Ralph Bunche House
115-125 Grosvenor Road
New York

Ralph Bunche (1904-72) was born in Detroit, Michigan. Both his parents died before he was 12 years old, and he was sent to live with his grandmother in California. Bunche excelled in high school, graduating in the top ten in his class, and entered the University of California at Los Angeles in 1922 on an athletic scholarship. He graduated *summa cum laude* in 1927 and was awarded a fellowship to Harvard University, where he received his master's degree in 1928. That year, he moved to Washington and organized the political science department at Howard University.

Bunche lived in Washington until 1947, teaching and studying race relations through various posts and fellowships. From 1922 to 1923, he was a Julius Rosenwald Fellow in West and North Africa. He earned his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1934. In 1935 he became codirector of the Institute of Race Relations at Swarthmore College. From 1936 to 1938, Bunche did field work in South and East Africa, Malaya, the Netherlands, and the East Indies.

One of his most important achievements came in 1939, when he was recommended by the Carnegie Foundation to assist Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal with a two-year study on the situation of African Americans in the United States. The groundbreaking two-volume study was published in 1944 under the title The Amerian Dilemma.

In 1944 Bunche became an area specialist and technical adviser at the State Department, and in 1946 he accepted the post of director of the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations. He accepted a permanent position with the United Nations the following year and moved from Washington, D.C., to New York. In 1948 Bunche became secretary of the peace-seeking Palestine Commission and successfully mediated a peace settlement that ended the Arab-Israeli War in 1949. For this accomplishment, Bunche was awarded the 1949 Nobel Peace Prize. He was he first African American ever to receive the Nobel Prize.

Bunche continued working with the United Nations throughout the 1950s and 1960s and was eventually appointed undersecretary general. While serving in this capacity, Bunche was awarded the country's highest civilian honor, the Medal of Freedom, by President Kennedy. Meanwhile, he also served as a professor at Harvard University and as adviser to the president at Howard University. In 1959 he became the first black overseer of Howard University.

Bunche retired from his United Nations post in ill health on October 1, 1971, and died three months later. The New York residence in which he lived from 1952 until 1971 was designated a National Historic Landmark on May 11, 1976. [B 5/11/76 NHL, 76001266]