

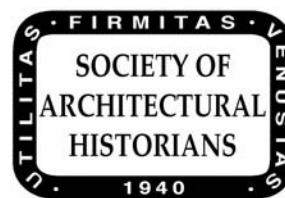
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## **News Letter**

### **THE DRUMMERS' RITZ: THE ST. LOUIS HOTEL OF ELLSWORTH STATLER AND ITS ANTECEDENTS**

*by Daniel C. Williamson*

The large American hotel had by 1915 reached a form that, with few modifications, would work throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With a steel or concrete frame, separate banks of elevators for guests and staff and enclosed stairs for emergency egress, public rooms at the bottom of the hotel and guest rooms, each with its own bath, on the several floors above, it was not dissimilar to hotels built today. And because of an orgy of hotel building in the 1920s, followed by the debacle of the 1930s, when three out of four hotels went into bankruptcy, with very little new construction in the 1940s and 1950s, hotels built in the first three decades of the century were predominant in most American cities well into the 1960s. Older St. Louisans will remember the Jefferson, the DeSoto, the Mayfair, and Lennox, the Coronado, the Chase, and the Park Plaza, and of course the Statler. The Statler has now been restored and remodeled by RTKL Architects, becoming, with a new guest room and lobby addition to the east and a lower ballroom addition to the west, the Renaissance Grand. The former lobby, brought back from a ruinous state, is now the restaurant "An American Place." The Chase and Coronado also have been largely restored, the first operating as a hotel, the latter as an apartment house incorporating a catering facility. What distinguished the Statler from the others (excepting the Jefferson, built in 1904) is that it is not a mid- or late-1920s building, as it appears to be, but rather opened in November 1917. It was only the fourth "house" (as hotels were called in the trade) in the Statler chain, which was famously progressive. Just how the St. Louis Statler was progressive, however, needs to be explained.

Ellsworth Statler (1863-1928) was a typical self-made American millionaire of the period, born to poverty, starting at the bottom (as a floor waiter at the McLure House in Wheeling, West Virginia in 1876), advancing rapidly due to constant work and driving ambition. After becoming night manager of the McLure House, Statler operated restaurants, one quite large, in Buffalo, New York. In that same city, from which he would eventually run his hotel chain, he was the entrepreneur and manager of the 2,084-room temporary Pan American Hotel at the Pan American Exposition in 1901, making a small profit despite the pre-



The Hotel Statler, St. Louis, 1917. From John Albury Bryan, *Missouri's Contribution to American Architecture*, St. Louis Architectural Club, 1928, p. 175.

mature closure of the Exposition due to the assassination there of President McKinley; he then became the logical choice to finance and manage the Inside Inn at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904. Also temporary and also enormous, with 2,257 rooms and 500 baths, the three-story stucco structure stood roughly where Hampton now crosses Highway 40. Early in its brief but successful history Statler was gravely injured in a coffee urn explosion (the injuries would prevent him from conceiving an heir), but he continued to run the Inn during his acutely painful recovery. He seemed to have a character of steel. With the impressive \$361,000 profit he realized from the Inside Inn, and with additional funds from the backers who were always important to him, Statler would build his first hotel, the Buffalo

Statler, opening in 1908. The architects were Essenwein and Johnson, apparently influenced by Adler and Sullivan's Guaranty Building, 1896, but not for the better: Sullivan's proclivity for covering every surface of the exterior with ornamentation does not work well in lesser hands. The interiors were a murky conglomeration of Craftsman, oriental, and Jacobean elements; they attracted criticism, which reached the ears of Statler and his backers, and undoubtedly influenced him to seek different architects and a different style for his next house, in Cleveland.

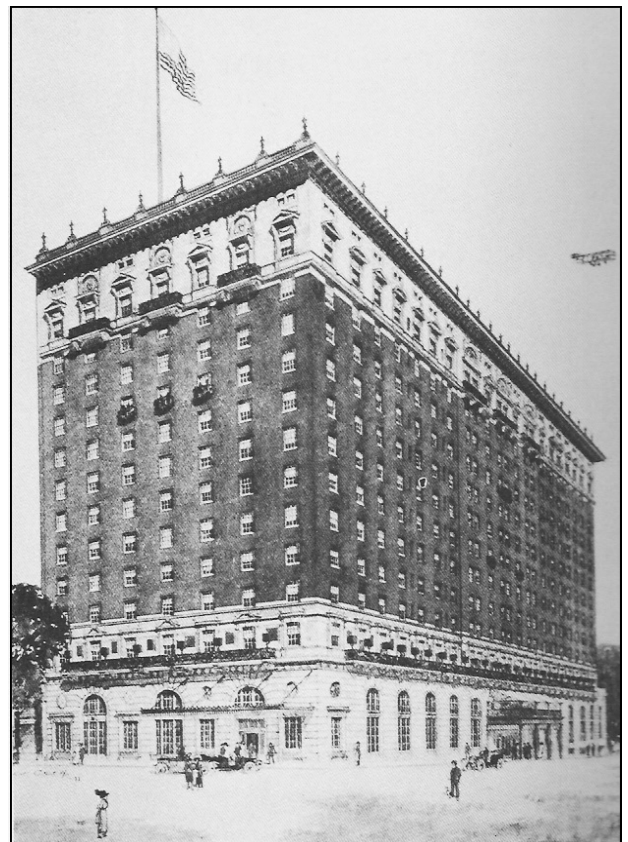


The La Salle Hotel, LaSalle & Madison, Chicago, 1907-09, Holabird & Roche. Demolished. Note Adler & Sullivan's Chicago Stock Exchange Building behind and to the right. From Stevens Estate, Chicago Historical Society, reproduced in Robert Brueggemann, *The Architects and the City: Holabird & Roche of Chicago, 1880-1918*, University of Chicago Press, 1997, p. 327.

