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## The Accountants Club of America

*One of New York's best-kept secrets*

By STUART KESSLER, CPA

One of the best-kept secrets of the accounting profession in the New York metropolitan area is the Accountants Club of America. Conceived by Elijah Watt Sells and his friend and colleague, Charles Waldo Haskins, it was officially incorporated in 1927. However, its real origins can be traced to a time decades earlier.

Soon after the incorporation of the NYSSCPA in 1897, Sells began urging the State Society to make a place in its program for social and nonprofessional meetings of its members. He felt that if the members could meet in friendly comradeship, they would be bound together more closely for the advancement of professional ideals.

During the early years of the club, they held monthly meetings in a room in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. These get-togethers served to build personal friend-



THE HOTEL BELMONT

ships among the then limited number of members. The time came when larger attendance at the monthly meetings required a formal program and expansion of the opportunity for personal contact.

A group of men who shared Sells's thoughts on the need for informal gatherings of CPAs de-

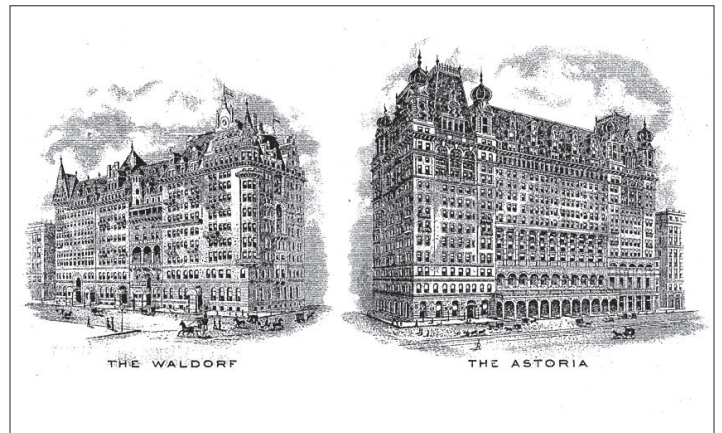
cidated to put his idea to a practical test. Many luncheons were held at the Hotel McAlpin, located at Broadway and 34th Street, in Manhattan. The attendees were asked to join and support an Accountants Club. A number of leading accountants agreed to join. However, it was 1917 and the United States had become involved in World War I, so the plan was set aside.

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professional accountants in New York. One was the Accountants' Round Table. It existed from about 1912 until 1917, also being abandoned after the United States entered World War I. However, in 1927, interest in the club was renewed when the partners of Haskins & Sells set up a foundation for the club. The founding group reminded those who had committed themselves some years before to form the Accountants Club. At a private dinner party at the Waldorf Astoria, given by Col. Robert Montgomery and Col. Arthur Carter, it was decided to proceed with the organization.

As plans matured, the decision was made to give the club a national standing by including in its name the words "of America." Twenty-five illustrious CPAs met in Montgomery's office on May 6, 1927, and signed the certificate of incorporation. At the first meeting, the incorporators became the first Board of Governors and elected Montgomery the first president and Samuel D.



Leidesdorf as the first treasurer.

The new club was established in the Hotel Belmont, which oc-

suitably inscribed, as a token of their esteem.

Luncheon meetings have been the continuing feature of the club's program. Included among those addressing these luncheons are a New York state Governor, award-winning authors, members of Congress, distinguished environmentalists, prominent attorneys, noteworthy economists and noted members of our own profession.

We have also been treated over the past half-dozen years to an annual breakfast address on the state of the CPA profession by Barry C. Melancon, the president of the AICPA and a member of the Accountants Club.

In 2007, the club celebrated its 80th anniversary with a gala dinner. We are looking forward to our 90th anniversary in 2017, with a repeat gala.

The vision of Sells and Haskins of a group of friendly professional men and women working together in both state and national societies, professionals with high standards of integrity and competency in financial accountancy, is as valid today as it was when they were alive. The Accountants Club of America will continue to do its part in promoting the spirit of comradeship among members of the accounting profession and those who work with the profession. We encourage all who are interested in joining the club to visit our website, [accountantsclubofamerica.org](http://accountantsclubofamerica.org).

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cupied the southwest corner of Park Avenue and 42nd Street (a venue at which the NYSSCPA held many meetings in the 1950s and 1960s, before it was torn down). Membership in the club was extended to all professional public accountants (certified public accountants and chartered accountants), to members of the National Association of Cost Accountants, and to others of good character and executive standing who had a vital interest in accounting, such as "bankers, credit issuers and many industrial accounting officials."

Before long, the club sought larger meeting rooms in the new Hotel Montclair at Lexington Avenue and 49th Street; a duplex apartment with attractive furnishings was rented. Dining rooms, social rooms, an outdoor sundeck and, on the upper floor of the penthouse, an outdoor exercise area were provided.

At his last meeting as club president, the governors presented "Colonel Bob," as he was called, with a large silver tray,