

# LONDON, ENGLAND

## AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, WINFIELD HOUSE



Situated adjacent to Regent's Park, the residence of the U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James emanates power and grace. The site was originally occupied by Hertford Villa, the largest of the eight villas originally constructed in Regent's Park. Occupants of the villa included the Marquess of Hertford, newspaper proprietor Lord Rothermere, and the American financier Otto H. Kahn. The villa was damaged by fire in the 1930s and was purchased by American heiress Barbara Hutton, one of the wealthiest women in the world. Hutton demolished the existing villa and, on the recommendation of Lord Louis Mountbatten, hired the English firm of Wimperis, Simpson & Guthrie to design her house.



The red-brick Georgian-style mansion was built in 1936 and named after Hutton's grandfather F.W. (Winfield) Woolworth, who had founded the stores where any item could be purchased for five or ten cents. Hutton employed two decorators: Johnny Sieben, an expert on carpets and French furniture, who had renovated the Woolworth town houses in New York, and Sheila, Lady Milbank, who had consulted on furnishings, colors, and fabrics for Hutton's London house. The decorators laid oak parquet floors, installed eighteenth century French paneling, fitted marble bathrooms, and planted several thousand trees and hedges.

During World War II Winfield House was used as a Royal Air Force officers' club and then as a convalescent home for Canadian servicemen. After the war Hutton offered it to the United States Government, for the price of one American dollar, to be used as the ambassador's residence.

The residence is among the properties comprising the Regent's Park historic district established by the commissioners for the Crown Estates. Its twelve-acre private garden within the city limits of London is second in size only to that of Buckingham Palace. A ninety-nine year lease was negotiated with the landlord Crown Estates and extensive renovations prepared the residence for its new role as a stage for diplomacy.



On their first night in Winfield House, January 18, 1955, Ambassador and Mrs. Winthrop Aldrich hosted a ball for Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. In the early 1970s, Ambassador and Mrs. Walter H. Annenberg refurbished the residence in a grand style that included installing eighteenth century hand-painted Chinese wallpaper in the Garden Room. Winfield House stands as a tangible symbol of the uniquely close relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom.