

Background on 4040 52nd Street, N.W.

COPY

The house was built by W.C. & A. Miller Company for Mr. and Mrs. Robert Longyear, who took possession in June of 1930 and owned the house for twelve years. Mr. Longyear, who was with the State Department, and his English wife spent much of their time in Switzerland and England, leaving their Washington home in the care of their chauffeur.

In April of 1942, Naval Captain and Mrs. William D. Chandler purchased the house from the Longyears.

In 1948, the W.C. and A. Miller Company bought back the approximately 5-acre property, then known as 5101 Tilden Street, in order to subdivide the property. They cut through 52nd Street, and had the address changed to 4040 52nd Street.

During the time the Miller Company owned the property (1948 to January of 1954) they maintained a caretaker on the grounds and rented the house several times for short periods.

The house, with approximately 2 acres of ground, was sold to George Tyson in January of 1954. In 1960, the Tysons deeded the house to Mrs. Tyson's sister, Mrs. Perle Mesta.

Mrs. Mesta sold the house to Vice President and Mrs. Johnson in May of 1961.

(information from Mr. Crampton of W.C. & A. Miller - Em 2 4464)

COPY

Redecorating done by Mrs. Perle Mesta in 1954

Mr. Boudin, Director of Johnson in Paris, came over to work with the architect Theodore Dominick on decorating and making some structural changes in the house.

Mr. Boudin brought with him the plans for the stairway which was copied from one Mrs. Mesta had admired in Brussels. He was responsible for designing and locating many of the things which give a real French flavor to the house, for example, the canopy over the front entrance.

The drawing room was planned around a magnificent rose rug -- which Mrs. Mesta now has in her Washington apartment. The damask on the walls was taken from a French chateau, and Mr. Boudin sent a section of the paneling from this chateau so the painter here in Washington could duplicate the background for the damask. The entire room was set up in Mr. Boudin's Paris studio -- drapes, furniture, damask, the carving over the mantel -- all around the rug.

The chandelier in the drawing room is the finest one in the home -- was once in the house of antique collectors Lord and Lady Beaty. Lord Beaty was head of the English Navy during World War One.

The rug now used in the drawing room was one Mrs. Mesta purchased from a friend in New York, and had cut down to use in the dining room.

The sun room was designed by Mr. Boudin -- he constructed a model which he sent over for the builder to copy.

