

# It's About Time . . .

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Shaker Landmark Weekend 2001    September 15 and 16, 2001

## *It's About Time...*

Shaker Heights is so much "of one piece and one time" that a large portion of it is a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the "Garden City" established by the Van Sweringen Company. The overlay of a complex street plan, neighborhoods with schools and church, green space of parks, street lawns, and unfenced yards, as well as uniformity in set-backs and spacing of houses both unifies and distinguishes the city as a garden city suburb.

Yet within this setting, houses have been built over a period of more than one hundred years. The houses before the establishment of Shaker Heights, the farmhouses of Warrensville, provide the starting point. A majority of the houses were erected during the Van Sweringen years, beginning in the late 1910's and extending through the 1930's. But the city also has a significant number of houses erected during the post World War II housing boom and following decades.

**The Early Years** "Century Homes" is the local name for small, wood-framed houses built during the first half of the nineteenth century. Such dwellings erected on and near Chagrin Boulevard constituted the community of Warrensville. There are several additional nineteenth-century homes on Fairmount Boulevard.

In the areas of the city developed before the Van Sweringens took control of them, many "Cleveland Doubles," two-family houses with porches at both levels across the façade, were erected. These houses are in the area southwest of the Chagrin/Lee intersection, initially developed as Eastview Village; on the streets north of Larchmere, northwest of Shaker Square; and northeast of the Chagrin/Warrensville Center intersection.

**Houses of the Van Sweringen Era** The first wave of houses built in Shaker Village were erected during the 1910's. There is a group of these early buildings in the area east of Shaker Square. There are also early suburban houses on several streets between South Woodland and Shaker Boulevard, and on South Park. These houses are picturesque in design, but do not adhere sometimes as faithfully to the three styles mandated by the Van Sweringen Co.: the English (Tudor), Georgian, and French.

The period of most intense development under the Van Sweringen standards occurred in the 1920's and 1930's. The Van Sweringen's participated in the construction of several sets of model, or "Demonstration Homes," 21 in all, that presented the types of houses and stylistic sophistication considered appropriate for Shaker Village. These houses are City of Shaker Heights landmarks and so marked with bronze plaques near their

front entrances. Eight houses erected on Scottsdale Boulevard in 1928 showed the potential for design excellence in smaller houses; these dwellings were constructed by the Homeowners' Service Institute of New York with the assistance of the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

The designs of all houses were governed by rules that mandated size and the Van Sweringen Company approved certain types of rooms and amenities and all blueprints. The variety in the city's houses, despite this regulation, was due to the large number of architects and builders involved in building houses in Shaker Heights. Though many of the dwellings were erected as speculative investments, no one developer or architect controlled large tracts. Some of the apartment buildings and most of the two-family houses that exist today were built in this time period.

**Post War Development: The Recent Past** Shaker Heights was completed during the post-war building boom of the late 1940's and 1950's. The eastern portion of the city consists largely of these houses. The general turn in American domestic architecture to more casual and outdoor living is evident in these dwellings. The feel of the ranch house and its more open interior plan prevail in the post-war houses of Shaker Heights, even though the two-story requirement remained in effect. Houses became plainer versions of colonial or other styles as ornament was omitted to seem more modern. Additional apartment buildings were also built in the city during this period. These buildings are examples of what historians have labeled "The Recent Past," since some post-war development has reached the 50-year mark, the age generally recognized as historic.

### "New Houses" in Shaker Heights

Although the city was essentially "built out" by the end of the post-war building boom, some late twentieth century houses and groups of condominiums have been erected on vacant parcels. Many of these houses are noticeably modern in their design, but often landscaping helps them blend into the neighborhood. However, during the 1990's the idea of compatible design became more dominant and some of the newest houses express the revival styles of the Van Sweringen era.

The range of ages of houses in Shaker Heights will continue to grow as small projects add to the housing stock of the city. If you're curious about how houses of various ages can be good neighbors, stroll down Drummond Road. The homes on this street include several houses erected during 1913-14, residences from the hey-day of the Van Sweringen Company, and some of the city's contemporary dwellings built during the 1960's. Character and quality prevail in Shaker Heights housing, even as form, materials, and age add essential variety.

