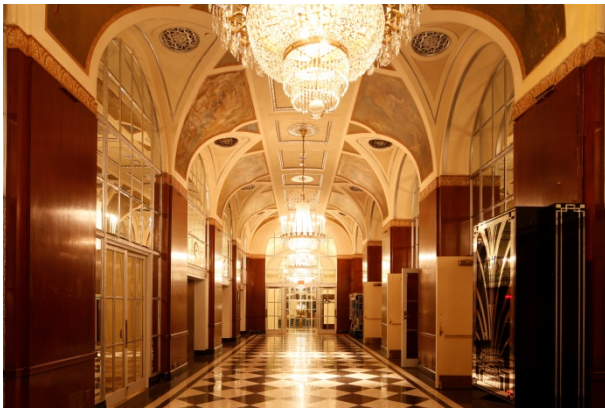


# Waldorf-Astoria Hotel

## Interiors

### Designation Report

March 7, 2017



**Cover Photographs:**

Top left: Park Avenue Lobby; Top right: Main Lobby;

Bottom left: Ballroom Entrance Hall; Bottom right: Grand (Main) Ballroom

*Photos: Sarah Moses, LPC*

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**Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Interiors | LP-2591**



E 51 St

Lexington Av

E 49 St

0.04 Miles

Block: 1304  
Lot: 7501

E 50 St

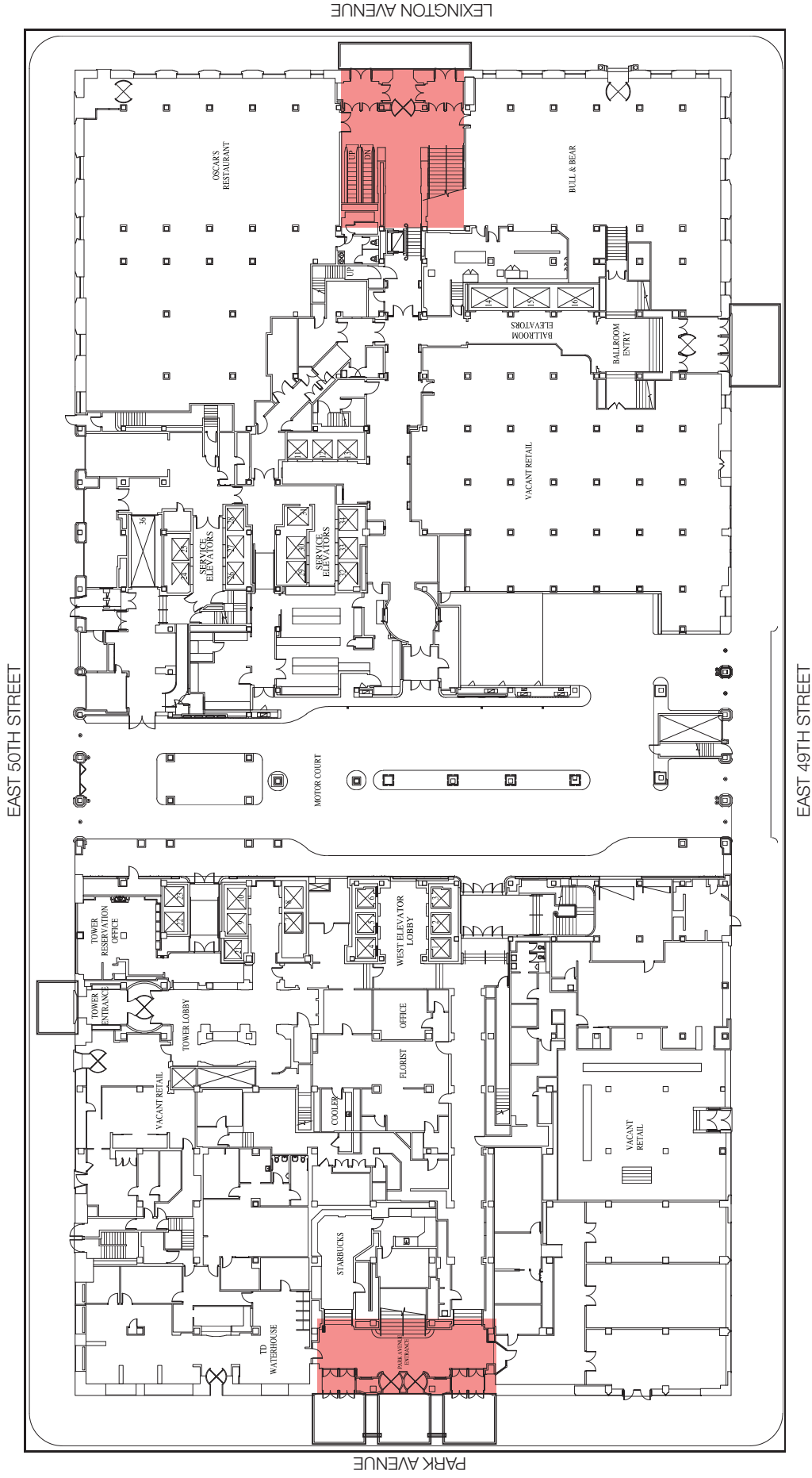
Park Av

Park Av

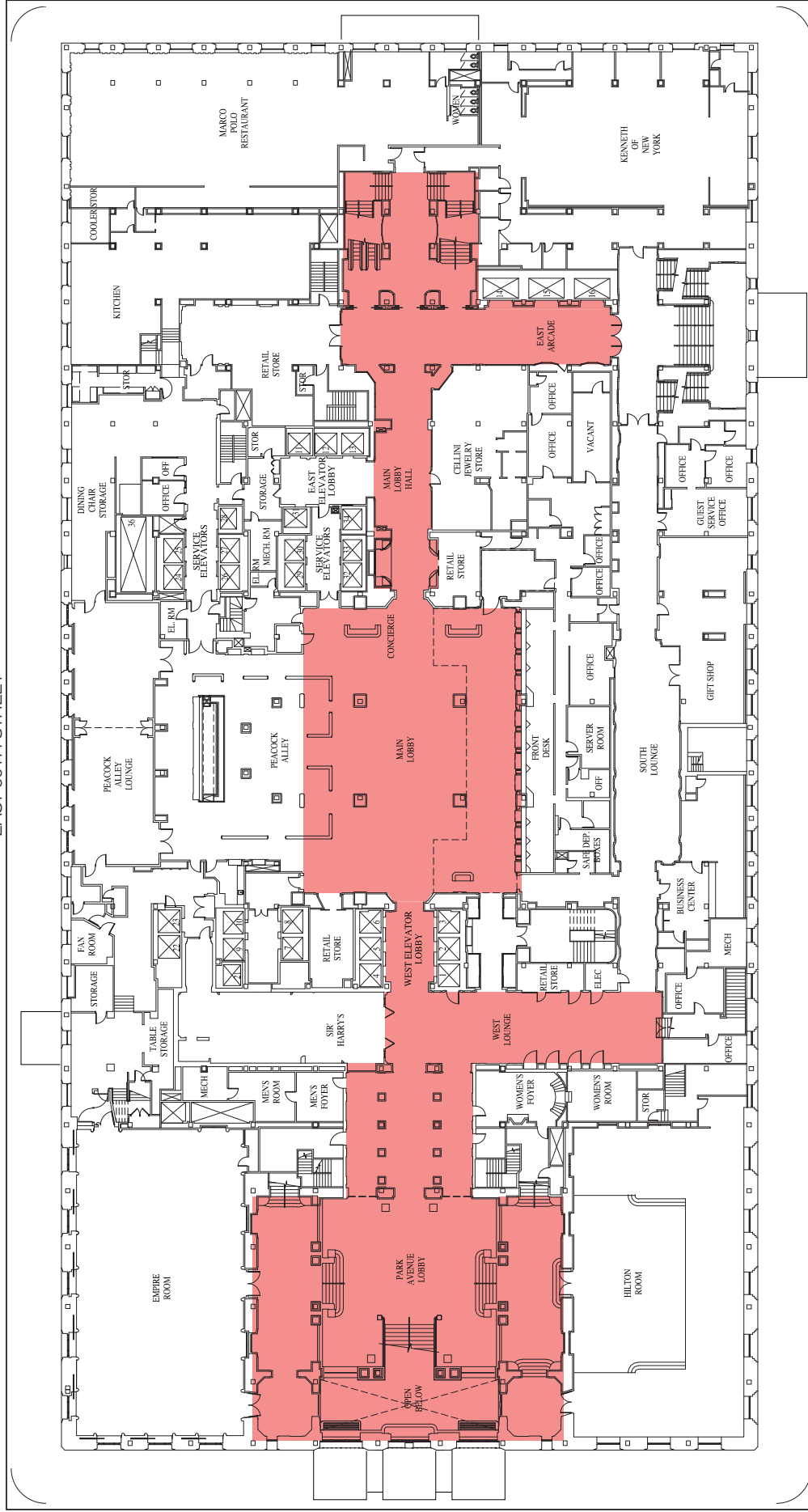
**Legend**

- Interior Landmark Site
- Building Footprints
- New York City Tax Map Lots

Address: 301 Park Avenue (aka 101-121 East 49th Street, 100-120 East 50th Street, 538-586 Lexington Avenue),  
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1304, Lot 7501  
Calendar Date: November 1, 2016  
Public Hearing Date: January 24, 2017  
Designated: March 7, 2017



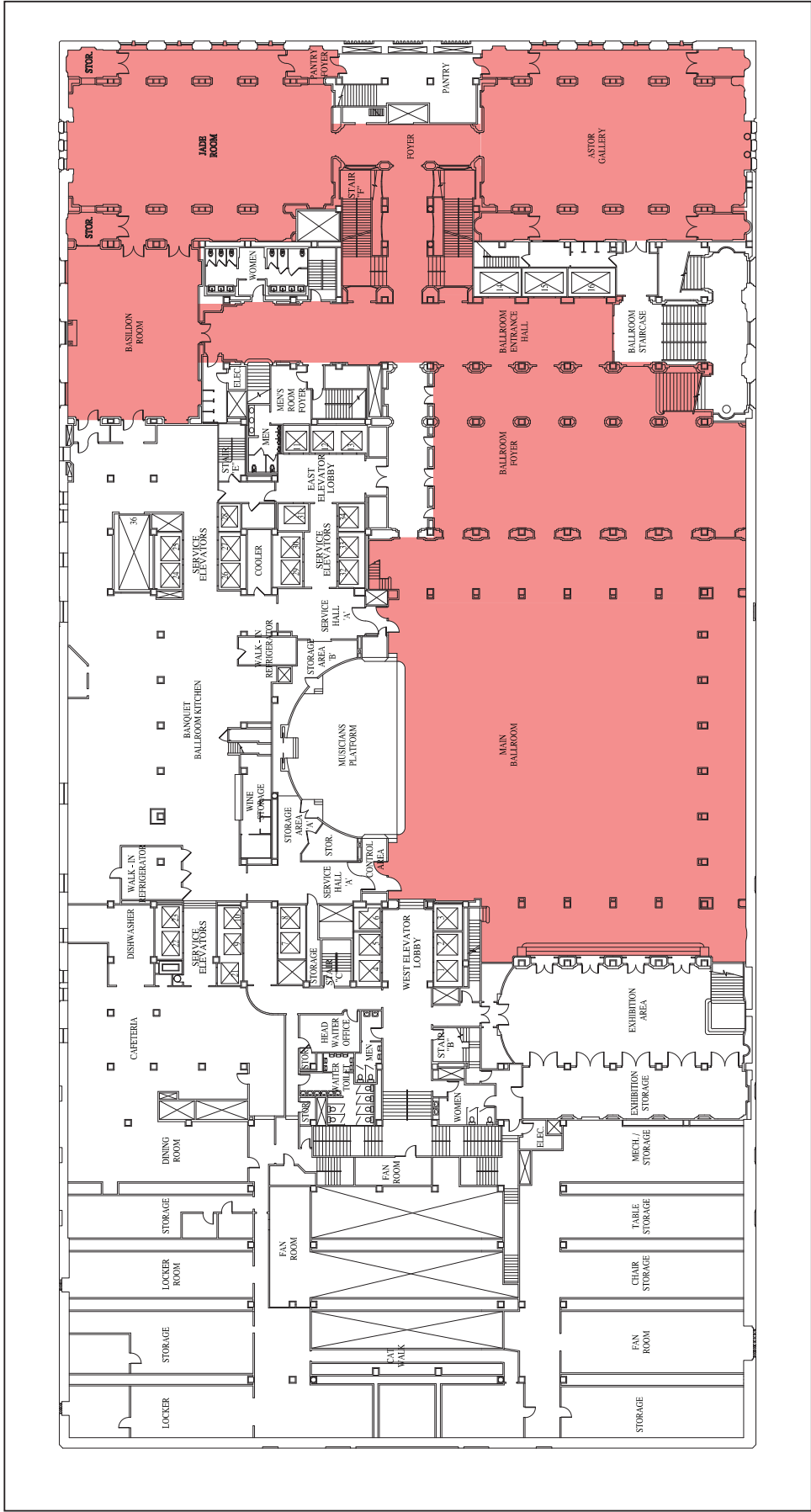
EAST 50TH STREET







EAST 50TH STREET



PARK AVENUE

EAST 49TH STREET

LEXINGTON AVENUE



## **WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL INTERIORS SITE DESCRIPTION**

Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, **ground floor interior**, consisting of the Park Avenue vestibules and foyer, the Lexington Avenue vestibules and foyer; **first floor interior**, consisting of the Park Avenue Lobby and colonnade, West Lounge (formerly Peacock Alley), West Elevator Lobby, Main Lobby, Main Lobby Hall, East Arcade, Lexington Avenue stairs and landing; **second floor interior**, consisting of the Lexington Avenue stairs and landing; **third floor interior**, consisting of the Lexington Avenue stairs and landing, the Grand (Main) Ballroom and balconies, Ballroom Entrance Hall (originally Silver Gallery), (Grand) Ballroom Foyer, Basildon Room, Jade Room, Astor Gallery, foyer connecting the Jade Room and Astor Gallery with Lexington Avenue stairs; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces including but not limited to the wall surfaces, ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, murals, mirrors, chandeliers, all lighting fixtures, attached furnishings, doors, elevator doors, grilles, railings and balustrades, decorative metalwork and attached decorative elements; 301 Park Avenue (aka 101-121 East 49<sup>th</sup> Street, 100-120 East 50<sup>th</sup> Street, 538-556 Lexington Avenue), Borough of Manhattan. Built 1929-31; Schultze & Weaver, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1304, Lot 7501

## **TESTIMONY AT THE PUBLIC HEARING**

On January 24, 2017, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel as an Interior Landmark, ground floor interior, consisting of the Park Avenue vestibules and foyer, the Lexington Avenue vestibules and foyer; first floor interior, consisting of the Park Avenue Lobby and colonnade, West Lounge (formerly Peacock Alley), West Elevator Lobby, Main Lobby, Main Lobby Hall, East Arcade, Lexington Avenue stairs and landing; second floor interior, consisting of the Lexington Avenue stairs and landing; third floor interior, consisting of the Lexington Avenue stairs and landing, the Grand (Main) Ballroom and balconies, Ballroom Entrance Hall (originally Silver Gallery), (Grand) Ballroom Foyer, Basildon Room, Jade Room, Astor Gallery, foyer connecting the Jade Room and Astor Gallery with Lexington Avenue stairs; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces including but not limited to the wall surfaces, ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, murals, mirrors, chandeliers, all lighting fixtures, attached furnishings, doors, elevator doors, grilles, railings and balustrades, decorative metalwork and attached decorative elements; and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). Eight people testified in support of designation, including representatives of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, Art Deco Society of New York, and Historic Districts Council. Council Member Daniel R. Garodnick, New York State Senator Brad Hoylman, Manhattan Community Board 5 and Historic Park Avenue submitted testimony in support of designation. The Commission also received 33 pieces of correspondence, as well as a petition, submitted by the Art Deco Society of New York, signed by 826 people, all supporting designation.

## SUMMARY

One of New York City's most prominent hotels, the Waldorf-Astoria was designed by Schultze & Weaver, an architectural firm that specialized in luxury hotels. Built in 1929-31, the elegant limestone exterior has been a New York City Landmark since 1993. The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Interiors include the primary public spaces – considered some of the finest and most varied Art Deco interiors in New York – as well as adjoining corridors that together form a memorable sequence of visually-connected spaces, tied to the experience of procession. Entering from Park or Lexington Avenue, these spaces flow seamlessly without interruption, expanding and contracting, from the ground level to the third (ballroom) floor. All of these luxurious rooms have had alterations and some exhibit new finishes but most retain their original modern classical details, artwork, metalwork, mirrors, glazed doors, and volume.

The first (lobby) floor includes the Park Avenue Lobby, a gracious entrance hall with 13 murals and a floor mosaic by the French artist Louis Rigal, as well as the wood-paneled Main Lobby, which features black marble columns and an elaborate plaster ceiling. Located at the center of the first floor is a freestanding clock, bearing portraits of American presidents and Queen Victoria. Acquired for the hotel's original building in the 1910s, it has stood at the center of the Main Lobby – on axis with the Park and Lexington Avenue entrances – since the late 1960s. At the east end of the first floor, near Lexington Avenue, elevators with handsome metal doors and staircases with decorative metalwork resembling “frozen fountains” ascend to the third (ballroom) floor. A long mirrored hallway, the Ballroom Entrance Hall (originally Silver Gallery), connects four ballrooms. This glittering space features a vaulted ceiling that incorporates 16 paintings by the American artist Edward Emerson Simmons. They are among the only features salvaged from the hotel's original building. The Grand (Main) Ballroom, one of the largest event spaces in the New York City, accommodates more than 1,500 guests. Arranged on three levels, this fabled room has hosted countless dinners, banquets, galas and balls, including the annual Alfred E. Smith Dinner, a fundraiser for Catholic charities that attracts major presidential candidates. The third floor also contains the Basildon Room, which has colorful ceiling panels acquired from an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Palladian-style villa in England, as well as the more low-key Jade Room and Astor Gallery.

The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel has often been called “New York's Unofficial Palace.” A transient and residential hotel with stylish lobbies and spacious ballrooms, during its lengthy history the Waldorf has hosted far too many guests to count, from international dignitaries and celebrities to long-term residents and members of New York Society. In a city where relatively few hotels preserve their historic interiors, these lavish public rooms remain important for their understated Art Deco character and lasting cultural significance.

