

Meet Matilda, the Algonquin Hotel Cat

Watch CatChannel's exclusive video about the reigning feline at New York's landmark hotel.

By Sandy Robins

Posted: June 10, 2009, 3 a.m. EDT

Matilda, the resident cat at the Algonquin Hotel on West 44th Street in New York City, is the ninth cat to greet guests and call this gracious hotel home.

The hotel has had a resident cat since the 1930s. The Algonquin was a hangout for famous actors and writers of the day. Theatrical luminaries who populated the hotel's famed "round table" included Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, Sir Noel Coward and John Barrymore.

As for the history of cats at the Algonquin, the story goes that one rainy night a very wet and bedraggled tabby cat wandered into the hotel seeking refuge from the atrocious weather. Frank Cage, the hotel's then-owner and the quintessential host, welcomed the furry traveler into the Algonquin and offered it milk served in a champagne glass in the hotel's famous Blue Bar. He invited it to stay as a permanent guest.

Initially, the hotel regulars named him Rusty in keeping with his orange tabby coloring. But Barrymore, who was starring in "Hamlet" on Broadway at the time, decided that the feline needed a more dignified name and changed it to Hamlet.

And so a tradition was born; the hotel has had a resident cat ever since. All the males have been named Hamlet with deference to Mr. Barrymore and the females have been called Matilda.

Sandy Robins is an award-winning pet-lifestyle expert who appears regularly on TV, radio and in international publications. She lives in Southern California with her family and cat Fudge.