

## The American Embassy, London - United Kingdom

*Ambassador to the Court of St. James:*

*The Right Honourable Robert Holmes Tuttle 2005 – present*

### *A brief history . . .*

As you get off the Underground at the Bond Street station, turn left and proceed along Oxford Street. At Duke Street, take another left and proceed along the east side of the street until you come to Grosvenor Square. You are now standing right by the building that housed the **first American Mission to the Court of St. James in 1785**. The first thing you'll notice is that the building is still standing and if you look around, you will find the brass plaque identifying the location and **John Adams as the first U.S. Minister to the Court of St. James**. You might

even get a glimpse of the former Prime Minister of Great Britain, the Right Honourable Tony Blair through one of his office windows.



Continue looking to your right through the trees and you will soon identify both the Golden Eagle and the American flag of the **United States Embassy** at the west end of Grosvenor Square.

**Regarding Embassies**, we need to remember that Great Britain is a Constitutional Monarchy even though it doesn't have an actual written constitution. There are 37 constitutional monarchies active world-wide as a form of government today. They include such States as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Japan, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In most sovereign States the Ambassador is appointed to the country in which he will represent the interests of the United States and its citizens. In Great Britain however, he is appointed to the Royal Court as the **Ambassador to the Court of St. James**.

The Royal Court is considered to sit (or be) wherever the Sovereign (King or Queen) resides and at the start of this "custom" that residence was the Palace of St. James in London. It stayed there from 1702 until 1837 when it moved to Buckingham Palace. As the Sovereign (the Queen) now has 3 official residences (Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and the Sandringham Estate), depending on the time of year, the "Court" decided

not to change the wording even though the Court no longer uses the Palace of St. James ,as it would only serve to cause confusion. That’s called a “Royal Prerogative”.

Grosvenor Square (pronounced Grovner as in “over”) was built between 1725 and 1731 just before the Big Bust-up with the colonies. The available plots were originally leased



out to building tradesmen and the square was considered a working class area at that time. This is a far cry from the present status of the Square which is very Des Res and where a 3 bedroom flat (apartment) might sell for more than £6 million (\$12,000,000). Indeed, there’s one on the market right now (February 2008) for that exact amount.

In 1966 if you had knocked on the right door it might have been answered by Mia Farrow or Frank Sinatra. If you knocked today at 9 Grosvenor Square it could very well be answered by Tony Blair if he is in the habit of greeting callers at his new offices (same for Frank & Mia). If you went a couple of blocks further on (and around the corner), the door would have been answered by a Playboy Bunny (probably accompanied by a U.S. Marine as they were ALL made members when the Playboy Club 1<sup>st</sup> opened). At one time the American Ministers and Ambassadors lived in the square, generally above the Chancery. Not any more, though. The American Ambassador lives next door to the London Zoo but that is yet another story.

The Diplomatic Mission started modestly in 1785 when John Adams (who signed the Declaration of Independence and was considered a traitor just a few years before) moved in to 9 Grosvenor Square. Adams probably had to be the consummate diplomat just to stay alive at the time as the English could be quite imaginative with traitors that fell in to their hands after the Bust-up. In 1938 the Embassy moved to 1 Grosvenor Square which is presently occupied by the Canadian High Commission.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War with the Chancery at #1 and General Eisenhower’s Headquarters diagonally opposite, the square became popularly known as “Little America” and is still referred to as such today by nearby residents and black-cab drivers with “The Knowledge”. Up until this time, no less than 5 Ministers/Ambassadors to the Court of St. James have seen their career escalate to include the Presidency of the United States. That’s more than any other United States Mission . . . by far.

After the end of WWII the United States went on an Embassy building spree to publicise its new status as a World Super Power and Grosvenor Square was the logical choice for a new American Embassy. There was an obstacle, however.

The property was still owned by the Grosvenor family who were still a little peeved about the Americans confiscating some of their property they claimed to own during the American War of Independence two centuries before. Can you imagine? Ignoring the world wide practice of each embassy owning the land they occupied, the family refused to sell instead offering a 999 year lease. Ignoring this bad case of “sour grapes” the offer was accepted and construction was completed in 1960. President Kennedy was the first President to visit and every President (and several wannabe’s) since (except Lyndon Johnson who only went to Texas and Gerald Ford who wasn’t around long enough) has made the trip over.

