

HELSINKI, FINLAND AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE



The Residence of the U.S. Ambassador is notable for its role as a beautiful backdrop over several decades in international diplomacy, and is a valuable symbol of the U.S.-Finland partnership. The Residence has played host to significant diplomatic events between the former Soviet Union/Russia and the United States, including two and a half years of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) negotiations, as well as talks on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), the Helsinki Accords, and the first Gulf Crisis. Several presidents and vice presidents have visited the Residence in conjunction with these and other occasions.

The building in Helsinki was designed by Harrie Lindeberg, a sought after architect whose practice was aimed at elite clients and was known for buildings which reflected neo-Georgian and neo-Federal styles. For Helsinki he chose William Byrd's Westover (completed 1735) as his inspiration and created a structure which combined the chancery and the Ambassador's residence into a single, winged structure. Construction started in 1938 and concluded the following year, by which time the Winter War between the Soviet Union and Finland had begun. The relationship between the United States and Finland soured during World War II and complete use of the new building did not occur until after the war ended.

The representational rooms in the center of the structure are a significant bicultural architectural expression. Lindeberg paneled the major hall, the living room, the dining room, and the study with traditional Georgian style paneling, but he chose to have them built of the native Finnish Karelian Flame Birch (Loimukoivu), a dramatically figured wood. The Finish province of Karelia, however, was captured by the Soviet Union during the Winter War and now is a part of Russia.