

JOIN TODAY!

All members receive the benefit of knowing that their membership dues help advance historic preservation opportunities for Cleveland Heights. Memberships are tax deductible.

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society

PO Box 18337 • Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118

Please accept my yearly membership fee for:

- \$ 15.00 – The Marcus M. Brown Membership
- \$ 25.00 – The Patrick Calhoun Membership
- \$ 50.00 – The Barton and Grant Deming Membership
- \$100.00 – The John L. Severance Membership

Please make checks available to: *The Cleveland Heights Historical Society*

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (Daytime) _____ (Evening) _____ E-mail: _____

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society
PO Box 18337
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118

View from The Overlook



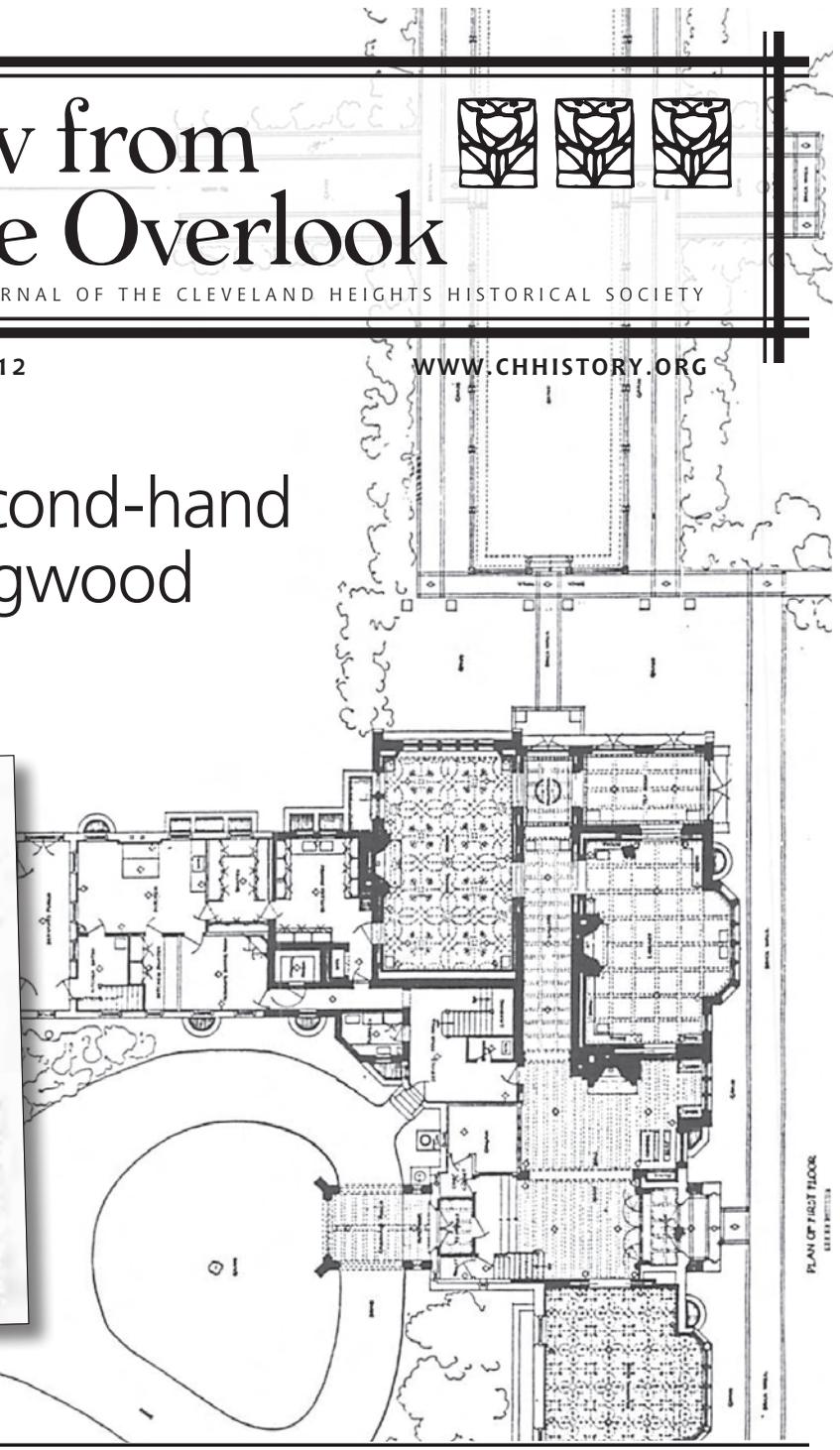
THE JOURNAL OF THE CLEVELAND HEIGHTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NO. 31 • SUMMER 2012

