

ARCHITECT ALFRED WILSON HARRIS SR.

Alfred Harris was born in Tremont, Illinois on August 28, 1884. He attended the University of Illinois where he studied architecture, and then lived in Peoria for several years. Due to some early flying experience, he was put in charge of aviation training camps during World War I, and achieved the rank of Major. Shortly after the war, he set up the country's first commercial airline to haul packages and mail. Unfortunately Congress prohibited him from carrying out this enterprise. He was one of the charter members of the Cleveland Aviation Club, founded in 1919. Harris was also an inventor and originally came to Cleveland after World War I to look for a company that could produce his invention of the first movable headlights for cars.

While in Europe during the war, he was exposed to English and French architecture which influenced him greatly. Harris believed that English architecture should somehow be showcased in this country and that the best way to do this would be with a large apartment complex.

As Shaker Heights was developing, the Van Sweringen brothers were withholding from the market, large land areas on either side of Moreland Circle on Shaker Boulevard, and on South Moreland Boulevard (now Van Aken Boulevard). The Van Sweringen's idea of selling all of this land at the entrance to Shaker Heights to one developer seemed to mesh with Harris' idea of a large

English village. In late March, 1922, Josiah Kirby announced the purchase of the land by his Cleveland Discount Company, for the construction of a \$30,000,000 Moreland Courts project.

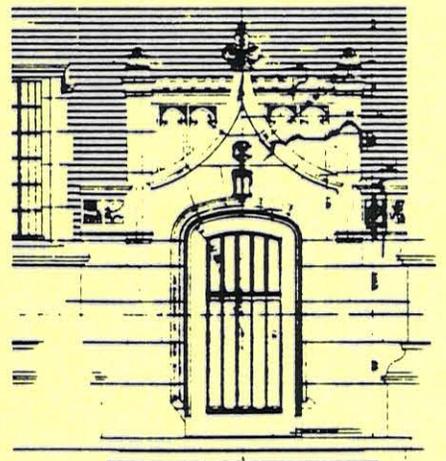
The concept included the Moreland Courts apartment building linking the western edge of Shaker Heights with a shopping center at Moreland Circle (now Shaker Square). In addition to the 1,500 foot long apartment building on Shaker Boulevard it included terrace homes on Van Aken Boulevard, business buildings, stores and a theatre on the circle and a market house, central heating plant and parking garage southwest of the circle. Harris spent 14 months on the preliminary planning. His plans for the commercial buildings showed a variety of form and detail comparable to that executed in the apartments, creating the feeling of a medieval street.

