

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Andrew Mellon Apartment, McCormick Apartments

AND/OR COMMON

1785 Massachusetts Ave. Office Bldg., Brookings Institution

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

1785 Massachusetts Avenue NW.

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Washington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

D.C.

STATE

District of Columbia

CODE

11

COUNTY

District of Columbia

CODE

001

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

\_\_ DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

\_\_ STRUCTURE

\_\_ SITE

\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

\_\_ PUBLIC

PRIVATE

\_\_ BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

\_\_ IN PROCESS

\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

OCCUPIED

\_\_ UNOCCUPIED

\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_ AGRICULTURE

\_\_ COMMERCIAL

\_\_ EDUCATIONAL

\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_ GOVERNMENT

\_\_ INDUSTRIAL

\_\_ MILITARY

\_\_ MUSEUM

\_\_ PARK

\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_ RELIGIOUS

\_\_ SCIENTIFIC

\_\_ TRANSPORTATION

OTHER Office

space for non-profit organizations

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Brookings Institution (President, Mr. Kermit Gordon)

STREET & NUMBER

1775 Massachusetts Avenue NW.

CITY, TOWN

Washington

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

District of Columbia

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

515 D Street NW.

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

District of Columbia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Proposed additions to NR by Joint Committee on Landmarks; NR; Commission on Fine Arts, Massachusetts Avenue Architecture, I (D.C., 1973)

DATE

1968; 1972; 1973

FEDERAL  STATE \_\_ COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

National Capitol Planning Commission; NR; Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

District of Columbia

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This top-floor apartment outstandingly commemorates Andrew Mellon's national significance. He lived here from 1922 to 1932 while serving as Secretary of the Treasury under Presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover. After 1932 Mellon occupied the apartment intermittently until his death in 1937. Here he planned the National Gallery of Art and assembled the collection of artworks that he gave the Federal Government for display in the gallery.

At the time that Mellon moved into the McCormick Apartments, the building was about 5 years old. About 1915, Stanley McCormick, a businessman who had purchased a large single-family house on this corner lot in 1906, decided to raze that dwelling and erect a luxury apartment, one of Washington's first. McCormick commissioned French-born architect J. H. de Sibour to plan the apartment, and de Sibour designed a five-sided, semidetached edifice that was well suited to its trapezoidal site. Inside, the first floor was divided into two apartments. Each remaining floor held one apartment, and servants' sleeping quarters occupied mezzanine levels. Rentals began in 1917, and in addition to Mellon, at various times, such illustrious figures as Robert Wood Bliss and Pearl Mesta occupied the building.

The McCormick Apartments consists of four stories, a mansard, and a raised basement. The entrance bow faces the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and 18th Street, and the building measures about 80 feet, including the bow, along the five-bay Massachusetts Avenue side (southwest), about 111 feet on the seven-bay 18th Street side (west), and about 100 feet across the eight-bay P Street side (north). At one time, portions or all of the two east walls adjoined structures in rowhouse fashion. Apparently crews demolished those structures between 1950, when McCormick's widow sold the apartment building to the American Council on Education, and 1970, when the Brookings Institution acquired it. The institution's main offices occupy a relatively new edifice just east of the McCormick Apartments. Since 1941, temporary-type partitions have divided the interior of the apartment house into offices. Its exterior remains unaltered, however.

The foundation of the building is concrete, and the wall construction is of steel I-beams and brick. Limestone sheaths the Massachusetts Avenue, 18th Street, and P Street walls, and a small portion of the windowless southeast wall and foundation. Brick finishes the remainder of the east walls. On the limestone-faced elevations, a torus and cavetto water table supports the rusticated first story, and a string course and false balustrade top the first floor. The string course doubles as a window lintel, and a rosette tops each opening. Second-, third-, and fourth-story walls have a

(continued)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1922-1937 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Stanley McCormick/  
J. H. de Sibour

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Andrew Mellon served as Secretary of the Treasury from 1921 to 1932--the longest cabinet tenure since Albert Gallatin in the early 19th century. In the 1920's most Americans considered Mellon the "greatest Secretary of the Treasury since Alexander Hamilton" because his policies of tax cuts and reduced government spending played a significant role in maintaining the booming economy of that era.<sup>1</sup> A multimillionaire responsible for the creation of such giants as Gulf Oil and the Aluminum Company of America, Mellon personified the prevalent probusiness sentiment of the era and gave business leaders, says eminent historian John D. Hicks, "a spokesman on whose judgment they knew they could depend."<sup>2</sup>