But the Buffalo Statler was an important building in hotel history, due primarily to its internal planning and equipment. In appraising this importance, however, one must proceed carefully, because while Statler undoubtedly was an innovator of a kind, he was also an effective publicizer of innovations which he adopted but had been originated by others. The Buffalo Statler had a bathroom with every guest room, for example, but the frequent assertion that it was the first hotel so equipped is not sustained by a perusal of architectural publications of the previous decade. Judging from this evidence, in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century several hotels were built with a bathroom with every guest

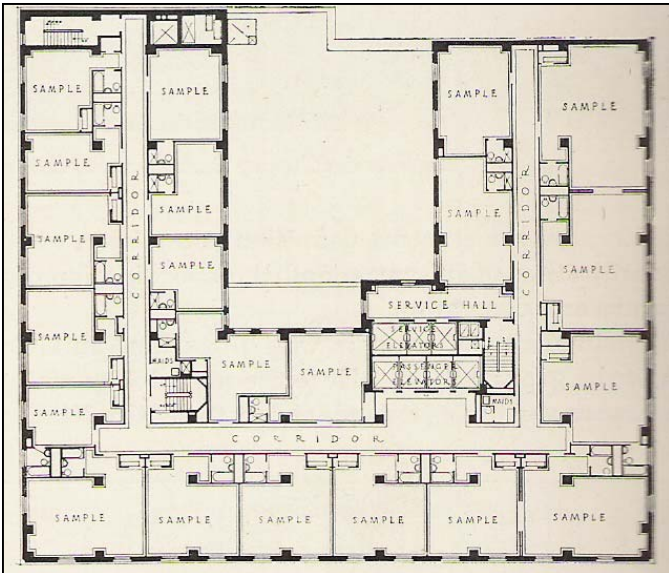
room, examples being the St. Regis on Fifth Avenue, New York, in 1904 (admittedly very posh) and the Auditorium Annex in Chicago in 1906, part of the Congress complex but essentially a separate hotel. But in large houses with bedrooms of various sizes it was usual to include a run of small rooms with shared baths, or even the old-fashioned common bath off a public hall; so Holabird and Roche's ornate Hotel LaSalle in Chicago on a typical floor had only 38 baths for 60 rooms. Statler's innovation was to include private bathrooms with small bedrooms economically priced. At Buffalo in 1908, for instance, \$1.50 was charged for bedrooms measuring 9 by 12 feet, enabling Statler to advertise "a room with a bath for a dollar and a half." As a result this basic comfort was extended to the most economically minded of travelers, the salesmen or "drummers" who formed a sort of army of American capitalism, and to whom Statler would always be loyal.

In this way Statler began by standardizing throughout a hotel, and went on to standardize from hotel to hotel. And he was undoubtedly the pioneer of hotel standardization. His was not the first hotel chain, as is sometimes asserted, but it was probably the first chain of large hotels in which each house was built for the chain, and the hotels were deliberately designed to resemble one another, so that the traveler knew what to expect. (Statler did lease and operate the already-extant Fort Pitt Hotel in Pittsburgh, but it retained the name Fort Pitt.)



The Statler Hotel, Cleveland, 1911-1912, George B. Post & Sons, architects. From *Architectural Record* 36 (1914), reproduced in Sarah Bradford Landau, *George B. Post, Architect*, The Monacelli Press, 1998, p. 174.

The pattern was set at the Cleveland Statler, opening in 1912, and with 800 rooms over twice the size of the first Buffalo Statler; an addition would later raise the room count to about 1,000. Almost every feature of this hotel could be found in hotels already built, but at Cleveland all the pieces came together for the first time, and this was widely noticed. The model was followed, more or less, by all the great downtown commercial hotels built at a reckless pace during the 1920s, a remarkable number of them still operating and still famous. The size of the guest rooms varied, but each, of course, had its own bath; a number of so-called “sample rooms” provided both display spaces and sleeping spaces for the drummers, while the public rooms were grand and elegant without gilt and ornamentation being laid on with a trowel. The kitchen was on the ground floor, convenient to the restaurants. The function rooms, including a ballroom designated “banquet room” on the published plans, had their own zone of the mezzanine, where they could easily be reached from the kitchen and the entrance. Only the shops that became common in the 1920s inside hotels were missing.



A floor of the St. Louis Statler devoted to sample rooms used by traveling salesmen. From *Architectural Forum*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1918), p. 34.

George B. Post & Sons were the architects of the Cleveland Statler and of all of the subsequent Statlers built before the Depression – with the exception of the New York Statler, designed by McKim, Mead & White at the insistence of the owners, the Pennsylvania Railroad. The firm had designed on a vast scale, but only one previous hotel, a small house in Oswego, New York. George Post (1837-1913) was then nearing the end of his life, and the firm was very much in the hands of his two sons, William and James. It was far from an obvious choice for the job, but I suspect that a lack of hotel experience was an advantage from Statler’s point of view, since he would then not have to contend with pre-conceived notions of hotel planning and, confident of his

own mastery of the subject, would be able to dominate the project. The Post firm offered a sophisticated aesthetic sense, and the appearance of the Cleveland Statler, the exterior even more than the interior, would be a large part of the pattern it set. Although never properly appreciated, the exterior is also a notable feature of the St. Louis hotel, which much resembles the Cleveland Statler and the 1915 Detroit Statler.

