

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CAMPBELL APARTMENT

Excerpt from GRAND CENTRAL by David Marshall, McGraw-Hill, 1946

... **S**till more surprising is the office of John W. Campbell. You may have heard of Campbell; he was chairman of the board of the Credit Clearing House for many years prior to 1941, when he retired and his company's work was taken over by Dun & Bradstreet's. CBS moved into Grand Central because it found here "the biggest single room in New York"; and twenty years earlier Campbell moved into Grand Central because he also had found here what he wanted—the biggest ground floor room in New York.

It still remains his private office. It lies just off the West Balcony, at the southwest corner of the building; and it's the most remarkable office, probably, that New York has ever seen. When he rented it, back in 1923, it was a bare barracks of

a room, thirty feet wide by sixty feet long, and with a ceiling twenty-five feet high. He transformed it into the galleried hall of a thirteenth-century Florentine palace; it was said at the time that the decorators lay on their backs for months painting and mellowing and aging the newly timbered ceiling. And when the place was finished, Campbell furnished it with chairs and tables that came, in fact, out of Italy and out of Italy's magnificent thirteenth century.

He installed in it a fine pipe organ

and a finer piano. He covered the whole floor with a single Persian rug, and other rugs he flung over the chairs and tables or hung upon the walls. They are said to compose one of the world's best collections; they are said to have cost three hundred thousand dollars.

And they are not the only treasures. There are flowered vases, too, and fine statuary, and collections of rare books, petrified woods and uncut precious stones. And

there, under the gallery at the far end of the room, is the massive Florentine desk at which Campbell for many years conducted the affairs of a very lucrative business; at which today he writes his letters, signs his checks, and keeps in touch with the world.

It was more than a business office, though. From the first

it was also a museum of beautiful and precious things, and by night it became a reception hall where Mr. and Mrs. Campbell together entertained their friends. Fifty or sixty guests might come here of a single evening to hear famous musicians play the pipe organ, or the concert grand piano, or both of them together. The Campbells live well out in the suburbs—good, sensible people that they are. But they love crowds of company, and by leasing that great barn of a room at Grand Central Station they solved their social problem.



*The Campbell Apartment as it appeared in the 1930's.*

### The Campbell Apartment

*Cocktails from another era*

Grand Central Terminal, 15 Vanderbilt Entrance, New York City

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