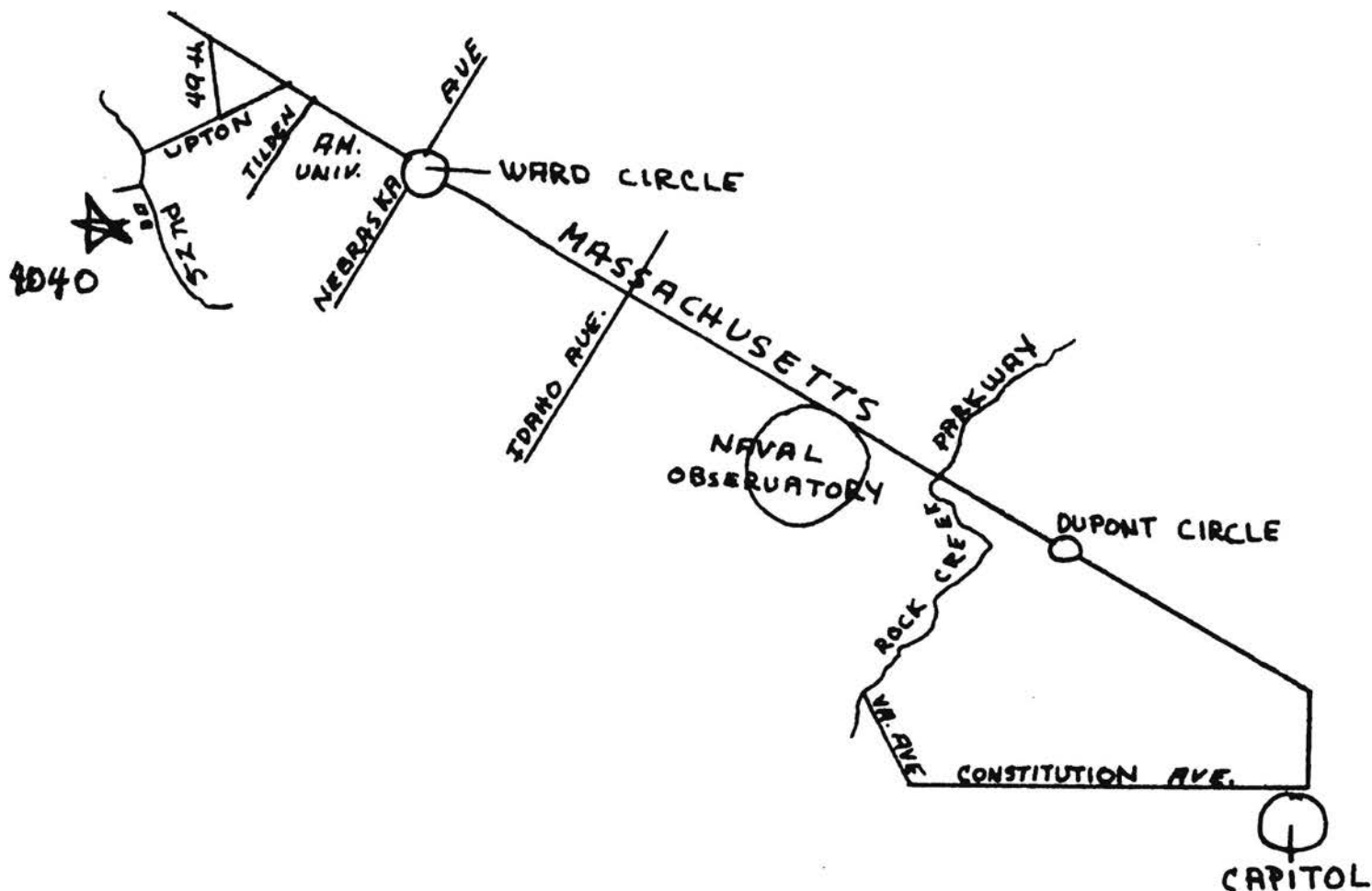
The parquet floors in the library (la bibliothèque), the dining room and the drawing room were taken from a Versailles chateau and shipped over in sections approximately 3-feet square.

The paneling (la boiserie) in the library is also from a chateau in Versailles. The room it came from apparently had a mantel and mirror at each end of the room, because there was an additional piece of trim which is now over the large mirror in the entrance hall. (When a family was hard up for cash and there were no more family jewels to sell, they would "sell a room" to a dealer. This is where the floors, the paneling and the damask came from -- not from a house being torn down.)

The cartoons on the dining room walls are Viennese, and date back 150 to 200 years. Mrs. Mesta bought them from French and Company in New York. The French Company did the painting and "filling in" where necessary. The drapes, like those in the drawing room, were made by Boudin. The lights are old Waterford ones. The furniture Mrs. Mesta had copied from some she had admired in France. Of the two consoles, one is an old Venetian one, the other a copy of it.

The iron gates at the entrance were purchased by Mrs. Mesta from a Long Island estate. They were originally, however, brought from France. Several years ago Readers Digest used these gates as an example of very fine iron gates -- the story contained a sketch of the gates, but did not say where they were located.

(This information from Mrs. George Tyson and her daughter, Mrs. Lewis Ellis)



- 1) Out Massachusetts Avenue, NW, past Ward Circle two blocks to Upton Street which cuts into Mass. Ave. on a diagonal on your left only.
- 2) Left on Upton Street to the end ----- 52nd Street.
- 3) Left on 52nd Street about one block to the iron gates on your right ---- this is 4040 52nd Street.

(If you miss Upton - and it is easy - turn left on 49th Street and proceed to Upton. Then right on Upton to 52nd and left on 52nd to the iron gates.)

[file contains six identical copies of this document]

The Elms

Massive black and gilt iron gates announce the entrance to the Elms. They are said to be among the finest examples of French gates in this country. Proceeding through the gates and up the driveway, one passes the service entrance on the left and a parking area on the right which accommodates five or six cars. The driveway then makes a circle in front of the house where an additional six cars can park without blocking the drive. There are also three one-car garages.

