

Washington and Ottawa

A Tale of Two Embassies

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Overview

The product of years—sometimes decades—of diplomacy, the architecture of embassy buildings is a sign of the strength and significance of the ties between two nations. Foreign policy and programs change all the time, but the buildings that house foreign missions do not change as easily. They evolve out of an ongoing reciprocal process, but they become fixtures that stand as symbols of national commitment and expectation. They also provide snapshots of key moments in the history of a diplomatic relationship and insight into the changing meaning of architecture.

The United States and Canada share political and social values and a border that stretches nearly five thousand miles. They also share an economy, with each as the other's largest trading partner and bilateral trade totaling more than U.S.\$1.4 billion per day. Their common ties form the basis for a close diplomatic relationship. In the 1980s, when Canada needed a larger embassy in Washington, its unique status and lofty diplomatic ambitions coincided perfectly with development plans calling for a good "anchor" for renewal in the downtown area. There were no other embassies in the vicinity when Canada took an independent stance and located its impressive new embassy office building, or chancery, at the very foot of Capitol Hill (1981–89). Likewise, when the United States needed to expand in Ottawa, Canadian officials welcomed the chance to boost ongoing redevelopment, and the U.S. welcomed

the opportunity to assert its individuality and underscore the exclusivity of its relationship with Canada. It constructed its new chancery on an outstanding site directly across from Ottawa's Parliament Hill (1994–99).

Both the United States and Canada consciously redefined their national presence and amplified their identity through these recent and almost simultaneous construction projects. The pairing of the two projects shows how a long-standing quest for identity, a competitive spirit, or even a sense of national entitlement can find its expression in architecture, and it demonstrates how the choice of location, size, scale, design elements, and historical associations can combine to further both diplomatic and civic agendas. The comparison clarifies how chanceries differ from single-purpose government office buildings and points to the ways in which security has had a growing impact on buildings of this type. In addition, it explores the significance of embassy architecture as the result of interaction between site and evolving public policy.

Strictly speaking, embassies are comprised of two building types: private ambassadorial residences and chanceries. This paper focuses on the latter because they are the "public" buildings associated with diplomacy and they contain the offices in which diplomats and officials from an array of government agencies conduct business—from treaty negotiation, military procurement, and intelligence gathering to visa approval and commerce promotion. A key challenge facing chancery architects is how to separate public-access

spaces (reception and conference rooms, libraries) from quasi-public spaces (consular business, veterans' benefits, or public health), and then how to segregate those spaces from others that are either generally (the ambassador's office) or strictly (communications centers and emergency safe havens) off limits to the public. Another dilemma is how design can express both power and friendship.

Chanceries may be purchased or built, but those that are custom-designed are real billboards advertising national identity, mutual respect, and/or other subtler or more potent political and cultural messages. The new chanceries in Ottawa and Washington were both custom-designed for high-profile downtown sites that add immeasurably to the prestige and influence associated with this building type. Also, under the terms of a diplomatic agreement, both enjoy unobstructed views of key legislative buildings and stunning panoramas from their respective two ambassadorial suites.¹ Both are also near other major landmarks, including museums and memorials. The Canadian chancery stands almost directly across from the National Gallery's East Building (I. M. Pei, 1968–78), and the U.S. chancery bears a similar relationship to Ottawa's National Gallery of Canada (Moshe Safdie, 1983–88); the planning agenda that influenced the placement of those tourist attractions similarly influenced the location of the two chanceries.

Since the late 1950s, the U.S. State Department had wanted to expand its existing chancery in Ottawa.² Other priorities interfered with that objective, and month-to-month delays turned into decades, with two schemes having been shelved between 1959 and 1983. The opening of Canada's new chancery in Washington in 1989 may not have been a decisive factor, but it certainly played a role in energizing the U.S. effort and clarifying objectives. When a site in Ottawa was finally acquired in 1993, construction followed quickly.

Canada needed expanded office space, too, but its decision to build a new chancery was also closely connected to a discernable shift in Canadian foreign policy. Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau had launched this new policy in 1969 soon after he facetiously compared living next to the United States to "sleeping with an elephant."³ Dubbed the "Third Option," the new policy expressed Trudeau's intention to establish his country as a politically and economically independent world power.⁴ Using upgraded foreign buildings as a way of reaching out to Europe and Japan, Trudeau expanded the Department of External Affairs and created the Physical Resources Bureau (PRB), an independent foreign-operations construction service that solicited new candidates among the best Canadian architectural firms.⁵ He also upgraded embassy programs to include generous provi-

sions for libraries, auditoriums and exhibition spaces, creating what architectural historian Marie-Josée Therrien has referred to as the "culturally-minded" embassy model.⁶ In this context, in 1981, Trudeau selected Arthur Erickson to design the new chancery in Washington. Soon after, as the Third Option policy foundered, the Canadian government reaffirmed a goal of bilateral trade with the United States. When the project was completed in 1989, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney advocated the importance of solidarity between the two North American neighbors.⁷

The civic agenda shared by these chanceries is remarkable in light of the civil disturbances that rocked Washington in the late 1960s and the unrelated but increasingly brutal attacks on U.S. embassies that began to occur at about the same time. The site purchased by the Canadians in 1978 was on Pennsylvania Avenue, the thoroughfare known as Washington's "Main Street," but the recently riot-torn corridor and adjacent areas were neglected at the time, and many doubted a rapid rebound. The risk in Ottawa was different, but the Americans may have showed even greater boldness in selecting a relatively small downtown site in 1993. Its real-estate value was not in doubt, but there were security risks involved. The State Department had first selected the site in 1979, before security became a paramount concern at all posts. Security issues came to the fore after violent mobs and suicide car-bombers attacked and destroyed U.S. embassies in capitals including Beirut, Islamabad, and Mogadishu, and foes fired rockets at or bombed U.S. embassies in Athens, Madrid, Rome, Lima, and La Paz. Chanceries became targets of violence precisely because they were such potent and accessible symbols of American presence.

Circumventing the choice of a competition jury, Trudeau personally selected the Vancouver-based Erickson to design the Canadian chancery, for which construction started in 1986. Concurrently, the State Department's Office of Foreign Buildings Operations (FBO) had named Benjamin Thompson to design the U.S. chancery in Ottawa in 1980.⁸ Although Thompson's project was well under way by the time Erickson started his, it was suspended in 1983, when the U.S. Embassy and Marine barracks in Beirut were attacked. At that time, the State Department suspended all new work pending a security review and began the task of weighing alternative sites in and around Ottawa. Prodded not to gauge every post as an equal risk, the State Department ultimately chose to waive its security setback standards and purchase the previously selected site even though it did not meet those standards. It also hired a new architect, David M. Childs of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM). As the project proceeded, the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was bombed and destroyed in Oklahoma City

(1995), and U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were blown up (1998). It is impossible to assess the architecture of the Ottawa chancery without taking these far-reaching events into consideration.

Erickson enjoyed more design leeway than did Childs because security was less of a concern for the Canadians. Although Erickson had to comply with an array of planning and zoning criteria, he managed to turn his project into an imaginative personal statement that combined his modernist sensitivity to place-making with respect for Washington's neoclassicism. Both chanceries can be described as "signature pieces," but Erickson stamped his with a personal flair that is absent in Ottawa. His architecture embodies a sense of openness and grandeur that has much enhanced Canada's identity in Washington.

While Canadians are all too cognizant of the U.S. as a political, economic, and cultural force, Americans may be only dimly aware of their northern neighbor. Childs was not faced with the task of proclaiming identity as much as he was asked to reconcile evident power with polite regard. He and his team grappled with several issues: how to design a large modern workplace that somehow minimized itself, how to suggest strength without dominance, and how to add a landmark to a ceremonial route without overwhelming the Ottawa skyline. Working within tight planning and zoning constraints, SOM's solution was less flamboyant than Erickson's but no less inventive. Its design significantly improved the U.S. presence in Ottawa, acting at once as foreground and background, noticeable as a major civic marker but also readable as a backdrop for the surrounding city.

Two Architectural Traditions

Both chanceries furthered civic and design agendas that predated the hiring of any architects. Indeed, their architectural history can be traced back to 1927, when the two countries first exchanged diplomats, and even before that to earlier stated planning goals and design philosophies.⁹ Neither Washington nor Ottawa was a notable place until it was chosen as a national capital, in 1790 and 1857, respectively. Pierre Charles L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the District of Columbia was a grandiose vision for a capital laid out along formal lines: a rectilinear grid crisscrossed by wide radials focused on major public buildings. Inspired by the association between Greco-Roman antiquity and republican ideals, or by the French reinterpretation of antiquity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, American architects turned to a classical vocabulary to define the federal norm. From the Capitol (begun 1793) to

the Treasury Building (begun 1836) and Library of Congress (1871–97), classicism set the tone for Washington's government core. Extending L'Enfant's vision, the McMillan Plan (1901) led to the development of the formal Mall and the grouping of government offices known as the Federal Triangle (bounded on one side by Pennsylvania Avenue and directly across from the Canadian Embassy site). Washington's neoclassical tradition still marks the façades, if not the interiors, of most local government and commercial buildings.

Premier Wilfred Laurier proclaimed his wish to make Ottawa into the "Washington of the North" in 1896, but the two cities developed distinctly different architectural profiles.¹⁰ Winning designs for the Canadian Parliament Building and adjacent departmental blocks were devised in what was called the Civil Gothic style. Selecting a medieval, instead of a classical or Renaissance idiom (two styles that were also seen in competition entries) was certainly a sign of Canadian allegiance to Great Britain. The symbolic affiliation with London's Houses of Parliament (1836–60) was obvious even though Pugin and Barry had adopted a rather sedate and horizontal version of Perpendicular Gothic in London, while Ottawa's Parliament displayed a "Ruskinian vigour" characteristic of the High Victorian era.¹¹ Complementing the unspoiled expanses of Canadian landscape, the jagged silhouettes of steep copper roofs created a distinctive skyline for the new capital city, where snow was more of a design factor than sunlight and where white marble and balustrades would not have had a strong visual impact. In 1903, the newly formed Ottawa Improvement Commission (OIC) retained Montreal landscape architect Frederick Todd to prepare the first major plan for central Ottawa. Todd devised a park and parkway system, insisting on the "need for a unified architectural theme that would be compatible with the Parliament Buildings."¹² Reiterated by subsequent consultants, this directive was a matter of silhouette as much as style. It encouraged variations on the Gothic theme and the so-called Château style that emerged in the late 1880s in the railroad hotels that New York architect Bruce Price designed for the Canadian Pacific Railway. In fact, the steeply pitched copper-clad roofs juxtaposed against mountain landscapes subsequently became a logo for Canadian tourism. In Ottawa, the Parliament and the neighboring Château Laurier Hotel (Ross & MacFarlane, 1912) created a powerful and distinctive skyline, which subsequent planners sought to protect and amplify. Other public buildings expanded upon the Château style, which, being a hybrid to begin with, proved versatile over time.¹³

Establishing a Foreign Presence

By 1920, when the United States had some four hundred diplomatic and consular posts worldwide, Canada was still being represented in foreign capitals by the British ambassador. The two countries established formal diplomatic relations in 1927 and exchanged legations headed by ministers. For Prime Minister Mackenzie King, this was a major step toward diplomatic autonomy and independence from Britain's Foreign Service. For the U.S., it meant direct diplomacy with a strategically important neighbor.

In Washington, the nations of Mexico, Spain, France, and Italy had already established an embassy enclave along upper 16th Street, but Canada decided on a location much farther south and nearer to the White House, purchasing an elegant French-inspired townhouse near Dupont Circle (Figure 1).¹⁴ In that vicinity, along Massachusetts Avenue, Egypt, Turkey, Brazil, Greece, and Luxembourg followed Canada's lead and purchased palatial houses, products of the Gilded Age, while Great Britain and Japan completed construction of new chancery/residences. By the mid-1930s, this chic locale had become Washington's new "Embassy Row."

Until the U.S. Congress passed a bill reforming the structure of diplomatic and consular services in 1924, most American diplomats lived abroad at their own expense, and before 1926, when the Foreign Service Buildings Act established the Foreign Service Buildings Commission (FSBC), the government lacked the funds to buy or build legations or embassies overseas.¹⁵ Individual diplomats would establish themselves almost exclusively in residential quarters. When the government began to buy and lease buildings for embassy use, its first purchases included the former Schoenborn Palace in Prague (acquired 1925) and the Palacio Bosch in Buenos Aires (acquired 1929). The residential prototype was well established by that time and remained fixed in the American popular imagination thanks in part to the large number of Washington mansions that became embassies.

By the late 1920s, the rapid growth in diplomatic staff made it necessary to separate the residential from office components of many legations and embassies. Designed as a designated office building, the U.S. Legation in Ottawa was the FSBC's first major project. The FSBC struck a deal for a parcel of unmatched prominence at 100 Wellington Street, directly across from the main gate leading to the Houses of Parliament. It is evident from the selection of Cass Gilbert as architect—he was the designer of New York's Woolworth Building (1913) and the Supreme Court in Washington (1929–35)—as well as the generous appropriation (\$200,000 for acquisition of the site and \$300,000



Figure 1 Jules-Henri de Sibour, former Canadian Embassy (originally Clarence Moore House, purchased in 1927 as Canadian Legation), 1746 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., 1906

for construction) and the haste with which the project proceeded that the relatively small Canadian capital was already expected to become prominent on the geopolitical map.¹⁶

Not surprisingly, Gilbert gave his legation a distinct domestic character (Figure 2).¹⁷ To convey an impression of aristocratic gentility, much like that of Canada's legation in Washington, he embellished his modern-day Renaissance palazzo with eighteenth-century French and English accents.¹⁸ A spacious lobby and staircase led to the *piano nobile*, where the ambassador's suite was centrally located. Tall windows, elegant wood paneling, and a handsome fireplace gave his office an air of comfort and authority perfectly suited to its purpose. The classical façades matched those of new commercial establishments south of Wellington, but formed a sharp contrast to the picturesque Parlia-



Figure 2 Cass Gilbert, former U.S. Embassy, 100 Wellington Street, Ottawa, 1928–32. This was the home of the U.S. diplomatic mission from 1932 to 1999. It is shown here after its sale to the Canadian government in 1999 as part of a property exchange for the new embassy site.