By 1910 American hotel architecture had achieved its own distinctive idiom. The characteristic tripartite division of the exterior – base, shaft and crown – could be found in other buildings, but arguably was most convincingly identified with hotels. Typically the base was stone or terra cotta, or a combination of one of these materials and brick, employing classical forms; the shaft was brick; and the crown was again stone or terra cotta, sometimes mingled with brick. The shaft was both the least embellished and most extensive part, the base being shorter and the crown shorter still. These façade divisions were an aesthetic device, not necessarily corresponding to internal functional divisions; they are sometimes compared to the base, shaft and capital of a classical column. Above the crown, particularly in New York City, rose a steeply pitched mansard roof bristling with dormers, establishing a French style given to an exuberance that more or less enveloped the building. The old Astor Hotel in Times Square was a celebrated example. The interiors of these hotels were more exuberant still, often crowded with architectural features and ornamentation of the vegetable sort, in an unstinting way reminiscent of such other aspects of Edwardian culture as huge veiled and feathered women’s hats and over-rich meals with towering table decorations.



The Astor Hotel, Times Square, New York City, 1903, Charles W. Clinton & William H. Russell. Demolished 1967. From Jeff Hirsh, *Manhattan Hotels 1880-1920*, Arcadia Publishing, Images of America, Manhattan Series, Volume II, 1997, p. 37.

In Statler hotels the mansard roof was gone; the shaft, free of bay windows, was totally unembellished, and the base and crown were chastely neoclassical and architectonic.

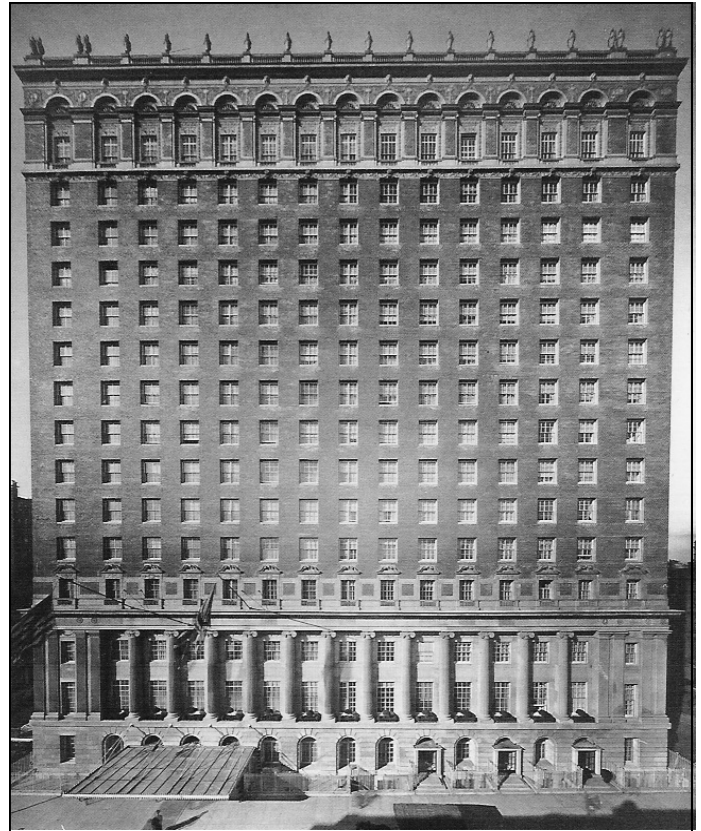


The style was no longer French, although just what it was is rather complicated. Inside, the ornament was both delicate and restrained, predominantly Adamesque (or perhaps simply neoclassical) in the Cleveland, Detroit and St. Louis Statlers. In the later second Buffalo and Boston houses it reverted to a Renaissance Italian look, making much use of decorative box-beamed ceilings and textured plaster walls. By winning battles with the representatives of the Pennsylvania Railroad, the lessor, Statler was able to dominate the design of the New York Statler (which was originally called the Hotel Pennsylvania and has reverted to that name), and that enormous house became the best-known example of the Statler look, which seemed crisply modern at the time. From that look the characteristic appearance of the 1920s American hotel is directly descended.



The Hotel Pennsylvania, Seventh Ave. bet. 32<sup>nd</sup> & 33<sup>rd</sup>, New York City, 1919, McKim, Mead & White. From Hirsh, p. 80.

But Statler and the Post firm did not originate this influential modification of the American hotel style. Rather it was the work of Warren & Wetmore. They were hotel specialists and an obvious firm for Statler to have turned to instead of George B. Post & Sons, except that the puritanical Statler, a preacher's son, would probably not have found Whitney Warren, a tremendous swell who kept a *Comédie Française* mistress, very congenial. Warren liked French architecture as well as French women, but he turned to English Georgian models in his influential Ritz-Carlton Hotel in New York, pictured, often extensively, in virtually every American architectural publication when it opened in 1911.



