

MARRIOTT RESIDENCE INN



Walking into the downtown Memphis Residence Inn by Marriott is like stepping back in time. The historic art deco-styled structure, built as the William Len hotel in 1927 at Main and Monroe, opened last year following its conversion to a 90-suite, extended-stay hotel. A great deal of effort went into keeping the building true to its history while adding all the modern comforts.

General Manager Tricia Weatherford enjoys giving tours, and she is quick to note that the art deco feel of the property, preserved throughout the building, is especially noticeable in the hotel's lobby, the building's most architecturally significant space. There, the ironwork around the staircases and mezzanine reflects the art deco design of the hotel's original logo, a theme carried throughout the lobby and common areas of the hotel in the intricate inlaid woodwork. The vertical marble columns, the ornate elevator doors, and the light fixtures are all original to the building, and gilded mirrors and modernist furnishings are used to heighten the period look throughout the hotel.

1980's when the landmark hotel was adapted for use as an apartment building. In an interview with *The Commercial Appeal* when the property opened, Wright noted that the conversion left a perfect footprint for his hotel venture, commenting, "The footprint and the size of the rooms fit the Residence Inn room size, so it was an easy transition to make from an apartment building to an extended-stay hotel."

The extended-stay concept, Weatherford points out, allows guests to enjoy all the amenities of a fine hotel without sacrificing the conveniences of home such as a full kitchen including stove and oven, microwave and refrigerator. All rooms have high-speed Internet access and the lobby and common areas provide wireless Internet access. As with other Residence Inn properties, guests receive a complimentary hot breakfast and are hosted at a social hour late afternoons.

However, says Weatherford, her property was designed as an alternative to the traditional Residence Inn property: "The idea was to

Above: The historic art deco-styled Residence Inn at Main and Monroe is the only all-suite hotel in downtown Memphis



Left: Tricia Weatherford, General Manager

Below: The suites feature feather beds and fluffy pillows to ensure a superb night's sleep for guests.





Attention to detail is apparent in the lobby where many art deco elements original to the building were retained during the renovation of the hotel.

achieve a more up-scale, boutique concept Inn."

It is the attention to detail that makes this National Historic Register property special. From its original art deco details and its period look to its amenities, the downtown Residence Inn offers the special touches that sets it apart. For instance, all the beds in the hotel are feather beds and are triple sheeted. "In terms of bed comfort, which we are consistently checking, this hotel always ranks in the top 95 percentile when compared to other hotels," Weatherford says with obvious pride. The beds are "presented" with four fluffy, oversize pillows, calling attention to the fact that Weatherford wants every guest to look forward to a good night's sleep while at her property. She explains, "We offer a place where you not only want to lay your head, but where you also want to kick up your heels and stay awhile, too."

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Some tenants stay more than a year. The rates for the suites vary according to the length of stay as well as room size,

making the hotel affordable to any visitor staying more than the minimum five nights. However, the property does a significant amount of business with large corporate clients. This may be due, in part, to the fact that business can be conducted as if the hotel were your company's downtown Memphis office. Available for guests are two meeting rooms that will accommodate up to 50 people, with catering on an as-needed basis. In addition to the internet access available in both rooms and common areas, fax and copy machines are conveniently located off the lobby.

A RICH MEMPHIS HERITAGE

The building, which was placed on the National Historic Register in 1984, was begun in 1927 and completed in 1930. Its name was chosen by Grady Manning, who at that time was president of Southwest Hotels, Inc., the company operating the hostelry. Grady Manning named the hotel in

honor of his father-in-law, wealthy Arkansan William Len Seaman. Formerly of Savannah, Tennessee, Seaman became one of the wealthiest and best known citizens of Arkansas in the early part of the 20th century. At its opening, the William Len was heralded in the *Memphis Press Scimitar* as a grand hotel with 250 rooms, 250 baths, and "an artificially-cooled lobby and barbershop." Longtime Memphis mayor "Boss Crump" had his hair cut in the mezzanine barbershop of the William Len on a regular basis. Perhaps he frequently dined on the daily 75¢ Chef's luncheon special.

The hotel closed in 1970, reopening in the early 1980's when an investment firm converted the building's 250 rooms into 89 apartments. The Hertz Investment Group purchased the property in 1994, holding it until 2000 when it was donated by the Hertz family to Neve Yerushalayim, a college for women based in Israel. Larry Wright and his partners bought the building from the non-profit organization with the intention of turning it into an extended-stay property, the only property of its type between downtown and one at Poplar and I-240.

Although the latest renovation kept the same configuration of rooms, the division of a large rooftop apartment allowed an additional unit.



RESIDENCE INN
DOWNTOWN
110 Monroe Ave
Memphis, TN 38103
(901) 578-3700