Figure 3 Cass Gilbert, former U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, view from the ambassador’s office looking north across Wellington Street to Parliament



ment compound across the street (Figure 3). Clearly, Gilbert elected not to borrow a style closely associated with the Canadian government, partly out of respect for the host’s architectural tradition and partly to make a statement that was recognized as both cosmopolitan and “à la Washington.”¹⁹ The U.S. Legation won praise for its stately and dignified presence, and the project was considered a milestone in Canada’s evolution from “colony to nation.”²⁰

Proximity to the Capitol: Site Selection in Washington

In 1943, both the Ottawa and Washington posts were raised to the status of embassies headed by ambassadors, the highest ranked diplomats. Thereafter, the size of Canada’s Washington staff grew steadily, overflowing into office space adjacent to the Massachusetts Avenue townhouse, into a newly constructed office building for the military mission about a mile away, in 1953, and then into other structures scattered across town. By the early 1970s, the situation was so inefficient that embassy officials decided to consolidate operations into a single building. Embassy Row was the logical place to look for a site. However, local residents had objected to the presence of office buildings near their homes and faulted protocols that protected diplomats from an array of local regulations, including parking restrictions.²¹ Responding to their lobbying effort, Congress threatened to cut off funds to the State Department unless new chanceries in the District of Columbia could be accommo-

dated without encroaching further upon established residential areas. Faced with the need to provide suitable sites in Washington if the U.S. hoped to find equally desirable locations for its missions abroad, the department turned to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) for assistance in identifying new chancery sites.²² Planners eventually settled on a large federally owned parcel in upper northwest D.C., and the State Department created the International Chancery Center (ICC), with benefits to embassy tenants that included reduced-rate ninety-nine-year renewable land leases, proximity to the Metro, controlled perimeters, and a highly expedited design/construction process. By the early 1980s, the first tenants (Israel and Jordan) had moved into newly built chanceries at the ICC, and Austria, Ghana, and Egypt quickly followed. But the Canadians rejected the ICC option.²³ Tempted by the idea of a “signature” embassy by a noted architect, they were not interested in a planned unit development that was likely to evolve into a diplomatic theme park.²⁴

Aware that Canada was looking for a site, the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) proposed a development parcel (Square 491) on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue between John Marshall Place on the east and Sixth Street on the west, bordered by C Street on the north. The area had been a lively neighborhood of hotels, row houses, and small factories before it became contested turf between local and national interests. Long before the PADC was created, Square 491 had figured prominently in a number of schemes to give the District of Columbia its own government center and in efforts to augment the federal core.

The McMillan Plan had recommended construction of a group of municipal office structures ten blocks to the west on Pennsylvania Avenue, and the D.C. government proceeded to build an impressive District Building (Cope and Stewardson, 1908).²⁵ But once construction of the Federal Triangle was under way in the 1920s, officials erroneously assumed that the District Building would eventually be demolished to make way for a Grand Plaza. So in 1927, Municipal Architect Albert L. Harris proposed a Municipal Center at the lower end of Pennsylvania Avenue near the Old City Hall (George Hadfield, 1820–81), with twin buildings each encompassing two entire city blocks.²⁶ The District government acquired the land (including the blocks later labeled Square 491), but abandoned the project during the Depression in 1932. Harris’s successor, Nathan Wyeth, began working on a new scheme for the same site two years later.²⁷ A plan published in *Pencil Points* in September 1939 featured twin municipal administration buildings (Figure 4). On either side of John Marshall Place, which he trans-

formed into a 230-foot-wide plaza, Wyeth showed a new central public library (to replace the Carnegie Library on Mount Vernon Square) and a federal auditorium. A portion of the library was built on Square 491 in 1941 and immediately taken over for D.C. government use.²⁸ It stood adjacent to a multistory Ford automobile showroom designed by Albert Kahn (1915). These, and nearly all nearby structures, had fallen into disrepair by 1953, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower rode past them in his inaugural parade. The situation was worse in 1961, when President John F. Kennedy made the same trip from the Capitol to the White House.²⁹

To identify sites for new federal office buildings in and around the area, Kennedy created the Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space. Labor Secretary Arthur Goldberg, prodded by his assistant secretary, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, used the mandate to that committee to propose a link between new office construction and the overall redevelopment of Pennsylvania Avenue. With Washington planner Frederick Gutheim, Moynihan drafted the committee’s report:

As conceived by L’Enfant, the “grand axis” of the City of Washington was to be Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capital [sic] to the White House, expressing symbolically both the separation of powers and the essential unity in the American form of Government. But Pennsylvania Avenue today is a scene where we find imposing Government buildings unhappily contrasted with blight and decay. It is beyond doubt that many existing structures will soon be torn down and replaced. This makes it possible to bring Government and private enterprise together in a joint undertaking to plan for the development of the whole Avenue.³⁰

Most important, the report enunciated “Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture,” which rejected reliance on tradition and clearly stated the need to avoid “an official style.”³¹

The President’s Advisory Council on Pennsylvania Avenue was created in 1962, with Nathaniel Owings (a founding partner of SOM) as chairman and Moynihan as vice-chairman.³² Based upon then-popular policies of removal and replacement, its plan, presented in 1964, featured grandiose staircases, paved open spaces, raised plazas, and recessed shopping concourses. It recommended turning John Marshall Place into a pedestrian park and again called for a cluster of large municipal buildings on Square 491 (Figure 5). Reaction to the mammoth FBI building (C. F. Murphy, 1967–72) at 601 Pennsylvania Avenue (west of Square 491) fueled opposition to the plan’s grandiosity. Planners began to rethink urban design priorities and ponder ways to reanimate the cityscape.

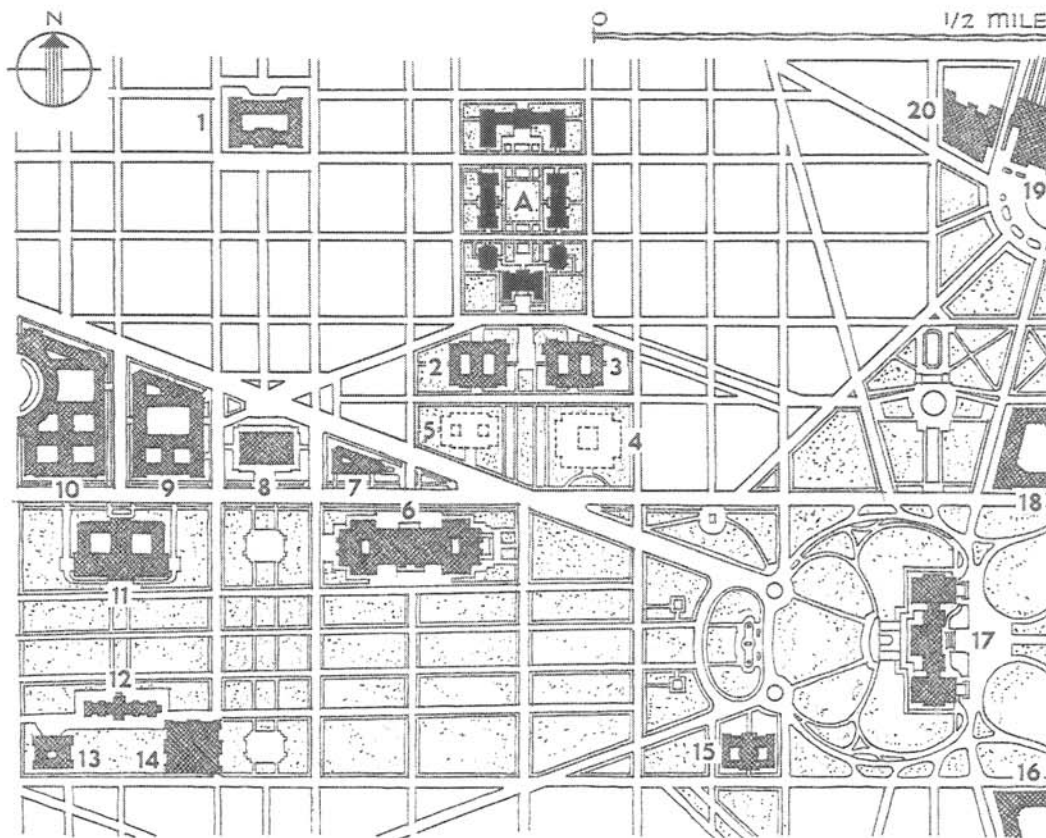


Figure 4 Nathan Wyeth, plan showing Washington's proposed Municipal Center (identified by nos. 2–5). The proposed Central Public Library (no. 5) corresponds to Square 491. Reproduced in *Pencil Points*, September 1939

The announcement of plans for Pei's proposed addition to the National Gallery of Art in 1968 added immediate prominence to Square 491 (Figure 6). By 1972, when Congress created the PADC to oversee downtown development, the preservation movement had mobilized itself in response to threats to local landmarks, including the Willard Hotel.³³ Prompted by the public outcry over the earlier plan, the PADC unveiled a new plan in 1974 that diversified the mix of people coming to the area and extended its life beyond the normal workday. For Square 491, it recommended a total transformation: "up to 400 new hotel rooms, an estimated 100,000 square feet of new retail space and an estimated 525,000 square feet of new office space."³⁴ District Mayor Walter Washington urged the PADC to replace the Ford property with a new quasi-public office building featuring ground-floor commercial space, and the Secretary of the Interior called for the creation of "focal points of civic design at this end of Pennsylvania Avenue."³⁵ Meanwhile, as planning options were debated, Moynihan was elected to the Senate in 1976 (D-NY) and became Pennsylvania Avenue's staunchest advocate. According to Sen. Moynihan, Senate Minority Leader Howard Baker, Jr., was the first to suggest locating the Canadian

chancery near the tip of Pennsylvania Avenue at the foot of Capitol Hill. Sen. Baker selected the spot on Square 491, Moynihan said, because it was "parallel to ours in Ottawa across from the Houses of Parliament."³⁶

When Canadian Ambassador Jack Warren informed President Gerald Ford that his country wanted to build an embassy of significance in Washington, the notion of locating embassies near the Capitol was not without precedent. It originated with L'Enfant and his unrealized idea of housing representatives of older European powers in palatial dwellings along the Mall. But, as noted earlier, the Canadians were reluctant to accept a site on Square 491 when it was first offered to them. In the polite words of Terry Colli, director of public affairs at the Canadian Embassy, "it was not a desirable neighborhood." Sen. Moynihan phrased it less diplomatically when he described the area as "a slum."³⁷ According to Colli, it was "friendly persuasion" from the PADC that convinced Canada to proceed. The PADC acquired the land from the D.C. government in 1977 and sold it to the Canadians in 1978 for U.S.\$4.5 million. That politically savvy and forward-thinking decision has enabled the Canadians to boast that their chancery is the only one between the U.S. Capitol and the White House.

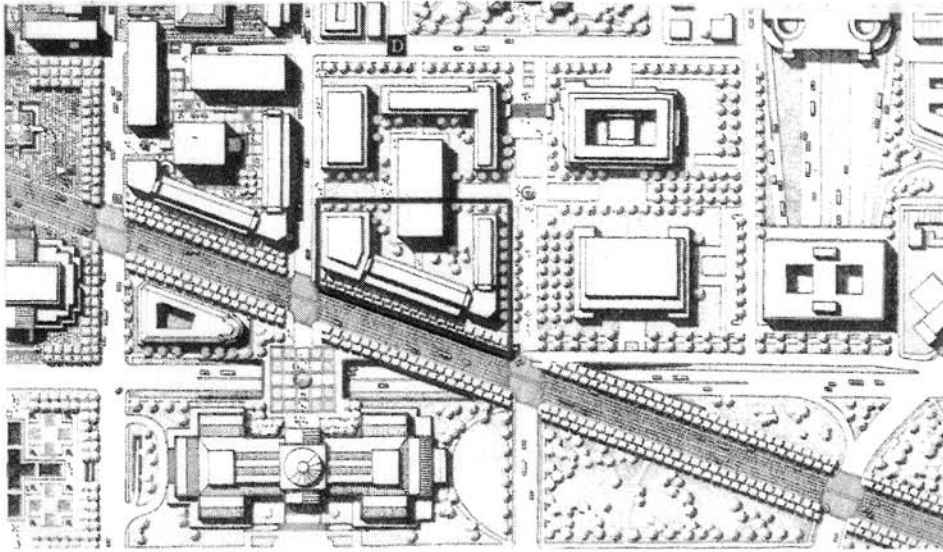


Figure 5 Proposed development plan for Pennsylvania Avenue showing Square 491 (outlined) between John Marshall Place and Sixth Street, with the Capitol to the east (right) and the proposed National Square to the west (left). *Pennsylvania Avenue Plan*, from *Report of the President's Advisory Council on Pennsylvania Avenue*, 1964

Figure 6 Aerial view of Pennsylvania Avenue looking west before construction of the East Building of the National Gallery of Art. Note the old Ford showroom on Square 491 diagonally across from the Federal Trade Commission.