WWW.CHISTORY.ORG

First- and second-hand looks at Longwood

By Mazie Adams



Main photo: Ground floor plan, Longwood residence. Inset: Title page of The Architectural Record, June 1917.



North view of the Longwood residence.

First- and second-hand looks at Longwood

By Mazie Adams

All photos are from *The Architectural Record*, except the Austin Company image (page 6) courtesy of the City of Cleveland Heights.

In the early 1900s, numerous wealthy Clevelanders escaped from the pollution and congestion of downtown to the fresh air and open spaces of the countryside. But few did so with more aplomb than three members of the Severance family, each of whom purchased and developed estates near the intersection of Mayfield and Taylor Roads in Cleveland Heights, then a small community with less than 5,000 inhabitants.

Elizabeth Severance Allen hired noted architect Charles Schweinfurth to design her home, Glen Allen, located on forty five acres just east of Ben Brae, where Lutheran East School and the Bluestone Community now stand.

Julia Severance Millikin built Ben Brae on the site of an old farmhouse at the northeast corner of Mayfield and Taylor (the current location of the fire station). But the most iconic of the Severance estates in Cleveland Heights was Longwood, home of John L. and Elisabeth Severance.

John L. Severance was widely revered as a philanthropist, early partner of John D. Rockefeller, executive at Standard Oil Company and, later, benefactor of Severance Hall. For several years, he searched for the ideal location of his “country place.” He began purchasing land in Cleveland Heights around 1899, starting with the acquisition of a small property from Beulah Silsby. Over the years, the estate, situated across the Mayfield street car lines from his sister Elizabeth and cousin Julia, grew to nearly 200 acres.

Longwood included a dairy barn, several stables, gardeners’ cottages, natural brooks, waterfalls and extensive formal gardens. The centerpiece was Severance’s English Tudor mansion, designed by architect J. Milton Dyer, who studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and also designed Cleveland’s City Hall. After six years of construction, Severance and his wife moved into Longwood in the summer of 1910.

Just four years later, the couple hired renowned Cleveland architect Charles Schweinfurth to completely remodel their home. What eventually became a 50-room mansion included a tea porch, wine cellar, interior fountain court and a dedicated space for flower arranging. The great hall featured a triple organ whose console was masked with a magnificent tapestry. Finishes included elaborately carved wood paneling, ornamental plaster ceilings, fabric wall coverings and

eight large Italian stone fireplaces. During the 1914 renovation, workers even detached the original servants’ wing and added a two-story addition to connect the two sections. The exterior featured elaborate chimneys, refined stone carvings and castellated stone detailing. Until work on their “new” \$2 million home was completed in early 1916, the Severances summered in Maine and then went on a three month Caribbean cruise.

In June 1917, well known architectural historian I.T. Frary enthused about the wonders of Longwood in an extensive article published in *The Architectural Record*. Excerpts from the article, framed in quotation marks, accompany pictures of the beautiful estate.

continued on page 5



West end of the first floor gallery.

