

Quality Courts

by
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[Note: "Quality Courts", here, includes Quality Inns, Quality Motels, etc]

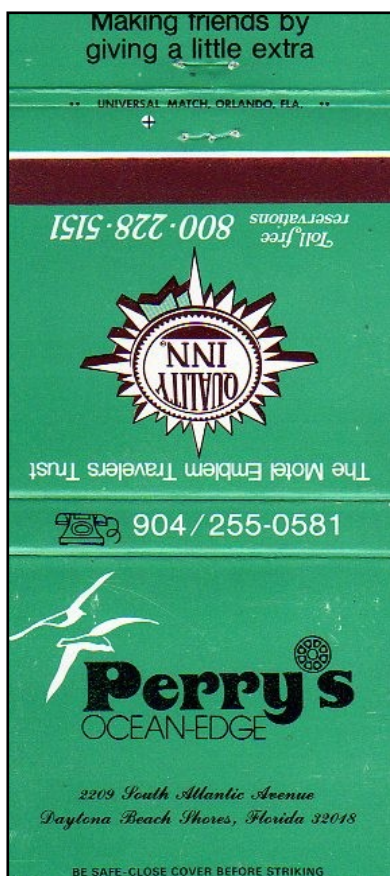
Quality Courts United, Inc., which began as a nonprofit referral chain of seven motels in Florida, was founded in 1939. It would undergo several name changes before becoming what is known today as Choice Hotels International. The chain initially remained east of the Mississippi River.

By the early 1960s, Quality Courts United had approximately 600 members. All of its hotels needed to meet certain quality standards and offer amenities like air conditioning, telephones, swimming pools, paved driveways, and wall-to-wall carpeting. In 1963, the organization became a for-profit corporation and changed its name to Quality Courts Motels, Inc.

In 1957, Stewart W. Bainum Sr., who ran a Washington, D.C., plumbing business, opened his first hotel in Silver Spring, Maryland. He later franchised his first Quality Courts motel in 1963. In 1968, Bainum merged his business, Park Consolidated Motels, Inc., with Quality Courts Motels, assumed the role of president and CEO, and moved the company's headquarters from Daytona Beach to Silver Spring, Maryland.

Lodging Magazine wrote that, by 1969, Quality Courts Motels was the world's "largest association of independent motel operators".

The company changed its name to Quality Inns International in 1972 and, in 1990, the parent company became known as Choice Hotels International.



In the 1980s, the company started the industry's first market segmentation strategy, using a range of hotel brands across price points. Geographically, it expanded across the country by opening hotels in the west.

The Comfort brand, which would later become Choice Hotels' flagship brand, was established in 1981. The brand was marketed to family vacationers, business travelers, and senior citizens to compete with Days Inn, Best Western, and Friendship Inn. The company's Quality Inn hotels remained in the midscale segment, competing with Holiday Inn, Ramada, Howard Johnson, and Travelodge. The now-discontinued Quality Royale brand was positioned as Choice Hotels' upscale brand, designed to compete with Marriott, Hyatt, Hilton, and Sheraton. In the 1980s, Choice bought Friendship Inn, Rodeway Inn, and Econo Lodge.

In 1989, the company introduced McSleep, an economy brand utilizing a consistent, interior-corridor design prototype designed by Rob Spurr that was all new construction. The name was soon changed to Sleep Inn following litigation from McDonald's.

Bainum's other business, Manor Care, Inc., which owned and managed nursing homes, bought Choice Hotels in 1990. The company later spun off its hotels business in 1996. Bainum Sr. led Choice Hotels International until 1987, when his son, Stewart W. Bainum Jr., took over the role of chairman and chief executive. As of 2018, Bainum Jr. remains chairman of Choice Hotels.

Choice Hotels International became publicly traded in 1996. That same year, it announced the establishment of the MainStay Suites brand, a midscale extended-stay hotel.

In the mid-2000s, Choice Hotels expanded into the upscale hotel market. The company announced in 2005 the creation of its Cambria Hotels & Suites brand, later renamed Cambria Hotels, the company's first new brand since MainStay Suites's creation in 1996. The Cambria brand was created as an upscale hotel chain marketed to business travelers. As of 2018, the Cambria brand had expanded to about 100 hotels open or in the pipeline, including hotels in Philadelphia, Dallas, New Orleans, South Windsor, Connecticut and Savannah, Georgia.

In 2008, Choice Hotels was the first industry chain to establish a "soft brand", Ascend Hotel Collection. The Ascend Hotel Collection includes upscale boutique and historic hotels whose owners are subject to fewer fixed brand standards compared with Choice's other brands.

Choice Hotels began a transformation of its Comfort properties in 2012, with the company removing its franchising from 600 properties that did not meet Choice Hotels' new standards. Choice Hotels rebranded Comfort in 2018, which brought its Comfort Inn, Comfort Inn & Suites, and Comfort Suites brands under one umbrella.

In October 2010, officials in Maryland and Montgomery County announced that Choice Hotels International would move its headquarters from Silver Spring, to a new 197,866 square feet facility in Rockville Town Center in Rockville. Groundbreaking occurred in August 2011, and Choice Hotels completed the move into the new headquarters in June 2013.

Throughout its history, Choice Hotels introduced new features into the hotel industry, including having all hotels include non-smoking rooms, 24-hour-a-day toll-free reservations, Internet-based property management systems, and the industry's first iPhone application. The company's technological developments also led it to create a division called SkyTouch Technology in 2013, which markets Choice Hotels' property management system to other hotel companies.

In 2014, Choice Hotels invested millions of dollars to begin a multi-year process to develop the industry's first new global reservations system and distribution platform in 27 years. A cloud-based system, choiceEDGE, launched in 2018. The system can integrate with voice search and artificial intelligence.

In 2018, Choice Hotels expanded the number of hotel brands it franchised by acquiring WoodSpring Suites, an extended-stay economy hotel brand. Adding WoodSpring's 240 hotels across the U.S. tripled the number of extended-stay hotels in the company's portfolio to around 350 properties.

As of 2018, Choice Hotels-branded properties are located in more than 40 countries and territories, including hotels in Europe, Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, and Scandinavia. Choice Hotels entered into an agreement with Spanish hotel operator Sercotel in 2018 to increase Choice's footprint in Spain and Latin America.

Re the covers, themselves, there is certainly a wide array. There are front-strikers and rear-strikers. Most are 20-strikes, but there are 10s, 12s, 30s, 40s, Jewels, Jewelites, and boxes (and many of the boxes are either American Ace or Pocketbox). There are also Fancies: Uniglo, Matchtone, Matchorama, Metallic, Full-Lenths, and more. And, there are long-running stock series, as well as many non-stock issues. It should also be noted that many of these covers are AAA.

Here's how I have mine organized: 10s, 40s, boxes, Jewels and Jewelites in front of the first album (just because I want to maximize page usage), then the 20s and 30s are divided by state, and then alphabetically by city with each state.

There is no listing (another opportunity for some collector). I currently have 1,770 in my collection, and I'm still looking!

