



The City of Seattle

LPB-114/82

Landmarks Preservation Board

400 Yesler Building Seattle, Washington 98104 • (206) 625-4501

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

NAME OF PROPERTY: Stuart/Balcom House and Gardens

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Comstock Supl. Addn.
Block 26, Lots 8, 9 and 10.

At the Public Hearing held on April 21, 1982 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Stuart/Balcom House and Gardens as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following criteria of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance 106348:

Section 3.01 (2) It is associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the history of the city, state, or nation.

De Ette McAuslan Smith Stuart (1892-1979) the original owner and builder of the house, was the daughter of a pioneer Washington family and a long time patron of the arts and charities. For over four decades she gave of herself and her monies to local arts organizations, schools and charities. She was a founder of the Seattle Opera Association, a member of the National Council of the Metropolitan Opera, a council member of the National Symphony of Washington, D.C., and a member of the Seattle Art Museum. Upon her death she left significant bequests and trust funds, and willed the house to the Opera Association which in turn sold it to the present owner, Mrs. Balcom.

Section 3.01 (4) It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction.

The house is an excellently executed example of neo-Georgian architecture, with impressive massing and form, rich treatment of the entrance, and possessing particularly noteworthy interiors as reflected in the recommended protections.

Section 3.01 (5) It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder.

Mrs. Stuart's first husband, Grant Smith, headed a construction company which was responsible for much of the Metropolitan Center, including the Olympic Hotel and the White-Henry-Stuart Building. Because of this activity the Smiths knew A. H. Albertson, then a very active architect in the Downtown and involved with the above building. Because of the connection through her (late) husband's firm, Albertson agreed to do the house and it was built by Mr. Smith's successors. As far as we know this is one of the very few, if not the only, major residence designed by Albertson as a favor for Mrs. Smith-Stuart, and although more eclectic than his other works (i.e., Northern Life Tower, St. Joseph's Church, etc., designated landmarks), it demonstrates again his creative ability and his concern not only for excellent detail and unity, but for admirable interrelationships of spaces as well.

Section 3.01 (6) Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality of such neighborhood or the city.

The house is commandingly located high on the Southwest "corner" of Queen Anne Hill, rising above the Parsons-Gerrard House and Parsons Gardens (designated landmarks), and above "Betty Bowen Park."

Features of the Landmark to be preserved include:

Designation with protection of the entire exterior of the house; the entire site/gardens; and the following interior spaces as well:

- (a) the garden floor ballroom and adjoining office (library);
- (b) the foyer, gallery, drawing room, dining room and powder room on the main floor;
- (c) the entire master suite (bed-sitting room, dressing room and bath on the second floor; and the other two bathrooms on the second floor;
- (d) the spiral staircase and stairwell uniting all three floors. Special attention is noted for the outstanding tile work in all of the bathrooms noted above, the completeness of all original fixtures and lights in those rooms; the iron work in the curving bannisters of the staircase; the original finishes in the master dressing room; excellence of mouldings, panels, details and fixtures in all rooms; and for the design integration of the garden with the house.

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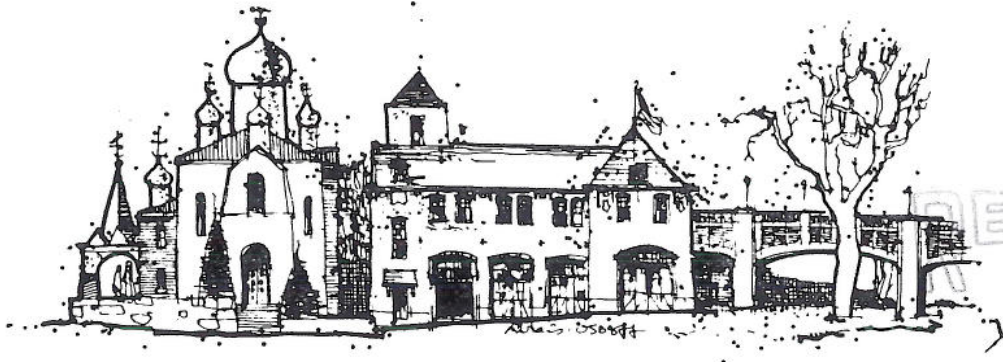
LPB-114/82