## HISTORY

### Hotel Architecture<sup>1</sup>

Hotels have played an important role in New York City since the colonial era when the taverns and inns of New Amsterdam offered travelers lodging, food, and drink. For many years, Astor House, built in 1836 by Isaiah Rogers, on Broadway between Barclay and Vesey Street, provided the utmost in comfort and convenience to guests. Not only was the building large, but it was equipped with baths and toilets on every floor. As the city's population moved northward, so did the hotel district. By 1859, the Fifth Avenue Hotel (Griffith Thomas, demolished), called the "first modern New York Hotel,"<sup>2</sup> had opened on the west side of Madison Square, with luxuriously decorated interiors and one of the earliest passenger elevators. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, hotels grew in size and grandeur. Among the most famous was the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, which was located on the west side of Fifth Avenue, between 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Streets. The south building, commissioned by William Waldorf Astoria, opened as the Waldorf Hotel in March 1893. The north building, known as the Astoria, was commissioned by cousin John Jacob Astor IV and completed in November 1897. Both structures were designed by Henry J. Hardenbergh, architect of the Dakota Apartments (1880-84, a New York City Landmark) and the Plaza Hotel (1905-07, a New York City Landmark and Landmark Interior) and functioned as a single hotel, with 40 public rooms and 1,300 guest rooms.

The original Waldorf-Astoria was the largest hotel in New York City, but it was certainly not unique among the grand hotels of this era. Fostered by economic prosperity, hotels not only provided guest accommodations but the various public spaces provided New Yorkers with a prominent stage for social events.<sup>3</sup> Improvements in transportation made travel between (and within) cities easier, and people became increasingly mobile, traveling for pleasure and business. Turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century hotels tended to "include within the walls of the building all the possible comforts of modern life, facilities which formerly could be found only outside of the hotel walls. Telephones, Turkish baths, private nurses, physicians,"<sup>4</sup> as well as maids, valets, and barbers. Many guests remained for long periods, preferring not to be saddled with the responsibility of maintaining a large home in the city, while others were visitors who came for extended annual stays.

A. C. David wrote in 1905 that new hotels were "in a different class architecturally from any similar buildings which have preceded them." Benefitting from steel-frame construction, these structures were designed "in such a manner that it would be distinguished from the office-building and suggest some relation to domestic life."<sup>5</sup> The St. Regis Hotel (1901-04, 1927, a New York City Landmark), Fifth Avenue and 55<sup>th</sup> Street, shared similar technological innovations with the original Waldorf-Astoria but provided a more exclusive and refined atmosphere. Designed in the Beaux-Arts style, the 20-story St. Regis was faced with limestone, like many Fifth Avenue residences. Unlike the Waldorf-Astoria, which "provides exclusiveness for the masses," the St. Regis sought "the patronage of people who were rich, and who were or wanted to be fashionable, but which also would be somewhat quieter and more exclusive."<sup>6</sup>

The Plaza Hotel blends both traditions. In addition to complementing the neighboring Fifth Avenue mansions, the public interiors of this apartment-hotel were designed in various revival styles. The ground story has a U-shaped plan with broad corridors connecting the original lobby, facing 59<sup>th</sup> Street, with various public spaces, including the neo-classical Palm Court (formerly the Tea Room), the Spanish Renaissance Edwardian Room and the German Renaissance Oak Room. The Grand Ballroom (and corridor) on the first floor, was built by

Warren & Wetmore in 1919-21 and completely redesigned in the neo-classical style by Schultze & Weaver in 1929, as they were commencing work on the Waldorf-Astoria.

New York City hotels continued to hold social significance in the 1920s. Large-scale restaurants like Delmonico's and Rector's closed and many people began to lease suites in centrally-located apartment hotels. Several notable examples were designed by Schultze & Weaver, architect of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, including The Park Lane (1922-24), Sherry-Netherland (1926-27), and Hotel Pierre (1930). Not only could wealthy and upper middle class tenants rely on hotel staff, rather than hiring servants, but these commercial structures, by law, were permitted to be significantly taller and bulkier than apartment buildings.<sup>7</sup>

Investment in apartment-hotel construction surged in the late 1920s, from just 19 filings for new buildings in 1927 to 104 filings in 1929. Significant Manhattan projects included: Panhellenic Tower (John Mead Howells, 1928, a New York City Landmark), New Yorker Hotel (Sugarman & Berger, 1928-30), Barbizon Plaza Hotel (Lawrence Emmons, working with Lloyd Morgan, 1930), Essex House (Frank Grad, 1929-31), Hotel Edison (Herbert J. Krapp, 1928-30), and a new Waldorf-Astoria.

### A New Waldorf-Astoria Hotel

The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel is a twin-towered Art Deco skyscraper. As the hotel's second incarnation, it replaced the three-and-a-half-decade-old German Renaissance-complex, whose dark-colored masonry facades rose no higher than 16 floors. In contrast, the new hotel was faced with pale limestone and matching "Waldorf Gray" brick. Mixing Art Deco and classically-inspired details, the hotel's sleek monochrome exterior was designated a New York City Landmark in 1993.

Businessman T. Coleman DuPont acquired the hotel in February 1918. In partnership with Lucius M. Boomer, formerly of the McAlpin Hotel, also owned by DuPont, he formed the Boomer-DuPont Properties Corporation, a holding company, to manage the Waldorf-Astoria. The company flourished in the 1920s, buying and building hotels throughout the nation. In December 1928, however, the site was sold to the Bethlehem Engineering Corporation, who later sold it to a syndicate headed by John J. Raskob. The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel closed in May 1929. Demolition of the famed structure began almost immediately, with construction of the Empire State Building (1929-31) starting a year later, in March 1930.

Before closing, in March 1929, Boomer announced that a new Waldorf-Astoria Hotel would rise on Park Avenue. Louis J. Horowitz, chairman of the Thompson-Starrett Company, convinced Boomer to remain with the hotel and arranged financing, with bonds secured by the New York Central Railroad, who owned the site.<sup>8</sup> To prepare for construction, several buildings were demolished: the Railroad Branch of the Y.M.C.A., a railroad powerhouse, and the American Express Building. Demolition of these structures began in July 1929 and was completed five months later, in November 1929.

The new Waldorf-Astoria was constructed on an extremely rapid schedule by the Thompson-Starrett Company. Founded by Henry Soffe Thompson and Theodore Starrett in c. 1900, this New York builder specialized in industrial, commercial, hotel, and skyscraper construction. It was responsible for many New York City Landmarks, including the St. Regis Hotel (1904), Woolworth Building (1913), Paramount Building (1926-27), and the Equitable Building (1915), which was financed by DuPont. Work on the hotel's substructure began in October 1929 and the steel framing began to rise in March 1930. Masonry work started in June

1930 and was completed in February 1931. Executives began to move into the new structure in July 1931.

### Architects and Designers

Established in 1921, Schultze & Weaver were the logical choice to design the new Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Both principals had considerable experience with midtown properties and had numerous hotels to their credit, including the Atlanta Biltmore (1922-24), the Los Angeles Biltmore (1922-23), the Sevilla Biltmore (1922-24) in Havana, and the Breakers (1926) in Palm Beach. In New York City, their first commission was the Park Lane (1922-24), a Renaissance Revival-style apartment hotel at 299 Park Avenue. Thirteen stories tall, it stood directly south of the Waldorf until 1965.

Both Schultze and Weaver were New Yorkers. Leonard Schultze (1877-1951) attended City College and the Atelier Masqueray, a private school founded by Emmanuel Masquery to train architects according to French methods. Schultze joined Warren & Wetmore in 1903; he served as chief designer of Grand Central Terminal (1913), the Biltmore Hotel (1912-13, reclad) and the Commodore Hotel (1918-19, reclad). Spencer Fullerton Weaver (1880-1939), founder and president of the Fullerton Weaver Realty Company, was active in Manhattan as a builder and real estate operator. Trained as a civil engineer at the University of Pennsylvania, at least two of his projects were built “on leasehold ground of the New York Central Railroad,” 400 Park Avenue (Warren & Wetmore, 1914-15, demolished) and 420-30 Park Avenue (Warren & Wetmore, 1916, demolished).<sup>9</sup>

Prior to the Waldorf-Astoria, Schultze & Weaver designed several skyscraper hotels, including the 35-story Sherry-Netherland<sup>10</sup> (1926-27, part of the Upper East Side Historic District), 26-story Hotel Lexington (1928-29, a New York City Landmark), and the 41-story Hotel Pierre (1929-30, part of the Upper East Side Historic District). With Weaver’s death in 1939, the firm became known as Leonard Schultze & Associates. Subsequent projects included Parkway Village (Jamaica, Queens, 1947) and Fordham Hill (University Heights, the Bronx, 1950), both housing developments, as well as the 1955 remodeling of the 1893 Metropolitan Life Building, 1 Madison Avenue, which was completed by the successor firm headed by Lloyd Morgan and Eugene V. Meroni (d. 1955).<sup>11</sup>

Schultze & Weaver worked on the Waldorf for about three-and-a-half years, overseeing a minimum of 50 draftsmen.<sup>12</sup> Lloyd Morgan (1892-1970) joined Schultze & Weaver in 1926. He became a partner in 1929 and is generally credited for designing the Hotel Pierre and the Waldorf-Astoria. Many of the interior renderings for the Waldorf, which are often signed, are in Morgan’s hand. A graduate of the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, he later studied at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Morgan was awarded the Paris Prize by the Society of Beaux Arts Architects in 1921 and for three years studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts.<sup>13</sup> During this period, he worked with the French architect Victor Laloux (1850-1937). This was his second stint in Laloux’s atelier, having assisted Jacques Carlu (1890-1976) “in the making of drawings” for the Ecole’s Grand Prix and Concours Roux competition of 1919, which the French architect won.<sup>14</sup> Carlu later joined the faculty at M.I.T. in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was well-known for his Art Deco designs, including the grand foyer, auditorium, and restaurant atop Eaton’s College Street Store (1930), Toronto, and the Palais de Chaillot (1937), Paris.

Partners who served as superintendents on the project included: John F. Bacon (1876-1931), William Sunderland, and E.V. Meroni.<sup>15</sup> H(enry) B. Keckeley (1889-1932), who

supervised construction of the Park Avenue Viaduct (1919), worked on the Waldorf. Robert von Ezdorf (1889-1956), who was earlier associated with McKim Mead & White and Warren & Wetmore, designed some of the interiors, as did Edward Durrell Stone, a student of Carlu at MIT, who joined Schultze & Weaver in late 1929. He recalled focusing on the public spaces, including the Main Lobby and Grand Ballroom.<sup>16</sup> Stone would later co-design Radio City Music Hall (1932, a New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark) and the 1939 Museum of Modern Art building.

### The Plan

The Waldorf-Astoria occupies an entire Manhattan block, 200 by 400 feet, bounded by Park Avenue, Lexington Avenue, 49<sup>th</sup> Street, and 50<sup>th</sup> Street. An apartment hotel, it rises 625 feet and has 47 floors, making it the tallest hotel in the world in 1931.<sup>17</sup> It originally contained 2,200 rooms, with the tower section, known as Waldorf Towers, for long-term tenants and the lower floors, adjoining Park and Lexington Avenue, for transient guests. The base of the building contains the main public spaces, grouped primarily on the first (lobby) floor and third (ballroom) floor.

In contrast to earlier hotels by Schultze & Weaver, the first floor is raised a full level above the street. Guests arrive from either avenue and ascend stairs. This arrangement gives the act of entering a sense of grandeur, distinguishing it from most office buildings, which Schultze derided as crawling “into a low hole which meanders around among cigar stands until we come against a bank of elevators.”<sup>18</sup> It also frees up the street level for revenue-producing shops – a significant issue for hotels during the Prohibition era – and uses that were typically in the basement, which the Waldorf mostly lacks due to the railroad tracks that pass immediately beneath the building.<sup>19</sup>

Significant attention was paid to circulation and the arrangement of public spaces. The first floor has a mostly axial plan with a sequence of rooms and hallways that extend the full length of the building, connecting the main entrances on Park and Lexington Avenues. Separate entrances, for the residential section, ballroom floor, driveway and staff, face 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Streets. Lewis Mumford, architecture critic for *The New Yorker*, criticized the decoration but admired the plan:

. . . for the way that the space is broken up on the main floor, which is both a continuous corridor and a series of rooms, each varying in size and shape and height with the function that it performs. The plan and disposition of this floor, which involves both that above and that below, seem to me adroit.<sup>20</sup>

The Main Lobby, a windowless 82 by 62 foot reception area and lounge, is located at the center of the first floor, midway between Park Avenue and Lexington Avenue. The ceiling is 22-feet tall – about twice the height of the spaces it adjoins. Originally, there were four entrance portals, each located at the center of a wood-paneled wall. At the time of the opening, the cashier and front office desks were on the south side, the transportation desk on the east side, and the cigar store and porter on the north side. Located directly above the hotel driveway, it could be conveniently reached from nearby stairs and elevators.

A secondary corridor system originally ringed the Main Lobby on four sides, connecting Peacock Alley (now West Lounge), South Lounge (not part of designation), East Gallery, and North Lounge (no longer extant). These wood-paneled corridors served various functions; in



addition to providing space for shops, display cases and seating, the East Gallery provided access to the Lexington Avenue stairs, Ballroom Stairs and Ballroom Elevators – making it possible for guests to reach events on the third floor without entering the Main Lobby.<sup>21</sup>

Peacock Alley was named for a public corridor in the original Waldorf-Astoria, where New Yorkers and hotel guests would sit, or stroll in their finery, between the various dining rooms. *Facts About the Waldorf-Astoria* claimed: “Several volumes have been written about this famous feature of the old Waldorf which is now incorporated into the new.”<sup>22</sup> Despite having identical names, these two spaces had relatively little in common. Whereas the original Peacock Alley had chandeliers and marble walls, the new space was wider and wood-paneled, with floor lamps and comfortable seating to take afternoon tea, or, after 1934, cocktails.

The third floor was designed with four ballrooms.<sup>23</sup> Lucius Boomer, the hotel’s president, saw “a crying need for up to date and suitable rooms for hotel functions . . . Existing features in other hotels are meager compared to the present Waldorf, and they would not compete at all with the new Waldorf as it is projected.”<sup>24</sup> Each ballroom connects to the Ballroom Entrance Hall (originally Silver Gallery), a vaulted north-south hallway that extends almost 200 feet.<sup>25</sup> To the west is the Grand (Main) Ballroom; forty-four feet tall, this 120 by 135 foot space has two balconies with cantilevered boxes. Adjoining the Grand Ballroom is the Ballroom Foyer (sometimes called the East Foyer). This 87 by 44 foot room is divided in two sections. The east section contains a wide staircase that ascends to a mezzanine that extends across the south side of the room to the fourth floor balcony. A similar room (not part of the designation) is located on the west side of the Grand Ballroom.

At the north end of the Ballroom Entrance Hall is the Basildon Room, a 48 by 37 foot interior facing 50<sup>th</sup> Street. To the east is the Jade Room, which is connected to the Astor Gallery and Lexington Avenue stairs by a foyer. These corner ballrooms are flanked by arcades and measure 78 by 48 feet. By placing these four ballrooms in close proximity, they could be used in various ways, for mid-size dinners or “in combination with one another for a single large function.”<sup>26</sup> As a result, the third floor could accommodate multiple gatherings or a single event of more than 3,500 guests.<sup>27</sup>

### Interior Design

A significant example of Art Deco interior design, the Waldorf-Astoria combines modern and classical motifs. While columns and symmetry define the most important spaces, the use of glittering metals and indirect lighting made the fairly spare decorative treatments seem distinctive and new, as well as considerably different from the hotel’s previous building. The term “Art Deco” first came into use in the 1960s. Early reports on the Waldorf, interestingly, avoided using precise stylistic labels; writers described it as “conservative but not reactionary” and having “chaste magnificence.”<sup>28</sup> This may have been done to avoid direct comparison with the earlier building, which was said to express “the showiness of 1893” or perhaps because it was difficult for writers to generalize about the entire scheme.<sup>29</sup>

To please the tastes of a large and varied clientele that included foreign dignitaries and members of New York society, as well as long and short-term guests, Schultze & Weaver skillfully exploited “smart contemporary effects and beautiful period interpretations.”<sup>30</sup> This somewhat staid approach may have been partly shaped by economics. Though conceived in the late 1920s, a period of what seemed to be boundless prosperity, it was constructed during the first phase of the Great Depression, a time of numerous bank failures. Such changing

circumstance may have led the designers to adopt a slightly cautious approach, one that would be perceived as elegant but not ostentatious.

The style now called Art Deco originated in Europe during the 1920s. Though American architects and designers drew on varied sources for inspiration, France was generally considered the leading “arbiter of taste.”<sup>31</sup> Two of the building’s architects, Schultze and Morgan, spent considerable time in Paris. Schultze was enamored by the French capital, claiming: “every architect ought to go at least once every year to Paris.”<sup>32</sup> A true Francophile, he praised the city’s architecture for displaying “uniformity, simplicity of line, restfulness, quietness, gracefulness, dignity” – terms that could be easily used to describe the Waldorf interiors.<sup>33</sup>

Following the devastation of the First World War, classical aesthetics reemerged in French culture, symbolizing what many have described as a “return to order.” Neither industrial nor avant-garde, artists embraced traditional materials and classical motifs. This was particularly evident at the Paris Exposition of 1925, where various commercial pavilions demonstrated the “supremacy of French taste,” and on the *Ile de France* (1927), the first ocean liner to feature Art Deco style interiors. These luxurious French works used simplified classical features, such as columns without capitals and imagery drawn from antiquity. Schultze & Weaver adopted a similar approach in the Park Avenue Lobby and colonnade, and Main Lobby, designing square columns with slim capitals and stylized fluting. In effect, classicism is present but reduced to a minimum.

The Park Avenue Lobby was described in hotel publications as “modern with classic Pompeiian influence.”<sup>34</sup> Ringed by square stone columns that form arcades, it vaguely recalls, in grand scale, an atrium-type residence from ancient Roman times. Several walls feature colorful murals by Louis Rigal. Like the multi-panel sculptural frieze that decorated the exterior of *Hotel d’un Collectionneur* at the Paris Exposition, the scenes depict groups of robed figures, a sure reference to classical antiquity. Similar stone columns were used in the Lexington Avenue stairs, as well as in the Park Avenue colonnade that leads toward the West Lounge (formerly Peacock Alley). The walls of the West Lounge, which are paneled with French walnut burl, are divided by rouge French marble – said to be the “same red marble as before will give the promenade a familiar note to observed and observers who recall its predecessor.”<sup>35</sup> To differentiate each corridor, the architects used different-color marbles: yellow Siena in the North Lounge (not extant), white gray Breche Montalto in the South Lounge (not part of the designation), and Green Serpentine in the East Arcade.

