



An American Tour: **20**



New York's *Waldorf=Astoria*

On March 24, 1893, millionaire William Waldorf Astor opened the 13-story Waldorf Hotel on the site, which had formerly boasted his mansion, at Fifth Avenue at 33rd Street. Built by renowned architect Henry Hardenbergh, The Waldorf was the embodiment of Astor's vision of a grand hotel, complete with electricity throughout and private bathrooms in many guest chambers - two of a long list of Waldorf firsts. Four years later, The Waldorf was joined by the 17-story Astoria Hotel, erected on an adjacent site by Waldorf's cousin, John Jacob Astor IV. The corridor built to connect the two buildings became an enduring symbol of the combined Waldorf and Astoria hotels - it is represented by the "=" in The Waldorf=Astoria

In 1929, after decades of hosting distinguished visitors from around the world, a decision was made to tear down the original Waldorf=Astoria Hotel in order to erect the Empire State Building and pave the way for a reincarnation 15 blocks north on Park Avenue. The current Waldorf=Astoria opened on October 1, 1931 as the world's largest and tallest hotel, a veritable city-within-a-city. President Herbert Hoover himself delivered the radio broadcast message of congratulations at the opening of the hotel.

The Waldorf=Astoria is an Art Deco masterpiece, and was the world's largest hotel when it opened. The hotel was recognized as an official New York City Landmark in January 1993. During recent renovations totaling in excess of \$200 million, many of the hotel's original Art Deco treasures were rediscovered and unveiled, delighting a whole new generation of devoted admirers of the Waldorf=Astoria.

The Waldorf=Astoria celebrates its many famous firsts.

- At its opening, the Waldorf=Astoria was the largest hotel in the world.
- The Empire Room, which was once the premier entertainment club in New York, helped launch the careers of Diana Ross and Frank Sinatra.
- Ginger Rogers appeared in the first major film to feature a hotel, Weekend at the Waldorf.
- The Waldorf=Astoria was the first hotel to abolish the "Ladies Entrance."
- The Waldorf=Astoria was the first hotel to start the practice of having assistant managers in the lobby to greet and assist guests with their needs.
- The Waldorf=Astoria was the first hotel to be included in the lyrics of a Broadway show. The lyrics from Cole Porter's "You're the Top", featured in Anything Goes proclaim "You're a Waldorf Salad."
- The Waldorf=Astoria was the first hotel to introduce room service.
- The Waldorf Towers was the first hotel to suggest people live permanently in private suites. [<http://waldorfastoria.hilton.com>]

