



The Russ House was built by Christian Russ who arrived in San Francisco with his wife and sons on March 26, 1847 from New York on a boat called the Loo Choo. Upon arrival he immediately took wood from the ship and built a cottage on the outskirts of San Francisco... at Pine and Montgomery Streets. He was a jeweler by trade established a jewelry shop which turned into a huge booming business when the upcoming gold rush came. In fact, he expanded to different areas of the business like assaying where he was able to take a little gold off the top for each assayal. His timing couldn't have been better. Since the land in the area was dirt cheap, he and others like James Lick, purchased as many lots as he could. Russ even built a hotel on Pine and Bush called the American Hotel. When the Gold Rush came, he built about 40 cottages to rent to the miners. When the Gold Rush ended, he tore down those cottages and built the Russ House which became a famous hotel and restaurant. The idea to build this house and the use his name this way came from a similar restaurant/hotel that James Lick built called the Lick House. The idea was for Russ to make his bigger and better which he succeeded in doing... In the 1906 Earthquake, the Russ House was badly damaged but it did survive. In 1927 or so, the building was rebuilt and turned into a 31 story building which, as hard as it may be to believe, was then known for a long time as the tallest building in the West.

--Harry Murphy, January 03, 2002.



The **Russ House**, built by Christian Russ, was arguably San Francisco's first grand hotel. —Photo courtesy of [San Francisco History Center](#), [San Francisco Public Library](#)