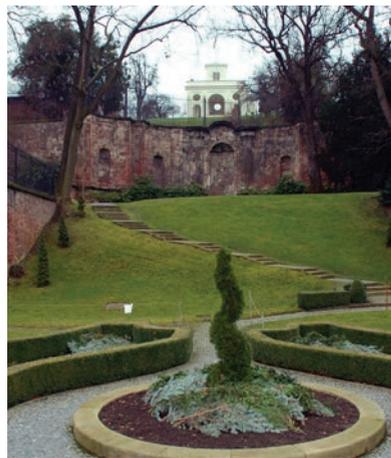


PRAGUE, THE CZECH REPUBLIC

U.S. EMBASSY, SCHÖNBORN PALACE



The U.S. Embassy in the Schönborn Palace in Prague has a long and complex history of adaptations to accommodate a wide range of royal, noble, and governmental owners. Today the dominant image dates to 1718, when the Colloredo family renovated the building to the design of the expatriate Italian architect Giovanni Santini.

Five medieval residences and a malthouse had been combined by various owners in the early decades of the seventeenth century. The building's Renaissance past is preserved in the courtyard stair tower, the geometric stucco ceilings, and the entrance portal with its rough stone set in a diamond bossage pattern.

In 1643 Rudolph, Count of Colloredo-Wallsee, purchased the property from Emperor Ferdinand. He carried out a remodeling project that unified the street façade with classical elements, created airy apartment wings behind, and transformed the vineyards on the slope of the hill into a geometrical terrace garden. The garden pavilion, called the Glorietta, was converted from a winepress into an open-air belvedere with majestic views of the city.

Following ownership and renovation by the Colloredos, the Schoenborn family inherited the property in 1794. The elegant and romantic English garden is basically unchanged from the first decade of the nineteenth century. During the year before the Republic of Czechoslovakia was proclaimed in 1918, influential international author Franz Kafka occupied two rooms "high and beautiful, red and gold, almost like Versailles" in the Schoenborn Palace.

Carl Johann Schönborn sold the property to Chicago plumbing millionaire Richard Crane, Czechoslovakia's first U.S. diplomat. Crane, whose father had introduced Tomas Masaryk—the first president and founder of Czechoslovakia—to President Woodrow Wilson, bought Schoenborn Palace with the aid of the Czechoslovak Government. In 1924, the United States Government purchased the property from Crane for use as an American Legation, paying him the minimal price of \$117,000.

The view to the Schönborn Palace gardens from the Prague Castle has been an important part of the city character for generations. It has been said that the illuminated American flag, flying atop the Glorietta, provided a beacon of inspiration during times of limited political freedom.