Two giant elm trees flank the entrance to the house. A green and white striped metal awning covers the entrance. The handsome double doors open into a foyer, 8'x9', which has an ample coat closet for men on the right and a large ladies' powder room on the left. The latter is beautifully furnished with parquet floors, a chandelier, and a spacious closet for ladies' coats.

The entrance hall, 21'x14', has a black and white marble floor -- excellent for dancing. The wall opposite the entrance is lovely wood paneling brought from a chateau in Versailles. There is a mirror and a large Louis Sixteenth console which was bought for the space and may remain with the house.

Straight ahead is the Baiserie, or Terrace room, 20'13'9", perhaps the most charming room in the house and used by the Johnsons as an intimate living room. The floors are oak parquet, brought from a chateau in Versailles and approximately 150 years old. The walls are paneling from the same chateau and finished in soft grey-green. The heart of the room is a large fireplace above which there is a mirror. In the middle of the room hangs a delicately designed chandelier. The entire East side of the room consists of french doors and windows which open onto the large flagstone terrace giving the room an open, airy feeling in the summertime.

The Elms - Page Two

To the right of the foyer and several steps down is the large salon, 19' 10" x 28' 9", with a fireplace over which there is an antique mirror surrounded by wood paneling. On the West side are 2 large windows and on the East side there are two french doors opening onto the flagstone terrace making for an easy flow of large parties in the summertime. The parquet flooring and the rose damask walls are from the Versailles chateau. The chandelier -- the most handsome one in the house -- once hung in the home of antique collectors Lord and Lady Beaty (he was head of the British Navy during World War I.)

At the end of the large salon is the Sun Room, 19' x 11' 6", with terra cotta and white marble flooring. The windows on the South look to the Swimming Pool and on the West side the french doors open onto the flagstone terrace. Built-in bookshelves and cabinets add to the charm and versatility of this room.

To the left of the entrance hall is the dining room, 23' 3" x 17' 7", with parquet floors from Versailles. The most charming feature of the room is the old Viennese cartoons on the walls, 150 - 200 years old, depicting in lovely pastels the games played by elegant people in those days. The chandelier is an old Waterford one. The furniture, including a table with 22 Louis Quinze chairs, plus two handsome consoles -- one of which is an original -- may remain with the house. There are ~~two~~ large french doors which open onto the terrace which makes a combination of 4 chief entertainment areas -- the foyer, the large salon, the baiserie, and the dining room -- an unusually well-arranged, easily flowing entertaining unit.

The Elms - Page Three

Off the dining room, is the circular breakfast room, 12'10" in diameter, which the Johnsons used constantly as a family dining room.

From this family dining room, one enters the "working part" of the house -- the pantry, 13'6"x8", with unusually adequate storage space for linens, china, crystal and decorative items plus a sink which is useful for flower arranging and other auxiliary functions.

The kitchen, 13'4"x16', contains a commercial size double oven - Garland stove - with 6 burners, purchased in the summer of 1961.

Off the kitchen is another pantry room, 9'6" x 5'6", containing a refrigerator and a huge upright deep freeze, purchased in 1961. The back door, for grocery deliveries and general service entrance opens onto a paved courtyard and immediate access to the driveway.

From the kitchen, returning toward the front of the house, one passes through a room 7'x7'6", where there is a large size commercial refrigerator and an ice-maker which supplies enough ice for practically any size crowd. These services, plus a dumb waiter which goes from the basement to the 3rd floor, and an incinerator where paper and many waste products can be disposed of, helped make this house -- in Mrs. Johnson's eyes -- both efficiently and happily equipped for entertaining.

The back stairs lead up through a hallway to the 2nd and 3rd floors. There is also a back hall, with a gentlemen's lavatory, which provides access to the front door from the kitchen without passing through the dining room.

