

ARCHITECTURAL
STUDY
OF AN
AMERICAN LEGATION
IN
BEIRUT

KASPARIAN

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OF AN
AMERICAN LEGATION
IN
BEIRUT

Made
by

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The first American consular representation in Lebanon was established in about 1832 as a consular agency in Beirut.

Relations between the United States and Lebanon increased as a result of the immigration into America of a great number of Lebanese nationals, many of whom returned to their country of origin after their naturalization as American citizens.

With the establishment of the American Mission in Beirut, American missionaries and teachers in increased numbers came to Lebanon. Missions, schools and hospitals were opened in various cities in Lebanon and Syria. The American University of Beirut was founded in 1867, which ⁵soon became the intellectual center of all the Near and Middle East.

Economic and business relations between these two countries increased gradually. Lebanon was in need of manufactured goods while the United States needed the raw materials produced in Lebanon and Syria.

With the expansion of economic, business, cultural and political relations between the United States and Lebanon, the Consular Agency was found to be inadequate to represent the United States. Therefore, a Consulate was established in 1850 in Beirut. It was raised to a Consulate General in about 1905, and following the recognition of the Independence of Lebanon it was raised to a Legation on November 17, 1942.

As a result of the establishment of diplomatic representation, Offices of Military and Naval Attaches were added to the Legation. A new department, the Office of War Information, which was later on called the United States Information Service, was established during the war for the purpose of furnishing true information and establishing better understanding between the peoples of Lebanon and America.

It has been impossible to ascertain the location of the consular premisses from 1850 to 1896. From 1896 to 1905, the Consulate General was in the Bassoul Building, next to the American University Hospital. In 1905 the Consulate General was transferred to the first story of the Omar Bey Daouk's building at Rue Georges Picot. Thereafter it was transferred to the Mizher building at Rue Abdel Kader. On July 1, 1936 the Shoucair building at Rue de l'Amérique was rented for the Consulate General. This building was later on found to be insufficient to quarter the increasing number of the Legation's personnel. Therefore, the Bassoul Building was again rented.

At present this building is used by the Legation proper and the Consular Section of the Legation. The Commercial Section has its offices in a separate building opposite the Legation. The Offices of the Military and Naval Attaches are in the former American Consulate General building at Rue de l'Amérique, whereas the United States Information Service has its quarters at the Omar Bey Daouk's building at Rue Georges Picot.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the present Legation building is not sufficient to provide space for the various sections of the Legation which are now quartered in four different buildings. Therefore, there is an urgent need for an adequate Legation building to quarter all of the above departments, which, it is believed, will further increase in personnel in proportion to the growing of commercial, economic and political importance of the State of Lebanon.

With these points in mind, the ^{Author}~~undersigned~~ has prepared the attached plan for a Legation with the hope that it will be sufficient to meet the requirements of the American Legation.

T H E S I T E

In selecting a site for the construction of the Legation building, consideration should be given to the following points:

1. It should be situated in one of the best locations of the city;
2. It must be near the American establishments - The American University, the American Hospital and the American Junior College;
3. It should not be far from the main road or the tramway line, so as to be easily accessible to the public.

The grounds of the present Legation quarters fulfills the above requirements, but it is not large enough to provide for a garden around the building, which may also be used for receptions during the summer season.

Therefore, the author suggests a place near the Junior College towards the Rue Bliss. The lands at this location are comparatively ^Gsheep and fulfill the above requirements. A rectangular ground 120 x 77 meters with its 120 M. side on the main road has been chosen for this construction. Its total area is 9240 square meters of which 1160 square meters will be used for the building and the balance for the Minister's villa, gardens and roads.

The construction of such a building in this quarter may be the starting point of an expansion of the city of Beirut towards the South West. In case this expansion is carried out according to good town planning schemes, this part may soon become an ultra modern section of the city of Beirut, say the New Beirut.

MAIN DIVISIONS
OF
BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

The following are the main divisions of the Legation, to each of which space has been allocated in the building according to its importance and convenience to its relation with the public.

1. The Legation
2. Consular Section
3. Commercial Section
4. The Office of the Military Attache
5. The Office of the Naval Attache
6. United States Information Service
7. Service quarters.

