

Historic Designation Report

2834 Courtland Boulevard Shaker Heights, Ohio



2834 Courtland Boulevard, Shaker Heights, Ohio (circa 1992)¹

Prepared by

The City of Shaker Heights
Planning Department
3400 Lee Road
Shaker Heights, Ohio

July 2014

¹ Image source: Campen, Richard N. *Distinguished Homes of Shaker Heights*. (Ft. Myers, FL: West Summit Press, 1992), pg 60.

Property Description

General:

Built: 1922
 Architect: Howell & Thomas (James William Thomas signed/stamped plans)
 Style: English Tudor
 Builder: W.W. Jepson
 Original construction cost: \$30,000
 Permanent Parcel Number: 733-21-039

Structural:

Exterior Walls: Brick
 Roof: Slate
 Stories: 2 with attic and basement
 Size: 4,738 square feet (in 2014)
 Rooms: 5 bedrooms, 3 full baths, 2 partial baths
 Additions: 1933 - library & partial bath above garage; 2nd floor master bedroom
 1991 - circular drive on Courtland
 1992 - first floor breakfast room
 Heating: Hot Water
 Amenities: In-Ground Pool

STREET		SUB-LOT 200 PLAN FILE	
2834 - Courtland Blvd.			
BUILDING PERMIT	DATE	PERMIT	CONTRACTOR
959	9-11-22		
OWNER	Van Swearingen Co.		
BUILDER	W. W. Jepson		
ARCHITECT	Howell & Thomas		
DATE COMPLETED	O.K.		
ESTIMATED COST	#30,000		
KIND	Sewer 844 J.W. Jepson		
DIMENSIONS	Single 930 " J.W. Jepson"		
MATERIAL	53' x 40' INCINERATOR		
HEATING	Brick & Stucco ELECTRICAL		
INCINERATOR	Vapor FIXTURES J.C. Cowing		
ROOF	Slate HEATING		
GARAGE - DETACHED - ATTACHED	SIDEWALK		



Image 1 and 2: Original building card² and location map for 2834 Courtland Boulevard³

² www.HistoricShaker.com

³ Shaker Heights parcel map 733-21-039

Located on the southwest corner of the Shaker Boulevard/Courtland Boulevard intersection, 2834 Courtland Boulevard is a single-family English Tudor built in 1922. The house is one of the first four Shaker Heights speculation homes designed by architects Howell & Thomas for the Van Sweringen Company. This house receives mention in the *Distinguished Homes of Shaker Heights* book by Richard Campen and was featured on the 1985 Shaker Heights Landmark Commission Annual Tour.

The house has an English appearance because of its half timbering, projecting gable, oriel windows, clustered ornamental chimneys and other design details.⁴ The first floor of the house is brick, the upper stories are stucco and half timbering, and the roof is slate. The windows are a mixture of casement and double-hung styles and most appear to be the originals. Many are leaded with stained glass.

There is a large open patio on the north side of the house that is neatly surrounded by foliage and an in-ground swimming pool flanking the garage to the south. The pool (“natatorium”) was included on plans prepared by Howell & Thomas and dated 1924. As no separate building permit was issued for the pool, it was likely constructed in 1924-1925, after completion of the house itself. The building permits for all four of the demonstration homes at this intersection were issued on the same day—September 11, 1922. Anecdotal stories share that this was the first pool in Shaker Heights, which may well be true.

The house received additions in 1933 and 1992 that bring its current square footage to 4,738.⁵ The 1933 library addition over the garage was a large wood-paneled room with a stone fireplace, vaulted ceilings and large, leaded glass oriel windows. That same year, the master bedroom was expanded into a second floor addition over the existing “living porch” at the north end of the house. The 1992 addition expanded the breakfast room, replacing an existing window with a 12’ x 5’ 10” bump out.

