

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **SEP 30 1986**

date entered **NOV 6 1986**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Embassy Building No. 10

and/or common D.C. Department of Recreation Headquarters

**2. Location**

street & number 3149 Sixteenth Street, N.W. N/A not for publication

city, town Washington, D.C. N/A vicinity of congressional district: Walter E. Fauntroy

state District of Columbia code 11 county District of Columbia code 001

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name District of Columbia Department of Recreation

street & number 3149 Sixteenth Street, N.W.

city, town Washington N/A vicinity of state District of Columbia

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds

street & number Sixth and D Streets, N.W.

city, town Washington state D.C.

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title None has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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

Embassy Building No. 10, located at 3149 Sixteenth Street, N.W., was designed by architect George Oakley Totten, Jr. in 1928 and built by the owner, Mrs. Mary Henderson, in 1929-1930. The building was designed to incorporate both public and private domestic activities. The symmetry of the facade belies the actual form and plan, designed for the wedge-shaped lot situated in the acute angle formed by the intersection of Lamont and Sixteenth Streets, N.W. The three-story building is massed as two gabled units of unequal length, with a circular pavilion marking the point of intersection. An irregularly-shaped infill addition is situated between the two units at the rear.

The building is of brick construction on a full basement. The exterior walls are stuccoed and scored to resemble coursed ashlar masonry, except at the Sixteenth Street facade which is faced with dressed limestone. The steep, slate-shingled roofs are finished with shoulder parapets at the gable ends. The circular corner pavilion is surmounted by a truncated conical roof from which a decorative cap and finial have been removed. Fenestration is symmetrical on the facade, but functional and therefore somewhat irregular on the remaining elevations. Windows are paired eight-light metal casements, some with four-light transoms. They occur singly, paired, or in groups of four, in the latter instance set off by thick muntins.

The tripartite facade is ornamented in the Chateausque style, with details such as attenuated label moldings, stone and terracotta window balconies with pointed arched balustrades, a richly-detailed terracotta cornice with pendants, and gabled dormers embellished with flying buttresses, finials and crockets. Other features include a terracotta parapet inset with pierced medallions, cast-iron cresting on the roof ridge, an embellished iron entrance marquise, and double-leaf wood and glass doors.

The interior plan consists of two ranges of rooms oriented in an asymmetrical "V", with the circular rooms of the corner pavilion at the point, and the stairwell in the angle between the ranges. The front rooms on both first and second floors were originally semi-public spaces: an entrance hall, reception room and round "ministry" on the first floor, and a library and salon on the second floor. The dining room was also located on the second floor on the Lamont Street side and was accessible from the corner pavilion end of the salon through wide double-leaf doors. The third floor was occupied by bedrooms, baths, and servants' rooms.

(continued)

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1928-1930 **Builder/Architect** George Oakley Totten, Jr.

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Embassy Building No. 10, used since 1940 as the headquarters for the District of Columbia Department of Recreation, is significant for its association with Mary Henderson and with George Oakley Totten, Jr. It reflects the tail end of the development activity along Sixteenth Street that created a luxurious ambience in the vicinity of Meridian Hill Park and Mt. Pleasant at the turn of the century. Briefly known as the Avenue of the Presidents, Sixteenth Street, N.W. has been partially designated a National Register Historic District from Scott Circle to Florida Avenue, N.W. Several examples of Henderson's and Totten's collaboration are situated on the avenue.

Embassy Building No. 10 is highly typical of Totten's work, which has been characterized by a willingness to employ numerous styles and rich ornamentation. The facade of the building serves as a catalogue of features associated with the late Victorian Chateausque style, popularized by Richard Morris Hunt during the late nineteenth century. Major features of No. 10's facade include the distinctively high-pitched roofs, round corner pavilion, profusion of decorative dormers, and liberal distribution of Gothic motifs. The interior detailing, however, with the exception of the main staircase, abandons the facade style in favor of neoclassical ornamentation. The dichotomy between the exterior and interior is quite pronounced, serving to confirm one critic's description of Totten's work as "all surface and no substance" (Kavler and Carson, 1978:429).

Mary Henderson, wife of Senator John Henderson of Missouri, became active in the Washington, D.C. real estate market at the turn of the century. After 1880, Washington's population began to spread beyond Boundary Avenue (now Florida Avenue) and Henderson rode the wave of affluence that characterized Washington's emergence as the capital city of a nascent world power. Mt. Pleasant had been among the city's oldest suburbs and consisted of a collection of frame houses around a village green. She envisioned the redevelopment of Sixteenth Street in this vicinity as a luxurious neighborhood of mansions, housing foreign embassies and missions to the United States. In the aftermath of the Spanish American War, the United States assumed a more imperial role in international affairs and Washington as a capital city grew in stature and size.

(continued)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

(See continuation sheet)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .1 acre

Quadrangle name Washington West, D.C.-MD.-VA.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	8	3	2	3	4	9	0	4	3	1	0	8	9	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The resource at Embassy Building No. 10 consists of the structure and is therefore bounded by the exterior walls of the structure. Although some (continued)

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state District of Columbia code 11 county District of Columbia code 001

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Amy Friedlander, Ph.D., Historian and Martha Bowers, Architectural Historian  
Cultural Resource Group

organization Louis Berger & Associates, Inc. date August 31, 1984

street & number 1730 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W. telephone (202) 466-4000

city or town Washington state D.C.