Enacted for the most part in the Revenue Acts of 1921, 1924, 1926, and 1928, Mellon's financial program, dubbed the "Mellon Plan," proposed drastic cuts in the surtax on upper income brackets, repeal of excess profits taxes, and reduced levies on corporations. Mellon rejected the concept of taxation as an instrument of social reform. He was a firm believer in the "trickle down" theory and argued that his policies would serve to stimulate business investment, create more jobs, and result in increased prosperity for all.

Although Mellon proved ineffective in dealing with the Great Depression, and therefore experienced a precipitous decline in his popularity, his overall contribution as Treasury Secretary was positive. According to historian Allan Nevins, in the years immediately following World War I, Mellon's "emphasis on economy and tax-reduction was sound, his technical expertness in complex financial matters was highly valuable, and . . . his composure, system, and solidity strengthened the nation's confidence."<sup>3</sup>

(continued)

<sup>1</sup> William E. Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932 (Chicago, 1958), 98.

<sup>2</sup> John D. Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, 1921-1933 (New York, 1960), 53.

<sup>3</sup> Allan Nevins, "Andrew William Mellon," Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. XI, Supplement 2 (New York, 1958), 452.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Commission on Fine Arts, Massachusetts Avenue Architecture, Vol. I (Washington, 1973).

Hicks, John D., Republican Ascendancy, 1921-1933 (New York: Harper & Row, 1960).

(continued)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	3229810	43084810	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the nominated property coincides with the boundary of the legal lot known as 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW., Washington, D.C.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Cathy A. Alexander and Ralph Christian, Assistant Editors; and George R. Adams, Managing Editor.

ORGANIZATION American Association for State and Local History DATE January 1976

STREET & NUMBER 1400 Eighth Avenue South TELEPHONE (615) 242-5583

CITY OR TOWN Nashville STATE Tennessee ZIP 37203

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

254

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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CONTINUATION SHEET Mellon Apartment TEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

smooth surface. End windows on the second-story facade have triangular pediments, while the bow window has a segmentally arched pediment. Urn-balustraded limestone balconies on consoles with swags project from the false balustrade at the bow and end bays. Cornices top the remaining second-story windows. Throughout the structure, casement windows with transoms predominate.

Flush balustrades, posed on the second-story window cornices, ornament the third-floor openings, but on the facade ends and bow, second-floor pediments interrupt the decoration. Each third-floor facade and window has a bracket-supported cornice, though, and it in turn supports a fourth-story cast-iron railed window balcony above. Between the other third- and fourth-floor windows, ornamental panels appear. The frieze of the roof cornice serves as a fourth-floor window lintel, and a rosette tops each opening. Above, a projecting cornice supports a cast-iron railing around the slate-shingled mansard roof, which has a copper ridge cap. Each dormer has a limestone pediment, either triangular or segmentally arched. Of the nine or ten chimneys that top the roof, most are brick, but some are limestone, decorated with cornice caps and escutcheon and lion mask panels.

Situated in the bow, the entrance consists of two glazed-glass door panels, cast-iron side lights and transom, and a limestone oak leaf-and-fret architrave. An iron-and-glass radial marquise shelters the limestone stoop. Within lies a dome-ceilinged circular lobby, which has decorative marble flooring and intricate plaster ceiling and wall decorations. A marble fireplace with an elaborate overmantel stands against one wall. From the lobby, four risers mount to the rectangular vestibule, where there is an elevator which may not be original. A central shaft holds the elevator, stairs, and a vent. Above the first story, each floor plan is identical. The elevator doors open onto a narrow landing with access to a grand, oval-shaped reception area and smaller, rectangular east and north foyers. In adapting the building to modern office use, workmen have put up make-shift partitions, carpeted some of the floors, and installed fluorescent lights. Numerous ornamental features and the basic Mellon Apartment layout remain intact, however. The Brookings Institution maintains its offices in the Mellon Apartment and rents space on some of the other floors to various nonprofit organizations.

