

History of the Hay-Adams

The Hay-Adams, located across Lafayette Square from the White House, holds a special place in Washington, D.C. This classic hotel takes its name from earlier residents of its site: John Hay, private assistant to President Abraham Lincoln and later secretary of state, and Henry Adams, an acclaimed author and descendant of U.S. Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams. Like their homes, the Hotel has long been a favorite gathering place in the Nation's Capital.

Adams, his wife Marian, Hay, his wife Clara and geologist Clarence King became a close group of friends who dubbed themselves "The Five of Hearts," complete with china and letterhead stationery. In 1884, the Hays and Adamses bought adjoining lots at 16th and H Streets. Renowned architect Henry Hobson Richardson designed elaborate, Romanesque homes that became Washington's leading salons for years. The far-ranging discussions of politics, literature, science and art attracted the era's leading artists, writers and politicians, including Theodore Roosevelt, Mark Twain, Henry James and sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens.

Hay died in 1905, and when Clara died in 1914, ownership of the Hay house passed to daughter Alice Wadsworth and her husband, Sen. James Wadsworth. After Henry's 1918 death, the Wadsworths bought the Adams house, which they leased to the Brazilian embassy.

Premier Washington developer Harry Wardman bought and razed both homes in 1927. In their place, he constructed an Italian Renaissance-style apartment hotel designed by architect Mirhan Mesrobian. The 138 room Hay-Adams House cost \$900,000. It featured a dazzling array of architectural elements, including Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders, walnut wainscoting and intricate ceiling treatments with Tudor, Elizabethan and Italian motifs. Wood paneling from the Hay residence found a new home in the grand public space now known as The John Hay Room.

The Hay-Adams House opened in 1928 and quickly attracted prominent Washingtonians and elite travelers, including Charles Lindburgh, Ameila Earhart, Sinclair Lewis and Ethyl Barrymore. Guests were drawn to the Hotel by its unparalleled views of the White House, Lafayette Square and St. John's Church as well as such amenities as large suites, kitchens, steam heat, elevators, circulating ice water, and, in 1930, Washington's first air-conditioned dining room.

In 2001, the Hotel closed its doors for a major renovation. In spring 2002, the Hay-Adams re-emerged, stunningly restored with its unique ambiance well preserved yet enhanced with distinctive luxury features orchestrated by the widely acclaimed Washington designer, Thomas Pheasant.

The Hay-Adams has maintained its reputation over the years as a result of the dedication and sensitivities of its several private owners.

The spirit of hospitality originated by the John Hay and Henry Adams households lives on at the Hay-Adams today. The stability and strength of its management and staff combined with distinctive luxury features create the residence of choice for discriminating visitors and an elegant oasis for the citizens of the Washington area.

The Hay Adams