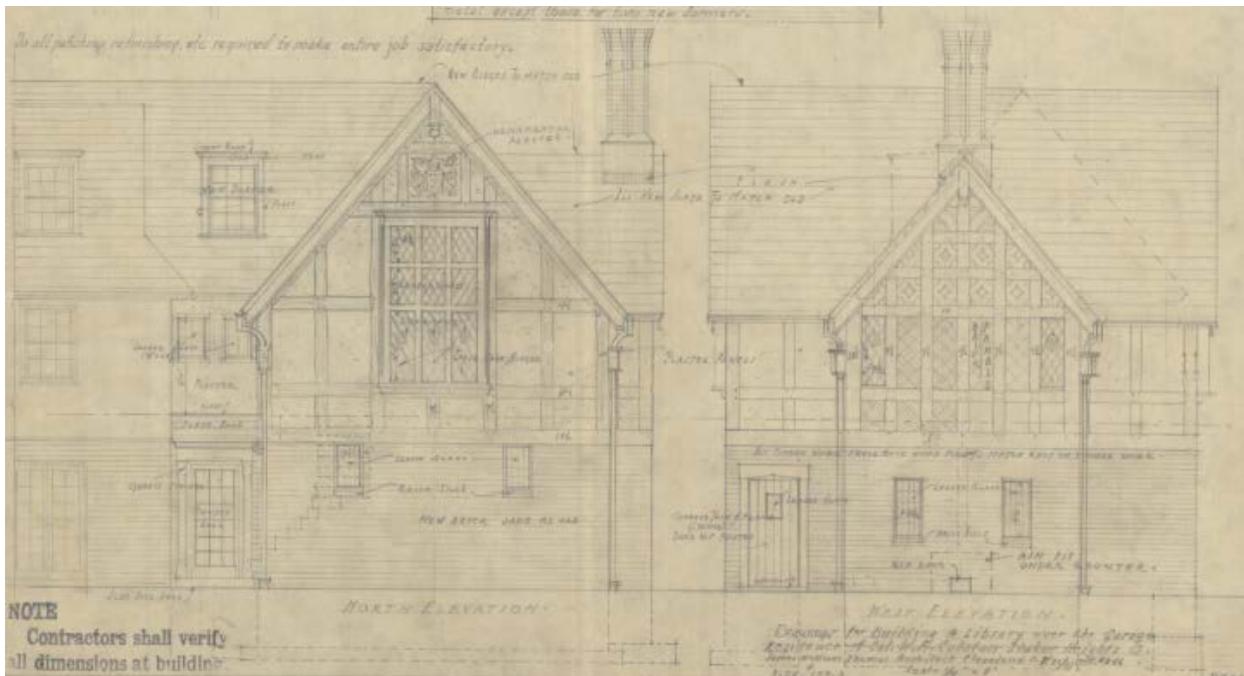


Image 3: Detail from a Howell & Thomas elevation drawing for the 1933 library addition (dated 7-31-33)⁶

⁴ Campen, Richard N. *Distinguished Homes of Shaker Heights*. (Ft. Myers, FL: West Summit Press, 1992), pg 60.

⁵ City of Shaker Heights Building Department

⁶ Copies of the original plans were obtained from the Howell & Thomas archives at the Cleveland Public Library.

Van Sweringen Demonstration Homes

Shaker Heights has the national reputation of being a high quality community with luxurious, distinctive homes. This reputation started in 1905 when the Van Sweringen brothers slowly but surely bought up the land that became first Shaker Village, and later Shaker Heights. Influenced by the Garden Cities movement and the Romanticism of the 1920s, they wanted to create a utopian suburb connected to downtown Cleveland via public transit that embodied their vision of class and beauty.⁷

To ensure the quality of their development, the Van Sweringen brothers created a set of design regulations for their development to embody dignity and good taste. The design standards included three approved styles: English, Colonial, and French. One of their most important regulations was the requirement that only a competent architect be engaged in the design of each Shaker home.⁸

To set the standards for future construction the Van Sweringen brothers commissioned Howell & Thomas, one of the best architectural firms of the “historic revivalist” era, to build four demonstration homes. These homes were located at the Shaker Boulevard transit stop at Courtland Boulevard so as to visually welcome potential buyers into the area and demonstrate what a client could expect from their development. Built in 1922, the home at 2834 Courtland was included in the first group of demonstration homes commissioned by the Van Sweringens. The other three are also clustered on the south side of Shaker Boulevard at the intersection with Courtland Boulevard: 2833 Courtland, 1960 Shaker and 19300 Shaker.