Proximity to Parliament: Site Selection in Ottawa

Less than twenty years after its completion, the Wellington Street building in Ottawa could no longer accommodate U.S. embassy offices. FBO retained an architect to design an annex, but the project did not proceed.³⁸ By the 1970s, offices had overflowed to as many as ten different locations across Ottawa. FBO again examined the option of adding space to the Gilbert building but quickly found that expansion was no longer an option. Public Works Canada and the National Capital Commission (NCC) had decided that the prime sites along Wellington between Elgin and Bank Streets should be reserved for Canadian government use, and informed the Americans of their intention to acquire the site once the chancery had moved. The Americans started searching for a suitable alternative. Evaluation criteria included visibility, accessibility, size, and security, which had become more of a concern as a result of repeated attacks on U.S. facilities.³⁹ Competitiveness also entered into the equation because the State Department was well aware of the prominence of Canada's site in Washington, having agreed to guarantee its sight lines to the Capitol in perpetuity.

Few sites were available in Ottawa's tightly knit urban core, and the NCC suggested one small but well-situated possibility. It consisted of 2.2 acres wedged between Mackenzie Avenue and Sussex Drive at the junction between "town and crown": the Byward Market commercial district on one side and the picturesque district composed of Major's Hill Park, the Rideau Canal, and the Parliament buildings on the other. The steeply graded parcel, which came to be known as Sussex/Mackenzie, was the closest location to Parliament not already developed commercially. The Byward Market area was part of Lowertown, a working-class, French-speaking district practically unchanged since 1870, when the commercial focus had shifted to Uppertown, south of Parliament. Three- to four-story commercial buildings lined Sussex across from the proposed chancery site. Notre Dame Basilica (1841–53) stood slightly farther to the north. Like Pennsylvania Avenue, the Byward district had been long neglected, but it was already undergoing redevelopment. And like Square 491, Sussex/Mackenzie figured prominently in plans to beautify the Canadian capital.

In his 1903 report for the OIC, Frederick Todd had recommended lining Sussex Drive with government institutions.⁴⁰ In 1906, the Department of Public Works sponsored a national competition for the design of a linear structure comprising a federal courthouse and a departmental office on Sussex/Mackenzie and three additional

blocks to the south.⁴¹ Although the full project was eventually abandoned, the Connaught Building (David Ewart, 1916), an eight-story customs house, was built in the late Gothic/Tudor style on a portion of the site. With the completion of the Château Laurier Hotel at the intersection of Wellington and Mackenzie, it was no longer possible to imagine a "cohesive government precinct along Sussex Drive."⁴² When the Laurier government was defeated in 1911, the locus of planning for large government buildings moved up to the northern side of Wellington Street in the immediate vicinity of the Parliament. The newly established Federal Plan Commission hired American architect Edward Bennett to prepare a new plan in 1913. Bennett, who had collaborated with Daniel Burnham on the 1909 Chicago Plan (and later became a key figure in planning Washington's Federal Triangle), devised a clearly delineated government enclave edged along Sussex Drive by four long, narrow administrative buildings and monumental stairs on axis with adjacent streets (Figure 7). He recommended architecture featuring "vigorous silhouettes, steep roofs, pavilions and towers . . . never competing with, but always recalling [the Parliament]."⁴³

Planners had long eyed Sussex Drive as a ceremonial route because, like Pennsylvania Avenue, it was the path between Parliament and residences of the prime minister (24 Sussex Drive) and the governor general (1 Sussex Drive). In the early 1960s, the NCC began to buy, rehabilitate, and lease buildings opposite the future chancery site, promoting the drive as the "Mile of History."⁴⁴ At about the same time, temporary war buildings on Sussex/Mackenzie were demolished and replaced by parking lots. The steep slope, fast-moving traffic on either side, and long and narrow footprint made the site far from ideal for a chancery, but the proximity to Parliament and the scarcity of alternatives prompted FBO to accept it as the best option in 1979.

Thompson's Design for Ottawa

Benjamin Thompson had to reckon with that site when William Slayton named him to design the new U.S. chancery. Recently appointed by President Jimmy Carter to head FBO, Slayton had been the executive director of the American Institute of Architects and had an avid interest in modern architecture. Thompson, a founding partner (with Walter Gropius) of The Architects Collaborative (TAC), was best known then for his Design Research store in Cambridge, Massachusetts (1969), and for Boston's Quincy Market district, which he had transformed in 1978 into a festival marketplace.⁴⁵ In November 1980, Thompson submitted preliminary drawings, and FBO's Architectural



Figure 7 Edward Bennett, consultant, *Federal Plan Commission of Ottawa and Hull*, showing planned administrative buildings (second through fourth shaded blocks from bottom on far right), January 1915. From Herbert S. Holt et al., *Report of the Federal Plan Commission on the General Plan for the Cities of Ottawa and Hull* (Ottawa, 1916)

Advisory Panel pondered ways to add “grandeur” to a relatively small structure, although it offered him no specific suggestions.⁴⁶ As his earliest sketches show, from the outset Thompson was looking for ways to pay homage to the neo-Gothic Canadian buildings and other landmarks nearby.

Since the NCC required a view corridor toward the Parliament through the middle of the site, Thompson separated the consular offices from other chancery offices, creating two distinct blocks connected at ground level by an arcade and a fenced “multipurpose” plaza opening toward Mackenzie. The overall color palette was warm, with a pinkish cut granite proposed for the façades. Steeply pitched copper roofs mirrored surrounding landmarks and supplied attic space for mechanical equipment. Windows were deeply recessed to create shadow and to emphasize strength and mass. The ambassador’s suite was clearly identified on the west façade by its sweeping second-story balcony. Thompson incorporated three distinct tower elements with a flagpole atop the tallest one.

On initial review, FBO panelists asked Thompson to think in terms of a stronger “statement.” They agreed with the choice of the copper roof, but instead of recognizing it as a reflection of place, they seemed to see it as part of a fad and urged him to think “beyond post-modern.” He revised the design and further articulated the chancery block, reducing its scale and perceived mass but maintaining its overall size at 160,000 gross square feet. All the while, FBO

was making changes to the program and asking the architect to incorporate those changes. For example, he covered the outdoor arcade, then enclosed it, and then expanded it into a large multipurpose room connecting the two halves of the embassy above grade. Drawings from 1983 show a handsome, distinctive, yet understated and inviting pair of buildings (Figure 8).

Weighing Benefit and Risk in Ottawa

In 1983, when Thompson’s construction documents were nearly complete and the State Department was finally about to sign a purchase agreement for the site, suicide bombers attacked the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and the nearby U.S. Marine barracks. The United States halted construction of diplomatic buildings worldwide. The ensuing report submitted by Admiral Bobby Ray Inman to Congress in 1985 called for sweeping changes in embassy design, construction, and location. The new recommendations prescribed large sites (minimum size of fifteen acres) far from downtown and removed at least one hundred feet from surrounding streets, a window-to-wall ratio of no more than 15 percent, a nine-foot-high perimeter wall, and the elimination of underground parking. There was no way to satisfy the “Inman standards” at the 205-foot-wide Sussex/Mackenzie site. Although Thompson was asked to revise his final design to incorporate smaller windows and increased perimeter secu-

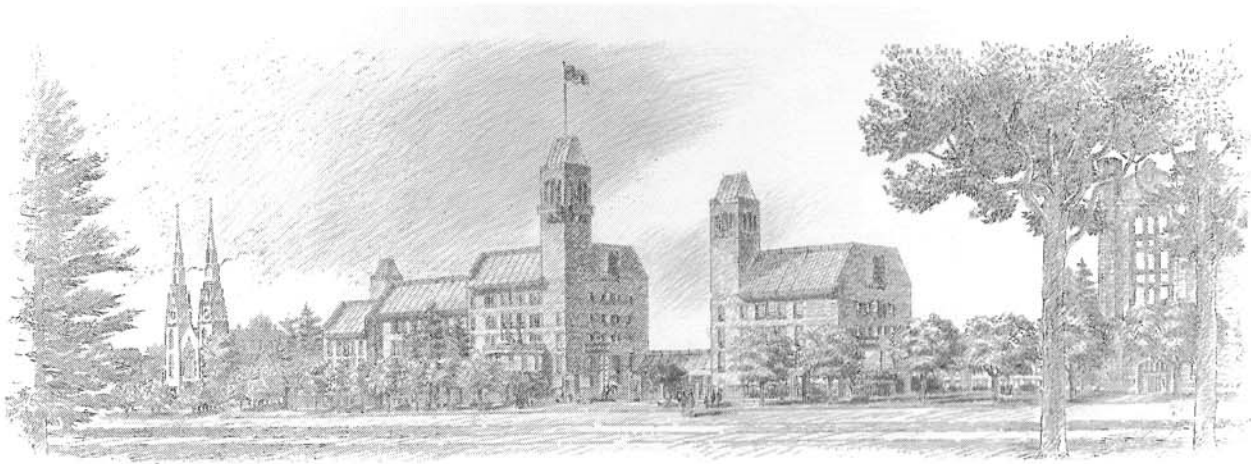


Figure 8 Benjamin Thompson Associates, rendering of proposal for U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, 1983. The view from the west shows two blocks, the chancery on the left and the consulate on the right, linked by an arcade and an open plaza.

riety, FBO saw that the situation mandated a new program and a new site. In 1985, Thompson was finally notified of plans to select a new architect for the project.

With the help of the NCC, FBO began the search for a larger and more protected site. Possibilities included one near LeBreton Flats, a rundown area by the Ottawa River; another on Green Island far from the ceremonial core; and a third even farther north of town on fifty-two acres of federally owned land in the exclusive Rockcliffe Park residential area. Despite the presence of a number of diplomatic missions and the home of the U.S. ambassador in that neighborhood, Rockcliffe Park residents strongly opposed the U.S. chancery as an intrusion, criticizing the loss of green space and the added security risk.⁴⁷ However, it was not the local opposition that stopped the move to the suburbs. Forceful critics pointed to the symbolic importance of a high-visibility downtown location, and Canadian officials also urged reconsideration of the initial site. Advocating a balance between benefit and risk, Sen. Moynihan derided a move to Rockcliffe Park as little better than a move to Manitoba. As a former U.S. ambassador himself and a leading member of Congress, he was uniquely qualified to denounce overreactions based on fear and to argue for the connection between democracy and the openness of public buildings.⁴⁸ Ultimately, FBO rejected all the proposed alternatives “on the grounds they lacked prestige and/or were too remote” and turned once again to Sussex/Mackenzie, which had improved considerably as a locale in the intervening eight years.⁴⁹

Hoping to keep the State Department interested in Sussex/Mackenzie or to attract another developer, the NCC had lobbied city councilors to increase the height limit from four to eight stories on Mackenzie. Given the prevailing economic recession, NCC chairman Marcel Beaudry argued to the city council that greater height was necessary to encourage “architecture of the highest quality.” He said, too, that only a large-scale commercial development could pay for the construction of the York Steps, a much-needed pedestrian link between Sussex and Mackenzie.⁵⁰ The council approved the zoning change. The NCC had also moved to protect views of the landmark buildings on Parliament Hill and had initiated plans for a ceremonial route linking Ottawa (Ontario) with Hull (Quebec) via the Alexandra Bridge across the Ottawa River. With the name of Confederation Boulevard, this loop opened in 1989, passing directly in front of the proposed chancery site (Figure 9).

Three other factors contributed to the State Department’s turnaround on the site: first, tensions eased, the Beirut tragedy faded quickly from public memory, and subsequent attacks on U.S. facilities would not again capture headlines until 1998; second, Congress had never actually funded Admiral Inman’s full security package; and third, the State Department acknowledged that risks varied and security standards could not be universally applied.⁵¹ Confident that an American embassy in Canada could rely on Canadian authorities for security, the department assessed Ottawa to be a “low threat post” in 1993 and waived the hundred-foot setback requirement.⁵² After a costly eight-



Figure 9 Du Toit, Allsop, Hillier, Confederation Boulevard project, 1985. The ceremonial route encircled Parliament, the Supreme Court, Canada's national archives and library, and the new Peacekeeping Monument located between the National Gallery and the Sussex/Mackenzie site (represented according to Benjamin Thompson's plans). Opened in 1989, the first section connected the Château Laurier Hotel in Ottawa with the Canadian Museum of Civilization across the river in Hull.

year hiatus, plans to locate the new chancery on Sussex/Mackenzie proceeded, much to the pleasure of Canadian officials in Ottawa. The State Department purchased the Sussex/Mackenzie site from the NCC for Can\$12.4 million, and as part of a reciprocal deal, agreed to transfer the old chancery on Wellington Street to Canada's Department of Public Works.⁵³

Arthur Erickson, the Prime Minister's Choice

In 1981, the PRB established a two-stage competition to select a Canadian architect for its Washington chancery using criteria—based on professional reputation as much as design excellence—established by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC). Despite having signed a statement agreeing to accept the jury's short list of four finalists, Prime Minister Trudeau selected another competition entrant who was not a finalist, his friend and political supporter Arthur Erickson. According to Therrien, a member of the jury leaked these irregularities to the press.⁵⁴ A mini-scandal ensued, and Trudeau was forced to defend his decision before the House of Commons.⁵⁵ He had helped select Moshe Safdie to design Ottawa's National Gallery and Douglas Cardinal for the Museum of Civilization in Hull,

but never before had a Canadian prime minister been so dismissive of professional protocols in the selection of an architect for a federally sponsored project.

