



FLORENCE, ITALY

U.S. EMBASSY CONSULATE, PALAZZO CANEVARO

Palazzo Canevaro, the U.S. Consulate in Florence, was designed by Giuseppe Poggi for Marquis Manfredi Calcagnini Estense in 1857—the last of a series of glorious Florentine neo-renaissance residences by Florence’s most famous architect and city planner.

Calcagnini kept the palace for only a brief time. Then it was occupied by Count Francesco Arese — an important figure in the Risorgimento and bosom friend of Emperor Napoleon III — and later an Italian Senator. At the beginning of 1900, Emanuele Giuseppe Canevaro, Duke of Zoagli, bought the building for his residence. The Canevaros were an important family, busy in both the Italian and Peruvian political worlds. Emanuele Giuseppe’s son Raffaele and wife Terry Camperio, a young American heiress, were active in the social life of the city. In the period between the two World Wars, Palazzo Canevaro was a center of Florentine society and on innumerable occasions opened its doors to important Italian and foreign dignitaries.

Palazzo Canevaro became a U.S. property on December 30, 1947, when the American Consul Walter Orebaugh purchased it, together with the Annex and the garden. (During the war, Orebaugh had been a prisoner-of-war of the Fascist government, escaped, and joined the Italian partisans in the hills of Umbria.) The building is protected by Italian law because of its architectural and historic value and its setting on the banks of the Arno. Serving the large resident American population, American business interests, American university community (over 50 in its district) and the over one million tourists who visit annually, Palazzo Canevaro has played an important role in Florentine life since 1947.

During the disastrous flood of the Arno in 1966, which resulted in the deaths of over 100 Florentines and left 500 families homeless, the Consulate was recognized by the Department for its distinguished service assisting American tourists and residents of Florence. Following the flood, the Consulate played a key coordinating role for the American “Mud Angels” — volunteers, mostly students, who cleaned the city of refuse, mud, and oil, and retrieved priceless works of art, books, and other materials ravaged by the Arno. One of those volunteers was young Edward Kennedy, and in 1996 Senator Kennedy returned to be honored by the City of Florence in an official event honoring the 30th Anniversary of the flood. In years following the flood, the Consulate assisted the U.S. Committee to Rescue Italian Art, chaired by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, which sponsored the restoration of damaged artworks around the city.