Black marble columns and pilasters dominate the Main Lobby, which has wood paneling and an elaborate plaster ceiling that incorporates reliefs representing swords, leaping gazelles, baskets of flowers and nude females, some holding masks. Above the west entrance, adjoining the West Elevator Lobby, is a rectangular metal grille, possibly intended for a radio speaker. Though the designer is unknown, it has a musical theme and depicts robed women, two of which play horn-like instruments. Art Deco metalwork also embellished the original registration desks. These decorations recall the metal reliefs that flank the Park and Lexington Avenue doors, as well as the decorative grilles that face Park Avenue and the Park Avenue Lobby. It is not known who was responsible for creating these handsome features, though the sculptors who produced the clay models are known. The exterior reliefs are generally credited to Maxfield H. Keck (1880-1943), brother of sculptor Charles Keck, and the interior details to (Eugene) Rochette & (Michael) Parzini, who produced work for the New York Stock Exchange, Cunard Building, Pierre Hotel, and the 1939-40 World’s Fair.<sup>36</sup>

The third floor, for the most part, displays similar restraint. *The New York Times* observed that in the Grand Ballroom “modernity is tempered by panels of classic figures.”<sup>37</sup> Similar reliefs, representing “rhythm and the dance” decorate the corners of the Jade Room and Astor Gallery. Both rooms feature simple gilded ornament, especially the Astor Gallery, which was described by the hotel as “a modern treatment of Louis Seize.” Surrounded by a round-arched arcade, the double pilasters are “finished in ivory.”<sup>38</sup> The Jade Room, in contrast, has Italian vert mentalto marble columns and pilasters.

### Louis Rigal

Louis Rigal (1889-1955) played a central role in the hotel’s decorative program. In the Park Avenue Lobby, he painted the murals and designed the medallion in the mosaic floor. A successful artist in France and the United States between the First and Second World War, Rigal won the Grand Prix de Rome in 1919, produced a circular ceiling mural for the Grand Salon in the Hotel d’un Collectionneur” at the Paris Exposition, ceiling paintings for the lobby of the Palmer Hotel (1926) in Chicago, and various murals for the Astoria Center of Israel (1927) in Queens, New York.

The murals in the Park Avenue Lobby were painted in Rigal’s Paris studio. Installed at the top of the east, west, north and south walls, canvases depict men and women in pastoral settings. *The New York Times* described them as “classic scenes” that “suggest hospitality.”<sup>39</sup> According to the hotel, the 13 scenes:

... form a single conception and are in done in the classic-modern style recalling the work of Burne-Jones. The subjects are hunting, painting, fishing and other scenes relating to the procuring of food, to eating, drinking, dancing, and rhythm. The frieze was designed to harmonize perfectly in coloring and conception with the furnishing and carpets<sup>40</sup>

He also designed the original rose-colored carpet, which inspired the current mosaic floor. Eighteen feet in diameter, the center medallion portrays the “Wheel of Life,” with scenes representing six stages of human existence, from birth to old age and death. Architect-author Kenneth Murchison called it “one of the wonders of the Waldorf and a unique work of art.”<sup>41</sup>

Containing an estimated 148,000 tesserae, the 102-section mosaic was produced by V. Foscatto Inc., Long Island City, Queens, and installed in 1939.<sup>42</sup> The rest of the floor, which is made of pieces of “golden Sienna marble,” contains brown rosettes that recall details in the lobby floor of the original Waldorf. A similar mosaic field was used in the adjoining colonnade and the first floor landing of the Lexington Avenue stairs.

Rigal is likely to have supplied the “cartoons” for the impressive reliefs that decorate the elevator doors throughout the hotel’s public spaces.<sup>43</sup> Each relief has a musical theme. In the West Elevator Lobby, gleaming metal doors feature stylized females that hold a horn, pan pipe, or cymbals. The double doors in the East Arcade and Ballroom Entrance Hall depict two figures in profile, women holding stringed instruments, possibly a lute and harp. These reliefs, as well as other decorative motifs used in the public spaces, resemble works by the French metalsmith Edgar Brandt, who played an important role in the Paris Exposition of 1925.<sup>44</sup>

Some of the exterior sculpture may have been designed by Rigal. A 1980s hotel brochure credits him for the limestone carvings (now gilded) above the Park Avenue entrance.<sup>45</sup> Here, in

contrast to the figures depicted in the murals and on the elevator doors, two women are depicted as seated, selecting fruit from a basket held by a kneeling servant.

### White Metals

A review of the hotel interiors, written by antiquarian Charles Messer Stowe and published in *The New York Sun*, late September 1931, observed:

Another striking thing about the Waldorf-Astoria decoration is the achievement of splendor without the bizarre use of gold leaf. There is, in the lobby, in Peacock Alley and the rooms of the main floor almost no gold to be seen.<sup>46</sup>

Instead, white metals were judiciously used, described in hotel publications as nickel bronze. Hardly known in North America before the 1920s, this silver-colored metal appears in many New York City Landmarks, including the City Bank Farmer's Trust Building (1931), The Empire State Building (1932), and the lobbies at Rockefeller Center (begun 1931). Often referred to as nickel silver, especially in commercial literature, this metal has a high resistance to corrosion, particularly when used indoors.

In the 1980 book *Metals in Historic Buildings*, Margot Gayle and David W. Look called the Waldorf-Astoria "a *tour de force* of nickel silver works."<sup>47</sup> Two firms were responsible for the hotel's metalwork. General Bronze Company, Long Island City, produced the exterior doors, grilles, and storefronts. William H. Jackson, Brooklyn, produced the ornamental bronze for the interiors, particularly the doors, decorative grilles, railings, and showcases. These elements were to be produced with a "special nickel finish, to be known as Waldorf bronze."<sup>48</sup> A contemporary journal described nickel silver as:

. . . desirably metallic in design and color, and harmoniously employed. Its silver-like finish is pleasing when noted individually or when partially concealed by fabrics and furniture.<sup>49</sup>

Nickel bronze was used to cast Nina Saemundsson's *Spirit of Achievement*, the statue installed above the Park Avenue entrance, as well as various doors, stair rails, capitals, urn-shaped lighting fixtures, decorative bas-reliefs, and cast and extruded moldings. In some instances, the architects substituted less-costly materials, hidden by decorative finishes.

Of particular note are the elevator doors in the West Elevator Lobby. The center panels, by Rigal, are possibly nickel silver, while surrounding metal is "polished blue steel," better known as stainless steel. Though most of the ornament was nickel bronze, construction specifications permitted contractors to also substitute a cast ornamental bronze, a yellower material.<sup>50</sup>

The Ballroom Entrance Hall was originally called the "Silver Gallery." Henry Bolles Lent wrote in 1934 that it was "considered by many to be the most beautiful room in the entire hotel."<sup>51</sup> The wood piers that flank this passage no longer exhibit a "soft grey finish" but much of the original surface glitter remains in the mirrored archways, glazed entrance doors, and metal elevator doors. A similar juxtaposition of materials enlivens the East Arcade, two floors below, as well as the Park Avenue Lobby, where entrances to the Empire and Vanderbilt Rooms originally had mirrored doors and transoms. These features reflected light towards the center of the Lobby and expanded the sense of space.

Use of white metals clearly distinguished the new hotel from its Victorian-era predecessors. *Metalcraft* magazine noted that while metal had been “principally resorted to in the lighting fixture equipment” in the original Waldorf, the new building exhibited a “well balanced understanding and use of the many materials available that contribute to the success of the modern structure.”<sup>52</sup> Charles Messer Stowe humorously recounted how a “conservative old lady” feared that if her husband left his shoes outside their door in the old Waldorf they would come back “not blacked but gilded.” In the “new” Waldorf, he claimed, there would be no reason for concern.<sup>53</sup>

## Lighting

Lighting enhanced the hotel’s understated Art Deco character. The primary spaces – the Park Avenue Lobby, Main Lobby, Grand Ballroom – were designed without chandeliers or recessed down lights, permitting clear views of ceilings, many of which have handsome reliefs. While earlier hotels, including the Waldorf-Astoria, used chandeliers, many of the new Waldorf interiors had indirect and semi-direct lighting fixtures, which have been removed or modified through the addition of wall sconces and recessed spot lighting. Fashionable in the late 1920s and 1930s, this recently-introduced technique was also used to illuminate the lobby of the Chrysler Building and 30 Rockefeller Plaza (both are Landmark Interiors), as well as in the recently-launched Ile de France ocean liner, where it was described as the “glory of the vessel,” producing “a soft illumination in every part of the ship.”<sup>54</sup>

The Park Avenue Lobby originally had several types of fixtures. In addition to glass ceiling panels above the vestibule and terraces, light was “given” from a large rose-colored marble panel at the center of the shallow vaulted ceiling, and from lights concealed inside urns. Urns were frequently used by interior designers during this era, to light rooms on the Ile de France and in Eaton’s College Store, Toronto. *The New York Times* reported that this type of lighting scheme would “diffuse light over the ceiling and walls, so as to create a restful atmosphere.”<sup>55</sup>

A pair of five-foot-tall nickel bronze urns, concealing lighting fixtures, originally flanked each staircase, as well as the passage that leads to the colonnade and Main Lobby. These urns, as well as many other lighting fixtures in the hotel, were fabricated by Edward F. Cauldwell & Co. of New York City. Decorated with female figures and floral motifs, “the chasing of this modified Adam design is jewel like in character and stand as rich embellishments near large square columns of simple design.”<sup>56</sup> Removed by 1962, four simplified replicas of the urns (without lights) were installed on the east and west side of the room in the 1980s.

In general, the interiors of the Waldorf were more dimly lit than we expect today, producing, in some cases, a mild sense of mystery and hushed drama. Shaded floor lamps that “throw light to the ceiling whence it is reflected to every part of the room in soft amber tones,”<sup>57</sup> were the principal lighting fixtures in the Main Lobby. Additional light emanated from the service areas and office counters, which ringed the room and incorporated concealed fixtures.

Indirect lighting was also used in the Grand Ballroom. More than 400 silver mirror reflectors were hidden behind the deep soffit that runs around three sides of the room, projecting light towards the center of the ceiling.<sup>58</sup> There were also lights installed beneath the individual boxes and inside ceiling grilles. This chandelier-less scheme enhanced the room’s exceptional height and breadth, which was made possible by a 90-foot-truss, said to be the longest and heaviest in the world.<sup>59</sup>

The more traditional interiors were illuminated with crystal chandeliers. These include the Ballroom Entrance Hall, Ballroom Foyer, Basildon Room, Jade Room and Astor Gallery on the third floor, as well as the Lexington Avenue stairs. In contrast to the “electroliers” that hung in the original Waldorf, which had conspicuous arms and metal details, these fixtures were mostly made with delicate pieces of faceted glass, a material that scatters and reflects light from a central bulb or multiple sources. Murchison wrote:

. . . these rooms are becomingly lighted by gold and crystal chandeliers, and the general effect is one of formal, classical dignity lightened by a modernized treatment.<sup>60</sup>

Though fixtures like these trace their origins to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, 20<sup>th</sup> century examples tended to use greater concentrations of glass.

Each room on the third floor had fixtures of different design. For instance, while the original chandeliers in the Ballroom Entrance Hall resembled frozen fountains, a common Art Deco motif, the ones in the Ballroom Foyer had a simpler cylindrical shape, while others incorporated horizontal bands of cast metalwork and tiered elements that recall earlier designs. Regardless of what shape and configuration was selected, these handsome fixtures provided these spaces with illumination and glittering focal points.

### Historic Features

Though much of the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel was destroyed or sold at auction, some significant elements were integrated into the new structure. The most notable, a series of now-darkened pendentives by the American painter Edward Emerson Simmons (1852-1931), runs the entire length of the Ballroom Entrance Hall. These paintings represent the months and seasons. In 1897, author Helen W. Henderson wrote:

They are considered among the best work done by this talented mural painter, of which the city contains so much. The motives are joyous groups of women and cupids, exquisitely painted, without ponderous allegory, but light and charming simply, in sentiment as well as treatment.<sup>61</sup>

Originally installed in the Astor Gallery, on the first (not main) floor of the Astoria Building, art critic Royal Cortissoz called the group:

. . . one delightful souvenir, the sole decorative scheme transferred intact from the old building . . . it is delightful to see their graceful lines and their delicate, opalescent tones. Simmons long ago affirmed himself as one of the leaders in our mural decoration. He knows his craft and has, besides, a lively sense of beauty. It is inspiring to see how well this old work of his wears, how aptly it enters into the new frame provided for it.<sup>62</sup>

Another memorable vestige of the original building is the clock at the center of the Main Lobby. Exhibited at the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, this four-faced, approximately nine-foot-tall timepiece was fabricated by the Goldsmiths and Silversmiths Company in London.<sup>63</sup> Purchased for the hotel in 1903, it was located in the original Waldorf’s main foyer. In the new

building, despite reportedly weighing two tons, it has been moved several times. Initially, it was placed in the Park Avenue Lobby, on the north terrace adjoining the current Empire Room.<sup>64</sup> Photographs suggest that it was moved to a wood-paneled corridor, possibly Peacock Alley, and later to the one of the staircases that leads to the Ballroom Entrance Hall. Since the late 1960s, it has stood at the center of the Main Lobby, with the Statue of Liberty sculpture facing west. This setting takes advantage of the first floor's axial plan, allowing it to be seen from the Park Avenue Lobby and the Lexington Avenue stairs.

To provide further continuity with the past, the hotel kept a group of white marble figurative sculptures from the original building, and enlisted European curators to purchase historic mantelpieces for many of the private suites. Of particular note is the Basildon Room on the third floor, which has a ceiling that incorporates small oil paintings acquired from the dining room at Basildon Park (John Carr, 1776-83), a Palladian-style villa in Berkshire, England. Purchased from an antique dealer in 1930s, they are traditionally attributed to the celebrated 18<sup>th</sup>-century painter Angelica Kauffman. Recent research, however, suggests that the rondels and lunettes were not original to the room. They date to the 1840s and depict scenes, many with nude figures, from Dante's *Divine Comedy*.<sup>65</sup> Installing the paintings was a challenging task. Not only did the rooms have different dimensions but at Basildon Park the ceiling was a shallow barrel vault. According to the *New York Herald Tribune*, the canvases were "carefully removed . . . Exact models were taken of the fine plaster decorations which it was impossible to remove intact and a complete record of the proportions and details of the salon were made."<sup>66</sup>

The north wall incorporates a beautifully-carved marble chimneypiece, set below a large mirror. It features ionic columns and a central tablet depicting Bacchus and Ariadne "drawn in triumph by panthers."<sup>67</sup> Often attributed to the English sculptor John Flaxman, others credit this handsome work to the villa's architect, Carr.

### New York's "Unofficial Palace"

A preview of the new building occurred on September 30, 1931. Twelve thousand invitations were "distributed" and reportedly 25,000 people attended the three-hour reception, which began with an organ recital and symphonic concert. President Herbert Hoover, who later served on the hotel's board and lived in the Waldorf Towers from 1932 to 1964, spoke by radio from Washington D.C. He described the hotel as "an exhibition of courage and confidence to the whole nation."<sup>68</sup> The next day, the hotel officially opened, with just 500 guests in attendance. Such numbers would not substantially improve until a decade later. The first event held in the Grand Ballroom was for the Sphinx Club on October 1, 1931. It was the group's 200<sup>th</sup> dinner at the Waldorf.

Food service was originally managed by Oscar Tschirky, known as "Oscar of the Waldorf." Hired in 1893, this Swiss immigrant provided a tangible link between the original Waldorf and the new building. The *New York Herald Tribune* noted in 1930: "Probably the most important announcement was that Oscar, who for thirty-seven years was maître d'hotel at the old hostelry at Fifth Avenue and Thirty-Fourth Street, will be in complete charge of all the banqueting and entertaining facilities."<sup>69</sup> Oscar retired in 1943. During his five-decade tenure, he and his staff "concocted many delicacies," including the Waldorf salad.<sup>70</sup>

The Waldorf opened at the height of the Depression. Though most newspapers and magazines portrayed the hotel in a positive light, author Langston Hughes published a sarcastic poem in the *New Masses*, a socialist magazine, which highlighted the hunger and poverty that was afflicting many New Yorkers. After viewing an ad for the new Waldorf, he wrote:

All the luxuries of a private home . . . Now, won't that be charming when the last flop-house has turned you down this winter? . . . Walk through Peacock Alley tonight before dinner, and get warm, anyway. You've got nothing else to do . . . they got swell music at the Waldorf-Astoria. It sure is a mighty nice place to shake hips in, too.<sup>71</sup>

Several years later, in 1936, jazz pianist Fats Waller recorded "Lounging at the Waldorf," a comic song that expressed a similar perspective.

During the 1930s and over subsequent decades, the hotel was frequently accused of racism. This was still not unusual among Manhattan's better hotels and restaurants, but the Waldorf's elite status probably cast a much brighter light on such treatment. African Americans were reputedly barred from attending dinners and other social events, and were not employed a banquet waiters until 1945.<sup>72</sup> Visiting African political leaders were likewise excluded.<sup>73</sup>

One of the first black musicians to perform at a Waldorf event was Nobel Sissle & His Orchestra, in April 1937. The *Pittsburgh Courier* reported that this "Great Colored Orchestra" entertained Elsa Maxwell and numerous guests chosen from New York's Blue Book.<sup>74</sup> In November 1938, Lionel Hampton sat in with the Benny Goodman Quartet. The enthusiastic headline claimed that this event "Marks First Time In Musical History That Race Musician Played Entire Evening With White Band."<sup>75</sup> The first black performers to have extended engagements at the Waldorf were the John Kirby Sextet in the early 1940s and actress-singer Dorothy Dandridge in 1955.