Internationally, Erickson (who designed his country's pavilion at Expo '70 in Osaka) was the best known Canadian architect at that time. He was recognized as a key figure in the effort to take Canadian architecture beyond the Late International Style and imbue it with a distinct identity. In addition to many houses in and near Vancouver, he had prepared bold campus plans for Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia (1963), and for Alberta's University of Lethbridge (1969), and designed the Museum of Anthropology at Vancouver's University of British Columbia (1977). Even the least ambitious of his projects conveyed a sense of monumentality, and all won praise for compatibility with context, especially the rugged, expansive terrain of Canada's west. A lengthy profile published in the *New Yorker* in 1979 presented Erickson as an outspoken and charismatic personality with an "aptitude for overspending."⁵⁶ When news broke that he would design the new chancery, Benjamin Forgey in the *Washington Post* described him as "the very image of the world traveling architectural star," and praised him as a "flexible modernist" with a "punchant for special drama."⁵⁷

Erickson devoted a great deal of personal energy to the Canadian chancery.⁵⁸ In the spring of 1984, his design was reviewed first by Canadian authorities, then by the PADC and the Commission of Fine Arts in Washington.⁵⁹ Erickson may have exaggerated slightly, but when he later jokingly referred to some “twenty-three approval bodies,” he expressed something of his exasperation with the multi-tiered design review process.⁶⁰ In May, the final scheme was unveiled to the public by Canadian ambassador Allan Gotlieb, who played a pivotal role in taking the chancery from the drawing board to completion.⁶¹

While it was being planned and built, the chancery generated little adverse publicity. To the contrary, it acquired added prestige when Erickson won the 1986 AIA Gold Medal. The Canadians had a lot to prove in risking the move to Pennsylvania Avenue and deciding to build amid major landmarks, and they were determined to win notice and respect. The project was supported by an intense official public-relations campaign, and press announcements associated the architecture with the “spaciousness” and “freshness” of the country itself and praised the Canadian people for being “prepared to experiment politically, socially and architecturally.”⁶² The publicity paid off, for Erickson’s design attracted widespread attention and positive reviews in architectural journals and newspapers when it was completed in 1989.⁶³

SOM Brings Corporate Expertise

To put the project for Ottawa back on track, FBO turned to David Childs, senior design partner at SOM, because of his experience in orchestrating complex projects, his political savvy, and his recognized talent as leader of a skilled team.⁶⁴ Childs had prepared a master plan for the Washington Mall (1976); he had designed a headquarters for *U.S. News & World Report* in Washington (1984) and numerous nearby hotels; he had restored the *Evening Star* building on Pennsylvania Avenue (1989); and he had major skyscrapers to his credit, including World Wide Plaza (1989) and 450 Lexington Avenue (1992), in New York. When he won the Ottawa commission, he was busy with the expansion of four major airports, a federal courthouse for Charleston, West Virginia (1996), and a new railroad terminus to replace New York’s Pennsylvania Station. Childs’s own work represented only a fraction of his firm’s projects. According to FBO officials, SOM’s diversified expertise and record at creating and maintaining client confidence was particularly important in the post-Beirut climate.⁶⁵ SOM’s Chicago office handled structural and mechanical work for the chancery, Childs coordinated the design out of New York, and Gary Haney

headed the Washington team that prepared the working drawings, collaborated closely with architects at FBO, and oversaw the project on a day-to-day basis.

SOM’s initial concept featured an open office plan and a sweeping glass-walled atrium that faced west. By coincidence, the NCC approved the SOM scheme on 19 April 1995, the day of the Oklahoma City bombing. That tragedy prompted FBO to require added security. Childs reconfigured the space, moving the glass-walled atrium to the center of the building and ringing it with perimeter offices. As FBO staff architect Michael Minton points out, this move also improved energy efficiency and provided office workers with maximum daylight. The NCC’s Advisory Committee gave final approval to the revised scheme in January 1996.⁶⁶ Six months later, the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee also approved the project, “resigned to the fact that security concerns had limited the designers’ options.”⁶⁷ Construction began in January 1997, and President Bill Clinton attended the opening ceremony on 8 October 1999, the first time a U.S. president personally dedicated a U.S. embassy.

In terms of publicity, Ottawa was the opposite of Washington. From the time the U.S. purchase of Sussex/Mackenzie was announced, the project drew intense local scrutiny and sparked negative controversy. As is recorded in countless articles and letters to the editor in the *Ottawa Citizen*, animosity was directed both at the design and at the U.S. government for implementing it.⁶⁸ All the while, neither the State Department nor the architects had much to say about the project. SOM had other prestigious, larger, and less problematic commissions the world over and did not depend on the chancery to boost its reputation or its business, and the department was not looking for publicity that might fan controversy. Perhaps more important, after the bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa in August 1998, the department was preoccupied with damage control, trying to secure necessary funding from Congress to implement security upgrades at scores of posts and hoping to avert another catastrophe. The chancery’s completion and dedication went relatively unnoticed in the press.

Similar Programs: Different Design Strategies

The two new chanceries are close in size: the gross floor area above grade is 15,453 square meters in Washington and 12,819 square meters in Ottawa.⁶⁹ Each of the chanceries had to accommodate diplomatic and consular officers and offices for scores of other employees while incorporating the various components of the modern workplace: lobbies, work space, meeting rooms, cafeterias, libraries, mailrooms, load-



Figure 10 Arthur Erickson, Canadian Embassy, 501 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., 1978–89, Pennsylvania Avenue façade

ing docks, and underground parking. In Ottawa, the State Department’s diplomatic, political, economic, consular, and information offices were slated to utilize only about 25 to 30 percent of the total office space, sharing the remainder with fifteen other U.S. government agencies, from the FBI and the IRS to the Public Health Service and the Department of Agriculture.⁷⁰ The Canadian program likewise called for separate spaces for political, economic, public affairs, congressional and legal, immigration and consular, and tourism sections. In addition, it included Canada’s permanent mission to the Organization of American States, which has its headquarters in Washington. Consular and public-affairs sections in both chanceries had their own specific spatial needs. Although relatively small in size, the Canadian consulate required a separate entrance, a waiting area, and a secure separation from other parts of the building.⁷¹ Public-affairs sections required space for sizable reference libraries and reading rooms.

The U.S. program incorporated an auditorium that seats one hundred, but it was never envisioned as a cultural destination. By contrast, Canada’s included a large multi-purpose room for receptions, an art gallery, and a 171-seat theater, all intended as venues to further Canada’s public diplomacy, build awareness of Canadian art and popular culture, and achieve the PADC’s goal of increased street life along the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor. (Until relatively recently, visitors could enter the building easily for receptions or to see exhibitions, and they did not have to pass through security devices to do so.)

Canada’s six-story chancery presents itself as a volume

with no fixed edge, a composition in white marble around a raised courtyard that is open on two sides (Figure 10). The building itself covers only two-thirds of the designated parcel, with its plaza taking up the remainder. The U.S. chancery also abuts public space (the York Steps) but it is a closed composition. With four stories facing Sussex and three facing Mackenzie, it is a single block tapered to fit precisely its long, narrow site (Figure 11). The openness of the surrounding streets and the pedestrian right-of-way to the south visually compensate to some degree for the tight fit. But with a perimeter defined by a nine-foot steel fence, it cannot offer the same welcome as Canada’s chancery.

The PADC and the NCC had similar agendas, so both designs were shaped by site-development guidelines that included comparable specifications for massing, setback, and lot coverage. Both planning agencies wanted to enliven the areas around the chanceries and wanted the architects to respect the architecture of nearby buildings. Dismayed by the way the FBI Building shunned passersby, the PADC urged Erickson to find ways to attract pedestrians; for that reason, the chancery has a direct entrance from the Pennsylvania Avenue sidewalk.⁷² The NCC expressed much the same idea to Childs. As he later said, the commission “didn’t want a fortress” and “pushed us to modify the design to make the building as inviting and open as possible.”⁷³

The NCC saw the U.S. chancery as a companion piece to the adjacent York Steps and the Sussex façade as a complement to the market area (Figure 12). Similarly, PADC guidelines required Erickson to recognize the siting, size, and scale of nearby federal buildings and to build to the

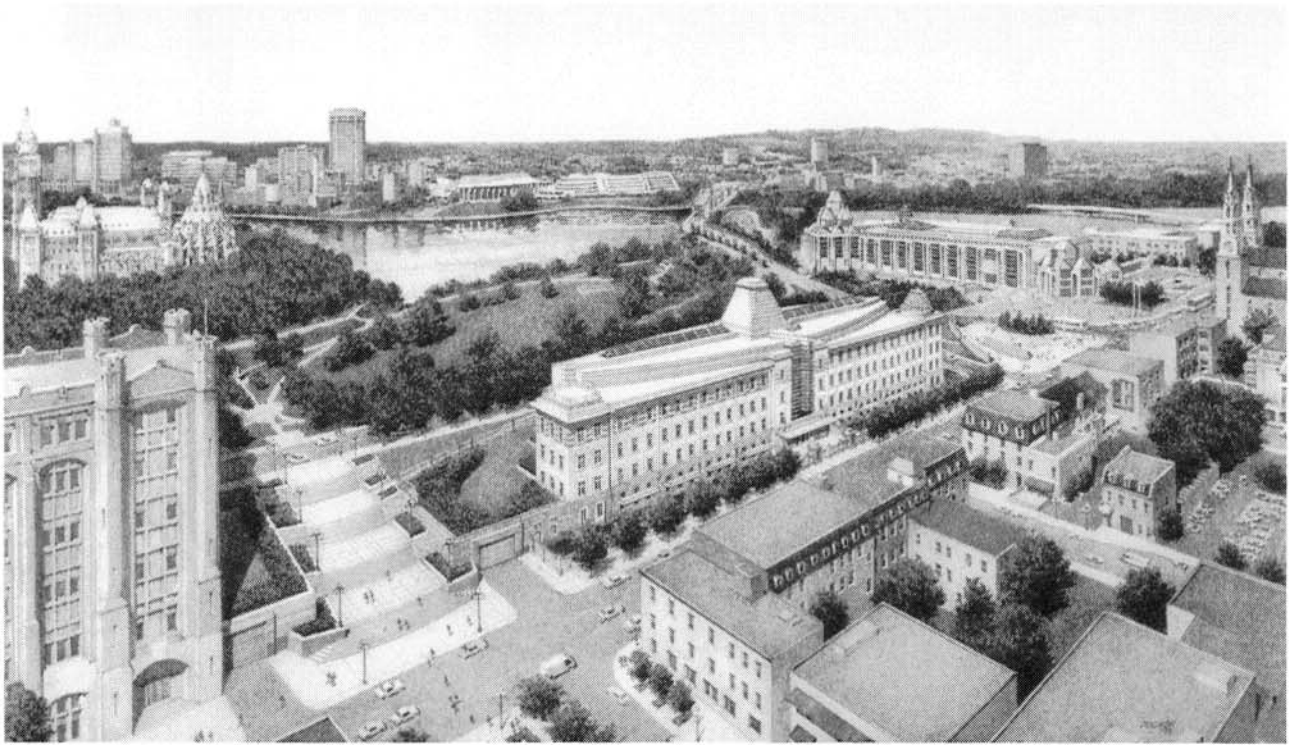


Figure 11 Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, rendering of U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, looking west. Surrounding the embassy are, clockwise from lower left: Connaught Building, Parliament, Ottawa River, Museum of Civilization (in Hull, Quebec), Alexandra Bridge, National Gallery of Art, Notre Dame basilica, and Byward Market area. York Steps are just south of the chancery and Major's Hill Park is immediately to its west.

site's perimeter on all sides (with the exception of the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and John Marshall Place) and to a height equal to the lower cornice line of the U.S. District Courthouse across the park (approximately sixty-five feet).⁷⁴ In Ottawa, Childs was not given similar "build-to" lines. His task was not to expand a building to fill a much larger space, but to squeeze a large building onto a small parcel. The zoning envelope of maximum allowable heights generated an L-shaped volume that stepped down from eight stories next to the Connaught Building on the south to four at the opposite end. Haney dubbed this shape "the old shoe" (Figure 13). To the delight of Canadian planners, Haney found that he could accommodate the U.S. program without even approaching the eight-story height limit. The result was a building with a low profile, about as low as possible, considering its size and construction. It was supposed to be "a background building," as Childs aptly noted, "quieter than its neighbors."

Unlike its U.S. counterpart, the Canadian chancery was never conceived as a background building. The PADC wanted it to anchor an avenue already lined by landmarks including the Willard Hotel, the Apex Building, the Fed-

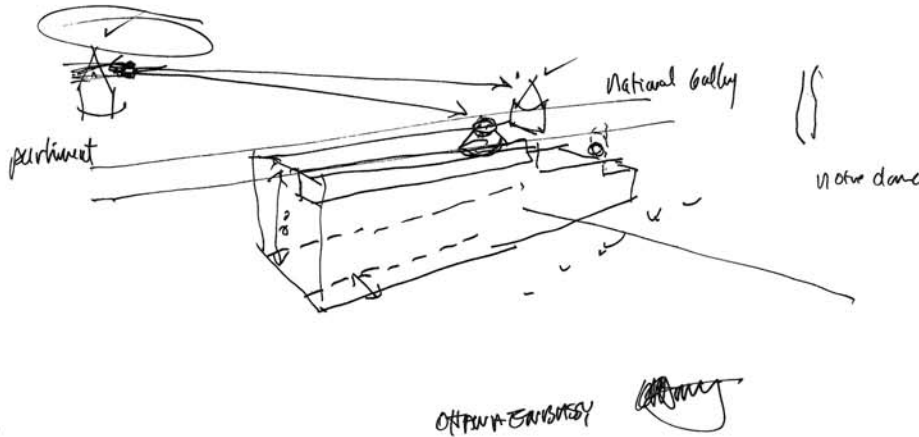
eral Trade Commission Building, and the new East Building of the National Gallery. In addition, the Canadians gave their architect a mandate to aim for stately grandeur. Erickson understood perfectly what was expected of him. As he explained it: "A cornice and base line had to be present, and a columned face at least inferred. We had to build to the height required and fill out all corners of the site; this scheme left a hole between two wings containing a large inner courtyard and suggesting a U-shaped building. Washington required the completion of the pediment across the fourth side, and doing so gave us a strong horizontal to set off a grand entrance facing the green park space."⁷⁵ A sweeping colonnade, a domed rotunda atop a circular fountain, and a sharply angled marble shaft form layers enclosing the open side of the "U" (Figure 14). The colonnade matches the scale and proportions of the Constitution Avenue entrance to the National Gallery, the raised rotunda echoes the Federal Trade Commission, located diagonally across Pennsylvania Avenue, and the angled shaft at the corner suggests the geometry of Pei's East Building (Figures 15, 16). None, however, are slavish quotations.