The building has three stories. The ground floor will be used as service quarters. It includes the garages, quarters for Cavasses and guards and store rooms. The first and second floors will be used by the above mentioned six sections of the Legation.

Since the ground is sloping towards the south, the building will be seen as having two floors from the front, and three floors from the back. The ground floor will therefore have its entrance only from the back.

TYPE OF BUILDING, LOCATION OF DIFFERENT SECTIONS
AND SUBDIVISION OF LAND

The construction of L or the U type are most suitable for official buildings. The L type is unsymmetrical whereas the U type is symmetrical around a central axis.

Since symmetry gives an effect of balance to the medium observer, the U type has been selected. The building will, therefore, have two wings each 21 meters long, joined by a central part 40 meters long.

A. FIRST FLOOR

The Legation proper has been placed in the central part of the building since this is the best part. It will occupy the first floor and the right half of the second floor.

The Consular Section is located in the left wing, while the right wing is set for the Commercial Section.

B. SECOND FLOOR

The Office of the Military Attache has been placed in the left wing, having next to it the Office of the Naval Attache.

The apartment for guests is located just to the left of the Hall.

The reception quarters occupy the right half of the central part of the building, and the United States Information Service will occupy the left wing.

It is

It is obvious from the distribution of the above various departments that four different entrances are required.

The main entrance at the center of the building will be used as entrance for the Legation proper. It is made somewhat monumental and therefore becomes the point of attraction of the building. It consists of 3 x 9 meters raised platform projecting out from the building, reached from three sides by means of 8 steps. This platform has 3 arches and the covered top serves as a veranda for the second floor.

At the back of these three arches, 3 doors of 1.80 x 3.00 M. open into a central big hall which connects the two sides of the building and the two floors together.

A large central stairway 2 meters wide connects the first floor to the second floor and ends in a hall. The central part has 13 steps. Thereafter it is divided into two parts and comes to the hall by means of two flights, 1.60 M. wide. A wooden balustrade gives a neater appearance to the whole in general. Under this central stairway, a second one starting from the south goes down to the ground floor, which is used only by the service.

A second entrance in the middle of the left wing will be used by the Consular Section. It is 3 meters ~~wide~~, has 8 steps, and the landing at which it ends is 2 x 3 m. The two sides will have stone made balustrades 70 cm. high and 40 cm. thick.

By means of large door 2 x 3 m. we enter into a hall which will be used as waiting room for the Consular Section. At the back of this hall we have a staircase which leads to the Offices of the Military and Naval Attaches on the second floor.

The right wing will have an entrance, symmetrical to the second, which will be used by the U. S. I. S. and the Commercial Section.

The fourth entrance will be from the back of the building and will be used only by those connected with the service.

With these divisions and entrances in mind, the ground has been arranged so as to fit its purpose.

A central road, 8 meters wide, leads from the main road up to the main entrance. Two side roads, 6 meters wide each, lead to the Commercial and Consular Sections, respectively. They meet at the back of the building near the garages.

In front of the building an eight meters wide road joins the first three, thus completing the circle around the Legation.

On occasions of important official receptions, the following circulation may be practiced:

All cars will come from the central road, leave their occupants near the main entrance and then take their right and returning from the back yard stop in front of the Consular Section. This will provide efficient circulation and thus prevent practically all possibility of accidents.

The rest of the ground is to be divided as shown on general location plan No. 8.

The two front gardens will have small circular sections at their centers covered with grass, forming the United States Eagle.

The west part of the grounds will be used for garden parties. It is divided into three parts, 2 circular and 1 oval, each having a pool at the center, and surrounded by perigolas covered with green plants. These will beautify the gardens and contribute greatly to the success of the parties given.

At the eastern corner space is provided for the construction of the future villa for the Minister, the outline of which is shown on plan no. 8. This building will have two floors; the first for reception and service quarters, while the second for sleeping quarters.

INTERIOR SUBDIVISIONS
DISPOSITION OF VARIOUS SECTIONS

The central hall divides the middle part of the building into two sections. A similar hall placed in the middle of each wing, divides the latter into two parts. These wings and the central section of the building are connected by means of three corridors. The first is in the central part, 2.60 m. wide, while the others situated in the wings are 1.80 M.

