Marjorie and Duncan Phillips in the Main Gallery of the Phillips Memorial Art Gallery, now The Phillips Collection, one of Washington's great treasures. Courtesy The Phillips Collection, Clara E. Sipprel photo, ca. 1922.

D.C. Historic Preservation Office
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Massachusetts Avenue Historic District

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Massachusetts Avenue Historic District

Generally including structures fronting on Massachusetts Avenue from 17th Street, N. W., to Observatory Circle. Includes approximately 150 buildings c. 1880-1940. DC designation 11/27/73, NR listing 10/22/74.

- Boulevard of grand mansions, row houses, and embassies, known as "Embassy Row."
- Among the finest realizations of L'Enfant's Baroque vision of grand vistas and diagonal avenues.
- Exemplar of the fashion for urban boulevards in the European manner, with dynamic interaction among buildings, streets, and landscaped open space.
- Includes some of the city's most elegant and lavish turn-of-the-century residences.
- Home to many foreign governments since early 1900s.
- Many locally and nationally prominent architects represented.
- Architectural styles include Queen Anne, Richardsonian Romanesque, Beaux Arts, Chateauesque, and Classical Revival.

Restoring or renovating your Massachusetts Avenue property? Call the D. C. Historic Preservation Division. An historic preservation professional is assigned to assist you with technical information. 202-442-4653

SUGGESTED READING:

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Massachusetts Avenue Architecture. Vols. 1 & 2. Washington, D.C.: Commission of Fine Arts, 1973, 1975.

The Eye of Duncan Phillips. Passantino, Erika D., ed. Washington, D.C.; The Phillips Collection, 1999.

On the cover: The entrance of the McCormick Apartments, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, now the headquarters of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Drawing by John Gerachis.

Opposite page: Plan of the City of Washington by Pierre L'Enfant. Printed in Tobias Lear's pamphlet, *Observations on the River Patowmack*, 1793. Courtesy Library of Congress.

The symbolic importance of Massachusetts Avenue in defining the nation's capital is second only to that of Pennsylvania Avenue. It is the longest, and one of the widest, of the grand radiating avenues conceived by L'Enfant in his 1791 plan for the Federal City. From the western boundary of the city near Georgetown to the city hospital he sited on the Eastern Branch as a major element of the plan, Massachusetts Avenue is 4.4 miles long and 160 feet wide. It intersects all of the avenues connecting the northern, predominantly residential area of the city with the monumental core, and most of the north-south grid streets. Seven of the original squares and circles occur at these intersections, including Dupont, Scott, and Thomas circles; Mount Vernon and Stanton Squares; Union Station Plaza, and Lincoln Park. At Dupont Circle, Massachusetts Avenue is intersected by four major thoroughfares–Connecticut Avenue, New Hampshire Avenue, 19th Street, and P Street. The prominent, irregularly-shaped lots created here were perfect sites for showcasing the mansions of the rich and powerful. Beyond the western boundary of the L'Enfant city at Boundary Street (Florida Avenue), the steep terrain and the presence of Rock Creek Park created a contrasting but equally appropriate *rus in urbe* aura for sumptuous residential construction. The Massachusetts Avenue Historic District recognizes the unique character of Massachusetts Avenue between 17th Street and Observatory Circle.

President Washington allowed his Revolutionary War comrade-in-arms, engineer Major Charles Pierre L'Enfant, complete aesthetic freedom when he selected him in 1791 to design the new Federal City. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson supplied him with plans of cities in both Europe and the United States, but L'Enfant's primary inspiration clearly came from the vistas and grand allées of Versailles where L'Enfant, son

of a gardener, had grown up. His brilliant and comprehensive Baroque design of a "grand city for a great nation" was based upon a coordinated system of radiating avenues, parks, and vistas overlaid on an orthogonal street pattern like that of Philadelphia. It created a commemorative and symbolic framework for buildings, structures, and viewsheds. In the monumental core it provided sites for government buildings, monuments, and public assembly with easy access from the residential neighborhoods. In the neighborhoods it provided parks and a focus of neighborhood activities with a clear relation to the larger city.

The transition from grand plan to reality was slow. The 1859 Boschke map shows little construction along either the eastern or western ends of Massachusetts Avenue. L'Enfant's vision was barely discernible. When the Corps of Engineers began construction of Dupont Circle in 1871, the only house on Massachusetts Avenue near the circle was reputedly a fortune-teller's establishment. The Board of Public Works (1871-74), under the leadership of Alexander Robey Shepherd, transformed the city's infrastructure. Massachusetts Avenue was one of the first streets to be paved, and within 10 years the section near Dupont Circle, between 17th Street and Florida Avenue, became one of the city's most fashionable locations for the residences of socially and politically prominent families.