Countless events have been celebrated in the Grand Ballroom, including the Beaux-Arts Ball, a fundraiser for the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects in the 1930s, and the Alfred E. Smith Dinner, a fundraiser for Catholic charities held every year from 1945 to 2016. This event typically attracts leading Democratic and Republican candidates for the U.S. Presidency. From 1986 to 2011, it was used for the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony. Much beloved by members of New York society, these and other Waldorf ballrooms have hosted numerous benefits, receptions, debutante balls, high school proms, anniversary parties, and New Year's Eve celebrations – with bandleader Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians, from 1960 to 1977. This annual event was broadcast nationally, on CBS television.

Numerous films have been set at the Waldorf. Many feature exterior views of the building, but interior scenes were often filmed in Hollywood, including *Weekend at the Waldorf* (1945), or within other structures. *The Out of Towners* (1970) and *Broadway Danny Rose* (1984) are notable for having extended scenes filmed on the first floor.

### Later History & Renovations

Despite lean times during the Depression years, by the early 1940s the Waldorf-Astoria began to generate profits. With the death of two important executives, president Boomer in 1947 and treasurer Augustus Nulle in 1948, hotel operator Conrad N. Hilton (1887-1979) sensed an opportunity.<sup>76</sup> In October 1949 he gained control of the Waldorf by purchasing 250,000 shares, or about 68 per cent of the Hotel Waldorf-Astoria Corporation. This purchase came with a significant amount of longstanding debt. The hotel had been reorganized in 1934, issuing various financial instruments to remain afloat. Hilton bought back and paid off the last of these bonds and debentures in 1950 and 1953. Two decades later, in 1977, the site on which the hotel stands



was acquired from the bankrupt New York Central Railroad. Sold in 2014, Hilton and his successors owned the hotel for about 65 years.

The first of many alterations occurred in 1934, following the repeal of Prohibition. In addition to creating a men's bar, a cocktail terrace was added to the west side of the Park Avenue Lobby, over the foyer and joining the terraces.<sup>77</sup> Following the Second World War, the Art Deco style fell out of favor and Hilton began to redecorate the interiors. In 1951 the Empire Room (not part of the designation) was renovated by architect Walter Frazier, of Frazier Raftery Orr & Fairbank. A new Peacock Alley, approached through "glass inclosed [sic] entrances, one from the north end of the Peacock Alley corridor, another from the north central part of the main lobby and the third from the South Lounge," was created by decorator James Amster in 1953.<sup>78</sup> These interconnected spaces operated as the Peacock Lounge and Peacock Alley Cafes.

Hilton launched a series of major renovation projects in 1962. *The New York Times* reported:

Like fading movie queens rising to the challenge of fresh-faced starlets, many of the city's famed hotels are primping themselves with an array of construction cosmetics ranging from red velvet drapes to new bathroom fixtures.<sup>79</sup>

Rather than choosing subdued understatement, the transformed interiors emphasized nostalgia and "revived Edwardian elegance."<sup>80</sup> Suites were completely redecorated, as well as most of the public spaces. This phase involved the installation of a one-ton, 104 electric candle, crystal chandelier, accompanied by red velvet curtains, in the Park Avenue Lobby.<sup>81</sup> The nickel bronze urns were replaced with marble statues from the original Waldorf and new busts, covering some of the Rigal paintings, were installed in front of circular niches.

Oliver Smith, a prominent scenic designer of Broadway productions, transformed the Grand Ballroom, making it into an "eighteenth-century court theater" with brightly-colored murals in the "romantic style of Fragonard."<sup>82</sup> A new lighting scheme, including an elaborate multi-fixture centerpiece, as well as smaller chandeliers and wall sconces, was designed by Abe Feder.<sup>83</sup> At this time, a pair of escalators was installed on the north side of the Lexington Avenue entrance hall.

The free-standing bronze clock was moved to the center of the Main Lobby in the late 1960s. At this time, the four portals were draped with curtains. Peacock Alley was redesigned and extended into the Main Lobby in 1971, adding mirrors, painted latticework, glazed floor tiles and four columns topped by umbrella-like forms. Architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable wrote in *The New York Times* that the Waldorf had "sabotaged" Peacock Alley and another writer compared the transformed lobby to "an underwater palace, with green plants flourishing amid ink-blue walls."<sup>84</sup>

Management, however, soon regretted these changes. Kenneth E. Hurd & Associates, of Boston, was hired in 1981 to "bring it back to its original 1930s art deco condition."<sup>85</sup> According to a press release, the firm studied the original plans and consulted with "surviving members" of the firm Schultze & Weaver.<sup>86</sup> Hurd inserted some new features, but for the most part, respected each room's unique spatial qualities. He described his overall approach as "reduction, clarification, and modification."<sup>87</sup>

Under Hurd's direction, the Park Avenue Lobby was refurbished in summer 1982, revealing Louis Rigal's long-hidden "Wheel of Life" mosaic. The Grand Ballroom reopened in September 1983. Hurd removed the 30-foot-tall canvas murals, revealing the original ornamental

grilles that flank the stage. In 1985, the painted wood paneling in the Main Lobby was replaced with mahogany and a series of new plaster reliefs were installed as a frieze on the upper walls, immediately below the ceiling. These reliefs depict figures, sometimes in reverse, that Hurd borrowed from other rooms in the hotel, as well as frozen fountains and flower baskets.<sup>88</sup> The frieze was illuminated by new uplighting around the perimeter.

Richard D. Lyons observed in *The New York Times*: “the overall image differed little from the past but the details collectively add up to a richer impact on the eye.”<sup>89</sup> In subsequent years, the Astor Gallery, Jade Room, and Basildon Room were also refurbished. Further improvements were made by Hurd in the late 1990s, including restoration of the marble floor in the Park Avenue Lobby. When the hotel received the Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award in 1993, the New York Landmarks Conservancy’s chairman, Stephen Lash, praised “the meticulous restoration of one of the city’s greatest Art Deco masterpieces.”<sup>90</sup>

A reconfigured Peacock Alley restaurant, designed by Arnold Syrop Associates, opened on the north side of the Main Lobby in 2005. Alexandra Champalimaud supervised the 2012 renovations to the Park Avenue Lobby. This project involved the removal of the chandelier and cocktail terrace. At this time, new lighting fixtures were installed at the center of the room, as well as painted double doors that replaced the original metal ones that led to the north and south ballrooms. The multi-panel fixtures installed above the entrance foyer, the north and south terraces, and inside the adjoining colonnade evoke the room’s original lighting scheme.

The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel was purchased by the Anbang Insurance Group Co. of China in 2014. Closed on March 1, 2017, a major renovation is planned.

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The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel is one of only two major early 20<sup>th</sup> century hotels in New York City that preserve most of their original public spaces. While the Plaza Hotel, which had many of its 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>-story interiors designated by the New York City Landmarks Commission in 2005, has Renaissance Revival style decorations, the Waldorf is unique for preserving some of the finest and most varied Art Deco interiors in New York City. These luxurious and visually-connected spaces have had alterations and some exhibit new finishes but most retain their original volume and palette and share such distinctive characteristics as nickel bronze metalwork, wood paneling, mirrored wall sections and glazed doors, as well as decorative grilles and ornamental reliefs.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> “Hotel Architecture” is mainly based on Landmarks Preservation Commission, “Hotel Martiniere Designation Report” (LP-1983), by Virginia Kurshan, 1998. Also see “Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Designation Report” (LP-1812), by Anthony W. Robins, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> William Hutchins, “New York Hotels, I,” *Architectural Record* 12 (October 1902), 469.

<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon continued well into the twentieth century. In 1923, *Rider’s New York City*, noted that the modern American hotel was “not merely a hotel, but in a certain sense a public resort, frequented daily by a vast floating population comprised not only of casual strangers, but of resident New Yorkers, who take an unlicensed, yet undisputed advantage of a large proportion of the accommodations and privileges intended for the guests of the house. Any well-dressed stranger can enter unchallenged, use the parlors and sitting rooms as meeting places for social or business purposes, finish a day’s correspondence on the hotel stationery...” Fremont Rider, ed., *Rider’s New York City, A Guide-Book for Travelers* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1923), 7.

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- <sup>4</sup> William Hutchins, "New York Hotels II," *Architectural Record* 12 (November 1902), 621.
- <sup>5</sup> A. C. David, "Three New Hotels," *Architectural Record* 17 (March 1905), 167-168.
- <sup>6</sup> "The New Metropolitan Hotels," *Real Estate Record and Guide*, September 3, 1904, 478.
- <sup>7</sup> Regulations were changed in 1929, permitting taller apartment buildings. Andrew S. Dolkart, "Millionaires Elysiums: The Luxury Apartment Hotels of Schultze and Weaver," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (Spring 2005), 15-16.
- <sup>8</sup> "Arrange Financing For New Waldorf," *The New York Times*, October 3, 1929, this and other NYT articles cited were viewed at nytimes.com
- <sup>9</sup> "Maj. Weaver Dead; Park Ave. Builder," *The New York Times*, January 2, 1939, 26.
- <sup>10</sup> The Sherry Netherland was built for a subsidiary of the Boomer-Dupont Properties Corporation. The associate architect was Buchman & Kahn. See Marianne Lamonaca, "Sherry-Netherland Hotel, New York, New York," in *Grand Hotels of the Jazz Age: The Architecture of Schultze & Weaver* (Princeton Architecture Press, 2005), 197.
- <sup>11</sup> "Metropolitan Life Modernizes," *The New York Times*, April 24, 1955.
- <sup>12</sup> Kenneth M. Murchison, "The Drawings for the Waldorf-Astoria," *The American Architect* (January 1931), 35.
- <sup>13</sup> "Paris Prize, Goal of Architects, Won By Ex-Office Boy," *The New York Times*, August 23, 1921.
- <sup>14</sup> "Lloyd Morgan," *Pencil Points* (October 1921), 33.
- <sup>15</sup> Leonard Schultze, "Waldorf-Astoria Hotel," *Architecture* (November 1931), 252.
- <sup>16</sup> Mary Anne Hunting, *Edward Durrell Stone: Modernism's Populist Architect* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 24.
- <sup>17</sup> The new Waldorf was also the 13<sup>th</sup> tallest building in New York City. The second tallest was the Sherry-Netherland. See W. Park Chase, *New York: The Wonder City* (Wonder City Publishing Co., Inc., 1932), 151.
- <sup>18</sup> "Friday, August 14," *Architecture* (October 1931), 230.
- <sup>19</sup> "New Waldorf Gets Own Rail Siding," *The New York Times*, September 8, 1929, viewed at nytimes.com. Schultze was also involved with the Hotel Biltmore which stands partly above Grand Central Terminal. Like the Waldorf driveway, it incorporated an automobile ramp to serve taxis.
- <sup>20</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The New Yorker*, February 15, 1932, 48.
- <sup>21</sup> *Facts About the Waldorf*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, April 1935, reprinted in Stanley Turkel, *Hotel Mavens* (Authorhouse, 2014), 230.
- <sup>22</sup> *Facts About the Waldorf*, 222.
- <sup>23</sup> *Facts About the Waldorf*, 226.
- <sup>24</sup> Lucius Boomer, *Building Investment* (January 1932), 23.
- <sup>25</sup> Henry Bolles Lent, *The Waldorf-Astoria: A Brief Chronicle of a Unique Institution Now Entering Its Fifth Decade* (Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Corporation, 1934), 92.
- <sup>26</sup> *Facts About the Waldorf*, 226.
- <sup>27</sup> *Facts About the Waldorf*, copy in Landmarks Commission files, edition unknown, c. 1950s, 26.
- <sup>28</sup> "New Waldorf Astoria Is Ready to Open Its Doors – Is Expressive of New York Itself," *The New York Sun*, September 26, 1931, 6.
- <sup>29</sup> "Five O'Clock Tidings," *The Spur*, September 1, 1931, 44.
- <sup>30</sup> Walter Rendell Storey, "Hotel Decoration in the Grand Manner," *The New York Times*, September 27, 1931.
- <sup>31</sup> Charlotte Benton, "The International Exhibition," *Art Deco 1910-1939* (London: V&A Publications, 2003), 141.
- <sup>32</sup> Lewis Sherwin, "Schultze, Making Our Skyline, Admits It Needs a Trip to Paris," *New York Evening Post*, February 3, 1931, 3.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> *Facts About the Waldorf*, 220
- <sup>35</sup> "Five O'Clock Tidings," 44.

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- <sup>36</sup> Leonard Schultze, "Waldorf-Astoria Hotel," 253; "Michael Parzini, Retired Sculptor," *The New York Times*, December 5, 1956.
- <sup>37</sup> Walter Rendell Storey, "Hotel Decoration."
- <sup>38</sup> *Facts About the Waldorf*, 229.
- <sup>39</sup> Walter Rendell Storey, "Hotel Decoration."
- <sup>40</sup> *Facts about the Waldorf*, 220.
- <sup>41</sup> Kenneth M. Murchison, "Architecture," *The Unofficial Palace of New York: A Tribute to the Waldorf-Astoria* (Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Corporation, 1939), 20.
- <sup>42</sup> "Mosaic Depicts Life," *The New York Times*, May 14, 1939; "Robert T. Foscatto," *New York & Brooklyn Daily*, January 20, 1967, page not visible.
- <sup>43</sup> Leonard Schultze, "Waldorf-Astoria Hotel," 266.
- <sup>44</sup> Joan Kahr, *Edgar Brandt: Art Deco Ironwork* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2010), 196-98.
- <sup>45</sup> Brochure, 1980s, Waldorf-Astoria Archives.
- <sup>46</sup> Charles Messer Stowe, "Waldorf-Astoria Modernism Keeps the Past's Good Taste," *The New York Sun*, September 26, 1931, no page visible.
- <sup>47</sup> Margot Gayle and David W. Look, *Metals in America's Historic Buildings: Uses and Preservation Treatments* (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1980), 36.
- <sup>48</sup> The General Bronze Corporation was responsible for the exterior doors and windows. "New Waldorf-Astoria Will Be House of Many Bronze Doors," *New York Herald Tribune*, May 4, 1930; "Waldorf Bronze Contract Awarded to Jackson Co.," *New York Herald Tribune*, December 11, 1930, 42.
- <sup>49</sup> "New Waldorf-Astoria," *Metalcraft*, 171.
- <sup>50</sup> Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Construction Specifications, July 1, 1930, 32, Wolfsonian. Schultze & Weaver Collection.
- <sup>51</sup> Henry Bolles Lent, 92.
- <sup>52</sup> "New Waldorf-Astoria," 171.
- <sup>53</sup> Charles Messer Stowe, "Waldorf-Astoria Modernism."
- <sup>54</sup> "New French Liner Features Comfort," *The New York Times*, June 17, 1927.
- <sup>55</sup> "Waldorf Lighting," *The New York Times*, April 26, 1931.
- <sup>56</sup> "New Waldorf-Astoria," 173-74.
- <sup>57</sup> *Facts About the Waldorf*, 222.
- <sup>58</sup> "Lighting in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel," *Hotel Monthly* (March 1932), 50.
- <sup>59</sup> "312-Ton Truss Will Help Hold Up New Waldorf-Astoria," *New York Herald Tribune*, July 13, 1930, E7.
- <sup>60</sup> Murchison, 23.
- <sup>61</sup> Helen W. Henderson, *A Loiterer in New York* (New York: George H. Doran, 1897/1917), 268-269.
- <sup>62</sup> Royal Cortissoz, "Mural Decorations And Other Things," *New York Herald Tribune*, October 4, 1931, no page visible.
- <sup>63</sup> *Truth* (March 3, 1893), 711, viewed at googlebooks.com
- <sup>64</sup> *Waldorf-Astoria* magazine (September 29, 1934), 34.
- <sup>65</sup> "Basildon Park," *Wikipedia*, viewed 2017; "Basildon House – II," *Country Life* (May 12, 1977), 1228-29.
- <sup>66</sup> "Old England Will Be Well Represented In Waldorf-Astoria," *New York Herald Tribune*, February 1, 1931, E1; "Old English Ballroom," *The New York Times*, February 8, 1930.
- <sup>67</sup> *Country Life* (April 19, 1930), cited by Helen Smith in "New Perspectives on Basildon Park" (University of Buckingham, 2004), 14.
- <sup>68</sup> "Waldorf Opens With a Tribute From President," *New York Herald Tribune*, October 1, 1931, 1.

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- <sup>69</sup> “Grand Ballroom At New Waldorf Will Hold 4,000,” *New York Herald Tribune*, December 30, 1930, 30.
- <sup>70</sup> “Oscar of Waldorf Dead At Age of 84,” *The New York Times*, November 8, 1950.
- <sup>71</sup> Langston Hughes publication can viewed at [http://projects.vanartgallery.bc.ca/publications/Hotel/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/GCR\\_Social\\_01-1024x733.jpg](http://projects.vanartgallery.bc.ca/publications/Hotel/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/GCR_Social_01-1024x733.jpg)
- <sup>72</sup> “Waldorf Hires Negro Waiters,” *The Chicago Defender*, May 11, 1946, 3; “Waldorf-Astoria Hires Waiters,” *Atlanta Daily World*, May 12, 1946, 8.
- <sup>73</sup> For instance, in the summer of 1946 Trygve Lie, first Secretary General of the United Nations, “personally intervened with the chairman of the board of the Waldorf-Astoria, who finally agreed to accept the Ethiopian and Liberian delegations but not the Haitians” as guests. Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize; The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 106. There were also rumors that the Waldorf would build a second location in Harlem to serve “black and colored persons who visit the United States in connection with the work of the United Nations.” See “Report Plan to Build \$2,000,000 Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in Harlem,” *New Amsterdam News*, March 8, 1947, 1.
- <sup>74</sup> “Nation’s ‘400’ Dance to Strains of Sissle’s Music in Waldorf-Astoria’s Empire Room,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 24, 1937, 4.
- <sup>75</sup> Hampton replaced regular drummer Gene Krupa, who failed to show up that evening. “Lionel Hampton On Drums For Benny Goodman,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 12, 1938, 20.
- <sup>76</sup> From 1943 to 1953, Hilton also owned the Plaza Hotel in New York City.
- <sup>77</sup> “\$100,000 Alterations Planned for Waldorf,” *The New York Times*, July 13, 1934.
- <sup>78</sup> This bar featured peacock murals, blue banquettes, and gleaming chandeliers. “Going Places,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, August 7, 1953; “Waldorf Presents New Peacock Alley,” *The New York Times*, September 23, 1953.
- <sup>79</sup> “Hotels Spruce Up As Rivalry Rises,” *The New York Times*, September 9, 1962.
- <sup>80</sup> “The Waldorf Revives Plush Era,” *The New York Times*, February 7, 1962; “Hotels Spruce Up As Rivalry Rises,” 18
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>82</sup> Scenic designer Oliver Smith (1918-1994) was the founder and co-director of the American Ballet Theater. The Grand Ballroom was “his first assignment in the field of hotel interiors.” See press release for National Hotel Exposition, c. 1962, Waldorf Astoria Hotel Archives; “Waldorf Creating Ballroom Recalling 18<sup>th</sup> Century Style,” *The New York Times*, July 28, 1982.
- <sup>83</sup> Feder’s papers are in Avery Library at Columbia University. Brochure, c. 1962, Waldorf-Astoria Archives; “Waldorf Creating Ballroom.”
- <sup>84</sup> “Potted Plants and Wilted Roses,” *The New York Times*, February 3, 1978; “Elegance Is Still Supreme as the Waldorf Adapts,” *The New York Times*, June 2, 1980; Paul Goldberger, *The New York Times*, December 3, 1981.
- <sup>85</sup> “Restoring the Waldorf’s art deco,” *Newsday*, July 1, 1982, B41. Architect Kenneth E. Hurd (Cornell, 1969) confirmed the dates of specific restoration projects and related details in a letter to the author in January 2017. Hurd’s relationship with the hotel lasted more than three decades, ending in 2015.
- <sup>86</sup> Press Release, c. 1983, Waldorf Astoria Archives.
- <sup>87</sup> “Restoring Romance,” *Interior Design* (January 1984), 280.
- <sup>88</sup> Hurd, letter to author.
- <sup>89</sup> Richard D. Lyons, “For the Waldorf, a Return to the Elegance of the 30s,” *The New York Times*, September 21, 1986.
- <sup>90</sup> “Chronicle,” *The New York Times*, August 25, 1993.

