Holiday Inns Encyclopedia Article

Holiday Inns

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Holiday Inns

Kemmons Wilson transformed roadside accommodations by building or franchising look-alike motels known as Holiday Inns. In 1952, entrepreneur Wilson, a high school dropout and home builder, opened the first Holiday Inn in Memphis, Tennessee, after returning from a road trip to Washington, D.C., with his wife and five children, disappointed with the typical motel or roadside cabin of the day—overpriced, cramped units charging $2 extra for each child. Wilson's first motel, opened at the start of the postwar auto travel boom, was the prototype for the thousands of Holiday Inns that later formed a global giant much imitated by newer hotel-motel chains. Wilson retired in 1978, and 18 years later Holiday Inns Inc. was acquired for more than $2.2 billion by the British firm Bass PLC., which, by century's end, operated or franchised more than 2,700 Holiday Inns and other hotels in 90 countries. Holiday Inns caught the public's fancy by offering uniformly family-friendly, unsurprising, and moderately priced accommodations, with each motel easily recognized by a large green and white sign.

Further Reading:

Walton, William B., with Mel Lorentzen. *Innkeeper.* Wheaton, Illinois, Tyndale House, 1987.

Wilson, Kemmons, with Robert Kerr. *Half Luck and Half Brains: The Kemmons Wilson, Holiday Inn Story.* Nashville, Tennessee, Hambleton-Hill, 1996.