

= Algonquin Hotel =

The Algonquin Hotel is a historic hotel located at 59 West 44th Street in Manhattan ( New York , New York ) . The hotel has been designated as a New York City Historic Landmark .

The 181 @-@ room hotel , opened in 1902 , was designed by architect Goldwin Starrett . It was originally conceived as a residential hotel but was quickly converted to a traditional lodging establishment . Its first owner @-@ manager , Frank Case ( who bought the hotel in 1927 ) , established many of the hotel 's traditions . Perhaps its best @-@ known tradition is hosting literary and theatrical notables , most prominently the members of the Algonquin Round Table .

= = History = =

The Algonquin Hotel was originally designed as an apartment hotel , whose owner planned to rent rooms and suites on year @-@ long leases . When few leases sold , the owner decided to turn it into a hotel which he was originally going to name " The Puritan " . Frank Case , upon discovering that Algonquian tribes had been the first residents of the area , persuaded the owner to christen it " The Algonquin " instead .

Case took over the lease on the hotel in 1907 and bought the property on which the building sat in 1927 for US \$ 1 million . Case remained owner and manager of the hotel until his death in June 1946 . In October that year , The Algonquin was purchased by Ben Bodne of Charleston , South Carolina for just over US \$ 1 million . Bodne undertook an extensive restoration and renovation effort . Bodne sold the hotel in 1987 to a group of Japanese investors and the Algonquin changed hands a number of times before ending up with Miller Global Properties in 2002 . Following a two @-@ year , US \$ 3 million renovation , the hotel was sold again in 2005 to HEI Hospitality .

HEI has affiliated it with Marriott International where it is part of Marriott ? s Autograph Collection brand .

= = The Algonquin Round Table = =

In June 1919 the hotel became the site of the daily meetings of the Algonquin Round Table , a group of journalists , authors , publicists and actors who gathered to exchange bon mots over lunch in the main dining room . The group met almost daily for the better part of ten years . Some of the core members of the " Vicious Circle " included Franklin P. Adams , Robert Benchley , Heywood Broun , Marc Connelly , Jane Grant , Ruth Hale , George S. Kaufman , Neysa McMein , Dorothy Parker , Harold Ross , Robert E. Sherwood and Alexander Woollcott .

The Algonquin Round Table ? a group of notorious literary figures ( mostly critics ) who made The Algonquin their daily meeting place ? set forth to implement significant literary styles in the early 1900s .

At the end of World War I , Vanity Fair writers and Algonquin regulars Dorothy Parker , Robert Benchley , and Robert E. Sherwood started meeting for lunch at The Algonquin . Alexander Woollcott , acerbic critic and war correspondent , received a warm welcome from literary friends in 1919 . They gathered in the Rose Room that afternoon ; one person enjoyed the event enough to request that it become a daily event . That same request prompted a daily exchange of ideas and opinions shared between highly esteemed literary figures . George S. Kaufman , Heywood Broun , and Edna Ferber were also a part of this August assembly ; these individuals influenced writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway . They founded The New Yorker magazine ; all hotel guests receive free copies to this day .

Frank Case , owner of the hotel , ensured a daily luncheon for the talented group of young writers by treating them to free celery and popovers ; more importantly , they were provided with their own table and waiter . Edna Ferber , Franklin P. Adams , George S. Kaufman , Heywood Broun , and Marc Connelly eventually joined the group , expanding its membership . All members were affiliated with the Algonquin Round Table , although they referred to themselves as the Vicious Circle .

Visitors often request to dine at the actual ? round table ? where members originally met for

decades .

= = The Oak Room = =

The Oak Room at the Algonquin was long one of New York City 's premier cabaret nightclubs . Opened in 1939 ( as the Oak Room Supper Club ) , it was soon closed on account of World War II , reopened as a regular venue in 1980 , and closed for good in 2012 . ( Before 1939 , it had been called the Pergola Room and was the first meeting place of what became the Algonquin Round Table ) .

Legendary European chanteuse Greta Keller was the room 's first star . When Donald Smith reopened the Oak Room in 1980 , the first regular and star was singer @-@ pianist Steve Ross . Other performers who have appeared at the Oak Room include Julie Wilson , Mary Cleere Haran , Karen Akers , KT Sullivan , Barbara Carroll , Sandy Stewart , Bill Charlap , Diana Krall , Jessica Molaskey , and John Pizzarelli . Andrea Marcovicci performed there over a span of 25 years , sometimes with her mother Helen Marcovicci ( né Stuart ) , becoming effectively an Algonquin institution . The Oak Room helped launch the careers of Harry Connick Jr. and Michael Feinstein . Sylvia Syms collapsed and died on stage there during a performance in 1992 .

With its oak panels and other decor recalling an earlier time , the heyday of cabaret , the Oak Room was small , intimate , and expensive ( at least \$ 100 per person , more if one had dinner , except for matinees ) , and was not a big moneymaker for the Algonquin . Part of the space occupied by the former Oak Room was used to enlarge the Blue Bar , the rest was converted into a private breakfast room for Marriott Reward Elite customers .

= = Traditions = =

The hotel has a tradition of keeping a cat that has the run of the hotel . The practice dates to the 1930s , when Frank Case took in a stray male cat that was initially named " Rusty . " Hotel lore says actor John Barrymore suggested the cat needed a more " dignified " name , so the cat was renamed " Hamlet . " Nowadays , whenever the hotel has a male cat , he 's named Hamlet ; but if the hotel has a female cat , she 's named " Matilda . " The current Algonquin cat , a Matilda , is a Ragdoll that was named 2006 cat of the year at the Westchester ( New York ) Cat Show . Visitors can spot Matilda on her personal chaise longue in the lobby ; she can also be found in her favorite places : behind the computer on the front desk , or lounging on a baggage cart . The doormen feed her and the general manager 's executive assistant answers Matilda 's e @-@ mail . During 2011 , Matilda was temporarily confined to an upper floor or to the limits of a leash tethered to the check @-@ in desk , due to a directive from the city Department of Health . As of late 2011 , Matilda has been confined to the non @-@ food areas of the lobby by an electronic pet fence .

Although the Algonquin was " dry " even before Prohibition ( Case closed the hotel bar in 1917 and had harsh words for those who ran speakeasies ) , the hotel does have an eponymous cocktail , composed of rye whiskey , Noilly Prat and pineapple juice . More recently , a newer drink has hit the Algonquin 's menu , the \$ 10 @,@ 000 Martini or " Martini on the Rock , " consisting of a martini of the buyer 's choice with a single piece of " ice , " a diamond , at the bottom of the glass . The martini was developed to mark completion of a major 29 @-@ day renovation that closed the hotel for the first time since its opening . Hoy Wong was a notable bartender at the hotel and was the oldest person to hold such a position in the state , serving at the Algonquin for 30 years until retiring in 2009 , well past the age of 90 .

In keeping with Frank Case 's long @-@ standing tradition of sending popovers and celery to the more impoverished members of the Round Table , the Algonquin offers lunch discounts to struggling writers . Formerly , writers on tour could stay one night at the hotel free in exchange for an autographed copy of their book , although the practice has been amended to include a discount on standard room rates .

= = Landmark status = =

The Algonquin Round Table , as well as the number of other literary and theatrical greats who lodged there , helped earn the hotel its status as a New York City Historic Landmark . The hotel was so designated in 1987 . In 1996 the hotel was designated a National Literary Landmark by the Friends of Libraries USA . The organization 's bronze plaque is attached to the front of the hotel .