## DESCRIPTION OF WALDORF-ASTORIA INTERIORS

Architect: Schultz & Weaver

Style: Art Deco combined with Modern Classical

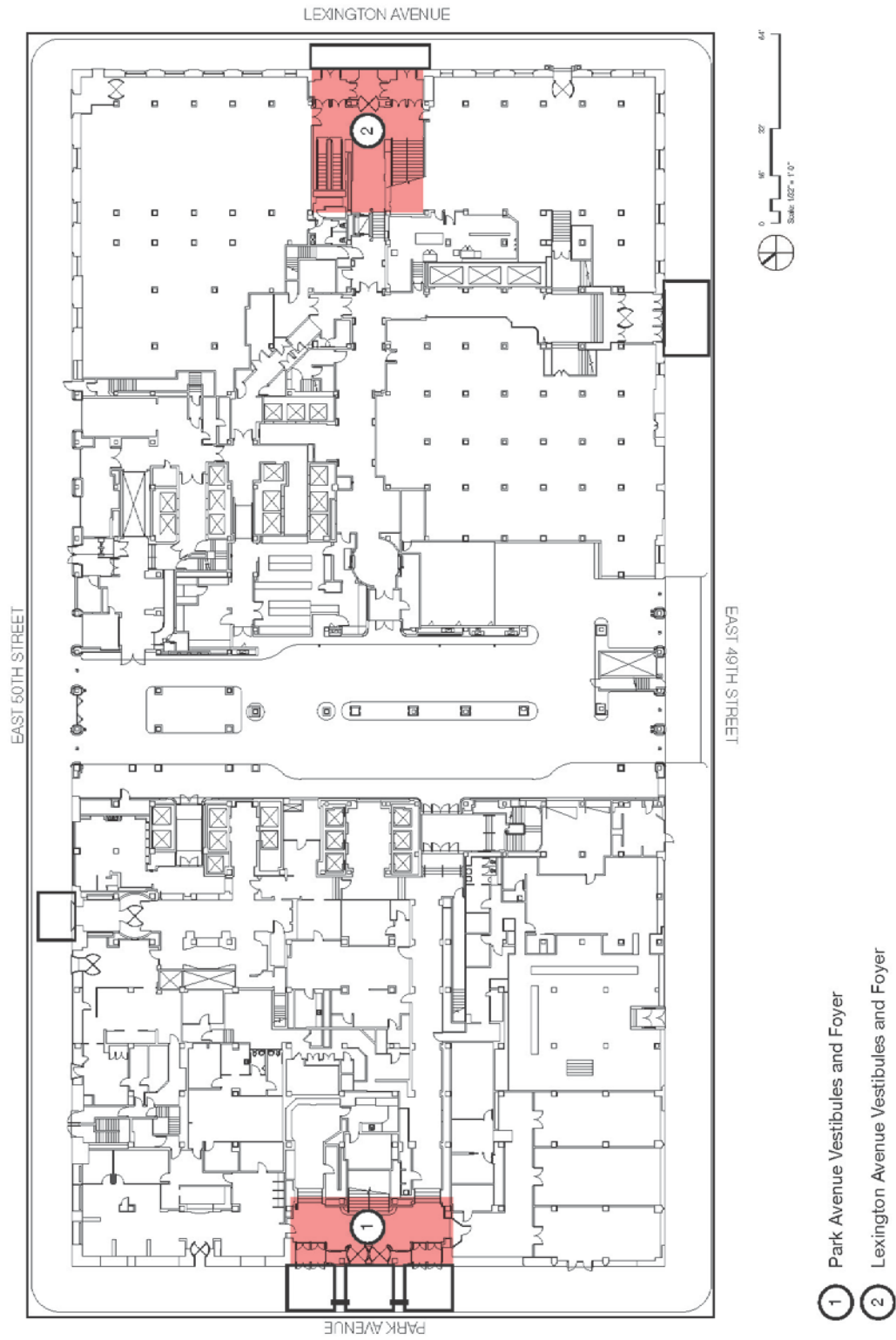
As described in 1935: “*Rich natural materials, such as marbles, matched woods, marquetry panels and various kinds of stones, bronzes and nickel bronzes have been used for the interiors. Lighting throughout the large public rooms is indirect and semi-direct.*” This quotation and quotations in the individual room descriptions are taken from *Facts about the Waldorf*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, April 1935, reprinted in Stanley Turkey, *Hotel Mavens* (Authorhouse, 2014).

This designation includes public rooms on the ground, first and third floors as well as the Lexington Avenue Entrance and Stairs. The hotel occupies an entire block, and as such, the selected first floor rooms form an axial progression that connects the entrances on Park Avenue and Lexington Avenue, leading the visitor through a progression of spaces that alternately expand and contract. In general, the style is Art Deco, combining classical and modern features. Such elements are unified by the use of a shared material palette including decorative metalwork, bas-relief plaster, and metallic finishes. Beyond these shared materials, each room distinguishes itself from its neighbors in the sequence with distinct types of wood paneling and marble. The third-floor rooms addressed in this report occupy the eastern section of the floor and continue many features of the first floor’s materials with a greater emphasis on mirrored surfaces and crystal chandeliers.

Completed in 1931, the Waldorf-Astoria’s design scheme highlighted the use of white metals and “silvery” finishes in its major public rooms. Today, most of the rooms still retain many of their white metal or nickel bronze features. Nickel-bronze, an alloy of copper and nickel, varies in color from silver to a warmer light bronze color, depending on the composition.

Non-historic finishes have been applied to much of the decorative trim; most of the surfaces have been overpainted and at this writing the historic color scheme has not been determined. Rooms were illuminated with indirect lighting or free-standing fixtures not only for general lighting, but also to highlight the decorative features.

# GROUND FLOOR WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL INTERIORS



## **1. PARK AVENUE VESTIBULES and FOYER** (originally called Park Avenue Entrance)

Located midblock at ground level, three vestibules with metal and glass doors enter the foyer where a wide travertine staircase leads directly to the Park Avenue Lobby.

This foyer is notable for its use of nickel-bronze metalwork or surfaces with a nickel-bronze finish, not only in the prominent wall grilles with a floral motif, but in the projecting vestibules at each side of the revolving doors. The center vestibule accommodates two revolving doors set within a painted limestone surround. Each side vestibule accommodates two sets of paired out-swinging doors and features decorative metalwork on the interior. Above the entrance portals rise three large windows, described in the Park Avenue Lobby entry.

### Significant Features

- Room configuration and associated volume
- Center vestibule that extends partially into the foyer and exhibits vertical incised lines at pier and at the prominent quarter-round corners of the limestone surround
- Metal side vestibules that extend partially into the foyer and exhibit curved corners on the exterior and a steel grid floor, wall grilles, coved ceiling, indirect lighting panels, on the interior
- White metals, either nickel-bronze or a nickel-bronze metallic finish, used for the decorative wall grilles, side vestibules, railing posts, doors, and door surrounds
- Metal grilles in stylized floral (lotus) design along east and west walls and within side vestibules
- Metal and glass entrance doors at side vestibules
- Travertine staircase with lower steps curved at corners
- Decorative brass stair hand railings (3) with nickel-bronze posts
- Travertine flooring
- Decorative ceiling, a continuation of the Park Avenue Lobby's terrace ceiling (see Park Avenue Lobby entry)
- Three bays of large nickel-bronze windows (see Park Avenue Lobby)

### Alterations

- Replacement revolving doors
- North portal to eastern part of ground floor closed off
- Painted walls and ceiling, including decorative scheme at ceiling (see Park Avenue Lobby)
- Replacement ceiling light panels (see Park Avenue Lobby)
- Addition of recessed spot lighting in the ceiling
- Addition of security camera(s)





Park Avenue Foyer Center Vestibule



Park Avenue Foyer Side Vestibule



Park Avenue Foyer Stairs to Lobby

## **2. LEXINGTON AVENUE VESTIBULES and FOYER** (originally called Lexington Avenue Entrance)

Located midblock, at ground level, the Lexington Avenue entrances anchor the east end of the axis of primary public spaces and is notable for the decorative nickel-bronze metalwork. Three bays of vestibules for metal and glass doors enter the foyer where a wide carpeted staircase to the south and an escalator to the north lead to the first floor and continue as the Lexington Avenue Stairs and Landings. The Foyer's central bay leads up to several steps to adjacent ground floor spaces (not included in this designation).

The center vestibule has one large revolving door within a curved decorative surround; each side vestibule contains two sets of paired out-swinging doors. The doors are below a decorative grille, a wood-paneled wall, and framed beveled mirrors. The interiors of the vestibules have additional doors and metal wall grilles that have a similar lotus design as the Park Avenue Foyer grilles.

Placed in the foyer are two marble statues of female figures that came from the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

### Significant Features

- Configuration of the east wall (along Lexington Avenue) with three entrance bays of metal and glass doors with metal frames and housing; plastered piers with stylized fluting
- Nickel-bronze metalwork, or a surface with a nickel-bronze metallic finish, used for the decorative wall grilles, doors, and door surrounds
- Metal grilles, including two grilles with bas-relief figurative panels (silver color); also grilles inside vestibules in stylized lotus pattern
- Rockwood stone pilasters incorporated into the walls dividing the stairs and escalators
- Decorative crown molding
- Travertine baseboards

### Alterations

- Removal of north staircase and installation of escalators in 1962.
- Reconfigured floor height and steps at center bay
- Replacement of original metal and glass doors (two pairs and the revolving door) along the east wall of the foyer
- Addition of restaurant entrances at the reconfigured north and south walls
- Addition of beveled-mirror panels with metallic-finished frames
- Wood veneer above revolving door may be replacement (original specifications noted marble)
- Altered ceiling with recessed spot lighting; addition of crystal chandeliers
- Non-original marble tile flooring and travertine
- Painted walls and ceiling
- Addition of wall signage

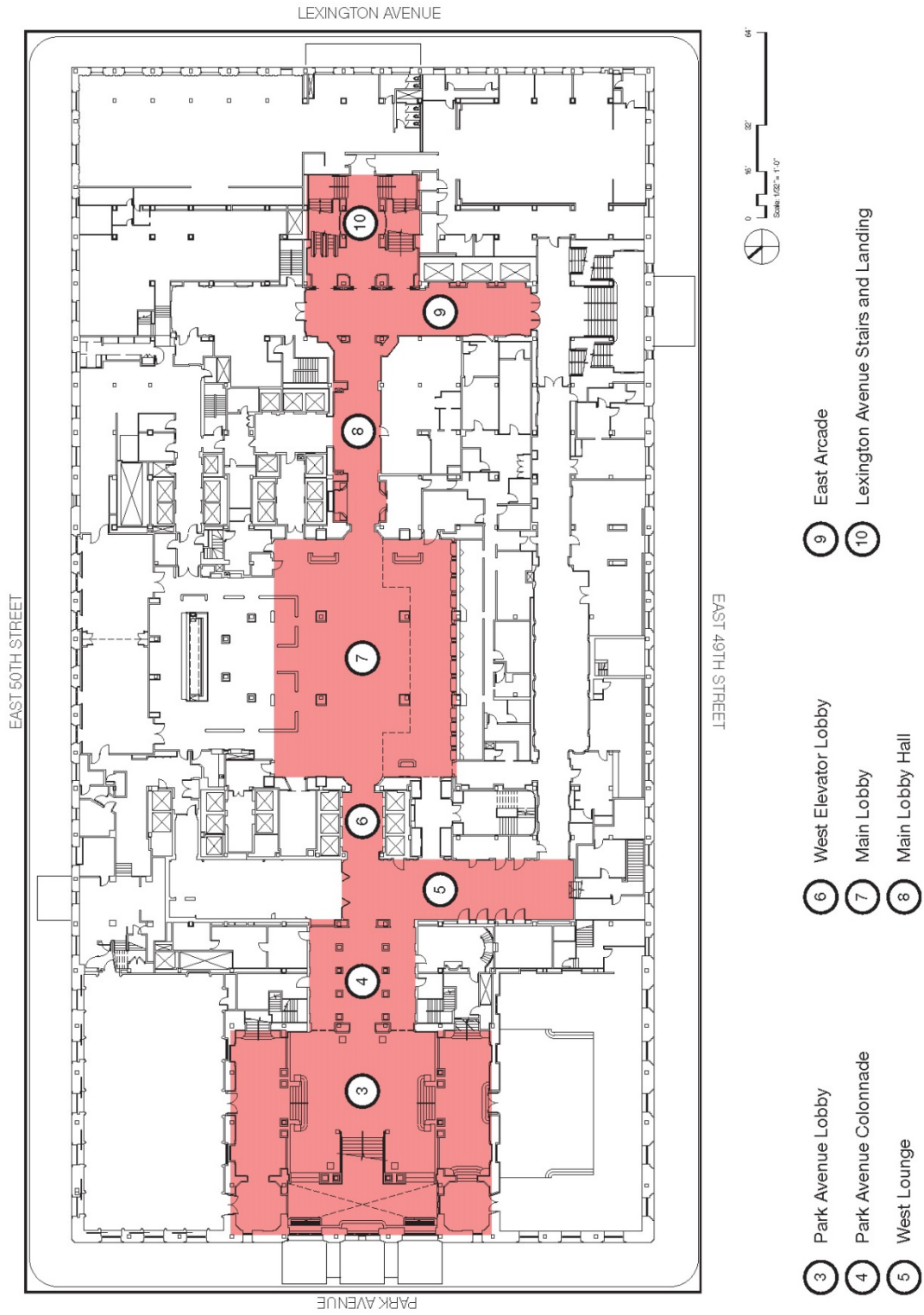


Lexington Avenue Vestibule and Foyer, View East



Lexington Avenue Vestibules, Grille and Door Details

# FIRST FLOOR WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL INTERIORS



### 3. PARK AVENUE LOBBY (Originally called Main Foyer)

As described in 1935: *“The design of the Main Foyer is modern with classic Pompeiian influence. Walls, columns, piers and doorways are of Rockwood stone. The floor is laid with travertine stone...The ceiling is plaster, decorated in gold and silver leaf. Semi-indirect lighting is given from a large marble panel in the center of the ceiling. Also from eight large gold and silver urns, placed symmetrically about the room, reflected lighting is provided.”*

This spacious, light-filled entrance lobby is notable for the three tall Park Avenue windows, artwork by Louis Rigal, and paired columns that define the space. The large windows framed in silvery nickel-bronze exemplify the hotel’s Art Deco character with wide mullions with bas-relief figurative designs, and metal screens composed of pierced sections.

The prominent square columns with stylized fluting and slim stylized capitals separate the main central space from the Park Avenue Foyer to the west, from the raised north and south terraces, and from the adjacent Colonnade to the east. The terraces are connected visually, yet maintain their separate character and function, and provide entrance to the Empire Room to the north and the Vanderbilt Room to the south (not part of the designation). At the west end of each terrace is a small alcove-like space that overlooks the ground floor entry. The east end of each terrace terminates in a stairway (the stairs are not part of this designation).

The Park Avenue Lobby’s decoration is relatively spare and as such highlights the mosaic floor with Louis Rigal’s “Wheel of Life” in the center and his thirteen colorful frieze murals that ring the perimeter walls. These allegorical murals, along with the courtyard feel of the space, lend to its description as “Pompeiiian.”

The stepped ceiling above the central space retains its original decorative outer perimeter panels and some of the moldings. It has been altered with new lighting, central ceiling panels, and non-historic finishes, including a contrasting color scheme at the perimeter trim. The ceilings above the terraces and ground floor entrance consist of non-original square light panels set within decorative painted ceiling designs, also executed in a non-original contrasting scheme. The ceilings in the side alcoves off the terraces are stepped with metallic-finished trim.