The second floor is connected to the first by means of three staircases. The main staircase starts from the main hall of the Legation quarters and enters the Hall, next to the large reception hall. As stated before it will be used during receptions and equally by occasional guests who, as it will be explained later, will have their sleeping quarters east of the hall. The second staircase, located in the east wing, starts from the back of the waiting hall, in the consular section, and in two flights reaches the second floor. It will serve the offices of the Military and Naval Attaches.

The third staircase, similar to the second, is located in the west wing, and starts also from the back of the hall. It will serve the U. S. I. S.

FIRST FLOOR

I. LEGATION QUARTERS.

Eleven rooms are necessary to accomodate the personnel of this section.

1. Office of the Minister
2. Office of the Minister's clerk
3. Reception room for the Minister
4. Office of the First Secretary and Consul
5. Office of the Second Secretary and Consul
6. Office of the Third Secretary and Vice Consul
7. Office for 2 clerks of the 1st and 2nd Secretaries
8. Office of the Interpreter
9. Office for an additional Third Secretary
10. Large reception room
11. Service.

These rooms have been placed to the right and to the left of the hall, care being taken to place together those offices which are related to each other.

The left of the hall has been chosen for the Minister's office, while the right side for the Secretaries and Consuls.

The Minister's office is on the corner and opens into the veranda. Just to its right is the office of his private secretary. The Minister's reception room is close to the hall and actually opens into it. All visitors are taken to the reception room and the Minister enters it directly through the short corridor which links his office with the reception room.

On the other side of the corridor there are the offices of the additional Third Secretary and the Interpreter and the kitchenette. The Interpreter's office has been placed almost

in front of the Minister's office since he is always called for by the Minister to act as translator and introduce official guests. The additional third secretary's office has been placed near that of the interpreter.

A modern kitchenette with all necessary accommodations for quick service has been placed opposite the reception room and will serve to prepare drinks for the Minister's guests as well as be used by the personnel of the Legation. A full plan of the kitchenette may be seen on page 14 .

On the west side of the hall and on the front part there are the offices of the first and second secretaries. Opposite these and next to the hall there are the offices of the third secretary and the room for two clerks.

The telephone switchboard is placed at the right corner of the central part. It is divided into two sections, one serving the civilian part of the Legation and the other the military and naval attaches.

A mailing office, with two similar partitions, civil and military, is placed opposite the telephone switchboard room.

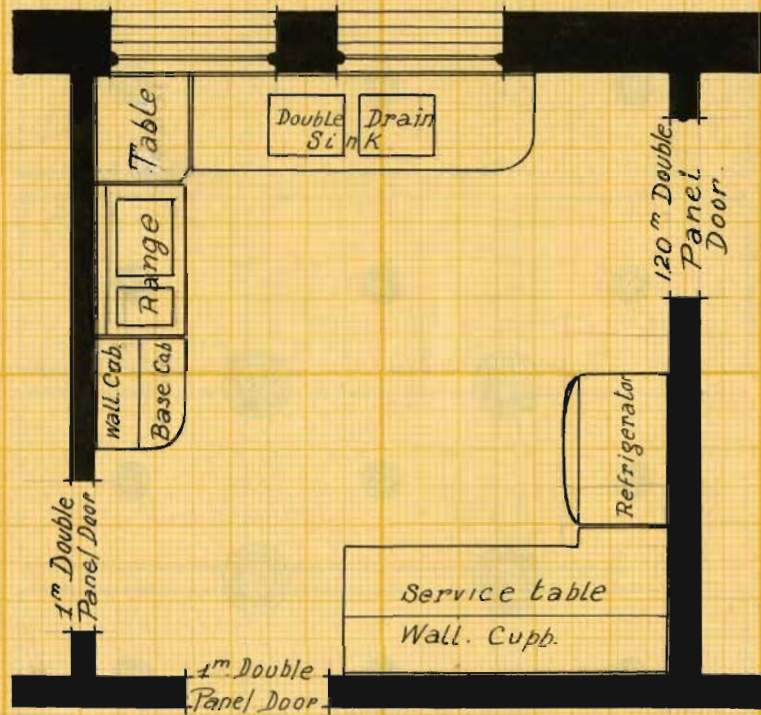
The reception hall has been placed on the second floor to the west of the hall. It will be used for official receptions and balls. It has three doors, two on the east opening into the hall, and the third on the west, opening into the corridor. It extends to the full width of the building and is 9.60 m. wide, 12.90 m. long and 6.00 m. high. It has 9 windows, 4 on

the front and five overlooking the back yard.