One of the largest Embassies in the world the building consists of 9 floors (3 of which are under ground and has a staff of over 1,000 of which less than half are Americans, working in more than 2 dozen departments from immigration to defence and intelligence. It has its own convenience store, restaurant and theatre all watched over by a private security firm as well as its own detachment of United States Marines. The embassy describes its budget simply as . . . “Huge”.

The easily identified gilded Eagle on the top of the Chancery has a 35 foot wingspan and “guards” the American Flag which flies over the Chancery while welcoming it’s citizens from home. In the 1960’s the Embassy was an open and welcoming cultural attraction with the British public encouraged to walk in and enjoy the Library to learn about America.

The main lobby of the Chancery, which was Post Number 1 for the Marine Guard during the early 60’s, was the showplace of the Embassy. With its smooth pale stone (travertine marble), imitation gold bars dividing the elevator area from the front entrance while supporting the DOS seal, a few paintings and a low level fountain that traverses the lobby width it remains as silent and impressive as it did in 1960. However, visitors are no longer permitted unless being escorted by a member of the U.S. Staff who has arranged prior clearance. Not even Ex-Marines.

The theatre on the 1<sup>st</sup> sub floor was (and still is) frequently used for Jazz Concerts and art shows with the occasional performance (in the past) by stars such as Barbara Streisand when she was on the West End Stage in the musical Funny Girl. The Marine Guard provided “unofficial security” for her performance in 1966 by just showing up and even the Watchstanders managed to get a brief look in while on “tour”.

Unfortunately, all that has been toned down under stricter security measures implemented after the anti war demonstration in 1968 which caught everyone by surprise and almost breached the Embassy defences (locked doors and several lines of unarmed Police

Officers). From that time to the present the security measures have intensified and are being constantly revised further isolating the Chancery.

Grosvenor Square and the American Embassy has been the venue for many demonstrations over the years. The demonstrations of the early 60's for Ban the Bomb (up to 2500 demonstrators in 1965 and 1966) and later the War in Viet Nam (up to 4,000 demonstrators in 1968) didn't come close to September 2001. Probably one of the most under publicised and under rated demonstration was the outpouring of sympathy exhibited in Grosvenor Square with the arrival of over 50,000 people wishing to express their shock and sympathy for the victims of 9/11.

The days of a 12 man Marine detachment handling security consist of the Detachment Commander and the A/Detachment Commander on board in the daytime and three Watchstanders in shifts throughout the evening and on week-ends/Holidays. One was detected recently in desert camouflage during the day but he was just passing through the waiting area of the passport section on the ground floor and didn't respond the "Semper Fi, Marine" that was thrown at him without warning.

The existing ring of new fortifications and two new entrance halls being built at street level will all serve to process and direct access but tend to cause traffic congestion in the area as the traffic will no longer be able to pass directly in front of the Embassy.

To say security is a bit stiffer nowadays is to understate the obvious. Unfortunately, the public face of the existing security is no longer the Marine Security Guard but heavily armed Police Officers supplementing a private security firm that makes everyone take off their belts before passing through the metal detectors. It's possible they are trying to get back at us for making them take off their shoes at U.S. airports. Until you enter the sealed off areas of the Embassy you're not likely to see the "Diplomats in Blue" and even then it'll be quick. They are definitely hard to spot even after moving the Marine House from West End Lane the 3 miles to Mayfair, just yards from the Chancery.