Issued: June 18, 1982



Earl D. Layman
City Historic Preservation Officer

EDL:dn



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CITY OF SEATTLE

City of Seattle

Department of Community Development/Office of Urban Conservation

Landmark Nomination Form

Name Stuart/Balcom residence and gardens Year Built 1926
(Common, present or historic)

Street and Number 619 W. Comstock

Assessor's File No. 173280-0660

Legal Description Plat Name Comstock Supl. Add Block 26 Lot 8,9,10

9 & 10 & N 20 ft of S & vac por St & por of vac alley adj & S 8 ft of vac Comstock St adj

Present Owner J. Elizabeth Balcom Present Use residence

Address 619 W. Comstock

Original Owner DeEtte McAuslan Smith Stuart Original Use residence

Architect A.H. Albertson Builder G. Teufel and P. Carlson
(Grant Smith & Co.)

The Stuart/Balcom residence built in 1926, is an impressive example of eclectic residential architecture in Seattle. Designed by A.H. Albertson in a modified English Georgian style, the residence dominates its surroundings on the south slope of Queen Anne hill. The concrete based, wood frame and brick veneer structure includes a garden level, two floors and a very large attic. The structure includes cast stone and wrought iron detailing and lead divided window panes. The high pitched roof and lofty chimneys create a picturesque and variegated line. The cedar shingled roof has copper hips and gutters and lead finials.

The large terraced site is supported on the west and south by massive retaining walls. The site features a generously landscaped formal garden and a rose garden. Many flowering shrubs and trees indigenous to the area are incorporated.

The northern facade facing West Comstock is the location of the main entry. The overall impression of this side of the home is unimposing and inviting as the garden level is not visible. A cast stone entrance way frames the delicate wrought iron and glass entrance door. The broken pediment above the arched entrance door handsomely incorporates the window of the bathroom above. Cast stone quoins accent the entry as well as all corners of the brick structure. Most of the windows are of the double hung sash variety. Windows on the second floor are divided into small rectangular panes by lead glazing bars. Sills are cast stone. The northern facade is arranged with the main entrance in the center and shallow hipped roof pavilions at each end project out toward the street.

On the eastern facade a wing containing a garage and chauffeur's quarters extends eastward from the main structure. A single dormer is incorporated into the roofs of this portion of the house.

The western and southern facades are more impressive as the garden level is fully exposed. The southern side incorporates a loggia with arched colonnade of cast stone, delicate wrought iron railing, and awnings. The plan of the house is H-shaped and as with the north facade, shallow hipped roof pavilions extend from the residence at each end. Brick is used on the first and second floor and stuccoed concrete at the garden level. Arched windows and doors at the garden level repeat the effect created by the loggia above. Arched French doors connect the gallery to the loggia and the ballroom to the garden at that level. A centrally placed stone inset and other cast stone detailing are incorporated. Five dormers accent the roof on the south side.

The west facade is dominated by the impressive chimney which rises up to the height of the ridge of the roof. The chimney is tied to the roof by a rod detailed with delicate wrought iron work.

Mrs. Stuart desired to have large main rooms for entertaining. She had plans at the time the house was designed to adopt two children (although she never did) and consequently included a nursery and a nurse's bedroom.

Description: Present and original (if known) physical appearance and characteristics

On the first floor, the residence has both a main and side entrance on West Comstock. The main entrance is approached on a basketweave brick walkway leading to a terrace. A large arched glazed wrought iron door opens to a small vestibule. The wrought iron is patterned in an intricate dogwood pattern. The floor of the vestibule is inlaid marble.

