American Embassy Properties in Algiers

Their Origins and History

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(Ambassador to Algeria 1988-1991)

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Introduction

The United States Government owns two properties in Algiers – Montfield and Oued El Kilai. The first is the Ambassador's Residence; the second includes the residence of the Deputy Chief of Mission, the General Services Section and other offices of the Embassy, and the American School of Algiers.

In addition, the U.S. Government leases Villas Mektoub and Inchallah from the Algerian Government. The first is the Chancery proper; the second is the adjacent Chancery proper; the second is the adjacent Chancery annex.

The following pages are an attempt to give Americans visiting and working in Algiers a sense of the origins of the Embassy neighborhood, as well as a history of each Embassy property.

The sources for the information presented in these pages include a variety of published materials, the archives of the Algerian Government's "Administration des Affaires Domaniales et Foncières," which preserve the registers of the French administration's "Bureau des Hypothèques," Anglican Church records, Embassy and FBO files, and the memories of Algiers residents. Further research would undoubtedly reveal additional details of the history of these properties and their successive owners.

I am especially indebted to Osman Bencherif for sharing his work in progress on the Anglo-American experience in Algeria, to Zahiya Neggas for having given me access to the rare book collection of the Palais de la Culture, to Malek Hamadouche for having worked tirelessly to obtain sales documents, to Derek Elton for having graciously permitted me to review the records of the Anglican Church, and to my wife for sharing the effort and the pleasure of research.

Montfeld, April 1, 1991

The Embassy Neighborhood

For over 150 years, the neighborhood and quarter in which the Embassy properties are located have been known respectively as Colonne Voirol and Mustapha Supérieur.

The Embassy properties are all located on the ridge road from Place Salvador Allende (formerly Colonne Voirol) to El Biar. This is known today as chemin Cheikh El Bachir El Ibrahimi in honor of a religious scholar active in the Algerian nationalist movement. Before independence, it was called chemin Beaurepaire, a name still familiar to the older generation.

Turkish Country Estates

In Turkish times, Algeria did not extend beyond the walls of the Casbah. The Sahel, the range of coastal hills that frames the city, was laced with bridge paths and foot trails and dotted with country houses and estates belonging to urban Turks, Moors, and Kouloughlis (Turco-Algerians). Each was called a "djenane" (garden), translated into French as "campagne," or country estate.

An 1834 French map of Algiers identified the entire slope along and below the site of the Embassy properties as the Gardens of Mustapha Pacha, suggesting that they formed part of the grounds of the country house of Mustapha Pacha (Dey of Algiers from 1798 to 1805), now part of the former St. Vincent de Paul Orphanage just east of Place Addis Abba.

French Depredations

Soon after the French occupation in 1830, Europeans began to transform the slopes of the Sahel. The first changes were destructive. Francis Pulszky, writing in "The Tricolor on the Atlas" (London/New York, 1854), explained that "many officers and officials, immediately after the conquest, bought the finest gardens for a mere trifle in the communities of Mustapha and Bujarea (Bouzareah). The Turks were banished, the Moors began to emigrate, and both classes sold their property, parting with the most magnificent villas and farms at any price. Some of these splendid residences have often changed proprietors... and there were speculators. Other jobbers behaved like Vandals; they half-destroyed the houses, sold the wood, iron, glazed tiles, and marble columns piecemeal, and offered the ruins to other European colonists. But these poor fellows, unable to afford the high prices, went rather farther (out) ... Many handsome country seats on Bujarea and Mustapha have remained empty and ruined."

Voirol's Road

In 1833-1834, General Théophile Voirol built one of the first carriage roads from Algiers over the Sahel along what is now boulevard Souidani Boudjemaa. To commemorate its completion, a column, the "Colonne Virol," was erected at the intersection of his road

with the ridge road. This monument to French military engineering was removed after independence.

Mustapha Supérieur and Colonne Voirol

Along Voirol's road and the ridge road, a garden suburb called Mustapha Supérieur, initially devoted to agriculture and livestock raising, began to develop. Like Mustapha Inférieur below, it took its name from the djenane of Mustapha Pacha. The neighborhood at the eastern end of the ridge road became known as Colonne Voirol.

Winter Residents

Beginning in the 1850's, expatriate pioneers such as the British feminist Barbara Leigh Smith began visiting Algiers in search of a healthful climate and exotic shores. They and those who followed produced many guidebooks, medical commentaries, and travelogues extolling the merits of Algiers as a winter resort (see appendix: The Life of Winter Residents). These circulated among the moneyed classes of the British Isles and the United States, which were beginning to tire of the European Grand Tour. The first to come were the invalids; by 1860, doctors were sending numerous patients with pulmonary and "languorous" ailments to the temperate climate of Algiers. These quickly formed a separate social group with its own holidays and amusements.

The Wealthy Flock

Soon, the hale and hearty joined the invalids. By the mid-1860's, Mustapha Supérieur had become a November-to-May resort popular with rich British and American families looking for a new experience, but from within the safe confines of an English-speaking community. By 1865, British visitors alone amounted to 1,500 a year. The Anglican Church, which depended almost entirely on the donations of winter residents, took a great interest in the evolution of their numbers. In 1868, a fund-raising brochure noted approvingly "the importance of Algiers as a sanitarium for that unhappily large class of our countrymen who are obliged to flee from the severity of an English winter is becoming year by year more generally appreciated." Church records indicate that the winter community flourished from 1875 to 1884. In later years, number again grew, not least because an earthquake hit the Riviera, but "the class of visitors was becoming continually less permanent, harder to get at, and less willing to give." To get at these problems, the Church advertised heavily at hotels, even arranging to have headwaiters accept donations!

A Garden Setting

The semi-rural setting of Mustapha Supérieur was one of the main drawing cards for winter residents, as it was for rich settlers and a few wealthy Algerian Muslims. This setting was enhanced by the planting of the Bois de Boulogne in 1868 and sheltered from urban development by its administrative separation from the city of Algiers in 1871.

Moorish Homes

The wealthiest expatriates eschewed hotels, which until 1887 were all downtown, in favor of winter homes in Mustapha Supérieur, renovating or building villas on estates along the ridge and slope. Those who had come before produced voluminous advice on choosing a villa; a southern exposure was highly prized. A "neo-Moorish" style modeled on the djenane quickly became the norm. In the words of J.J. Deluz in "L'urbanisme et l'architecture d'Alger" (Algiers, 1988), "this intellectual current – fed particularly by the passionate interest that rich British, by tradition more discriminating than the French, had in such residences – took on a very elitist character. Certain architects specialized in imitating djenanes. Many 'Turkish' residences of the environs of Algiers are either colonial architecture or authentic houses that have been remodeled. The untrained eye can sometimes go wrong." The DCM Residence at Oued El Kilaï, in British and American hands from 1867 to 1929, dates from Turkish times. The Ambassador's Residence at Montfeld, in British hands from 1863 to 1932, was built after the Turkish period.

Fevers and Quinine

This building craze was not without its problems. Karl Marx, who visited in 1882, recorded that, "in Mustapha Supérieur, new houses are being built without letup, old houses are being destroyed, ext. And, even though the workers used for these projects are from here, they are prone to fevers. So, a part of their salary consists of a daily dose of quinine, which is provided to them by the contractors."

Resort Hotels Open

Beginning in 1887, once the cholera scare was over, winter residents began to return to Algiers in large numbers, with the merely well-to-do now joining the rich in seeking the sun. About a dozen hotels were built on and below the ridge of Mustapha Supérieur to cater to those who, by choice or lack of means, did not take villas. Southern exposures, large gardens, "perfect sanitary arrangements," tennis courts, billiards tables, and darkrooms for the amateur photographer were featured in advertising. The premises of several of these hotels still exist – the Mustapha Pacha (the ornate hilltop building that is now part of the ex-Lycée Descartes in le Golf), the Alexandra (now an apartment building adjacent to and below the Hotel El Djazaïr), and the Villa des Orangers (now the Clinique des Oranger next to the Chancery) – but only the Hotel St. George (now the Hotel El Djazaïr) remains in operation. The profits to be made from this trade became evident; in 1897, the City of Algiers even created a Wintering Committee to organize and publicize special events.

A Community at its Zenith

The Anglo-American winter community flourished in the late Victorian and Edwardian ages, but always remained apart from Algiers proper. In the dry words of Marc Baroli, writing in "La vie quotidienne des Français en Algérie, 1830-1914" (Paris, 1967):

"Separated from Algiers by vast green spaces, Mustapha proclaimed itself to be British. The British colony, which gave it its tone and was attracted by the sky and the sweetness of life, had no desire to mix with the little people, and even less with the bourgeoisie of Algiers. The geographical distance of the palatial quarter from those in which the population lived merely reflected a deeper separation. The English colony of El Biar and Mustapha lived with no relation to the 'natives,' and, in Algiers, the European population was incontestably part of the 'natives'."

Community Institutions

Formalizing this separation, the Anglo-American community created a number of institutions tailored to its needs. In 1911, these included:

- Holy Trinity Anglican Church (from 1870 to 1908 on the site of the main Post Office and after 1909 at its present site) and St. Andrew's (Scottish) Presbyterian Church (from 1886 to 1935 on a site at 119 ter rue Didouche Mourad).

- An English Cemetery consecrated by the Anglican Bishop of Gibraltar (the Carré Anglais at the Bru Cemetery).

- A Church-run English Circulating Library (now the Carthage Restaurant building).

- A Seamen's Institute/Reading Room to supply "a home as well as healthy recreation for seafarers, both men and boys, who are continually exposed to the temptations inseparable from a sea-port such as that of Algiers."

- A British Cottage Hospital and "home for English Protestant ladies and governesses in straitened circumstances" (now the home of the British DCM and others).

- And English Club that offered its members a place "where English and Americans might meet together and enjoy something like social life" (now the British Ambassador's Residence). Tennis, billiards, current periodicals, and entertainments of various kinds (dinners, dances, shooting and boar-hunting excursions, and occasional amateur theatrical performances) were featured. According to the Rules of the Club (preserved at the British Library in London!), "no politics, or religious discussions, nor any games of chance or baccarat shall be allowed in the Club. On Sunday, no play of any kind shall be allowed, either at cards, billiards or any other game. No member or other person shall on any account bring a dog into the Club."

- A golf course whose site, now occupied by the Presidency and Foreign Ministry, is still known as "le Golf."

Two English-language weeklies, "The Algerian Advertiser" and "The Atlas," recorded the comings, goings, and doings of the community. English doctors, dentists, chemists, tobacconists, grocers, house agents, ships' chandlers, and cafés, as well as an "American bar," advertised regularly. Cook's and Barclay's catered to travel and banking needs.

Mail arrived daily from the British Isles. Mr. Patry even advertised a boarding school offering "classical and modern" tuition at which "young English gentlemen will find all the comforts of an English home."

Post-War Decline

After the First World War, the Vitality of this Community began to fade. Changes in upper class life, as well as the urbanization of Mustapha Supérieur, which had been incorporated into the city of Algiers in 1904, prompted may owners to sell their estates to French settlers. Such wintering as continued was limited largely to hotels.

