



HISTORY

When Harry Dougherty opened Dock's Oyster House on Atlantic Avenue in Atlantic City, the Queen of Resorts was still a princess waiting to ascend her throne.

It was 1897 and Atlantic City was bustling with the construction of ocean piers and giant stone hotels that were taking the place of the turreted wooden hotels that lined the avenue. The Miss America Pageant hadn't been born yet and rolling chairs along the boardwalk had just come into vogue. Diamond Jim Brady and Lillian Russell were the American equivalent of royalty and regularly held court in the seaside resort. In the waning years of the 19th Century, a fine dinner might set you back \$.75 and shrimp cost \$.15 per pound.

In this atmosphere of the gay 90's, Harry "call me Dock" Dougherty believed there was a great opportunity to open a seafood restaurant that would carefully prepare and serve the finest seafood available in a clean, comfortable and friendly atmosphere. And so he opened Dock's Oyster House, with 60 seats, no liquor license and very high standards.

Over the next 40 years, because of Harry's uncompromising dedication to serving top quality seafood, Dock's survived even through World War I and the Great Depression. In 1938, with his health failing, Harry turned the restaurant over to his son Joseph, who honored his father's traditions until World War II called him to active duty. Under the very capable guidance of Joseph's wife, Anne, Dock's flourished during the war years and, when Joe returned in 1945, the two enlarged the restaurant to 80 seats.

Dock's reputation grew along with the resort, but in 1969, with the city in a steep decline, Joseph retired, passing the reins on to the third generation, his son Joe, Jr. Defying the conventional wisdom that the Queen of Resorts had been dethroned, Joe gutted the restaurant, installed two completely modern kitchens, purchased a liquor license and expanded the dining room to 120 seats – twice its original size. Joe not only believed in the resort's ability to revitalize itself, but also in the power of the local business community to support what was by now a local institution.

The ensuing decade saw skyrocketing seafood prices, disappearing convention business and other local businesses folding left and right, but Joe persevered, taking over the day-to-day kitchen duties himself and asking his family to pitch in. Joe's wife Arleen took over the management of the dining room and their sons, Joseph III and Frank, helped out doing chores, washing dishes, and eventually learning to cook. His determination paid off and Joe saw his dream of the rebirth of Atlantic City and the success of his restaurant become reality.

With the opening of the first casinos in the 1980's, Joe and Arleen again refurbished Dock's Oyster House, this time adding a small cocktail lounge. But even after several refurbishments and three generations of leadership, Dock's retained the charm for which it had always been known. As many other non-casino restaurants closed, Dock's remained a local favorite and, in 1997, the entire community celebrated the centennial anniversary of Dock's.

Sadly, Joe Jr. lost a bout with cancer in 1999 and Frank, his youngest son, has taken the reigns that his father expertly held for the last 30 years. Together with his mother Arleen, who is still in the dining room with a warm welcome for everyone (she knows almost everyone by name), along with the help of Joe III, Dock's was refurbished yet again in 2001 and saw the addition full raw bar.

There isn't much left of the old turn of the century Atlantic City. But with the growth of the casino industry and the construction of the new Convention Center and other local attractions, Atlantic City again attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors. And even after more than 100 years in this constantly changing city by the sea, Dock's is thriving, thanks to the loyalty of its customers and the love, hard work and dedication of a family who keeps the tradition alive.

We invite you to relax and enjoy your visit. It's our pleasure to serve you