The vestibule leads to a large arched oak door which opens into a small hall with an adjacent half bath. The hall is intersected by a spacious gallery. The gallery is paralleled by a loggia of equal size and connected to the loggia by a set of arched French doors. The loggia has a dramatic view of Elliott Bay, Mount Rainier and downtown Seattle. At each end of the gallery, arched French doors lead to the dining room on the east and living room on the west. Oak parquet flooring runs throughout the main first floor rooms and a plaster cornice in a decorative motif encircles the ceiling. In the living room the plaster cornice has recently been covered by a pine coving. An antique pine and tile mantel installed by the current owner has replaced the original. Both the living room and dining room have plaster paneled walls. The chandelier and sconces in the dining room are not original. The "squared" spiral main staircase has intricately shaped oak treads and delicate wrought iron railings with a dogwood motif. The beautiful wrought iron work is attributed to the same firm which did similar work in the Olympic Hotel. The handsome staircase strongly relates all three floors of the house.

Original features of the kitchen include handmade tile and ash counter tops. Other first floor features include a breakfast room, service pantry, service stairs and a two-car garage.

The second floor contains four bedrooms, a large nursery, two bathrooms and an owner's suite consisting of a bedroom, a dressing room and a bathroom. The owner's bedroom has a small fireplace well located on axis with the hallway. Oak flooring extends throughout the main rooms. Walls of the bathrooms are covered with handmade tile, each room featuring a different luxuriant color. The bathroom serving the nursery has inlaid tile depicting Mother Goose rhymes and low fixtures. Bathrooms also contain their original fixtures including small sinks for brushing teeth, large pedestal sinks and coved bathtubs. The owner's suite has all of its original imported French light fixtures and the ceiling in the dressing room has the original hand painted floral designs.

The garden level is fully exposed on the south side and partially exposed on the west side. The main staircase from the first floor leads down to a large ballroom which occupies the western end of the garden level. The ballroom has four sets of French doors which open onto the formal garden. The floor of the ballroom is oak in a herringbone pattern and the ceiling is encircled with a plaster cornice. A large classical fireplace is centered on the western wall. Adjacent to the ballroom and the stair hall is a small library. The ceiling of the library is paneled in wood. A passage leads from the stair hall to the formal garden. The remainder of the basement level includes two staff bedrooms, a bathroom, a laundry, boiler room, store rooms and two service stairways.

Statement of significance

The House

The Stuart/Balcom residence is one of Seattle's finest eclectic residences. Built in 1926, in modified English Georgian style, it is one of the impressive showplaces of Queen Anne hill. The house, which has been carefully preserved and maintained, remains unaltered. The formal landscaping, prominent siting and impressive architecture distinguish this residence as a Queen Anne landmark. The house is united and well articulated vertically by the staircase and horizontally by the gallery. The house is stylistically consistent in detail and in scale.

The Garden

The terraced gardens are formal and well related to the formality of the house. The terrace at the garden level on the south side is well scaled to extend the space available for entertaining and to provide a foreground for the dramatic views. The garden on West Comstock harmonizes the house with the street and delineates the entry.

The Owners

DeEtte McAuslan Smith Stuart (1892-1979) was the daughter of a pioneer Washington family and a longtime patron of the arts in Seattle.

Born in Seattle, DeEtte McAuslan was the second in a family of two daughters. Her parents were John McAuslan and Lillie Crutcher McAuslan. Lillie's father Albert Crutcher represented the Knapp-Burrell Implement and Hardware Company of Portland in Seattle, in the late 1880s. Burned out in the great fire in 1889, the family continued in the implement and hardware business in Seattle. Seattle's Polson Company is an outgrowth of these early efforts. John McAuslan became a Klondiker in 1897. Mrs. McAuslan accompanied him for a short time on a trip to the Klondike in 1899. The McAuslan's built their family home on Queen Anne (now demolished) at the turn of the century.