Image 5: Map of the 1922 demonstration homes designed by Howell & Thomas

Twelve additional demonstration homes were subsequently designed by Howell & Thomas and architects of similar reputation, including Bloodgood Tuttle and Phillip Small. Today, all sixteen demonstration homes are still standing and can be found on Parkland Drive, Shaker Boulevard, Courtland Boulevard, Van Aken Boulevard and South Woodland Road.

⁷ Boatright, Claudia (editor), *The Van Sweringen Influence: Shaker Heights*, 1995, pg 9

⁸ Boatright, pg 14

2834 Courtland Boulevard Ownership History⁹

Purchase Date	Owner	Purchase Price
2-5-1924	Virginia B. & Col. William A. Colston	unknown
11-13-1950	Charlotte Kendig	\$45,000
8-31-1954	Edward B. & Jane Castle	\$69,000
6-11-1956	Jane Castle	unknown
2-13-1958	Catherine H. Oppman	\$67,000
8-26-1971	J.R. Bryan & M. Jackson	\$78,000
9-4-1973	Joseph B. & Gayle Richey	\$85,500
2-18-1998	Gyurgyik, Joseph G. & Suzanne M	\$522,500

The home's first owner was Colonel William A. Colston, whose appointment as vice-president and general counsel of the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad (headquartered in Cleveland) was announced in April 1922. Colonel Colston was born in Louisville, KY in 1873, was educated in the public schools there, and later attended the Jefferson School of Law. He entered railroad service with the Louisville & Nashville Railroad in 1891 as messenger. He was later transferred to the accounting department and advanced to the position of assistant comptroller. He was then appointed commerce attorney, from which position he advanced to general solicitor. He resigned this position in 1920, upon his appointment as director of finance of the Interstate Commerce Commission, which position he held until 1922. Colonel Colston saw service in Puerto Rico during the war with Spain and was colonel of the First Kentucky Infantry in Mexican border service. He commanded the 136th Field Artillery and 63rd Field Artillery Brigade in France in World War I.¹⁰

Census records show that Colonel Colston was married to Virginia B. Colston (born 1897 in West Virginia). According to the 1930 Census, other members of the household included daughters Virginia V. (age 5) and Ann A. (age 4), Colston's mother Belle A. (age 77), Virginia's sister Margaret A. Brown (age 26) and employee Beatrice E. Parks (age 23).

⁹ Plat map books and <http://fiscalofficer.cuyahogacounty.us/AuditorApps/real-property/REPI/transfer.asp>

¹⁰ *Railway Review*, May 6, 1922.

Howell & Thomas, Architects

The firm of Howell & Thomas was one of the leading architectural firms in Cleveland that specialized in the design of larger homes. From about 1915 to 1930 Howell & Thomas designed dozens of beautiful homes in the Heights area.

The architectural firm of Howell & Thomas was formed in Columbus, Ohio in 1908 where they designed a number of large residences and East High School. In 1913, the architects were brought to Cleveland to design houses for Barton Deming's Cleveland Heights Euclid Golf Allotment.¹¹ Deming's own house, at the intersection of Cedar Road and Fairmount Boulevard, was designed by Howell & Thomas in 1914 to serve as a demonstration home for what could be had in the Euclid Golf neighborhood.¹² Howell & Thomas remained in the Cleveland area and opened a Cleveland office in 1914. They continued designing houses in Cleveland Heights, and by 1922 they were contacted by the Van Sweringen Company to build four demonstration homes at the intersection of Shaker Boulevard and Courtland Boulevard. Two years later, in 1924, their work for the Van Sweringen Company included a group of seven model homes along Parkland Drive and the home of George J. Arnold, Vice President and General Manager of the Van Sweringen Company.

