

## Hotel Olga

Demolished 2019

695 Lenox Avenue



*The Hotel Olga in a newspaper ad from 1923 (The New York Age, February 3, 1923)*

The Hotel Olga, formerly the Dolphin Hotel, was built in 1910 and designed by architect John E. Kerby for owners McAvoy and Ratz, who operated the business as the Hotel Dolphin. African American businessman Edward "Ed" H. Wilson, with financial assistance from A'Lelia Walker, bought the business in 1920, renamed it Hotel Olga, and welcomed African American guests.

In a post on [Historypin.org](https://www.historypin.org), historian Eric K. Washington (whose childhood home faced the Hotel Olga) states, "In an era when Harlem's now iconic Hotel Theresa still loomed as a citadel of racial exclusion, Wilson conjured up his swank haven for 'the Race' from an earlier mixed-race watering hole on the same site, the Dolphin Hotel."

The African weekly newspaper, the New York Age, reported on the opening of the hotel in its December 25, 1920, edition stating, "New York's latest hostelry for the accommodation of the public is the Hotel Olga, at 145th St. and Lenox Avenue, recently opened by Edward H. Wilson,

formerly of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Seventy-five rooms are provided, nicely furnished, with hot and cold water in each room. Mr. Wilson is intending to give the best service possible at a medium cost, and every attention will be given to the comfort of guests, whether transient or permanent”.

The hotel also had a large library. African American writer and educator Alain LeRoy Locke stayed at the hotel when he visited New York; he and other African American writers of the Harlem Renaissance held their meetings at the hotel. Musicians Billie Holiday, Dizzy Gillespie, and others performed at the hotel’s social club.

The Hotel Olga remained Harlem’s bastion for African Americans travelers until 1940, when the Hotel Theresa, purchased by African American Love B. Wood in 1937, was desegregated. The Hotel Olga ceased operating in the mid-1940s, and the building was demolished in 2019.