



The Hotel Belleclaire opened southwest of 77th Street on Broadway in 1903. (Credit: Emilio Guerra)

REAL ESTATE

Inside NYC's oldest hotels: Celebrity tales, literary wunderkinds and one famous cat

By Cristian Salazar March 29, 2016

ADVI

Some of the most fabled buildings in New York City are its grand old hotels. Over the decades, they have sheltered the world's most famous artists, presidents, kings and celebrities. Here are 17 of the city's most legendary hotels, from the artistic mecca of the Algonquin to the palatial Waldorf Astoria.

Research for this story was based on reports from the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission as well as several books, including Stan Turkel's invaluable "Built To Last: 100+ Year-Old Hotels in New York."

Aberdeen Hotel



The former Aberdeen Hotel, which opened at 17 W. 32nd St. in 1904, was among the first hotels in the 1920s [to allow women to stay by themselves](#) without men at their sides. There were also fewer rules. The hotel is now La Quinta Inn Manhattan, which boasts of being “newly renovated.”

(Credit: Emilio Guerra)

Algonquin Hotel



A few years after it opened in 1902 in the city's Theater District, the 12-story Algonquin Hotel became a literary and artistic mecca. After the First World War, it was home to the Round Table, a gathering of artists and writers that included Dorothy Parker and New Yorker magazine founder Harold Ross. Orson Welles spent his honeymoon there. Today the hotel continues to draw artists and writers because of its legacy. In recent years, much attention has been showered on its [famous resident cat](#), Matilda, who helps host an annual feline fashion show.

(Credit: Getty/Peter Kramer)

Ansonia Hotel



The Ansonia Hotel, which opened on Broadway between 73rd and 74th streets in 1904, has been described by the Landmarks Preservation Commission as a “symbol of an era of opulence and elegance.” Built to serve as an apartment hotel, the building had over 300 suites and over 1,200 rooms; pneumatic tubes delivered messages throughout the 550,000 square feet of space. At one point, the building was home to the world’s largest indoor pool, [New York magazine reported](#). Today the Ansonia offers apartments for rent or sale.

(Credit: Library of Congress)

Hotel Belleclaire



The [Hotel Belleclaire](#), which opened southwest of 77th Street on Broadway in 1903, was originally intended to serve wealthy clientele seeking apartment hotel rooms. Russian author Maxim Gorky was famously kicked out of the hotel in 1906 as bad press swirled around his visit to the U.S. Its reputation declined over the years. During the 1939 World’s Fair, double rooms at the hotel were advertised for as little as \$2.50 a night. In recent years, in an attempt to freshen up the hotel, the Belleclaire’s owners have refurbished its guest rooms and restored its lobby.

(Credit: Emilio Guerra)

Hotel Chelsea



The Hotel Chelsea, which opened in 1884, has sheltered a galaxy of artists, writers and rock stars over the decades. A short list includes: Thomas Wolfe, Jackson Pollock, Edie Sedgwick, Bob Dylan, Patti Smith, Dennis Hopper and Ethan Hawke. Sid Vicious, of the Sex Pistols, fatally stabbed his girlfriend Nancy Spungen, there in 1978. It was where Arthur C. Clarke wrote "2001: A Space Odyssey" and Jack Kerouac penned "On The Road." And on and on and on. The Hotel Chelsea has been undergoing renovations in recent years and is slated to reopen in 2016.

(Credit: Getty/AFP/Timothy A. Clary)

Cosmopolitan Hotel



The Cosmopolitan Hotel, the [oldest hotel](#) in New York, was built in 1845. Although it doesn't have the starry historical trappings of fellow grand old hotels, it started out serving the railroad traveler when a railroad was nearby. Over the decades, it has served a business class, and the budget traveler. These days, it is described in guidebooks as an inexpensive but clean historic hotel.

(Credit: Flickr/Katie Killary)

Iroquois Hotel



Just down the street from the Algonquin Hotel on West 44th Street, the Iroquois New York Hotel opened in 1900. Although it does not have the same reputation for being an artistic and literary mecca as the Algonquin, it has had its share of celebrity visits. James Dean lived there for a time in the 1950s, and Johnny Depp was said to have stayed there at one point. Today its owners advertise the hotel as a “luxurious” midtown refuge.