The End of an Idyll

With but a few exceptions, the Depression completed the demise of the Anglo-American winter estates and further reduced the winter hotel trade. The opening of trans-Mediterranean air service for passengers in 1931 made short stays easier, and community institutions correspondingly less necessary. Gradually, all but the Anglican Church and its Cemetery disappeared. A 1931 Church fund-raising brochure complained that "the British community in Algiers is no longer the large and wealthy colony it was in former years... British and American visitors (now) far outnumber the British and American residents."

In the years leading up to the Second World War, the self-contained life of Anglo-American winter residents at Mustapha Supérieur faded into the memories of old-timers. If this community is to be remembered for anything today, it is for the properties that its wealthier members left behind. In later years, after the quarter had begun to suffer urban development, the urban historian G. Guiauchain was to admit that "it's thanks to some few members of the foreign colony, mostly the British, that the slopes of El Biar and Mustapha still possess some Moorish houses and greenery."

French, Algerian, and Diplomatic Heirs

In later years, the French who now owned almost all of the estates on the slopes of the Sahel sold a number of the larger ones to foreign missions, including the Americans, French, and Soviets. In 1962, they sold or abandoned the remainder to Algerian owners and occupants, including the Algerian Government. As the 21st century nears, the history of Colonne Voirol and Mustapha Supérieur have become indistinguishable from that of greater Algeris, and even their names are falling out of use.

Mektoub and Inchallah (Chancery)

The Chancery occupies two adjacent properties, Villa Mektoub ("Villa Destiny") and Villa Inchallah (Villa "God Willing"). They are situated at 4, chemin Cheikh El Bachir El Ibrahimi. Both are owned by the Algerian Government.

Origins

Before the French occupation, the site was was part of a lard djenane, or country estate, owned by Sid Mohi'Eddin, son of Sid El Hadj Mohammed, that strectched down to the present Diocesan Center on chemin des Glycines. In 1831, he rented it in perpetuity (i.e., sold it) to the first of several French owners. This transaction is likely to have taken place in the unfavorable circumstances created by the French occupation.

In 1859, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, a leading British feminist and water colorist (whose sister, Anna Leigh Smith, bought the adjacent property, Montfeld, in 1866), purchased the estate from Mrs. Marie Françoise Desvignes Pugnet, the wife of a French horse trader. Barbara died in 1891, leaving the estate to her two brothers. In 1893, they sold most of the property to Paul Edouard Olivier Lecq, possibly one of the wine-merchant Lecqs.

In succeeding years, the estate was carved up. By 1902, for instance, a hotel for expatriate invalids, the Villa des Orangers (now the Clinique des Orangers), had been built next to the site of Villa Mektoub. The subdivision of such estates was greatly accelerated in 1904, when the commune of Mustapha was incorporated into the City of Algiers.

Sometime after 1893, the part of the estate next to Montfeld was sold to a Mrs. Ziegler. By 1909, the parcels that are now Villas Mektoub and Inchallah had become the property of Maître Charles Roger, a French barrister before the Court of Appeals.

Villa Mektoub

The U.S. Government has occupied Villa Mektoub, the Chancery proper, since September 1, 1961.

Its date of construction is unknown. The main building is probably an early 20th century structure, while the annexed office wing of light construction is a mid-20th century structure. Directories of Algiers for the period from 1909 through 1927 all list Maître Roger as residing at Villa Mektoub in those years, and he is likely to have lived there later as well.

At some point, the French Government acquired the property. In 1949, according to a veteran Embassy employee, the main building served as a medical examination center for French civil servants. By 1957 or 1958, the annexed office wing, which was then

separated, housed the Joint Organization of the Saharan Regions (OCRS), whose mission was to develop the infrastructure and mining industries of the Saharan region. By 1959 or 1960, one or both of these buildings became the offices of the Institute of Algerian Industrial Development Studies (SEDIA). Its task was to conduct studies and seminars to promote French industrial investment in Algeria within the framework of the Plan of Constantine, which was meant to improve the economic and social status of Algerian Muslims in the period 1959-1963. According to old correspondence, the OCRS was the tenant of Villa Mektoub immediately preceding the U.S. Government. It may be that it subleased it to SEDIA.

In October 1961, the French and U.S. Governments signed a retroactive lease for Villa Mektoub at an annual rent of 22,400 francs. Before 1961, the Consulate General had been housed at 119 ter, rue Michelet (now rue Didouche Mourad), near the Sacred Heart Cathedral, in a downtown building now partly occupied by the Embassy of India. The reasons for the move were spelled out in an old Consulate General Record Book: "In the second week of September, 1961, Consul General Porter transferred the offices of the Consulate General from 119 Rue Michelet (third and ninth floor apartments) to the Villa Mektoub on the Chemin Beaurepaire. This change was deemed necessary for representational and administrative purposes, as well as for reasons connected with the turbulent conditions existing in Algiers, as well as throughout the country. The offices at 119 Rue Michelet had suffered from several bombing attacks carried out by the O.A.S., some of these attacks being directed against the C.G> because of U.S. policies, while others were aimed at other occupants of the building."

In 1962, since Villa Mektoub was a "domaine" (state-owned property), the Algerian Government took title from the French Government and the annual rent became 22,400 dinars. In March 1972, a new lease was signed at an annual rent of 44, 000 dinars.
In 1979, the Algerian Government proposed a new lease at an annual rent of 366,000 dinars. The U.S. Government ignored this proposal on the assumption that the old lease was still valid and continued to pay at the old rate.

In negotiations held in 1983 to resolve the U.S. Government's dispute with the Government of Algeria over the Mustapha Raïs property, which resulted in agreement to exchange U.S. Government title to Mustapha Raïs for Algerian Government title to Oued El Kilaï, the American side sought a long lease on Villas Mektoub and Inchallah, initially proposing 99 years. It later accepted a shorter lease, but argued that, until a new Chancery planned for the Oued El Kilaï property was built, Villas Mektoub and Inchallah could not be relinquished.

In October 1983, as part of the above agreement, and "to help the United States of America install its diplomatic mission in its new property at Oued El Kilaï," the Wali of Algiers and the U.S. Government signed a lease for Villa Mektoub for 20 years renewable by the U.S. Government for a "last" period of not to exceed a further 10 years." A "concessional" rent of 134,880 dinars, subject to regulatory increases, was fixed.

At the time of its rental, Villa Mektoub was still laid out as a residence with an annexed office wing. In the years since 1961, the U.S. Government has made extensive changes. Notably, many windows have been walled in, most of the second-floor rear terrace has been transformed into offices, and, in the period from 1982-1986, a ground floor communications center and access control lobby were built.

Villa Inchallah

The U.S. Government has also occupied Villa Inchallah, the Chancery Annex, since 1961 or early 1962. At the time of its rental, a wall separated it from Villa Mektoub, and it had its own street entrance (now the upper vehicle gate of the Chancery Complex.)

Its date of construction is unknown, but it seems more recent than Villa Mektoub, perhaps dating from the 1930's. The site may have been acquired and the villa built by Maître Roger's son, Dr. Charles Roger, who owned it in 1961 and occupied it until he departed for France, where he still practices medicine.

Villa Inchallah was leased directly from Dr. Roger for use by the Defense Attaché Office. The last rental payment to him covered FY-66. A marble plaque that reads "Inchallah/Charles Roger" at the top of the stairs to the patio of the building is all that remains of the Roger family legacy.

In May 1966, the Algerian Government published Ordinance 66-102, by which properties such as Villa Inchallah whose French owners had "abandoned" them became, as far as the Algerian Government was concerned, "biens vacants" (vacant properties) whose title passed to the state. Under Algerian law, the U.S. Government might have been able to advance a claim to ownership, since it occupied the building at the time it became a "bien vacant" and has done so ever since. The U.S. Government has, however, never pressed this claim.

As a "bien vacant," Villa Inchallah should have been managed by the Wilaya of Algiers, but the latter let it fall through the cracks. From 1966 to 1983, rent was never billed or paid. This was discovered during the 1983 property negotiations cited above and became one of the issues to be resolved.

In October 1983, as part of the property agreement cited above, and "to help the United States of America install its diplomatic mission in its new property at Oued El Kilaï," the Wali of Algiers and the U.S. Government singed a lease for Villa Inchallah for 20 years renewable by the U.S. Government for a "last" period of not to exceed a further 10 years." A "congressional" rent of 78,920 dinars, subject to regulatory increases, was fixed.

Villa Inchallah, originally designed as three separate apartments with connecting interior staircases and independent egress, presumably functioned as offices from 1961 or 1962 to the break in diplomatic relations in 1967. Thereafter, for many years, it housed three staff apartments. In the early 1980's, these were progressively converted into offices

without major changes in their floor plans except on the ground floor where a cashier's vault was built in the central court.

Montfeld (Ambassador's Residence)

Montfeld, the Residence of the American Ambassador in Algiers, was acquired by the U.S. Government on June 13, 1947. One of the most elegant estates of Algiers, it occupies 2.06 hectares (5.1 acres) on the northeast slope of the Sahel, the range of coastal hills that frames the city of Algiers. The property is located just below the ridge at 6, chemin Cheikh El Bachir El Ibrahimi, 192 meters (630 feet) above the sea.

The Name of the Property

Known formally as Campagne Montfeld (Montfeld Estate), the property acquired this name some time after 1866 and before 1895, when it appeared on a map in Sir R. Lambert Playfair's "Handbook for Travelers in Algeria and Tunis" published in the Murray's Handbook series (London, 1895). The "Grand annuaire general de l'Algérie, de la Tunisie et du Maroc" published in Algiers in 1924 indicates that a "Mrs. C. Montfeld," of independent means, was living at Villa Djenane El Djebel (a free Arabic translation of Montfeld) on chemin Beaurepaire in that year, but her relationship to the property remains unkonw; no one by that name ever owned it.

The Age of the Property

The site of Montfeld has existed within its present boundaries with a few relatively minor modifications since at least 1837. Before that year, it may have been a privately owned djenane or part of the larger djenane of Mustapha Pacha. On this point, an 1834 map of Algiers, while it shows some small structures and trails within the present boundary lines, provides no clear evidence.

The Age and Style of the Residence

The Residence is difficult to date. Its layout and appointments, unlike those of Oued El Kilaï, are European, not Turkish. The record suggests that the two-story core was built between 1853 and 1863 and remodeled between 1876 and 1895, while the three-story kitchen and guest wing was built between 1876 and 1909. The gate house was built after the realignment of the ridge road in 1894 but before 1909. The age of the stable and carriage building is not known.

The residence structure, although post-Turkish, shares many external characteristics with authentic country houses of the Turkish period as described by G. Guiauchain, in "Alger" (Algiers, 1905): "With country houses, the architectural effect resides exclusively in the set-backs produced by the different elevations of the roofs and by the projections of the facades. A line of shade stippled with light formed by the brick cornices highlights the larger masses. The absence of any superfluous effect, the scrupulous respect of the forms required by construction, and the fine tone of the whitewash produce an effect of exquisite sweetness. Simple, almost naïve, these Morrish structures are in such admirable harmony with nature that no other form can equal them."