In 1886, Congress authorized the westward extension of Massachusetts Avenue across Rock Creek to the Tenallytown Road (Wisconsin Avenue). Because of topographical and economic considerations the Avenue was extended first to a point 600 feet beyond Florida Avenue, then pivoted slightly northward around a circle, at first called Decatur Circle and later Sheridan Circle, in order to cross Rock Creek at the most advantageous point. In 1887-88 Massachusetts Avenue was extended as far as Rock Creek. A cast-iron bridge across Rock Creek was built by the landowners and by November 1888, this section of the Avenue was completed and opened to the public. By 1891 Massachusetts Avenue, with the exception of a section of the road in the immediate vicinity of Observatory Hill, had been completed and dedicated as far as the Tenallytown Road. In 1894, this section, too, was complete. Subdivision and development of Massachusetts Avenue in the Kalorama area west of Florida Avenue began immediately. In 1901 the iron bridge across Rock Creek was replaced by a low-level stone-faced bridge–little more than a culvert–built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In 1940-41, due to the intercession of the Commission of Fine Arts, this was replaced by the present stone Charles C. Glover Bridge, designed to carry the Avenue across the Rock Creek chasm without a break in width or elevation.

MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE IN THE 1870s AND '80s

The potential grandeur of L'Enfant's Massachusetts Avenue was appreciated by those who came in the final quarter of the 19th century as part of official Washington or simply to enjoy the dazzling 'winter season' in a relatively open society. The avenue's prominent triangular and trapezoidal lots with multiple street exposures afforded unusual design opportunities to imaginative architects and their socially ambitious clients. Nevada Senator William Stewart, one of the first to build here, set the tone. In 1873, German-American architect Adolf Cluss designed an architectonic, subtly-massed pentagonal building for Stewart's site on the north side of Dupont Circle between Connecticut and Massachusetts Avenues. Its tall, circular entrance tower and central octagonal lantern drew attention to its important location. Built in what was then a rural, undeveloped neighborhood, the house was known as 'Stewart's Castle' and 'Stewart's Folly.' Stewart's wife Annie purchased the furnishings for the house in Europe, and, it is said, asked the architect to model the tower after a Rhenish prototype which she had admired on her travels.

Stewart's Castle, 1913 Massachusetts Avenue (1873), Adolf Cluss, architect. The house was leased to the Chinese Legation from 1886 to 1893. Razed in 1901, its site is now occupied by Riggs Bank. Courtesy Huntington Library, Frances Benjamin Johnston

Directly opposite Stewart's Castle, on the south side of Dupont Circle between Connecticut and Massachusetts Avenues, New York architect J. Cleveland Cady designed an elegant double house for sisters Katherine Miller and Charlotte E. Hopkins in 1880. The house had the appearance of a single large mansion. Entrance to the Hopkins House was at 1826 Massachusetts Avenue, while that of the Miller House was at 1347 Connecticut Avenue. The narrow side fronting on Dupont Circle was architecturally complex and sophisticated and included shared

Hopkins-Miller House, 1826 Massachusetts Avenue/1347 Connecticut Avenue (1880), J. Cleveland Cady, architect. Razed 1948/1912. Courtesy *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. LXX, ca. 1885.

balconies on each of the three floors. Cady was also architect of the Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Connecticut Avenue and N Streets (1887-89, razed 1966), and the old Metropolitan Opera House (1883) in New York City. The residence of Gardiner Greene Hubbard, father-in-law of Alexander Graham Bell and founder and first president of the National Geographic Society, was located nearby on a narrow triangular lot formed by the intersection of Connecticut Avenue with 19th Street. This comfortable Queen Anne style house (ca. 1880) included a bay overlooking Dupont Circle, bays and other projections in the public space on 19th Street, and an entrance at 1328 Connecticut Avenue.

In 1881, Philadelphia architect John Fraser designed a substantial Queen Anne style residence for Maine Senator James G. Blaine intended for a site on 16th Street near Scott Circle. Blaine changed his mind while grading of the 16th Street site was in progress. The house was built instead at 2000 Massachusetts Avenue on the west side of Dupont Circle. Fraser was the architect of many Washington buildings including the British Legation at 1300 Connecticut Avenue (1874) and the A. Saks Store at 7th & Market Space, N.W. In Philadelphia, Fraser had been architect of the Union League Club (1863), and practiced briefly (1867–71) in partnership with Frank Furness and George Hewitt. The Blaines did not live long in the house, moving in 1883 to the Windom-Munn House at 1601 Massachusetts Avenue. Harriet Blaine expressed the wistful lament of many other American families before and since when she wrote to her daughter in 1883, "How does it happen that the large mansion and the large family came in different portions of my life?"