#### Significant Features

- Room configuration and volume including central staircase from the ground level and north and south terraces raised above the main floor
- Three large nickel-bronze (white-metal) decorative windows over the Park Avenue Vestibules and Foyer with metal mullions with bas relief figurative designs and metal screens composed of pierced sections
- Rockwood Stone (limestone, originally not painted) walls (ashlar beneath the paint), pilasters and square columns with stylized fluting and capitals
- Thirteen pastoral frieze murals, said to suggest hospitality, by French artist Louis Rigal
- “Wheel of Life” mosaic floor designed by Louis Rigal (1889-1955) installed in 1939 and surrounded by a golden-hued mosaic floor with rosettes of a similar design to the floor in the Main Office of the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel
- Travertine flooring at the perimeter of the central space and at terraces
- Travertine staircases with curved corners at lower steps
- Stepped design of central ceiling and ceilings in terrace alcoves with decorative molded trim

- Paneled ceilings at perimeter spaces above terraces and foyer with decorative molded trim
- Brass stair hand railings with nickel-bronze posts; three per staircase
- Metal terrace railings with floral motif set within open squares
- Metal and metallic-finished wall grilles, with stylized floral/foliate designs
- Solid pedestals that flank the three stairways and entrance to Colonnade room

### Alterations

- Central ceiling design altered with the addition of a central light panel and inset lighting panels of “bubble” glass
- Replacement light panels, in terrace and foyer ceilings similar in plan to the original flush fixtures, but projecting from the ceiling (2014)
- Addition of boxed up-lighting under each Rigal frieze mural
- Addition of recessed spot lighting in the ceilings
- Removal in 1962 of eight large nickel-bronze urns used as torchieres for indirect lighting
- Installation in the 1980s of four replacement urns at the east and west locations, similar in shape and size to original, but without lights; installation of four large travertine balls at the north and south location of original urns
- Removal of mirrored doors and transom and the installation of new solid doors to Empire and Vanderbilt Rooms (2012)
- Removal or cover-up of mirrored window-like openings at each side of central doorway to Empire Room and to Vanderbilt room
- Non-historic paint finishes and scheme at walls, columns and ceilings; a dark/contrasting scheme has been adopted at perimeter panels
- Painted figured plaster with a floral motif in sections of the terrace and alcove walls
- Non-original wood pedestals with travertine base at entrance to Colonnade
- Non-original carpets on the terrace stairs



Park Avenue Lobby, 1931, View Southwest  
(*The Wolfsonian–Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection*)



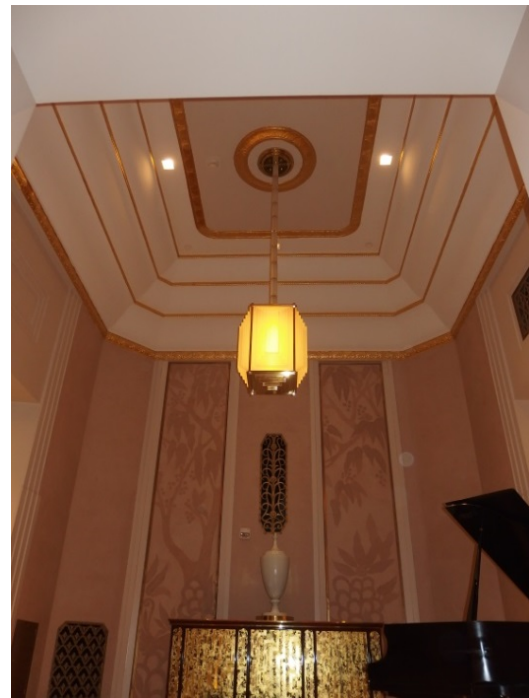
Park Avenue Lobby, View Southwest, with "Wheel of Life" Mosaic Floor



Park Avenue Lobby, View to South Terrace



Park Avenue Window Detail



South Terrace Alcove with Stepped Ceiling



#### 4. PARK AVENUE COLONNADE

The Park Avenue Colonnade is an elegant transitional space between the Park Avenue Lobby and the West Lounge. The room is notable for its two rows of square columns creating a central aisle and two side aisles. The coved ceiling above the center aisle is finished with aluminum (or silver) leaf and dramatically lit with indirect up-lighting. The ceilings above the side aisles continue the design of the Park Avenue Lobby terrace ceilings. The flooring is also a continuation of the Park Avenue Lobby mosaic design with rosettes set within a travertine border.

The north and south walls incorporate limestone pilasters, a stepped base, wainscot, a simple chair rail, and painted plaster. Set within the north and south walls are white-metal doors with bas-relief designs. On the north wall, there is a framed opening to the Men's Room and a door to a Cloak Room; likewise along the south wall, there is a door to the Ladies' Room and another to a Shoe Shine Room. The portal to the Men's Room appears to be in a different location than shown on the original floor plan where the doors mirrored each other on north and south.

As originally constructed, there were glass and metal doors with tall mirrored transoms at the east end entrances adjoining the West Lounge (Peacock Alley). The doors have been removed, a mirrored wall installed at the north aisle's west end, and the transoms shortened.

##### Significant Features

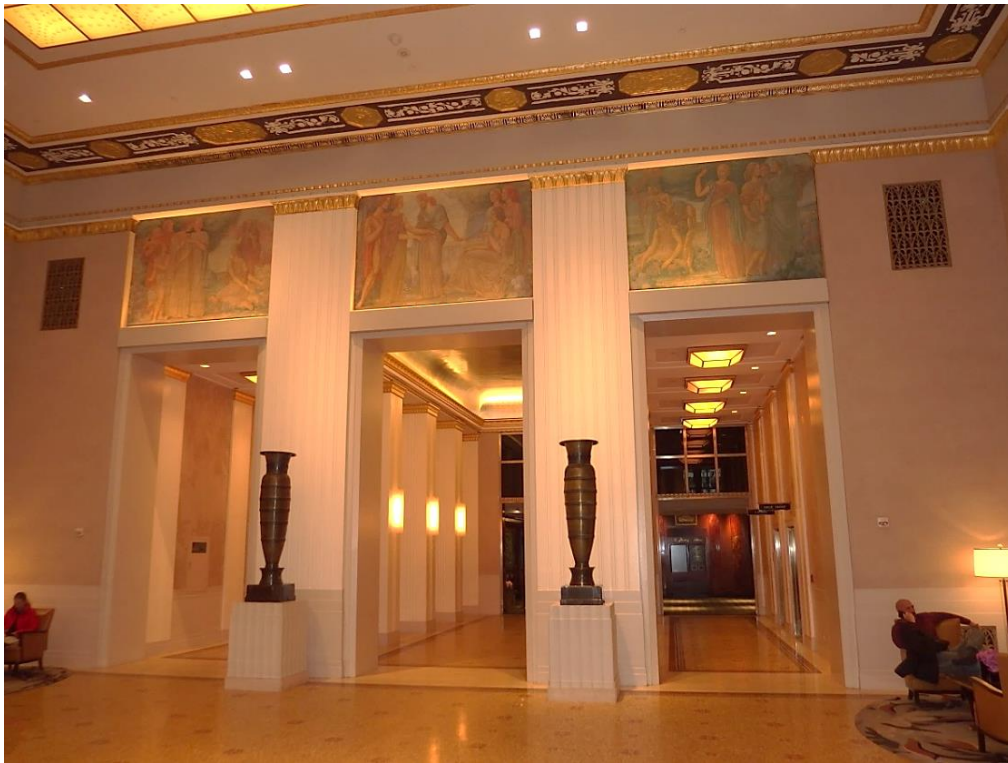
- Room configuration and volume
- Rockwood stone square columns and pilasters with stylized fluting and foliated capitals
- Mosaic floor with rosette pattern; travertine flooring along edges
- Coved ceiling in center aisle with aluminum-(or silver-) leaf finish and indirect lighting
- Paneled ceilings at side aisles
- Decorative trim at the edge of the coved ceiling, along the ceiling, and at the metal framework and transom bars at the entries to the West Lounge
- White-metal doors with decorative relief designs
- Stone used for base, wainscot, chair rail, surround at Ladies Room door
- Projecting wall signage at north and south walls (possible)

##### Alterations

- Removal of the metal and glass doors to the West Lounge
- Addition of mirrored wall to close off view at east end in north aisle
- Removal of original mirrored transoms; installation of shorter transoms with dark glass
- Re-location of Men's Room portal
- Addition of sconces on columns along center aisle; addition of recessed spot lighting
- Replacement light panels at side aisles, similar in plan to original flush fixtures, but projecting from ceiling (2014)
- Installation of restroom signage
- Painted plaster and stone surfaces
- Figured plaster wall finish in a floral design above chair rail
- Non-original wood baseboards in northeast corner and wood surrounds at three door openings



Park Avenue Colonnade, View from Park Avenue Lobby, 1931  
*(The Wolfsonian–Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection)*



Park Avenue Colonnade, View from Park Avenue Lobby

## 5. WEST LOUNGE

(originally called Peacock Alley)

As noted in 1935, the West Lounge's walls were "...paneled with French walnut burl inlaid with ebony. Pilasters on the walls are of rouge French marble. Capitals and cornices are of nickel bronze."

The West Lounge is located between the Colonnade and the West Elevator Lobby. This north-south corridor, dark in contrast to the light-filled Park Avenue Lobby, is similar in orientation and design to the East Arcade. It is notable for its red marble pilasters with stylized Ionic capitals, nickel-silver vitrines, and walls of both straight grain and burlled-wood panels. As designed, the corridor extended north into the section that was later remodeled into a separate room (not part of this designation).

Early descriptions indicate that a silvery finish predominated, but today the decorative accents are in a gold metallic finish. Historic photographs show a repeating pattern of a vitrine flush with the wood-paneled wall and placed between either paired or single pilasters. Burlled wood with inlaid strips of thin dark wood appear along several sections of the wood paneling. Flooring has changed over the years and has included patterned carpets and rubber flooring with a bold geometric pattern.

Many of the historic vitrines, grilles, and pilasters remain, but alterations have added a shop and new display cases. An unusual feature of the corridor is the short staircase along the south wall featuring a pair of distinctive metal bi-fold entrance gates to what was originally a Beauty Salon.

### Significant Features

- General Room configuration is retained at this southern half of the original corridor
- Red-veined marble pilasters, paired or single, with stylized Ionic capitals
- Built-in nickel-bronze vitrines with a rectilinear frame with a reed pattern, flush with wall, set within straight-grain walnut trim
- Use of smooth wood wall panels with highlighted straight or burlled wood grain
- Decorative plaster grilles above vitrines along the upper sections of the east and west walls
- Decorative plaster cornice along the perimeter
- Baseboard (metal) in a simple stepped pattern, painted black
- Pair of decorative bi-fold nickel-bronze gates at the south wall

### Alterations

- North section of the original Peacock Alley converted to bar area, separated by a wall and doors (bar area is not part of this designation)
- Removal of two vitrines along south wall and at least one along east wall
- Removal of several pilasters along south and east walls
- Original Ionic capitals removed and replaced with similar plaster capitals with gold metallic finish
- Gold metallic finish added to plaster cornice and plaster grilles
- Addition of dropped ceiling set back from cornice, fitted with recessed spot lighting and linear diffusers

- Removal of the original steps and installation of new steps at the south wall
- Added casework along south wall, between entrances to Colonnade and along east wall
- Non-original storefront at east wall (Landau)
- Non-original carpets



Peacock Alley, 1931

*(The Wolfsonian–Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection)*



West Lounge (Peacock Alley), View South

## 6. WEST ELEVATOR LOBBY (Passenger Elevators)

As noted in 1935: “...the walls of the elevator lobbies are of French walnut with ebony trim. Doors of the elevators are of nickel bronze and polished blue steel.”

The West Elevator Lobby connects the West Lounge and the Main Lobby. The room has six elevators, notable for their stainless steel doors with nickel-bronze bas-reliefs of classically-draped women with musical instruments, and reed design borders. The original ebonized-wood elevator door trim appears intact behind the current wall paneling.

The walls are non-original smooth wood panels with dark wood bases. Flooring has changed over the years and has included carpets and rubber flooring with a bold geometric pattern. The decorative stepped ceiling has a recessed well with a crystal chandelier.

### Significant Features

- Elevator doors of nickel-bronze and stainless steel, each with a bas-relief panel
- Decorative metal plate for elevator call button; metal mail chute northeast corner
- Use of smooth wood wall panels with highlighted wood grain
- Dark (wood) baseboard in a simple stepped pattern
- Original ebonized wood trim around elevator doors beneath wall paneling
- Decorative ceiling consisting of a stepped recessed space with floral frieze and edge molding
- Possible historic hanging glass signs for “Starlight Roof” at east and west ends

### Alterations

- Removal of original elevator floor indicators and addition of modern units
- Addition of non-original wood paneling, possibly over original paneling
- Non-original ceiling paint
- Crystal chandelier (after 1962); non-original carpet
- Signage; metalwork for hanging signs



West Elevator Lobby, North Wall

## 7. MAIN LOBBY

As described in 1935: *“The walls of the Main Lobby...are covered with Oregon maple burl. Columns and pilasters are black and gold marble. Capitals on the pilasters and cornices are of nickel bronze. The ceiling is finished in nickel bronze and ivory. The entrance doors leading to different spaces off the Main Lobby have small columns of ebony with nickel bronze capitals.”*

The Main Lobby, an 82 by 62 foot lounge and reception area with a 22-foot high ceiling, is located at the center of the first floor and is its primary destination. This large room was originally defined by bilateral symmetry with major portals at the north, south, east, and west walls, each of which provided access to secondary rooms and hallways along the perimeter of the hotel. The north and south portals, located at the center of the walls, were removed during past remodeling projects.

Dominating this grand, spacious room are the square black marble columns, the decorative plaster ceiling, and smooth wood-paneled walls. Although not part of the original furnishings, the large, ornate, clock at the center of the room came from the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

In contrast to the light-filled Park Avenue Lobby, the Main Lobby exhibits a subdued, dimly-lit ambiance. Early photographs show the lobby with scattered chairs and floor lamps, the main source of lighting at that time. Flooring has changed over the years and has included area rugs and rubber flooring with a geometric pattern.

Major alterations include the extension of the room beyond the original north wall to incorporate a restaurant into the main space, infill of the south wall during the remodeling of the registration counters, and the addition of the decorative bas-relief frieze panels below the ceiling. The fabrication and installation of these frieze panels with up-lights mounted on profiled trim were part of a 1985-86 Main Lobby restoration project that also included the replacement of the original wood walls with new mahogany panels. (Richard D. Lyons, “For the Waldorf, a Return to the Elegance of the 30s,” *NYT*, Sept 21, 1986)

### Significant Features

- Large rectangular volume and general room configuration
- Black-and gold-veined square marble columns and pilasters with stylized fluting and slim stylized capitals accented with nickel-bronze corners in a vertical reed pattern
- East and west portals (of the original four major portals) with decorative black wood pilasters and angled jambs
- Gridded ceiling with faux grilles, decorative trim, bas-relief panels with geometric and figurative stylized designs
- Nickel-bronze, or a nickel-bronze metallic finish, used for the decorative wall grilles and column corners
- Use of smooth wood wall panels with highlighted wood grain
- Bas-relief metal trim and ebonized wood at bands along the north and south walls; narrow bas-relief metal plates at vertical elements, decorated with draped figurative and bird designs (some areas have been remodeled using the historic design)
- Decorative metal wall grilles, including large grille with figurative design over entry to West Elevator Lobby
- Location of decorative grilles in frieze (originally incorporated in wood paneling)

- Clock on south wall
- Black baseboards (original marble baseboards are intact behind current base)
- Use of patterned area rugs with delineated zones that reinforce spatial arrangement
- Clock from the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, installed in this lobby in the late 1960s

#### Alterations

- Enlargement of north portal to accommodate the restaurant, raising the datum and reconfiguring the opening; reconstructed wall incorporating dark wood with decorative bas-relief metal trim; low partition walls around restaurant (c.1971)
- Infill of the south portal to accommodate reconfigured reception/registration counters; reconstructed openings with dark wood with decorative bas-relief metal trim
- Addition of a decorative frieze that incorporates new bas-relief panels with designs taken from other areas of the hotel and replacement wood grilles matching originals
- Addition of up-lighting and profiled trim under frieze
- Re-clad walls with new mahogany veneer
- Addition of lighting sconces on east and west walls above secondary portals
- Non-historic doors in secondary portals on east and west walls below ebonized wood band
- Non-historic ceiling finishes in modified color scheme
- Installation of recessed spot lighting and sprinklers in the ceiling
- Non-historic carpet
- Installation of security camera(s) and signage, including illuminated signage



Main Lobby, View East, 1931  
(*The Wolfsonian–Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection*)

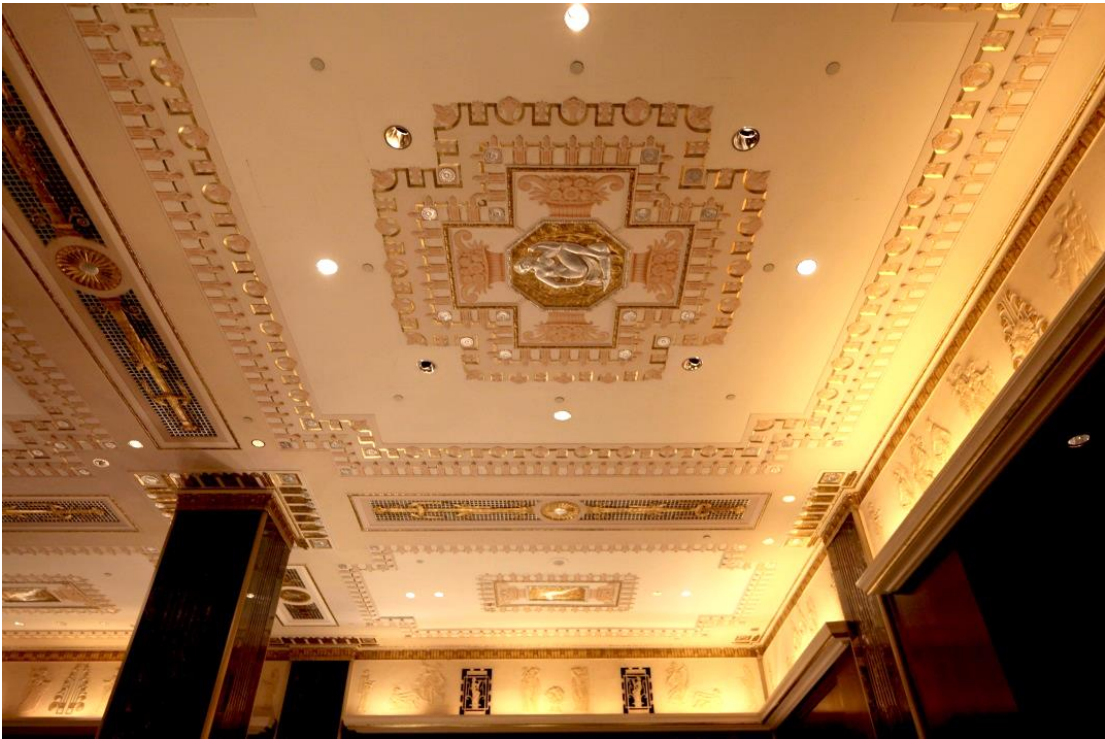


Main Lobby, View East





Main Lobby, View Southwest



Main Lobby, Ceiling and Frieze Detail

## 8. MAIN LOBBY HALL

As described in 1935: “The walls of the connecting gallery are covered with figured Japanese ash veneer inlaid with ebony. The big piers and columns in the gallery are of ebony. Lighting is semi-indirect.”