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society



PO Box 18337
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118
heightshistory@gmail.com

Board of Trustees

Mazie Adams, President
Charles Owen, Vice President & Founder
Sue Godfrey, Treasurer
Ken Goldberg
Korbi Roberts
Christopher Roy

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society, founded in 1983, is a state-chartered, 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization.

Our Mission

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting the diverse character and traditions of Cleveland Heights.

As a community-based historic organization, the Society encourages and facilitates greater knowledge, understanding and awareness of the heritage of Cleveland Heights.

www.chhistory.org

Heights History Series

Thursday, September 27 at 7:00 p.m.
CHUH Main Library

Ohio Wineries and Preyer's Lake View Wine Farm

Claudia Taller, Cleveland-based author of *Ohio's Lake Erie Wineries*, will profile the island and shoreline wineries of Lake Erie from the Lake Erie Islands to Ashtabula County. Through historic and current photographs, this presentation will chronicle Northern Ohio's wine history from the first European settlers who planted vineyards on Kellys Island in the mid-1800s to the new wineries developing along Erie's shores. City Planner Kara Hamley O'Donnell will share the history of J.P. Preyer's Lake View Wine Farm, a well-respected Cleveland Heights winery on the "Ridge" near Superior and Mayfield roads in the mid-to late-1800s. Copies of Ms. Taller's book will be available for purchase. An optional Ohio wine tasting will follow at The Wine Spot, 2271 Lee Road, for a small fee.

Registration begins September 13.

Thursday, October 25 at 7:00 p.m.
CHUH Main Library

Cleveland Heights' Euclid Heights Neighborhood

Marian Morton, history professor, local history expert and the woman behind the listing of the Euclid Heights Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places, will share the history and architecture of Cleveland Heights' Euclid Heights neighborhood, roughly bounded by Overlook, Mayfield, Coventry and Cedar, and including portions of both the Cedar Fairmount and Coventry commercial districts.

Registration begins October 11.

To register, contact the CHUH Library at www.heightslibrary.org or 216-932-3600.

The Grounds

The beautiful grounds and gardens of the Longwood estate were designed by the landscape engineer M. H. Horvatch. "The Longwood estate is situated a short distance east of Cleveland's city limits and comprises extensive, well-wooded grounds, whose beauty is greatly enhanced by a brook, the waters of which have been utilized to the utmost, forming small ponds and waterfalls. The general planting scheme has been developed along natural lines, except in the immediate vicinity of the house, where a formal garden has been laid out." Visitors' first glimpse of the estate included a large marble fountain, one of several sculptures found throughout the gardens.

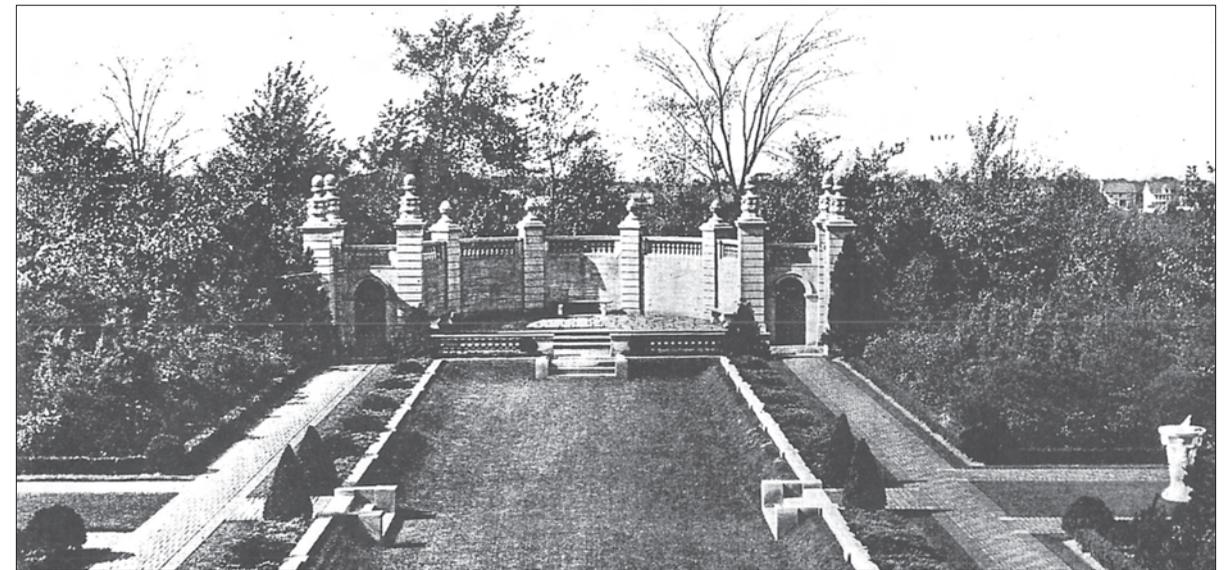
At times, large parts of the estate were used for crops. During WWI, a seventy five acre tract was made available for community cultivation, with plans for the produce to be sold and proceeds given to "the war charity."

