

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, TRUMAN HALL

Truman Hall is a traditional Flemish country estate built in 1963 for Côte d'Or chocolatier Jean Michiels. The house is the residence of the U.S. Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and is named in honor of President Harry S Truman, one of NATO's founders. The design is the successful collaboration between architect B.A. Jacquemotte and landscape architect René Pechère.

Pechère, one of the best-known contemporary landscape architects in Europe, transformed twenty-seven acres of barren agricultural land into gentle hills and valleys, meadows, and formal gardens. A curving cobbled drive, lined with roses, leads to the tree-lined approach to the residence. The house overlooks a sweeping lawn, towering cedars, English gardens, and an herb garden. The lawn pavilion is planted with fragrant honeysuckle, roses, clematis, hydrangeas, and wisteria. The original children's playground, giant sequoia circle, and maze are still effective landscape elements. In 1984, on the first anniversary celebrating Truman Hall's becoming the official U.S. NATO residence, a new garden was created with cobbled circles representing each NATO country.

The Truman Hall residence is constructed of painted brick and gray stone, with slate roof dormers. Virginia creeper relieves the gray and white stucco and in autumn turns a festive red orange. The plan is designed to capture sunlight—the kitchen/breakfast rooms face east; the dining room is illuminated at lunchtime; and the salons overlook sunsets. The entry hall is paved in the famous "pierre bleu" Belgian black marble. The corridors are wide and inviting, and there is a library with fine eighteenth century wood paneling.

Truman Hall, graciously welcoming visitors from the NATO nations and Alliance partner countries around the world, was sold in 1983 to the U.S. government at a reduced price by Mrs. Michiels, who said, "I want you to have it. Your country saved mine in World War II."