The whitewashed interior of 12,000 square feet is punctuated with antique tiles, plain and molded plaster arches and pillars, antique wooden doors, marble and parquet floors, wood screens, fireplaces, and many other features. The antiques decorative tile panels on the two floors of the central court and the terrace loggia were reputedly a specialty of Tunis.

1837-1862: French Investors

The property changed hands eight times in the first three decades after the French occupation. The first recorded sale was made by "various Moors and Morresses" (presumably the multiple heirs of one owner) in 1837. It is likely that this sale took place under the unfavorable circumstances created by the French occupation. Seven other transactions, all involving French citizens, took place between 1839 and 1863. This suggests that the property was initially an investment for speculative or rental purposes, not a homestead.

1863-1932: British Winter Residents

During the period of Mustapha Supérieur's popularity as a winter resort for wealthy British and Americans, the property was in the hands of four successive British owners.

Archibald Briggs

A merchant, married, and a Unitarian, owned the property from 1863 to 1866. At the time of purchase, it included a "large dwelling house" built by the previous owner on the site of an earlier "Moorish-style house." At the time of its sale in 1866, the property was described as "a large dwelling house, built with a ground floor, a first floor, and outbuildings, which is reached by tree-lined lane, two other small, low houses with tiled roofs, along with grounds in the form of a garden, an orchard, etc."

Briggs' one known claim to fame, which came after his period of ownership, seem to have been that he and his brother, H. Currer Briggs, co-authored a "Memorandum" appended to a study on "Profit Sharing between Capital and Labor: Six Essays" by Sedley Taylor, published in London in 1884. In the preface, Briggs noted that the health of his family had caused him to reside abroad, that in 1881 he was associated with the Whitwood Colliery in Normanton (West Yorkshire), and that in 1884 he was living in Italy. Nothing more is know of him.

Anna Leigh Smith (or Leigh-Smith)

Described as being unmarried and "of independent means," seems to have been responsible for creating Montfeld as we know it today.

Anna was one of four children of Benjamin Leigh Smith (1763-1860), a prominent supporter of the Liberal Party and Member of Parliament from Norwich (Norfolk). Her older sister, Barbara (1827-1891), was one of the founders of organized feminism in Victorian England, a water colorist, and at the origin of the family's ties to Algeria (see appendix).

Barbara's family sent her to Algiers in 1856 in the company of Anna, her second sister Isabella, and one of her brothers to recover from a failed affair with a married man. Shortly after the Smiths' arrival in Algiers, they met Dr. Eugene Bodichon, a freethinking Breton who had made Algeria his life since 1836. Barbara married him in 1857 and bought a six-hectare property on the ridge road adjoining the southeast boundary of the present Montfeld property in 1859. She published one of the first English-language books on Algeria, "Guide Book – Algeria Considered as a Winter Residence for the English," to which Anna contributed sections (London, 1858). This contributed to Algiers' emergence as a winter resort among English speakers.

In 1866, Anna, then living with her sister Barbara at Campagne Bodichon, bought the adjacent property from Briggs. She is likely to have wintered on this property until about 1890; the records of the Anglican Church register cash donations from her for maintenance of the cemetery every year from 1875 to 1887. While she preserved some of the structures, she evidently needed more room. Thus, during her period of ownership from 1866 to 1909, she built "the greater part of the buildings" that now exist. She may also have kept cows; church records note that in 1884 she sent two liters of milk a day to the church verger, who had been stricken with typhoid fever.

According to an old note on Montfeld, "two elderly English sisters" had "originally owned" the property; this suggests that Anna's sister Isabella may have been associated with the project as well.

According to this same report, Anna hired the resident British architect Benjamin Bucknall (see appendix) and the El Biar contractor Vidal to remodel and expand the main house. Vidal was actually a Jewish family of architects and entrepreneurs who were active at least into the 1920's and built many of the villas in and around El Biar and the ridge road.

In working for Anna, Vidal and Bucknall reputedly benefited from the gradual demolition of the lower Casbah, which began in 1832 and continued into the 20th century, to acquire antique tiles, pillars, arches, and other decorative features from the old Turkish and Moorish houses being pulled down to make way for new streets and buildings. These they used at Montfeld.

In 1894, in the only known significant alteration of the boundaries of the property, the Colonne Voirol-El Biar road was realigned further to the southeast. The absorption of the old roadbed, which seems to have run through the Snack Bar patio and gatehouse site, added 122 square meters to Anna's property. Her brothers, who had inherited Barbara's adjacent property, gave Anna another 38.5 square meters between the old and new roads (roughly the far corner of the present gatehouse). These additions account for the southeastern bulge of the present property, which includes the Snack Bar patio.

Robert Bevan

A wealthy British lawyer of independent means, who had been wintering with his wife in Algiers since at least 1891, bought Montfeld from Anna, then residing in Rome, in 1909.

He had evidently been renting it from her already. The records of the Anglican Church indicate that Anna stopped contributing in 1887, while Mr. Bevan began contributing in 1891; his rental may thus have begun around then.

Reputedly, Bevan had a chest condition that required him to seek sunshine away from the English winter. A regular churchgoer who rented two seats at the Anglican Church almost every year from 1891 to 1904 and served on its committee for at least seven years between 1892 and 1914, he may have built the small "chapel" off the lower terrace of Monfeld. In spite of his pursuit of the sun, he died of pneumonia in Biarritz in 1915 at the age of 58.

Constance Helen Ross Bevan

His wife inherited his estate of £235,192, including Montfeld, upon his death. In 1931, upon her death, Mrs. Bevan (evidently a frugal person) herself left an estate of £235,689. In the absence of heirs, she willed this to charity, with preference to the Society for the Assistance of Ladies in Reduced Circumstances, the Distressed Gentlefolk's Aid Association, the Home of Rest for Horses, the SPCA, the Royal U.K. Beneficent Association, and assistance for soldiers and sailors maimed or injured in the First World War.

1932-1947: French Owners and Official Tenants

Mrs. Bevan's executors decided to sell Montfeld presumably to generate cash for her charities. The First World War and the Depression having ended Algiers' days as an expatriate winter resort, British buyers did not present themselves.

Paul Perrier

Chairman of the board of the "Echo d'Oran" and Officer of the Legion of Honor, decided to buy the property. Reputedly, he was an Oran pioneer whose family was said to have been one of those released from the clutches of the law in France on condition that it migrate to Algeria. There is no clear evidence that he ever moved to Algiers.

Lucien Raoul Perrier and Suzanne Marie Mathilde Lacanaud

Paul's son and daughter-in-law, already living in Algiers in 1921, bought Montfeld from him in 1936. Lucien is remembered as having been quite wealthy. At some point, he became co-owner of the Algiers newspaper, the "Dépêche quotidienne d'Algérie." His family and in-laws (the Robes) were well known to U.S. Consuls General in the 1930's for their right-wing sympathies and suspected ties to the fascist Cross of Fire movement. According to he diary of the Consulate General for May 24, 1935, Mr. Perrier himself "stated that he had several times been solicited to join this organization but that he had thus far refused and would continue to do so until he was assured that the leaders of the Croix de Feu had a definite program and that it was other than fascistic. When direct questions were put to him, he hedged. I am under the impression that he is a Freemason and that he has not joined the Croix de Feu on this account." An old French resident of Algiers, reminiscing in 1991, remembered the Perrier family approvingly as "charming rightists."

At some point during the Perriers' ownership (1932-1947), the working name of the property was shortened to "Montfeld," presumably because it was hard to call it a campagne when the city had invaded it on three sides. A new stamp press was procured to emboss the changed name on letters. Both this press and its predecessor survive at Montfeld.

Marcel Peyrouton

French Governor General of Algeria from January 17 to June 3, 1943, evidently resided at Montfeld. It seems that, as early as late 1942, the Perriers been obliged to make it available to the French authorities.

General Georges Catroux

Governor General from June 3, 1943 to September 8, 1944, also lived at Montfeld, building the bomb shelter under the basement as a refuge from German air raids.

Harold MacMillan wrote in his "War Diaries" (London, 19??): "Now a great event has taken place in the social life of Algiers. The famous Mme Catoux has arrived!! Catroux – I need hardly say – has managed to get the best villa in Algiers for himself. He has guards of honor, Indo-Chinese servants, aides-de camp, secretaries, and all the paraphernalia, which the French adore. But Mme Catroux has pronounced the villa to be "effroyable" – she apologizes for the bad food, the indifferent service, the poor display of silver, the "mauvais gout" of the furniture, the second-rate wine – in fact, all is exquisite."

Lady Diana Cooper, the wife of the British representative to the Free French in Algiers in 1943-44, who lived at Oued El Kilaï, wrote in her autobiography, "Trumpets from the Steep" (London, 1960), that "from these first days we were welcomed and cherished by General and Madame Catroux, who lived exactly opposite our gates. His Spahi and Senegalese sentries challenged us from the doors of authority. Once in their warm Mahommedan house, we met many of the mighty and ex-mighty. Two reliable khaki supporters lived at the Catroux gate – Minou de Montgomerie ... and Elizabeth de Breteuil ... what leisure these redoubtable women found was dedicated to keeping us warm and cheerful. Together we cowered over their inadequate stove, sipping glasses of hot brandy and water."

1947-Present: U.S. Government

In 1947, Raoul Perrier, acting on behalf of his parents, sold the property to the U.S. Government in Paris. The Perriers' newspapers had championed French-Nazi collaboration in the years immediately preceding the Allied landings in North Africa, and the Allied authorities had forbidden their publication thereafter. Apparently, in the aftermath of the war, the Perriers faced open accusations of collaborating with the Nazis and risked having Montfeld confiscated, even though they had not lost their civil rights under French anti-fascist decrees issued in 1944 and 1945. (Raoul, by the way, continued in the family's right-wing tradition. From 1949 to 1959, he was general director of the "Dépêche quotidienne d'Algérie," and from 1957 to 1963 he served as chairman of the

board of the "Echo d'Oran." In these posts, he was known for his anti-deGaulle and pro-French Algeria views.)

An old note on Montfeld reports two versions of how the property came to the attention of the Department of State:

- Through Batonnier Marinaud, who, when Consul General Finely (1945-49) was looking for an apartment, told him that Montfeld could be bought for a reasonable sum;

- Through Miss Daisy de Liouville, a French lady of great charm and an interior decorator by profession. She was a god friend of the FBO officer in Paris. When her friends, the Perriers, explained their property problem to her, she brought this friend to see the property. At that point, just after the war, Congress had not yet restricted the use of billions of lend-lease francs the U.S. Government had acquired. Daisy helped FBO make the purchase decision and got the contract to do the interior decorating and refurbishing.