This hall is covered by concrete beams and girders dividing the ceiling into 12 rectangular panels. Lighting is provided with lamps put at the center of each of these panels. Four big lustres will be put as shown on the drawing, page no. 15, while small lamps are installed on the walls, which by means of indirect lighting will beautify the hall.

In order to make receptions and parties a success, it is necessary to have a good service. Although the kitchenette on the first floor may be used for this purpose, it will not give satisfaction because of its distance from the reception hall. Therefore an additional kitchenette has been placed to the west of this hall.

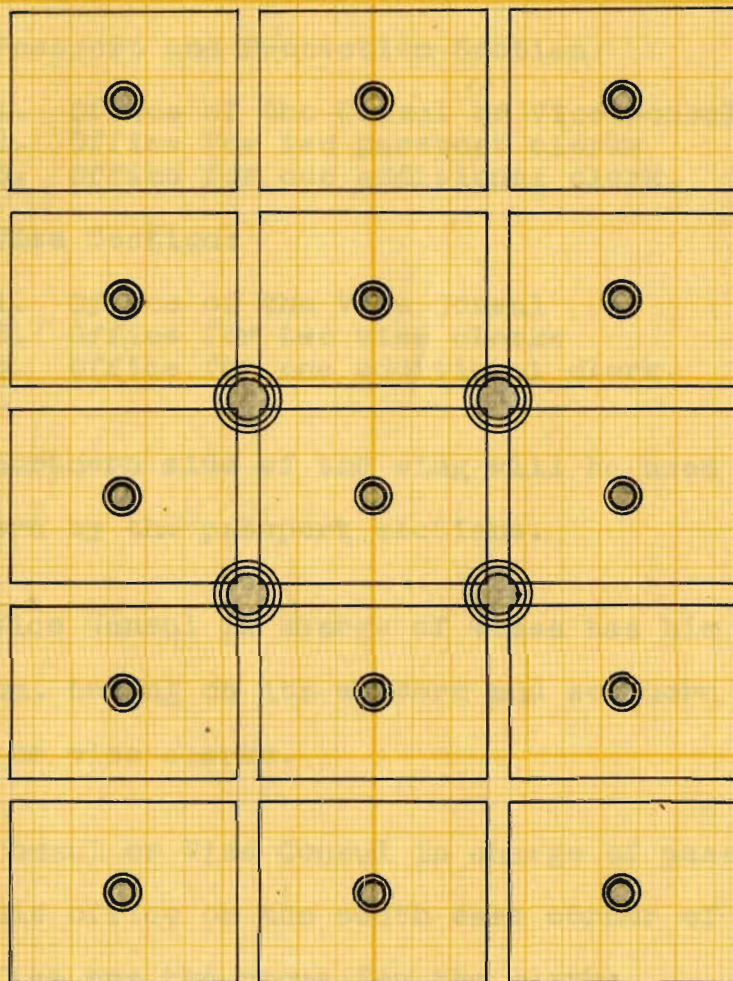
Two toilets have been placed to the west side, one for ladies and the other for gentlemen.



PLAN OF KITCHEN

IN 1st FLOOR

Scale: 1:50



*CEILING OF
RECEPTION HALL
showing lighting system*

II. CONSULAR SECTION.

This section will occupy the left wing and will accommodate the following:

A. Passport and Protection Section:

1. Office of the Consul or Vice Consul
2. Office for two passport clerks
3. Office for one additional clerk.

B. Visa Section:

1. Office of the Vice Consul
2. Office for two visa clerks
3. Office for one additional clerk.

The northern side of the wing will be used by the visa and the southern by the passport sections.

The Vice Consul in charge of visas has his office in the corner room, having on its western and southern sides, the two rooms of the visa clerks.

The Consul or Vice Consul in charge of passport and protection work has his office on the south east corner of the wing. Opposite to his office are the rooms for the clerks.

The central hall will be used as waiting room for the public who call at the Consular Section for passport or visa services.