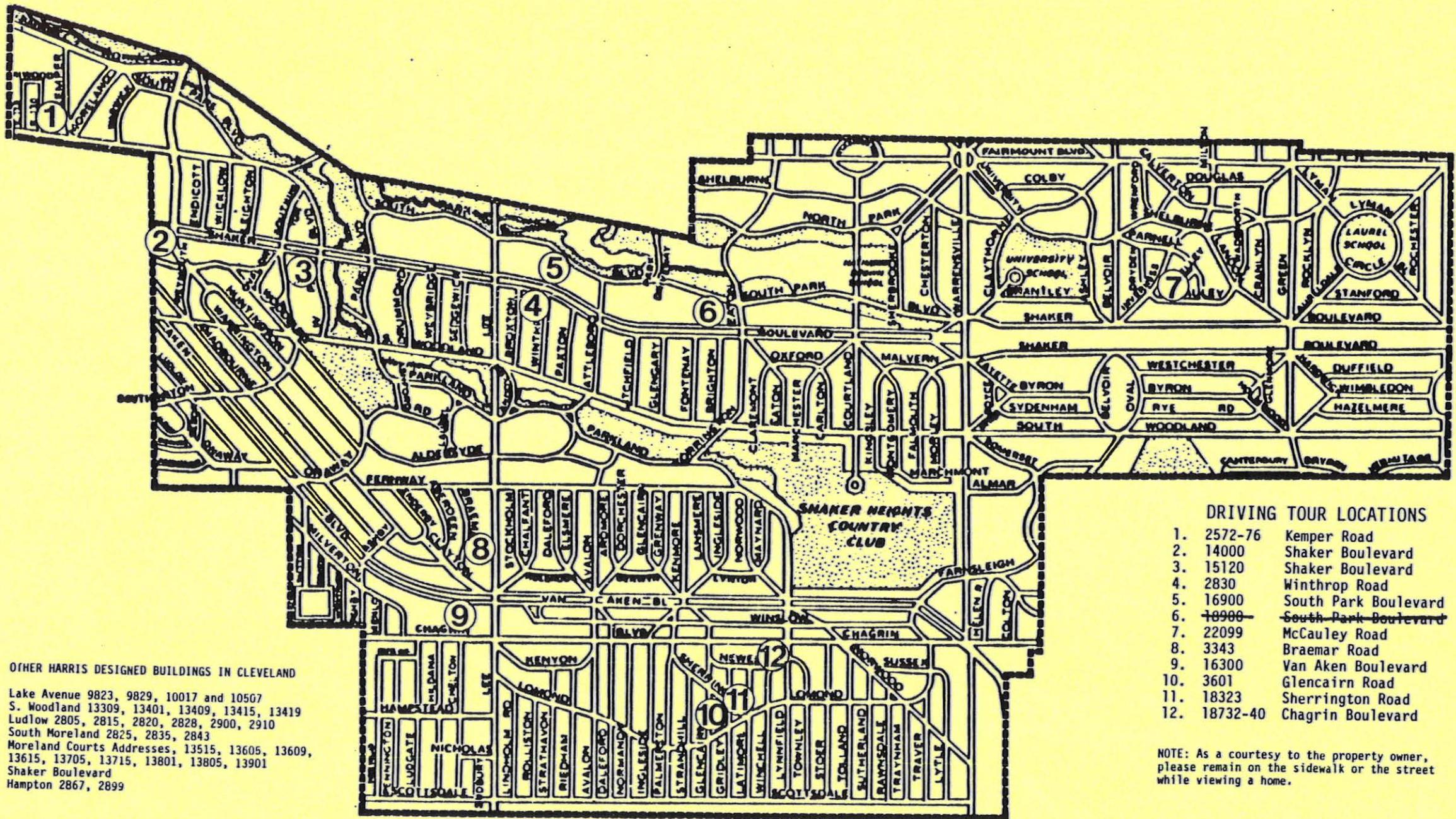
When Kirby's development failed in 1923, less than a year after it was announced, the Van Sweringen brothers employed Harris to prepare a scheme to develop Shaker Boulevard west to East 93rd Street. However, the Harris plan was never carried out, and Philip L. Small and Carl B. Rowley were engaged by the Van Sweringens to complete Moreland Courts and to plan Shaker Square. Although not completely realized, the effect of Harris' intentions can be seen in the irregular block of smaller apartments south of Shaker Square bounded by Drexmore, South Moreland, Hampton and South Woodland. Nearly all were designed by Harris, although they were built by different developers. They comprise a picturesque combination of round towers, bay windows, steep slate roofs, half-timbered gables, brick, stone, wood, and stucco.

Harris designed a number of buildings for Charles Bernstein, which included some of the original buildings in the block bounded by Ludlow Road, South Moreland Boulevard, Hampton Road and South Woodland Road, in addition to the building on Drexmore Road at Ludlow Road. Other important works by Alfred Harris Sr. include several apartments on and around Lake Avenue in the vicinity of Edgewater Park, the Shaker Rapid Station at Coventry Road, and the commercial building on Chagrin Boulevard at Lynnfield Road. Harris' own home was an English brick with a soaring two-story living room that is very similar to a Moreland Courts studio suite with an unusual double layer vaulted ceiling. A notable feature is its fireplace which shows Jesus and his apostles with the tools of their trade.

In the late 1920's the Van Sweringen brothers decided to change Moreland Circle to Shaker Square and had Small & Rowley design a shopping center and the Moreland Courts additions that start just past the second high tower west of Coventry and extend to Shaker Square.

Major Harris passed away on March 19, 1932. His artistic talents were also expressed in paintings and sculpture.





OTHER HARRIS DESIGNED BUILDINGS IN CLEVELAND

Lake Avenue 9823, 9829, 10017 and 10507
 S. Woodland 13309, 13401, 13409, 13415, 13419
 Ludlow 2805, 2815, 2820, 2828, 2900, 2910
 South Moreland 2825, 2835, 2843
 Moreland Courts Addresses, 13515, 13605, 13609,
 13615, 13705, 13715, 13801, 13805, 13901
 Shaker Boulevard
 Hampton 2867, 2899

DRIVING TOUR LOCATIONS

- 1. 2572-76 Kemper Road
- 2. 14000 Shaker Boulevard
- 3. 15120 Shaker Boulevard
- 4. 2830 Winthrop Road
- 5. 16900 South Park Boulevard
- 6. ~~10900~~ ~~South Park Boulevard~~
- 7. 22099 McCauley Road
- 8. 3343 Braemar Road
- 9. 16300 Van Aken Boulevard
- 10. 3601 Glenclair Road
- 11. 18323 Sherrington Road
- 12. 18732-40 Chagrin Boulevard

NOTE: As a courtesy to the property owner, please remain on the sidewalk or the street while viewing a home.

ALFRED WILSON HARRIS SR.

ARCHITECTURAL DRIVING TOUR OF SHAKER HEIGHTS