According to a 1947 entry in an old Consulate General Record Book, "this villa, former residence of M. Lucien Perrier (ex co-proprietor the confiscated newspaper, Dépêche Algérienne) was acquired under an arrangement with the French Government. The latter Government desiring more of our war surplus that it has dollars to pay agreed to purchase for francs for us such property as we designated – we to give credit in dollars. Montfeld was purchased under this agreement for francs 50,000,000. Possession of the property was taken July 1, 1947 but it cannot be occupied as a residence until it is finished."

Finley finally moved in on July 16, 1948. Montfeld has been the residence of the principal officer in Algiers ever since. These have been its occupants to date: 1948-49 Consul General Harold D. Finley; 1949-50 Consul General George Tait; 1950-53 Consul General Thomas H. Lockett; 1953-58 Consul General Lewis Clark; 1958-61 Consul General Frederick B. Lyon; 1961-65 Consul General/Ambassador William J. Porter; 1965-67 Ambassador John D. Jernegan; 1967-69 Principal Officer Lewis Hoffacker; 1969-74 Principal Officer William L. Eagleton, Jr.; 1974-77 Principal Officer/Ambassador Richard B. Parker; 1977-81 Ambassador Ulric St. Clair Haynes, Jr.; 1981-85 Ambassador Michale H. Newlin; 1985-88 Ambassador L. Craig Johnston; 1988-91 Ambassador Christopher W.S. Ross; 1991-94 Ambassador Mary Ann Casey; 1994-97 Ambassador Ronald E. Neumann; 1997-2000 Ambassador Cameron Hume; 2000-2003 Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson; 2003-Present Ambassador Richard W. Erdman.

Many improvements and changes have been made since 1947. In 1948-49, the city proposed to soften the curve of ridge road, which would have required demolition of the gate house and stable and carriage building; fortunately, nothing came of these plans. Some time before 1951, a pedestrian gate opposite the entrance to Oued El Kilaï was closed off. In 1954, a reflecting pool on the east terrace was converted into the existing swimming pool. In 1960, the third floor, which had previously been a large attic, was divided into the present rooms. Some time after 1965, the low wooden gate at the main

entrance (over which Ambassador Porter had been in the habit of jumping) was replaced by a metal gate. Some time between 1967 and 1969, following heavy rains, the terrace and retaining wall adjacent to the northeast corner of the Residence were rebuilt and reinforced. In 1969, the existing wall replaced a wire fence. In 1969-70, the tennis court was laid out. Some time between 1969 and 1974, the arches between the main drive and the kitchen arbor were walled in. Some time between 1974 and 1977, the present kitchen was created out of two separate rooms and the wall separating the Snack Bar patio from the Residence grounds was erected. In 1975, the Algerian Government disapproved a proposal to build "a small staff apartment" on the Montfeld property. In 1975 as well, the Seabees rewired the entire house. In 1978-79, the large swimming pool complex was built. In 1988-89, two bathrooms and the portion of the east terrace adjacent to the living rooms were tiled by Moroccan workers and the present basement changing rooms were built into a basement space. In 1989-91, the exterior and roof surfaces of the house were redone, the plumbing and heating systems replaced, the kitchen remodeled, and the terrace at the northwest corner of the Residence rebuilt.

Oued El Kilai (DCM Residence)

Oued El Kilaï, the Residence of the Deputy Chief of Mission in Algiers, as well as the site of the General Services Section and other offices of the Embassy and of the American School of Algiers (ASA), was leased by the U.S. Government on November 1, 1962 and acquired on October 12, 1983. A large wooded estate; it occupies 2.4041 hectares (5.94 acres) on a ridge of the Sahel, the range of costal hills that frames the city of Algiers. On one side, it slopes toward the sea; on the other, it overlooks the valley of the Oued Kniss (Kniss River) that runs under the Hydra Bridge. The property is located on the ridge at 6, chemin Cheikh El Bachir El Ibrahimi, 212 meters (696 feet) above the sea.

The Name of the Property

Known formally as Oued El Kilaï, the property acquired this name some time before 1892, when it was so named in a sales contract. The Oued Kniss, which runs under the Hydra Bridge, was called "Oued El Kilaï" in an 1878 contract, so the name of the property may come from the former name of the stream. This stream has, however, had several names (Kleig in 1834, Krenis in the 1880's, El Kilaï in the 1890's, Khemis in the 1910's to 1930's, so this is not certain.

"Oued" ("wad" in written Arabic) means a riverbed. "El Kilaï" has been spelled in various old documents as "El Kolaï" and "El Kilaï," and its meaning is unclear. The most likely etymology is that it is a corruption of "al-Qulay'I," which in literary Arabic means "someone from the town of Kolea." By this reading, either the stream that runs under the Hydra Bridge or the property itself was once associated with someone from Kolea.

The Age of the Property

The Oued El Kilaï property can be documented as far back as 1831. Before that, it evidently formed part of a vast estate owned by Ali Agha, a senior official of the last Dey of Algiers, that extended from the present French Chancery toward the sea. The DCM Residence itself, which comprises 9,500 square feet, is difficult to date and has probably been enlarged and remodeled several times. Its layout, unlike that of Montfeld, is largely Turkish as opposed to European. A ceramic tile inscription inside the front door state that it was built in the year 1111 A.H. (ca. 1700 A.D.) by one Ahmed Ben Mohammed, about whom nothing is known. It is possible that this inscription was moved from an older structure. Architectural historians are unanimous, however, in dating the building to the 18th century.

In it origins, therefore, the DCM Residence is a Turkish "djenane," or country house, of which G. De Lombay wrote in "Alger, Oran, Tlemcen" (Paris, 1893): "Among the country houses of the environs of Algiers, a few are distinguished by the style of their construction, unique to this part of North Africa, and which some consider to be the most

beautiful expression of architectural art. Usually, as their distinctive characteristic, the dwellings have great white walls, thick and solid, pierced by a small number of openings for windows and doors, unevenly distributed. Arched windows, flat roofs, and Moorish ribbed vaults predominate."

G. Guiauchain, in "Alger" (Algiers, 1905), noted with much hyperbole that "the Moors and Turks of Algiers had no industry; they made nothing. They were contemplative idlers. Living off pillage, they had an adventurous life and many leisure-time activities. It is under such conditions that one becomes refined, not when life is scorched by the ardent struggle for existence. They had a very delicate idea of beauty – more instinctive than rational. Thus, the country house that every respectable Moor owned in the environs of the city was always in an admirably chosen site. Its vast gardens were protected from indiscreet eyes with jealous care, because the Moor likes to savor his real pleasures without witnesses, not to advertise the proudly. Today, these gardens exist only in the memories of the elderly. Speculation has broken the properties up, and bourgeois taste has rendered them vulgar. It is thanks to some members of the foreign community, principally the English, that the slopes of El Biar and Mustapha still possess some Moorish houses and some greenery."

1831-1867: French Investors and Cattle Breeders

After the French occupation of 1830, the present Oued El Kilaï property became part of a larger property of around 9 hectares (22 acres) that was formed by the consolidation of two separate estates in 1844. One of these estates evidently included most if not all of the present property. The other evidently surrounded the first one on the southeast and southwest. Most of it has since been split off.

First Estate

In 1831, Sid Mohammed Ben El Hadj Hamida, son of Chaaban, known as Boukandoura, leased the first estate in perpetuity, probably in the unfavorable circumstances caused by the French occupation, to its first French owner. Sid Mohammed had acquired this property from his father, Sid El Hadj Hamida, well before the French occupation.

In 1837, Sid El Sherif Mustapha Ouled Erraïs, who possibly had acquired the rights to the property from Sid Mohammed Ben El Hadj Hamida, leased it in perpetuity again to the same French owner. A map of El Biar from 184450 provides evidence for the association of "Ouled Erraïs" with the property, in that it calls the property "Djenane Oued (sic) Erraïs."

The property was sold to successive French owners in 1838 and 1839, suggesting that it was an investment for speculative or rental purposes, not a homestead.

Second Estate

In 1843, Sid Ahmed Ben El Sid Mohamed El Makfouldji leased the second estate in perpetuity, again probably in unfavorable circumstances, to its first French owner. In

1844, the later sold it in turn to a second French owner, who had already bought the first estate in 1839.

Between 1844 and 1867, the consolidated estate sold twice, in 1861 to a French cattle breeder and in 1867 to the newly arrived British Consul General.

1867-1892: Owners from the British Isles

Lt. Col. Robert Lambert Playfair

Lt. Col. Robert Lambert Playfair, who owned the property from 1867 to 1878, was British Consul General in Algiers for 29 years after postings in Aden and Zanzibar. The period from 1867 to 1896 coincided with the establishment of the community of British and American winter residents in Mustapha Supérieur. Col. Playfair played the central role in that community, and travelogues of the period are peppered with favorable references to him. One of his first acts was to push for the construction of the first Anglican Church in Algiers, which stood on the site of the main Post Office downtown from 1870 to 1908; a tablet in his memory may be seen in the narthex of the present Anglican Church. He himself wrote a guidebook to Algeria and Tunisia in the Murray's Handbook series (London) that went through five editions between 1874 and 1895, as well as "The Scourge of Christendom: Annals of British Relations with Algiers Prior to the French Conquest" (London, 1888 and 1895). Col. Playfair also owned the adjacent property, Sidi Alowi, now the residence of the French Deputy Chief of Mission, where he lived. It is likely that he rented Oued El Kilaï out.

Emily Frances Bury

Countess of Charleville and widow of Count Alfred of Charleville Forest, County Cork, Ireland, bought Oued El Kilaï from Col. Playfair in 1878. The sales contract described the property as "an estate situated on the territory of the Communes of El Biar and Birmandreis with an area of around nine hectares (22 acres). There exists on this property a family mansion of Moorish style, stables, storerooms, various outbuildings, and an arable garden. It is crossed by the Hydra Aqueduct and planted with many fruit trees. There is a farmer's house with a well equipped with a noria (bucket waterwheel) on the part located in the Commune of Birmadreis."

It is likely that the Countess of Charleville, like so many wealthy expatriates, wintered at Oued El Kilaï for a number of years. The records of the Anglican Church register cash donations from her from 1878 to 1883. In 1881, she gave the Church kneelers, hangings, alms bags, and bookmarkers.

1892-1929: An American Family in Algiers

John Marshall Sneden

Described as being of independent means, domiciled in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and married to Marion Kinzie (Sneden) at Trinity Chapel in New Your in 1889, bought the property from the Countess of Charleville in 1892. The sales contract repeated the 1878

description of the property and added that it was known as Oued El Kilaï and included cultivable lands and ornamental trees.

Little is known of Mr. and Mrs. Sneden. He was born in Brooklyn, New Your, in 1858; Mrs. Sneden was born in St. Louis, Missouri. It is possible that Mr. Sneden was one of the Snedens of Sneden & Lawrence, a shipyard of the mid 19th century at Greenpoint, New York.

Mr. and Mrs. Sneden evidently spent many of their winters at Oued El Kilaï. They sem to have been steady churchgoers; the records of the Anglican Church register cash donations every year but one from 1892 to 1904.