III. COMMERCIAL SECTION.

This section has been placed in the western wing and has the following offices:

1. Office of the Commercial Attache
2. Office of the Assistant Commercial Attache
3. Office of the secretary to the Commercial Attache
4. Office for two commercial clerks
5. Office for two additional clerks and typists
6. File room
7. Waiting room.

This wing is rather similar to the eastern wing. The entrance is the same and the hall, situated in the middle of the wing, will likewise be used as waiting room.

The north western room has been assigned to the Commercial Attache because it is the best as to position and size. The room next to the hall has been given to the clerk of the Commercial Attache. The two clerks, whose work is mainly connected with that of the Commercial Attache, are placed in the room to the east of the latter's office.

The south west corner room has been chosen as the office of the Assistant Commercial Attache. To its front and on the east the office for two additional clerks and the file room have been placed.

SECOND FLOOR

I. The Office of the Military Attache:

The following rooms in the east wing are set aside for the Office of the Military Attache.

1. Office of the Military Attache
2. Office of the Assistant Military Attache
3. Office of the Second Assistant Military Attache
4. Office of the Ordinance Officer
5. Office for two clerks
6. Code and file room
7. Photography room.

The north eastern room has been reserved for the Military Attache. On its west he has the office of his secretary and on the south the office of his ordinance officer. These three rooms have been placed next to each other because of the related nature of the duties of the occupants.

The First Assistant Military Attache's office is situated next to that of the Ordinance Officer's, whereas the Second Assistant Military Attache has his office on the east side of the staircase.

The photography room has been placed in the south east corner. It has a small dark room to its west. This latter, as its name implies, should have no window. However, a window has been left for this room because of the following considerations. First, the dark room being constantly filled with acid vapours, needs better ventilation. Second, since we have a similar window on the first floor, it would not be logical to close
the

the corresponding window on the second floor. In case of omission of this window, the harmony and balance of the building would be lost.

The code and filing room has been placed on the south west corner, next to the dark room.

II. The Office of the Naval Attache.

This section which is closely related to the Office of the Military Attache has been placed at the west of the latter, and has the following:

1. Office of the Naval Attache
2. Office of the Assistant Naval Attache
3. Office of the Chief and one clerk.

The offices of the Naval Attache and that of the Assistant Naval Attache are placed in the front part of the building, whereas the office of the Chief and one clerk to the south of the corridor.

The room to the west of the office of the Assistant Naval Attache may be used as an accounting office to serve both the Offices of the Military and Naval Attaches.

III. GUEST APARTMENT

The Legation often receives official guests - Consuls, Vice Consuls and couriers - who at present are accommodated in the hotels. In order to provide adequate quarters for these guests, a special guest apartment has been arranged to the east of the hall. It is composed of two sleeping rooms

with

with a modern bath room. One of the sleeping rooms will be on the north, while the second on the south, having to its east the bath room.

Each sleeping room will have a bed, a night table, a cupboard, a desk and a book case. A door separates this apartment from the office of the Naval Attache. Should someone want to pass to the reception hall, he may pass through the corridor of the guest apartment.

IV. THE UNITED STATES INFORMATION SERVICE.

This department was established during the last war, mainly for the purpose of improving the social and cultural relations between the United States and Lebanon.

The main subdivisions of this department are as follows:

1. Office of the Director of the U.S.I.S.
2. Office of the Assistant Director
3. Office of the Second Assistant Director
4. Office for two clerks
5. Distributing office
6. Photograph and duplicator office
7. Radio reception room.

The north east corner room has been assigned to the Director. The room to its east just opposite to the staircase is given to his secretary. The distributing office is placed to the south near the stairs so as to be easily accessible to the public.

The Assistant Director's office is on the south of the distributing office, with photograph and duplicator rooms to its east and the radio reception room to its south. The latter

two rooms have been placed there because they have practically no relation with the public.

GROUND FLOOR

Only the central part of the ground floor has been used for the service quarters, garages and store rooms. The rest of this floor has been filled with earth.

As stated before, the entrance to the ground floor is from the south and the windows placed are only on the south wall, the front part being closed. This entrance opens into a small hall from which a staircase leads up to the first floor.

On the west of this hall there are the garages, on the east the rooms for the Cavasses and guards, and on the north and north east the store rooms. The latter have no window openings to the outside; therefore, in order to provide sufficient light and proper ventilation, their interior walls have been made 60 centimeters shorter and the open part is grilled with iron bars.