Blaine House, 2000 Massachusetts Avenue, (1881), John Fraser, architect. Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C., ca. 1890.

Belden Noble House, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue (1880), Gray and Page, architects. Razed in 1915 to provide a site for the McCormick apartment building. Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C., ca. 1882.

The Belden Noble House, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue (1880–razed ca. 1915), was designed by Gray and Page for a lot at the intersection of 18th Street with Massachusetts Avenue and P Street, one block east of Dupont Circle. The design of the house admirably exploited its site. The principal entrance was on Massachusetts Avenue, emphasized by a loggia, while a circular tower like that of Stewart's Castle acknowledged the Dupont Circle location. *Harper's* commented that the design was "perhaps the best illustration in the city of what may be accomplished in massiveness and the ornamental in brick, without superficial adornment." West of Dupont Circle, architect W. Bruce Gray designed a residence for Samuel M. Bryan at 2025 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. (1885). Gray's building addressed Massachusetts Avenue with a strong asymmetrical composition which included another circular tower. In 1885 Robert Fleming designed a vast sandstone, pressed brick and terracotta mansion for Anastasia Patten at 2122 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Patten and her late husband Edmond had migrated from Ireland to California during the gold rush, making a fortune there and in Nevada. The house was sited on a 1.75 acre private park at Florida Avenue–then the western terminus of Massachusetts Avenue. Rapid residential development of Massachusetts Avenue west of

Bryan House, 2025 Massachusetts Avenue (1885), W. Bruce Gray, architect. Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C., W. H. Seaman, c. 1889.

Anastasia Patten House, 2122 Massachusetts Avenue (1885), Robert Fleming, architect. Razed 1947. Courtesy Washingtoniana Room, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, *Evening Star* photo, 1940.

Florida Avenue began after completion of the street improvements of 1888. Today ten houses built in the 1890s survive here.

In 1883 Levi Zeigler Leiter moved his family to Washington, leasing the recently completed Blaine mansion at 2000 Massachusetts Avenue. A wealthy self-made man, he had been a partner of Marshall Field in the Chicago dry goods business and had greatly increased his fortune by investing in Chicago real estate after the great fire of 1871. In Chicago, Leiter had been a benefactor of the Chicago Art Institute, the Chicago Historical Society, and the Chicago Public Library. A member of an old Maryland family, he liked to travel and collect books and manuscripts. In 1891 he built his own 55-room residence on the north side of Dupont Circle between New Hampshire Avenue and 19th Street. In Chicago, Leiter had made architectural history as the builder of William LeBaron Jenney's Leiter Building (1889), the first true steel-frame building. His residence here, designed by architect T. P. Chandler of Philadelphia in a neo-classical style, was the first of the palatial white Beaux Arts mansions to be built on Massachusetts Avenue and signaled the beginning of a new era.

Leiter House, 1500 New Hampshire Avenue (1891), T. P. Chandler, architect. Razed 1947. Courtesy National Capital Planning Commission, T. A. Mullett Collection, ca. 1893.

CITY BEAUTIFUL

The Philadelphia 1876 centennial celebration of the founding of the United States created an interest in colonial and early federal architecture. Architect Richard Morris Hunt, educated at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, had used colonial themes in remodeling his own house in Newport, Rhode Island in 1870–71, but soon adopted the more formal neo-classical approach, which Thomas Jefferson had used at Monticello and the University of Virginia, as the more appropriate direction for American architecture. Charles McKim, also educated in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, began his career in the office of Henry Hobson Richardson where he met Stanford White and sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. After the Centennial, McKim and White toured New England recording details of colonial houses for use in their own work. In 1879 McKim struck out on his own with William Rutherford Mead. The following year White joined the firm. McKim, Mead & White began by adapting early American vernacular architectural themes to late nineteenth century lifestyles. A Beaux-Arts-fostered interest in accurate historical detail and rational planning found mature expression in a new American architecture based on the classical principles of the early republic.

Daniel Burnham (1846-1912), first chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts. Courtesy Commission of Fine Arts, portrait by Anders Zorn.

The World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, presented a planned urban environment based upon neo-classical Beaux-Arts design. "The White City" became a model for progressive urban design in the United States, and especially for public buildings. Richard Morris Hunt; McKim, Mead and White; Burnham and Root; Frederick Law Olmsted; and Augustus Saint-Gaudens were among those responsible for the success of the project. In 1901 the Senate Park Commission, popularly known as the McMillan Commission, was established to plan a comprehensive park system for the national capital and to make suggestions for the siting and design of new public buildings. Charles Follen McKim, Daniel Burnham, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and Augustus Saint Gaudens, surviving planners and designers of the Columbian Exposition, were among those appointed to serve on this Commission. Its 1901 plan recommended an extensive park system based upon the precedent of the L'Enfant Plan with coordinated neo-classical buildings and monuments. In 1910 the Commission of Fine Arts, with Burnham as chairman, was established to advise upon the implementation of the 1901 plan.