Marion Kinzi Sneden

Inherited Oued El Kilaï from her husband, who died on the property in 1923 and was buried at Bru Cemetery.

Marion Sneden Lea

Probably the Snedens' daughter, inherited Oued El Kilaï from Mrs. Sneden, who died on the property in 1925 and was also buried at Bru Cemetery. Mrs. Lea was born in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1893 and married Rowland Lea at Jugnedd Valley in 1916. It is possible that Mrs. Lea did not reside at Oued El Kilaï, but rented it out.

1929-1966: The Paulus Family – Owners and Landlords

René Paulus

A wealthy French businessman and former naval officer, bought Oued El Kilaï from Mrs. Lea in 1929. According to Algerians with long memories, Mr. Paulus was active, among other things, in the cork trade.

Later that year, Mr. Paulus acquired the .87 hectares (2 acres) adjacent to Oued El Kilaï between the Oued Kniss and the chemin du Petit Hydra that winds its way up the streambed from the Hydra Bridge. This parcel included a dwelling, a stable used as a dairy, and another two-story house. The 9.87 hectare (24 acre) property that resulted included all the present Oued El Kilaï property, plus all the land to the southeast up to rue El Ghazali (now the site of municipal water storage complex), all the land to the southwest up to the cehmin du Petit Hydra (including the present war veteran's farm), and a sliver of land running all the way to the old bridge over the Oued Kniss.

The Paulus family resided at Oued El Kilaï from 1929 to 1958 except for the war years of 1940-44. An old resident of Algiers recalls that Mrs. Paulus, anxious to make her own mark, opened the Hostellerie du Rocher des Singes (now the Hotel de la Ctiadelle) in the Chiffa Gorge around 1930. The Guide Bleu of that year described it as a newly built "Moorish-style structure" with seven rooms and a deluxe restaurant.

Algred Duff Cooper

The British Representative to the French National Committee of Liberation, lived at Oued El Kilaï from October 1943 to September 1944. It was described at length in "Trumpets From the Steep" (London, 1960), Lady Cooper's memoirs (see appendix). Harold MacMillan, writing in his "War Diaries" (London, 1944), noted after a visit to the property that it was a "charming Arabesque villa, pretty old."

Marie-Louise Hélène Vogt Paulus

Inherited Oued El Kilaï following her husband's death. In 1958, she left Algeria "because of the events" (the Algerian Revolution).

The Training Service for Youth in Algeria (SFJA)

A French Government agency, requisitioned and leased 3.87 hectares (9.5 acres) of the Oued El Kilaï property, including the Moorish villa, some time after its creation in 1958. The SFJA was a civilian service staffed by younger military personnel, mostly conscripts, who ran training centers to provide six to 12 month-courses in basic skills to uneducated young men and women over 16, thus enabling them to enter formal technical or agricultural training or to find jobs. 180 such centers had been created by 1959 as part of the ambitious Plan of Constantine, which was meant to improve the economic and social status of Algerian Muslims in the period 1959-63.

One such center was established at Oued El Kilaï, where the SFJA built ten prefabricated metal Butler buildings to house its operations. A 1961 plan of this center indicates that the present ASA offices were used as officers' quarters, the other school buildings as classrooms, dormitories, and storerooms, and the prefabricated Butler buildings as classrooms, dormitories, as cafeteria, and storerooms.

According to Yves Courrière, writing in "Les feux du désespoir" (Paris, 1971), certain staff members of these training centers were in collusion with the pro-settler Secret Army Organization (OAS), but at least one reserve lieutenant colonel on the staff was recruited by the anti-OAS "barbouzes" who operated from November 1961 to February 1962. This officer provided information on the OAS activities of the other members of the Muslim students of these centers and their parents.

By 1962, according to veteran Embassy employees, the SFJA had been replaced by French paramilitary "Gardes Mobiles" units that used Oued El Kilaï as an encampment.

The U.S. Government

Leased Oued El Kilaï from Mrs. Paulus, then living in Paris, on November 1, 1962, upon expiration of the SFJA lease, for use as a Chancery annex in conjunction with its lease of Villas Mektoub and Inchallah in 1961. It quickly became know in Embassy parlance as "le parc" or "the Oued." The contract described the object of the lease "as the totality of a property called 'Oued El Kilaï,' with an area of around 10.87 (sic) hectares" and called for rent to be paid in Paris.

Pierre Gerlier

Mrs. Paulus' son-in-law took over responsibility for the property upon her death in 1963.

Property Reduced

In the years between 1962 and 1965, an Algerian war veteran established himself in the farmhouse in the southwest portion of the property, and the City of Algiers took and other private parties over the land in the southeast portion, effectively reducing the property under lease to the U.S. Government from 9.87 hectares (24 acres) to 3.052 hectares (7.5 acres). This probably passed uncontested at the time, since the Algerian Government had made it clear that it would not permit the Embassy use of the entire property and, indeed, the Embassy itself had no immediate use for the excess.

The American School of Algiers

In 1964, ASA was established and given the use of space in buildings behind the villa. In 1969, by an exchange of diplomatic notes, the Algerian Government authorized ASA's operation as part of the Embassy.

A Dispute with the Owner

In August 1964, the Algerian Government issued a decree requiring prior written approval of all real estate transactions by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and payment of all rents in Algeria. In September 1964, the Embassy wrote Mr. Gerlier to ask him to remove the family's effects from Oued El Kilaï.

In September 1964, Mr. Gerler wrote Ambassador Porter a letter of protest concerning the Embassy's actions with regard to the property. According to this letter, the Embassy had originally been interested only in the 10 prefabricated buildings, and not in the villa, and the rent had been reduced accordingly. Mrs. Paulus had stored a number of effects in the dining room and master bedroom and locked these rooms up. Subsequently, the Embassy had placed the Health Unit on the ground floor and then placed an Embassy family in the rest of the villa, except for the dining room and master bedroom, without consulting the owner. Mr. Gerlier had asked for a rental increase, which the Embassy had refused on the grounds that the Embassy family was only temporarily in the villa. Subsequently, according to this same letter, this family had occupied the master bedroom by forcing the lock and, in July 1964, had told Mr. Gerlier that it wanted to take over the dining room as well. Mr. Gerlier protested all these actions, but also noted that he had offered to sell the Oued El Kilaï property for 11.4 million francs in 1962 and subsequently for 5 million francs.

In October 1964, the Embassy informed Mr. Gerlier in writing of the August 1964 Algerian Government decree, and Mr. Gerlier reiterated his offer to sell the property, given the fact that, in 1963, the Algerian Government had nationalized his family's agricultural and forest lands, and it no longer had any reason to return to Algeria. In November 1964, the Embassy wrote Mr. Gerlier that it was studying the allegations he had made in his September letter. No further correspondence has survived.

Property Further Reduced

In 1965, the Embassy contracted for a professional appraisal of the "most desirable portion of the property" that was of direct interest to it. This was described as consisting of 3.052 wooded, terraced hectares appraised at 4,066,237 francs. The appraisal noted that, "following certain internal circumstances in Algeria, the Administrative Services of the American Embassy in Algiers were led to lease a site in El Biar within the property of Mr. René Paulus ... (made up) of a parcel of wooded land with prefabricated metallic structures and a villa of Moorish type called Villa Oued El Kiffar (sic)."

In the years between 1965 and 1981, the area under U.S. Government lease was further reduced, evidently by gradual encroachment on the southeast corner, from 3.052 hectares (7.5 acres) to the present 2.4041 hectares (5.94 acres).

1966-1983: Algerian Government

In 1966, the Algerian Government published Ordinance 66-102, by which properties such as Oued El Kilaï whose French owners had "abandoned" them became, as far as the Algerian Government was concerned, "biens vacants" (vacant properties) whose title passed to the state, and the Embassy began paying rent to the Algerian Government. With the help of Maître Lanzaro, Mr. Gerlier has been unsuccessfully contesting the seizure of Oued El Kilaï in the Algerian courts ever since.

ASA Expansion

In the mid-1970's, as school enrollment increased, ASA put up three additional prefabricated buildings on the property, two round units and one double trailer. All were donated by companies from English-speaking countries doing business in Algeria for use as classrooms.

DCM Residence

The villa on the property was firmly established as the DCM Residence by 1975, although it may have housed the second officer of the mission even earlier.

1983-Present: U.S. Government

Property Settlement

In October 1983, the Algerian and U.S. Governments signed Administrative Act no. 128 to settle a property dispute involving the Mustapha Raïs property acquired by the U.S. Government in 1948 and seized by the Algerian Government in 1964 (see appendix). By the terms of the settlement, the U.S. Government ceded title to the Mustpha Raïs property to the Algerian Government, while the latter ceded title to the 2.4041 hectares (5.94 acres) that then constituted the Oued El Kilaï property to the U.S. Government and leased Villas Mektoub and Ichallah to the Embassy for a further number of years to facilitate the installation of the U.S. diplomatic mission at Oued El Kilaï.

In Reports drawn up in 1981 to prepare for a settlement, the Algerian Government's Sub-Directorate of Public Property Appraisals and Real Estate Operations had appraised the

value of the Oued El Kilaï property as 9.980 million dinars and that of Mustapha Raïs property as 7.276 million dinars. The two parties agreed, however, to waive any equalization payment.

As part of the settlement, the Algerian Government relocated the Soltani family that had resided in the gatehouse (now the Healthy Unit) since 1962 and provided separate access to the war veteran who had been occupying the farmhouse behind the Oued El Kilaï property since around independence; until that point, his only access had been through Oued El Kilaï.

Chancery Project

As early as 1980, the Department of State had projected the construction of a new Chancery and Marine Security Guard quarters in the center of the Oued El Kilaï property and a number of staff apartments between the DCM Residence and chemin Cheikh El Bachir El Ibrahimi. Originally planned for development in FY-85 and construction in FY-87, this project has been repeatedly delayed. If and when it is implemented, the parklands of Oued El Kilaï will be irrevocably transformed.

Appendix

The Life of Winter Residents

The British and American winter residents and visitors who populated Mustapha Supérieur in the years between 1850 and 1939 were prolific writers. Over 100 travelogues and 30 guidebooks devoted in whole or in part to Algiers appeared in Great Britain and the U.S. during this period. Most of these works were rich in their praise of Anglo-American life at Mustapha Supéieur, but sour notes did creep in from time to time. French writers of the period were predictably more critical.

The Wall's the Thing in 1875

Having invested in winter properties, many expatriates did everything possible to isolate themselves from their wider environment. George Gaskell, in "Algeria as It Is" (London, 1875), observed caustically that "the proprietors, in erecting new houses, have shown a proper regard for British taste and the unsociable habits of our countrymen, for Mustapha is the only place in the neighborhood of the capital where high white walls, glaring in the sun, pen up the enclosure as completely as the most exclusive soul of Albion can desire."

