

WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL,

301-319 Park Avenue (a/k/a 538-556 Lexington Avenue), Borough of Manhattan.
Built 1929-31; architects Schultze & Weaver (Lloyd Morgan, designer).

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1304, Lot 1.

On September 11, 1990, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 12). The hearing was continued to December 11, 1990 (Item No. 2). Both hearings were duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation; two letters were received in support of designation. There were no speakers against the proposed designation. The owners have subsequently indicated that they support the proposed designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel and Towers, which recently celebrated its 60th anniversary on Park Avenue, was built in 1929-31 to be the second home of an internationally known, hundred-year-old New York establishment. Unlike its palatial predecessor on Fifth Avenue at 34th Street, the new Waldorf combined a transient hotel and a related but separate residential tower into a 625-foot-high skyscraper, one of the city's tallest at the time, located in the major new skyscraper office building district developing around Park Avenue near Grand Central Terminal. The architect of the hotel and towers, Lloyd Morgan of the firm of Schultze & Weaver, designed the complex in a sedate but handsome version of the modernistic style now generally referred to as Art Deco, adapting the skyscraper form and an up-to-date look to a conservative traditional establishment. The chief elements of the Waldorf's design include its modernistic massing as a twin-towered skyscraper; the gray limestone base with matching, specially made "Waldorf Gray" brick above; vertical rows of windows and modernistic spandrels; and bronze entryways, marquees, lanterns, and other ornament. Since opening, the hotel and the Towers have been home to some of the world's most famous figures, including presidents, kings and other potentates. The Waldorf-Astoria, continuing to serve as "New York's Unofficial Palace" (as it was once dubbed by the *New York Times*), remains one of the city's great hotels and major social establishments, and among the handsomest, if most sedate, of the city's Art Deco skyscrapers. Its great modernistic twin towers still form a very visible part of the skyline of midtown Manhattan.

The Waldorf-Astoria

The history of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel begins with the history of the Astor family, German immigrants from the town of Walldorf.¹

The family's vast wealth originated in the fur trade, but was consolidated by the acquisition of cheap farmland on the outskirts of early nineteenth-century New York that later became valuable midtown real estate.

One such piece of farmland, a rural tract crossed by Sunfish Creek when acquired by William Backhouse Astor in 1827, evolved into a substantial piece of Midtown Manhattan including the intersection of Fifth Avenue and 34th Street.² By the 1850s, this part of Fifth Avenue was lined with the palatial homes of such millionaires as the Vanderbilts and A.T. Stewart (the "merchant prince," one of New York's wealthiest residents). The Astors themselves moved from Astor Place to Fifth Avenue in 1859 when John Jacob Astor, Jr., built his house at the northwest corner of Fifth and 33rd Street; shortly thereafter his brother William Waldorf Astor built an adjoining house at the southwest corner of Fifth and 34th Street.³ The Astor houses soon became known as a central meeting place of New York "society," and home to the balls given by Mrs. Astor for "the four hundred," a phrase coined by social arbiter Ward McAllister to describe the number of people who could fit into Mrs. Astor's ballroom, and understood to include the city's wealthiest and most socially prominent residents.

In 1890, following an unsuccessful run for Congress, William Waldorf Astor moved to England.⁴ By this time, Manhattan's hotels, theaters, clubs and restaurants had followed residential development up Fifth Avenue. One city guide identified "the great hotel district" as lying "between 23d and 59th Streets, and Fourth and Seventh Avenues" and noted that "in that territory, which is little less than two miles long by a half mile wide, are half of the leading hotels of the metropolis."⁵ Astor, rather than giving up his house site, redeveloped it with a thirteen-story hotel, designed by one of turn-of-the-century New York's most prominent architects, Henry Janeway Hardenbergh, in a style derived from German Renaissance models.

The Waldorf Hotel opened in 1893 with a benefit concert of the New York Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Walter Damrosch, that attracted society figures from New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Under the management of George Boldt, formerly of the Bellevue Hotel in Philadelphia, the Waldorf soon became known as a gathering place for the city's society, a successor in that capacity to the Astors' private homes. Christened "New York's unofficial palace" by the *New York Times*,⁶ the hotel became not only a residence for visitors to the city, but also a social facility for members of prominent New York families, people who formerly would have entertained guests only at home, but did so now at the Waldorf Hotel.

The Waldorf's success very soon led to the building of an annex, on the site of the adjoining mansion belonging to John Jacob Astor, Jr. The 17-story addition, also designed by Hardenbergh, linked up with the original, but, because of less than cordial relations between the two branches of the family, remained a separate structure, with the proviso that if relations further soured the two buildings could be internally sealed off from each other. The new hotel, called the Astoria, opened in 1897. Eventually the two came to be referred to jointly as the "Waldorf-Astoria." The combined establishment continued as a center for the large parties given by the very wealthy. Oscar Tschirky, the maitre d'hotel who choreographed social events at the hotel, became famous, and wealthy, as "Oscar of the Waldorf." A corridor connecting two public rooms, the Palm and Empire, became known as "Peacock Alley" for the display of finery worn by promenading guests and visitors.

In 1918, following the death of manager George Boldt, the Waldorf-Astoria left the Astor family's hands.⁷ The hotel was acquired by General Coleman DuPont, who hired hotelier Lucius Boomer to manage the business. Boomer, originally with the Flagler hotels in Florida, had run a string of successful hotels and recently been named manager of the new McAlpin Hotel on 34th Street just west of the Waldorf-Astoria. DuPont reportedly made the offer by saying, "Boomer, I'll buy the Waldorf if you'll run it."⁸ DuPont

and Boomer formed a development corporation, and together they acquired and built other hotels.