THE PALACES OF MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

On Massachusetts Avenue, Beaux-Arts classicism was adopted with enthusiasm in the mansions of the very rich. These imaginative homes were designed for entertainment, with dramatically linked rooms which typically included a grand entrance and stair to the piano nobile floor, drawing rooms, conservatory, dining room, library, ballroom, and billiard room. Details were

Townsend House, 2121 Massachusetts Avenue (1898), Carrère and Hastings, architects. Now the Cosmos Club. Courtesy Library of Congress.

eclectic and, although drawn from European precedent, were used to create architecture for an American lifestyle. In 1898 railroad magnate Richard H. Townsend commissioned New York architects Carrère and Hastings to remodel the Second Empire style residence which Curtis Hillyer, one of Senator Stewart's partners in the original development of Dupont Circle, had built for himself ca. 1871 at 2121 Massachusetts Avenue. Both John Merven Carrère and Thomas Hastings had studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and had worked at McKim, Mead, & White. The design for the mansion was modeled after J. A. Gabriel's Petit Trianon (1762-1768) at Versailles. Mrs. Townsend is said to have had a superstitious fear of living in a completely new house, but if any portion of the original house was retained after the remodeling it was not immediately obvious. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. was consulted in the design of the grounds.

In 1896 Herbert and Martha Blow Wadsworth purchased a prominent triangular Dupont Circle site at 1801 Massachusetts Avenue. Martha Wadsworth was an artist and in 1899 collaborated on the design for the house with Buffalo architect and friend, George Cary. Cary had trained with McKim, Mead, & White and at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Their brilliant urban design fully occupied the site with projections on all sides. A drive-through from Massachusetts Avenue to P Street at the midpoint of the building provided a sheltered entrance to the building. On the west was the main entrance with stairs leading up to the principal living spaces on the floor above. On the east was the city's first internal 'automobile room,' with a drained, slanted floor for washing the automobiles. The design of the nearby Leiter mansion, more suitable for a country estate with its colossal portico and drive, had by contrast exploited the prominence of a similar L'Enfant site while ignoring its design opportunities.

Martha Blow Wadsworth. Courtesy Martha D. Wadsworth. Portrait by Fred Pegram, 1910.

Wadsworth House, 1801 Massachusetts Avenue (1900), George Cary, architect. Now the Sulgrave Club. Courtesy Sulgrave Club Archives, ca. 1902.

Wadsworth House ballroom. Courtesy Sulgrave Club archives.

In 1901, Stanford White of McKim, Mead and White designed a white marble neoclassical Italianate residence at neighboring 15 Dupont Circle for Robert and Eleanor Medill Patterson. The dramatic yet simple entrance adroitly addressed Dupont Circle while maintaining the street facades at the intersection of the Circle and P Street. A grand polygonal central entrance hall linked ball room, conservatory, library, and formal dining room on the piano nobile floor, creating a perfect entertainment space. Eleanor Patterson's father, and then her husband, had edited *The Chicago Tribune*. Their daughter, Eleanor (Cissy) Medill Patterson,

Patterson House, 15 Dupont Circle (1901), Stanford White, architect. Private Collection.

Newspaper dynasty. Patriarch Joseph Medill with his grandchildren. L-R, Col. Robert Rutherford McCormick, *Chicago Tribune*; Cissy Patterson, *Washington Times-Herald*; Senator J. Medill McCormick; and Capt. Joseph Medill Patterson, *New York Daily News*. Senator McCormick lived in the house his parents built at 3000 Massachusetts Avenue while in Washington. Private Collection, 1898.