Betsy Hunter Bradley, 2001

## *House Descriptions*

The Shaker Heights Landmark Commission House Tour of 2001 provides a sampling of twentieth-century houses over time. A house from the 1910's evokes the pre-World War I era when household help was plentiful and a ballroom seemed essential in a large house. The heart of the tour features four houses from the Van Sweringen era, the houses that first come to mind as Shaker Heights' distinguished homes. Two much younger houses, one from the 1950's and another from the 1970's, represent homes from the more recent past.

### **15800 South Park Boulevard 1916; Harry L. Shupe, architect**

Designed in 1916 by architect Harry L. Shupe, this house represents the type of homes that were erected in Shaker Heights as the Van Sweringen Company was developing the design principles that would be the guide in the following decades. While this dwelling does not differ significantly from the houses erected during the 1920's, its English country house styling incorporates the strong horizontal lines of American houses of the era, seen most often in Prairie style houses and bungalows. The family of George G. Peckham occupied the house briefly before the family moved to the house next door to the west, which was also designed by Harry L. Shupe. During the 1920's the family of Carl H. Hanna lived here. The house was vacant during much of the 1930's and early 1940's. It was the home of attorney John and Dorothy Pegg during the 1960's and 1970's.

A roof clad with flat ceramic tiles and punctuated with exposed rafter ends shelters the wide facade modeled with two-story projecting bays. The understated entrance is Shupe's reinterpretation of a door flanked by sidelights with an interesting change in the proportions of the classical motif. The arch form of the entrance appears again to frame the window openings of the sunroom; but the architect turned to round arches for the windows of the breakfast room.

Shupe's mastery of form and proportion, and avoidance of ornament, extends to the interior of the house as well. The flexibility of the rooms on the main floor is evident in the reassignment of room use and zoning of formal and informal living spaces. A library/den, sunroom, family room, and an up-to-date "eat-in" kitchen accommodate day-to-day living. The male preserve of billiard and smoking rooms has given way to the family room; look there for a built-in pool cue cupboard and humidior. The sleeping porch, a feature largely dispensed with by the 1920's, extended across the west end of the house and has been divided into two rooms. Skylights in the ballroom's ceiling light a broad stair hall rising all the way to the third floor. This large space at the top of the house, another feature that disappeared in later houses, features a complete stage for home theatrical presentations.

### **18524 Parkland Drive 1924; Howell & Thomas, architects**

This property is one of the group of six Demonstration Homes on Parkland Drive designed by the firm of Howell & Thomas for the Van Sweringen Co. The houses were erected in 1924 to represent just what houses in the new suburb should be like. You'll see similarities in this group of houses on the south side of Parkland. Yet No. 18524 is no run-of-the mill model house; it epitomizes the well-detailed historicism favored in domestic architecture during the 1920's. The exterior of the house is enhanced by its use of decorative cottage motifs. Its sandstone lower facade is the background for an unusual arched door hood. The stucco walls of the second story feature a row of rosettes and foliate forms beside the windows, on the sidewalls as well as the facade.

