Architects

MUNROE W. COPPER JR. FAIA

Architect Munroe Copper, Jr., whose outstanding traditional architecture has brought national recognition to Shaker Heights, was born in Philadelphia in 1897. The only son of Munroe and Priscilla Van Tin Copper, "Monty"—whose great uncle, William Van Tine, designed Henry Ford’s home in Dearborn—grew up with three sisters, and distinguished himself at an early age by earning scholarships first to the Philadelphia School of Industrial Art and then to the City’s School of Art. His college career at the University of Pennsylvania was interrupted by his enlistment in the Navy at the outbreak of World War I; he subsequently graduated with the Class of 1920. In 1921, the young architect was employed by the Cleveland firm of Walker and Weeks. By 1924, Copper—who would become known for his midwestern adaptation of colonial Pennsylvania architecture—had started with his own firm in partnership with Donald Dunn.

COPPER’S WORK

Munroe Copper’s work can be found in 13 states and includes 2,000 homes—over 100 of them in Shaker Heights—and 59 churches, as well as restaurants, office buildings, hospitals and condominiums. His principal works include St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, Ashtabula (1964); First Presbyterian Church, Mansfield (1953); Oglebay Mansion Museum, Wheeling, West Virginia (1956); Lake Ridge Academy, North Ridgeville (1968); and Bonnie Bell offices and lab, Lakewood (1969). He has prepared designs for such prominent Ohio families as Bolton, Firestone, Augustus and Hoover.

HOBBIES & CIVIC AFFAIRS

Throughout his life, the interests of Munroe Copper have been diverse. He is a former horseman, a woodcarver, a restorer of antiques and a watercolorist. In 1925, Copper bought property in Gates Mills, and built his present home in 1931. He was soon elected to the Village Council, and in 1946 was appointed chairman of the Zoning and Planning Board. He also served on the Historical Society Board of Trustees and as treasurer of the Cleveland Garden Center.

HONORS & AWARDS

Munroe Copper was elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1951, and in 1961 he was admitted as a professional member to the Church Architectural Guild of America. In 1973 he received the "Excellence in Design" Award from the Greater Cleveland Growth Association for Country Club Colony Condominiums.

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Walking Tour

The self-guided neighborhood walking tours on the reverse side were designed to provide a look at Mr. Copper’s work in Shaker Heights. They cover all three major traditional styles. Look for symmetry, simple forms, shallow gabled or hipped roofs, siding, fieldstone, or brick on colonials. English designs emphasize asymmetry, have a variety of windows, steep gables and more stone and brick tapestry work. French homes typically have masonry painted white with steep hip roofs and romantic elements such as turrets.

Each neighborhood tour has a suggested starting point, but is laid out in a loop so that one may start at any point along the route. You may choose one or two to walk or many to bicycle. This is a tour of exteriors only. So as a courtesy to the property owner, please remain on the sidewalk or street when viewing a home.

Munroe Copper married the former Marguerite Letts in 1921. He has two sons, both of whom are architects; two daughters; 18 grandchildren; and one great grandchild.