Despite this utilitarian use, Frary explained, "The entire place is imbued with the charm of the old English manors and, although new, has little of the awkwardness of youth; quite to the contrary, its splendid setting of trees, augmented by a liberal planting of shrubbery, has tied it well into its surroundings, so that it already possesses that most desirable of assets, the quality of seeming to be an essential part of its environment."

The First Floor

"The Gothic style has been used throughout the first floor, different phases of it being developed in the various rooms. All the walls on this floor, where not covered with wainscoting, are hung with fabrics, the patterns and colorings of which have been selected for their unobtrusiveness, thus relieving the richness of woodwork and furnishings."

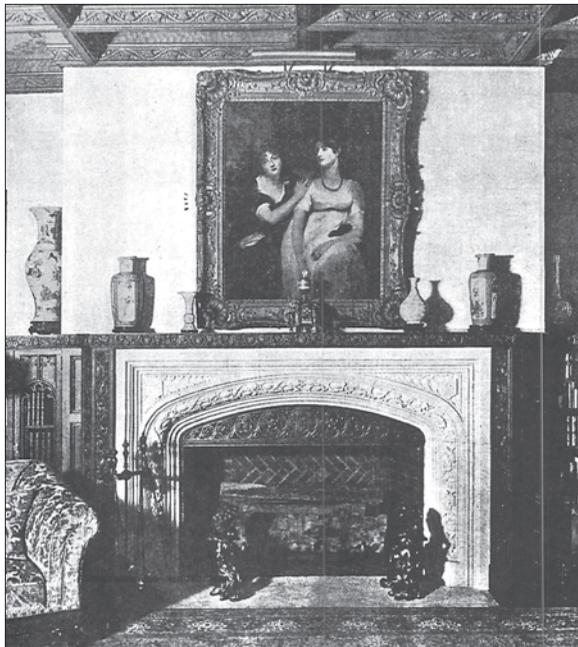
continued next page



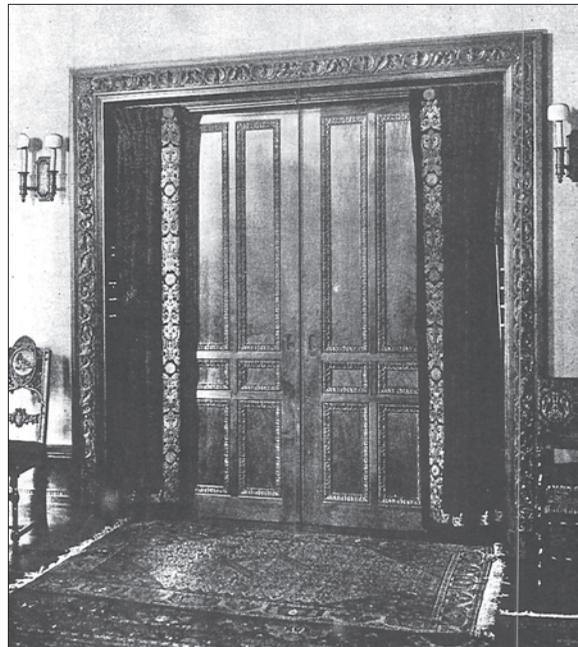
West view from the garden.



