

Phila PA Chronicles

Sharing memories of people, places and events that left their mark on the Philadelphia region in the 20th century

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George Washington Motor Lodges: Would George have slept here?

If you've spent any time in Pennsylvania, you know that we're practically tripping over places where George Washington allegedly slept. So it's probably fitting that one of the first chains of motor lodges in the Philadelphia region was named after the Father of Our Country. During the 1970s, whenever we'd drive past the George Washington Motor Lodge along Route 1 in Trevoise, it was easy to imagine the *Brady Bunch* overnighiting there on their way to Philadelphia.



George Washington Motor Lodge in Trevoise. Image courtesy of [Card Cow](#).

The George Washington Motor Lodges were part of a real estate empire owned by Philadelphia's Hankin family. The four Hankin brothers and their elder sister got their start in 1940 when they pooled their money to purchase a farm in Horsham. That started a real estate spending spree that continued until at one time the Hankins owned much of the land in Willow Grove, including Willow Grove Park.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the Hankin clan staked their claim on travelers motoring along the newly opened Delaware River Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. In fact, the Hankin family played quite a game of Monopoly, building GW Lodges near several Pennsylvania Turnpike exits, including Norristown (aka Plymouth Meeting), Valley Forge (aka King of Prussia), Philadelphia (aka Trevoise) and Willow Grove. Another GW Lodge also sprouted in Allentown.

When the GW Lodges opened, they offered the most modern accommodations of the era. Motorists could easily spy the lodging near the turnpike exit, and soon avail themselves of luxuries like indoor and outdoor pools, individually controlled heating and air conditioning, TV and hi fi and cocktail lounges.



Indoor pool at the Valley Forge GW Lodge. Image courtesy of [Card Cow](#).

The Willow Grove GW Lodge, which opened in 1963, included a convention center. The King of Prussia GW Lodge, which opened in 1958, hosted everyone from honeymooners, to baseball-card conventioners to General Electric Co. employees. The lounge of the Allentown GW Lodge regularly hosted dance parties.

The GW Lodges prospered, and the savvy real estate decisions of the Hankin family yielded a real estate empire valued at \$72 million by 1977. But the five siblings of the Hankin family began to quarrel and eventually became embroiled in an epic years-long squabble. Litigation ultimately ended in the court-ordered liquidation of the family's real estate holdings. In 1982, Tollman-Hundley Inns Ltd. purchased the GW Lodges, as well as two former Howard Johnson's Inns, from the Hankins for \$19 million.



It's a pool party at the Valley Forge GW Lodge. Image courtesy of [Card Cow](#).

By this time, the GW lodges had grown a bit stale since little had been done to help them evolve with the times. Although Tollman-Hundley undertook token efforts to spruce up the GW Lodges, its purchase of the Days Inn chain led to severe money troubles by the late 1980s. Things quickly went downhill since by then nobody wanted to stay in a place that looked like it housed Bobby Brady (no offense, Bobby!), especially with newer hotel kids on the block like Marriott Courtyards.



Images of days gone by at the Trevoise GW Lodge. Image courtesy of [Card Cow](#).

Unfortunately, the lodges were unable to climb out of their downward spiral. By 1991, the GW Lodges in Trevoise and Willow Grove were housing homeless families for \$117 a week. And by 1993, the last of the GW Lodges closed, leaving behind only memories of another mid-century roadside icon.

Phila PA Chronicles, published by Joanne C. McHugh, is a walk down memory lane to revisit the people, landmarks and happenings in the Delaware Valley during the 20th century. Its name was inspired by the pieces of hand-addressed mail that Philadelphia residents would receive from senders who didn't want to be bothered with writing out the city's lengthy name.