A watercolor illustration of a three-story building. The roof is a prominent reddish-brown color with several chimneys. The building has a light-colored facade with multiple windows on each floor, some with small balconies. The overall style is soft and painterly.

THE RESIDENCE
of the
AMBASSADOR
of the
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
to
HUNGARY

Historical Summary

The Official Residence of the American Ambassador is located west of the Danube River, on the hilly Buda side of the Hungarian capital in an area known as Zugliget. This is also the name of the street where the Residence is located, and it literally means "hidden grove." In the past, Zugliget was a popular summer vacation area, and even today it is one of the capital's most picturesque spots.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Buda and Pest were two separate cities on either side of the Danube. They were joined as Budapest in 1873. Zugliget was already a neighborhood of villas and vacation homes, and only once did it play a different role. During the Hungarian revolution in May 1849, the legendary General Artúr Görgey set up his headquarters in the Villa Laszlovszky, from where he led the victorious siege of Buda.

Starting in the 1860s, Pest underwent a huge expansion in population and construction, but Zugliget's natural environment remained virtually intact. Aristocrats, artists, businessmen, and industrialists built their vacation homes there and in the nearby valleys and hillsides, affording easy access to the social and economic life in Pest. Soon, however, the splendid isolation of the vacationers was spoiled by the opening of the horse tramway in 1869. Day-trippers could now travel the length of Zugligeti Street to the foot of Hunyad Hill.

Villa Friedrich

The Residence property, located at the foot of Hunyad Hill, was purchased by Ferenc Friedrich in the 1880s. Friedrich, a patrician of German origin, owned a two-story apartment house in downtown Pest, and wanted to build a vacation home for his family in Zugliget. In 1888–89, Friedrich built a single-story, five-room house

renovations, the two villas became permanent residences for two generations of the Friedrich family. During the first decades of the twentieth century, the Villa Friedrich became a well-known landmark in Zugliget.

Around 1910, one of Dr. Jenő Friedrich's daughters, Mária, married Dr. Jenő Hubay, Jr. The young couple moved into the Friedrich villa, and in 1912 gave birth to a son, Jenő Hubay III. Dr. Hubay, named for his famous uncle, the violinist and composer, was a well known inventor, and the holder of the patent for enamel-coated electrical wire.

The two branches of the Hubay family had somewhat strained relations, but it is likely that from time to time the composer himself visited the villa.

Upon Dr. Jenő Friedrich's death in 1936, his children inherited the Zugliget property. In 1940, Jenő Hubay III married Borbála Michaelis, heiress to a large real estate fortune. The young couple then built a new family home on the Zugliget property.

Villa Hubay

Jenő Hubay III wanted his new house to reflect his and his father's successful business ventures; both were directors and major stockholders of the Ariadne Company, a producer of electrical equipment.

On August 1, 1940, Jenő Hubay III began construction on a freestanding, three-story house designed by Géza Taubel and built by Ferenc Dittler. The house was completed in 1941, and some of the other buildings on the property were demolished. This is the house that later became the American Ambassador's Residence.

The basic material for the structure of the building was reinforced concrete, and the facade was covered with red brick, a material not often used in Hungary before. All the mechanical systems in the house were state-of-the-art. The house was equipped with water pipes, a sewage system, central heating, and hot water. Hubay used high-quality wires invented by his father, and produced by his own com-

home, although the building's spaciousness lent it a certain elegance. The three large rooms of the ground floor were then, as they are now, used for social functions. The living room is adorned with a richly carved marble fireplace. It still contains the original Hubay piano. Opening from one side of the living room is the dining room, and on the other side the sitting room. These rooms feature elaborate plaster ceilings and crystal chandeliers. The floors, the walls of the central hall, the staircase, and the banister are all made of oak.

In the central hall, two Francesco Maggiotto paintings are mounted in the wood paneling. One depicts the story of Hermes and Persephone, while the other is based on the theme of Zeus and Leda. Painted during the second half of the eighteenth century, these works reflect the influence of late Baroque and early Classicism.

Many buildings of the Zugliget district survived the destruction of the Second World War. Villa Friedrich-Hubay, where the extended Hubay family took shelter, was not damaged at all. For several years after the war, Jenő Hubay, Jr. and his son Jenő Hubay III continued



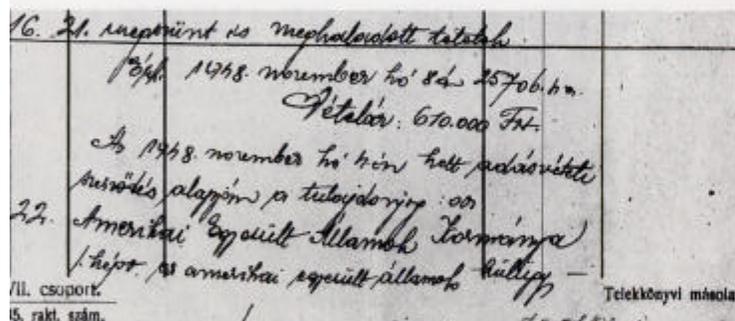
Zeus and Leda
by Francesco Maggiotto (1750–1805)

Early 18th century walnut
and marquetry bureau cabinet
(German/Central European)



their business, which had been renamed Permel Enamel-Coated Wire and Cable Factory, Inc., and of which they were the major stockholders. The company was nationalized in 1949.

In 1945, Jenő Hubay III leased his new villa to the Embassy of the United States, and the house has served as the Official Residence of the Chief of Mission of the United States ever since. As the land register testifies, on November 4, 1948, Hubay sold his property, along with several pieces of important furniture, to the United States. The price of the land and the house was 610,000 Hungarian forints, approximately \$50,000. Soon afterwards Hubay left Hungary.



Deed of sale

The Hubay Piano

According to popular myth, the Zugligeti Residence once belonged to the great violinist and composer Jenő Hubay. As this history illustrates, however, it was not he, but his namesake—his great-nephew—who built the house. The only direct connection between the famous violinist and the Residence is the piano. Now in the Residence living room, in the 1920s and '30s it was the focal point of recitals in the Hubay palace, on Fő utca in Budapest. The piano is a double grand piano built



Bösendorfer boudoir grand pianoforte, circa 1890.
 Formerly belonging to the composer
 and violinist Jenő Hubay.

during the siege of Budapest, the music room where the piano was located remained intact.

Many photographs show the instrument in the Hubay palace. One of these photos is now in the living room of the Residence. Taken in 1937, shortly before the death of the Maestro, it shows him with several of his pupils.

One of Jenő Hubay's descendants, Andor Hubay, sold the piano to the American Embassy in the late 1940s, before he, along with the rest of the Hubay family, left Hungary. The contract of sale stipulates that the buyer not ship the piano out of the country. This condition has been