Algiers, the Playground of 1880

Alexander Knox, in "The New Playground, or Wanderings in Algeria" (London, 1881), provided the first comprehensive – and critical – look at expatriate life: "Mustapha Supérieur, say the enthusiasts, is the Torquay of the future... I for one, do not think that Torquay is in any immediate danger... There are very few good villas on the market... You don't stumble upon suntraps in the country at every step. In the first place, the villas are built with an eye to the prospect rather than to the sun; and, in the next, they are constructed rather as refuges against the sun in the summer than as hot-houses in which to enjoy the sun during the winter... The English residents appear to give occasional luncheons to each other and to their intimates, and lawn tennis to the young folks. Algiers for young people is a dreary place... Nor, indeed, will older persons find much of the pleasant little sociabilities to which they have been accustomed at home. If you want to be comfortable here set about the business as Robinson Crusoe would have done on his island."

French Aspersions in 1884

The French population of Algiers looked upon the hermetically sealed existence of the Anglo-American community with some scorn. F. Kohn Abrest, in his "En Algérie: trois mois de vacances" (Paris, 1884), commented: "The oldest country houses are a century and a half to two centuries old. Today, the Moorish or native element has completely disappeared; on the other hand, England has taken root on the magnificent slopes and spreads along them more and more; each winter season, the number of villas bought, rented or even built by some Lord or some rich cutler of Sheffield grows, and, along with the sons and daughters of Albion, their customs, their sporting distractions, and their cargoes of pale ale and preserves have invaded the slope. Cricket parties are organized, and rowing matches take place off Sidi Ferruch."

An Orientalist Vision of 1899

Most writing was much more exuberant. The American Orientalist artist Frederick Arthur Bridgman left this word painting in his "Winters in Algeria" (New York/London, 1889/1890): "At Mustapha Supérieur, then, let us pitch our tent for the winter season, in the midst of semi-tropical vegetation... Evening creeps on, and the sun, setting behind the hills of the Sahel, gilds at last only here and there a house-top and a minaret faced with gleaming tiles; the long blue shadows soon merge into one; the sun still lingers on the sails of fishing-boats in the bay; and lastly on Cape Matifou and Djudjura. Many of the foreign residents on the heights are English, who spend successive winters in the beautiful villas, in which are combined the charms of Arab construction with the modifications of English detail. Here they exchange English hospitalities under Algerian conditions, and a dinner party with European friends in the Moorish court, or patio, is certainly a novel and charming entertainment... The English afternoon tea and tennis receptions are delightful, in gardens luxuriant with trees and bushes bearing fruit of all sorts."

Lotus Eating in 1901

In "The Burton Holmes lectures, Volume IV" (Battle Creek, Michigan, 1901), we find another testimonial to what drew visitors and residents: "Algiers is one of the most popular of the many winter resorts bordering upon the Mediterranean. The suburbs are especially attractive. They are the haunt of tourists and health-seekers... In the dress circle are seated in luxuriant gardens villas and pensions; and, higher still, perched in the most commanding situations, be found on the Riviera. A charming climate renders out-of-door life delightful, and the hotels provide attractive terraces and gardens where the idler or the convalescent may find the truth of that Italian saying – che dolce far'niente. It is indeed sweet to do nothing at Mustapha Supérieur. To establish oneself amid the fair surroundings of that suburb is death to energy, and there ensues a spell of lotus eating... To lovers of social gaieties who bring the proper introductions, the villas of English and American winter residents open their hospitable doors. The delights of five o'clocks, high teas, and dancing parties are enhanced a thousand fold by an ideal environment. The villas are usually Mooris in design, though occupied by foreigners. The Moors themselves do not now build dainty palaces as in the olden days. It has remained for European taste and wealth to create here on the shore of Africa these tiny Alhambras containing all that is best in Moorish art with all the comforts of our century. And the gardens, in the midst of which these architectural gems are set, are beautiful beyond description. They are miniature Eden's, conjured into existence by the magic of a southern sun."

A Fairyland in 1902

In "The Mediterranean: Its Storied Cities and Venerable Ruins" (New York, 1902), T.G. Bonney waxed just as poetic: "Nothing can be more charming than this delicious quarter, a wilderness of villas, with its gleaming white Moorish houses half lost in rich gardens of orange, palm, and cypress trees. The native North African style of architecture answers exactly to the country in whose midst it was developed... The milk-white Moorish palace with its sweeping Saracenic arches, its tiny round domes, its flat, terraced roofs, and its deep perspective of shady windows, seems to fit in with land and climate as if each were

made for the other. Life becomes absolutely fairy-like in these charming old homes. Each seems for the moment while you are in the just a dream in pure marble."

Romance in 1905

Equally lyrical – and colonial – was the description of M. Elizabeth Crouse in "Algiers" (Greenwich, Connecticut/London, 1905/06): "These villas and these villa gardens of Mustapha and El Biar! What romance of another life clings to them to make the present richer by possession and by contrast. For though some of them are French, and some are improved and sunnier copies, others are genuinely Moorish. Cold and comfortless the unchanged Moorish houses may appear... But they are still warm with a presence; and many a story is buried when romance lingers in their glorious gardens... The hills from a different setting for each one; and even in the new estates the roses have recalled the other days. It is in the very soil... Every old garden is a remembrance. Each house hs its special interest and its story. This life of the foreign colony in the Moorish villas on the hills outside Algiers is for us the happiest result of the changes wrought by the French. Here we command what little of the real Oriental life remains visible... (For) ourselves, surrounded by every accustomed comfort, it is the poetry, the true ideal of the East, which we may enjoy to the full in all the white chastity of marble, the purity of sparkling fountains."

A Refuge in 1906

Francis E. Nesbitt, writing in "Algeria and Tunis" (London, 1906), regarded Mustapha Supérieur as a refuge from the city: "Whatever people may think of Algiers itself... it is generally with a sigh of relief that they... wind their way towards the heights of Mustapha Supérieur and El Biar, where most of the foreign visitors and residents live. The road passes quite suddenly at last into a region of shady trees and gardens, and winds on and up past hotels and villas till at last the heights are gained, and lovely, ever-varying views open on every side. It is a joy to live in one of these white houses half-hidden by a mist of green, to stand on the sunny terrace in the early part of the day and look out over the sea – a joy which is new every morning and which increases day by day... The lanes of Mustapha and El Biar are a feature of place – narrow, sometimes very steep, often more like the bed of a torrent than a path, with stone walls full of plants and ferns, overarched by trees, with aloes and prickly pear crowning the banks; shady and cool in the heat, damp like a tunnel in the wet, lonely and not always very safe – a point which perhaps adds something to their fascination. The real delight of the whole place lies for most people in the possession of a villa, Moorish or otherwise, and a garden – and the garden is the thing."

Golf in 1911

Charles Thomas-Stanford, author of "About Algeria" (London, 1912), rhapsodized on the pleasures of life: "Algiers surpasses all... All around, on the well-wooded heights, are countless villas... almost all of dazzling white, and whiter for the somber foliage of cypress and stone pine and olive in which they are set. Perhaps no city of the earth possesses a lovelier suburb. The Englishman will find himself quite at home. The villas and hotels are to a great extent occupied by his compatriots... If he should be led to climb

through an aromatic wood of eucalyptus to the home of "le golf," and be able to remove for a moment his eye from the ball, he may enjoy a most glorious prospect."

A Cynical Look in 1914

M.D. Stott, who toured Algeria by bicycle just before the First World War and wrote "The Real Algeria" (London, 1914), looked upon expatriate hotel life with a jaundiced eye: "Of such are the caravanserais of Mustapha Supérieur; places of art in which the Arabian Nights and Tottenham Court Road are blended together in a terrible emulsion of oil and water. And the visitors are like unto the mixture – a mass of segregated units. You see them to particular advantage about teatime, when the family gathers round the sacred pot in hushed silence. Para glances through a three days' old Telegraph ('none of your damn French papers for me, Sir!'); mama takes her knitting and the girls do whatever respectable girls do at such a time, discuss tennis and – perhaps – a novel by Mr. Robert Hitchens" (who wrote the archetypal desert romance, "The Garden of Allah," in 1904).

A Life Transformed in 1926

R.C.V. Bodley lamented in "Algeria from Within" (Indianapolis, 1927) than "when Algiers was discovered as a winter resort... life on the Mustapha Hill was brilliant and amusing. The English colony was composed of well-to-do people who spent half the year in these Arab villas... An English Club flourished, and a real society existed. But all this is gone. The facilities of transit, the mechanical age in which we live, and newly acquired wealth have dispelled all this pleasant life. The English hibernators who inhabited the picturesque villas have in many cases been supplanted by foreigners, and those who remain are not much given to entertaining... The visitor can find excursions round about Algiers, but it will be at the cost of submitting to the gala nights of the Mustapha hotels, of the un-syncopated music of lamentable orchestras, while the middle-aged ladies of fashion sit round criticizing the few youthful or well-dressed creatures who have strayed by accident into this mediocre society."

Decadence in 1928

The winter hotel trade had become the object of open ridicule among the French by 1928. Antoine Chollier, in "Alger et sa région" (Grenoble, 1929), was scathing: "Europe and America rise victoriously to assault the defended heights of Mustapha... At teatime... the white teeth of the English women, ogres for these Tom Thumbs of cream tarts, shine in the sun. Next to us, this large American, with the smooth, pink face of a big fifty-year-old baby, is eating some kind of ice cream, while he makes an enormous emerald set in diamonds sparkle on his plump finger."

The Smith Family

Much is known about the Smith family, one of whose members, Anna, was responsible for Montfeld as we know it today. Anna's father, Benjamin Leigh Smith (1783-1860), was a prominent supporter of the Liberal Party and Member of Parliament from Norwich (Norfolk) who, among other things, gave each of his children an independent income. Anna had two sisters – Barbara and Isabella, and two brothers – Benjamin and William. Benjamin eventually became a polar explorer.

Barbara, the eldest child, was one of the founders of organized feminism in Victorian England, a water colorist, and at the origin of the family's connection with Algeria. Her family sent her t Algiers in 1856 in the company of Anna, Isabella, and Benjamin. The cover story was that Isabella, who was consumptive, was being sent to Algiers in the hope that the climate would be salutary. The real story was that Barbara had engaged in a failed affair with a married man, fought her depression with ceaseless exertion, and suffered a nervous breakdown. To avoid scandal and speed her recovery, her father sent her, well chaperoned, to Algiers.

Shortly after the Smiths' arrival, they met Dr. Eugène Bodichon, a free-thinking Breton who had made Algeria his life since 1836. A man of many talents, he was an anti-clerical libertarian and republican, a gifted naturalist, an abolitionist, and a champion of women's rights. A pioneer of the French colony, he defended the legal rights of colonists vis à vis the military authorities, argued for proper legal status for Algerians, ran a free clinic for the Arab population, and worked for the establishment of oases, exploration of the Sahara, and reforestation. He made introduction of the eucalyptus tree into Algeria a special project, ordering vast quantities of seeds from Australia. He published at least ten books, including hygiene manuals for colonists.