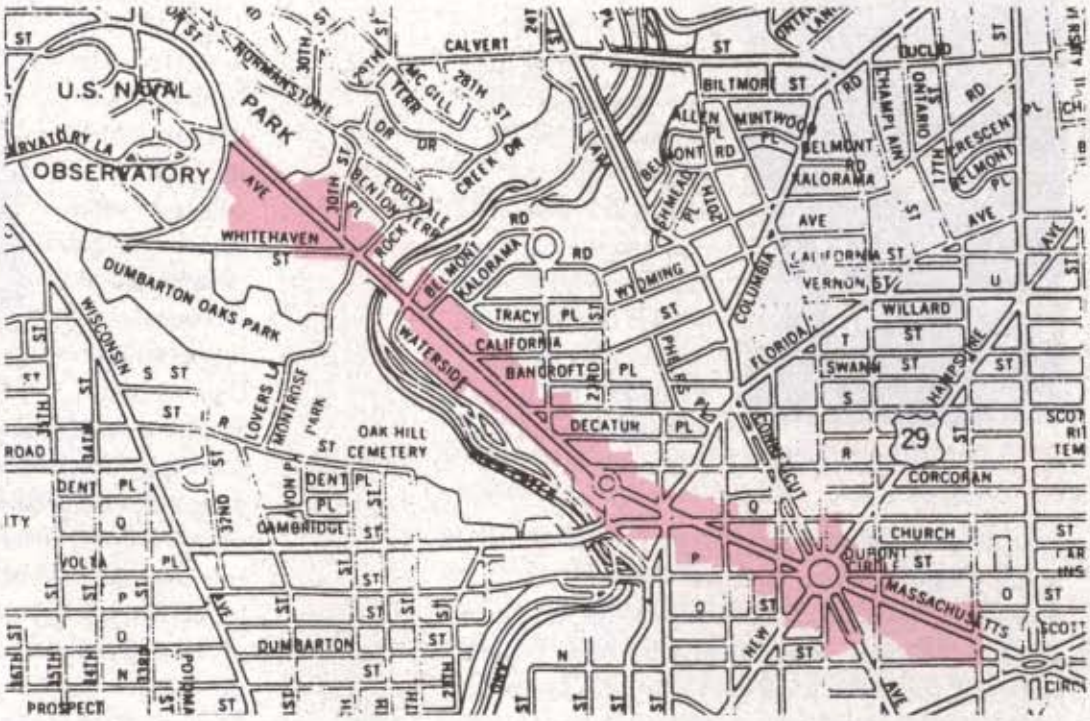
Wilkins House,
1700 Massachusetts Avenue
(1908-09),
Jules Henri de Sibour, architect.
Now the Embassy of Peru.
Courtesy Jay R. L. de Sibour. Prior to 1925.

Panoramic view of Sheridan Circle looking northwest toward Massachusetts Avenue.
Courtesy Library of Congress, c. 1910.

Stewart House,
2200 Massachusetts Avenue
(1908-09),
Jules Henri de Sibour, architect.
Now the Embassy of Luxembourg.
Courtesy Commission of Fine Arts, Jack Boucher photo, 1970.

THE MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

A linear district including all those historically significant buildings fronting on, or prominently visible from, Massachusetts Avenue between 17th Street and Observatory Circle. Popularly known as Embassy Row, it is anchored on the east by the Embassy of Peru at 1700 Massachusetts Avenue and on the west by the British Embassy at 3100 Massachusetts Avenue.
Map Courtesy DCSHPO.



Wyeth House,
2305 Massachusetts Avenue (1909),
Nathan Corwith Wyeth, architect.
Now the Embassy of Chile.
Courtesy Embassy of Chile, c. 1923.

The Embassy of Japan,
2516 Massachusetts Avenue (1931),
Delano and Aldrich, architects.
Courtesy Commission of Fine Arts.

Hauge House,
2349 Massachusetts Avenue
(1906-07),
George Oakley Totten, Jr., architect.
Now the Embassy of the Republic of Cameroon.
Courtesy Architectural Annual, 1907.

Everett House,
1606 23rd Street (1910-15),
George Oakley Totten, Jr., architect.
Now the Embassy of Turkey.
Courtesy Library of Congress.
Herbert French Collection. Date unknown.

acquired both the *Washington Times* and the *Washington Herald* from William Randolph Hearst, merging them in 1942 as the *Washington Times-Herald*. West of the circle, also in 1901, New York architect Henry Andersen designed a mansion in a curvilinear Art Nouveau style at 2020 Massachusetts Avenue for Thomas F. Walsh and his wife Carrie. Walsh, who had emigrated from Ireland to the gold fields of Colorado at an early age, discovered and developed the Camp Bird Mine, one of the richest gold mines in the world. The lavishly designed house featured a dramatic three-story central staircase, like that of an ocean liner, linking the entrance with the third-floor ballroom. A stained glass skylight dramatically lit the staircase. During parties musicians played from the stairhall galleries. A full pipe organ was located in a room of its own near the entrance. Their daughter Evalyn recalled that the house expressed the dreams her parents had when they were poor in Colorado.

Walsh House, 2020 Massachusetts Avenue (1901), Henry Anderson, architect. Now the Indonesian Embassy. Courtesy Kiplinger Washington Collection, c. 1905.

Walsh House, Central Hall. Courtesy Commission of Fine Arts, Jack Boucher photo, 1970.