(continued)

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CONTINUATION SHEET Mellon Apartment TEM NUMBER 7 PAGE two

In the Mellon Apartment, from the oval reception room one double door leads into the salon and another opens into the living room. Formerly a limestone fireplace provided heat for the oval hall. The 45- by 24-foot living room encompasses the bow and part of the Massachusetts Avenue side of the building; it contains a black-and-white marble fireplace, bracketed ceiling cornice, and herringbone parquet flooring. The 21- by 24-foot salon adjoins the living room west of the bow and has an ornate fireplace and chimney breast, an egg-and-dart ceiling cornice, and herringbone parquet flooring. Similarly the dining room, east of the living room, has parquet flooring and a ceiling cornice. Rear of the dining room stands a servants' wing, including a butler's pantry with original silver safe, a kitchen, and a servants' dining room. A second servants' wing is rear of the north foyer. There also is a service elevator and back stairs. The servants' sleeping quarters are on a lower mezzanine level. Parallel to the north servants' passage, the main north corridor--lined with built-in cedar closets and wardrobes--serves the master and guest bedrooms and baths. Some fireplaces, marble but simply styled, remain in the bedrooms, which today serve as offices.

The Brookings Institution hopes to maintain the exterior of the McCormick Apartments and preserve a pleasing segment of Massachusetts Avenue. The structure is in good condition, but the interior requires alterations to meet current fire standards and modern office needs. At present, workmen have installed central air conditioning in all but two stories. On the second floor, the current leasee maintains that apartment's living room beautifully as a meeting room with suitable furnishings.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Mellon Apartment TEM NUMBER 8 PAGE one

Mellon also played a nationally important role in promoting the arts. He planned the National Gallery of Art, and shortly before he died, he gave the Government his vast art collection, funds for a building, and a \$5 million endowment.

During the time that Mellon served as Secretary of the Treasury under Presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover--the period of his greatest impact upon the Nation's fiscal policies--he occupied the entire top floor of this marble-faced, four-story apartment building, which is distinguished by a mansard roof. He also resided here intermittently while completing his plan for the National Gallery of Art. This apartment, therefore, outstandingly commemorates Mellon's national significance.

Biography

Andrew William Mellon was born March 24, 1855, in Pittsburg, Pa., to Thomas and Sarah J. Mellon. Four years after Andrew's birth, Thomas Mellon became a county judge and served on the bench until 1869 when he retired to establish a banking house. Because of the family's comfortable circumstances, young Andrew enjoyed excellent educational opportunities. His first formal instruction was in a school that his father constructed on the family estate because of a fear of "vicious associations in the public schools and laxity in the private."<sup>4</sup> In 1868 Andrew entered the Western University of Pennsylvania (now the University of Pittsburgh). He was an outstanding student, but in 1872, 3 months before he was to graduate, he left school to establish a lumber and building business in partnership with his brother in nearby **Mansfield, Pa.**

In 1874 Mellon sold his share in the lumber and building business for a substantial profit and went to work for his father's banking house, T. Mellon and Sons. By 1882 Andrew's expertise in the

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<sup>4</sup> Harvey O'Connor, Mellon's Millions: The Life and Times of Andrew Mellon (New York, 1933), 21.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Mellon Apartment # TEM NUMBER 8 PAGE two

banking field had led his father to give him complete control of the family enterprise. Pittsburgh during this period was undergoing rapid industrial expansion, and Mellon, according to historian Allan Nevins, was quick to grasp the "important role a bank could play in supplying capital for its expanding industries."<sup>5</sup> Possessed of a remarkable capacity for evaluating the qualities of would-be borrowers and the worth of new ideas, Mellon vastly increased the family holdings and became one of the Nation's wealthiest men. In 1889 he played the leading role in founding the Aluminum Company of America and establishing, according to Mellon biographer Harvey O'Connor, "the nation's only 100 per cent large-scale monopoly from a mineral which comprises one-twelfth of the earth's surface."<sup>6</sup> In 1901 he helped establish the Gulf Oil Corporation and eventually came to dominate it. By 1921 he was either a director or officer in more than 60 corporations.

