Completed in 1904, the Hotel Dockery provided rooms for patients who traveled to Kirksville for osteopathic treatments. (Photo courtesy of Harriet Beard)

From Riches To Rags

The Dockery Hotel, originated in 1904 by Thomas Jefferson Dockery on the corner of Elson and McPherson Streets, was once an elaborate building that housed Kirksville’s visitors. When Mr. Dockery acquired the hotel through an unpaid mortgage, it was called the Leslie Hotel. He then finalized the building plans in 1904.

At the turn of the century, a problem of room and board existed for patients requiring the skill of the osteopathic doctors in Kirksville. During this time, several hotels were built to accommodate this need. Some examples of these hotels were the Pool House, which was later known as the Stephenson Hotel, the Ivie Hotel, the Central, and the Steele.

Of those listed, the only establishment remaining is the Dockery. Mr. Dockery’s acquisition of this hotel came in 1895, and he re-opened the facility in its enlarged state on December 21, 1904. The renowned businessman of Kirksville had a few influential guests at his hotel. William Jennings Bryan spoke at the hotel on August 2, 1907, while on his presidential cam-
This fire insurance map, dated 1906, shows the location of the Hotel Dockery at the corner of McPherson and Elson Streets. The map reads “Heat: Steam. Lights: Elec. & Gasol. Gas. 2 Empire Chem. Extsrs. 6 Round Bottom Metal Fires Buckets.” (Courtesy of Pickler Memorial Library)

...aign. A circus troop also stayed at the hotel. The camels in the show slept in the lobby.

Before Mr. Dockery died, he gave several of his landholdings to his three daughters: Ardella, Estelle, and Leota. Ardella, the oldest, received the house at 904 East Harrison Street. Estelle received what is now called the Bamberg Building, which is on the east side of the square. The Dockery Hotel went to Leota, the youngest daughter. Leota married Dr. George A. McCole and moved to Montana where she lived with her husband until she died.

After Mrs. McCole’s death, her husband wanted to sell the hotel rather than move back to Kirksville to supervise the facility. At this time, Pete Anesi was interested in buying buildings for tax depreciation purposes. Through a mutual acquaintance, Mr. Ernest W. Scott, ownership was transferred to Mr. Anesi in 1947 for the sum of $37,500.

The Dockery Hotel was a very beautiful building when first opened. The front veranda, which faced the morning sun, covered the entire front portion of the building, 150 feet, while extending from the building 14 feet. The facade, as well as the veranda, was decorated in galvanized tin, which still remains but is in a deteriorated condition. The two-story structure is made of brick and has two bay windows on the second floor.

In the rear, between the sides of the building, was a small flower garden. The interior of the hotel was very elaborate in its design.

The Leslie Hotel as it appeared before T.J. Dockery’s ownership. (Photo courtesy of Mrs. Harriet Beard)
The office in the northeast corner is 30 by 54 feet and has a black and white checkerboard Tennessee marble floor, as does the southeast corner where the barbershop was located. The rest of the hotel floor, in addition to the mill work, is made of oak.

The ground floor has two oak stairways leading to the second floor. The stairway in the front is just a straight stairway, but the one to the rear is a spiral staircase that leads to a large glass skylight on the second floor landing.

There were 75 guest rooms in the hotel, only 10 of which had a bath. Each, however, did have a coal stove for heat. Later, a boiler and steam pipe system were installed and radiators were put in each room.

Throughout the 32 years of Mr. Anesi’s ownership, the actual hotel business exchanged hands five separate times. He rented the hotel business for $200 a month. During his ownership, he made several improvements, including a new boiler and furniture, and raised the rent to $250.

Mr. and Mrs. Larry Whitney, Walt and Brad Beard, and Charles and Carl Baldwin bought the building in 1979. In 1985, they had a Quincy architectural firm, Pippin, Stone, and Bach, inspect the building, which was determined to be structurally sound. The new owners wanted to build offices on the first floor and apartments on the second floor.

The present owners were anxious to start work on the renovation of the Dockery, and following extensive research they were able to place the building on the National Register of Historic Buildings. Renovation will be attempted when a good use is found for the building.

Until recently, the Dockery Hotel served as a bus depot and a taxi service, but today the hotel is closed and restricted to the public. The hotel today is bare, except for the new boiler put in by the Whitney’s, the Baldwins, and the Beards in 1981. When Kirksville widened the streets, part of the front gallery was removed and the facade was altered. Later, the gallery was enclosed and turned into a sleeping room. The front veranda is still in good shape in places; however, the edges need repair. Weather has been a factor in its wear. But that is to be expected since it has shielded the Dockery Hotel for 83 years.

By Kim Crosley
and
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The Dockery Hotel in 1987 is showing its years of wear.