As one starts up the circular stairway, the enormous chandelier, dominating the entrance hall is a delight to pass. At the head of the stairs is a half-circle hall opening onto the Master Bedroom 17'x19'10", which has two windows on the West and two windows on the East. The handsome beige rug will remain. The Master Bathroom 10'x9'4", has a raised tub enclosed in marble, a separate glass enclosed shower, and an unusually adequate medicine cabinet, and shelf and storage space and lighting. The floor is also marble, but is carpeted to match the bedroom -- for comfort's sake. The master Dressing-room, 10'x12', has an array of built-in closets, shoe shelves and drawers to delight the heart of any woman, plus a window that looks out on the apple tree and the flagstone terrace below -- a view to get any day off to a good start.

Adjoining the Master Bedroom is the room Mrs. Johnson used for her office. It is a bright and cheery room and as it is above the boiserie, it is slightly circular with a spreading view of the grounds below. The amber carpet which matches the walls will remain. Behind doors, there are shelves and built-in drawers which are wonderful for men's shirts and attire and two additional cedar lined closets which might usefully serve to store gentlemen's sport and dress clothes. Also off the upstairs hall is a large cedar lined closet with 12 feet of hanging space and a generous amount of shelves for shoes and hats.

To the left, as one reaches the top of the stairs is one of the most attractive bedrooms 16'9" x 14'3", papered in a butterfly wallpaper in blue and white with a blue carpet and adjoining bath.

The Elms - Page Five

The long hall to the left, leading to the North end of the house has two linen closets, two bedrooms opening off it. The first bedroom on the right is 17'9" x 15'4", with three windows facing East making it a light and cheerful room. The chief delight is a walk-in closet which any girl of the family would cherish for its Ten feet of hanging space, plus ample shelves above. The yellow bathroom to the right serves this room and also joins the room used by Mrs. Johnson as an office.

The second bedroom off the hall, 17'6" x 12'9", was used as a guest room and because it is above the family dining room is architecturally rather a part of "The Norman Tower" and has unusual charm. A small hall opens off the bedroom to a bathroom on the left and a walk-in closet on the right with 5 feet of hanging space and built-in shelves.

At the end of the hall is the room used by the Johnsons as a family room. The entire South wall has built-in book shelves reaching almost to the ceiling with storage space below and a long book case along the East wall. This room, bright with books, the floor covered with a soft orange rug, and lighted by three windows, was one of the Johnson's children's favorite rooms. A small room adjoining contains a sink and small refrigerator and counter space, making a refreshment center which served this family room excellently for children's entertainment.

The large flagstone terrace, on the East side of the house, is ideal for summertime entertaining. Beautiful iron lawn furniture with cushions, plus two huge azalea trees add to the attractiveness of this area.

Leaving the terrace and walking down several steps, one sees a lovely fish pond, flanked by four magnificent holly trees which are boxed trimmed. In this area, Mrs. Johnson always planted colorful summer flowers -- zinnias, marigolds -- to use in the house.

To the left is the bathhouse -- rather French in design -- with two dressing rooms, each containing more than adequate shelves, racks and hanging space. There is a lavatory in the center with private entrance.

Walking down several more steps, one reaches the Swimming Pool. The pool is heated, surrounded by a hardwood screening fence 8' in height which gives complete privacy for this area. There is a shower attached to a handsome rock retaining wall by the pool.

Off to the side of the pool, toward Dalecarlia Drive, is an area the Johnsons had cleared with the thought of making it into a picnic spot for informal entertaining for the children. It has been planted with daffodil bulbs and shaded by pine trees -- which will truly be a fairyland this Spring.

In another area, a group of disease-resistant roses is planted which provide beautiful blooms and require little or no care.

Between the terrace and the fence is a small pebbled area that was used for outdoor barbecuing, since the Johnsons liked informal summer evening dinner on the terrace.

On the lawn on 52nd Street are several Magnolia trees -- one of which is rated as the most beautiful specimen in the area. It stands about 30' tall and has cream colored blooms

The Elms * Page Seven

some 9" in diameter with an intoxicating fragrance.

The dogwoods on the property are in excellent condition. There are several handsome horse chestnut trees and many large hollies.

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(information from Mr. Crompton of W. C. & A. Miller - Em 2-4464)

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