West view of the Longwood residence.



Library mantel.



Drawing room doorway.

The Library

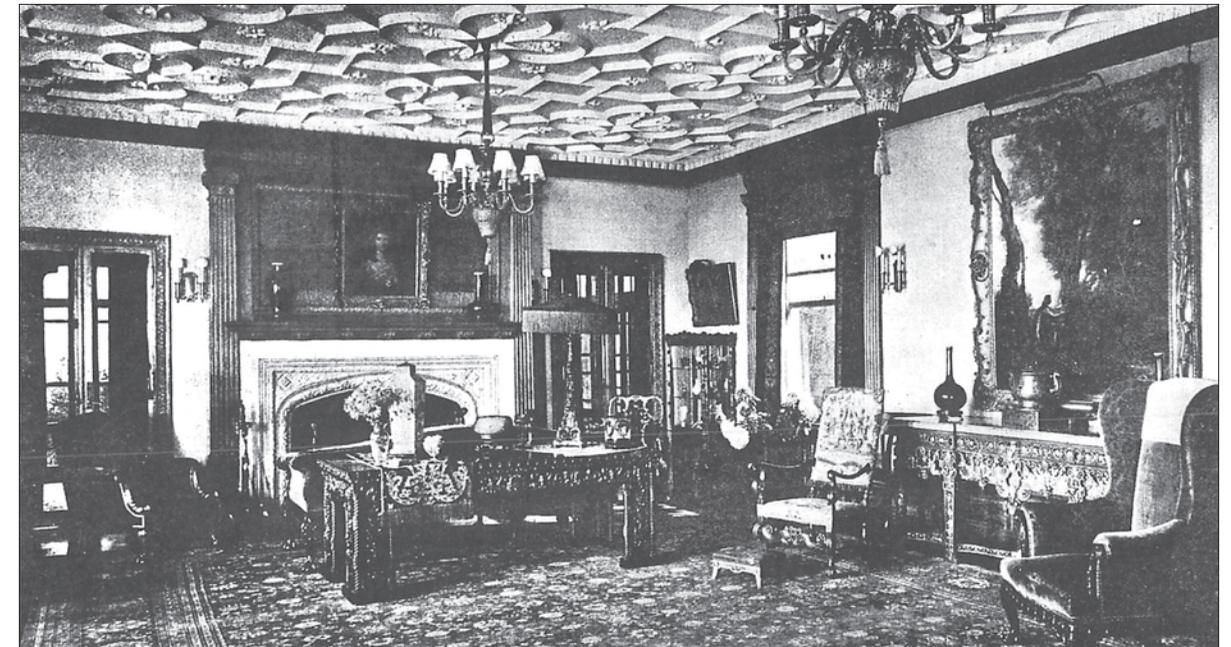
“The library woodwork, including ceiling beams, is of English oak...The mantel facing is of Botticino marble. An interesting feature of [the] mantel is the delicate bronze grille which squares up the fireplace opening. To the back of this is attached a rolling screen of brass mesh, which, when drawn down like a window shade, forms an effective spark-guard. The attention to detail found throughout the home is exemplified by the unique bookcases. The carved cornice molding of the cases conceals the fronts of a row of shallow drawers.

