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Hotel Flashback: The Roosevelt Hotel Celebrates New Orleans

Posted by [Alissa Ponchione](#) on June 2, 2016 in [Projects](#) [10 comments](#)

By Mary Beth Klatt

There are few destinations as iconic and legendary as the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans. It's home to the Sazerac cocktail; it's where presidents, movie stars, and singers stayed; and it survived Hurricane Katrina.

EXTERIOR



The exterior of the Roosevelt New Orleans

The hotel, originally known as the Grunewald Hotel, opened in December 1893 just in time for the 1894 Mardi Gras season. It became so successful, a 400-room, 14-story annex was opened in 1907. When the hotel was sold in 1923, the new owners wanted to demolish the original hotel, build a new tower the same size as the annex, and redesign the interiors.

Lobby



The restored lobby with the original chandelier that was hand cleaned.

The new structure, which spanned a city block (and still does), was renamed the Roosevelt Hotel. The property changed hands throughout the following decades, and, in 1965, the 504-room hotel was sold once again and renamed the Fairmont New Orleans. No matter the iterations of its name, however, the hotel is most known for its guests. The Blue Room stage welcomed Ella Fitzgerald, Judy Garland, Tina Turner, Carol Channing, Marlene Dietrich, Audrey Hepburn, Ginger Rogers, and Bob Hope. Elvis, Sonny and Cher, Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland, and Marilyn Monroe have dined there, as have presidents ranging from Calvin Coolidge to Bill Clinton.

Sazerac-Bar



The Sazerac Bar with its original murals from artist Paul Ninas

The property shut down after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the city in 2005. Only two years later, the hotel was sold for \$17 million and converted to the Waldorf Astoria flag under the Roosevelt New Orleans name. Houston-based Paradigm Design Group was called on to bring the hotel back to its original glory. The firm redesigned the 504 guestrooms in a neoclassical style; restored the lobby, even hand-cleaning the original chandeliers; and updated the Sazerac Bar to mimic its 1930s heyday with elegant woodwork and four restored Art Deco murals painted by artist Paul Ninas when he moved to New Orleans in 1932.

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