2118 Massachusetts Avenue (1902-05) was designed by Boston architects Arthur Little and Herbert W. C. Browne for diplomat Larz Anderson and his wife, writer Isabel Weld Perkins. Based upon 18th century English precedent, the monumental three-story grey limestone residence is H-shaped in plan with an entrance court screened from Massachusetts Avenue. It is noted for its stately succession of rooms. West of Florida Avenue, at 2201 Massachusetts Avenue, an imaginative Chateauesque residence was built in 1900-01 for Lt. Commander Frederick Augustus Miller and his wife, Alice Townsend Miller. The design, by architect of the Library of Congress Paul J. Pelz, included much personalized decorative detail relating to Miller's naval career.

Anderson House, 2118 Massachusetts Avenue (1902-05), Little and Browne, architects. Now the Society of the Cincinnati. Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C., c. 1905

Anderson House, Ball Room. Courtesy The Society of the Cincinnati.

Miller House, 2201 Massachusetts Avenue (1900), Paul J. Pelz, architect. Courtesy *A History of the City of Washington*, Washington Post Co., 1903.

These palatial residences, built at the turn of the century for the founders and heirs of some of America's great fortunes, established Massachusetts Avenue west of 17th Street as the fashionable frontier of Washington society. They set the style for the Avenue as an elegant Beaux-Arts boulevard where architecture and urban design superbly complement each other. Gutzon Borglum's equestrian statue of General Philip H. Sheridan was erected in Sheridan Circle in 1909 by act of Congress. By 1910 architects Jules Henri de Sibour, John Russell Pope, George Oakley Totten, Nathan C. Wyeth, Waddy Wood, Glenn Brown and others trained at the Ecole des

McCormick House, 3000 Massachusetts Avenue (1908), John Russell Pope, architect. Now the Brazilian Embassy. Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C., ca. 1917.

Beaux-Arts had transformed Massachusetts Avenue. Many of the old brownstone and brick houses had been replaced with their work and the Sheridan Circle neighborhood, considered isolated in 1900, was fully developed. With the construction in 1908 of John Russell Pope's residence for Robert and Katharine Medill McCormick at 3000 Massachusetts Avenue, development west of Rock Creek had begun.

THE GILDED AGE ON MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

Eleanor Medill Patterson. Courtesy Chicago Historical Society, portrait by Anders Zorn.

The 'winter season' in Washington coincided with the sessions of Congress. Summers were typically spent in Newport, Bar Harbor, or traveling abroad. A dizzying round of social events took place during the season. Politics, business, diplomacy, social causes, and the arts livened the gatherings. Hostesses vied for prominence, and each had her own style. Mary Townsend entertained on a grand scale at 2121 Massachusetts Avenue, maintaining a staff of 34 servants and spending as much as $240,000 a year on entertainment. Eleanor Medill Patterson also entertained lavishly with a staff of 10 to 15 liveried servants at the 15 Dupont Circle house her daughter called 'the movie palace.' President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge stayed here in 1927 while the White House was being redecorated, and Col. Charles A. Lindbergh was a guest of the president in June 1927 when he was honored in Washington after his heroic crossing of the Atlantic. At 2020 Massachusetts Avenue the luminaries of the Theodore Roosevelt administration were lavishly entertained. The *Evening Star* reported a 1903 dinner for which the "table was adorned with yellow orchids of a very beautiful variety, their coloring being the keynote to the superb decoration of the board, where a service of gold made from glittering nuggets taken from the Camp Bird Mine, was used for the first time. A recital on the organ in the music room was an accompaniment to dinner." The *New York Times* reported that "at one New Year's Eve party 325 guests consumed 480 quarts of champagne, 288 fifths of Scotch, 48 quarts of cocktails, 40 gallons of beer and 35 bottles of miscellaneous liquors." Daughter Evalyn Walsh McLean was best known as the owner of the fabled 44.5 carat Hope Diamond, now in the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History.

Thomas F. Walsh with daughter Evalyn Walsh McLean. Courtesy Library of Congress.

The ocean liner and great wealth had allowed the Massachusetts Avenue palace-builders to travel freely and luxuriously abroad where they mixed with aristocratic society. Walsh, appointed by President McKinley to represent the United States at the Paris Exposition of 1899, transformed a Seine River steamer into a floating palace as a setting for a $40,000 dinner party. Transferring the sumptuous decorations from the ship to a five-car train, he toured France and Belgium where he was welcomed by King Leopold of Belgium who hoped to persuade him to invest in mining ventures in the Congo. Levi Leiter's three daughters married Englishmen. Mary Victoria Leiter married George, Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India; Daisy Leiter married the Earl of Suffolk, and Nancy Leiter married Colonel Colin Campbell of the British army. Lady Curzon's wedding reception was held at her parents' Dupont Circle house. Her sisters were married there. Cissy Patterson was presented to the Austro-Hungarian court in Vienna in 1902 by her aunt Katharine Medill McCormick. Here she met her first husband, Count Josef Gizycka, whom she married in 1905 at 15 Dupont Circle.