The Waldorf-Astoria flourished under Boomer's management for another decade, but ultimately fell victim to the increasing commercialization of the area and to the effects of Prohibition on the hotel and restaurant business in general. The Waldorf-Astoria closed its doors in the spring of 1929; the site was sold to the developers of what was to become the Empire State Building, and Boomer retired to Florida. As a parting gesture, the board of directors sold Boomer the rights to the Waldorf-Astoria name for one dollar.⁹

Within days of his retirement to Florida, Boomer received a telegram from New York builder Louis Horowitz, asking if he would be interested in a proposal for a new, larger Waldorf-Astoria hotel. The telegram read, according to Boomer, "If you'll run it, I'll build it."¹⁰ Boomer agreed, and returned to New York, bringing with him the rights to the Waldorf-Astoria name.

The New Waldorf-Astoria¹¹

Boomer and Horowitz's plans for the new Waldorf-Astoria called for retaining as much of the traditional Waldorf image as possible -- including Oscar of the Waldorf himself, who came out of retirement to run the hotel's social functions -- but bringing it thoroughly up to date, with the best of twentieth-century technology and imagery.

By 1930 midtown hotels had left Herald Square and lower Fifth Avenue to relocate further north along, and east of, Fifth Avenue. Horowitz, however, chose not to relocate to the newer Fifth Avenue hotel district. Instead, he acquired a site in the heart of the city's newest office building development, the area just north of Grand Central Terminal along a landscaped and newly renamed Park Avenue which had been completely redeveloped over the underground train yards leading north from the Terminal. Located on the east side of Park Avenue, it encompassed the entire block between 49th and 50th streets and Park and Lexington Avenues; it was then occupied by the YMCA, American Express, and New York Central Powerhouse buildings.

For this very large site Horowitz and Boomer planned an institution substantially larger than the original Waldorf-Astoria hotel, and somewhat different in function. As George Boldt had made the original Waldorf a success by promoting the social innovation of private parties held in public places, so Horowitz and Boomer were to capitalize on changing residential patterns, which they helped create, by making the new Waldorf a hybrid: a cross between a transient and a residential hotel.

Up to this point in the history of Manhattan, for almost three centuries, wealthy residents had built private houses for themselves. The social set who patronized the original Waldorf maintained elaborate town houses with large staffs, or else lived in luxury apartment houses. Yet this same group spent much of the year outside New York, generally at resorts like Newport and Palm Beach, or in Europe. A growing and more convenient alternative to the town house in the early twentieth century was the residential hotel, which offered residents, whether families or "bachelors," all the conveniences of home, including housekeeping and restaurant services.¹²

Boomer elevated the concept of the residential hotel to heights of luxury as yet unknown, planning to offer his clientele private suites in "the Towers," a separate residential portion of the new hotel. Privacy for the suites would be insured by keeping their entrances separate from those of the main hotel lobbies, but residents would enjoy access to all the hotel's facilities, including kitchen staffs, wine cellars, and ballrooms. The new combination Waldorf and Towers, occupying an entire midtown block, would serve not only as hotel and residence, but also as transit hub and shopping arcade for a wider public, with restaurants, shops, exhibition halls, and so on, something of a city within a city.

Schultze & Weaver and Lloyd Morgan

Boomer and Horowitz commissioned the new Waldorf-Astoria from the firm of Schultze & Weaver, a logical choice for their new Park Avenue hotel. Leonard Schultze (1877-1951) had been chief of design for Grand Central Terminal from 1903 to 1911, and then "executive in charge of the design and construction of all buildings

relating to the terminal,"¹³ experience which made him particularly well qualified to handle the complexities of building a hotel over the Grand Central train yards. Spencer Fullerton Weaver, as founder and president of the Fullerton Weaver Realty Company, had built apartment houses elsewhere on Park Avenue. The firm of Schultze & Weaver, founded in 1921, specialized in the design and construction of hotels in New York and across the country. Their New York hotels included the Sherry-Netherland (1926) and the Pierre (1929) on Fifth Avenue, as well as the Park Lane and the Lexington. Elsewhere in the country they designed the Breakers in Palm Beach, the Atlanta Biltmore, and the Los Angeles Biltmore, as well as the Sevilla Biltmore in Havana.

The Waldorf's design is credited to Lloyd Morgan, then a new partner in the firm. Morgan (1892-1970) graduated from the Pratt Institute in 1911 and later studied at the University of Pennsylvania and M.I.T. Awarded the Paris Prize in 1921, he spent five years in Europe, studying for a time at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Joining the firm of Schultze & Weaver in 1926, Morgan was made a partner three years later. Outside the office he served as an acting professor of architecture at Yale and New York University and conducted his own classes -- the Atelier Morgan -- for students who could not afford to attend architectural school. Besides the Waldorf-Astoria, Morgan is credited with designing some of Schultze & Weaver's best-known buildings, including the Barbizon Plaza and the Pierre Hotel in New York, and the Miami Biltmore and Roney Plaza in Miami Beach.

The New Waldorf: a Skyscraper Hotel

The plans for the new Waldorf required a very big building, with separate but interconnected hotel and residence sections. Schultze & Weaver's response was to design a three-part structure: two 20-story slabs on Park and Lexington Avenues serving as hotel, with the 42-story residential Towers sandwiched between them. The hotel blocks would naturally be located on the more visible avenue frontages of the site. The Towers were to be entered discreetly from the more private side streets; the casual visitor to the hotel

might never notice the independent existence of the Towers at all. The bulky, low hotel slabs by themselves might have seemed simply an up-to-date version of the old palace-like Waldorf. With the 625-foot Towers, however, towering over major office buildings for blocks in all directions, the new Waldorf-Astoria, the "unofficial palace of New York," would not be a palace at all: it would be a skyscraper, and, perhaps taking its cue from the Empire State Building which had displaced its predecessor, the tallest hotel in the world.

