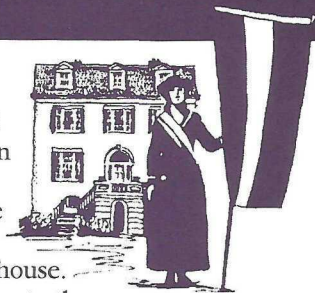


Sewall-Belmont House

Washington, D.C.

The Sewall-Belmont House is one of the oldest houses on Capitol Hill. It was built by Robert Sewall in 1799-1800. On August 24, 1814, during the War of 1812, shots were fired at the British by American flotillamen who had occupied the house.



Those shots were the only resistance to the British invasion of Washington, D.C. In retaliation, the British burned the house; it was the only private house they burned deliberately that day although they burned most of the public buildings. In 1820, Robert Sewall rebuilt the house and it was owned by his descendants until 1922.

Among the prominent people who lived in the house was Albert Gallatin, who was secretary of the treasury under Presidents Jefferson and Madison, minister to France and Great Britain, and one of the founders of New York University. Gallatin rented the house and lived there with his family from 1801-1813. While living in the house, he handled the financial arrangements for the Louisiana Purchase.

Since 1929, the house has been the headquarters of the National Woman's Party and for forty-three years it was the residence of the party's legendary founder, Alice Paul. Alice Paul founded the National Woman's Party in 1916 to press for woman suffrage. Members of her activist group chained themselves to the White House fence and staged parades and hunger strikes to attract national attention. The gold and purple banner that they carried to the White House hangs in the hallway of the Sewall-Belmont House and proclaims: "We demand an amendment to the United States Constitution enfranchising women." The 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote was added to the Constitution on August 26, 1920. The proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), drafted by Alice Paul in 1923, has yet to gain final ratification. In the years since the National Woman's Party moved into the house, it has been a center for women's rights activities and is now a unique museum dedicated to women's long campaign for full citizenship.

The Sewall-Belmont House was named for the original owner, Robert Sewall, and for Alva Belmont, whose financial contribution enabled the National Woman's Party to purchase the house. The house was designated a National Historic Site by an Act of Congress in 1974. That act also provides for the restoration, preservation, and maintenance of the house in cooperation with the National Park Service. Susan B. Anthony's desk, upon which she worked on the 19th Amendment, and a life-size statue of Joan of Arc, a gift from Ms. Belmont, stand among the marble busts and portraits of woman suffrage leaders in the house, reminders of the commitment of women prepared to fight for their rights.

There is no substitute for touching the books our foremothers read, seeing the strokes of handwriting that expressed their thoughts, walking the halls that channeled their days.

GLORIA STEINEM, FEBRUARY 2002

TEXT OF THE ERA

“EQUALITY OF RIGHTS UNDER THE LAW SHALL NOT BE DENIED OR ABRIDGED BY THE UNITED STATES OR BY ANY STATE ON ACCOUNT OF SEX”.



LOCATION:

144 Constitution Ave., NE. The house stands on Capitol Hill at the corner of Second Street and Constitution Avenue, next to the Hart Senate Office Building.

Metro: Union Station or Capitol South.

HOUSE TOUR AND MUSEUM SHOP HOURS:

Tuesday through Friday: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Saturday: 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

To schedule a group tour call 202-546-1210.

FEATURES:

- Memorabilia of the National Woman's Party and the movements for suffrage and women's rights.
- Houses the oldest feminist library in the country.
- Available for weddings, receptions and other events. For rental information call 202-546-3989.
- Not accessible to wheelchairs.

INFORMATION:

202-546-1210 • Fax 202-546-3997

e-mail: info@sewallbelmont.org

www.sewallbelmont.org

Sewall-Belmont House
144 Constitution Avenue, NE
Washington, D.C. 20002

The Sewall-Belmont House is an affiliated area of the National Park Service.



Number 5 in a series about interesting sites in the Washington area by Parks & History Association, Washington, D.C. 20032, 800-990-7275 1997, in cooperation with the National Park Service.