Horses, fox hunting, and private social clubs were an important part of this life. The Washington Riding Academy opened in 1888 just off Massachusetts Avenue at 22nd & P Streets, with a street-level riding ring,

Washington Riding Academy, 21st & P Streets (1887), George S. Cooper, architect. Razed 1936. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Clarence Moore, Master of Fox Hounds, Chevy Chase Hunt. The master on his famous race horse Masterpiece in the garden of 1746 Massachusetts Avenue. Courtesy Austin Kiplinger.

professional instruction, stalls for 150 horses, European grooms and extensive services. The Academy soon evolved into the socially prestigious Washington Riding and Hunt Club. In 1892 the Chevy Chase Hunt was organized with investment banker Clarence Moore as Master of Fox Hounds. In 1900 Moore married Mabelle Swift, an heir to the Swift meat-packing fortune. Their sumptuous home at 1746 Massachusetts Avenue was designed by Jules Henri de Sibour in the Beaux-Arts manner in 1906. In 1912 Moore decided to relocate to Loudoun County. He accepted a position as M. F. H. of the Loudoun Hunt and went to England to buy hounds. Unfortunately returning on the maiden voyage of the Titanic, he was lost at sea. The Chevy Chase Hunt, succumbing to the demands of golf and suburban development, was disbanded in 1916. The Washington Riding and Hunt Club was demolished in 1936 and replaced by a gas station.

The Moore House, 1746 Massachusetts Avenue (1900), Jules Henri de Sibour, architect. Now the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Courtesy Jay R.L. de Sibour, prior to 1925.

Of the many private clubs existing in the city at the turn of the century, the Cosmos, Metropolitan, and Chevy Chase Clubs were the most important to the residents of Massachusetts Avenue. The Cosmos Club, founded in 1878, included men distinguished in science, literature, and the fine arts. Including women in 1988, it numbered among its members U.S. Presidents William Howard Taft, Herbert Hoover, and Woodrow Wilson as well as 31 Nobel Prize winners, 56 Pulitzer Prize winners, and 45 recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 1950 the Cosmos Club purchased 2121 Massachusetts Avenue from Sumner Welles after the death of his wife, Mathilde Scott Townsend. Women interested in literature and mutual improvement organized the Washington Club in 1893. In 1951 the club purchased 15 Dupont Circle as their headquarters. The Sulgrave Club, founded in 1932 for women interested in music, literature and the arts, purchased 1801 Massachusetts Avenue from Martha Wadsworth. Larz Anderson willed 2118 Massachusetts Avenue to The Society of the Cincinnati for use as a museum and national headquarters at his death in 1936. His great-grandfather, Colonel Richard Anderson, had been a founder of the Society in 1783.

Cosmos Club, members' lounge and bar in former ballroom of Townsend House, 2121 Massachusetts Avenue. Courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library, Washingtoniana Room, Evening Star, 09/05/52.

Red Cross workers rolling bandages in dining room of Walsh House. Courtesy Kiplinger Washington Collection. Drawing by H. G. Durston, 1942.

The sinking of the Titanic and advent of World War I signaled the end of the Gilded Age, as the residents of Massachusetts Avenue either left town or turned to support of the war effort. Many of the buildings were turned over to the Red Cross and other relief organizations for their activities. After the war society was more subdued. The deaths of the original owners, the income tax, the Great Depression and World War II took their toll. Gradually the grand houses were sold or leased to clubs, offices, and embassies.

A NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Alice Pike Barney came to Washington from Cinncinnati in 1889. Her parents had been patrons of the arts and had built Cinncinnati's first opera house. Alice studied painting in Cinncinati and in Paris after her marriage. She joined and exhibited with the prestigious Washington Water Color Club and Society of Washington Artists, hoping to be taken seriously as a painter herself and to

establish Washington as the center of the nation's artistic life. In 1902 Architect Waddy Wood designed an Arts and Crafts-style house for her which would provide a dramatic setting for both a studio and an artistic salon similar to those she had known in Paris. The first party in the house honored the workers who had built it, making the point that art was for the masses as well as the rich. Located on Sheridan Circle at 2306 Massachusetts Avenue, Barney Studio House became a center of Washington artistic life and efforts to establish a national museum of art. In 1906 this objective was fulfilled as a National Gallery of Art was established to receive the bequest of a collection of paintings to the nation by Harriet Lane Johnston, niece of President Buchanan. It was placed in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum (now the National Museum of Natural History) and became the nucleus of the present National Museum of American Art. Barney staged theatricals at her studio house which received national attention and led to the establishment of the National Sylvan Theatre on the Washington monument grounds in 1917.

Studio House, 2306 Massachusetts Avenue (1902), Waddy B. Wood. Courtesy National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, before 1911.