Besides their obvious difference in height, the hotel and the Towers, though linked in one architectural design, took very different forms. The hotel portions are simple slabs fronting on Park and Lexington avenues; they rise straight up to simple setbacks at the level of their very top floors. The Towers, on the other hand, take the form of a modernistic skyscraper: lower wings at the lot line, from which the upper portion sets back and rises up in the form of tall twin towers joined by a connecting center, each tower rising to a modernistically capped peak. The obvious models for the twin-tower design would have been the contemporary twin-towered skyscraper apartment houses on Central Park West. Where such late-nineteenth-century apartment houses as Hardenbergh's Dakota, on Central Park West at 72nd Street, had been modeled on European palaces, by the late 1920s the new model had become the American skyscraper, producing the twin-towered Majestic, just across the street from the Dakota, followed by the Century, Eldorado and San Remo. Similarly, Hardenbergh's nineteenth-century Waldorf, modeled on a palace, was replaced by a late-1920s style twin-towered skyscraper hotel. Unlike the apartment buildings, however, whose twin towers are set parallel to the avenue, the Waldorf has its towers set perpendicular to the avenue, so the twin-tower effect is apparent only from a distance to the north or south.

The Waldorf was not the only or even the first tall hotel tower of its period; others included, in descending order of height, the Sherry-Netherland (1926, 514 feet), the Pierre (1929, 506'), the Ritz Tower (1925, 484'), the Barbizon Plaza (1930, 425'), the Savoy-Plaza (1927, 420'), the Shelton (1924, 412'), and the St. Moritz (1930, 395').¹⁴

The Waldorf was, however, the first and only one to adapt for hotel use the twin-towered model of Central Park West; the first to use the modernistic Art Deco style developed by skyscraper designers; and the first to compete with the truly tall office building skyscrapers -- at 625 feet, it was a dozen feet higher than the Singer Building on lower Broadway, which, when built in 1906, had been the tallest building in the world. Moreover, the Waldorf was built as a skyscraper hotel in a skyscraper district, as part of the newly redeveloped midtown emerging after World War I. Only a few blocks away could be found the Lefcourt Colonial, Lincoln, Chrysler, Chanin, and Daily News buildings, all on East 42nd Street, and the New York Central (now Helmsley) Building closing the vista of Park Avenue at 46th Street.

Schultze & Weaver's plans for the Waldorf tried to meet every possible need of the modern, wealthy traveler. One of their much noted novelties was an updated version of the old Waldorf's carriage entrance: a mid-block automobile driveway that not only passed under the Towers from 50th to 49th streets, but was also wide enough to permit cars to enter, drop off passengers, and, if necessary, turn around and exit onto the same one-way street, to avoid the loss of precious transportation minutes by making an unnecessary trip around the block. Taking advantage of the location beneath Park Avenue of the New York Central's railroad tracks leading into Grand Central, the architects arranged for the construction of a siding directly under the Waldorf, permitting wealthy patrons in search of privacy the opportunity to arrive below street level in their private railroad cars, and so enter the hotel or Towers undetected by the press or the public.

The Waldorf-Astoria: Modernistic design for a tradition-conscious establishment

The desire to remain faithful in some measure to the Victorian-era Waldorf while bringing it up to date can be detected in the history of the new building's ornamental treatment. Lloyd Morgan's original design for the new Waldorf-Astoria, while calling for a modernistically massed twin-towered skyscraper, nevertheless followed the conservative ornamental trends found in several late 1920s midtown skyscrapers, including the Lincoln

Building and the New York Central Building. The forms of these buildings followed the modern tower massing that developed in response to the requirements of New York City's 1916 zoning resolution, but continued the eclectic ornamental treatment, based on historical "styles," that had been popular until earlier in the 1920s. Morgan's early designs show the modernistic twin-towered Waldorf layered with Gothic-inspired ornament. As described in 1931 by architect and critic Kenneth Murchison, Morgan's first design was

*evidently based on a modernistic Gothic. Many little spear points hurl themselves upward all over the facades, giving a sort of a glorified Woolworth Tower-St. Patrick's Cathedral effect.*¹⁵

Murchison noted also that there was

*little indication here of the modern feeling which gradually crept into the design.*¹⁶

At some point, however, Morgan redesigned the tower in a modernistic vein. He stripped away the Gothic ornamental detail and strengthened the tower's vertical lines. Such ornament as found its way onto the building derived not from the Gothic but rather from the new abstract, geometric and flowing forms today called "Art Deco." Again, in Murchison's words:

*Superfluous ornament was eliminated, fenestration is more interesting, and mass and tower pinnacles are simplified in accordance with the spirit of modern design.*¹⁷

The new design, wrote Murchison,

*....presents a much more modern conception than the first study*¹⁸

The ornamental style of Morgan's final design may best be characterized as a conservative version of Art Deco. All signs of Gothic eclecticism are gone, but the treatment stops short of the brash polychromatic geometric whiz-bang effects of such skyscrapers as the nearby Daily News, Chrysler or General Electric buildings. In color it is a sedate gray, limestone on the lower stories, matching brick in the tower. About the color of the brick Murchison wrote:

*When it came to the materials used on the exterior, the architects got very fussy and insisted that their brick be a sort of super-brick which should carry the fame of the Waldorf-Astoria down through the entire history of brick-making. So they demanded a pure gray brick that would be a fine match for limestone, something never before attained.... The brick manufacturer...dubbed the product "Waldorf Grays."*¹⁹

The chief ornamental detail is to be found in the decorative spandrels in the long vertical window-spandrel bays, and in the ornamental bronze doorways, storefronts, announcement boards and marquees at the street level. Over the main Park Avenue entrance is a large expanse of wall with a bronze relief of the name Waldorf-Astoria set between classically inspired friezes. "The crowning feature of the ornamental metal work [are the] two large bronze and glass beacon lanterns, which ... surmount the twin towers."²⁰