Some of the other more important Howell & Thomas homes were built for Albert Metzger on Torrington Road, for Amos Barron, Julius Feiss, Isaac Joseph, and Barton Demming in Cleveland Heights. They also designed the two symmetrical winged additions to the Shaker Heights Senior High School (now Woodbury Junior High School). Lakewood High School was also designed by Howell & Thomas. Other outstanding examples of their work include the Library and Auditorium buildings for Ohio University in Athens, Ohio; churches in Columbus, Canton, and Oxford, Ohio; and YWCA buildings in Cleveland and Zanesville, Ohio. They also became experts in the design of newspaper plants, designing plants in Cleveland, Akron, Pittsburgh, Rochester, Houston and Brooklyn among other cities.¹³

Some of the design features that make Howell & Thomas homes distinctive include extensive use of leaded glass windows and raised design work in stucco. They often designed false front doors that were actually highly decorative windows, accompanied by a small, informal side entry.

Carl Eugene Howell

Carl E. Howell was born in Columbus in 1879 and died in 1930 in Monrovia, CA. He attended college at Ohio State University and studied drawing at the Columbus Art School. After working a few years in the office of Frank Packard in Columbus, he studied further at the University of Pennsylvania. He was awarded the John Stewardson Traveling Scholarship in Architecture and spent a year traveling in Europe.

James William Thomas, Jr.

James W. Thomas was born in Wilkes-Barre, PA on November 8, 1876 and lived until 1973, spending his last 30 years on a family compound in Hudson, OH. He attended the University of Pennsylvania, graduating in 1904. The early part of his career was spent in the New York City office of Cass Gilbert, the architect eventually to become most famous for the Woolworth Building in New York.¹⁴ In Cleveland, Thomas became a member of the American Institute of Architects in 1911. He enjoyed a long marriage

¹¹ Howell & Thomas Landmark Commission Tour Map. City of Shaker Heights, September 1985.

¹² <http://clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/485#.U8fvMyxOW70>

¹³ Howell & Thomas Landmark Commission Tour Map. City of Shaker Heights, September 1985.

¹⁴ Campen, pg 21.

to Pearl Delehunt. His family included three sons (one of which is a Cleveland area architect) and seven grandchildren.

Shaker Heights Homes Designed by Howell & Thomas

Howell & Thomas designed twenty-seven homes in Shaker Heights.¹⁵

2939 Attleboro Road
3116 Chadbourne Road
2833 Courtland Boulevard
2834 Courtland Boulevard
2575 Coventry Road
2590 Coventry Road
2593 Coventry Road
2920 Glengary Road
2886 Glengary Road
2873 Glengary Road
2839 Manchester Road
3280 Maynard Road
2853 Montgomery Road
18201 North Park Boulevard
18401 North Park Boulevard
18300 Parkland Drive
18414 Parkland Drive
18428 Parkland Drive
18500 Parkland Drive
18560 Parkland Drive
18580 Parkland Drive
18524 Parkland Drive
18401 Shaker Boulevard
19300 Shaker Boulevard
19600 Shaker Boulevard
3051 Torrington Road
3060 Woodbury Road

¹⁵ www.shakerbuildings.com

The Shaker Rapid

The Shaker Boulevard (now Green Line) rapid transit stop at Courtland Boulevard predates the demonstration homes by a few years. A station operated by the Cleveland Railway opened in this location on May 20, 1915.¹⁶ Also opening at this time was an extension rail line that ran south along Courtland Boulevard to the entrance of Shaker Heights Country Club (it was closed in 1923 due to low ridership).

In 1923 a small station building resembling the Lynnfield stop on the Van Aken rapid transit line was built at Courtland across the street from the demonstration homes. Courtland Boulevard was the end of the line on eastbound Shaker Boulevard until 1928, when the transit line was extended to Warrensville Center Road. The station building was demolished on October 15, 1967 because it saw little use after the line was extended.¹⁷



Image 6: The Shaker Boulevard/Green Line rapid transit stop when still running (circa 1920)¹⁸

¹⁶ Toman, James (1990). *The Shaker Heights Rapid Transit*. Glendale, CA: Interurban Press. pg 17–18.