Both Mrs. Stuart and her sister Marie McAuslan attended the University of Washington. Mrs. Stuart worked for the Dexter Horton Bank for several years after attending college. Mrs. Stuart's first husband was Grant Smith, a Seattle contractor with substantial oil properties in Louisiana. Mr. Smith's firm Grant Smith and Company constructed a number of downtown buildings including the Olympic Hotel and the White Henry Stuart Building, for the Metropolitan Building Company, who originally developed the University held properties. A specialist in irrigation construction, he had prime responsibility for the Denny Regrade. Four months after their marriage, Mr. Smith died in 1923. Mr. Smith was then 55 and Mrs. (Smith) Stuart was 31 years old.

After her husband's death, Mrs. (Grant Smith) Stuart built the Stuart/Balcom residence to provide a gracious home for herself, her mother and her older sister. Mr. George Teufel and Mr. Paul Carlson had taken over the management of Mr. Smith's construction firm and Mrs. (Smith) Stuart entrusted the job of building her residence to them. Mrs. (Smith) Stuart was a major stock

Statement of significance

holder in the Metropolitan Building Company and had contact with the architect A.H. Albertson through his involvement on the White Henry Stuart Building and other downtown buildings. This resulted in both the architect and the contractor undertaking one of their few residential projects.

Mrs. Stuart married Charles E. Stuart in 1931. Mr. Stuart graduated in engineering from the University of California at Berkeley in 1909. At the time of his death he was president of Grant Smith & Company and of Delta Security Company. Mr. Stuart died in 1946.

For the next three decades, Mrs. Stuart gave of herself and of her material benefits to local arts organizations, schools and charities. She was a founder of the Seattle Opera Association, a member of the National Council of the Metropolitan Opera, a council member of the National Symphony of Washington, D.C., and the Seattle Art Museum.

Mrs. Stuart donated her Queen Anne home to the Seattle Opera Association. It was offered by the Association for sale and purchased in 1975 by Maurice C. Balcom. Mrs. Stuart was also the donor of the sculpture, The Dance, at the Opera House.

Following her death in 1979, Mrs. Stuart left assets of more than \$23 million. Among the beneficiaries were the University of Washington for first year scholarships (\$1 million), Children's Orthopedic Hospital (\$750,000), First Presbyterian Church (\$500,000). Trust fund income went to the Seattle Art Museum for a DeEtte McAuslan Stuart wing for early European porcelain and to the finalists in the Pacific Northwest regional auditions for the Metropolitan Opera.

J. Elizabeth (Brown) Balcom, the current owner, is a member of a pioneer Seattle family. Her grandfather was a contractor and built a number of Seattle structures, including the Burke Building. Mrs. Balcom owns Globe Antiques and is an authority on antiques. She is active in civic and cultural affairs in Seattle.

The Architects

The Stuart/Balcom residence was designed in 1926 by the local firm of A.H. Albertson, Architect, Joseph W. Wilson, and Paul Richardson, Associates.