In 1857, Barbara married Bodichon at the Unitarian Chapel in Little Portland Street in London, and they embarked on a one-year honeymoon tour of the United States. She wrote "An American Diary, 1857-58" (reprinted in London, 1972) as a record of that trip. Once back in Algiers, she wrote one of the first English-language books on the country, "Guide Book – Algeria Considered as a Winter Residence for the English" (London, 1858), thus contributing to its budding renown as a winter resort. In the words of one French writer, "her work drew the attention of her compatriots to Algeria; she also made the results of several years of assiduous work in this country known in London through numerous articles in newspapers as well as by her paintings."

But Barbara's real cause was women's rights. She was a close friend of George Eliot, as well as a cousin of Florence Nightingale. Between 1854 and 1872, she worte five works promoting women's rights to education, work, property, and the vote. She was a founder and benefactor of Girton, a women's college at Cambridge. She is the subject of four studies: "Barbara Bodichon," by Hester Burton (London, 1949); "Barbara Bodichon, George Eliot and the Limits of Feminism," by Muriel Clara Braddock (1975); "A Mid-Victorian Feminist, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon," by Sheila Herstein (New Haven,

1985); and "Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group," by Candide Ann Lacey (1987).

In 1859, Barbara bought a six-hectare property on the ridge road adjoining the southeast boundary of the present Montfeld property. Three times as large as Montfeld, Campagn Bodichon is likely to have encompassed the grounds of the present Chancery, the Clinique des Orangers, and the slopes below down to the present Center for Diocesan Studies.

According to J. Ross Browne, writing of a visit to Algiers some time before 1866 in "An American Family in Germany" (New York, 1866), the Bodichon residence "is delightfully situated on an eminence overlooking the bay, and commands a fine view of the city, the sea, and a spur of the Atlas Mountains. The house is built in the Moorish style, somewhat modernized, to suit the taste and convenience of the occupants. It is surrounded by a beautiful garden, abounding in the choicest fruits, flowers, and shrubs, most of which were in full leaf at the time of my visit. The various species of acacia are common, and I noted also the rose, nutmeg, and fish-geraniums, the sweet-elysium, the china-aster, and many other plants and flowers familiar to us in Oakland. Dr. Bodichon is making constant improvements, and expects to have a magnificent place in the course of a few years..."

According to Mrs. Betham-Edwards, who visited the Bodichons in 1866-67, became a life-long friend, and wrote three books on North Africa, including "In French North Africa" (London, 1912), their home was "a large straggling, Moorish-looking house at that time standing almost alone on these heights and commanding a splendid view of Algiers bay and the Atlas range. Inside, the aspect was still more Moorish, the large, bare, super-airy rooms being, after Eastern fashion, slenderly furnished." She quotes Barbara as describing the view from her house in these words: "The little group of olive trees opposite, with their knotted, gnarled, twisted stems and delicately slender branches, are contradictions beyond description and a perpetual delight to me. One moment the foliage is a dark, bluish grey almost black in some aspects and of a somewhat grave and solemn expression. At the least breath of the west wind, it is stirred with a rustling silvery ripple, and the whole tree laughs and sparkles with delight. We have also a group of poplars, towering over the savage mass of spiked aloes and prickly cacti..." Mrs. Betham-Edwards quotes another visitor, Mrs. Bridell-Fox, as remarking that "this house was then full of Kabyle workmen, and they all took a siesta in the middle of the day, dropping asleep in the corridors – on the stairs – anywhere."

The Bodichons lived in Algiers for six months each winter, passing the remainder of the year in England and France. When in Algiers, they held weekly salons for French, British, and American residents and visitors. Mrs. G. Albert Rogers, writing of a visit to Barbara in 1864 in "A Winter in Algeria" (London, 1865), noted approvingly in that pre-telephone age that "this fashion of having a special day for seeing one's friends and acquaintances has its advantage, and is one of the established usages of the place." The Bodichon's salons were, in the words of Mr. Betham-Edwards, writing in his "Reminiscences" (London, 1898), devoted to "the promotion of Anglo-French

intercourses" and "the uprooting of international antipathies," and thus contributed to "improving the general tone of Algiers society."

J. Ross Browne noted that "I was very kindly entertained by the doctor and his wife, and do not remember spending a more pleasant time any where in the course of my travels. They lived in a style of great simplicity and elegance – half civilized, half barbaric, just as the climate requires. Once a week the English residents meet at their villa, and pleasure-parties are made up to visit places of interest in the neighborhood."

Mrs. Betham-Edwards, for her part, noted that "you will meet all the best people, French and English, in the place." She described Barbara at these salons as "looking as English as it was possible to do, and strikingly contrasted with her exotic surroundings, her long sumptuous golden hair... simply dressed, her titanium coloring matching such superb goldness." As for Eugène, she described him as "original, epigrammatical, picturesque as his brilliantly complexioned Anglo-Saxon wife. The pair presented a striking contrast, the Brenton doctor, swarthy as a Moor, his tall stature and slow, deliberate carriage being also in keeping with his Oriental neighbors. Sixty years ago no more picturesque sight could have met an artist's eyes in Algiers than Dr. Eugène Bodichon holding gratuitous consultations in his Moorish quarters... A motley crowd would collect – who came to be cured or advised for nothing...!"

But all was not sweetness and light. In her study of Barbara Bodichon, Hester Burton noted that Barbara's marriage made it difficult for her to take a prolonged part in any one development of the Women's Movement... Wintering always with her husband in Algiers, it was impossible for her to run a printing press in England, or an employment bureau, or even a school... Her marriage had its disappointments, too. When they were first married, Barbara had hoped that Eugène would settle in England and start a practice in London; but it soon became apparent that he was too old to be uprooted... Barbara perforce had to live in Algiers. It was a bitter decision. Though they compromised by spending half the year in France and England, she still felt cut off from her friends. (But) the prospect of spending the winter months in Algiers often came as a relief... By her very nature she was pulled two ways... The sort of jog-trot provincial life she was forced to lead in Algiers in company with the sensible but rather dull members of the English colony acted as a welcome bromide to the heroics of the feminist struggle... Algerian society was as extravagantly unusual as everything else... Life in Algeria was in fact full of contrasts. The wild, vigorous landscape mocked the sick bodies and minds of the consumptive. Crimes of blood and passion seemed all the more cruel with the smell of the almond-scented heath in the air, and the lavender and the gum cactus and the myrtle. Azure skies and cholera made strange companions... It was all so weird and strange, and so unlike the civilized bustle and commotion of Blandford Square, that Barbara was startled into an even more conscious awareness of life."

Barbara's health declined to the point that, by 1877, she could no longer visit Algeria; Eugène, meanwhile, paid his last visit to England in 1880. He passed away in Algiers in 1885 and was buried at Bru Cemetery; the next year, Barbara donated £10 to the Anglican Church "on the understanding that the tomb of her late husband Dr. Bodichon

be planted and tended in the same manner as if it were situated in the English portion of the Cemetery;" this understanding has long been forgotten, for today Dr. Bodichon's tomb has disappeared. Barbara herself died at Scalands Gate (Sussex) in 1891. Girton College and the Hastings Art Gallery both retain collections of her watercolor landscapes of Algiers, and Girton also has a collection of her private papers.

Benjamin Bucknall

The Welchman Benjamin Bucknall, reputedly the architect whom Anna Leigh Smith hired to remodel and enlarge Montfeld, first visited Algiers during the winter of 1876-77 in search of a healthful climate. So pleased was he with the country and with his surroundings that he took up permanent residence during the winter of 1877-78. According to an old note on Montfeld, the Bell family brought him to Algiers as a mason, and he developed into a remarkably capable architect; this account seems wrong, since Bucknall had demonstrated his architectural abilities in Great Britain before ever coming to Algiers.

"The Building News" (London) of December 20, 1895 wrote of Bucknall that, "with singular knowledge and good taste, he adapted Moorish art to modern requirements, and the many beautiful villas in the neighborhood of Algiers which he built or reconstructed for French, as well as for English, owners, are very graphic evidences of his genius and good work. So successful was he that he was employed by wealthy natives as well as by Europeans." He presumably lived in and worked on villas on chemin Tayebi Youcef in El Biar, which, before independence, was named chemin Bucknall in his honor. At least one source cites Bucknall as the architect of the present Anglican Church, but this seems erroneous. Church records indicate that, between 1877 and 1883, he undertook a variety of projects in the old Church (torn down to make way for the main Post Office), but he died four years before the City of Algiers informed the Church Committee that it would have to move.

Bucknall also doubled as a purveyor of Oriental wares. He was cited in Alexander Knox's book, "The New Playground, or Wanderings in Algeria" (London, 1881), as someone knowledgeable on shopping in Algiers. He advertised in George Harris' "The Practical Guide to Algiers" (London, 1895), offering a variety of wares and services and even promising "trustworthy workmen on request!"

Bucknall died at age 60 in 1895. He was buried in the Carré Anglais of Bru Cemetery. His tombstone states it was "erected as a token of esteem and regard by some of his friends." A tablet "placed by his friends desirous of perpetuating his memory" in the narthex of the Anglican Church records that he was "of rare genius and taste; his buildings in Algiers are models of simple beauty."

A great-great-nephew, Stephen Bucknall of Woodmancote, Highfield Road, Monmouth NP5 3HR (Gwent), visited Algiers in 1989 to research his ancestor's life.

Lady Duff Cooper's Memoirs

From October 1943 to September 1944, the Oued El Kilaï property was the residence of Duff Cooper, the British Representative to the French National Committee of Liberation. It was described at length in Lady Cooper's memoirs, "Trumpets from the Steep" (London, 1960):

October 1943

We turned into a very beautiful, measureless Belle au Bois Dormant demesne. As far as eye could see was jungle of palm and cypress-covered hills, green as jade. We came to a Moorish door, a courtyard, hammam and tiles, cypress and arches. The home of Omar, I thought, Jamshid's palace – but inside! O dear, ugliness can produce pain and this ugliness was of a colossal kind, combined with gloomy darkness, paralyzing cold and dusty, musty squalor. The style was ragged palmist – a dingy junk-shop, brass tables and hubble-bubbles green with verdigris, heavy brass beds thinly overlaid, unvalanced and equally green, exposing cracked chamber pots, baths brownly stained, lavatory pans not describable, no looking-glasses or curtains, no washerwoman (there being no soap), no anything, sans, sans, sans… It was very discouraging. Cold wrapped us round. It was warmer outside the thick walls than within them. North Africans cater for summer's heat and forget December frost. I slept in my fur coat, shaking it out vigorously for daywear.

06 January 1944

A conflict goes on as to whether to be strong or accommodating, whether to preserve with these Augean stables or leave them uncleaned, hoping for H.Q. staffs to move out in two or three months, and face uncomplaining this miserable squalor… I've got a pretty-fire burning in one of the brothel-like sitting rooms….