The key to understanding the understated modernism of Morgan's Waldorf may be found in contemporary descriptions of the hotel's interior and its furnishings (though none of these interior spaces is included in this landmark designation). The new Waldorf tried to combine modern ornamental treatment with something of the Victorian character of the old. The main lobby was designed modernistically with giant ribbed piers and indirect lighting sources, but its furnishings included an enormous bronze clock rescued from the old Waldorf that was adorned with portraits of United States presidents and, tellingly, Queen Victoria. Other public rooms ran the gamut from the modernistic main ball-room to the old-fashioned Basildon Hall, named for the English country house from which its furnishings were bought. Modern murals by Spanish artist Jose Maria Sert were counter-balanced by murals brought from the old Waldorf. The ballroom was built as a traditionally theatrical space, with a stage and balconies, while on the 18th and 19th floors atop the Park Avenue slab the Starlight Roof had a glass and metal roof that on warm nights rolled back to open to the stars (though the roof is now inactive the machinery survives). In the words of

Walter Kendall Storey, writing in the New York Times in 1931, the interiors combined "smart contemporary effects and beautiful period interpretations"; the "modernity" of the ballroom was "tempered by panels of classic figures in soft silver on the balcony fronts."²¹

The Waldorf, in other words, could and should be modern, but apparently not so totally modern as completely to erase its image as a traditional social establishment -- hence the conservative treatment interlaced with the modern. Only at the very top of the towers, visible only from afar as part of the skyline of the metropolis, did the architects permit themselves the thoroughly modernistic abandon of the twin, stepped, geometric towers. Rising the equivalent of ten stories above the last residential story (the 42nd floor), these contain only water tanks and are completely hollow above the 46th floor level -- in other words, they are purely decorative.

The opening of the new Waldorf Astoria was greeted by the *New York Times* in a story entitled "Old and New Meet as Waldorf Opens -- Elderly Friends of the Hotel and Youngsters Among 20,000 Who Swarm to Pre-View":

New York's past and present met yesterday afternoon to welcome back one of the city's best-known institutions, the Waldorf. It was opened for the first time since the completion of its Park Avenue home, and so fond has been the memory of the old that more than 20,000 persons went to pay tribute to the new.

*Standing in the Cabinet Room of the White House just at dusk, President Hoover made his bow to the new hotel. The message, broadcast over a National Broadcasting Company network, was amplified in the public rooms and in the grand ballroom....*²²

Description

The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel and Towers form a 625-foot tall twin-towered skyscraper occupying the entire block bounded by Park and Lexington Avenues and East 49th and 50th Streets. The hotel's massing is arranged as 20-story slabs with set-backs (at the 18th floor on Park Avenue; at the

13th and 16th floors on Lexington) on Park and Lexington avenues, with a tower rising to twin peaks sandwiched between the slabs (the towers have 42 stories of residential space, above which sit the peaks, approximately equivalent to another ten stories). Though the hotel slabs are much the shorter, they occupy the prominent avenue facades; the towers, much the larger element, meet the ground on the more discreet side streets.

The lower stories of the hotel and towers are faced in gray limestone, the upper stories of the towers in a matching gray brick. The modernistic twin-tower massing of the building is emphasized by the verticality of its bays of recessed windows and spandrels. Chief among the building's applied ornament are the abstract geometric patterns in the spandrels, in three patterns alternating across the facades on Park and Lexington Avenues. The other major ornamental detail is to be found on such decorative bronze work on all the building's facades as marquees, lanterns, flag-pole bases in the shape of eagles, announcement boards, store-front and window trim, stylized figures and floral motifs in the door surrounds, and an enormous geometrically patterned metal screen over the central windows on the avenue facades. The hotel is identified on both the Park and Lexington Avenue facades by gilded letters spelling out its name; on Park the latter are framed by reliefs of classically-inspired figures.

Though the interior has undergone many changes, and more recently a major restoration, the exterior has changed little over the decades. Noticeable changes include: air-conditioner sleeves which have been unsympathetically cut through many of the spandrels; canopies that have been erected over windows and doors; new marquees over both the Park and Lexington Avenue entries (those over the Towers entrances on East 49th and 50th Street appear to be original); new aluminum windows replacing the steel originals throughout the building (though a few originals survive); minor alterations to storefronts; the closing of an entrance formerly leading to the mid-block driveway on East 50th Street; and a pseudo-Japanese front that has been added to the 49th Street facade for a Japanese restaurant located there.²³ For further detail,

please see the photographs at the end of this report.

Subsequent History

Over the sixty years subsequent to its opening, the new Waldorf went on to surpass the reputation of the old, which had lasted a mere thirty-six years. Towers residents have included the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, General Douglas MacArthur, former President Herbert Hoover, William Randolph Hearst, Jr., Cole Porter, and Henry Cabot Lodge, who lived there in the early 1950s as United States representative to the U.N. (the Waldorf continues to serve as the official residence of the U.S. ambassador).²⁴ Besides the permanent residents in the Towers, the Waldorf has hosted guests from all over the world, including royalty and heads of governments from countless countries.²⁵