The Drawing Room

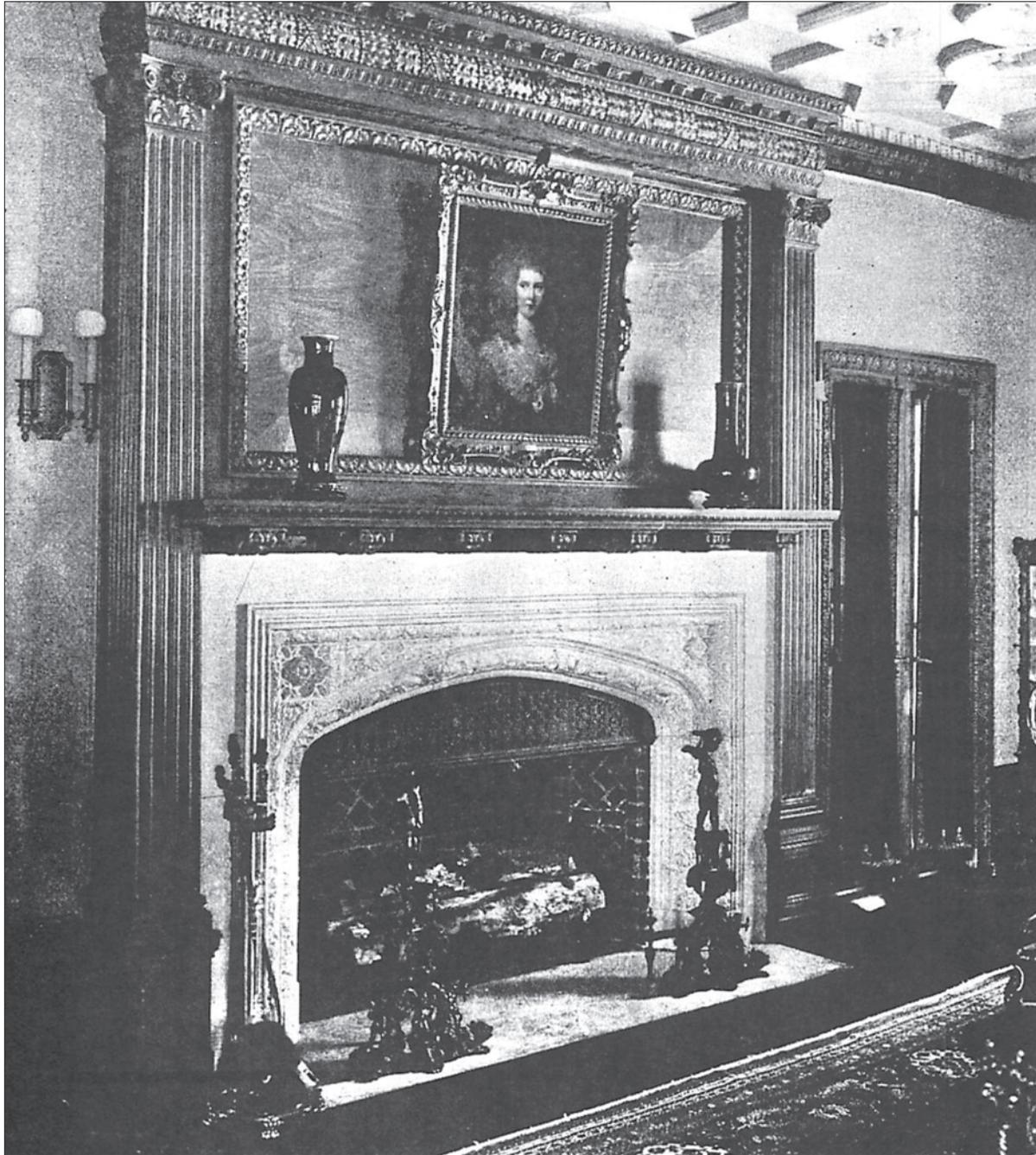
“The woodwork of the drawing room is of French walnut and the mantel facing of Botticino marble. While there is but little woodwork in

this room, there is found on the door casings one of the most interesting bits of carved detail in the house, consisting of intertwining vines, perched on which are tiny birds and animals carved in high relief and executed with the greatest delicacy and spirit. [The room] contains rare pieces of furniture both antique and modern, to say nothing of pictures, ceramics and jades.” After the devastation of WWI, members of the European aristocracy were forced to sell many of their paintings and other artwork. The Severances took advantage of this “buyers market,” filling Longwood with paintings, sculpture, porcelains and furniture purchased on their many trips to Europe. They bequeathed their collection, valued at over \$2 million, to the Cleveland Museum of Art.

