



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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News Release

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LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION DESIGNATES EIGHT INTERIOR ROOMS IN THE PLAZA HOTEL

July 12, 2005 – Today, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to designate eight interior rooms in the Plaza Hotel, including the Palm Court, the Grand Ballroom, the Terrace Room, the Edwardian Room, the Oak Room, the Oak Bar, the 59th Street lobby and the Fifth Avenue lobby.

“From Alfred Hitchcock’s ‘North by Northwest’ to Eloise to Truman Capote’s Black and White Ball, I can’t think of a series of rooms such as the Palm Court, Oak Room and Oak Bar, just to name a few, that are more evocative of New York City and its history,” said Robert B. Tierney, Chairman of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. *“Within a few years, when these spaces are restored, everyone will be able to fully enjoy these incredible rooms as Henry Hardenburgh, Warren & Wetmore and Schulze & Weaver intended.”*

Plaza Hotel Interiors (768 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan)

The Plaza Hotel, one of the world's great hotels since it opened in 1907, is located on a prominent site overlooking Central Park, Grand Army Plaza and Fifth Avenue. In 1971 the *New York Times* architecture critic, Ada Louise Huxtable, called it “New York's most celebrated symbol of cosmopolitan and turn-of-the-century splendor, inside and out.” The exterior has been a beloved New York City individual landmark since 1969. The eight publicly accessible interiors are largely a result of four different campaigns: Henry Hardenbergh's original design of 1905-07; the 1921 renovation and addition by Warren & Wetmore; Schultze & Weaver's ballroom from 1929 and Conrad Hilton's renovation of the building when he acquired it in 1943. Hardenbergh, Warren & Wetmore and Schulze & Weaver were three significant early twentieth-century American architectural firms, which were pre-eminent hotel designers.



The Oak Room, 2005

The Plaza Hotel is one of Henry Hardenbergh's most famous and critically acclaimed buildings. Hardenbergh set standards for the design of luxury American hotels on the exterior and interior of his buildings. The Plaza Hotel interiors are rare surviving examples of Hardenbergh's interior designs in New York City and represent his sophisticated planning and mastery of historical revival styles. The Beaux Arts style 59th Street Lobby and Main Corridor feature strikingly veined and carefully matched stonework in white and Breccia marble. The German Renaissance Revival style Oak Room features wood paneling with elaborate carvings on the west wall, murals of medieval castles, and a coved plaster ceiling. The Spanish Renaissance Revival

Edwardian Room features a paneled wood dado, pilasters and an elaborate trussed ceiling with carved bosses, stenciled decorations and mirrors. The neo-Classical Palm Court features walls faced with Caen stone and accented with a giant order of highly polished marble pilasters, a colonnade of marble columns separating the space from the main corridor and marble caryatids representing the Four Seasons on the west wall.

The 1921 addition by Warren & Wetmore includes the neo-classical Fifth Avenue Lobby and neo-Renaissance Terrace Room. The firm was known for its hotel interiors, which accommodated the expanding social demands of well-to-do Americans by providing vast halls for promenading, lounging and public dining. The Terrace Room features painted decorations, by noted interior decorator John Smeraldi, and different levels of space, while its foyer features pilasters with ornate capitals and a richly decorated coffered ceiling. These spaces are rare extant examples in New York City of Warren & Wetmore's hotel interiors.

Schulze & Weaver's 1929 Grand Ballroom represents the work of one of America's significant hotel designers and its mastery of revival styles. The French Renaissance Revival style room features attached Ionic columns and an elaborate coved ceiling.

The Plaza Operating Company owned the current building and its predecessor from 1902 to 1943 and the Plaza was managed by noted hotelier Frederic Sterry from 1905 to 1932. In 1943 the hotel was acquired by the Atlas Corporation, which was affiliated with famed hotelier Conrad Hilton, who owned the building until 1953. Hilton opened the Tudor Revival style Oak Bar and commissioned Everett Shinn to paint three murals specifically for the space in 1945. The hotel's current owner acquired the property in August 2004.

Since its opening in 1907 the Plaza Hotel's public spaces have been used by its guests as well as the general public including the thousands of people who took tea at the Palm Court and habitués, such as George Cohan, of the Oak Room. The Terrace Room has been used for receptions and press conferences including that of Marilyn Monroe and Laurence Olivier. The Grand Ballroom has been the site of benefits, weddings and dances, most notably Truman Capote's 1966 Black and White Ball.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the New York City agency responsible for designating and regulating New York City's landmarks. To date, the Commission has designated 1,128 individual landmarks, 105 interior landmarks, 9 scenic landmarks, and 83 historic districts.