Report prepared by
Anthony W. Robins
Director of Survey

NOTES

1. Details of the history of the Astor family from Horace Sutton, *Confessions of a Grand Hotel: The Waldorf-Astoria* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951).
2. Sutton, 4.
3. Theodore James, Jr., *The Empire State Building* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 22-26.
4. Sutton, 5.
5. Moses King, *King's Handbook of New York City* (Boston: Moses King, 1892), 199-200.
6. Lucius Boomer, "The Greatest Household," in Frank Crowninshield, ed., *The Unofficial Palace of New York: A Tribute to the Waldorf-Astoria* (New York: Waldorf-Astoria, 1939), 14.
7. Sutton, 25.
8. Sutton, 25.
9. Sutton, 37-38.
10. Sutton, 27.
11. Information pertaining to the new Waldorf-Astoria Hotel and the firm of Schultze & Weaver was gathered by N. Ross Terry in a study, "Documentation on the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Park Avenue, New York; Schultze and Weaver, Architects," undertaken as an Urban Corps Project in conjunction with the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Museum of Modern Art. The report includes full bibliographies.
12. Crowninshield, viii. Townhouse building in Manhattan had largely subsided by World War I, though a few were built in the 1920s. According to Crowninshield, many owners of townhouses were giving them up in favor of luxury suites in residential hotels, particularly the Waldorf-Astoria.
13. *New York Times*, obituary, April 26, 1951, 76:3.
14. "Waldorf Highest Hotel," *New York Times*, September 14, 1930, XI, 10:1.
15. *The American Architect*, v.139, no. 2591 (March 1931), 32.
16. *Ibid*, 30.
17. *Ibid.*, 29.
18. *Ibid.*, 31.
19. *Ibid.*, 33.
20. *New York Times*, April 29, 1930, 49:2.
21. Walter Kendall Storey, "Hotel Decoration in the Grand Manner," *New York Times*, September 27, 1931, 14:1.
22. *New York Times*, October 1, 1931, 27:1.

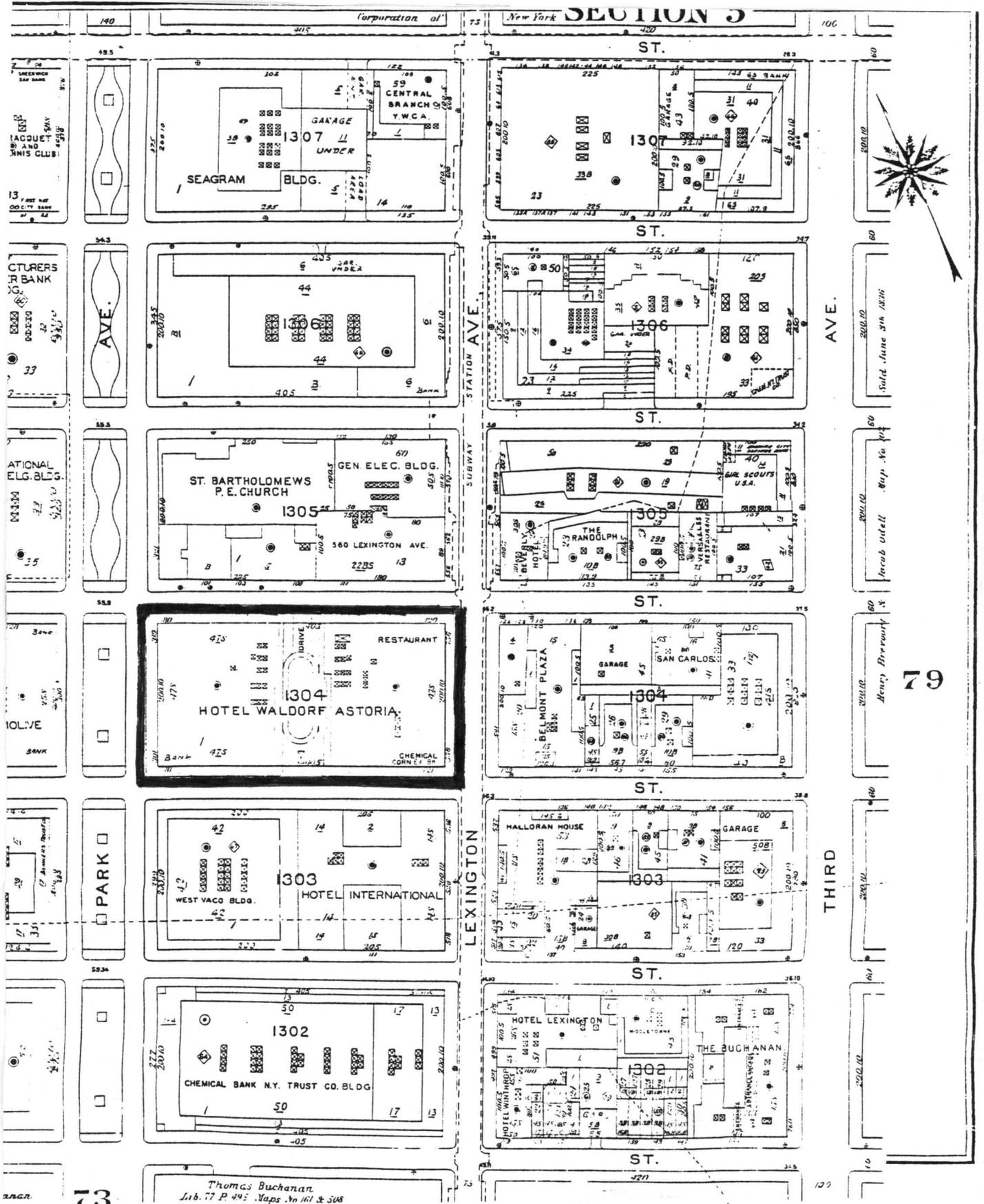
23. For information on alterations and other physical characteristics of the building the author is indebted to Mr. Martin Brett, Chief Machinist, who generously gave of his knowledge gained over forty years of employment at the Waldorf-Astoria.
24. Sutton, 55.
25. For a more detailed account see Sutton and Crowninshield.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel and Towers, built as a successor to the original Waldorf-Astoria on Fifth Avenue at 34th Street, has been among New York's most famous establishments in this century; that the Waldorf's design is a sedate but handsome version of the modernistic style now called Art Deco, creating an up-to-date look for this conservative, traditional establishment; that the designer of the Waldorf-Astoria, Lloyd Morgan of the firm of Schultze & Weaver, adapted the skyscraper form to hotel use; that the chief elements of the design of the Waldorf-Astoria include its modernistic massing as a twin-towered skyscraper, the gray limestone base with matching specially made "Waldorf Gray" brick above, vertical rows of windows and modernistic spandrels, and bronze entryways, marquees, lanterns, and other ornament; that the great modernistic twin towers form an important part of the skyline of midtown Manhattan; that the new Waldorf-Astoria was built as part of the major commercial redevelopment of Park Avenue north of Grand Central Terminal as a district of skyscraper office buildings; that the new Waldorf, as planned by Lucius Boomer, pioneered the social novelty of a residential tower included in but separated from the transient hotel; that, at 625 feet, the Waldorf was one of the tallest buildings in the city; that the hotel and the Towers have been home to some of the world's most famous figures, including presidents, kings and other potentates; and that the Waldorf-Astoria hotel, continuing to serve as "New York's Unofficial Palace," remains one of the city's great hotels and major social establishments, and among the handsomest, if most sedate, of the city's Art Deco skyscrapers.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of Chapter 21), 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 a Landmark the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, 301-319 Park Avenue (a/k/a 538-556 Lexington Avenue), Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1304, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.