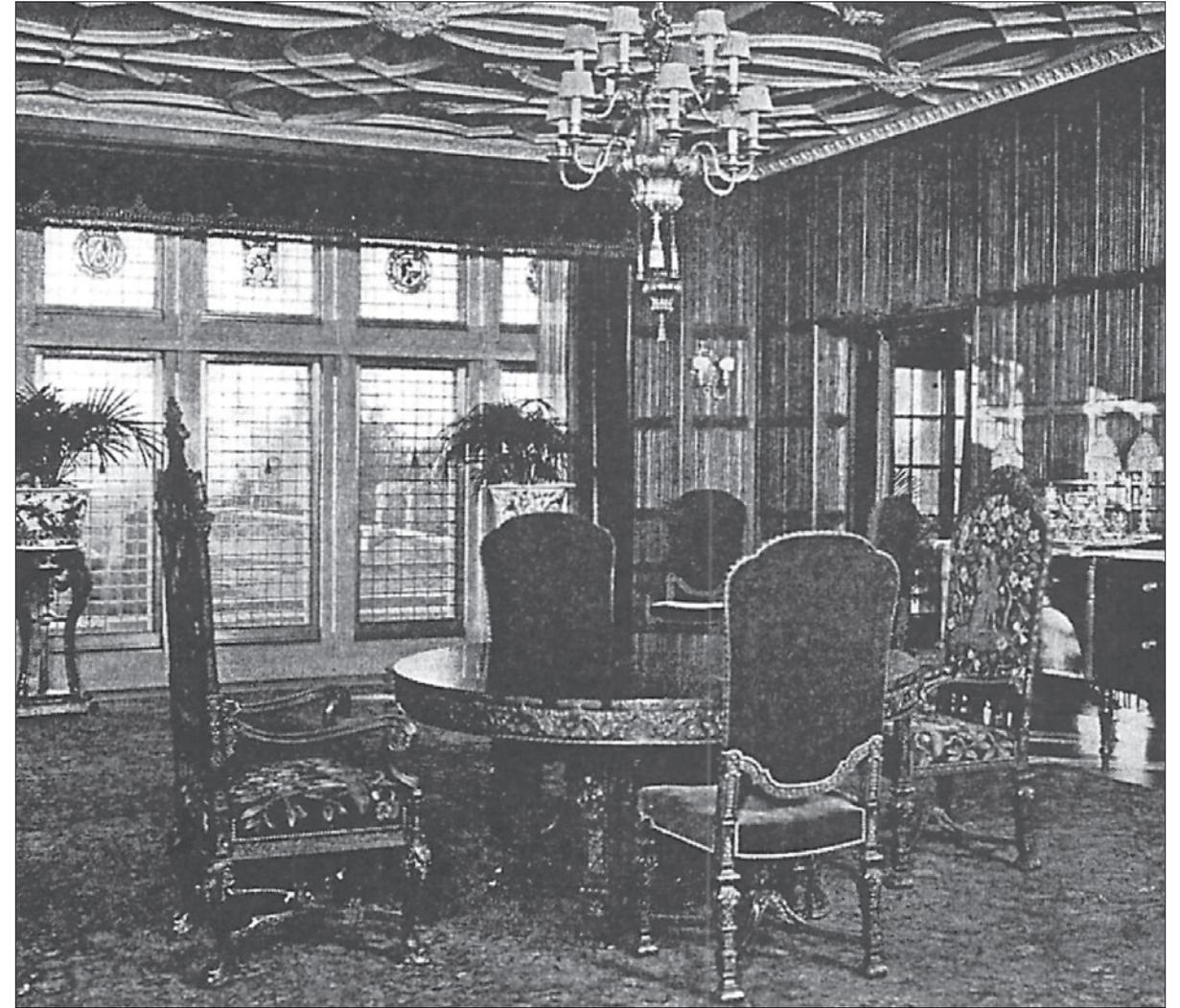
continued next page



Drawing room.



Drawing room mantel.



Dining room.

The Dining Room

“Perhaps the most interesting room in the house is the dining room, with its linen fold paneling, ornamental plaster ceiling and great carved limestone mantel. The woodwork is of English oak...The linen fold paneling is carried to the ceiling and...the carving is excellent in

character, of low relief, and has the texture which is so beautiful in the old hand wrought work.” Lettering inscribed in the escutcheons lining the bottom of the paneling spelled out the names of John and Elisabeth Severance.

continued next page



A northeasterly section of Longwood became the Austin Company.

The Demise

After the death of John L. Severance in 1956, the estate transferred to his second cousin Severance Millikin. Millikin lived in the home until 1959, when he moved to a more secluded estate in Gates Mills. For those twenty three years, neighbors continued to enjoy the estate. One youth remembered climbing over the wall or sneaking through one of the two large gated entrances with his friends for secret picnics around the pond.

But for years before the move, Millikin worked on his plan for a “new downtown” on the former estate. In 1952, his request for rezoning that would pave the way for commercial development of the property met with opposition from nearby homeowners and local officials. Millikin continued to fight for the rezoning, taking the legal battle all the way to the Ohio Supreme Court. It was approved in 1957. Longwood was demolished in 1961 to make way for Ohio’s first enclosed

mall, Severance Town Center. The mall, anchored by Higbee’s and Halle’s department stores, featured specialty shops, a movie theater and a bowling alley. All of this was surrounded by a huge parking lot large enough to hold 3,000 cars. The development also included the Austin Company headquarters, offices and apartments. The mall officially opened on October 17, 1963 and was soon one of the largest malls in the United States.