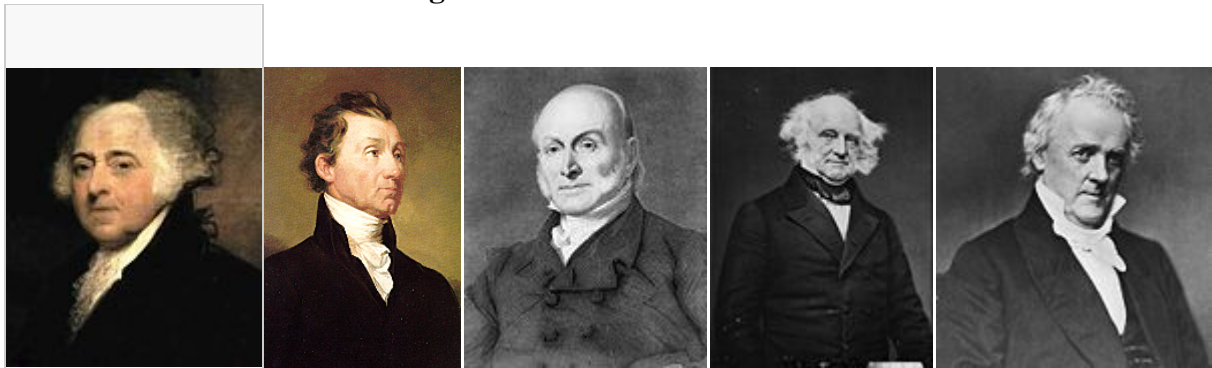
For the tourists and the voyeurs amongst us, the centre of Grosvenor Square (do you remember how to pronounce it?) is an attraction in itself. It consists of a large park on land donated by the Duke of Westminster who is probably richer than the Queen. The park is an open and wooded area in front of the Chancery enclosing: the **Roosevelt Memorial**, funded entirely through the sale of a souvenir brochure to approximately 160,000 British citizens; The **Eagle Squadron** Memorial honouring the American volunteers to the British Air Force during WWII; The **Eisenhower Statue** in front of the Chancery, directly across from his old headquarters and at the entrance to the central garden; a **Memorial Garden** in the centre of the Square that was created and dedicated to the remembrance of the **Victims of 9/11**. The rest of the park is given over to the public with not a single "Keep Off the Grass" sign in sight. The most common use seems to be a tranquil place to come on your lunch hour for a little sun on a lot of exposed skin on a good day, of which there are many, more than there used to be (thankfully).

Rumours have been confirmed that the Embassy will be relocated to a more secure and convenient location on the South Bank of the Thames next to the old Battersea Power Station which used to provide the Classified Burn Facilities for the Embassy in the 60's and 70's.

The embassy's relocation would be welcomed by the wealthy residents in the surrounding area, who have campaigned fiercely against the tough security measures imposed since 9/11. They will however, be giving up a location that is almost as old as the United States itself located in the heart of London (See attached newspaper article) for an area that is relatively void of amenities and transportation links. There'll be some very unhappy employees.

The lease expires in 2929 A.D.

### Ambassadors to the United Kingdom who later became U.S. Presidents



[John Adams](#)  
(1785-1788)

[James Monroe](#)  
(1803-1807)

[John Quincy Adams](#)  
(1815-1817)

[Martin van Buren](#)  
1831-1832)

[James Buchanan](#)  
(1853)

## BRITAIN'S MEMORIAL TO FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT



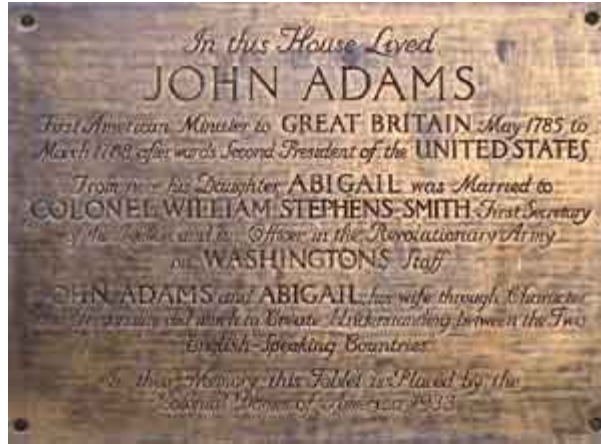
The Roosevelt Memorial was funded in 1946 entirely through the sale of a souvenir brochure to the British public. This was the brain child of The Pilgrims, a society dedicated to the enhancement of friendship and understanding between Great Britain and America. So enthusiastic was the public response to the subscription that the total sum required was reached and exceeded in a mere six days from the day that British Prime Minister announced the opening of the appeal on the radio. More than 160,000 separate donations had been received.