One of these two store rooms is 5.30 x 7.60 meters, and the other 8.40 x 2.80 meters. Between them there is a special room where the cabinets containing confidential documents of the Legation are kept.

The rooms for the Cavasses and guards look towards the south. They are separated by a toilet. The first room will accommodate two or three men, while the second will be used by two guards, one of whom is always on duty.

The garage is 12 x 14 meters and may accommodate very easily 8 to 9 cars. Its entrance door is 2.50 meters high and 4.50 meters wide, providing enough space for any car to enter. An inner door opens into the small hall, so that those who park their cars in the garage and desire to enter the first floor may pass to the hall from this door, and through the staircase reach the first floor without being obliged to leave the building.

OUTSIDE APPEARANCE OF THE BUILDING

Architectural Details, Decorations and Construction

As stated before the building appears to have only two floors when seen from its front. The first floor is 1.40 meters above the ground and is reached by eight steps.

The main entrance, with U shape steps, is situated at the center of the building.

The first floor wings have two verandas. On the second floor and over these verandas, there are two large balconies covered with colored translucent glass. This improves greatly the outside appearance of the building.

The first and second floors are each 5 meters high, except the reception room, which has a height of 6 meters. Therefore there will be a non-continuous slab which, if seen from outside, will make the building unbalanced and reduce its architectural value to practically nil. Care has been taken to improve this unavoidable irregularity, and the following solution has been found.

The two side wings will have a small parapet wall 0.30 meter high. Their height will therefore be 11.70 m. above the ground. The two sides of the central hall will have a high parapet wall of 1.30 meters, which will hide the irregularities of the reception room.

The central hall or the staircase room is made one meter higher than the two sides. Its total height is therefore 14.50 meters above the ground. The height of the building gradually increased from the two sides up to the center, and thus a certain vertical effect is produced.

The windows of the two floors have been combined by means of vertical recessed parts, which improve the appearance of the building. On the detail drawing, page 27 one set of windows is shown.

On top of every set we have a decoration as it is shown on the detail drawing. These have been put not only to make the building more attractive, but to make it compatible with the country in which it is built. It is natural to expect that all official buildings should more or less reflect the architecture of the country, otherwise they will look out of place. For this reason the Phoenician decoration has been selected. The same decoration has also been used over the arches on the main central entrance.

The outside walls are made of good yellow limestone, 40 cm. thick and left in rough shape. Over the parapet walls there is a cornice of 15 cm. thick made of polished stones which will contrast with the lower rough stones.

The space between the sets of windows of the first and second floors is made of smooth finished stones (Nahite). However, the keystone of the windows is left rough thus giving another contrast.