This corridor connects the Main Lobby with the East Arcade and provides access to a second public elevator hall (not part of this designation). The room is notable for a large nickel-bronze vitrine and burlwood wall paneling. Sections of original cornice and ceiling remain. Original free-standing columns along the hall have been encased and ventilation shafts added, changing the configuration of the wall(s). The east wall has also been altered with the removal of wall sections.

### Significant Features

- Large nickel-bronze vitrine at north wall, west end, with a reed design in its framing
- Use of smooth burlwood (Japanese Ash) wall panels, similar to the wood paneling in the East Arcade
- Dark color baseboards
- Original cornice, sections along north wall; original ceiling, central sections

### Alterations

- Original volume altered by moving the north and south walls to encase piers and install ventilation shafts
- Removal of part of the east end wall to create two free-standing piers
- Addition of red marble pilasters onto piers at south wall to frame openings, with lintels and molding painted to imitate red marble
- Replaced wood paneling on the encased piers/ventilation shafts with different grain pattern from burlwood paneling on the walls
- Removal of sections of the original ceiling with new infill at the perimeter
- Painted ceiling, chandeliers (1962), and recessed spot lighting
- Shop entrances and installation of new retail kiosks and display cases
- Non-historic carpet



Main Lobby Hall, View West



Main Lobby Hall, Vitrine, North Wall

## **9. EAST ARCADE**

(East Gallery or East Lounge)

As described in 1935, the walls were finished with “...figured Japanese ash veneer inlaid with ebony...pilasters and columns ... of serpentine green marble.”

The East Arcade is located between the Main Lobby Hall and the Lexington Avenue Stairs. This north-south corridor is similar in orientation and design to the West Lounge, and is notable for its nickel-bronze elevator doors with bas-relief figural and floral patterns, green marble pilasters with stylized Corinthian capitals, metal and glass doors, and smooth burled-wood (Japanese Ash) wall panels. As designed, the corridor extended north into the section that was later remodeled into a separate room (not part of this designation).

The southern end of the East Arcade terminates with the original metal and glass doors, sidelights and transom, leading to the 49<sup>th</sup> Street Ballroom Stairs (stairs not part of this designation). Although originally designed as a lounge with chairs and floor lamps scattered along the walls, today the room has been altered to include additional shop and hotel display cases.

### Significant Features

- General room configuration, southern half of the original volume
- Material palette including smooth burled-wood (Japanese Ash) paneling, serpentine green marble, decorative white metal
- Elevator doors with bas-relief panels of classically-draped women, “transom bar,” framing around wood panel, and floor indicator, all in nickel bronze (same design as elevators at Ballroom Entrance Hall on third floor)
- White-metal and glass doors with transom and sidelights at the south end of the hall
- Doors to Lexington Avenue Stairs and Landings (see Lexington Avenue Stairs), partially covered by paneling
- Fluted green marble pilasters on west wall with contrasting stylized Corinthian capitals in a metallic leaf finish
- Two decorative painted plaster grilles on upper sections of west wall
- Painted crown molding
- Black baseboard (metal) in a simple stepped pattern

### Alterations

- Northern section of the original corridor converted into a shop area, enclosed by a wall and doors (shop area is not part of this designation)
- Removal of pilasters on east wall and on sections of west wall
- Replacement of wood paneling on some areas of the walls
- Reconfigured east wall around elevators and of west wall around entrance to Main Lobby Hall
- Entry doors and transoms to the Lexington Avenue stairs partially covered by non-original wood panels
- Addition of elevator call-button plate and framed signage
- Installation (post 1970) of two built-in angled bronze vitrines and small display cases on west wall; three angled display cases (possibly free-standing) at the east wall

- Removal of several decorative plaster grilles on west wall; simple metal grilles added in their place
- Non-original concealed wood door at west wall, south end
- Ceiling repainted with surface-mounted trim
- Installation of recessed spot lighting
- Addition of wall signage
- Non-original carpet



East Arcade, View North, 1931 (Doors to Lexington Avenue Stairs on Right)  
*(The Wolfsonian–Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection)*



East Arcade, View North

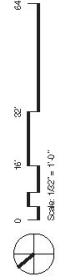
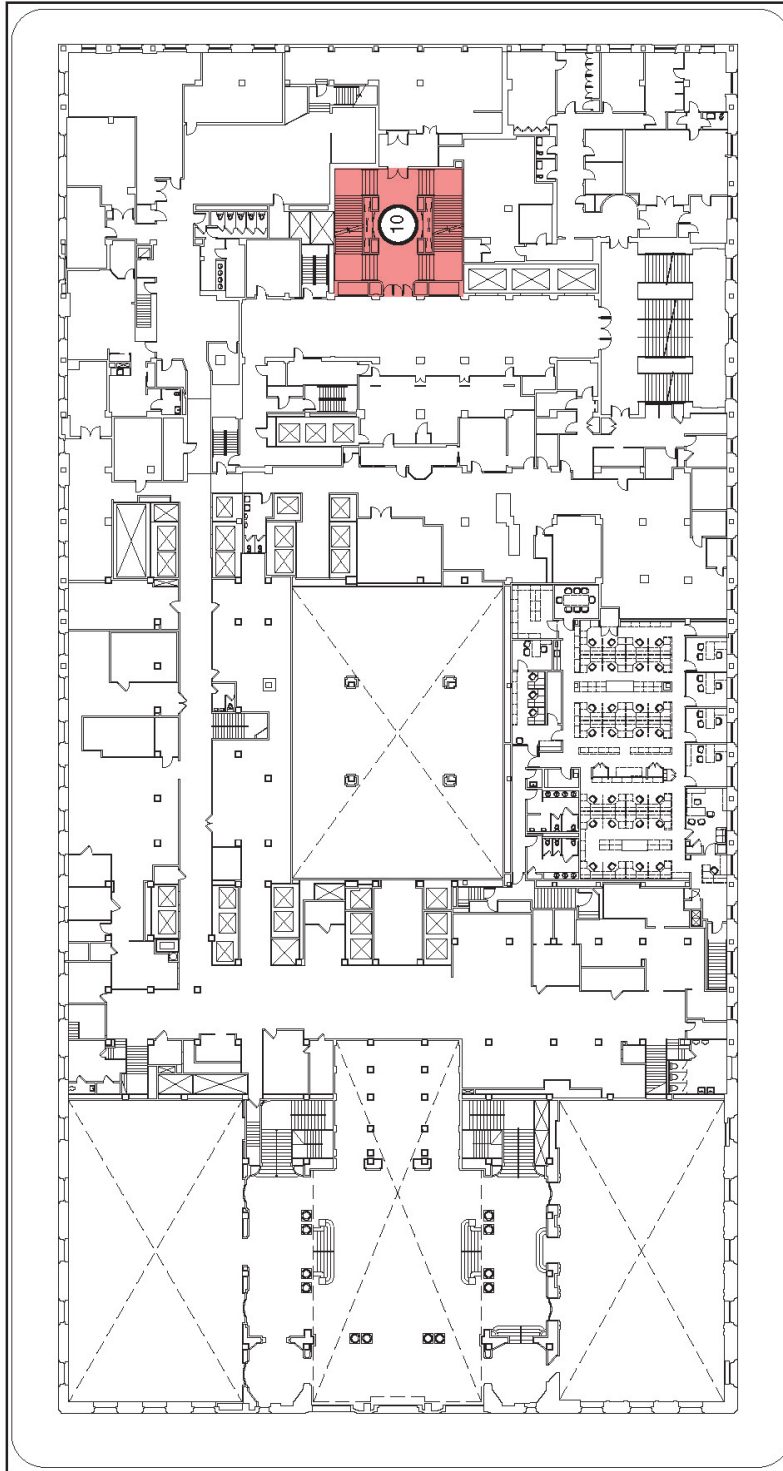


East Arcade, View South



East Arcade Ballroom Elevator Doors

# SECOND FLOOR WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL INTERIORS



10 Lexington Avenue Stairs and Landing

## 10. LEXINGTON AVENUE STAIRS AND LANDINGS

(First, Second and Third Floors)

Located between the Lexington Avenue Foyer and the East Arcade, two parallel staircases with generously-sized landings begin at the first floor and terminate at the third floor where they provide access to the Jade Room, the Astor Gallery, and the Ballroom Entrance Hall. These stairs allow visitors to reach the third floor without entering the Main Lobby.

The stairs and landings feature railings with a stylized “frozen fountain” design. The hand rail is brass while the stringers and railings are ferrous metal, originally finished with silver leaf. Additional notable features include the mirrored panels and decorative grilles, and the use of crystal chandeliers set within stepped ceilings. The walls with an ashlar pattern, piers, and pilasters (now painted) are cast plaster units that were intended to resemble travertine. Several marble statues, brought from the original Waldorf-Astoria, have been added as decorations along the stairways.

### Significant Features

- Brass handrails and metal railings with “frozen fountain” motif finished with metallic leaf
- Three sets of nickel-bronze and glass doors with sidelights at first floor within portals from East Arcade; center door has transom
- Walls, piers, and pilasters composed of cast plaster units
- Piers with vertical ribbing and quarter-round wall corners with a suggestion of a capital with vertical incised lines
- Mosaic floor, first floor only, with rosette design set between travertine border
- Stepped ceiling design, third floor only, above stairs
- Travertine baseboards and skirtboards
- Mirrored panels on outer walls
- Decorative painted wall grilles at landings
- Areas of plaster ceiling with a shallow fluted design
- Trim in ceiling and at cornice locations finished with paint and metallic leaf
- Use of crystal chandeliers
- Glazed doors with mirrored sidelights and transoms; brass door pushplates with an incised figurative pattern on some doors
- Use of carpet on steps

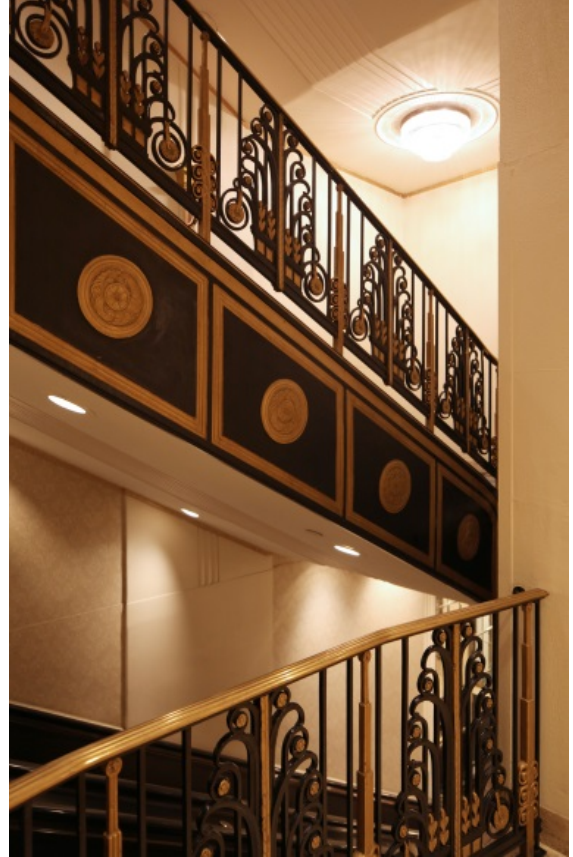
### Alterations

- Non-original sconces on piers, recessed spot lighting, crystal chandeliers
- Railing finished with metallic leaf (originally finished in silver leaf)
- Non-original painted surfaces and wall coverings
- Non-original carpet on steps and landings at second and third floors





Lexington Avenue Stairs, View to Third Floor

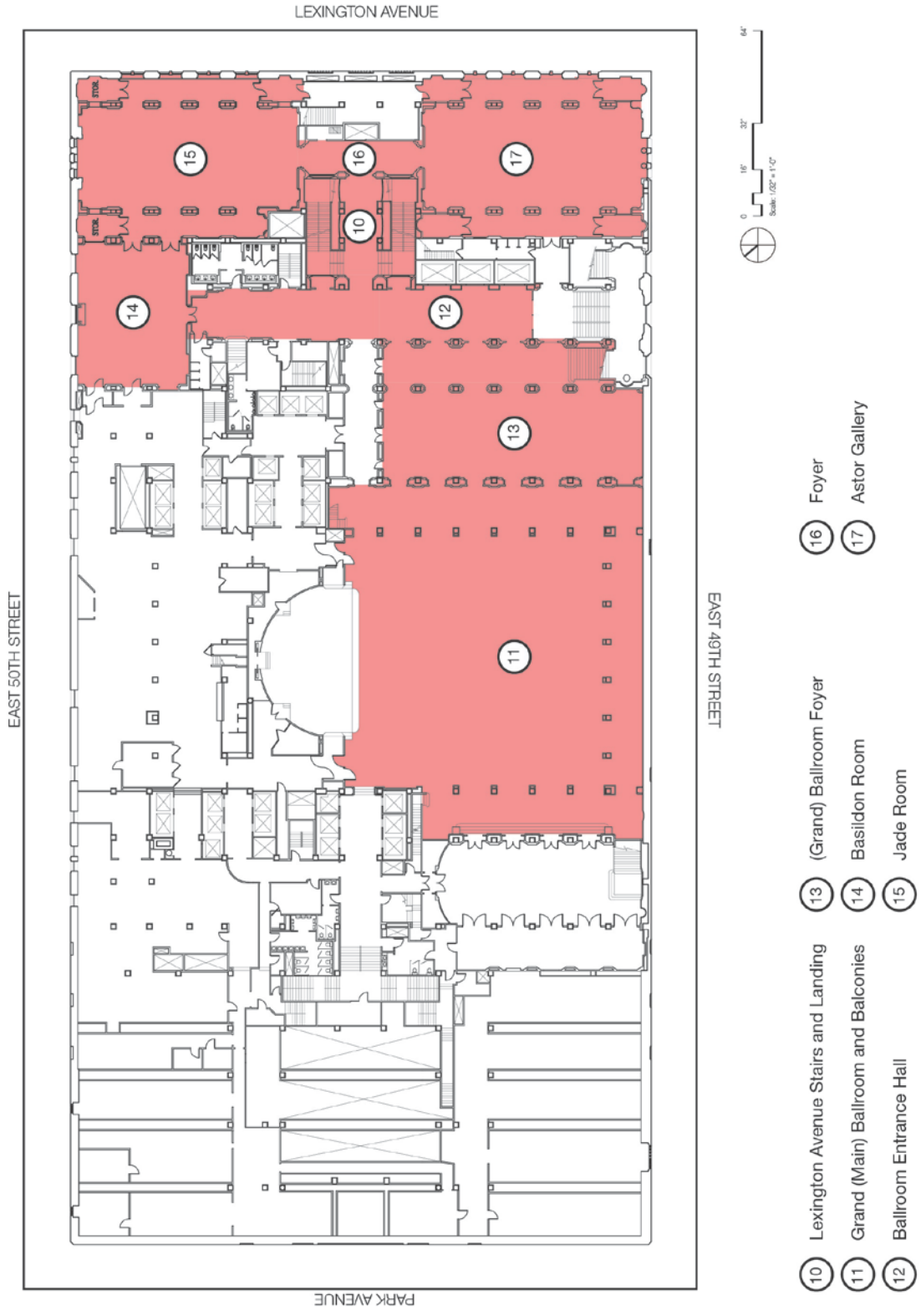


Railings with "Frozen Fountain" Design



Lexington Avenue Second Floor Landing, View East

# THIRD FLOOR WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL INTERIORS



## 11. GRAND (MAIN) BALLROOM AND BALCONIES

As described in 1935: *“The decorative treatment of the Grand Ballroom is modern with a tint of grey on the walls and coral rouge hangings, finely wrought gold and silver metal work decorations and soft suffused lighting. Small columns on either side of the room between the boxes are of silver.”* In addition, *“The lower wainscot to a height of approximately ten feet is of French Escalette marble.”*

Nearly a square in plan, the 120- by 135-foot Grand Ballroom is notable for its large size, two tiers of balconies, stepped ceiling with decorative relief, decorative grilles and prominent corner bas-relief panels.

Floor to ceiling piers anchor the balconies along three sides of the room and define the series of rectangular openings into the galleries. Projecting into the room, prominent cantilevered balconies are a major design feature; the fourth-floor balconies continue in front of the piers, while fifth-floor balconies consist of individual boxes. The forty-four foot ceiling steps up from a cove with a deep soffit at its base. The north wall stage area beyond the proscenium was designed to be moveable, has been altered over the years, and is not part of this designation.

Early photographs show a conservative decorative scheme with marble-cladding on the piers at the main level, tall decorative grilles at each side of the proscenium, figurative bas-relief panels in the corners, delicate patterns applied to the balconies, decorative soffit of the coved ceiling, a stepped ceiling with trim, and a large figurative and geometric bas-relief panel, similar to the smaller ceiling panels in the Main Lobby. Much of the room’s trim and relief panels appeared to have a metallic finish

Like other major rooms in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, the Main Ballroom’s original lighting was indirect, primarily from the base of the coved ceiling and from semi-opaque panels flush with the underside of the projecting balconies. Today, the lighting is supplemented by a large central crystal chandelier that was added in 1962, small crystal chandeliers at the ceiling of each box at the fifth floor balcony level, recessed spot lighting along the north side of the ceiling, and sconces that were added to the piers.

The Ballroom has been remodeled over the years, but beginning in 1983 alterations have reversed earlier decorative schemes that had deviated from the original design. In particular, the ballroom’s paint scheme has returned to its original light, warm palette of a champagne color with gold and silver accents and the large decorative grilles at each side of the proscenium, previously obscured with hangings, have been uncovered and finished with gold and silver.

Galleries: Ringing the perimeter of the ballroom proper are carpeted galleries that provide access to the main level and to the balconies at the fourth and fifth floors. Of note in the galleries are decorative wall grilles and metal stairways.