Trying not to give the impression Canada had become



Figure 12 Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, U.S. Embassy, 490 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Sussex entrance from Byward Market area looking down Clarence Street

Figure 13 Gary Haney, drawing of zoning “envelope” for U.S. Embassy, Ottawa, 2001



the “fifty-first U.S. state” by moving across from the Federal Triangle, Erickson wanted to “veer from the neo-Grecian standard so prevalent in official Washington.”⁷⁶ He questioned whether “Greco-Roman lines” could really convey “civic virtues and national strength” and objected to the contrast between Washington’s neoclassical monuments and what he saw as “the squalor of the city at that time.”⁷⁷ He was fundamentally allergic to “heavy-handed”⁷⁸ post-modernism and sought to “subvert the historicist scheme” through a very personal take on “modern Classicism”⁷⁹ (Figure 17).

In combining the classical and modern, Erickson adopted a “very Canadian tongue-in-cheek approach,” declaring: “I pulled back the stately row of columns that would normally support the heavy architrave, so that they

support nothing but a skylight, then I made them of aluminum in an irrepressible tweak at the restrictions.”⁸⁰ His bold juxtaposition of radically different scales (the colossal colonnade, the smaller rotunda, and the miniature entrance porch) creates visual surprise and deftly brings the building down to a human scale.

Landscape elements and sculpture add to approachability. A monumental bronze sculpture by Canadian artist Bill Reid titled *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii* stands in the courtyard in the middle of a large pool (Figure 18). Vancouver landscape architect Cornelia Hahn Oberlander installed boxed gardens of hawthorn trees and planted roses that cascade over each tier of the five-story structure, softening its strong horizontal edges and creating “green spaces for those working at desks inside the building as well as for those

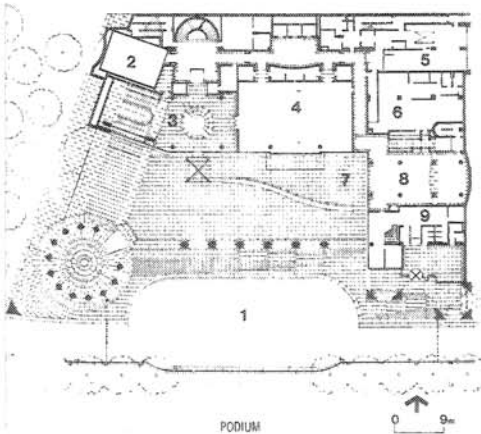


Figure 14 Canadian Embassy, Washington, D.C., entrance-level plan. Main entrance (large X), VIP automobile turnaround (1), art gallery (2), lobby (3), multipurpose room (4), consular section (9), and consular entrance (small X)



Figure 15 Canadian Embassy, Washington, D.C., the Rotunda of the Provinces, with cascading water. To the left of the rotunda are steps leading from Pennsylvania Avenue up to the main entrance.



Figure 16 Bennett, Parsons, and Frost, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C., 1938

entering it.”⁸¹ Demonstrating Erickson’s talent for space-making and his success at uniting architecture, sculpture, and landscape, the courtyard provides a respite from the surrounding city, frames landmark vistas, and works as an entertainment venue in its own right. In hot weather, schoolchildren enjoy pressing their hands against the water-walls beneath the rotunda, where visitors routinely holler and sing to hear the echo of their own voices. And even on weekends, when Pennsylvania Avenue is nearly deserted, the chancery attracts pedestrians, from architects with cameras to youngsters on skateboards. They step around the pool, examine the Haida sculpture, and peek into the chancery’s interior. Writing in the *Washington Post*, Roger Lewis praised Erickson for “the magnanimous courtyard gesture,” wondering how many embassies ever dedicated so much space to public access or how many ever similarly enlarged an adjacent public park.”⁸²

If Erickson faced the challenge of filling a site to its perimeter, Childs confronted the equally daunting job of minimizing the mass of a large building. While the PADC specified that the roof structure of the Canadian ambassador’s suite should not be visible from nearby streets in Washington, the NCC insisted upon “skyline features” to complement neighboring steeples and towers in Ottawa.⁸³

Because of the increased threat of terrorism by the 1990s, Childs had fewer design options than either Erickson or Thompson. His building is set back only forty feet from the street and is wrapped by a rusticated plinth that

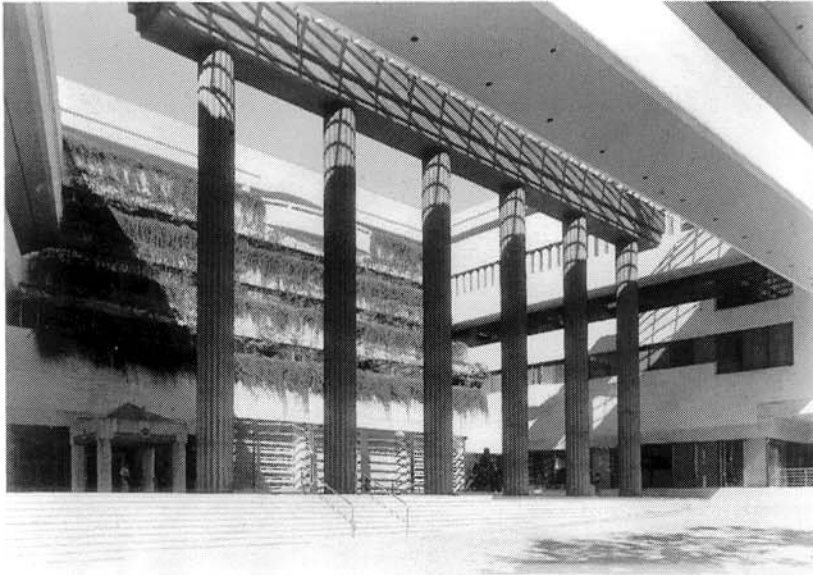


Figure 17 Canadian Embassy, Washington, D.C. Landscape architect Cornelia Hahn Oberlander designed the hanging gardens.

Figure 18 *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*, 1991, by Bill Reid, in the forecourt of the Canadian Embassy

provides a transition for the grade change and visually anchors the reinforced-concrete structure to the ground. The “skyline features” requested by the NCC are a central cone-shaped dome aligned with Clarence Street and a smaller glass tower on the north end. There is also the gently curved “penthouse” enclosure on the roof, which vaguely resembles a submarine. The NCC mandated that the chancery should *not* look Canadian and advised against the green-toned copper roofs so prominent in Thompson’s design. Instead, Haney chose a cool silver-gray palette for the roof and the entire exterior. Inspiration, he said, came from the spires of the nearby basilica.⁸⁴

The east and west façades of the U.S. chancery are totally different from each other, reflecting the division between “Town” and “Crown.” Facing Sussex, the exterior is clad in granite and limestone and detailed to complement the buildings lining the streets of Lowertown (see Figure 12). Taking a cue from the National Gallery, the Mackenzie façade is a curtain wall of dark reflective glass, stainless steel, and terne-coated metal (Figure 19). But the glass wall is not exactly what it appears to be; behind it, Childs has inserted a thick concrete blast wall. He turned to concrete and laminated glass to retain the apparent transparency of his earlier scheme after the Oklahoma City bombing. Punched window openings provide ample daylight and fine views to the offices within. The exterior glazing is three and a half to four inches thick, laminated to be blast-resistant and tamper-proof and engineered to resist forced entry for up to thirty minutes.



Getting Inside

To augment security, provide access control, and reduce operating costs, both chanceries feature a single main entrance, although both were designed with additional doors. For example, besides its canopied courtyard entry (Figure 20), Canada’s chancery has a separate consular entrance near the corner of C Street and John Marshall Place, and another that opens directly onto Pennsylvania Avenue. The U.S. chancery admits visitors, including those with consular business, through a single set of doors at its midpoint on the Sussex side (see Figure 12). The VIP



Figure 19 U.S. Embassy, Ottawa,
Mackenzie Avenue façade

entrance on the Mackenzie side is used only for large groups or for dignitaries.

At the two sites, the entrance progressions differ dramatically. The Canadian chancery has no perimeter fence and can be approached from several directions: from across a park and a plaza or up steep steps that lead to the same plaza from Pennsylvania Avenue. In Ottawa, the approach is more direct and abrupt because the chancery is accessible only through its fence's gated openings, bracketed by guard booths on the Sussex side. There is no transition between sidewalk and entrance. Heavy, slow-moving doors lead from the sidewalk to a small outer lobby that was not meant to accommodate magnetometers and scanners and the private-contract security guards who operate them.⁸⁵ Nor was it designed for large groups of people waiting to present credentials to a Marine security guard, who stands behind a bulletproof wall of dark tinted glass. Staff members escort each guest through the next set of heavy glass and steel doors into the inner lobby and beyond. Visitors see nothing of the dramatic interior until they are escorted up to the second level, where the skylit atrium runs the length of the building.

By contrast, visitors to the Canadian chancery have direct access to a spacious and well-appointed lobby, although contract security guards have been posted at the entrance since the events of September 11, 2001.⁸⁶ The lobby connects to the chancery's public spaces, including the reception hall to the right of the door. A great curved banquette, upholstered in red to match the Canadian flag, provides comfort and color. Detailed in highly polished

stainless steel, the lobby features sculpture by noted Canadian artists. The most impressive is *Inukshuk*, in which massive stones are stacked in the form of a man to represent the Inuit people of Nunavut, Canada's newest territory. A bronze statue of Tom Lamb, the famous Canadian bush pilot, stands at the foot of the stairs that lead to the lower lobby and is visible from Pennsylvania Avenue. Across the lobby is the main security checkpoint, where visitors present credentials to an embassy staff guard who sits behind a bulletproof wall of clear glass. All visitors are escorted beyond this checkpoint. The guard admits guests individually, via a "man-trap" entrance, into the office area.⁸⁷ But the public spaces are accessible without passing through the inside checkpoint.

In the office section of both chanceries, the spatial experiences also differ from each other. In Erickson's building, the U-shape configuration produces what seems to be a confusing floor plan. No principal rooms (with the exception of the ambassadorial penthouse) face the courtyard and there is nothing on the interior to compare with the splendid lobby. In Ottawa, however, the drama builds as visitors discover the atrium and its central dome, faceted in polished stainless steel and back-lit with artificial blue light and natural light. The dome provides a glittering and mysterious focal point for the interior space and serves as a powerful and effective organizing feature. Sunlight pours into the atrium. Open hallways, like the decks of a ship, surround the atrium and connect it to glass-enclosed staircases at either end. Any sense of interior openness is the result of



Figure 20 Canadian Embassy, Washington, D.C., main entrance

architectural ingenuity because the floor space allocated to public use was determined by a fixed percentage, and FBO cut that figure in half between 1993 and 1999. Interior walls are detailed in light maple, fixtures and railings in stainless steel. The floors are terrazzo and all furnishings are finished in maple veneer.

Comparing the two ambassadorial suites, the Canadian ambassador's is much grander, possibly a reflection of the difference in prestige between the two diplomatic posts. Erickson has provided a stylish penthouse that includes a lounge, a formal dining room, and an office—all opening out onto a rooftop terrace with “power views” of the Capitol, Federal Triangle, and the Mall.⁸⁸ Like the vista from the ambassador's office in Gilbert's legation (see Figure 3), these views carry great political symbolism. That is why the American ambassador's office in the new chancery also looks directly at Parliament Hill. The suite itself is more corporate than Erickson's, but its rooms are sunny and bright and the walls are paneled in wood, like those in the earlier legation. While Thompson called attention to the ambassador's suite with a balcony in his scheme, for security reasons this one is not identifiable from the outside.

Political Symbolism and National Identity

How and to what extent do these two projects address the issue of nationalism? Erickson's chancery is not about a bilateral relationship. Symbolically and metaphorically, it is a celebration of Canada, respectfully presented in an architectural

form prescribed by the host city. The U.S. chancery, by contrast, makes reference to the relationship through art, interior furnishings, and other choices that reflect a self-consciousness associated with dominance. Childs considered his design to be “apolitical,” but the whole project reads as a tribute to a political partnership.

While location makes the greatest political statement at both chanceries, national identity is also conveyed directly through modest signs and select symbols. In Washington, there are three Canadian flags with the distinctive red-maple-leaf insignia: one on the roof, another at the consular entrance, and a third on the Pennsylvania Avenue façade.⁸⁹ Erickson has said that “the sign out front” identifying the building is its only “distinctly Canadian feature.”⁹⁰ It is a modest inscription marking the building's dedication by Prime Minister Mulroney. In the larger cultural picture, Erickson suggests, the two countries are virtually indistinguishable.

In Ottawa, the “stars and stripes” waves on both sides of the chancery: high on the roof over the Sussex entrance and in front of the Mackenzie façade. Signs are similarly unpretentious. The architects inscribed “Embassy of the United States of America” in stone over the Sussex entrance and installed the same words in stainless-steel lettering on the Mackenzie side. They also incorporated an insignia of the Great Seal of the United States into the ironwork of the fence. Without these few external symbols, either chancery might pass for a government office building or a museum.⁹¹

To highlight the embassy's political role, Canadian officials pushed Erickson to build symbolic content into his

design. He responded by turning the entrance rotunda from a mere contextual device, a rotunda with eight columns, into an iconographical element in which each of the twelve columns symbolizes one of Canada's ten provinces and two territories.⁹² He produced what Canadian ambassador Derek Burney called a "strong and confident building for a strong and confident Canada."⁹³ At a distance, the sheer scale of the massing, the narrow slit windows, the colossal classical forms, and the abstracted battlements at the cornice line convey a sense of power that is at the same time attractive and forbidding. Erickson may have borrowed design elements from local landmarks, but he combined them in dramatic and unexpected ways, producing a new and unmistakably independent image for Canada in Washington.