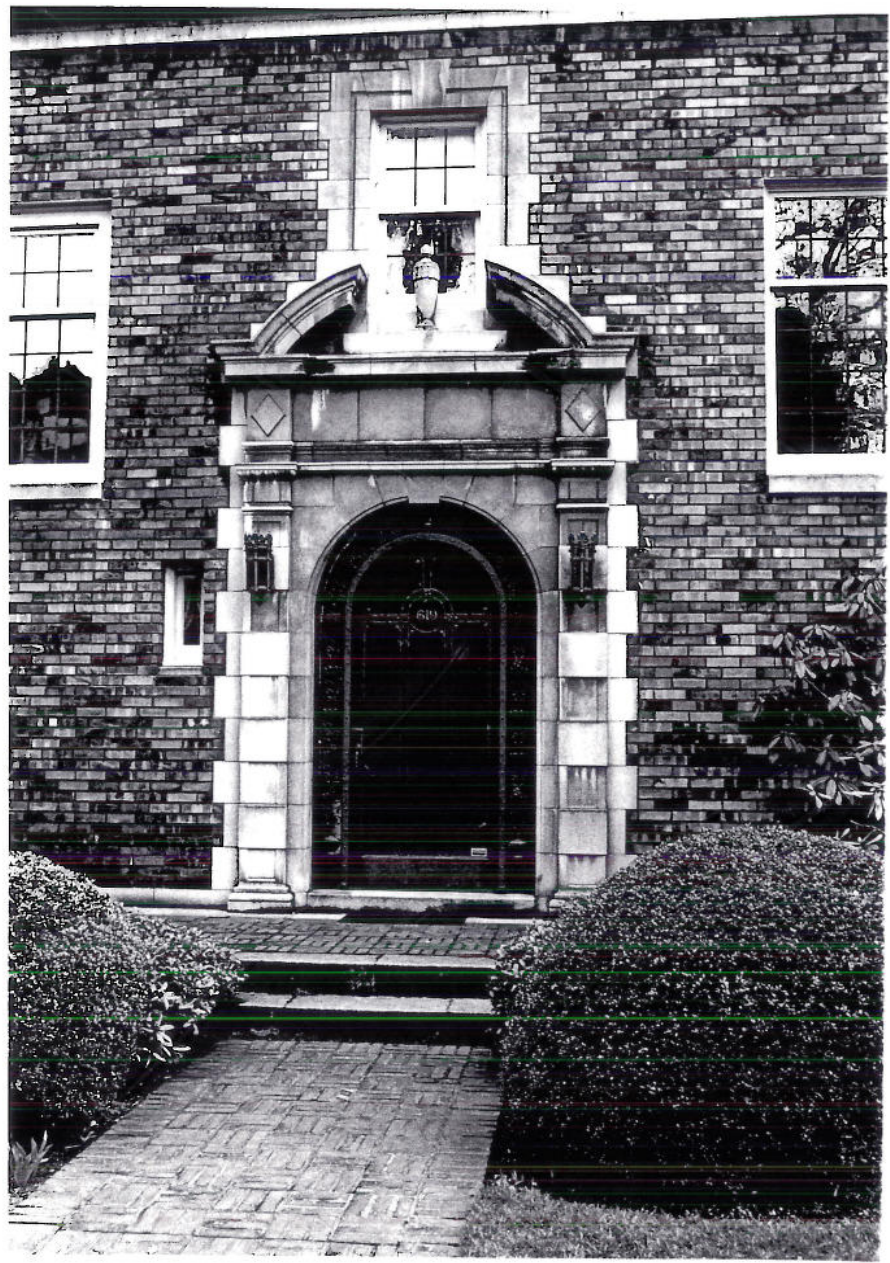
Abraham H. Albertson was born in New Jersey in 1872. He attended Columbia University and graduated with a degree in architecture in 1895. In 1907, he came to Seattle as a supervising architect for the White Henry Stuart Building (since demolished). His most important commission was the Northern Life Tower (now the Seattle Tower) for the Northern Life Insurance Company, founded in Seattle in 1906. This building built in 1928 is considered an influential early work in the Modernistic or Art Deco style. In 1962, the Seattle Chapter of the American Institute of Architects issued a special citation for the Northern Life Tower "in recognition of an older building's professional excellence and enduring quality". The building was nominated for Seattle landmark designation in 1974 (designation proceedings in process).

Statement of significance

His most significant commission after the Northern Life Tower was St. Joseph's Church, Seattle, an austere but awesome monolithic concrete structure, also locally recognized as an innovative accomplishment in architectural aesthetics. This structure has also been nominated for landmark designation (pending). Other buildings in Seattle by Albertson include numerous churches, the Cobb Building, the YMCA, and the old Law Building and the student infirmary on the University of Washington campus, Cornish School, old Children's Orthopedic and the Women's University Club.