73

Thomas Buchanan
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Waldorf-Astoria Hotel
301-319 Park Avenue (a/k/a 538-556 Lexington Avenue), Manhattan, Landmark Site
Graphic Source: Sanborn Manhattan Land Book, 1988-89.



The old Waldorf-Astoria superimposed on the new, pictured by Lloyd Morgan.
(Source: *The Unofficial Palace of New York*. New York: Waldorf-Astoria Corp., 1939, p. 15.)



Image of the proposed Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, superimposed over a Fairchild Aerial Survey photograph of Park Avenue. (LPC files)



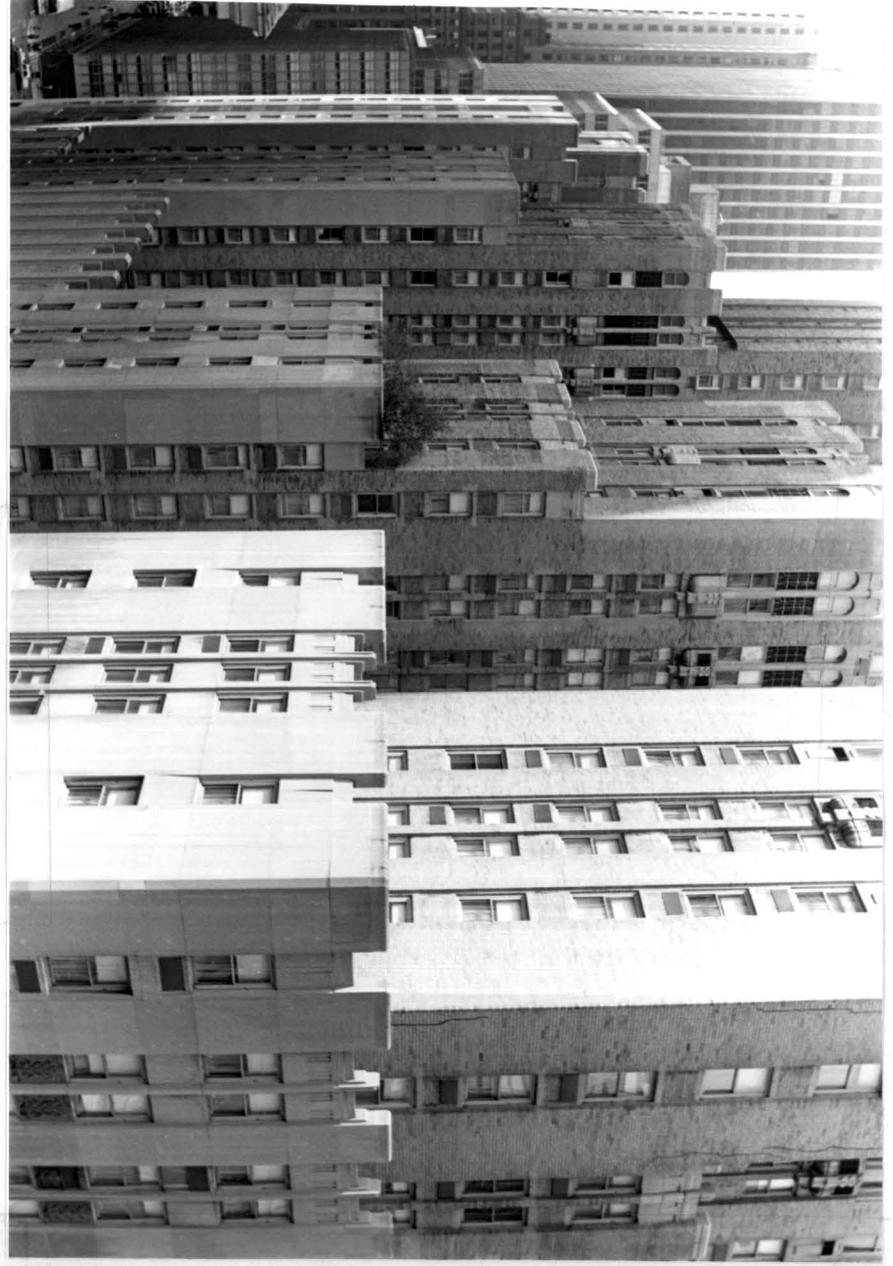
1. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Park Avenue facade on the left, East 49th Street facade on the right



2. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Lexington Avenue facade, with partial view of East 50th Street facade on the right



3. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, detail,
above Towers entrance on East 49th Street



