



Hotel Mavens: Lucius M. Boomer, George C. Boldt and Oscar of the Waldorf

Stanley Turkel

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The word "maven" is defined by Wikipedia as a "trusted expert in a particular field, who seeks to pass knowledge on to others" Since the 1980s it has become more common when the New York Times columnist William Safire adapted it to describe himself as "the language maven" The word from Hebrew is mainly confined to American English and was included in the Oxford English Dictionary second edition (1989). My three hotel mavens are: 1) Lucius M. Boomer, one of the most famous hoteliers of his time, was chairman of the Hotel Waldorf-Astoria Corporation. In a career of over half a century, he directed such celebrated hotels as the Bellevue-Stratford in Philadelphia, the Taft in New Haven, the Lenox in Boston, and the McAlpin, Claridge, Sherry-Netherland and the original as well as the current Waldorf-Astoria in New York. 2) George C. Boldt who was the genius of the original Waldorf-Astoria. It was said of him that he made innkeeping a profession and, more than any man, was responsible for the modern American hotel. 3) Oscar of the Waldorf who was described in 1898 by the New York Sun: "In only one New York hotel, however, is there a personage deserving to be called a maître d'hotel. Anyone who studies him closely will soon arrive at a firm conviction that he might quite as appropriately have been called General or Admiral, if circumstances had not led him into the hotel business. Oscar knows everybody" Oscar was a superstar of his time and one of the stalwarts who managed both the original and the current Waldorf-Astoria. Among his many duties, Oscar commanded a staff of 1,000 persons besides conducting a school for waiters, at the time the only one of its kind in the United States. In 1896, Oscar wrote one of the greatest cookbooks of its time: "The Cook Book by 'Oscar of the Waldorf' It contains 907 pages and 3,455 recipes.

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