

## SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA GUEST HOUSE, SEOUL OLD AMERICAN LEGATION



The Seoul Old American Legation, built in 1883 and now used as a guest house, is an exceptionally well-preserved example of traditional Korean residential architecture that illustrates the long history of Korean-American friendship.

Lucius Foote, the first resident envoy from the West to arrive in Korea, purchased this picturesque house one year after its construction in 1884 from the Min Family. Among the first American legations, and the first in Korea, the house has been in the possession of the United States Government longer than any other U.S. official residence abroad.

The property was once within the grounds of Kyongun Palace (now the Duksoo Palace). Although the architect and builder are unknown, the use of makse roof end tiles, reserved for royal or state buildings, and for ancestral shrines, makes it likely the builder was a master carpenter in the royal service. Other notable architectural features, from early modifications, are the harmonious use of red bricks and glass windows in a fusion of Western style with traditional Korean residential architecture.

The property was sold to Minister Foote in August 1884 by the aristocratic Min family. The U.S. Congress approved funds for the purchase in 1887, and Foote then deeded the property to the United States. A formal deed was issued in 1888 in Seoul, recording the land as sold "forever." In 1897 a decree by King Kojang granting use of an adjacent road noted that Korea and the United States "have built together in good faith, a friendship most enduring."

Undamaged during World Wars I and II, the Legation has been acknowledged by the Korean people as a symbol of freedom against aggressors. (Combine this sentence with the one that follows to create a paragraph.) Situated at the entrance to the Ambassador's stately landscaped residential grounds, the Seoul Old American Legation still quietly greets arriving guests.