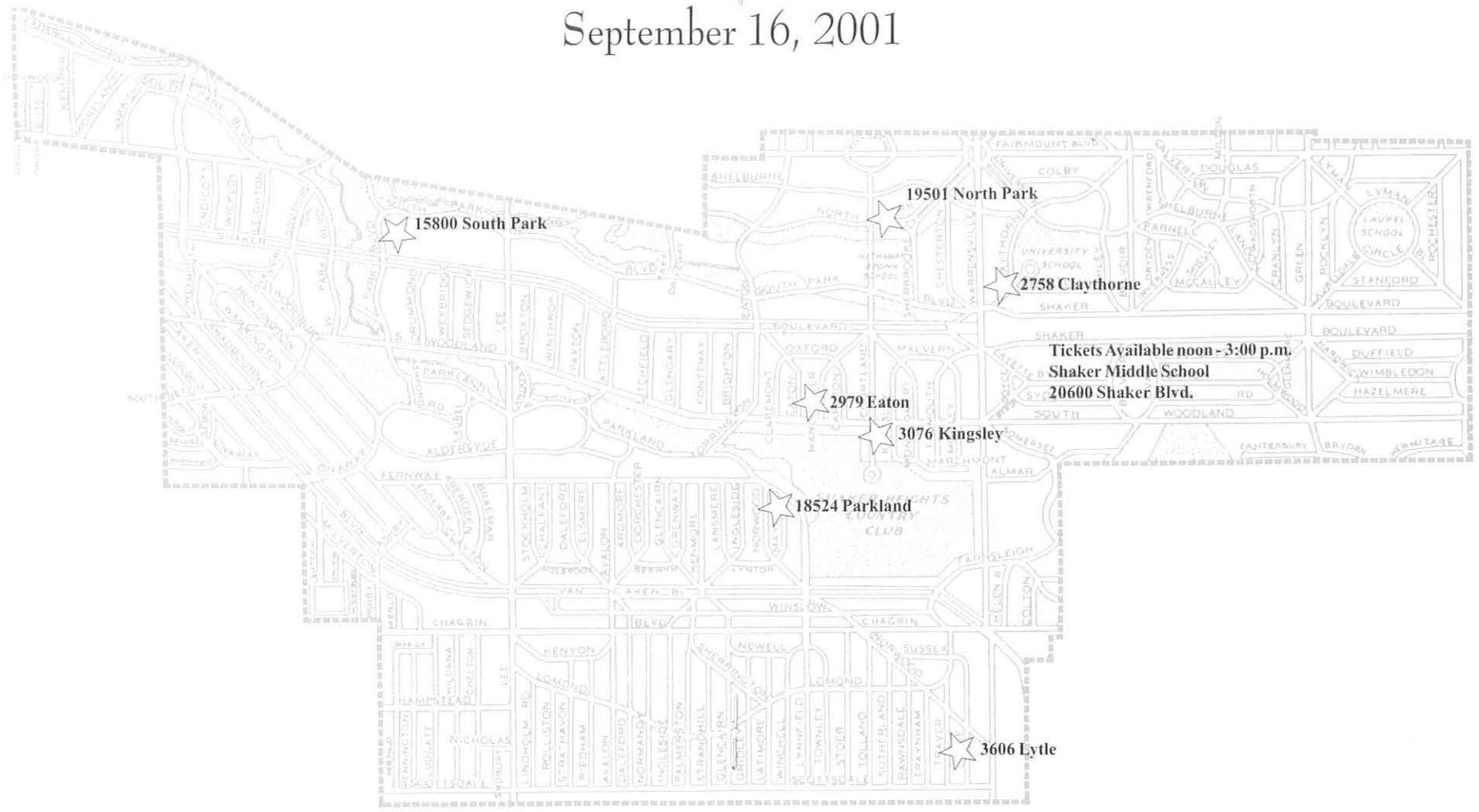
The main floors of the house, so little changed since their "modeling days," feature oak woodwork and doors. A pair of arches screens the lower portion of the staircase from the front hall where rope plaster molding inspired the choice of border paper. Speaking of wallpaper, the house showcases favorites from the owner's wallpaper design portfolio. A trip to the third-floor suite brings you eye-level with the unusual triangular and ocular ventilating windows set high in the gable end walls. A visit to the rehabilitated basement takes you to the artists' studios. Wesley Albaugh, an executive with Thompson Products, Inc. and his wife Mary lived in the house from the late 1920's until the late 1940's. William and Eleanor Adams then enjoyed this house for thirty years. The current owners, both of whom are artists, have stamped it with their style.

### **3076 Kingsley Road 1924; Philip R. Small, architect**

This Tudor style house is an inventive design that plays to the corner location at the intersection of Kingsley and South Woodland Roads. It is one of four dwellings on South Woodland Road designed by Philip Small for the Van Sweringen Company in 1924 as Demonstration Homes. As one of the larger models, this house featured an attached garage with servant's quarters above. Mr. and Mrs. John C. Wallace, who lived in the house until about 1950, purchased the model house. Mr. Wallace was an executive of the Cleveland Metal Products Company and later the Perfection Stove Company. The Wallaces had the architect make some minor alterations to the house, as documented by blueprints that have been passed down to the current owners. Later, the residence was owned for a long time by the family of Ruth and Monroe Rubin.

Philip Small's design demonstrates a deft hand with classic Tudor features. The stripes of dark wood against white stucco in the half-timbering, steeply pitched roofs, and prominent chimneys are hallmarks of the Tudor look.

Landmark Commission Tour  
It's About Time  
September 16, 2001



★ 15800 South Park

★ 19501 North Park

★ 2758 Claythorne

★ 2979 Eaton

★ 3076 Kingsley

★ 18524 Parkland

★ 3606 Eytel

Tickets Available noon - 3:00 p.m.  
Shaker Middle School  
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Small made the design his own by incorporating the less often seen rise at the end of the gable roof ridges and enlivening the broad half-timbered wall facing South Woodland with a projecting central section highlighted with carved brackets near the roofline. Octagonal chimneys rise as sentinels from the side of the small terrace at the front entrance.

Large banks of leaded glass windows deny the stereotype of the dark Tudor interior. The hand-painted over-door panels in the dining room and art-pottery tile floor in the breakfast room are distinctive features. A wonderful butler's pantry makes entertaining easy, even after the era of the butler. Indeed, the servants' quarters and the rear stairs provide a secluded studio for teaching music students. In the private rear garden, the two reflecting pools and patio are the handiwork of the current owner.

**2979 Eaton Road  
1925; A.E. Kellar, architect**

A.E. Kellar chose a formal, less-is-best, exterior for this Tudor house built by general contractor and developer C. H. Shipacasse in 1925. Dark walls of tapestry brick feature large banks of leaded glass windows that add character to the interior rooms. A central projecting pavilion features a stone Tudor-arched surround that frames the recessed entry and an oriel window in the gable face. The blending of individuality with standard floor plans common in the houses of Shaker Heights is demonstrated by the difference between this house and another Tudor, No. 3003 Eaton (two houses to the south), which Kellar also designed for Shipacasse; yet the floor plans are identical. Architect Paul Westlake updated the house in the '80's, adding an expanded and enclosed porch behind the living room and a loft above a rear bedroom. The result: a classic Shaker 1920's house altered subtly to keep up with changes in domestic standards.

The formal and restrained tone set on the exterior extends to the interior where the rooms on the main floor are carefully detailed with complex plaster moldings and finely crafted leaded glass doors. The neo-classical style of the fireplace surround, more at home in Georgian Revival homes, speaks to the design eclecticism of the 1920's. Robert Bennett, proprietor of the R.S. Bennett Co., and his wife, Mary, were probably the first occupants of the house. From the early 1930's to the early 1950's this was the home of Gertrude and Joseph Bruce, an executive of the Oilless Core Binder and Bowler Foundry companies. Later, No. 2979 was the long-time home of Richard and Edna Zilm.

**3606 Lytle Road  
1928; Theo Nichols, architect**

Theo Nichols, who had been a draftsman in the office of architect Philip R. Small, designed this home in 1928. Herman Hertel, a carpenter who lived in Cleveland, first owned it. Beginning in the 1920's, this was the life-long home of Charles W. Jauch, who was the manager of the Cleveland Builders' Exchange in the 1940's and 1950's.

The current owners enhanced the English cottage style of the house during a recent rehabilitation. A palette of clear white stucco walls, deep green shutters and dark brown wood trim, as well as colorful blooms in window boxes, transformed a plain-Jane house into a picture-perfect cottage. The shaded lawn of a double lot provides plenty of room for a play area and gardens. A path through the front garden leads the visitor to the entrance porch that is nestled under the long sweep of the main roof of the house.

