

## DAKOTA IMAGES

Ted and Dorothy Hustead, merchants and civic leaders in Wall, South Dakota, used the simple but appealing offer of free ice water to create a world-famous tourist attraction.

Theodore E. Hustead, the son of a doctor, was born 3 October 1902 at Phillips, Nebraska, and graduated from high school at Aurora in 1921. Dorothy Rush Hustead was born 29 August 1904 in Colman, South Dakota. She graduated from Flandreau High School.

The couple met at the University of Nebraska, where Dorothy was an English and drama major and Ted was a pre-med student. Following their marriage in 1926, Ted switched to pharmacy studies, and the Husteads graduated from college together in 1929. They settled in Sioux Falls, where Dorothy taught at Cathedral High School and Ted worked for Dow Drug.

Seeking to invest Ted's meager inheritance in a business of their own, the couple purchased Henry Sebade's patent medicine store in the tiny town of Wall in western South Dakota. Hustead's Drugstore opened on 31 December 1931. The Husteads struggled to make a living during the Great Depression, living with their young son Bill behind a curtain at the back of the store and selling concessions at community events.

Dorothy Hustead realized that the cars passing by Wall from the Badlands nearby carried thirsty tourists who would stop for refreshments at the drugstore if they knew of its existence. Her husband soon began painting road signs offering free ice water at Wall Drug—an easier name to paint and remember than Hustead's Drugstore—and the tourists came. In 1937, the Husteads hired eight employees to handle the summer rush.

During World War II, GIs carried Wall Drug signs around the world, and in 1942 the business expanded into a new store. Ten years later, the Husteads added a mechanical cowboy orchestra to the store's attractions. A clothing store and cafeteria soon followed. By 1999, sales at Wall Drug topped \$10 million, and the emporium's floor space had expanded to seventy-five thousand square feet. Over seven hundred magazine and newspaper articles had featured the improbable prairie success story.

Following the deaths of Wall Drug's founders—Dorothy Hustead on 4 November 1995 and Ted Hustead on 12 January 1999—the business continued on in the hands of the family's second and third generations as a cornerstone of South Dakota's tourism industry.

—John M. Duffy



Ted and Dorothy Hustead

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