¹⁷ Toman, pg 17–18.

¹⁸ Shaker Heights Planning Department

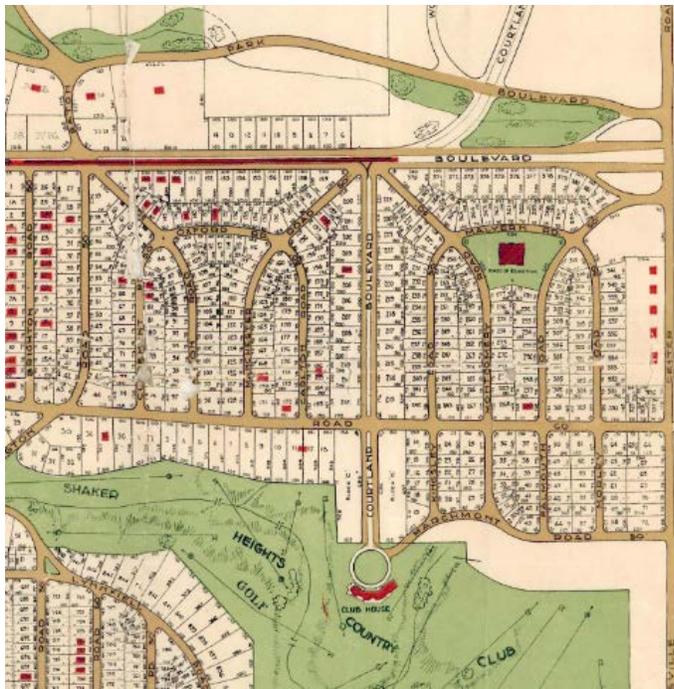


Image 7: Detail of 1922 Shaker Heights Map¹⁹

¹⁹ Red indicates existing buildings and extent of rapid line.

Property Photographs



Images 8 and 9: Front of 2834 Courtland Boulevard (July 2014)



Image 10: Back and garage of 2834 Courtland Boulevard (July 2014)



Image 11: Pool at 2834 Courtland Boulevard (July 2014)



Image 12: Courtland Boulevard's pool facing North (1980)²⁰

²⁰ Shaker Heights Planning Department



Image 13: Side patio of 2834 Courtland, looking south (July 2014)



Image 14: Side patio of 2834 Courtland, looking east (July 2014)

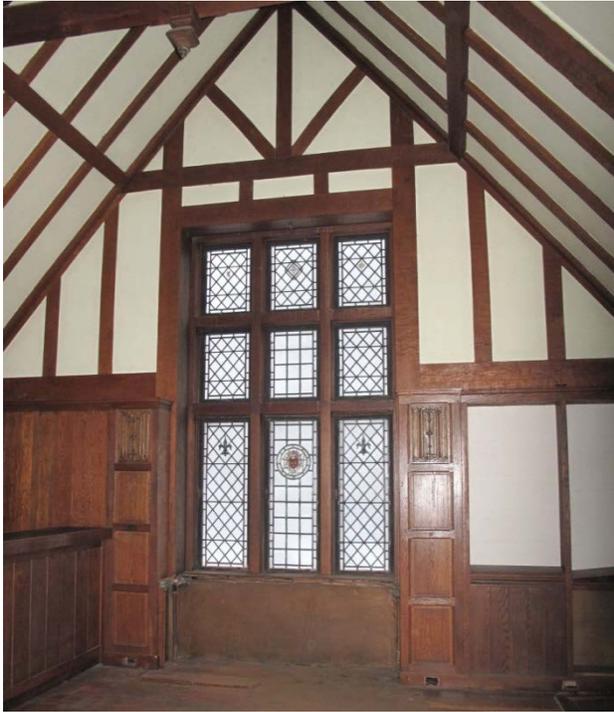


Image 15 and 16: 2834 Courtland, library (January 2014)



Image 17: 2834 Courtland, library (January 2014)