(Credit: Flickr/Jeff Kocan)

Knickerbocker Hotel



The Knickerbocker Hotel, built by the Astor family and completed in 1906, is a grand hotel in the Beaux-Arts style in Times Square. It initially operated as a hotel only until Prohibition, when it was converted into offices. One of its main tenants was Newsweek magazine. In the 2000s, the building's new owner, the royal family of Dubai, announced it would restore the Knickerbocker to its glory as a luxury hotel.

(Credit: Library of Congress)

Hotel Keller



Preservationists have called the Keller Hotel, completed in 1898, a "[luckless landmark](#)." The building, at 150 Barrow Street, was given landmark status in 2007. But it has languished since then. Built near the Hudson River, for years it was in a prime location to attract business from the ferry and cruise ship docks as well as transient sailors. But with the decline of the maritime industry, the hotel flagged. It was recognized as one of the last "[surviving turn-of-the-century Hudson River waterfront hotels](#)."

(Credit: Emilio Guerra)

Hotel Marseilles



The Hotel Marseilles, completed in 1905 at the corner of West 103rd Street and Broadway, was built in the Beaux-Arts style to serve as an apartment hotel complex. Largely because of its architecture, it received landmark status in 1990. The West Side Federation For Senior and Supportive Housing, Inc. purchased the building in 1978, converting it into apartments for seniors and handicapped persons with low income.

(Credit: Emilio Guerra)

Martha Washington Hotel



The 12-story Martha Washington Hotel, which opened at 30 E. 30th St. in 1903, was the city's [first hotel built to cater exclusively to professional women](#). And it stayed women-only until 1998. Today it continues to operate as a hotel, its 261 guest rooms serving everyone.

(Credit: Emilio Guerra)

Hotel Martinique



The Hotel Martinique, built at 1260 Broadway and completed in 1911, was a major work by the architect Henry J. Hardenbergh. Hardenbergh designed the original Waldorf and Astoria Hotels as well as the Plaza. The 16-story Martinique was designed to be a sumptuous luxury hotel. In subsequent years, it housed a theater, served as emergency housing for the homeless and was one of the city's most infamous welfare hotels. Today it's serving travelers once again as the Radisson Martinique on Broadway.

(Credit: Emilio Guerra)

Peninsula Hotel



Originally known as the Gotham Hotel, completed in 1905, this luxurious respite for the traveler was built in neo-Italian Renaissance style on one of the most heavily trafficked areas of Fifth Avenue in the city. After years of neglect, The Peninsula Hotels Group purchased the hotel in 1988. It's now known as the Peninsula New York.

(Credit: Emilio Guerra)

Plaza Hotel



The Plaza has been called “the most elegant of our great New York City hotels.” It stands gracefully at Central Park South facing Fifth Avenue in a European-style plaza that is almost unique to the city. Completed in 1905, over the decades it has played host to dignitaries, celebrities and world-renowned artists and architects. In receiving landmark status, it was described as adding “immeasurably to the beauty of the skyline of New York City.”

(Credit: Getty/Peter Kramer)

Hotel St. George



The Hotel St. George was constructed between 1865 and 1929 in the historic Brooklyn Heights neighborhood. For a time, it was the largest hotel in the U.S., a complex with over 2,000 guest rooms built to fill an entire city block. The buildings were connected at the basement level. It had a large indoor pool. Presidents were said to have sheltered there. After a decline that began in the 1960s, the hotel was converted to apartments and student housing.

(Credit: Brooklyn Museum/Brooklyn Public Library)

St. Regis Hotel



The 19-story St. Regis Hotel, on Fifth Avenue, takes its place among the grandest of old hotels. Commissioned by the Astor family, it was designed in the Beaux-Arts style and remained one of the most luxurious places to spend a night in the city for decades. Today it continues to operate as a swank hotel, with 171 guest rooms and 67 suites. Rooms have silk wall coverings, "antique accents" and butler service.

(Credit: Getty/Paul Hawthorne)

Waldorf-Astoria Hotel



Built between 1929 and 1931, this is the second hotel to bear the Waldorf Astoria name. The first was razed to make room for the Empire State Building. The second Waldorf Astoria was designed in Art Deco style with a twin-towered skyscraper. Presidents and kings have all lived at the Waldorf Astoria in the decades since it was completed. The New York Times called it "New York's Unofficial Palace."

(Credit: Emilio Guerra)