Albertson was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and he served for several years as president of the Seattle chapter of the AIA. Albertson retired in 1949 and died in 1964.

Photographs:



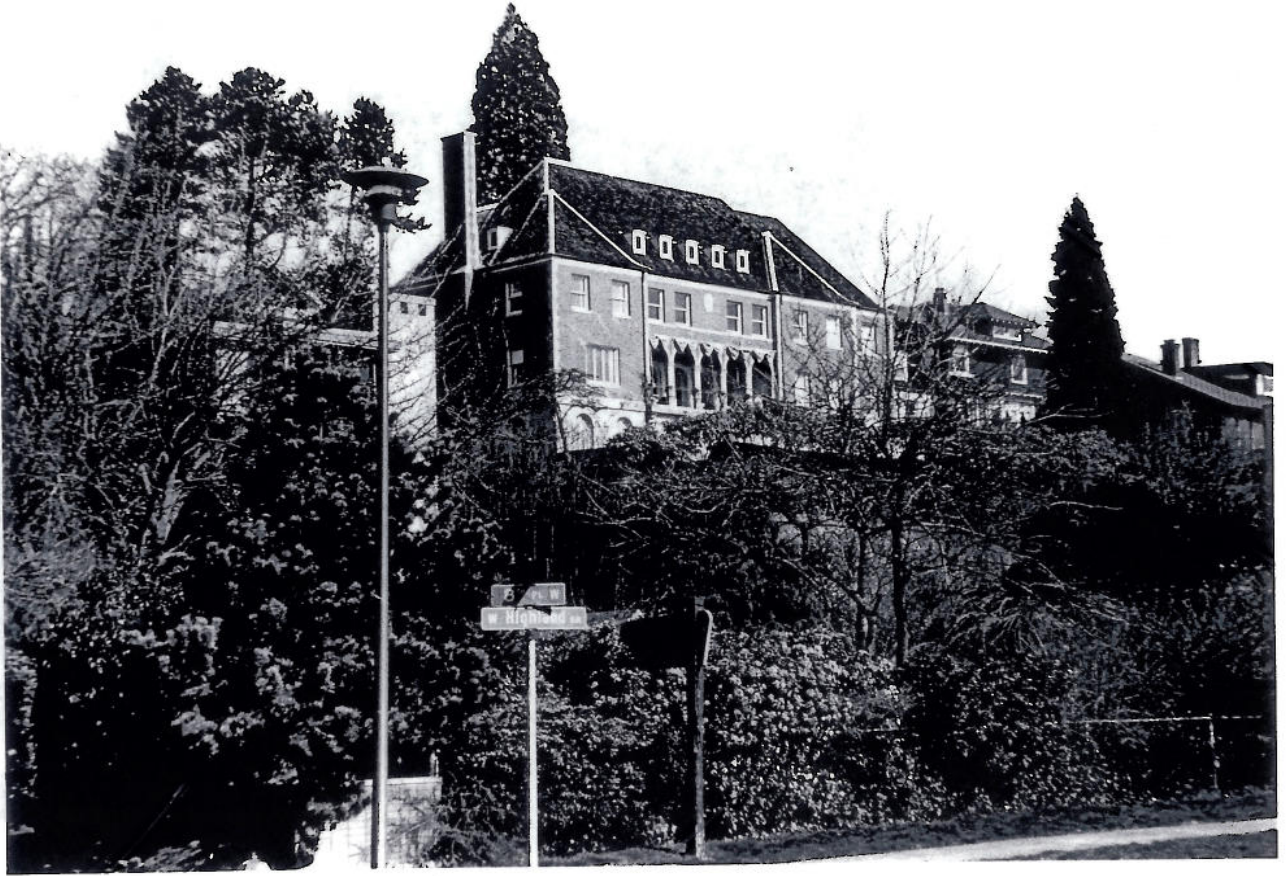
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Date March 17, 1982