The interior of this small house presents many of the features standard in Van Sweringen-era dwellings reduced, in some cases, to their essential quality. An informal sandstone fireplace stands along one wall of the living room; textured plaster, wrought-iron curtain rods, and bold coved moldings bring the cottage style into the interior. A series of broad arches links the living room to adjacent areas and frame views of a book-nook, the dining room, and the hall at the foot of the stairs. A small sun porch on the side of the house was extended years ago to wrap around to the back of the house as well. The original kitchen, breakfast room, and small back hallway have been combined to create a light, open kitchen that overlooks the peaceful terraced garden in the rear yard. Imagine this cottage as your "empty nest" or suburban retreat.

**19501 North Park Boulevard  
1955; J.A. Bialosky, architect**

Yes, this is it: that house with that wonderful corner staircase with walls of windows. But there is much more of interest in this custom-built post-war house designed in 1955 by prominent local architect, Jack A. Bialosky for Leroy Kendis, a realtor and developer, and his wife, Charlotte. From the mid-1960's to the mid-1980's it was the home of Lee and Dolores Hartzmark. The current owners are finishing a round of work after recently acquiring the residence. They have combined restoring the overall mid-century modernism of the property by retaining and refreshing as much as possible, rehabilitating the bathrooms, and adding a new kitchen that reinterprets the design aesthetic of 1950's Modernism. This house reminds us of what was new in the 1950's: wide-open floor plans, built-in locations for the television, and a master bedroom suite on the ground floor; bringing a bit of California living to northern Ohio.

The street fronts of the sleek, white exterior of No. 19501 give just a hint of how the house differs from its older neighbors. The shapes of window openings and a subtle grid in the brick walls of the garage echo the grid of the stair hall mullions. The set of louvers under the windows in the low eastern wing compensate for the fixed windows in the master bedroom. The landscaping of the lot reflects the original design and includes a planter built-in at the base of the stair hall window. The distinctly modern aspects of the house are mostly private: interior and back of the house features. Entire walls of windows in the living room, dining room, and den/office open to the rear yard. The interior detailing includes many carefully set up contrasts.

The subtle formality of terrazzo floors finished with brass keystones and walls papered with grass cloth cut and set in a checkerboard pattern is combined with the warmth of the natural materials of the hearth that divides the living room from the dining room, and the informality of cypress paneling used throughout the house. The rectangular box-like form of the living room with its low, flat ceiling and wall of windows is countered by the soaring ceiling of the dining room that rises to clerestory windows. And back to that staircase, the signature element of the house; it has just been restored to its original glory of maple treads and brass balustrade and floating platform landing.

**2758 Claythorne Road**  
1976; **Nicholas Kuhn, architect**

Architect Nicholas Kuhn whose office was located in Camden, Maine designed this contemporary house, erected by builder Daniel E. Biskind in 1976-77. The modernity of the interior of the house was enhanced by changes designed by the architectural firm of van Dijk Pace Westlake in 1983. The current owners have just been here a year.

Set almost out of sight on a narrow, triangular lot, the bold saltbox like volumes of the house are modeled by a recessed entry, projecting bay on the facade and dormers carved out of the rear rooflines. A cedar shake roof and vertical cedar siding, as well as spare, punched window openings evoke the clean lines of 1970's residential design.

The interior of this house is all about what can be seen, and how it is perceived. A variety of views - from up close and afar - are framed by the openness of the rooms and the elements that join and separate them. The dining room has a central role in extending main floor vistas and providing a link to the upper floors since the second story hall is open to its rise to the roofline and skylights. Watch for a series of black ledges and white columns; these elements were used to define spaces in the remodeled living room and kitchen areas, and then were picked up in the shelves the current owners designed for the library. A studied asymmetry throughout provides the unexpected, from the position of the fireplace to the placement of art. This visual feast is enhanced by the drama of unusual light fixtures and a lighting system programmed for various moods. The work done in the 1980's included finishing a second floor multi-purpose family room and borrowing space from the garage for an additional entrance and rear stairs to this part of the house. Upstairs you'll also find a former owner's interpretation of the gray flannel suit(e).

*Special thanks to Betsy Bradley for researching and writing the history and house descriptions.*

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