
The Drury Family Drury Inn / Hotels

By M. Karen Hubbard

The Drury Hotels story began in the early 1940s on the Lambert Drury family farm in Kelso, Missouri, located in the Bootheel of Southeast Missouri. The father and sons supplemented their farm income with plastering jobs on the side. Lambert taught his sons to always provide the best service, to be sure that any job they did was high quality, that people would get good value from the sons' work, and to always be thinking of ways to be innovative. With the business stressing these characteristics (service, quality, value, and innovation), the side job of plastering grew into a full time job.

The Drury brothers learned from their mistakes. For example, they picked up sand they were going to use for plastering using a truck that had just dropped off a load of soybeans. Two days after they had put on the first coat of plaster, the homeowners were surprised to discover soybeans sprouting from their walls. Can you imagine having plants growing out of your walls? The Drury brothers probably had a good laugh and then did what good businesspeople do and re-plastered the walls. They learned a valuable lesson which became the foundation of their future successful hotel operation: **Things can never be too clean.**

The first hotel the brothers built was a Holiday Inn in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. They made money on the rooms but lost all of it on the restaurant and lounge. To solve this problem, they developed a new idea for their hotel. They created a hotel with rooms only. The new hotel was called Drury Inn and it was opened in Sikeston, Missouri, charging a rate of \$10.88.

The brothers concentrated on ways to make a visit to a Drury Inn more enjoyable. They continued to innovate by offering new features. In 1986, they introduced their free Quikstart breakfast so that travelers could get up, grab a bite, and get started on their day. In 1995, they installed the first indoor/outdoor pool, and in 1998 they began offering free evening drinks and snacks. In 2002 they installed free high-speed internet so that business travelers could get work done right in the hotel room. In 2003 they improved their breakfast by offering hot breakfast foods. In 2004 they offered free long-distance phone calls so that people could call their families, and in 2007, they placed microwaves & refrigerators in every room.

The Drury Hotels are 100% family owned and operated. They are renovated every five to six years so each hotel has a "like-new" appearance and a similar identity. They employ about 3,500 people who are given the authority to do whatever it takes to make their guests happy. In just 30 years, Drury has grown from a small plastering business to a successful, growing system of more than 120 hotels in 19 states.