The Ritz-Carlton, 370-384 Madison Avenue, New York City, Warren & Wetmore, From Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, reproduced in Peter Pennoyer and Anne Walker, *The Architecture of Warren & Wetmore*, W. W. Norton & Co, 2006, p. 122.

“Ritz Hotel Adam” would become a style particularly popular for residential hotels in uptown locations, but its most remarkable conquest was the first three great downtown hostelryes of Ellsworth Statler. Any comparison of these buildings with the Ritz-Carlton will reveal striking similarities. An example is the row of splendid urns on the balustrades topping buildings shorn of the soon-to-be-outdated mansard roofs, clearly a novel feature on the Ritz-Carlton (practical challenges involving wind loads are mentioned in the articles); the urns are also found on the Cleveland and Detroit Statlers, essentially Adamesque in style despite the “Italianate” label sometimes pinned on the Cleveland Statler. The later, second Buffalo Statler, built in 1923, much resembled Warren & Wetmore’s New York Vanderbilt Hotel, approximately contemporary to the Ritz-Carlton in the same city and also Adamesque, but less publicized. The Buffalo Statler and the Vanderbilt were important in establishing the E-shaped floor plans, with courts open to the streets, popular in 1920s hotels.

It is undoubtedly true that the New York Ritz-Carlton (sadly torn down in 1951) was not completed when planning for the Cleveland Statler was underway. Detailed knowledge of the design, however, would have traveled to the Post office with W. Sidney Wagner, the principal George B. Post & Sons designer for all of their Statler ho-

tels, who had previously worked for Warren & Wetmore, and quite likely was hired to handle the Statler commission. This putative transfer, at breakneck speed, of the Warren & Wetmore hotel style to George B. Post & Sons in the early Statlers, with Sidney Wagner as its agent, is not mentioned in the recent books on George B. Post (by Sarah Bradford Landau) and Warren & Wetmore (by Peter Pennoyer and Anne Walker), nor is it noted in the contemporary articles in architectural journals, or in the Statler biographies (by Rufus Jarman, 1952, and Floyd Miller, 1968). But it is surely evident from a study of the buildings and their histories. The splendidly restored St. Louis Statler has become the example of Wagner's early work for Statler closest to its original condition, whereas the Detroit Statler is now a ruin, and the Cleveland Statler has been remodeled into apartments following "modernization" of its public spaces when it was still a hotel.



Part of the Grand Gallery looking west, in the Ritz Hotel, London, photo by James Mortimer. From Marcus Binney, *The Ritz Hotel, London*. London, Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 6.

The company operating the New York Ritz-Carlton had close ties to the company with similar responsibilities for the Ritz and Carlton hotels in London (hence the double name) and so was linked to the great European hotelier César Ritz (1850-1918). Ritz had very particular ideas

about hotel architecture and furnishing, worked out with his wife and the architects Mewes & Davis at the Paris Ritz (1898), and shortly afterward at the Carlton on Pall Mall in London, essentially a drastic remodeling (lost to World War II bombing). He was a simplifier and a banisher of 19<sup>th</sup>-century aesthetics, who disliked the heavy velvets and brocades, dark colors and busy wallpapers of Victorian interiors. Instead pale colors, particularly white and cream, predominated in his hotels, and bedroom walls were painted plaster embellished with moldings, with the furniture painted white. Ritz hotels have only small, inconspicuous business lobbies; the principal ground floor room typically was the restaurant, ornate in a refined way but approached by spaces walled in creamy stone (or imitation stone) and severely architectonic, in the manner of the large foyers of 18<sup>th</sup>-century French aristocratic residences, and also the Petit Trianon. The style of the other public rooms and private parlors all tended toward 18<sup>th</sup>-century French, predominantly Louis XVI.



Part of a private suite at the Ritz Hotel, London, photographed in 1906. From Binney, p. 89.

Warren & Wetmore took over nearly all of this for their North American Ritz-Carlton hotels, built in the second and third decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in New York City, Philadelphia, Atlantic City and Montreal. The Boston Ritz-Carlton was designed in a similar manner by other architects. (Only the Boston and Montreal houses are still operating.) But they rejected the Louis XVI style in favor of Adamesque, which was contemporary to Louis XVI and incorporated similar delicate plaster ornament, but simpler, particularly as a revival style, and calling for a different exterior. Warren & Wetmore no doubt wanted a clean break with the florid French manner that had flourished in New York hotels, but I suspect that they were also influenced by a notion, often contradicted in practice but with roots in 19<sup>th</sup>-century English residential design, stated to me explicitly in Philadelphia many years ago. "New money likes French décor but old money prefers English and American," I was told, in a tone that left little doubt that the latter example should be followed. The New York Ritz-Carlton would in fact enjoy a long association with a



conservative high society dominated by inherited fortunes, a snobbish regime described by Ludwig Bemelmans, a former Ritz-Carlton waiter, in his amusing volume, *Hotel Splendide*.