On April 12, 1948, the statue was ceremonially unveiled by Eleanor Roosevelt and dedicated by U.S. Ambassador Lewis W. Douglas in front of an audience including the Royal Family, the Prime Minister Clement Attlee and the Leader of the Opposition Sir Winston Churchill.

### Cover Text

"THIS SOUVENIR BOOK is given to you in grateful acknowledgement of your donation of five shillings to the Franklin Roosevelt Memorial Fund. It has been produced and distributed without cost to the Fund. It is hoped that as many persons as possible will contribute five shillings in order that the memorial may be thoroughly representative of the British people's wishes to commemorate Mr. Roosevelt"

The United States has been associated with Grosvenor Square in London's Mayfair since the late eighteenth century when John Adams, the first United States Minister to the Court of St. James's and the second President of the United States, lived from 1785 to 1788 in the house which still stands in Grosvenor Square on the corner of Brook and Duke Streets. The house is marked by a plaque erected by the Colonial Dames of America.



"In this House Lived  
JOHN ADAMS

First American Minister to GREAT BRITAIN, May 1785 to  
March 1788 Afterwards Second President of the UNITED STATES

From here his Daughter ABIGAIL was Married to  
COLONEL WILLIAM STEPHENS SMITH, First Secretary  
of the Legation and an Officer in the Revolutionary Army  
on WASHINGTON'S staff.

JOHN ADAMS and ABIGAIL, his wife, through Character  
and Personality, did much to Create Understanding between the Two  
English speaking Countries

In their memory this Tablet is Placed by the  
Colonial Dames of America 1933."

## STATUE OF PRESIDENT EISENHOWER IN GROSVENOR SQUARE

The **Eisenhower Statue**, dedicated January 23, 1989, stands just across the road from the buildings that General Eisenhower occupied as Commander in Chief of the Allied Force (June - November 1942) and Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force (January - March 1944). During World War II Grosvenor Square was the nerve center of the



American Armed Forces in Great Britain.



### January 23, 1989

U.S. Ambassador Charles Price and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher unveiled the statue of Dwight D. Eisenhower outside the American Embassy in London on the north-west corner of Grosvenor Square.

The memorial was given by the residents of Kansas City in recognition of the service of their fellow citizens. Eisenhower and Ambassador Charles Price and his wife were from the Kansas City region.

Two quotations appear on the rear facets of the pedestal - one from Eisenhower as a General and one from

Eisenhower as a President.

*"Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force: You are about to embark upon a great crusade... the hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you."*

Order of the Day, June 6, 1944

*"The faith we hold belongs not to us alone but to the free of all the world."*

First Inaugural Address, January 20, 1953.

Sculptor: Robert Lee Dean (1929 - )



## SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL GARDEN

A permanent memorial garden to those who lost their lives in the United States on September 11, 2001 has been built by the British government in Grosvenor Square Garden, London, which is bordered on its west side by the U.S. Embassy. The



*Ambassador William Farish and Tessa Jowell planting white roses in the memorial garden in Grosvenor Square on July 7, 2003.*

memorial's official opening was on September 11, 2003.

On Monday, July 7, 2003 Tessa Jowell, the U.K. Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and Ambassador William Farish planted white roses in memory of those who lost their lives in the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States of America.

White roses have a special significance for the U.K. families of those who died on September 11. The white Bianca Rose formed part of HM The Queen's bouquet at the Westminster Abbey service, and each of the families laid one white rose outside the Abbey, in an Act of Remembrance for their loved ones.

At the first anniversary service at St. Paul's Cathedral, over 3000 white rose petals (one for each victim) cascaded from the Whispering Gallery to the Altar below. It is therefore fitting that white roses should form a significant part of the planting within the memorial garden.

*The Department for Culture, Media and Sport issued a media [Briefing Note](#) on the July 7 event.*