

Early Best Western History

[This information comes from the March/April and May/June 1975 RMS Bulletins]

“Best Western was organized in 1948 by Mr. M. K. Guertin who owned the Beach and Oceanaire Motel in Long Beach, California. Until 1966, Mr. Guertin was the sole owner and only officer of Best Western. At that time Mr. Guertin turned the organization over to members and the present organization was formed, with a seven-man Board of Directors elected by the members administering the affairs of Best Western. M. Milton Duvall (owner of Duvall’s Motel in Clarksville, Missouri) was named Best Western’s first President, with M. Rene Grialou (Americana Motor Lodge, San Francisco, California) as Vice President.

Best Western's 25th anniversary was in 1973 (not in 1974). At that time charter members were honored at a gala celebration in Phoenix. According to the 1948 Travel Guide, these are the charter members of Best Western:

- Harry P. Smith, of the Hitching Post Motor Inn, Cheyenne, Wyoming, whose first motel was known as Lincoln Court.
- E. Pollman, of Beach & Oceanaire Motel and Apts., of Long Beach, California, whose first motel was known as Beach Motel.
- Lester U. Raw, of New Seashore Motel, of Seaside, Oregon; first motel was known as Center City Motel.
- M. & Mrs. Ray Knell, of El Rey Motel, Cedar City, Utah; original name still used today.
- Roy Coxwell, Rancho Grande Motel, Wickenburg, Arizona; original motel was known as Motel Rancho Grande.
- Arthur N. Pack, of Ghost Ranch Lodge, Tucson, Arizona; original motel name still being used.
- Marie Peach, Coronado Motel Hotel, Yuma, Arizona; original motel name still being used.
- C. G. Wallace, of De Anza Motor Lodge, Albuquerque, New Mexico; original name still being used.

E. J. Shelley sent along a “Prospective Membership Kit” that outlines policies of BEST WESTERN for the benefit of its members. Kit includes a “27 point requirements” that members must adhere to. No. 14 is of special interest: “14. Book Matches. Book matches prominently printed with the Best Western logo must be available in guest rooms.”

“...Unlike the H-I’s with their prominent large signs and conspicuous building design the Best Westerns are not too easy to spot. True, some motels have the familiar Best Western sign (yellow/red/blue square sign with a crown atop), but many are not that designated until you come upon the lobby door. Also, most of the motels were built to the owner’s design before being affiliated with Best Western; thus no one motel is a look-alike of another Best Western.

As the chain progressed eastward, the name was changed to Best Western/Best Eastern. But this was dropped shortly thereafter and reverted to the Best Western theme. Some of the earlier matchcovers bore only the slogan; some only had a small logo somewhere on the cover.

It wasn’t until the early 60’s that the matchcovers became a familiar yellow/white with the logo emblazoned on the back. Around 1964 the Best Western/Best Eastern logo appeared, along with the imprint inside the cover showing the figure “900 motels”. Some of these covers had the date 9/64 imprinted behind the matches. (in the crease).”