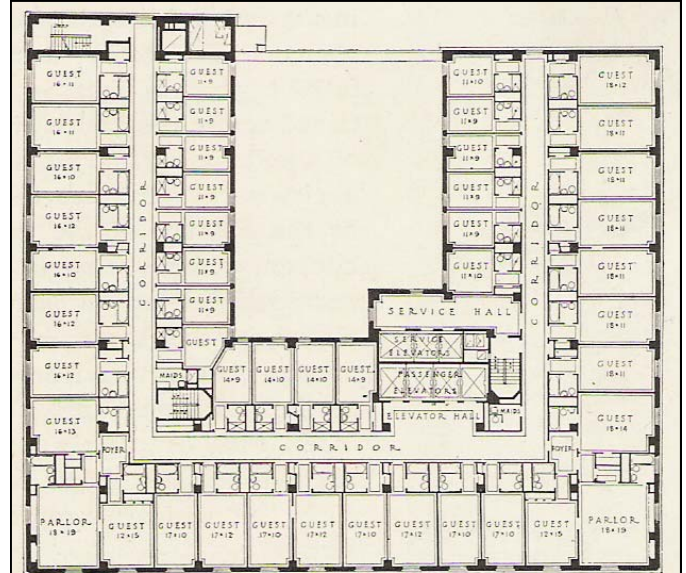
High society was foreign terrain to Ellsworth Statler, and was little attracted to his hotels. The drummers who filled his low-priced rooms would have been turned away coldly from the New York Ritz-Carlton dining room by a head waiter who studied the Social Register. But to a remarkable extent the look of the Mewes & Davis and Warren & Wetmore interiors was carried over by the Post firm and Sidney Wagner to the Cleveland, Detroit, and St. Louis Statlers, though necessarily modified to fit large hotels of the commercial type. Judging from photographs, on the bedroom floors this was most evident at Cleveland, where one restaurant was Italianate and the others English Georgian, while the Detroit Statler was purely Adamesque inside and out, in the Ritz-Carlton manner, and the St. Louis Statler was quite similar, despite such Italianate features as the gently sloped shallow roof above the eaves at the top. So echoes of the Paris of Marcel Proust, who haunted the Paris Ritz, and the London of Edward VII, a habitu  of the Carlton, sounded in the crowded heart of downtown St. Louis, and a line of architectural influence connects C sar Ritz, the most celebrated hotelier of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to Ellsworth Statler, the pre-eminent hotelier of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



The Detroit Statler, 1914-15 showing addition to left of 1916. From David Kohrman, *Detroit's Statler and Book-Cadillac Hotels: The Anchors of Washington Boulevard*, Arcadia Publishing, Images of America, 2002, p. 43.

The St. Louis Statler, designed by George B. Post & Sons in association with the local firm Mauran, Russell & Cro-

well, occupies a rectangle about 130 feet long on Washington and St. Charles and 150 feet on Ninth Street (the east side originally abutted Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge's Lionberger Building). This was smaller than the sites of the Cleveland and Detroit Statlers and forced the main kitchen into the basement and the ballroom to the top of the hotel, common locations at the time but somewhat inconvenient and outmoded, contradicting the forward-looking outlook of the Statler chain. The typical bedroom floor was U-shaped, surrounding an internal court, and in contrast was progressive to the point of anticipating trends in hotel planning belonging to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hotels built before that era – which means before 1932 – are typically somewhat helter-skelter in their bedroom floor layout, with variations in the arrangement of bedrooms, bathrooms, and closets which are difficult to explain if you were not standing over the drafting tables with the designers. At the New York Ritz-Carlton, for example, with 15 rooms on a typical floor, and even at the enormous Waldorf Astoria, with 103 rooms, identically laid out accommodations are difficult to find. At Warren & Wetmore's New York Biltmore (1913), U-shaped as was the St. Louis Statler, bathrooms in one wing are located between the rooms and in the other wing are located between the rooms and the corridor. The former arrangement was common in many 1920s houses, including the Cleveland Statler.

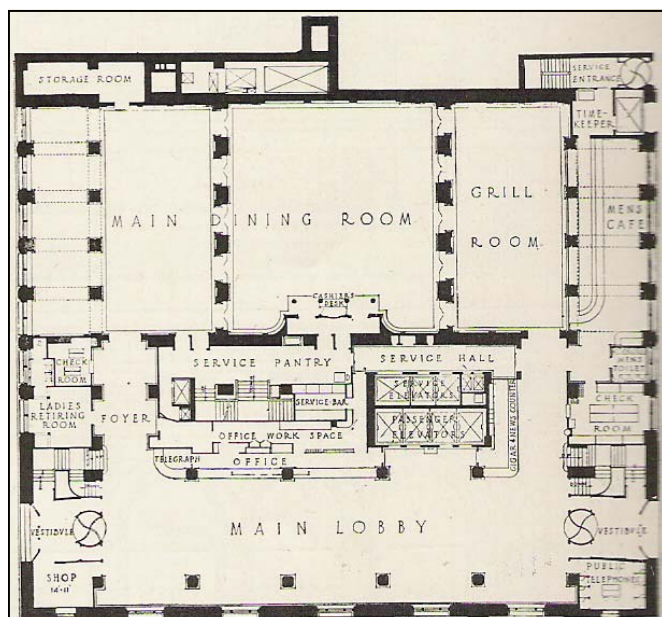


The St. Louis Statler, floor plan of a typical bedroom floor. From *Architectural Forum*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1918), p. 34.

