

WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL INTERIORS

301 Park Avenue (aka 101-121 East 49th Street, 100-120 East 50th Street, 538-556 Lexington Avenue), Borough of Manhattan

Block / Lot: 1304/7501

Built: 1929-31

Architect: Schultze and Weaver, with Lloyd Morgan, partner in charge

Style: Art Deco

Actions: Hotel designated an Individual Landmark in 1993, interiors proposed for the Commission's Calendar on November 1, 2016

The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel opened in September 1931. Considered one of New York City's most prominent and culturally significant hotels, it was designed by Schultze and Weaver, an architectural firm that specialized in hotels during the 1920s and 1930s. While the exterior became a New York City landmark in 1993, the Commission now proposes to designate as an interior Landmark the most lavish public spaces, including interconnected rooms and corridors on the ground, first, second and third floors. Architect Lloyd Morgan, the partner who headed the project, combined Art Deco and Modern Classical style motifs to create a strikingly elegant hotel that has played host to an impressive roster of American and foreign guests, including numerous political leaders and popular entertainers.



The first floor includes the lofty Park Avenue Foyer, a gracious entry hall with 13 murals and an immense floor mosaic by the French artist Louis Rigal, as well as the elegant wood-paneled Main Lobby, with soaring black marble pillars and stunning ceiling reliefs. At the east end of the first floor, near Lexington Avenue, elevators with distinctive metal doors

and double staircases with "frozen fountain" balustrades ascend to the third floor and the glittering Silver Gallery, a long mirrored hallway with a black-and-white mosaic floor that links four ballrooms. It also has a coved ceiling that incorporates paintings by the American artist Edward Emerson Simmons. These 12 murals depict the months of the year and are among the only features salvaged from the hotel's original Fifth Avenue building.

The Grand Ballroom, one of the largest event spaces in the New York City, can accommodate as many as 1,550 guests. Arranged on three levels, it has projecting balconies and an elaborate gilt ceiling relief. This fabled room has hosted countless dinners, banquets, galas and balls, including the annual Alfred E. Smith Dinner, a fundraiser for Catholic charities that often attracts major presidential candidates, and the Beaux Arts Ball, where in 1931 various architects dressed as their own buildings, including Leonard Schultze, architect of the hotel. The third floor also contains the Basildon Room, which has colorful wall and ceiling panels acquired from an 18th century British mansion, as well as the more restrained Jade Room and Astor Gallery. These memorable interiors have had alterations and sometimes exhibit new finishes but most retain their original dimensions and share such unifying elements as gilded plaster reliefs, nickel-bronze metalwork, glazed doors, mirrored walls and various types of exotic wood paneling.

The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel is one of two major early 20th-century hotels in New York City that have preserved many of their original public spaces. While the Plaza Hotel, which had its interiors designated in 2005, features Renaissance Revival style decoration, the Waldorf is notable and unique for containing some of the finest and most culturally significant Art Deco interiors in New York City.