The U.S. chancery has no comparable iconographical overlay, but its interior design team incorporated the Canadian maple leaf, paired with a star, into upholstery fabric on chairs in all the reception areas. The "deep Niagara blue" mohair fabric, they say, "acknowledges the Canadian climate and the shared northern border of the two countries."⁹⁴ The notion that upholstery can further the diplomatic mission may sound far-fetched, but all aspects of the design and construction (the use of Canadian materials, contractors, and manufacturers, for example) acquire significance as part of the effort to bolster dual themes of respect for Canada and American identity.

While Erickson did not believe in literal symbolism, one of his "key design considerations," he said, was "how to represent Canada appropriately." In addition to building upon historical allusion, he wanted his architecture to capture a cultural attitude: "to express an image of Canadian reserve and good manners, coupled with a characteristic gesture of openness and invitation, to affirm our similar heritages and at the same time project an element of freshness and forgivable naiveté."⁹⁵ Oberlander also saw the landscape architecture as a reflection of Canada's unique terrain, comparing the arrangement of planter boxes to "cascading trees growing out of Canada's rough mountain ledges."⁹⁶

Many critics, taking a cue from the embassy's publications, bought into the geographical metaphor, agreeing, for instance, that the entrance pool effectively symbolized Canada's "ocean limits."⁹⁷ Washington architect George Hartman interpreted Erickson's "big gestures" as evidence of a "frontier mentality," and Forgey reminded his *Washington Post* readers that boundless nature "is forever close to Canadian cities in a way it has not been in the American experience since the closing of the frontier."⁹⁸ The symbolism adds meaning to the architecture and helps the building connect with the public.

Both chanceries also underscore national identity through their art collections. The American art was assembled specifically for the embassy by independent consultants working closely with interior designers at FBO and by outside donors. It adopts a theme of artistic innovation, showcasing mostly abstract works. In contrast, the most visible pieces of Canadian art are representational, incorporating themes of cultural diversity and strong associations with history.

Monumental sculpture at each chancery illustrates this comparison. Bill Reid's *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii* (1991), a bronze outdoor piece, is a dark, brooding ensemble of mythical creatures including Mouse Woman, Grizzly Bear, Bear Mother, Raven, and Beaver (see Figure 18).⁹⁹ Erickson commissioned Reid, a West Coast Haida, to create a work that would interpret the legends of his people. As a tribute to one of Canada's "First Nations," it is animated by art and by allegory. Joel Shapiro's lyrical abstraction *Conjunction* (1999) stands adjacent to the U.S. chancery, near the top of the York Steps (Figure 21). While visitors can examine *Spirit* from all sides and even touch it, *Conjunction* is behind a fence. It was commissioned (without input from the architects) by the nonprofit foundation Friends of Art and Preservation in Embassies (FAPE). Like most of Shapiro's works, it alludes to the human figure in motion. According to the artist, it symbolizes America's close friendship with Canada. Ottawa newspaper articles compared the sculpture to a "pigeon and gull roost" and a "good lightning rod" when it was dedicated. Headlines blared: "Hideous Art Is Symbolic of Misappropriated Funds" and "Twisted Metal Fails as Public Art." According to the *Ottawa Citizen*, public reaction ranged from "absolute mockery to mild enthusiasm."¹⁰⁰ Initial support came only from the cognoscenti, but the sculpture is likely to acquire a following. The interplay between its geometry and the space it creates around it animates one corner of an otherwise serious, if not dour, structure.

The artworks in the U.S. chancery include a painting of Niagara Falls by Tony King, and photographs taken in Nevada and Arizona by Richard Misrach. Overall, though, the collection is more noteworthy for its conceptual dimension than for literal associations with American history, landscape, or culture. Deborah Butterfield's *Earth Measure*, a full-size horse made of found welded metal, for example, is officially described as "a symbol of partnership and understanding," and Ross Rudel's even more abstract three-dimensional blossom, #294, is said to evoke "a sense of patriotism for Americans."¹⁰¹ Aside from the Shapiro sculpture, however, none of the art is visible to the general public. This is regrettable because the collection is one of the chancery's finest features.



Figure 21 Joel Shapiro, *Conjunction*, 1999, commissioned by Friends of Art and Preservation in Embassies as part of its millennium project, Gift to the Nation. The sculpture stands adjacent to the southeast corner of the U.S. Embassy, Ottawa.

Conclusion

The two new chanceries in Washington and Ottawa represent a unique international partnership and are built upon an exceptional set of historical and geographical circumstances. The combined history of the buildings provides valuable historical lessons because it is a tale of how a straightforward need for added office space evolved into the construction of two symbols of mutual regard and political purpose. Scrutiny of these projects points to four areas of conflict and challenge that affect the future of diplomatic buildings in particular and civic structures in general.

First, buildings such as these can and do take decades to plan, and public policies of the time reflect changes in domestic and international politics. Descriptions that rely on conventional architectural dates, from design inception to end of construction, fail to convey the challenges involved in a lengthy and sometimes fractious planning

process and do not address the role played by planners. Such intervals are too short and misleading. It took the Canadians almost two decades and the Americans four (including abandonment of two nearly complete proposals) to build the new embassies. Assessments of such projects must take the element of change into account and reckon with the idea that they are to a large extent open-ended.

Second, it is difficult, but not impossible, to create a multipurpose structure that meets the planning needs of a surrounding city, enriches the cultural life of area residents, and also accommodates the disparate requirements of a government client. To a great extent, embassy officials and architects successfully met this challenge in both cities. In keeping with PADC and NCC objectives, the chanceries helped reestablish the prestige of neglected urban areas.¹⁰² Both provided a much-improved workplace for administrators and staff. Even if budget cuts and concerns for security have curtailed aspects of what was originally conceived as an ambitious Canadian cultural program, the Canadian Embassy still welcomes the public to exhibitions of everything from modern art to ice hockey memorabilia and announces its events with colorful banners on Pennsylvania Avenue. The U.S. chancery never aimed to offer public-access cultural venues, but its downtown location, like that of its Canadian counterpart, is a great convenience to those with embassy business, and the building offers a wide range of facilities that are used for conferences and meetings of all sorts.

A third conflict is how to establish presence and identity while also complementing local architecture. This is a delicate design dilemma because quoting from another nation's surroundings might be construed by some as an inability to create identity. Likewise, incorporating national iconography (rhetorical inscriptions, statuary, other conspicuous icons) can also suggest insecurity. Even though it draws from Washington's own architectural tradition, Erickson's bold design manages to convey strength and establishes Canada as a partner matching the United States in scale and stature.

Like Erickson, Childs quotes from surrounding structures without trivializing or insulting them. He conveys both modernity and tradition by juxtaposing scale, surface treatment, and materials. Not surprisingly, the project has been criticized both for not fitting in and for trying too hard to do so.¹⁰³ While tower elements add presence, especially when colorfully lit at night, their design shows the effects of compromise. The central "dome" is probably the least successful element, calling to mind a miniaturized power plant cooling tower. Negative reaction to Shapiro's *Conjunction* also points to the ways in which a generous gesture can be misconstrued.

In an embassy context, a sculpture's inability to convey meaning can amount to a diplomatic failure. Lingering resentment over lost zoning battles left its mark on local attitudes as well, prompting some to describe the chancery as "an unfortunate intrusion into the original federal precinct."¹⁰⁴ It is important to consider that criticism of embassy art or architecture can be, and often is, political antipathy masquerading as aesthetic judgment.

The fourth conflict, probably the most problematic of all, involves finding a balance between openness and security. A little over a decade ago, when the Canadians dedicated their new chancery in Washington, they celebrated openness, both literally and figuratively, through architecture.¹⁰⁵ Of all the buildings devoted to international affairs in Washington, the Canadian chancery remains one of the most accessible and offers the most exciting outdoor experience. Pedestrian activity will increase, too, when the Freedom Foundation moves its popular Newseum (Polshak and Partners, architects) to the site directly adjacent to the chancery.

Childs had far fewer options, particularly after the Oklahoma City bombing. It is a tribute to him and his colleagues that they managed to conceal the upgraded security to the extent that they did on the narrow and unforgiving site, and to the State Department that it did not move the whole facility to the suburbs. But if planning officials applauded the city site, shopkeepers and residents were understandably apprehensive about the large new American chancery in the middle of their neighborhood. As shown by the attack on the U.S. embassy in Nairobi, and more recently in Lima, nearby properties can sustain the worst destruction, especially if the target is more fortified than surrounding structures. It will be increasingly difficult for the U.S. and others to justify the placement of embassies in congested city centers, even though the need for accessibility and active public diplomacy has never been more apparent. Moreover, retreat to walled enclaves carries other risks. Such diplomatic compounds can be inviting targets—protecting, but also confining—and they create a new sort of risk that has been inadequately assessed. As the threat of political violence prompts increased security measures at and around embassies, will these buildings retain their role as civic landmarks, political symbols, and cultural beacons? Only time will tell.

Notes

It is impossible to provide plans for or to fully illustrate an embassy building given the current security constraints. A virtual tour of the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., including its art collection, is available at

www.canadianembassy.org. A virtual tour of the U.S. Embassy art collection in Ottawa is available at www.usembassycanada.gov.

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1. Peter B. Teeley, Ambassador to Canada, Leonard H. Legault, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister (U.S.) and Coordinator Free Trade Agreement, Dept. of External Affairs, and John F. W. Rogers, Under Secretary of State for Management, "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada Concerning the Exchange of Chancery Properties in Ottawa," 15 Jan. 1993, 5. Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (formerly FBO; see n. 8) Files, Washington, D.C. Agreements also covered the reciprocal use of local contractors and local building materials.

2. Minutes of the Architectural Advisory Panel, U.S. State Department, Office of Foreign Buildings Operations, 29 Apr. 1960.

3. Proffered during a visit to Washington in 1969, the analogy is quoted in full in J. L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer, *For Better or Worse: Canada and the United States to the 1990s* (Toronto, 1991), 247: "Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant: no matter how friendly and even-tempered the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt."

4. By the late 1960s, Canada remained a faithful ally, but successive prime ministers voiced objections over policies supported by U.S. presidents and Congress. For instance, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker had disapproved of the U.S. intervention in Vietnam, but according to Granatstein and Hillmer (*ibid.*, 229), Canadian diplomats collected intelligence information from Vietnamese and passed it to Americans. Granatstein and Hillmer also say that the Third Option was "greeted by officers in the American Embassy in Ottawa with a sardonic 'lots of luck, Canada'" (252–53).

5. In 1995, Canada's Department of External Affairs was renamed the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

6. Marie-Josée Therrien, "Au-delà des frontières: L'Architecture des chancelleries canadiennes, 1930–1992" (Ph.D. diss., Université Laval, 1998), 324, has identified three consecutive types of Canadian embassies: 1. the bourgeois residence, like the first legation in Washington; 2. the fortress edifice, as in Bonn, Islamabad, Brasília; 3. the Third Option "culturally minded" embassy, as built in Mexico City and Washington, in which architecture, art, and landscape combine to establish a distinct "Canadian" character. By the same author, see "Entre l'appareil bureaucratique et le pouvoir politique: La Construction des chancelleries canadiennes à Canberra, Brasília et Washington," *Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin* 20 (Dec. 1995), 88–96, and "Canada's Embassies: A Brief History," *Canadian Architect* 44 (June 1999), 18–19.

7. In general, U.S.-Canada relations were moving toward greater reciprocity at the time. The Free Trade Agreement was signed in 1988. The following year, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney took Canada into the Organization of American States. In 1987, the AIA and RAIC agreed that U.S. and Canadian professional degrees in architecture would be on equal footing.

8. In 2001, when Gen. Charles E. Williams was named director and chief operating officer of FBO, he changed the name of the office from Foreign Buildings Operations (FBO) to Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO).

9. For a fuller discussion of early designed capitals, see Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (New Haven, 1992).