In the Detroit Statler, the external rhythm of alternating single and paired windows does not fit the room arrangement inside, so that most rooms have one window but some have two, and room widths are not synchronized with internal column intervals, again common practice. In St. Louis, however, every room except the corner parlors has a single wide window, the depth of the 28 out-

side rooms varying from 16 to 18 feet according to which street they face. The columns are at intervals of two room widths, about 24 feet. Bathrooms are consistent in their orientation and always between the room and the corridors (except for outside bathrooms adjacent to the parlors), secluding the rooms from corridor noises, the invariable arrangement after 1950. Two baths typically are paired to back up to a shared vent shaft leading to a plenum and vent at the top of the hotel, a ventilation scheme sometimes said to be invented by Statler but in fact widely used in American hotels since the 1890s. The economy-minded drummers who did not take sample rooms could be accommodated in the 14 small rooms (each about 9 by 11 feet) facing the court; here the compact bathrooms have showers, not tubs, and closets are omitted in most of the rooms.

Except for the U shape and the missing closets, this highly regularized typical floor plan closely resembles plans of hotels built after 1945, right up to the present time, and Wagner, almost foreseeing the future, proudly described all the advantageous features in his article in the February 1918 *Architectural Forum*. He also commended the segregation of the sample rooms on three lower floors, which with the 12 floors of bedrooms resulted in a house of about 650 guest rooms.



The St. Louis Statler, plan of ground floor. From *Architectural Forum*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1918), p. 34.

The ground floor of the St. Louis Statler, containing most of the public rooms, is closely based on the organization of the bedroom floors above, allowing most of the supporting columns to extend from the upper floors straight to the foundation, with a minimum of trussing. A north-south line drawn along the west wall of the court divides

the ground floor in half. The western half, along Ninth Street, contains the long two-story lobby, with entrances from Washington Avenue and St. Charles Street at either end. East of the lobby lies a kind of service core, containing the passenger and service elevators back to back, the front office, a serving pantry and short corridors connecting the lobby and the restaurants. The restaurants occupy the entire eastern half of the floor. A dark-stained paneled dining room is located in the Washington Avenue wing of the hotel, balanced by an architecturally similar men's café and grill on the St. Charles side. In between, directly under the central court, is a dining room in the form of a skylit, two-story palm court. Above the side dining areas, a mezzanine floor contains offices and private dining rooms with windows onto the Palm Court. Lounges are above the entrance vestibules, and a connecting balcony runs the length of the lobby. The basement contains the kitchen, a small grill restaurant, a barber shop, and a large men's public toilet (women's toilet facilities were far less capacious). It is a highly symmetrical, tightly organized scheme.

The architectural treatment of the restaurant, lobby and adjacent corridor areas shows the strong influence of the New York Ritz-Carlton of Warren & Wetmore and the European Ritz hotels of Mewes & Davis. The nature of the Statler, however, required a large lobby that was the principal public room. The lobby contained almost 80 linear feet of front desk and news stand counter space. The Post firm had not yet mastered the difficult art of locating these facilities away from the lobby, or in an inconspicuous part of it, while leaving them close to the front entrance and elevators. So money changing intruded into the temple that was the heart of the hotel, a place often awash in businessmen and drummers.

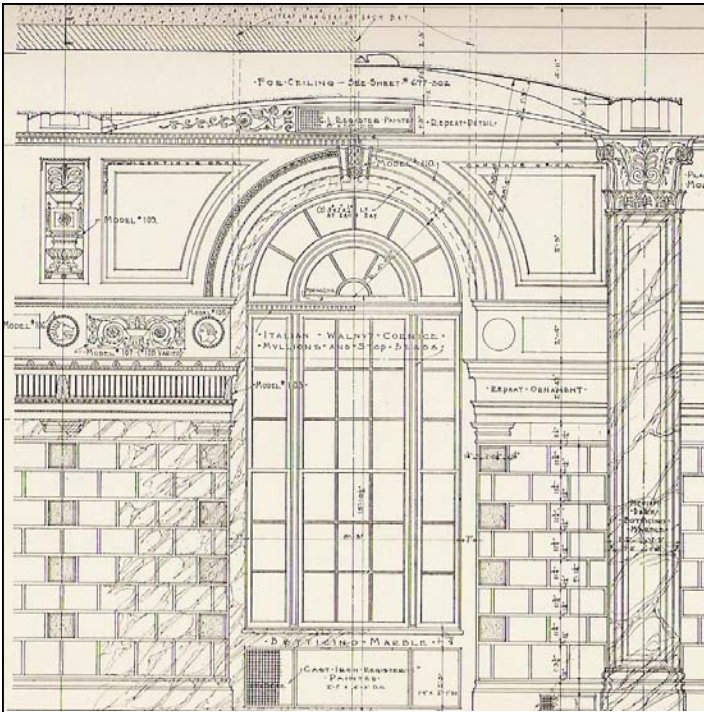


The St. Louis Statler, view in lobby looking toward St. Charles Street entrance. From *Architectural Forum*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1918), plate 21.

That situation was different from any found in the houses bearing the Ritz name, and led the architects of the Statler to conflate the lithic wall surfaces and architectural sim-



plicity of the Ritz approach areas (ground floor corridors and some of the palm courts) with the rich, delicate plaster ornamentation of the Ritz restaurants. Smooth, creamy Botticino marble covered the lower level of the lobby walls, establishing the light coloration that owed much to Mewes & Davis, whereas low relief plaster ornament covered the upper walls and ceiling. The ornament is so muted that it is barely visible in photographs, but it makes the lobby a splendid and subtle room. The ceiling is treated as a series of five shallow, square vaults, supported by square structural columns, very much a borrowing from several Warren & Wetmore hotels. Refined brass and glass fixtures, reproduced in the restoration, take the place of the usual dripping crystal chandeliers, again following Warren & Wetmore practice.