Reviewed [Signature] Historic Preservation Officer Date 032482

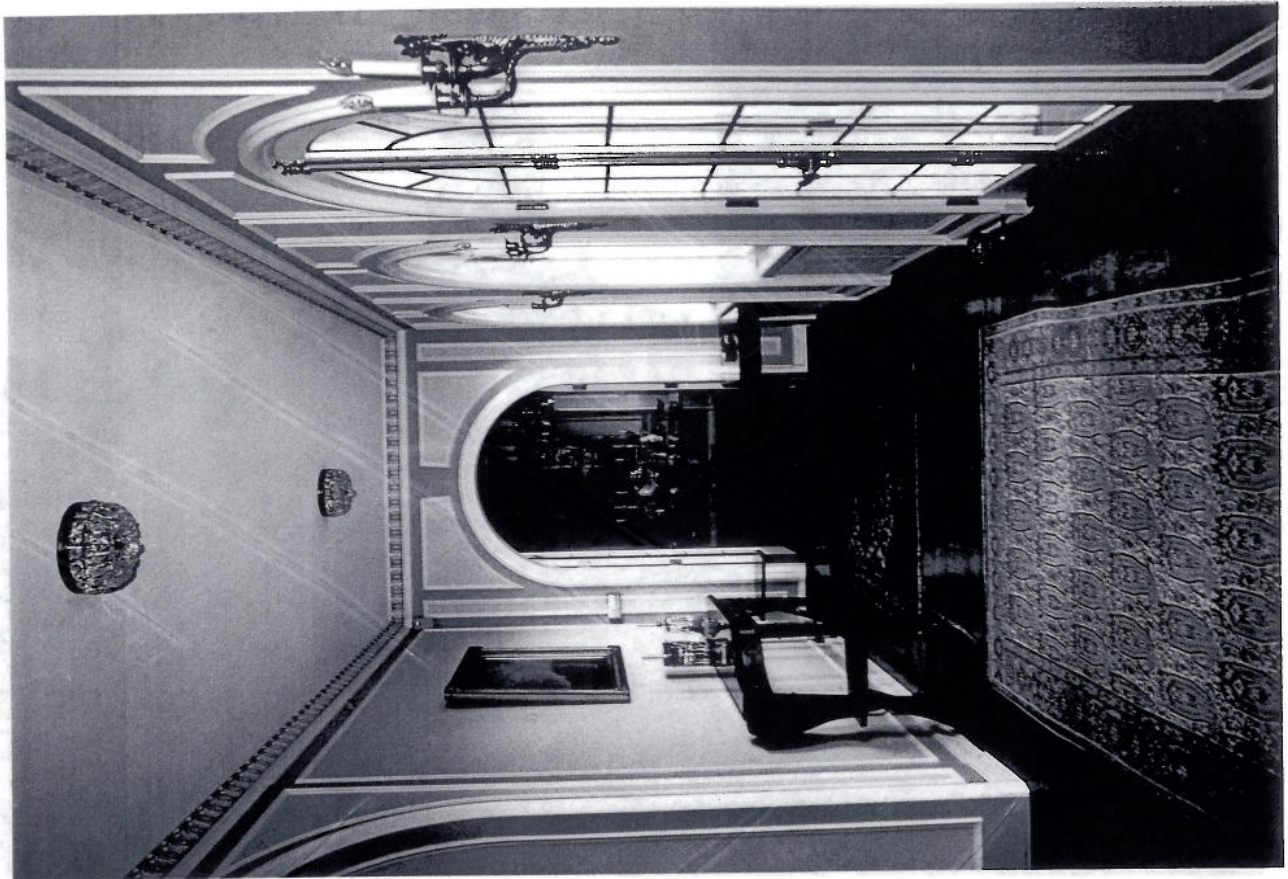
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