Prior to its demolition, Longwood was dismantled and sold in a series of salvage sales. A 1960 *Plain Dealer* article explained, “No wrecking ball will hammer Longwood into a pile of rubble. The big house with its 52 rooms will be torn down almost brick by brick, demolished by hand, so that many of the valuable materials can be saved.” Ads listed the items available for purchase from the “Finest Mansion Ever Wrecked in Cleveland/All Materials Bargain Priced.” These included the massive entrance doors (\$500), the Italian marble fireplaces (\$1000 each), stained glass windows from Germany (\$1000), oak ceiling beams, slate roofing, 250 gallon hot water tank, wood paneling, wood and bronze doors, bookcases, stairways, electric



Longwood fountain – one of several.

switches, fixtures, tubs, toilets and flooring. The Harris Wrecking Company held open houses and sales for more than six months in order to sell off the architectural features.

The Remains

Just a few things remain of this fabulous estate. Two landscape elements remain: a row of trees that lined the entry to the estate are still visible (behind the New Song Church); and a pond on City property directly east of Courtyards of Severance at the northeast corner of the former estate. The original brick stables, tucked into the wooded outskirts of the mall property and visible from the parking lot of the Severance Medical Building, are owned by the CH-UH Board of Education.

A Carrera marble fountain once marked the entrance to Longwood but was surrounded by an expanse of concrete when Severance Mall was constructed. In 1998, the Cleveland Heights Historical Society and other preservation groups worked to preserve the fountain and move it to its current location outside City Hall. While there are few features left of the wonderful property, this lovely fountain reminds all visitors of the beauty and heritage of the Severance estate.