

The Empire State Building

The Empire State Building! It hasn't been the tallest building in the world for a good many years, now, but none of the Johnny-come-latelys have the charisma, character, and history that this building can rightly boast of. I mean, how many of those other structures can say they've been climbed by King Kong?

Still one of the most famous architectural feats in the world, the Empire State Building was built in 1930-1931. It's located in central Manhattan, on 5th Ave., between 33rd St. and 34th St., on the site of the old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. It's about 1/4 mile high—1,250 ft! And, over the years, there has been a variety of Empire State Building covers issued, both to commemorate the structure, itself, and from various businesses and organizations located within its 102 floors. The site was first developed as the John Thomson Farm, in the late 18th century. The building stands on a block once occupied by the original Waldorf Hotel, a place frequented by The Four Hundred, the social elite of New York, in the late 19th century.

The project was hurried to completion in order to take the title of "world's tallest building" from the nearby Chrysler Building. The Empire State Building was officially opened on May 1, 1931, when President Herbert Hoover pressed a button in Washington, D.C. that turned on the building's lights, 410 days after construction commenced. From its opening until the 1940s much of its office space went unrented. This lack of inhabitants earned it the nickname "Empty State Building" in its early years.

More than thirty people have committed suicide from atop the building. The fence around the observatory terrace was put up in 1947 after five people tried to jump over a three-week span. In 1979, Elvita Adams jumped from the 86th floor, only to be blown back onto the 85th floor and left with only a broken hip. The building was also the source of suicides in 2004 and 2006.