### Significant Features

- Room configuration and volume, including two balcony levels and galleries
- Floor to ceiling piers along the east, west, and south perimeter
- Cantilevered balconies and boxes with rounded corners and applied decorative patterns
- Large rectangular decorative wood (or composition) grilles in the northeast and northwest corners, flanking proscenium and on side walls; foliate, floral design that includes birds
- Figurative bas-relief wall panels at the upper level of the room’s corners
- Large central ceiling panel with figurative bas-relief with metallic finish
- Ornamental coved and stepped ceiling with low relief designs along perimeter soffit that shields the lighting

- Light-colored palette of the painted surfaces; metallic finish for trim and decorative features
- Wood strip flooring in the center of the room (beneath carpeting)
- Galleries: decorative metalwork grilles; decorative metal staircase railings; ceiling with plaster medallions

#### Alterations

- Openings at dance-floor from galleries are larger than in original configuration
- Addition of marble-tile cladding to the piers at main level
- Light fixtures, including sconces at piers, large crystal chandelier and small chandeliers at balcony boxes, recessed spot lighting (c.1982).
- Repainted/refinished walls, balconies, and ceiling, including bas-relief panels
- Addition of padded railing extensions on balconies
- Security cameras on ceiling; non-historic carpeting
- Galleries: wallpaper; replacement ceiling light fixtures; and decorative metal wall grilles painted at fifth floor



Grand Ballroom, Corner Figurative Bas-relief



Grand Ballroom, View South, 1931  
*(The Wolfsonian—Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection)*



Grand Ballroom, View West



Grand Ballroom Ceiling



Corner Balconies with Decorative Bas-relief

## 12. BALLROOM ENTRANCE HALL (originally Silver Gallery)

As described in 1935: *“The Silver Gallery is a gallery of mirrors. The piers are of matched hawewood with soft grey satin finish. All decorations and lighting fixtures are of silver and crystal.”*

Located between the Lexington Avenue Stairs to the east and the Ballroom Foyer to the west, this nearly 200-foot long hall is one of the most opulent and richly finished spaces in the hotel. The vaulted hall with hanging crystal chandeliers, mirrored walls and doors, is noteworthy for its painted murals, decorative grilles, embossed frames, and nickel-bronze elevator doors with bas-relief figural and floral panels. The relief panels on the polished elevator doors consist of a circle with two classically draped women, one with a lute, and the other with a harp. These elevator doors have the same design as those in the East Arcade.

Adding to the decor of the room are the 19<sup>th</sup>-century allegorical murals by American artist Edward Simmons. Most of these dream-like murals depict draped female figures and putti. They were salvaged from the Astor Gallery, a Rococo-inspired ballroom in the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. The murals were adapted to this narrower space, framing them with decorative wood molding along sections of the vaulting.

### Significant Features

- Hall configuration and volume
- Arched bays with transoms with multi-light beveled mirrors within silver-colored frames
- Barrel-vaulted ceiling with decorative trim at spring line and panels
- Ceiling murals by Edward Simmons, salvaged from the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel
- Ceiling medallions, decorative grilles, and trim finished with a silver-color finish
- Pairs of nickel-bronze elevator doors with bas-relief figural and floral patterns and decorative white metal “transom bars” above
- Elevator floor indicators mounted on mirrored surface above elevator doors
- Nickel-bronze metal and glass doors and mirrored transom at 49<sup>th</sup> Street end of corridor
- Multi-light glass or mirrored wood doors, mirrored sidelights; some doors with decorative brass doorknob plates with an incised figurative pattern
- Black and white mosaic floor in a checkered pattern (significant early alteration that replaced carpets over a wood floor)
- Black marble baseboards
- Use of smooth wood wall panels with highlighted wood grain
- Historic use of crystal chandeliers

### Alterations

- Installation of recessed spot lighting in ceiling
- Replacement smooth wood panels on walls
- Replacement of crystal chandeliers with larger chandeliers
- Sections of ceiling repainted; paint glaze on trim at spring line and around murals
- Wall signage



Ballroom Entrance Hall (Silver Gallery), 1931, View North  
(*The Wolfsonian—Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection*)





Ballroom Entrance Hall (Silver Gallery), View North



Ballroom Entrance Hall (Silver Gallery), View South with Elevators and Doors to 49<sup>th</sup> Street Stairs

### 13. (GRAND) BALLROOM FOYER

(East Foyer)

As described in 1935: *“The Grand Ballroom Foyer is modern in design. The color scheme is carried out in different tones of ivory with floral patterns on the ceilings and walls. From three large domes are hung crystal chandeliers giving direct and semi-direct lighting.”*

Located between the Ballroom Entrance Hall (Silver Gallery) and the Grand Ballroom, this spacious room (87 feet by 40 feet) has an aisle along the east side that leads to a wide staircase at the south end. This staircase serves a mezzanine that overlooks this foyer and provides access to the fourth-floor balcony of the Grand Ballroom.

Notable features include the marble-clad piers along its north-south walls, decorative wall grilles, beveled-mirrored transoms along the east, west, and north walls, decorative metal railings along the staircase and the mezzanine, and ornamental plaster ceilings and trim.

The replacement crystal chandeliers hang from large domed wells that are ringed with a low-relief of painted plaster peacocks. The area below the mezzanine along the south wall, originally open with two pairs of columns, has been closed off with mirrored doors and marble panels. The doors leading to the ballroom, to the Ballroom Entrance Hall, and at the north end of the room were originally mirrored.

#### Significant Features

- Room configuration and spatial volume generally intact with a side aisle to the east and a staircase and mezzanine at the south end of the aisle
- Light gray marble pilasters on piers framing openings, edged with stylized fluting and topped with slim stylized capitals
- Beveled mirrored transoms over door openings at north, east and west walls
- Decorative metal railing design at both staircase and mezzanine
- Decorative grilles above mirrored transoms, above lintels along portals separating the main room from the aisle, at lower sections of the east and west outer walls, and larger decorative grilles above doors along north wall
- Decorative plaster ceiling trim in a floral pattern around the perimeter of the room and in a stylized peacock pattern around the deeply recessed wells for the chandeliers
- Historic use of crystal chandeliers in main room and east aisle; decorative ceiling domes
- Paneled ceilings and the use of hanging light fixtures in aisle
- Use of a light, warm palette

#### Alterations

- Original volume altered slightly by closing off the space beneath the mezzanine with the addition of a wall with mirrored doors and new marble panels
- Replacement doors that lead into the Ballroom Entrance Hall and the Grand Ballroom
- Paint applied to decorative grilles above each mirrored transom
- Replacement of original crystal chandeliers with larger crystal chandeliers; addition of recessed spot lighting in the ceiling
- Non-historic wall and ceiling paint finishes and color scheme; non-historic carpet



Ballroom Foyer, 1931, View South  
*(The Wolfsonian–Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection)*



Ballroom Foyer, View Southwest toward Mezzanine

## 14. BASILDON ROOM (Jade Room Foyer)

As described in 1935: “Features of the room include ... painted cornices, exceptionally fine paneling, a marble mantel attributed to John Flaxman, the sculptor ... (and) at regular intervals between the panels are large casement mirror doors and curtains reproduced precisely to the original design. The general color scheme...is carried out in greys... light pinks, and maroon with touches of emerald greens.”

Located at the north end of the Ballroom Entrance Hall, this 48- by 37-foot room is unique to the Waldorf with its installation of ceiling murals and fireplace mantel that were removed from the dining room of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Basildon Park Estate in England. Other notable features of the room include the painted decorative plaster walls and the mirrored doors along the south wall.

Basildon was built in 1776, designed by John Carr of York, but the ceiling murals are said to date from the 1840s when the dining room was remodeled. These 19<sup>th</sup>-century oil paintings in the shape of medallions and lunettes depict scenes from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. The decoration of the walls and the style of the mantel exhibit a delicate neo-classical style. Original doors and transoms were mirrored. A large floral-patterned area rug originally covered a wood floor.

### Significant Features

- Room configuration and spatial volume
- Low relief plaster wall decoration with grilles, swags and urns
- Marble fireplace mantel salvaged from the Basildon Estate; mirror with embossed frame
- Ceiling murals from the 1840s salvaged from the Basildon Estate
- Ceiling panels, trim, center medallion and textured designs that are similar to the scheme from the Basildon Estate dining room
- Mirrored doors and transoms along the south wall
- Metallic paint finishes
- Historic use of crystal chandelier

### Alterations

- Replacement of mirrored doors and transoms with wood-paneled doors and transoms at the east and west walls and at center bay of south wall
- Addition of dark wood wainscoting
- Removal of sections of applied trim on the large mirror over the fireplace
- Removal of two decorative plaster grilles and installation of utilitarian metal grates along south wall
- Addition of wall sconces; chandelier replaced with similar fixture; recessed spot lighting in ceiling
- Non-historic wall and ceiling paint finishes and color scheme
- Non-historic carpet



Basildon Room, 1931, View Northeast  
*(The Wolfsonian—Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection)*



Basildon Room, View Northeast

## 15. JADE ROOM

As described in 1935: *“The walls of the Jade room are painted jade green. All carvings and ornaments are in gold. Pilasters and columns of the large window at the north end of the room are of Italian vert mentalto marble. Lighting is direct, from crystal and gold chandeliers”*

This event room in the northeast corner of the third floor, is notable for the piers with paired marble pilasters, marble columns framing the windows on the north wall, the figurative bas-relief wall panels depicting rhythm and dance, two hanging chandeliers similar to the original, and decoration at the perimeter of the ceiling in the main central space. Like the Astor Gallery to the south, this 78- by 48-foot room is organized with side aisles, one to the east with tall windows with decorative metal grilles below each window, and another to the west providing access to the Basildon Room. Closets have been added at the corners of the aisles and mirrors now cover niches along the north and south walls. When built, the central portion of the floor was finished with maple for use as a dance floor.

### Significant Features:

- Room configuration and spatial volume of main center space
- Gray-green veined ivory-colored marble used for columns and pilasters with stylized capitals
- Piers frame squared openings into side aisles with paneled ceilings and hanging light fixtures
- Wood paneling within squared openings between piers
- Bas-relief figurative panels along the upper corners of the walls
- Ceiling medallions and ceiling decoration at the perimeter of center space and aisle ceilings
- Metallic finish on trim and decorative features
- Multi-light mirrored wood doors at south end of room with brass doorknob plates with an incised figurative pattern
- Historic use of crystal chandeliers

### Alterations

- Original volume within aisles altered slightly by the addition of corner closets
- Addition of sconces to piers; new indirect lighting shielded by projecting trim added to walls under figurative bas-relief panels; chandeliers replaced with similar fixtures; replacement of hanging light fixtures in side aisles; recessed spot lighting
- Addition of mirrors that cover two shallow niches along north and south walls within center space
- Altered design of column capitals to accommodate linear diffusers
- Installation of linear diffusers at lintels of openings to side aisles and at trim that runs above column and pilaster capitals
- Non-historic paint finishes and color scheme; bas-relief panels painted over
- Non-historic carpet; non-historic wallpaper
- Addition of speakers and sprinklers in ceiling



Jade Room, View North, 1931  
(*The Wolfsonian—Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection*)



Jade Room, View North

## 16. FOYER CONNECTING JADE ROOM and ASTOR GALLERY

This is a short corridor connecting the Jade Room and the Astor Gallery with the Lexington Avenue Stairs. Like many of the other rooms, there are decorative wall and ceiling grilles with a metallic finish and bronze-color painted crown molding. Midway along the west wall is a pair of glazed doors with transom and sidelights that allow views into the Lexington Avenue Stairs Landing.

### Significant Features:

- Room configuration and spatial volume
- Decorative wall and ceiling grilles with metallic finish
- Decorative crown molding
- Portal to Lexington Stairs Landing
- Brass doorknob plates with an incised figurative pattern

### Alterations

- Wall and ceiling refinished with non-historic wallpaper and paint
- Recessed spot lighting added to ceiling
- Non-historic carpet



Foyer Connecting Jade Room and Astor Gallery, View South



## 17. ASTOR GALLERY

(Jacob Astor Salon)

As described in 1935: *“The design is a modern treatment of Louis Seize character. Panels on the walls depict rhythm and the dance. Pilasters are finished in ivory while the room itself is in soft tons of French greys. All ornaments and lighting fixtures are of gold. The hangings and rug are blue-green.” Two large crystal and gold chandeliers in the center with similar chandeliers in the side aisles provide the lighting.”*

This event room, located in the southeast corner of the third floor, is notable for its arched openings set between piers with paired ivory-painted pilasters, figurative bas-relief wall panels depicting rhythm and dance, two large hanging chandeliers, and the perimeter decoration at the central ceiling. Like the Jade Room to the north, this 78- by 48- foot room is organized with side aisles, one to the east with metal windows with decorative grilles beneath, and another to the west with access to the Ballroom Entrance Hall. A fireplace has been added to the south wall of the central space, closets have been added to the corners of the side aisles, and mirrors cover niches along the north and south walls.

### Significant Features:

- Room configuration and spatial volume of center space
- Arched openings into the groin-vaulted side aisles with hanging light fixtures
- Ivory-painted fluted wood pilasters with metallic-painted stylized capitals
- Bas-relief figurative panels along the upper corners of the walls
- Beveled mirrored transom at north wall
- Metallic finish on trim and decorative features
- Multi-light mirrored wood doors at north end of room with decorative bronze doorknob plates with an incised figurative pattern
- Historic use of crystal chandeliers

### Alterations

- Original volume within aisles altered slightly by the addition of corner closets
- Addition of a fireplace along the south wall (original marble columns appear to be intact behind fireplace)
- Removal of original decorative metal grilles at spandrel panels
- Addition of mirrors that cover two shallow niches along north and south walls within center space
- Addition of sconces to piers; new indirect lighting shielded by projecting trim added to walls under figurative panels; chandeliers replaced with similar fixtures; replacement of hanging light fixtures in side aisles, recessed spot lighting
- Addition of chair rails
- Installation of linear diffusers above arched openings to side aisles
- Non-historic paint finishes and color scheme; bas-relief panels painted over
- Non-historic carpet; non-historic wallpaper
- Addition of speakers and sprinklers in ceiling



Astor Gallery, View Southwest with Columns, 1931  
(*The Wolfsonian–Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection*)



Astor Gallery, View Southwest (Columns Removed)

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this Interior, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Interiors, ground floor interior, consisting of the Park Avenue vestibules and foyer, the Lexington Avenue vestibules and foyer; first floor interior, consisting of the Park Avenue Lobby and colonnade, West Lounge (formerly Peacock Alley), West Elevator Lobby, Main Lobby, Main Lobby Hall, East Arcade, Lexington Avenue stairs and landing; second floor interior, consisting of the Lexington Avenue stairs and landing; third floor interior, consisting of the Lexington Avenue stairs and landing, the Grand (Main) Ballroom and balconies, Ballroom Entrance Hall (originally Silver Gallery), (Grand) Ballroom Foyer, Basildon Room, Jade Room, Astor Gallery, foyer connecting Jade Room and Astor Gallery with Lexington Avenue stairs; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces including but not limited to the wall surfaces, ceiling surfaces and floor surfaces, murals, mirrors, chandeliers, all lighting fixtures, attached furnishings, doors, elevator doors, grilles, railings, balustrades, decorative metalwork and attached decorative elements; has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, and that these interiors are customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Interiors are part of one of New York City's most prominent hotels; that it was designed by Schultze & Weaver, an architectural firm that specialized in luxury hotels; that it opened in 1931 and was designated a New York City Landmark in 1993; that the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Interiors include the primary public spaces, considered some of the finest and most varied Art Deco interiors in New York; that these spaces, along with the adjoining corridors, form a memorable sequence of visually-connected spaces, tied to the experience of procession; that when entering from Park Avenue, these spaces flow seamlessly without interruption, expanding and contracting, from the ground level to the third (ballroom) floor; that all of these rooms have had alterations and some exhibit new finishes but most retain their original volume and share such unifying elements as gilded plaster reliefs, nickel-bronze metalwork, glazed doors, mirrored walls, and various types of wood paneling; that the first (lobby) floor includes the lofty Park Avenue Lobby, a gracious entrance hall with a floor mosaic and murals by the French artist Louis Rigal, the elegant Main Lobby, featuring black marble columns and an elaborate plaster ceiling; that this room is located mid-way between Park and Lexington Avenue; that it displays a free-standing clock, bearing portraits of American presidents and Queen Victoria; that it was created in 1893 and was purchased for the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in the 1910s and has stood at the center of this room since the late 1960s; that at the east end of the first floor are elevators with handsome metals doors and stairs that incorporate metalwork resembling "frozen fountains," that these stairs ascend to the third (ballroom) floor, where the Ballroom Entrance Hall (originally Silver Gallery) connects four ballrooms; that this long corridor incorporates 16 paintings by the American artist Edward Emerson Simmons; that these artworks are among the only features salvaged from the hotel's original building; that the Grand (Main) Ballroom is one of the largest event spaces in New York City; that it is arranged on three levels and can hold more than 1,500 guests; that this fabled room has hosted countless celebrations, including balls, benefits and banquets; that the third floor also contains the Basildon Room, with ceiling panels

from an 18th-century Palladian-style villa in England, as well as the more low-key Jade Room and Astor Gallery; that the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel has often been called “New York’s Unofficial Palace;” that this transient and residential hotel has stylish lobbies and sizable ballrooms; that since opening the Waldorf-Astoria has hosted far too many guests to count, from international dignitaries and celebrities to long-term residents and members of New York society; and that in a city where relatively few hotels preserve their historic interiors, these handsome public rooms remain important for their understated Art Deco character and lasting cultural significance.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Interior Landmark, the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Interiors, ground floor interior, consisting of the Park Avenue vestibules and foyer, the Lexington Avenue vestibules and foyer; first floor interior, consisting of the Park Avenue Lobby and colonnade, West Lounge (formerly Peacock Alley), West Elevator Lobby, Main Lobby, Main Lobby Hall, East Arcade, Lexington Avenue stairs and landing; second floor interior, consisting of the Lexington Avenue stairs and landing; third floor interior, consisting of the Lexington Avenue stairs and landing, the Grand (Main) Ballroom and balconies, Ballroom Entrance Hall (originally Silver Gallery), (Grand) Ballroom Foyer, Basildon Room, Jade Room, Astor Gallery, foyer connecting Jade Room and Astor Gallery with Lexington Avenue stairs; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces including but not limited to the wall surfaces, ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, murals, mirrors, chandeliers, all lighting fixtures, attached furnishings, doors, elevator doors, grilles, railings, balustrades, decorative metalwork and attached decorative elements; 301 Park Avenue (aka 101-121 East 49<sup>th</sup> Street, 100-120 East 50<sup>th</sup> Street, 538-556 Lexington Avenue), Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1304, Lot 7501, as its Landmark Site.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin, Michael Devonshire, Michael Goldblum

John Gustafsson, Jeanne Lufty, Adi Shamir-Baron, Commissioners