



Hooters, Inc., was incorporated in Clearwater, Florida, on April 1, 1983, by six Clearwater businessmen: Lynn D. Stewart, Gil DiGiannantonio, Ed Droste, Billy Ranieri, Ken Wimmer and Dennis Johnson. The date was an April Fools' Day joke because the original six owners believed that their prospect was going to fail. Their first Hooters restaurant was built on the site of a former rundown nightclub. So many businesses had folded in that particular location that the Hooters founders built a small "graveyard" at the front door for each that had come and gone before them. The first restaurant opened its doors on October 4, 1983, in Clearwater.

In 1984, Hugh Connerty bought the rights to Hooters from the Original Hooters 6. Robert H. Brooks and a group of Atlanta investors (operators of Hooters of America, Inc.) bought out Connerty. The Clearwater-based company retained control over restaurants in the Tampa Bay Area, Chicago metropolitan area, and one in Manhattan, New York, while all other locations were under the aegis of Hoot-

ers of America, which sold franchising rights to the rest of the US and international locations. Under Brooks' leadership, the collective Hooters brand expanded to more than 425 stores worldwide.

The Hooters Casino Hotel was opened February 2, 2006, in Paradise, Nevada. This hotel has 696 rooms with a 35,000-square-foot casino. As of 2014, it is the only Hooters facility offering lodging since a Hooters Inn motel located along Interstate 4 in Lakeland, Florida, was demolished in 2007.

As part of their 25th anniversary, *Hooters Magazine* released its list of top Hooters Girls of all time. Among the best-known were Lynne Austin (the original Hooters Girl), the late Kelly Jo Dowd (the mother of the golfer Dakoda Dowd), Bonnie-Jill Laflin, Leeann Tweeden, and Holly Madison.