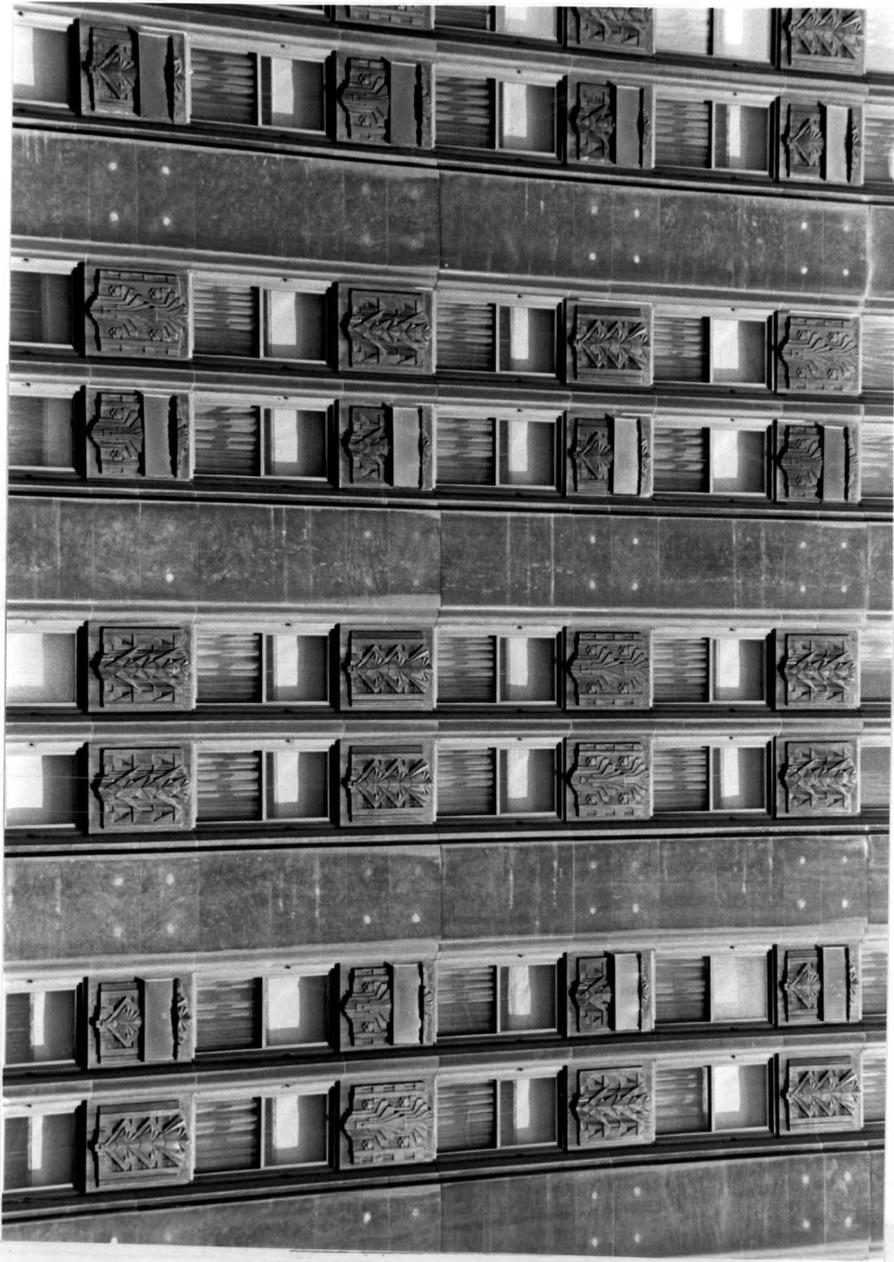
4. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel detail,
setbacks on East 49th Street



5. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel
East 49th Street facade of Park Avenue hotel slab



6. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel,
driveway/garage entrance on East 49th Street



7. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, detail showing alternating spandrel designs and air-conditioner sleeves cut through them



8. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, detail, East 49th Street facade



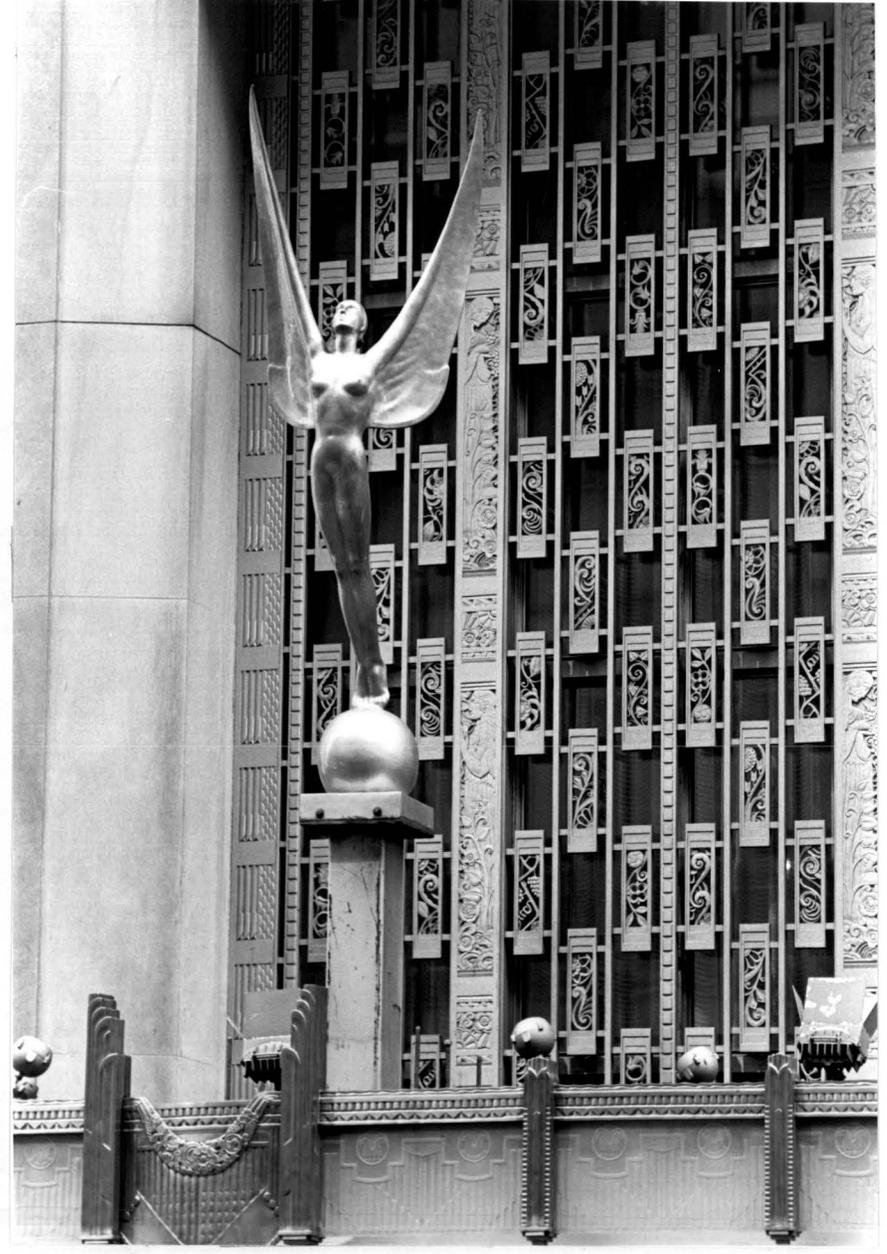
9. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, detail, tower facing East 49th Street



10. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Park Avenue entrance (marquee is not original)



11. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel,
detail, relief over Park Avenue entrance



12. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel detail, metal grille over window
above Park Avenue entrance, with winged statue



13. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel,
detail, flagpole base



14. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel,
detail, light fixtures over Park Avenue entrance



15. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel,
detail, bronze framing of Park Avenue entrance



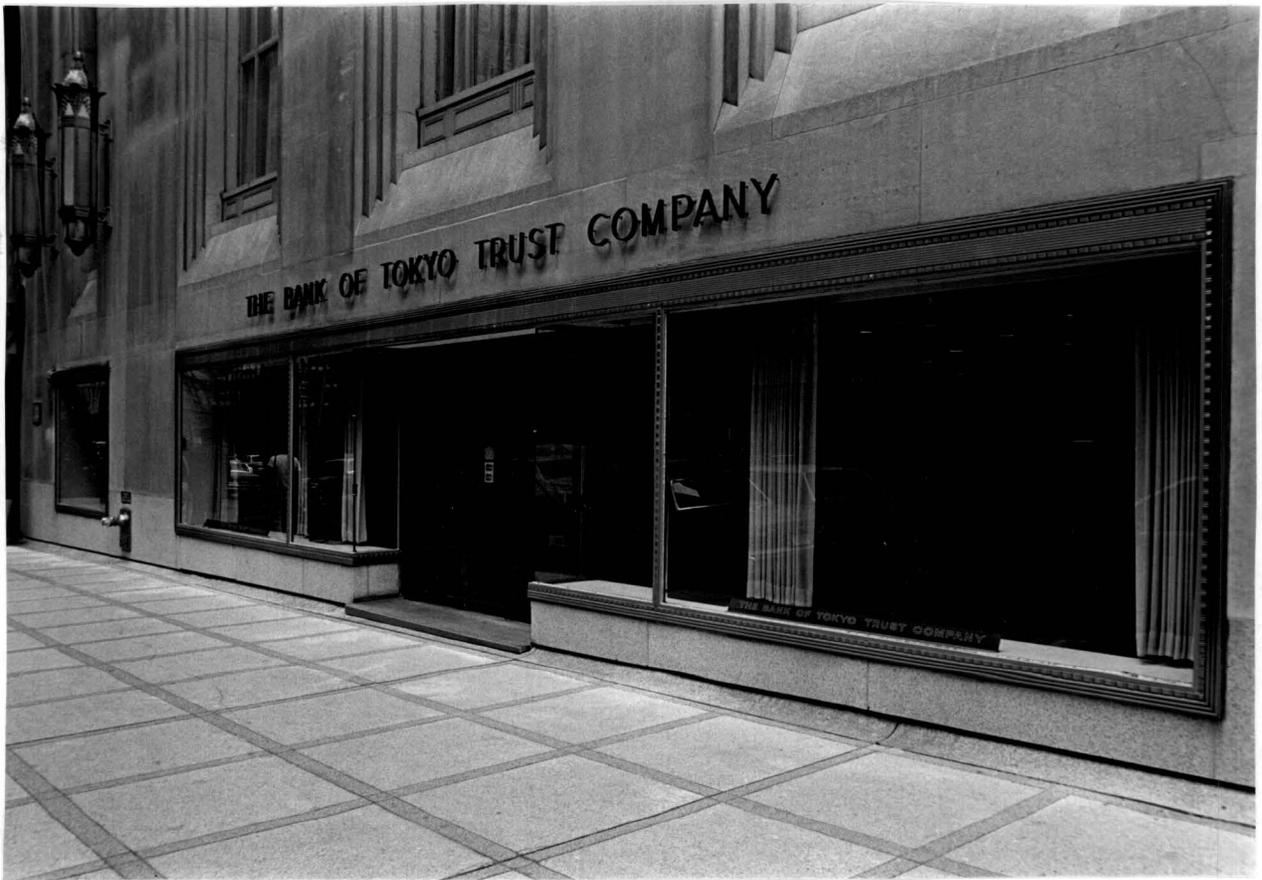
16. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel detail, bronze-framed announcement
board, Park Avenue entrance



17. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Lexington Avenue entrance (marquee is not original)



18. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. East 50th Street entrance to The Waldorf Towers



19. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, storefront, south side of Park Avenue facade



20. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, storefront, East 50th Street, just east of the Towers entrance