



ROME, ITALY

U.S. EMBASSY CHANCERY, PALAZZO MARGHERITA AND TWIN VILLAS

The Palazzo Margherita, the U.S. Embassy Chancery office building in Rome, was designed by Gaetano Koch and built between 1886 and 1890 for Prince Boncompagni Ludovisi. The building incorporated Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi's residence, erected in the seventeenth century on a site once owned by Roman historian Gaius Sallustus Crispus. From the first century AD to the early fifth century, it was the summer residence, the so-called Horti Sallustiani, of the emperors. The palazzo, later named after Italy's beloved Queen Mother Margherita who took up residence at the beginning of the twentieth century, remained the center of society in Rome until her death in 1926.

During Benito Mussolini's dictatorship (1925-1943), the spacious royal chambers were partitioned into utilitarian offices for the National Fascist Confederation of Farmers.

In 1946, the United States purchased the palazzo to accommodate embassy expansion, using Italian lire war credits against U.S. Army surplus property. The U.S. Government had already acquired other royal residences in the adjacent Twin Villas for the first American Legation in Rome. Between 1949 and 1952, the palazzo was extensively renovated, restoring rooms to their earlier grandeur, modernizing plumbing and heating systems, and increasing office space.

On the chancery site under an adjacent modern building are 2,000-year-old Roman Imperial fresco paintings preserved in an underground passageway. Conservation work carried out in the late 1990s, supported in part by the World Monuments Fund, reversed biological damage caused by adverse environmental conditions. The chancery's main entrance foyer displays Giambologna's famous sculpture Venus, c. 1583, one of the U.S. Government's most prized heritage assets abroad.

Palazzo Margherita is protected by the Italian law for cultural heritage. In a city where history is such a visible part of the landscape and so highly valued, the American diplomatic presence has been enhanced by association with this landmark.