Alice Pike Barney in first floor reception room of Studio House. Courtesy *Town & Country* magazine, 1904.

In 1920 Laughlin Phillips and his artist wife Marjorie opened the Phillips Memorial Gallery of "modern art and its sources" in the house his parents had built in 1896-7 at 1600-12 21st Street, facing a small triangular Massachusetts Avenue park. The original house and a 1907 library wing were designed by Hornblower and Marshall in an early Georgian Revival style with Richardsonian Romanesque elements. A public exhibition area, designed by McKim, Mead, and White, was added over the library in 1920 for what would be the first museum of modern art in the United States. The museum featured an extraordinarily fine collection of modern art in a home-like setting. Concerts, an art school, and educational programs were part of the concept.

Phillips House, 1600 21st Street (1896-97), Hornblower and Marshall, architects. Courtesy The Phillips Collection, ca. 1900.

Phillips Memorial Gallery, Main Gallery, McKim, Mead and White, architects. Courtesy the Phillips Collection, ca. 1927.

In 1915 Stanley F. McCormick, son of inventor of the reaper Cyrus McCormick, constructed the most luxurious apartment building in the city on the site of the Noble Belden House at 1785 Massachusetts Avenue. With six 10,000-square-foot apartments, it was designed by Jules Henri de Sibour to be compatible with the new Beaux-Arts neighborhood. The most distinguished resident was Pittsburgh industrialist and financier Andrew W. Mellon, who leased the top floor while he served as Secretary of the Treasury under Presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover, and as Ambassor to Great Britain. Mellon began collecting paintings with his friend Henry Frick in his twenties, assembling an astounding collection of Italian Renaissance masterpieces. As early as 1923 he began to plan the National Gallery of Art. In 1936 he offered the collection to the nation and agreed to build and endow the present National Gallery of Art to house it. Art dealer Lord Duveen traveled from London and leased the apartment below Mellon's to conveniently display paintings and sculpture for Mellon's consideration. Mellon purchased the entire forty-two item collection for an unprecedented $21 million. Mellon worked with architect John Russell Pope on the design of the new gallery building, but died before its completion. Another resident, diplomat Robert Woods Bliss, collected pre-Columbian and Byzantine art, bequeathing his home at Dumbarton Oaks in Georgetown together with his collection to Harvard University and establishing here a museum and research library.

EMBASSY ROW

British Embassy, 3100 Massachusetts Avenue (1927-31), Sir Edwin Lutyens, architect. Courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library, Washingtoniana Room, ca. 1935.

In 1873 the British boldly selected a site near Dupont Circle to build the first foreign-owned legation in Washington. Their presence greatly influenced the character of future development in the area, and especially on Massachusetts Avenue where the diplomatic corps was an important part of the allure of the 'winter season.' The prestigious, entertainment-oriented residences that were built on Massachusetts Avenue in the years before World War I were very appropriate for diplomatic use, and gradually many were acquired by foreign missions. This was especially true in the Sheridan Circle area, which quickly became a diplomatic enclave in the 1920s. In 1927 the British began construction of a new Embassy at 3100 Massachusetts Avenue, adjoining Observatory Circle. It was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in the manner of an 18th century English country house—a style sympathetic to the Colonial Revival then popular in the United States. In 1931 Japan built an embassy at 2516 Massachusetts Avenue, designed by architects Delano and Aldrich of New York as a Georgian country estate.

Today the Massachusetts Avenue Historic District is probably this country's most renowned example of an elegant City Beautiful boulevard. Its extraordinary Beaux Arts architecture is integrated with and is among the finest realizations of the urban planning vision of L'Enfant, and has been carefully preserved by the clubs, museums, and especially the foreign missions which have succeeded the original owners. The predominant character of the Massachusetts Avenue Historic District is that of an Embassy Row which serves as a focus for the many foreign mission buildings in the nearby Dupont Circle and Sheridan-Kalorama Historic Districts. Sheridan Circle today looks very much as it did in 1910, and, although the eastern end of the historic district and the area around Dupont Circle have suffered greatly from demolition and commercial development, their character and integrity survive through this stewardship.

1722-28 Massachusetts Avenue. Townhouses razed in 1974 for construction of high-rise office building. Preservation fight here spurred landmark designation of the Massachusetts Avenue Historic District. Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C. *Lily Spandorf's Washington Never More* (1988).

The McCormick Apartments, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue (1915), was purchased by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1977. Meticulously restored and rehabilitated by Washington architects Yerkes, Pappas, and Parker, it is now the national headquarters of the Trust.
Courtesy The Commission of Fine Arts, Jack Boucher photo, 1970.

THE MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

by

TANYA EDWARDS BEAUCHAMP

Sponsored by

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Sue A. Kohler, historian,

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