# 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Carol B. Thompson

title State Historic Preservation Officer  
for the District of Columbia

date September 29, 1986

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

entered in the  
National Register.

date 11-6-86

for  
Keeper of the National Register

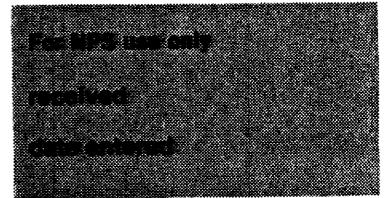
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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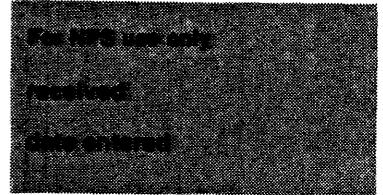
The interior has been altered to create office spaces on all floors, chiefly through installation of dropped ceilings and some partitioning of larger areas. The original plan, however, remains intact, as do architectural features in several of the formal rooms. A section of the reception room has been partitioned as a secretarial antechamber adjacent to the circular ministry office; much of the broad ovolo molding remains. The formal staircase rises from the first floor in a single wide flight, returning on the second floor as two flights. The string and railing are wood, the balustrade cast-iron with a quatrefoil motif.

The Chateausque style of the facade reappears only on the staircase. All other remaining interior ornamentation is derived from classical styles. Although door and window moldings are relatively simple, dentil moldings frame the ceilings of the first floor corner office and the library at the south end of the second floor. Fireplaces with marble-faced hearths are focal points for ornamental elaboration. The fireplace in the ministry office features bead-and-reel molding and scrolled console brackets, while the library fireplace displays a full-height chimneypiece flanked by fluted pilasters surmounted by a wide architrave. In the salon, giant fluted ionic pilasters frame doorways and rise to a broad coved plaster cornice with acanthus leaves molded in high relief. At the north end of the salon, in the corner pavilion, ionic pilasters supporting a richly embellished cornice flank a mirrored overmantel set in a tall round arch.

The exterior of the building has retained a high level of physical integrity; loss of the copper finial and the secondary entrance on the Lamont Street elevation appear to constitute the principal alterations. The interior, although modified for office use on all floors, is sufficiently intact to convey the original functions of many of the rooms. Retention of the staircase and architectural ornamentation in the ministry office, salon, and library allows a ready appreciation of the original interior appearance. The environmental context of the building, however, has been altered by construction of parking lots and playground areas adjacent to the site.

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Henderson built her own mansion at the corner of 16th Street and Florida Avenue and hoped to divert the luxury housing market from Dupont Circle to Meridian Hill-Mt. Pleasant, where she owned substantial property. Henderson's architect was George Oakley Totten, Jr., a native of New York, who took a degree at Columbia University in 1891 and studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. He worked in Washington in the 1890s and was architect to the Sultan of Turkey in 1908-1909. Returning to the United States after the sultan was overthrown, Totten directed his efforts primarily toward the construction of elaborate residences, frequently in association with Henderson.

In May, 1925, Henderson gave an interview to the National Republic in which she set forth her philosophy of real estate development. Targeting the diplomatic community, Henderson offered to procure land for an embassy, build to suit, or rent a house already constructed for that purpose. The ceremonial features of Embassy Building No. 10--balconies, marquise, spacious reception area, and grand staircase--as well as the interior detailing suggest that this was envisioned either as a rental embassy building or property to be sold for that purpose. Its failure to assume this function may have resulted from the onset of the Depression as well as the failure of Henderson's heirs to pursue her business interests.

The building does not appear to have been used by a diplomatic mission to the United States. Henderson died in 1931 and the building stood vacant for several years until it was converted to use as a residence and boarding house. In 1943, the Department of Recreation acquired the property and adjacent grounds now occupied by a playing field and recreation center.

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Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, District of Columbia  
1931 Vol. III, Plan 10. On file at the Columbia Historical  
Society, Washington, D.C.

Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, District of Columbia.  
1945 Vol. 3, Plan 10. On file at the Columbia Historical  
Society, Washington, D.C.

Boyd's District of Columbia Directory  
1927-43 R.L. Polk & Company, Washington, D.C.

District of Columbia  
1877- Building permits. R.G. 351. On file at the National Archives,  
1959 Washington, D.C.

District of Columbia, Surveyor's Office  
June 30, 1914 Square 2673. Subdivisions, vol. 51, p. 110. On file at  
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District of Columbia, Assessor's Office  
1927- General Assessments, Washington City. On file at the  
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January 1872 Plat of S.B. Brown Subdivision called Mount Pleasant near  
Washington, D.C. Record of County Surveys Levy Court,  
vol. 2, p. 56. On file at the D.C. Surveyor's Office, 614  
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Kohler, Sue and Jeffrey R. Carson  
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(Continued)

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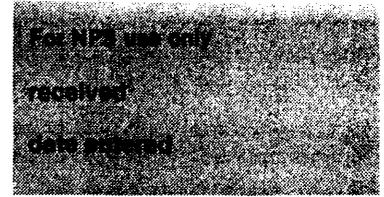
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**Continuation sheet** Verbal boundary      **Item number** 10      **Page** 1

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attempt has been made to suggest the original landscape through the retention of a circular driveway and maintenance of a lawn, trees and small garden, the setting has otherwise been significantly disturbed through construction of the parking lot, closing of Lamont Street east of Sixteenth Street, N.W., and creation of the adjacent playground. The setting, therefore, does not contribute significantly to the integrity of the resource.