A Home for the Federation

In November of this year the Federation took title to a property of about 12 acres and buildings, located in Bethesda, Maryland, intended to be its permanent home. This acquisition was the final outcome of several years of discussion, investigation and planning, since the time when it became apparent that the growth of the Federation and its member Societies would eventually require quarters larger and more permanent than could be provided by the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council.

The choice of this property was made after careful consideration of many factors. It was agreed by the members of the former Executive Committee and of the Federation Board, who considered the question at several meetings, that the general area of Washington was the location desired. Washington's importance as the nation's capital, the concentration there of research laboratories of Government agencies, and, particularly, the presence there of the offices of many other national scientific societies, led to this conclusion. Town properties, while more appealing in some respects, were very expensive and presented the possibility of decreasing values viewed as a long-term investment. After examining several possibilities, the Federation Board, for the year 1953-54, with Dr. K. K. Chen as Chairman, concluded that the property finally purchased combined the factors of suitability for use, opportunity for expansion, minimal depreciation of value, modest investment needed and location close to the large research centers of the Naval Medical Research Institute and of the National Institutes of Health. The entrance to the property is on Wisconsin Avenue extended, a main arterial highway to Washington, less than a mile north of the NIH and the NMRI; it is about 6 miles from the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The distance from Washington's Union Station is about 12 miles.

The buildings on the property consist of a large fieldstone house and four-car garage, a frame barn and a caretaker's house, and a small greenhouse. The buildings were designed from the former owner's plans by a well-known Washington firm of architects, Porter and Locke, and were completed between 1929 and 1932 at a total cost of approximately $120,000, exclusive of landscaping, which was done by Robert B. Crickland of Philadelphia. Several century-old trees have been left in their original locations, and the planned planting includes many unusual and valuable species besides those ordinarily used in formal plantings. Landscaping is said to be one of the best examples in the Washington area. The formal plantings of English boxwood are particularly beautiful. At the left of the entrance, a boxwood and cedar alley leads to a small amphitheater and summerhouse, while at the rear a box-bordered lawn gives access to a small formal garden planted with azaleas.

The main house is situated on a knoll, about 200 yards from the highway. It is of simple but elegant Georgian design, with 20 rooms and 7 baths on the three floors, and with furnace room and space for six additional rooms in the basement, a total of over 7500 square feet of usable space. The best materials and methods were specified in its construction and it has been maintained in excellent condition. Steel beams and masonry comprise the framework, with outer walls of 16-inch stone faced inside with terra cotta tile. The floors are hardwood throughout, and the details of wallpaper, trim, woodwork, fixtures and the six fireplaces are in excellent taste. Two rooms on the main floor are wood-paneled.

Since the plans were drawn to meet the needs and tastes of a private family, it was to be anticipated that some remodeling would be necessary to make the house suitable for use as offices. The
most extensive alterations were those undertaken to convert the basement floor for use by the business office. Damp-proofing and paneling of walls was done and an auxiliary heating plant was installed. A shaft has been made for installation later of a small, motor-driven hoist to facilitate delivery of supplies to upper floors. One large room provides space for the bookkeeping, accounting and subscription activities; smaller rooms house the mailing equipment and the addressograph and multigraph machinery. A lunch room for the staff members has also been installed on this floor.

On the main floor, a spacious central hall with a graceful open stairway runs from front to rear of the house. The reception desk and telephone switchboard have been located here. To the left as one enters is the former living room, 35 feet long and 20 feet wide, with a large open fireplace. French windows on either side of the fireplace open onto a porch, and others at the rear of the room give access to the gardens. This room will be kept and furnished as a conference room for meetings of the Federation Board and Society Councils, and for board and committee meetings of the member Societies when desired. On the right of the entrance hall are the former dining room and the walnut-paneled library, both with open fireplaces. Five other rooms on this floor, formerly breakfast room, gun room, butler’s pantry, kitchen and servant’s dining room, have been converted to office use. Three of these have been set aside for working and drafting rooms for the editorial section, considerable alterations, not yet entirely complete, being necessary here.

The second floor, with seven large rooms and five baths, has not been altered from its original state. Three of the rooms are occupied, respectively, by the Convention office, the Federation Placement Service, and the Register of Scientific and Technical Personnel. The third floor has four finished rooms (one corresponding in size to the large living room on the main floor), one bath and three large storage rooms.

Space in the main house is thus available for any foreseeable expansion of the Federation’s activities, or for use by any of the member Societies who may wish to establish executive or editorial offices in the Washington area. Also under consideration is the possibility that organizations outside the Federation, but closely allied to its interests, may wish to rent space.
Front of main portion of house

Rear of house from the garden
The purchase of the property was made possible by a combination of several fortunate circumstances and by the cooperation of the other occupants of the joint offices, the American Physiological Society. Placed on the market for quick sale to settle an estate, the property originally consisted of approximately 38 acres, and the price eventually offered and accepted was $225,000, inclusive of fees. The Federation being unable to finance the purchase within the short time available and because of uncertainty as to occupancy being permitted under zoning regulations, the Board of Publication Trustees and the Council of the American Physiological Society stepped in at this point and made funds available to purchase the property for the Society. An application for occupancy for headquarters and editorial offices, supported by the endorsement of local Citizens' Associations, finally received the approval of the Montgomery County Zoning Board, and the office staff moved from its old quarters leased from the National Research Council on August 12, 1954.

The American Physiological Society then commenced negotiations for the sale of the surplus acreage to a builder-developer, which resulted in the sale of 26.8 acres for approximately $120,000. Sufficient land was retained to preserve the character of the surroundings. With the sale of this surplus land completed, the Federation then was in a position to purchase from the American Physiological Society the remaining 11.4 acres and the buildings for a total sum of $100,000, financed partly from reserve funds and partly by a mortgage to the Riggs National Bank of Washington. The purchase price set was an arbitrary one and the American Physiological Society has agreed with the Federation that the financial transaction between them will not entail any profit to the Society, but only reimbursement for costs from the time of their purchase. A conservative estimate of the value of the property as acquired by the Federation is $225,000.

The problem of securing additional funds towards the purchase, and to cover the costs incurred in remodeling, has been met for the present largely through the energy and initiative of Dr. K. K. Chen, who secured contributions amounting to $24,100 from industrial firms in the fields of the Federation and from a few individuals. The names of the donors are given below, and their generous contributions are acknowledged with thanks.

Abbott Laboratories
Burroughs Wellcome & Company (U.S.A.)
Ciba Pharmaceutical Products, Inc.
Hoffmann-LaRoche, Inc.
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E. R. Squibb & Sons
The Upjohn Company
K. K. Chen
Milton O. Lee
Elmer L. Sevringhaus
Frederick F. Younken

Responsibility for the management of the property and allocation of space will now be assumed by a new committee, the Federation Headquarters Committee. Members pro tem have been appointed by the Chairman of the Federation Board, Dr. D. Murray Angervine, as follows: L. N. Katz (Physiology), H. B. Vickery (Biochemistry), J. C. Krantz, Jr. (Pharmacology), H. L. Stewart (Pathology), J. H. Roe (Nutrition) and Harry Eagle (Immunology).

The names "Beaumont" and "Beaumont House," for William Beaumont, have been proposed for the property and the house, but final decision has not yet been made.

To members of the Federation Societies, the officers and staff of the Federation extend a cordial welcome to visit the Federation home. It is hoped that as these, the real owners, become acquainted with the home in its beautiful surroundings, other Societies besides the American Physiological Society may avail themselves of its facilities, and that it may become a true headquarters and center for the activities and interests of all the constituent Societies.

Milton O. Lee
Federation Secretary