The St. Louis Statler, elevation of main lobby windows. From *Architectural Forum*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1918), plate 22.

The style could be classified as Adamesque, as in most of the Ritz-Carltons. Wagner, however, insisted that in St. Louis the style was Italianate, describing the kind of ornamentation he was in fact using extensively as “emasculate,” an unfortunate choice of words given what had happened to Ellsworth Statler at the Inside Inn, but reflecting the male-oriented gender typing that may have led to the rather unfortunate and very different Italianate interiors, tending toward murky shades of brown and more masculine in association, found in the second Buffalo and Boston Statlers.

The entire St. Louis lobby is highly similar to those of the Cleveland and Detroit Statlers. Indeed the three must have struck many Statler guests as being identical, giving rise to the mistaken notion that the hotels were carbon copies. The St. Louis room was the last built, but it is the only one re-

maining, more elegant than ever now that it is furnished as a restaurant. Many of its features, particularly the cream and gold coloration, have been used in the lobby of the new addition, which successfully takes its cues from the older building.



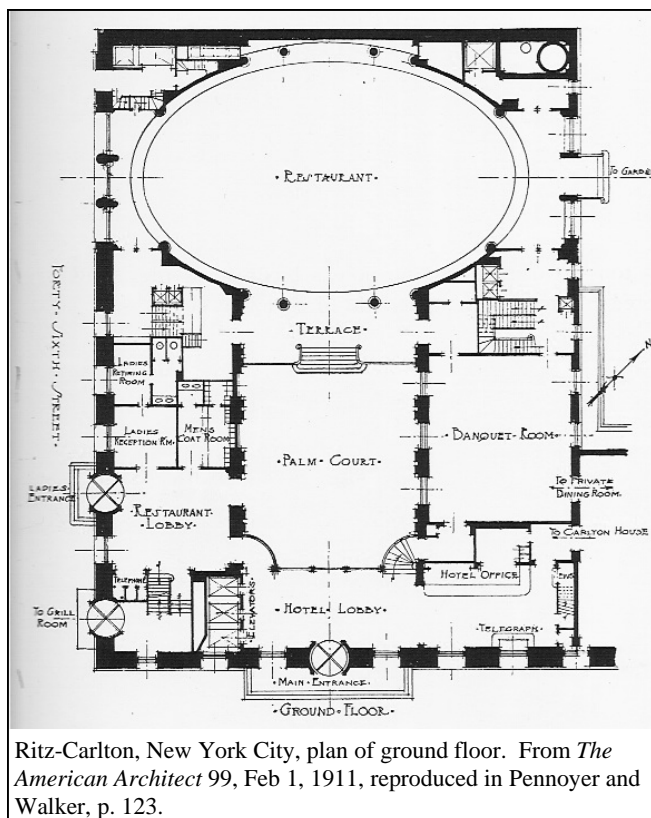
The Palm Court at the old Carlton Hotel, London, with staircase designed for dramatic female entrances and exits. From Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd & David Watkin, *The London Ritz: A Social and Architectural History*. London: Aurum Press, 1980, p. 29.

Even more remarkable than the lobby was the Palm Court/Dining Room. At the Carlton Hotel in London, Mewes & Davis and César Ritz created an interior focused on a two-story, stone-walled Palm Court, with marble pilasters separating windows, embellished with planted boxes, into two levels of surrounding rooms. A laylight of flat translucent panes covered the ceiling. At one end of the room an elevated terrace was reached by a short flight of steps leading to glass doors opening into the hotel dining room; Edward VII supposedly liked to sit on this terrace and inspect women as they mounted the stairs. The room was designed to be a showcase for feminine beauty because César Ritz wanted to attract fashionable but respectable women out of their homes into his hotel restaurants. At the New York Ritz-Carlton about ten years later, Warren & Wetmore designed a highly similar pair of rooms. One end of the Palm Court contained the small lobby, the separation effected by a low mirrored screen. The dining room beyond the terrace, elevated as at the Carlton, was a famous oval Adamesque chamber lined with 12 marble columns. I remember my father lamenting its lost splendor at the time of its demolition. Palm courts of this type were used for serving beverages, particularly afternoon tea, and light snacks.

The St. Louis Statler Palm Court, functioning as a dining room, was closely based on the interior of the New York Ritz-Carlton, as is evident even in its present, abstracted

