



Another Look

The Statler Towers



by Alissa Monti

On August 12, 2009, an investment group headed by Bill Koessler purchased the historic Statler Towers on Niagara Square in Buffalo for \$1.3 million. Although the building has not been used as a hotel in several decades, it was in its prime one of the most highly regarded hotels in the country.

Ellsworth Milton Statler, the man who owned the Statler Hotels and a precursor to J. Willard Marriott, began his hotel career by building a temporary hotel for the Pan-American Exposition. After another venture in Saint Louis, he returned to Buffalo from 1905-1908 to build what he called the Hotel Buffalo, his first permanent hotel. It was a functioning hotel until 1967, and was demolished a year later. This was also the first in a chain of Statler Hotels.

Other hotels opened by Statler were located in Cleveland, Detroit, Saint Louis, New York City, and Boston. Later hotels were opened after Statler's death in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Hartford, and Dallas. In 1919, Statler returned to Buffalo and began work on another Statler hotel, this one on Niagara Square on the site of the Castle Inn, a portion of which was the former home of Millard Fillmore. This area was not at that time a well-known political or social location, but Statler believed that it would become so. The Niagara Square hotel opened in 1923. Built in the English Renaissance Revival Style, it was 18 stories high with 1100 rooms. Statler also allowed space for future additions.

The interior of the hotel was a mixture of styles. The lobby was decorated in the Italian renaissance style and done

in marble, while the construction style was Spanish and made the lobby seem spacious. Other rooms inside the hotel

40 THE SATURDAY EVENING POST June 2, 1923

Ready for You in BUFFALO

The NEWEST Hotel Statler

Statler Service is Guaranteed

We guarantee that our employees will handle all transactions without regard to individual objections; in the spirit of the golden rule—of treating the guest as the employee would like to be treated if their positions were reversed. We guarantee that every employee will go to the limit of his authority to satisfy the guest whom he is serving; and that if he can't satisfy him he will immediately take him to his superior.

From the time you inquire if you have cause for complaint in any of our houses, and if the management of that house fails to give you the satisfaction which in this guarantee promises, the transaction will become a personal matter between you and me. You will receive a letter upon mail will write to me a statement of the case, and I will direct my staff to make good my promise. Don't personally check all the work of 6,000 employees, and there is no need that I should do so; but whenever promises aren't kept I want to know it. My permanent address is Executive Office, Hotel Statler Co., Inc., Buffalo.

— E. M. Statler

On Niagara Square, where Delaware Avenue begins. It has 1100 rooms, 1100 baths—and all the comforts there (some new ones) that have made the Statler Hotels world-famous.

This largest and finest of the four Hotel Statler is now open in Buffalo—and its beauty and convenience will be a revelation to you. With its opening the old hotel at Washington and Swan Streets (which was the first Hotel Statler) was renamed Hotel Buffalo, and the old Hotel Troop was closed, its building being converted to other uses.

There Will Be Other Statlers in Other Cities

Another Hotel Statler will shortly be under construction in Boston, at Columbus Avenue, Providence and Arlington Streets. It will have 1100 rooms, 1100 baths, and will be in every way worthy of the Statler name and reputation.

In Detroit, too, there will be a new Statler-operated hotel for which the ground has been purchased and plans are being drawn. It will be at the corner of Woodward Avenue and High Street, a block west north of Grand Circus Park, where the present Hotel Statler stands.

Why This Steady Growth?

This increase in the number and importance of Statler Hotels in American cities is brought about solely by the good value, the comfort and convenience and satisfaction, which the Statlers provide for their patrons. These values, this satisfaction, go beyond the satisfactory buildings and their equipment, the furnishing and facilities of the rooms and restaurants and lounges; these hotels also guarantee the service they render you—definitely guarantee your satisfaction in the formal promise reproduced above.

<p>HOTELS STATLER</p> <p>BUFFALO: 1100 rooms, 1100 baths, Niagara Square. The old Hotel Statler (at Washington and Swan) is now called Hotel Buffalo, and the old Hotel Troop Hotel is closed, not to reopen.</p> <p>CLEVELAND: 1000 rooms, 1000 baths, LaSalle at E. 12th.</p> <p>DETROIT: 1000 rooms, 1000 baths, Grand Circus Park.</p> <p>ST. LOUIS: 650 rooms, 650 baths, North and Washington.</p> <p>BOSTON: Now preparing to build at Columbus Ave., Providence and Arlington Sts.</p>	<h1>STATLER</h1> <p>and Statler-operated</p> <h1>HOTELS</h1>	<p>Hotel Pennsylvania New York</p> <p>The largest hotel in the world—with 2200 rooms, 2200 baths. On Seventh Avenue, 43 to 84th Street, directly opposite the Central Park. A Statler-operated hotel, with all the comforts and conveniences of other Statlers, and with the same policy of courteous, intelligent and helpful service by all employees.</p>
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The rate per day (for one and for two people), of every Statler room is posted permanently in that room, printed in plain figures.

A Saturday Evening Post ad for Statler Hotels, 1923.

SUE E. ECK COLLECTION

were finished with Spanish, Dutch, Chinese, Georgian and French touches. A Turkish bath was located in the basement, as was a barbershop. The floors of hotel rooms were done in one of three color schemes: rose, green or blue. There were five eating locations inside the hotel.

The Statler Hotels were established to appeal to the upper class and to traveling businessmen and tourists. The low room rate led to the popular slogan "A room and a bath for a dollar and a half," as rooms could be rented for \$1.50 a night. Statler's innovative "Statler plumbing shaft" allowed for a restroom in each hotel room, a first for a hotel chain. This plumbing shaft was located in the walls between rooms, which were placed back to back. Pipes and electrical conduits were run through this shaft. Statler purchased land across the street from the hotel and built a theater, so hotel patrons could eat at the hotel's restaurant and then go to the theater. He also built a parking garage on Delaware Avenue.

The Statler Towers, as the hotel eventually came to be known, was purchased in 1954 by the Hilton Hotel Chain for \$111 million, and changed hands several more times until by 1982 it was no longer in use as a hotel. In 2006, the Statler Towers was purchased by British investor Bashar Issa, who planned to return it to hotel use, as well as add stores and restaurants. Bashar Issa was forced into involuntary bankruptcy in April 2009. The investment group headed by Bill Koessler, who previously operated a catering company in the Towers, plans to invest \$100 million in renovations for hotel rooms, stores, restaurants and apartments.

If renovations continue as planned, Buffalo's Statler Towers, the first in a hotel chain to offer some of the modern conveniences enjoyed by travelers today, will again be open with the purpose for which the original hotel was intended: to offer a place for people to rest and enjoy themselves. 🏨



A detail of sandstone carvings above a west-facing window on the Statler Towers. CLARENCE PICARD PHOTO, 2009



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