Despite his great wealth, Mellon remained largely unknown to the general public. A Republican by inheritance, he provided financial support for the Pennsylvania machines of Matthew S. Quay and Boies Penrose and by 1910 was an influential behind-the-scenes figure in the State's politics. Mellon's Republicanism, says Nevins, was "of the orthodox conservative, high-tariff, nationalistic variety, with principles dating from the Harrison-McKinley days."<sup>7</sup> A close friend of former U. S. Senator and Secretary of State Philander C. Knox, Mellon became one of Knox's chief boosters for the Republican Presidential nomination at the 1920 Republican Convention.

Mellon's selection as Secretary of the Treasury in 1921, according to historian Robert K. Murray, was "a curious blend of politics, chance, shrewdness, and cold calculation."<sup>8</sup> President Harding had

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5 Nevins, "Mellon," 447.

6 O'Connor, Mellon's Millions, 79.

7 Nevins, "Mellon," 448.

8 Robert K. Murray, The Harding Era: Warren G. Harding and His Administration (Minneapolis, 1969), 100.



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CONTINUATION SHEET Mellon Apartment TEM NUMBER 8 PAGE three

originally wanted a westerner or midwesterner for the Treasury post, but Knox, to whom the President owed a political favor, pressured him to appoint Mellon. It happened also that Harding wanted Herbert Hoover in the cabinet but found his nomination threatened by conservative Republicans. Because Mellon was acceptable to this element, Harding paired his nomination with that of Hoover and secured the Senate's approval of both appointments.

Upon assuming the Treasury post in 1921, Mellon found himself faced with the problems of a depressed economy, a gigantic national debt, the war debts question, and readjustment of taxation. He asserted that "the Government is just a business and can and should be run on business principles," and then he proceeded to put his belief into practice.<sup>9</sup> His policies helped end the post-World War I recession, restored business confidence, and proved a significant factor in the economic boom that followed. Also, by 1928 his insistence on balanced budgets and reduced government spending reduced the national debt by \$8 billion. The 1927 budget was \$3 billion less than that of Woodrow Wilson's last year in office. Although war debts continued to plague the Republican administrations of the 1920's, Mellon chaired the War Debts Commission and set up a repayment schedule that was followed at least in part until the onset of the Great Depression.

Government tax policy, however, was Mellon's overriding concern. He rejected the concept that taxation was an instrument of social reform. Accordingly he proposed drastic cuts in the surtax on upper income brackets, repeal of the excess profits tax, and reduced corporate levies. A believer in the "trickle down" theory, Mellon argued that his policies would serve to stimulate business investment, create more jobs, and result in increased prosperity for all. His tax program, dubbed the "Mellon Plan," was enacted for the most part in the Revenue Acts of 1921, 1924, 1926, and 1928. It contributed to the boom of the 1920's and made him a national hero.

Mellon served as Secretary of the Treasury from 1921 to 1932--the longest Cabinet tenure since Albert Gallatin. Although he was

(continued)

9 Cited in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933 (Boston, 1957), 62.

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Mellon

CONTINUATION SHEET

Apartment ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE four

not close to Harding, Mellon became Coolidge's principal advisor and the most powerful individual in his administration. According to Coolidge's biographer, Donald R. McCoy, Coolidge and Mellon because of their agreement on "fiscal matters . . . worked as a pair" with direct telephone lines between their offices.<sup>10</sup> Retained by Hoover, Mellon played an ever-decreasing role as he proved unable to offer positive solutions to the Great Depression. In 1932 he resigned to become Ambassador to Great Britain and served in that position until 1933.

Upon returning to the United States, Mellon, despite the fact that he was 78, resumed his old post at the Mellon National Bank. He also gave much attention to philanthropic activities, announcing in 1937 the gift of his art collection to the American people and the building of the National Art Gallery to house it. He did not live to see the gallery completed, however. He died of pneumonia at Long Island, N.Y., on August 26, 1937, at the age of 82.

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<sup>10</sup> Donald R. McCoy, Calvin Coolidge: The Quiet President (New York, 1967), 169.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Mellon Apartment TEM NUMBER 9 PAGE one

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- Nevins, Allan, "Andrew William Mellon," *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. XI, Supplement 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 446-452.
- O'Connor, Harvey, *Mellon's Millions: The Life and Times of Andrew Mellon* (New York: The John Day Company, 1933).
- Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr., *The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957).