January 1944

Randy (Churchill) is to stoke Winston up into giving some orders in our favour. General Eisenhower, for instance, has a fine house which he has vacated today, and which his successor, Jumbo Maitland Wilson, hopes to take over immediately. We might, with pull, get it… Seeing these civilized houses has stirred Duff into action, or anyway outraged reaction. After all why the hell should these warriors, who are supposedly fighting a war in Italy, loll in luxurious immunity, while we permanent missionaries, with orders to entertain and impress, are left nothing but sties? The only people who live like real ladies… are the higher ranks of the Allied Forces. They should hie to their tents, hangars and hammocks and leave these soft delights to middle-aged diplomats. Duff's U.S. opposite number is in a gorgeous villa…

Winston's (Churchill's) telegrams… had done their dictator-best to clear our way to a more possible standard of living. A lot of electric heaters had been installed, so my room was warm enough for me to discard my fur coat in bed… The R.E.'s (Royal Engineers) had dragged a tank on to the roof, and jettisoned the antiquated geysers, so an occasional muddy bath could be taken…

February 1944

By February the spring was already whispering loudly. The mimosa burst open and most of the ills were retreating in rout… A scream went up from English throats in sympathy for their personnel. In this military set-up the unfortunate civilians were starving and wilting… Their cold, waterless diggings were their recreation grounds. Our Jamshid's palace should solve this problem. Our many shaded glades and hills should make their other Eden. The Y.M.C.A. must provide long chairs and tables, and with restrooms, garden-loggias, tea and service, a demi-paradise would be made… To this end I put my shoulder and heart. We lived on the fashionable hill at El Kalai, Rue Beaurepaire. The typhus-ridden buses would bring the weary element almost to our gates. Out house-mates hated the whole idea, fought it and, in consequence, found another villa to their liking. It was an ill wind… Now we can stay on in this once-despised villa and have the Civil Servants swarming all over the garden true… style. The place is warm now. Hideosity can be laughed off… Every day the house gets gayer…

The house is getting delightfully topsy-turvy with the spirit of an inn – more beds being unearthed, blankets aired, changes and alarms… Martha Gellhorn, wife to Ernest Hemingway, a lovely-looking American character in her early thirties, is staying… The daylight fades, the ghastly red, blue and green fairy harem lights are put up, whisky is lapped up greedily, roasted sardines are handed round… I don't think it looks like an Embassy I've ever seen anywhere…

Some evenings at dusk Duff and I walk round our Arabian property. It's huge, beautiful, romantic, and the seasons will bring flowers and new fruits. The Civil Servants mooch round and tear branches off the mimosas… We have a Moorish lodge at our gates, as pretty as Scheherazade's old home, romantic though dark. This also I am going to make over to the Civils, get some divans, get the R.M. (Royal Marines) to whitewash it, and fix it with curtains from my 100 white metres bought in Marrakesh… stock it with periodicals, stationery, such books as I can find etc. It shall be my doll's house and theirs. Great, great fun…!

March 1944

Soon it would be spring. The wisteria buds were swelling grey…

17 March 1944

The days are one lovelier than another, arums and freesias bursting into wild bloom in the garden and fields… Every morning I pick armfuls of arum lilies and large bunches of freesias.

April 1944.

Upon returning from a trip to England. It was brilliant and warm, and a pretty tame gazelle… with Victory horns, also two sneering peacocks, greeted me in the court of the villa, gifts of the Boushaga with whom Duff had been invited to shoot in the desert…

May 1944

The garden now was a wilderness of flowers. The days grew hourly hotter. For luncheon we sought cool dark rooms and the loggia was forsaken…

June 1944

The day had its heavy cloud. I never nursed a dear gazelle but it was sure to die, and the poor pet had been true to its tradition and lay stiff and stark among its uneaten roses and tobacco. It was to have been its wedding day. I had found a bride and was to have brought her to the groom this very afternoon. Did he die of a broken heart? Waiting was too long. No one could explain hope to him. It had become a custom to visit the peacocks and gazelle after our meals. It filled the polite half-hour and moved the guests imperceptibly to their cars.

06 July 1944

Randy (Randolph Churchill) rang up from the hotel to say could he bring Evelyn Waugh…? Randy is thin and grey, keen and sweet. Evelyn is thin and silent. I had to put them both on improvised beds in the unused dining room…

25 July 1944

Eve Curie fills another room with her beautiful face, khaki and medals, dreams of echelons and melees and garde-a-vous. The house is overloaded and has burst its boiler…

27 July 1944

It's like a madhouse these days. Randolph stumbles in at 8:30 when Papa is still in his bath and says: "Can I have my breakfast here?" Papa leaving his contiguous bathroom gives one look, renounces his coffee and leaves the house.

06 August 1944

Doggiest day of all – 100 degrees in my bedroom. We eat in the windowless Arab-pillared hall… When night comes it will be a scramble for cooler spots. The earth is baked and yet the trees blossom and reblossom as if their feet were in water. I tread the many paths in the garden watching the deprivations of summer, but always some new thing bursts into colour out of what seems scorched earth; red pomegranate flowers now, the vivid jacaranda tree and another acacia-type that drops scrambled eggs generously. The vines are green as English spring…

29 August 1944

Saturday, 2 September, is chosen as day of departure…

September 1944

Duff was glad to leave North Africa. It had not held for him, as it had for me, the same beauty… I alone dreaded departure from this temporary yet vital, substantial yet dreamlike, domain. Algiers possessed me… The once-hated house in which we had slunk around, un-warmed, un-watered and unfed, had become a palace of two worlds – of earth and of heaven. My heart felt more than ever before open, generous, almost selfless.

It could offer all it had to the thousands that rushed or wandered through our courts… Where rats had scuttled now shimmered a gazelle's ghost, two disdainful peacocks, a little silver cat, great Fatima the cow and a nuzzling donkey. Goodbye to them all; goodbye to the flowering trees, Judas and jacaranda, to the Valley of La Femme Sauvage, to the Marabout's shrine, to the white domes, the Arabian arcades. Never more… The last night, my mind a little disordered by imminent loss, I found intolerably hot. I walked the moonlit paths of our wide garden and noticed that, as in shallow waters on the beach, the temperature was patchy, and colder pools could be discovered. Like an unhappy somnambulist I was subjected to the fearful labour of dragging my mattress, pillow and mosquito-net down flights of narrow stairs, through impeding doors, over park, over pale, through bush, through briar, to my marked oasis. The net I tied to the limb of a frail tree. Beneath it I stretched my mattress, and there I composed myself and slept, to be woken within one small hour by a frantic cloudburst whipped into arrows by a hot hurricane that disbranched my roof-tree and streamed my net up into the semblance of a white witch. I fled whimpering to the house.

April-July 1945

During a brief return to Algiers. The ghost of old Louise opened the creaking door of Jamshid's palace. The lion and the lizard in possession. The court, once flowery, now choked with un-swept leaves of that vast busy, sheltering tree, the garden unfrequented. To this day that white town rings its glass in my heart.

Mustapha Raïs

Mustapha Raïs, the property that the U.S. Government ceded to acquire Oued El Kilaï, is a historic site of just over two hectares (about 5 acres) on boulevard Souidani Boudjemaa opposite the entrance to the Hotel El Djazaïr.

On June 2, 1948, the U.S. Government bought this property from Mrs. Sybil Maud Bell, Lady Burnett, widow of Sir Charles Stuart-Burnett, of Barra Castle, Oldmeldrum, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, daughter of John and Margaret Bell of Rushpool Hall.

The villa on the property was built around 1525A.D. and could have belonged to the Algerine corsair Mustapha Raïs, according to a 1965 appraisal. The French Army requisitioned the property from its owner for use as a depot in 1830 and returned it in 1835. Shortly thereafter, it was sold to the de Vialar family, which occupied it until 1873.

In 1873, five years after the Bells first arrived in Algiers, Mrs. Bell bought most of the property from Mr. Pierre Olivier, the Count Charlin de Gerson. In 1874, she bought a smaller part from Alexander Lauwick. Mr. Bell, a merchant, great-uncle of Gertrude Bell (the famous British political agent and author, 1868-1926), and leading member and benefactor of the British community and Anglican Church of Algiers, remodeled the property extensively. On the entry hall wall, near three carved hands in a niche, was to be seen a brass plaque reading: "This unfinished and last work from the hand of John Bell expressed, in one brief word, the spirit with which he met everyone who crossed his

threshold, Mustapha Raïs 1888." Mr. Bell died in 1888 aged 69, and was placed in the narthex of the Anglican Church by "friends who appreciated his many sterling qualities." In 1888, the British community also erected an "elegant fountain of stone, marble, and mosaic tile" in his memory at what is now the intersection of boulevard Souidani Boudjemaa and boulevard des Martyrs, across from the Mustapha Raïs property and the entrance to the Hotel El Djazaïr. It bears silent and somewhat forlorn testimony to Mr. Bell to this day.

In 1910, Mrs. Bell died, and the property passed to her daughter, Sybil Maud Bell, Lady Burnett.

In 1948, as the U.S. Government prepared to acquire the property, the French Governor General of Algeria wrote Consul General Finley to request that the U.S. Government "not make any modifications to the exterior aspect of Mustapha Raïs or construct any new building on the adjoining half of the plot without authorization." Finley so undertook in writing.

According to an old Record Book of the Consulate General, "title passed to the U.S. Government on June 3, 1948, and work is now proceeding on the plans and preparations for a new office building and the renovation and reconstruction of the villa for official purposes. The U.S. Government has agreed that the development of this property shall remain subject to the approval of the Government of Algeria, since it is considered one of the old monuments of Algiers in location and beauty of the gardens and villa."

A Real Property Record dated November 21, 1958 stated that "this old villa is now used only as a storage facility. The villa will be demolished when planed and arrangements are completed for the construction of a new Consulate General building on the Mustapha Raïs property," foreseen for FY-67

On November 27, 1964, President Ben Bella personally ordered the property seized and sealed. In later years, this action was attributed to the fact that it was adjacent to Algerian Radio and Television and other important Algerian Government facilities and that it was needed as a government guesthouse. The seizure may well, however, have been the result of Algerian fears that the U.S. Government was in fact planning to demolish the historic villa.

From 1965 on, successive Chiefs of Mission kept the issue alive, but with few results. The U.S. Government rejected early suggestions that it donate the property to Algeria or accept other unsuitable properties in exchange. The issue became intertwined with Algerian Government plans for a Diplomatic City near the airport; these were first announced in 1974 but abandoned around 1980. Meanwhile, the idea of exchanging the Mustapha Raïs property for the Oued El Kilaï property gained increasing currency, particularly as the Algerian Government began to seek a new property for its Chancery in Washington. Beginning in 1977, the bilateral relationship had improved to the point that the idea of an exchange could seriously be considered.

On October 12, 1983, after several years of talks leading to formal negotiations, the Algerian and U.S. Governments signed an administrative act to settle their dispute. By its terms, the U.S. Government ceded title to the Mustapha Raïs property to the Algerian Government, while the later ceded the Oued El Kilaï property to the U.S. Government and leased Villas Mektoub and Inchallah to the Embassy for a further number of years to facilitate the installation of the U.S. diplomatic mission at Oued El Kilaï.