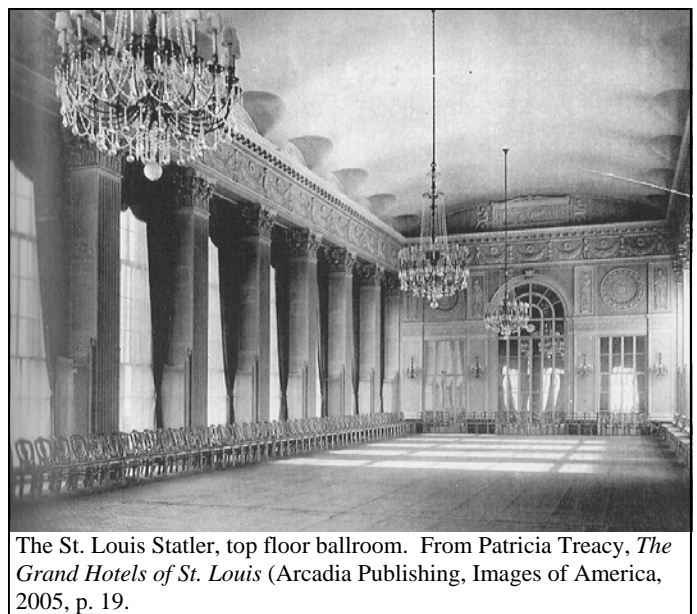


and altered form (see photo on back page). Here were the same segmentally arched laylight, made of small pieces of “Ambro” glass and the main difference between the New York and London rooms (the grid has been reconstructed and left open in the restoration); the same balustrade surmounting stone walls; and similarly proportioned windows, with boxes, on the second floor, the windows on the ground floor functioning as double doors to the side dining rooms. The terrace was missing, however; in its place the back wall was covered with three arched mirrors divided into panes, as if they were windows, similar to the treatment of the west wall of the New York Ritz-Carlton dining room. At the other end of the room an elaborate screen to the pantry entrance was one of the few indisputably Italianate features of the hotel. As in New York and London, the room resembled a courtyard, originally open to the air, that had been glazed over, so that it was a suitable and romantic outlook for the surrounding restaurants and private dining rooms. As with the lobbies, we have three rooms, each influencing the next, but in this case located on two continents. Again only the St. Louis Statler remains, albeit highly modified.



The top-floor ballroom, which is unchanged, was rather small, its width constricted by the width of the Washington Avenue bedroom wing below. For this reason, however, it is perfectly proportioned, whereas in most larger hotel ballrooms the ceiling appears to be too low. Embellished on the two long walls by fluted Corinthian piers,

with Adamesque, or at least neoclassical ornamentation filling the frieze above, it has in the opinion of this observer always been the most beautiful ballroom in eastern Missouri, a status particularly evident today when it is so handsomely decorated. Originally it functioned as a breeze-catching restaurant during the summer months. The distinguished exterior of the St. Louis Statler is the product of the “architectural language” of classicism, used decoratively rather than structurally, but with little added ornamentation. The one Italianate feature is the low-pitched roof over the deep eaves, visible only from a distance. The roof surmounts an Ionic colonnade, a skyline treatment probably influenced by Warren & Wetmore’s Hotel Biltmore in New York, but also found in many tall buildings of the period. It is the only Statler “crown” that encloses a single level of public rooms rather than two to four floors of bedrooms.



The base, separated from the crown by the severely simple shaft, is surely one of the most sophisticated features of this type found in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century American architecture and shows the George Post designers surpassing Warren & Wetmore, to whom they owed so much. Ranging across five levels, it can be read as if it were the façade of a 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup>-century palace or large house. The first three levels (the ground floor, mezzanine, and dormitory floor for staff living in the hotel) form the major element, rusticated at the corners, with rusticated pilasters separating the arched windows of the two-story lobby on the Ninth Street façade, and supporting an entablature and balustrade above the dormitory floor. The more closely set arched windows along the St. Charles and Washington facades, ingeniously designed to conceal the fact that they illuminate two levels, are separated by smaller pilasters to form an arcade. Distinct windows indicating a mezzanine occur only at the corners, above the entrance vestibules. The windows to the dormitory

floor, just beneath the entablature and screened by ornate ironwork, are a secondary note on all three facades.



The St. Louis Statler, detail of lower floors. From Treacy, p. 13.

Above the balustrade the first sample room floor, combining brick and stone facing and having its own entablature directly over, can be read as an attic floor; whereas the windows of the second sample room floor, with surrounding architraves and scrolled broken pediments, extend into the plain brick shaft of the bedroom floors and against that field are rather like dormers. This hierarchic arrangement avoids an appearance of elements of similar weight piled on top of each other, or of a sea of stone with windows afloat in it, the characteristics of so many hotel bases of this pe-

riod. The treatment of the two sample room levels is an expansion of the fourth floor treatment at the New York Ritz-Carlton, and the window arcades along the side wing are perhaps borrowed from the dining room fenestration on the south façade of that hotel.

Unlike the Detroit and Cleveland Statlers, the St. Louis Statler never received an addition and for most of the chain's history was the smallest Statler. A 1920s addition to the Jefferson, containing a large ballroom ("The Gold Room"), left that hostelry the city's principal meeting and convention site right through the 1950s. After Ellsworth Statler's death in 1928, his widow inherited the chain, which survived the Depression intact and even built an unusually dated, much needed Washington, D.C. Statler during the embattled early 1940s. Three more hotels, in Los Angeles, Dallas, and Hartford, no longer designed by the Post firm and austere modern in style, were built in the 1950s. In 1954 Mrs. Statler sold the chain to Conrad Hilton for a whopping \$111 million, said then to be the largest real estate transaction on record. It was the right time to sell, before the Midwestern downtowns where four of the Statlers were located went into decline, and the typical Statler bedroom began to look small compared to the bedrooms in newer hotels. For a while, the hotels were known as Statler Hiltons, then simply as Hiltons; today only one former Statler, the Washington house, remains in the Hilton chain, although most of the buildings survive. Statler's name is all but forgotten, whereas the name of César Ritz, whose hotels were so much smaller and whose wealth so much less impressive, is borne by hotels all around the world.



The St. Louis Statler, general view of Center Dining Room. From *Architectural Forum*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1918), plate 24.