

## HANOI, VIETNAM AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE

The U.S. Ambassador's residence in Hanoi, perhaps the most architecturally distinguished ambassadorial residence in the city, is genteel and elegantly Parisian. The façade is defined by tall windows, wrought iron balconies, and a high-style slate mansard roof punctuated with dormers. It was designed by M. LaCollonge, Principal Architect and Chief of Civil Construction Service in Tonkin. The house was built in 1921 by Indochina Public Property, part of the French colonial government, for Indochina Financial Governors who lived in the residence until 1948. It was then assigned, until 1954, to the highest-ranking Indochina Tariff Officer.

When the French left Southeast Asia in 1954, Viet-nameese government officials moved into the house. Vice Minister Phan Ke Toai was the last Vietnamese resident. He had been Emperor Bao Dai's special envoy, the highest-ranking representative from the royal Hue Court under the Japanese occupation in the northern part of the country. He was assigned to his post when the Japanese seized power from the French in 1940 serving until the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945. Toai later joined the Viet Minh government, having secretly collaborated with the Viet Minh during the Japanese occupation to protect the Viet Minh from government harassment. At Toai's death the house became the headquarters for the Committee for Foreign Culture Exchange. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs press office was located in the building until 1994.

The United States opened a Liaison Office in Hanoi on January 28, 1995. Diplomatic relations were established July 11, 1995, and U.S. Embassy Hanoi was established with a Chargé d'Affaires ad interim. On May 6, 1997, former U.S. Air Force pilot Douglas "Pete" Peterson, a former prisoner of war, became the first United States Ambassador to Vietnam. The residence had been included in an exchange of property between the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1995. Its recent renovation preserves the property's historical integrity.

This architecturally significant property contributes to the campaign to maintain the ambiance of Hanoi's past and reflects vestiges of a long period in Vietnam's history.