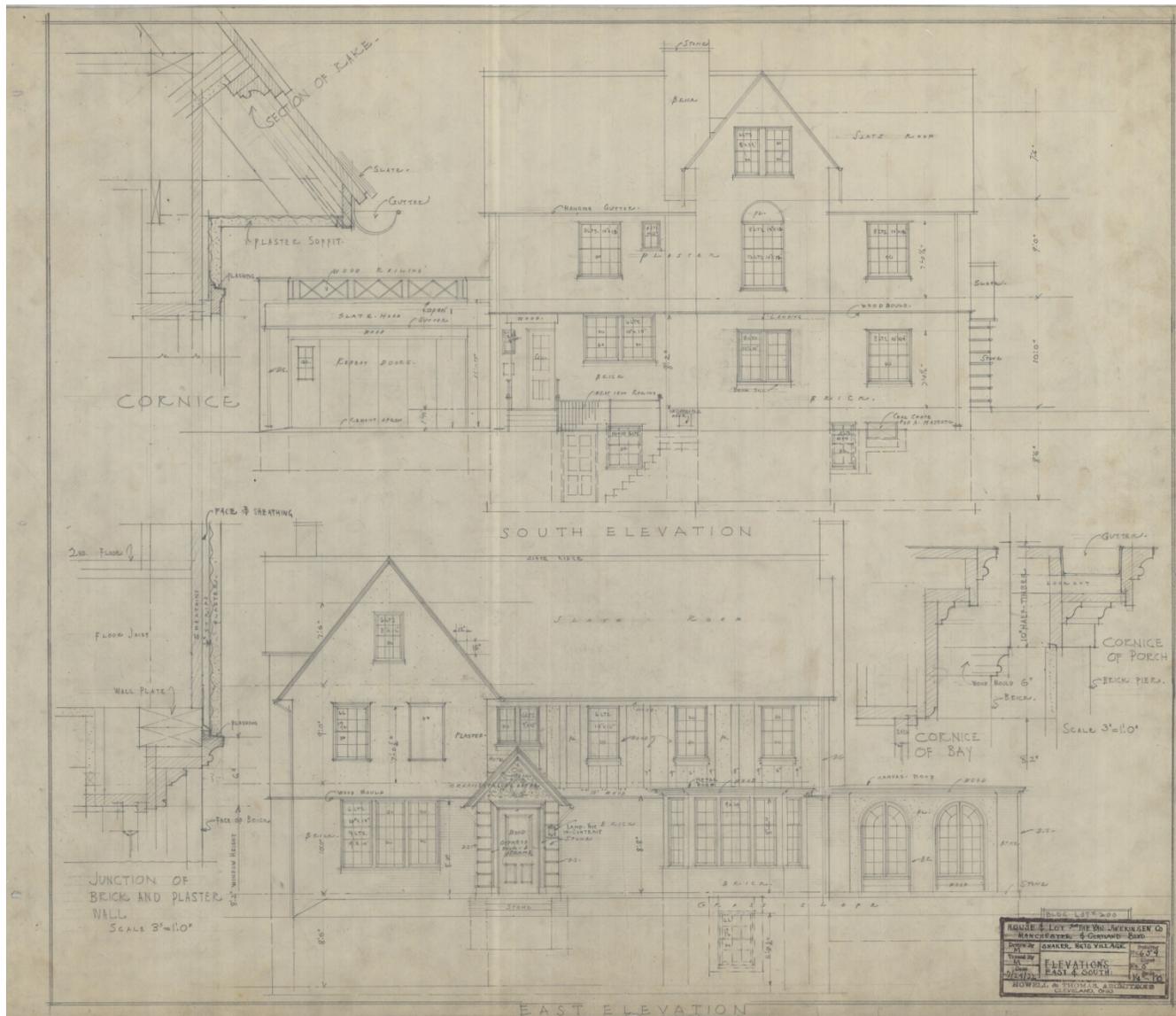


Image 18: South & East elevation drawings for 2834 Courtland, dated 7-24-22