10. Premier Wilfrid Laurier, speech, 1896, quoted in Wilfrid Eggleston, *The Queen's Choice: A Story of Canada's Capital* (Ottawa, 1961), 154.
11. Carolyn A. Young, *The Glory of Ottawa: Canada's First Parliament Buildings* (Montreal and Kingston, 1995), 94. The Centre Block was designed by Thomas Fuller and H. Chillion Jones (1859–66) and rebuilt with a taller tower by Darling and Pearson with Jean-Omer Marchand (1916–27); the library is by Fuller and Jones (1859–77); East and West Blocks by Frederick Warburton Stent and Augustus Lever (1859–65).
12. Janet Wright, *Crown Assets: The Architecture of the Department of Public Works, 1867–1967* (Toronto, 1997), 111.
13. A tribute to Canada's French and British origins, Price's hotels, the best known of which is Quebec City's Château Frontenac (begun 1892), evoke the romance of castles in the Loire Valley and manor houses in Scotland. See Derrick Holdsworth, "Architectural Expressions of the Canadian National State," *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien* 30 (1986), 167–71.
14. United States Commission of Fine Arts, *Massachusetts Avenue Architecture*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., 1973), 30–58. Just a block from the Canadian property was another de Sibour project, the McCormick Apartments (1917–22), today headquarters of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
15. In 1911, the U.S. Congress authorized the purchase of foreign buildings or building sites for diplomatic use, but by 1927, only a handful had been acquired. See Jane C. Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies* (New York, 1998), 17.
16. When the FSBC debated how to best represent U.S. interests overseas, its chairman, Henry W. Temple (R-PA), contrasted two categories of capitals: "the great capitals of the world," such as Paris, Rome, Berlin, Prague, Buenos Aires, and Tokyo, and lesser places, such as Tirana, Managua, San Salvador, and Monrovia. Ottawa was listed among the latter. Nonetheless, the Ottawa legation, together with U.S. embassy buildings in Tokyo (Raymond and Magonigle, 1931) and Paris (Delano and Aldrich, 1932), were FSBC's most significant pre-World War II projects. While Cass Gilbert was virtually free to choose what he considered to be the most appropriate "American" architecture for Ottawa, a Parisian law of 1757 required the Paris building (on the Place de la Concorde) to conform to preestablished design guidelines.
17. The legation bears a strong similarity to Gilbert's New York County Lawyers' Association (1928). Not until the late 1940s did the U.S. begin erecting modernist embassies in the spirit of corporate office buildings. These included chanceries in Rio de Janeiro (Harrison & Abramovitz, 1948), Copenhagen and Stockholm (Rapson and van der Meulen, 1951), and Havana (Harrison & Abramovitz, 1952), and consular office buildings in Bremen and Düsseldorf (Gordon Bunshaft for SOM, 1952).
18. Even buildings erected expressly for diplomatic purposes, such as those that Mary Foote Henderson sponsored on 16th Street near Washington's Meridian Hill, had a decidedly domestic character. One example was the Embassy of Italy, at 2700 16th Street, a residence with a separate chancery wing (Warren and Wetmore, 1923–24).
19. The idea of exporting American icons was popular in the decade preceding World War II. Plantation houses were considered appropriate models for U.S. consulates and embassies. In 1936, Harrie T. Lindeberg designed the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki after Westover, the red-brick Virginia residence of William Byrd II, who built it on the James River in 1734. There was even the suggestion that all foreign buildings be replicas of the White House, as was done for the consulate in Yokohama. Although there were fine examples of Beaux-Arts classicism in Ottawa, many Canadian architects were ambivalent about a style imported from their (sometimes) arrogant neighbor to the south. For their own public buildings, they preferred the neo-Gothic tradition. But they admired designs of Charles McKim and his disciples for the "bigness" of their work and for its dignity, and judged it appropriate for semipublic buildings like banks. On the impact of U.S. architects in Quebec and Ontario between 1880 and 1930, see Kelly Crossman, *Architecture in Transition: From Art to Practice 1885–1906* (Montreal and Kingston, 1987), and Isabelle Gournay, "Prestige and Professionalism: The Contribution of American Architects," in Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem, eds., *Montréal Metropolis: 1880–1930* (Toronto, 1998), 112–31.
20. Sally Coutts, Christina Cameron, and C. A. Hale, *Building Report 84-27: United States Embassy, 100 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office* (Ottawa, 1984), 23.
21. Residents objected to Canada's five-story military mission at 2450 Massachusetts Avenue (Marani and Morris, of Toronto, with Faulkner, Kingsbury & Stenhouse of Washington as associated architects, 1953). See "A Diplomatic Loophole in Zoning Law" (letter to the editor), *Washington Star*, 24 Sept. 1953, Vertical files, Historical Society of Washington, D.C., arguing that Canadians used their diplomatic status to obtain a building permit "which would never be granted to an American citizen" and were destroying the "beauty of our wooded Rock Creek Park."
22. The NCPD is the federal planning agency with oversight over land use in Washington, D.C. Its 1967 plan called for "a more orderly process for locating the offices of foreign governments and international organizations within Washington." See National Capital Planning Commission, "Summary," *Proposed Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*, Feb. 1967, 17.
23. At present, tenants also include Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei, Ethiopia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, Slovakia, and the United Arab Emirates. Countries with plans to build include Morocco and China, which has been allocated three adjacent parcels. The ICC also features a federal office building.
24. The first "flagship embassy" in Washington was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens (1927–31) for Great Britain. It retained the traditional residence/chancery duality. Other signature buildings were built by Switzerland (William Lescaze, 1959), Denmark (Vilhelm Lauritzen, 1960), Germany (Egon Eiermann, 1964), and Brazil (Olavo Redig de Campos, 1973).
25. The McMillan Plan called for a D.C. government center to be bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue to the north, Fifteenth Street to the west, and Constitution Avenue to the south.
26. A preliminary plan for this proposal was illustrated in National Commission of Fine Arts, *The Central Composition of the National Capital and the Public Buildings Program from the Eleventh Report of the National Commission of Fine Arts* (Washington, D.C., 1930), 52. It was reprinted in a slightly altered form by Alexander B. Trowbridge, "Federal Buildings and the Triangle Plan," in Frederick Haynes Newell, ed., *Planning and Building of the City of Washington* (Washington, D.C., 1932), 70, with the following comments: "The group of proposed buildings is in general similar to the composition of the Rue Royale in Paris from the Place de la Concorde to the Church of the Madeleine. The design challenges comparison with the plazas erected under royal patronage when European architecture was at its height."
27. Nathan Wyeth, "Notes on the New Municipal Center: An Important Addition to Washington's Plan," *Pencil Points* 20 (Sept. 1939), 579–83. The East Municipal Center (today the Daly Building) was erected according to Wyeth's plan in 1938–41, and its much less elegant and somewhat Brutalist pendant in the 1970s.
28. "Fine Arts Body Approves D.C. Library Plans," *Washington Star*, Jan. 19, 1940; "What New Library Will Look Like," *Washington Star*, June 3, 1940; Joseph S. Edgerton, "District Government Has Impressive Share in Development of Capital. Large Area to be Remade in Progress. Municipal Center Building Group Has Own Mall," *Washington Sunday Star*, Feb. 11, 1940, C5. Vertical files, Martin Luther King Library, Washington, D.C.

29. See Frederick Gutheim, "The Mess in Washington," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 20 (Jan. 1953), 15. Gutheim lamented that on inauguration day, driving up the avenue, President Eisenhower would see a bleak vista, "the result of two decades of depression, emergency, war, post-war readjustment and another national emergency . . . twenty years of improvisations, temporary solution, patching up and compromise."
30. Luther H. Hodges, Arthur J. Goldberg, David E. Bell, Bernard J. Boutin, and Timothy J. Reardon, Jr., *Report to the President by the Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space* (Washington, D.C., 23 May 1962), vi.
31. *Ibid.*, 13.
32. President's Advisory Council on Pennsylvania Avenue, Nathaniel A. Owings, chairman, Letter of Transmittal, *Pennsylvania Avenue, Report of the President's Advisory Council on Pennsylvania Avenue* (Washington, D.C., Apr. 1964).
33. At that time, Square 491 was still being examined as a site for District government offices, housing, or general office use. John Wiebenson, *Replanning for Pennsylvania Avenue: A New Study of the Section of Pennsylvania Avenue Bordering the Federal Triangle* (Washington, D.C., Dec. 1971), 10.
34. Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, *The Pennsylvania Avenue Plan, 1974* (Washington, D.C., 1986), 0-159-171, 54. The plan maintained the recommendation to close John Marshall Place to traffic, and the PADC retained landscape architect Carol L. Johnson to design John Marshall Park (completed 1983).
35. District of Columbia Government, *Recommendations of Mayor-Commissioner Walter E. Washington. Pennsylvania Avenue Plan-1974 Transmitted to the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation on June 16, 1974*, III-13; "Block 491 (Pennsylvania Avenue, John Marshall Place, C Street, 6th Street NW," *The Secretary of the Interior's Review of the Pennsylvania Avenue Plan-1974*, 52; Letter of the Assistant Secretary of the Interior to Elwood Quesada, 24 Oct. 1974, 23. All National Gallery Archives.
36. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Two Hundred Years of Pennsylvania Avenue," *The Jefferson Lecture*, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 13 Apr. 2000. Draft copy provided by office of Sen. Moynihan.
37. Moynihan quoted in Judith Havemann, "JFK Planted Seeds after Inaugural," *Washington Post*, 8 Aug. 1987, A12.
38. Minutes of Architectural Advisory Panel, 27 Feb. 1959 (see n. 2). The annex project was awarded to Harold Spitznagel, who presented his first scheme to FBO's Architectural Advisory Panel in 1959. Spitznagel grappled with how to build an addition that was "sympathetic" both to Gilbert's landmark and the Parliament group across the street, and he returned four times over the next year. Although he was directed to rush his plans to completion because of "the need for space" and "the time factor," the annex was never built. Many other FBO projects were suspended for long periods of time or never built at all. For a fuller analysis of how and why that occurred, see Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy* (see n. 15).
39. Until 1960, fire, theft, and espionage were the major security worries at U.S. embassies. When embassy employees died in the Vietcong attack on the U.S. embassy compound in Saigon in 1965, the State Department had to rethink the risks associated with its diplomatic buildings. Throughout the 1970s, terrorists targeted American embassies and FBO began to change its design specifications. New embassies in Lisbon (Frederick Bassetti, 1978) and Kuala Lumpur (Hartman-Cox, 1980), for example, included walled perimeters, bulletproof glass, and spiked balcony rails.
40. Frederick Todd, *Preliminary Report to the Ottawa Improvement Commission* (Ottawa, 1903). Todd also proposed a large circle where the Château Laurier stands today by "taking portions of the unsightly block between Mackenzie Avenue and Sussex Drive."
41. The winning design by the Maxwell brothers of Montreal is illustrated in Wright, *Crown Assets*, 117 (see n. 12). Farther north on Sussex, Ewart, as chief architect of the Department of Public Works, had previously built the Royal Canadian Mint (1905-8) and Dominion Archives (1904-7; designated Canadian War Museum, 1966).
42. Wright, *Crown Assets*, 111.
43. Herbert S. Holt et al., *Report of the Federal Plan Commission on the General Plan for the Cities of Ottawa and Hull* (Ottawa, 1916), quoted in Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 2 (Toronto, 1994), 652. Bennett's recommendations, which included the present location of the National Gallery, were incorporated into this report, which constituted the first comprehensive plan for Ottawa. See David L. A. Gordon, "A City Beautiful Plan for Canada's Capital: Edward Bennett and the 1915 Plan for Ottawa and Hull," *Planning Perspectives* 13 (1998), 275-300. In 1927, the Federal District Commission replaced the OIC. Its consultant was the Frenchman Jacques Gréber, whose first plan of 1937-39 called for terraces to surround the Connaught Building and plantings on the Sussex/Mackenzie parcel to complement the newly landscaped Major's Hill Park. Gréber's second, more comprehensive and influential study of 1946-50 made no specific recommendations for use of the future chancery site.
44. John Leaning, "Rehabilitation, Sussex Drive," *Canadian Architect* 10 (Aug. 1965), 47-49. Gentrification accelerated when the Lester Pearson Building, which housed the Department of External Affairs and was located farther north on Sussex, opened in 1973.
45. Aside from Leland King, the architect who headed FBO in the early 1950s, Slayton was the only FBO director who shared a strong affinity for the design profession, although he was not an architect himself. Most of the other directors had been Foreign Service officers. Once installed, Slayton set out to restore the luster to a design program that had seen its heyday in the 1950s, when the list of architects with FBO commissions read like a page out of a "Who's Who in Modern Architecture." Many from that era were older "masters," including Marcel Breuer, Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Richard Neutra, all relatively recent arrivals from Europe. Others were "promising" younger men, including Eero Saarinen, Hugh Stubbins, and Harry Weese. During the Vietnam era, FBO built relatively few major projects and moved away from "signature" designs toward more utilitarian solutions. Slayton wanted to reverse this trend. In short order, he awarded commissions for office-building chanceries (OBC) and embassy residences (ER) to Frank Gehry (Damascus, OBC, unbuilt), George Hartman (Kuala Lumpur, OBC), Hugh Jacobsen (Paris, OBC annex), William Metcalf (Cairo, OBC and ER), James Stewart Polshak (Muscat, OBC), Benjamin Thompson (Ottawa, OBC, unbuilt), and Harry Wolf (Abu Dhabi and Doha, OBC, unbuilt).
46. Loeffler, personal notes of Architectural Advisory Panel meeting, 25 Nov. 1980. Members of the Architectural Advisory Panel at that time were Donn Emmons, O'Neil Ford, and Hugh Stubbins.
47. It is hard to know which was the larger concern at that time because security can be used as a cover for environmental anxiety, and vice-versa. Long before the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, where so many perished in adjacent buildings, Rockcliffe Park neighbors were rightly apprehensive about collateral damage, although that risk was not yet widely recognized. There was a time when the presence of a U.S. embassy meant prestige and welcome economic benefit for a neighborhood, but Canadian opposition was a sign that things were already changing.
48. Moynihan is quoted on this subject in *Balancing Security and Openness*, Public Buildings Service, U.S. General Services Administration (Washington, D.C., 1999).
49. Dave Rogers, "Market with a Mission: Sussex Drive Will Be New Home of U.S. Embassy," *Ottawa Citizen*, 16 Jan. 1993, E1. In Ottawa, embassies are found in the Glebe district, along the Rideau Canal and Island Park