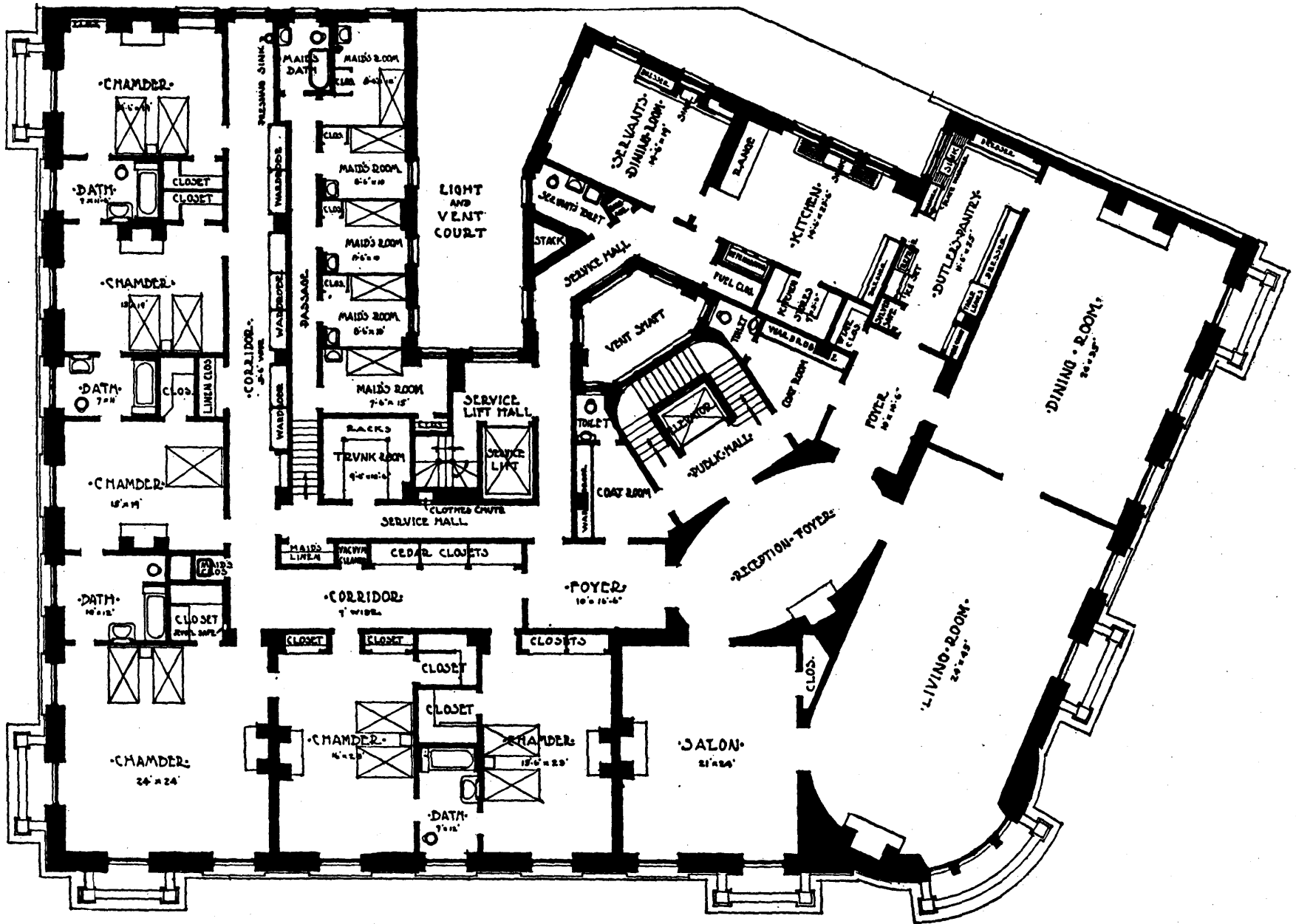


FIG. 131.—TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN—APARTMENT HOUSE AT 1785 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, WASHINGTON, D. C.  
 J. H. De Sibour, Architect.