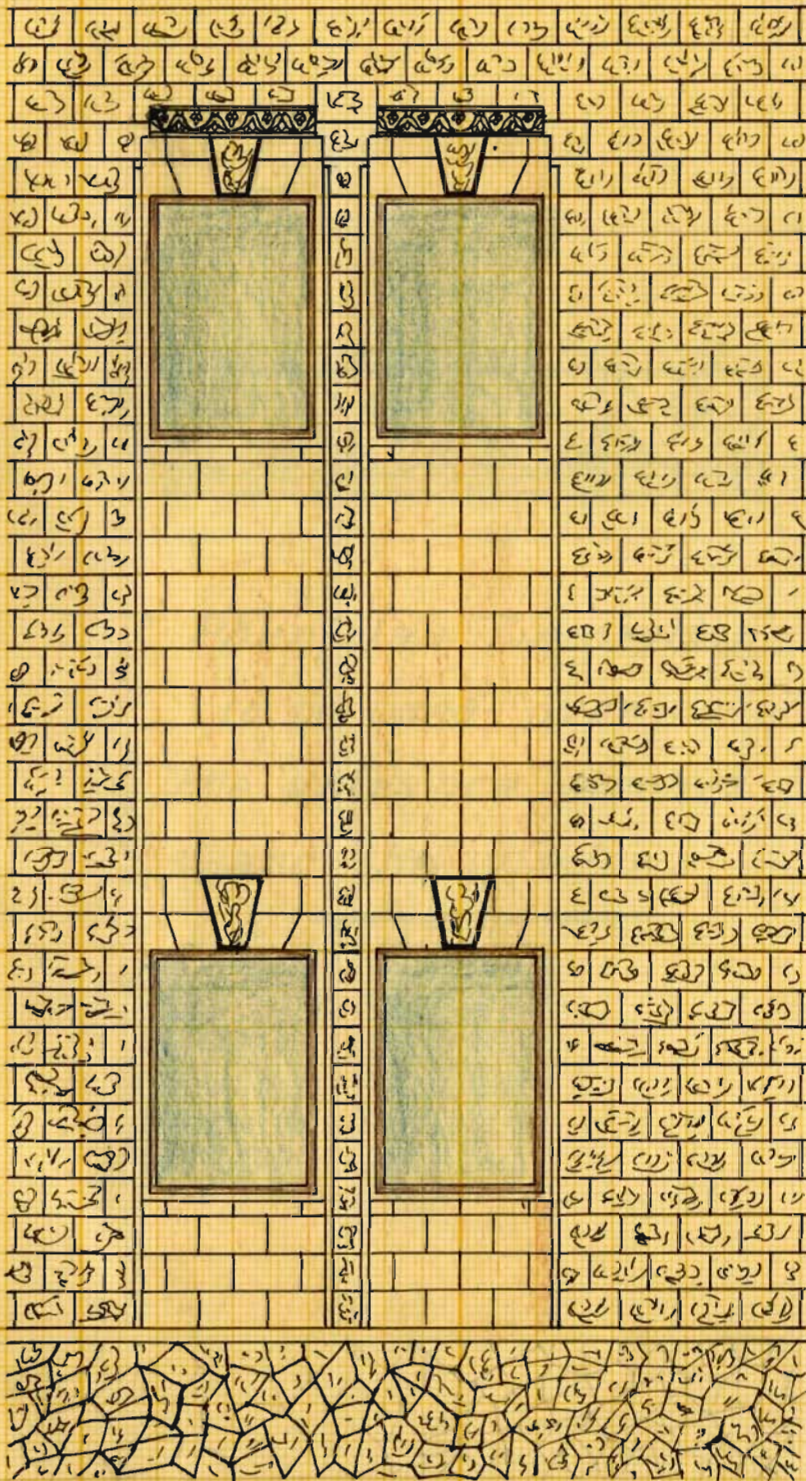
At the center of the building the United States Ensignia is carefully carved with a fine finish. It is 1.50 m. in diameter, and on its outside part there is a 10 cm. thick ring projecting out, likewise finely finished. The rest will be left rough which will produce another contrast and further beautify the building.

The outside walls under the first floor are 50 cm. thick, with a 10 cm. outside projection. They are made in polygonal masonry, with the same kind of yellow limestone and contrast with the rest of the walls which are of ashler masonry in regular courses.

As the limestone is generally 20-25 cm. thick, the rest of the wall will have to be filled to make 40 cm. thick in all. The walls at the windows and doors being only 20 cm. thick, the internal filling is not necessary.

The interior construction is made with beams supported by columns. Similar beams on top of the outside walls connect the external walls to the internal structure, thus combining all into one solid piece.

The inside walls are built of 20 cm. cement blocks, and the light partitions of 12 centimeters thick blocks. However, the walls of the bathroom in the guest apartment will have to be built of bricks, because of their being good insulator of heat.



*Details
of the
Stone Work
at the
Windows*



Phenician Decoration
to be used over
the entrance arches
and the windows



THE UNITED STATES EAGLE TO BE CARVED ON THE FRONT.

CONCLUSION.

From the foregoing explanations, discussions and plans the Legation building may be considered to be satisfactory both from architectural and functional point of views. However, it is probable that objection may be made that care has not been given to the economic side. In this connection consideration should be given to the fact that the United States is the wealthiest nation of the world which is spending great sums of money for the maintenance of its prestige and relative position among other nations, even in many cases by lending money to other governments. Therefore, the spending of a few hundred thousand dollars more on the construction of a Legation building in Lebanon compatible with its prestige and grandor may very well be justified. Furthermore, the construction of such a Legation building in Beirut will manifest the interest that the Government of the United States takes in Lebanon and the importance it attaches to its diplomatic representation in foreign countries.

May 1947,
J. K. Kasparian B.A.