- Drive. On Sussex Drive farther north from Parliament Hill stands the Embassy of Japan (Takeshi Sakamaki and Murray and Murray and Partners, 1977–78) and just off this road, the splendid Embassy of France (Beaudouin and Lods, 1936–39).
50. “NCC Presses Ottawa for Higher U.S. Embassy,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 Mar. 1993, A8. Lingering resentment over proposed plans for an “outrageously obtrusive” seventeen-story hotel-retail complex fueled opposition to the zoning change.
51. Inman standards only applied to capital projects or new construction (as opposed to adaptive reuse) funded under the Inman appropriation, which was not the case for the Ottawa chancery.
52. Louise Crosby, “U.S. Ready to Build Its ‘Dream Embassy,’” *Ottawa Citizen*, 6 Apr. 1993, A4.
53. Since the old embassy was valued at Can\$16.9 million, Canada agreed to pay the difference of Can\$4.5 million to the United States as part of the transfer.
54. The short list consisted of four groups: Zeidler Roberts Partnership; Smith Carter Partners & Fiset, Miller, Vinois Architects; Moriyama & Teshima; and Moshe Safdie, in association with Desnoyers Mercure Larose and Laliberté, Petrucci. According to Therrien, 284, the jury consisted of Ed Ritchie, former ambassador to the United States, two architects named by the RAIC, three PRB representatives, and architect Guy Desbarats of the Department of Public Works. All firms were judged according to an evaluation chart with the following criteria: cv of partners 15%; experience 20%; philosophy 25%; on-site supervision 25%; ability to balance budgets 15%. Therrien, *Au-delà des frontières*, 284 (see n. 6).
55. *Ibid.*, 288–89.
56. Edith Iglauer, “Profiles: Seven Stones,” *New Yorker*, 6 June 1979, 67.
57. Benjamin Forgey, “Canada’s Architect: Erickson’s Prestigious Embassy Commission,” *Washington Post*, 3 Apr. 1982, C1. At the time, Erickson, who was also working in Saudi Arabia, had a staff of forty-five in Vancouver and twenty-two in Toronto. He entered into a partnership with Frederick Gutheim and Vancouver architect Michael Seelig to attract international commissions and consulting work. In 1978, he was elected Fellow of the AIA. Two years later, he placed second in the competition to design a headquarters building for Intelsat in Washington, evidence of his interest in working in the U.S. capital.
58. The evolution of the design is studied in Barbara E. Shapiro and Rhodri W. Liscombe, *Arthur Erickson: Selected Projects 1971–1985* (New York, 1985), 40–44. The design team consisted of project director Keith Loffler, project architect Barbara Vogel, and architects Peter Clewes, Anne Vezina, and John Pepper. Francisco Kripacz helped design the interiors.
59. Therrien, *Au-delà des frontières*, 296, quotes the PRB’s report of 11 Apr. 1984: “Though the overall massing of the building was found very successful, the enrichment provided by some detailing of mouldings, balcony railings and fenestration was felt to be too derivative of Washington’s neo-classical order to give a strong Canadian image.”
60. Arthur Erickson, letter to Jane Loeffler, 28 June 2000.
61. Gotlieb served in Washington from 1981 to 1989, effectively mitigating Trudeau’s dislike for President Reagan’s energy and environmental policies that adversely affected Canada. He was also adept at strengthening ties to Congress, utilizing his own influence to advocate Canada’s position on key issues. Just before construction was scheduled to start, the Canadian government, now headed by Mulroney, halted work citing a shortage of funds. According to public affairs director Terry Colli, it was only Gotlieb’s intervention that saved the project. He appealed to Joe Clark, secretary of state for external affairs and former prime minister, arguing that the architecture “showed the importance of Canada . . . and the bilateral relationship.” Terry Colli, interview with the authors, 22 Dec. 1999.
62. Press kit, Canadian Embassy, 1984.
63. See, for example, Paul Goldberger, “A New Embassy Mixes the Appropriate and the Awkward,” *New York Times*, 9 July 1989, H34.
64. It is possible, even likely, that Sen. Moynihan, whose influence was significant during the early years of the Clinton administration, recommended Childs for the job. The two had collaborated when Childs served on the Pennsylvania Avenue Commission in the 1960s before joining SOM in 1971. Between 1975 and 1982, Childs was chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission. In 1984, he relocated to SOM’s New York office, and in 1991, he became the first chairman of the firm. He is a Fellow of the AIA.
65. FBO had previously retained SOM to design the ill-fated embassy compound in Moscow (1973–85), but did not hold the architects responsible for lax construction oversight that permitted the Soviets to infiltrate the structure with listening devices.
66. The NCC’s Advisory Committee on Planning, Design and Realty (formerly the Advisory Committee on Design) consists of architects, urban planners, and landscape architects from across Canada (no more than eleven at one time) and meets every two or three months to provide advice on projects built on public land. Unlike its counterpart, the NCPD in Washington, the NCC is not only an approval body but can also own property. Furthermore, it is not bound by lower government decisions.
67. Similarly, the NCC was not legally bound to follow city regulations in planning the development of the site, but members of the city’s planning committee made it clear that such compliance would benefit the project politically.
68. See, for instance, Ron Eade and Randy Boswell, “Top Architects Denounce U.S. Embassy Design Plans,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 8 June 1996, C4. Eleven architectural firms petitioned Mayor Holzman with a letter calling the design an “unconvincing mimicry of 19th century buildings” that failed to reflect the “progressive and technologically advanced societies” of North America. They also deplored the fact that the NCC had deliberated “in secret, as usual.”
69. Canada originally expected to have approximately 320 employees in its Washington chancery (a number that has since dropped to 265 as a result of cost cutting). The United States expected to have only about 165 employees, which is one reason why the U.S. chancery is smaller in floor area, but its staff has swelled to more than 225.
70. In some cases, State Department employees may account for less than one-half of a mission’s staff. In Ottawa, U.S. Embassy offices include the Security Assistance Office and the U.S. Army Research Development Standardization Group in addition to the U.S. Commercial Service, Customs Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and others. The U.S. ambassador to Canada also oversees operations at American consulates in Halifax, Quebec City, Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver.
71. The consulate in Washington, D.C., does not process green cards or visas, business that is handled in Buffalo, N.Y., nor passports, which are handled in Ottawa, so relatively little space is allocated to consular offices.
72. Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, Thomas F. Murphy, chairman, “Square Guidelines: Square 491,” typewritten document, 23 July 1980 (rev. 22 Sept. 1983), 1.
73. David Childs, interview with Jane Loeffler, Nov. 1999.
74. The PADC retained ownership of a fifty-foot setback from the right-of-way line on Pennsylvania Avenue and eighty-five feet on John Marshall Place.
75. Arthur Erickson, *The Architecture of Arthur Erickson* (Vancouver, 1988), 214.
76. Trevor Boddy, “Erickson in Washington,” *Canadian Architect* 34 (July 1989), 25–37; letter addressed to Ambassador Gotlieb by PRB staff member Keith Plowman, 5 Nov. 1976, quoted in Therrien, *Au delà des frontières*, 293 (see n. 6).

77. Erickson, *Arthur Erickson*, 213; and Erickson, letter to Loeffler, 28 June 2000 (see n. 60).
78. Lance Berelowitz, "Erickson: A Turning Point," *Canadian Architect* 37 (Apr. 1992), 24.
79. Erickson, *Arthur Erickson*, 217. See Richard Guy Wilson, "Modernized Classicism and Washington, D.C.," in Craig Zabel and Susan Scott Munshower, eds., *American Public Architecture: European Roots and Native Expressions* (University Park, Pa., 1989), 272–303, who discusses Bertram Goodhue's National Academy of Science (1924) and Paul Cret's Folger Shakespeare Library (1932). Although it was not at all his preoccupation, how modern or postmodern the chancery was and to what degree it represented a departure from Erickson's prior work became an obsession for its critics. See Adele Freedman, "Erickson's Embassy: Post-Modern Pastiche," *Progressive Architecture* 65 (Oct. 1984), 24–25.
80. Erickson, letter to Loeffler, 28 June 2000; Erickson, *Arthur Erickson*, 214.
81. Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, "The New Canadian Chancery," *Landscape Architectural Review* (Oct. 1990), 6; Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, letter to Jane Loeffler, 5 June 2001. Oberlander collaborated frequently with Erickson. In Vancouver's Robson Square, she also used hanging roses as a motif.
82. Roger K. Lewis, "Canadian Embassy's Paradoxical Qualities," *Washington Post*, 6 May 1989, E31.
83. Precedents had been established at the National Gallery, where Safdie had translated Ottawa's picturesque silhouettes into a modern idiom, designing a glazed, faceted Great Hall to echo the Library of Parliament.
84. A father-and-son team from Quebec painstakingly installed the lead-coated copper tiles on the "penthouse," the dome, and both ends of the building.
85. It is the first U.S. chancery that is handicapped-accessible, which is an asset as well as a hindrance. The slow-moving, hydraulically operated entrance/exit doors each weigh two thousand pounds and are built to resist the force of a five-hundred-pound bomb. Given current security requirements, the lobby is no longer used as a waiting area. Visitors wait outside to be admitted and processed individually.
86. Since September 11, all visitors to the Canadian chancery pass through a magnetometer that has been installed inside the glass entrance door. All bags are checked (although not by X ray), and contract security guards patrol the lobby and the surrounding area. This is a significant change from the way it was before, but the spacious lobby itself is still bright, interesting, and comfortable. A security checkpoint across the lobby still controls access to the office area.
87. A "man-trap" is a set of two heavy doors, one of which must close and lock behind a visitor before the second one opens. Many new embassies in Washington, including those of Finland, Italy, and Nigeria, feature such arrangements.
88. See Robert Janjigian, "Canadian Design: Furniture for the Canadian Embassy in Washington," *Interiors* 147 (Apr. 1988), 134–37. The suite includes a white kidskin-topped desk designed by Erickson, who imagined (naively) that it was only ceremonial and that the ambassador did not really need to work at it. It has since been adapted for actual use.
89. The maple leaf was first incorporated into the design of the Canadian flag in 1965.
90. William Lowther, "A Well-Placed Embassy," *MacLean's Magazine*, 21 May 1984, 56. Ethel S. Goodstein, in "Contemporary Architecture and Canadian National Identity," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 18 (1988), 156, observes that there is "nothing inherently Canadian" about Canadian architecture and argues that it is part of a larger and more diverse North American tradition.
91. Engraved in the stone beneath the central dome, brief excerpts from speeches by Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Reagan, and Clinton highlight the historical relationship between Canada and the U.S. Located deep inside the chancery, however, these statements are not seen by the general public or even by most visitors. In contrast, the Canadians underscored the relationship directly on their Pennsylvania Avenue façade in a brief message describing the embassy as a symbol of "peace and friendship between Canada and the United States."
92. When Nunavut was added as the newest territory in 1999, the embassy commissioned *Inukshuk* piece for the main lobby.
93. Chris Wood, "A Fiery Reception," *MacLean's Magazine*, 6 Mar. 1985, 52.
94. Fact sheet, U.S. Embassy, Sept. 1999.
95. Erickson, *Arthur Erickson*, 214 (see n. 75).
96. Oberlander, "New Canadian Chancery," 6 (see n. 80). She also suggested that the hanging gardens were inspired by Pliny the Elder's description of Hadrian's villa. Geographic or topographical symbolism had been used earlier by others as rhetorical devices at Canadian chanceries where architects alluded to national identity through massing and landscaping. For instance, in *Canadian Architect* 27 (Feb. 1982), 13, Etienne Gaboury, architect of the slightly earlier design for Mexico City, wrote that his expansive atrium "speaks of Canada," that tall planters were "reminiscent of landscapes of the Canadian West," and that his use of white marble for the floors was intended to evoke the prairies.
97. Boddy, "Erickson in Washington," 27 (see n. 76). Given the acrimonious U.S.–Canada disputes over the control of the Arctic seas, the fishing industry, and the Northwest Passage, the presence of water could also have been understood as a "subversive" element of symbolism.
98. Kymberly Taylor, "The Canadian Challenge: Has Arthur Erickson's New Embassy 'Upstaged' Pennsylvania Avenue?" *Museum & Arts Washington* 4 (Nov.–Dec. 1988), 72; Benjamin Forgey, "The Canadian Colossus. In Arthur Erickson's Chancery, an Epic Scope and Assurance," *Washington Post*, 18 June 1989, C4. See also Allan Gowans, *Styles and Types of North American Architecture: A Cultural History* (New York, 1991), 354, in which he refers to "a few hastily added quasi-symbols of Canadian nationalism."
99. Reid's sculpture is twenty feet long and nearly thirteen feet high and weighs approximately eleven thousand pounds. Reid, an acclaimed Canadian artist, died in 1998. This was his largest and most ambitious work.
100. See the following articles in the *Ottawa Citizen*: Stephan Klovan, "Hideous Art Is Symbolic of Misappropriated Funds," 29 Sept. 1999, A17; Laszlo Sonkodi, "Twisted Metal Fails as Public Art," 12 Oct. 1999, A17; Joe Scoles, "Good Bird Perch," 29 Sept. 1999, A17.
101. U.S. Department of State, Embassy of the United States of America, *Fine Art Collection* (Ottawa, Canada [1999]); full text also available at www.usembassycanada.gov. The U.S. collection consists of 113 artifacts and includes works by Sol LeWitt, Robert Rauschenberg, and Frank Stella, as well as ceramics, photographs, mobiles, and textile art.
102. In fact, the urban-design success of the chancery project prompted the NCC to formalize a new master plan in 1999, which celebrates Canada's role in the international community and encourages the construction of additional chanceries farther north on Sussex Drive.
103. One local architect on the Byward Preservation Committee called the design a "hodgepodge . . . at war with itself." See Randy Boswell, "U.S. Embassy Plan Wins Lukewarm Support of City Committee," *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 July 1996, B1.
104. Julian Smith and Victoria Angel, "Competing Identities: The Evolution of Parliament Hill and Its Urban Context," typewritten document, Dec. 1999, 59. Smith and Angel also lament that SOM's architecture "ignores the Gothic romanticism of its landscape setting, referring more to the classical influences in Lowertown."
105. Canada has continued to move in that direction with its new Berlin

chancery (KPMB Architects, 2002), a nine-story mixed-use building complete with a pedestrian arcade, shops, and apartments.

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Figure 8. Frances Loeb Library, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University

Figure 9. National Capital Commission, Ottawa

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