

View from The Overlook



THE JOURNAL OF THE CLEVELAND HEIGHTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

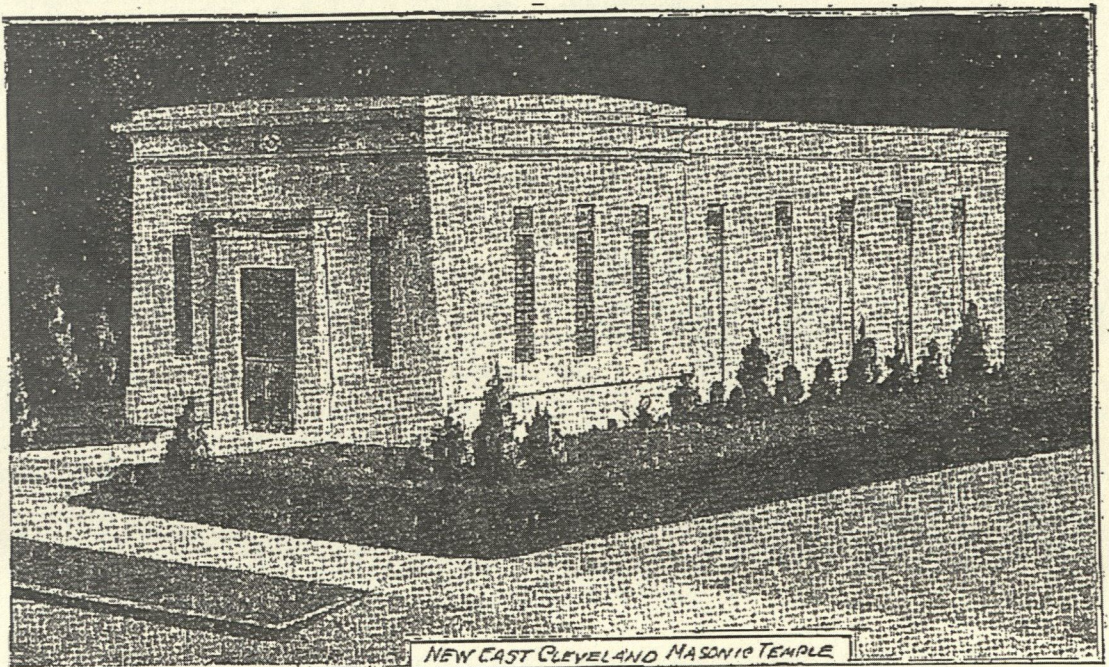
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Some History of the Former East Cleveland Masonic Temple

*Now the Living Truth Center —
1850 Belmore Road, East Cleveland, Ohio*

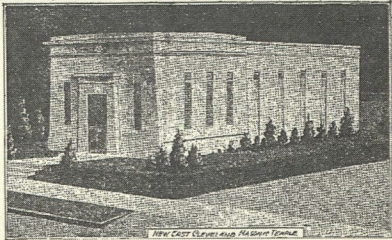
Compiled by Korbi Roberts



On the cover:

Photo from the Cleveland Plain Dealer June 26, 1927. The Caption reads: "The five Masonic bodies and the Eastern Star chapters of East Cleveland will be housed in this building of unusual design to be started immediately for the East Cleveland Masonic Company on the west side of Belmore Road, 400 feet south of Euclid Avenue..." The entrance of the building was intended to face eastward toward the direction of the rising sun to symbolize rebirth. The building was modeled after King Solomon's Temple (built c. 1000 B. C. E.) which is believed to have housed the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was created from materials such as acacia wood and contained the broken tablets of the Ten Commandments which God had given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The East Cleveland Masonic Temple architect and Freemason, Harold Morse, used Egyptian motifs throughout his building. Why would the architect choose Egyptian symbolism for the new Masonic Temple? The Masons share some important ideology with the ancient Egyptians, such as a belief in the eternity of the soul, and the power of the repeating cycles of the cosmos. The Freemasons also honor Imhotep (2650-2600 B. C. E.), an ancient Egyptian scientist they considered to be the first significant architect, engineer, and physician in early history.

Masons to Build Temple of Egyptian Design



The former East Cleveland Masonic Temple – now the Living Truth Center.

THE BUILDING

An architecturally "one-of-a-kind" building, inspired by the ancient wonder King Solomon's Temple (where the Ark of the Covenant was believed to be contained), is still standing strong amidst the quickly disappearing old treasures of East Cleveland. It is the East Cleveland Masonic Temple, now the Living Truth Center located at 1850 Belmore Road — just south of Euclid Avenue. The land for the building was earlier within the border of East Cleveland Township, as was much of Cleveland Heights. It was purchased by the East Cleveland Masonic Temple Company in 1924 from John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and was part of Rockefeller's own Forest Hill estate. The land deed from Rockefeller had the condition that for a period of ten years, the parcel was to be used for "special Masonic purposes" and no other. Belmore Road was originally Holyoke Road, and the neighborhoods near it have long been known by names such as Windermere and Terrace. The Masonic Temple is just down the street and around the corner from Forest Hills Blvd. (the intersection where Rockefeller's estate gatehouse once stood) and has

managed to retain its elegance and vitality while much of the old neighborhood nearby shows the effects of urban decline.

The architect Harold M. Morse, designed the building in the "Egyptian Revival style," as a three-story rectangular structure with windows all around its exterior. Built on a slab, the exterior is mostly brick, with limestone cornice and limestone elements at the base of the facade for decorative embellishment. The main purpose of the building was to provide a large auditorium for Masonic ceremonies and events. The long vertical windows in the front, and around the sides nearest the street, are covered with geometric iron "latticed" overlays producing a leaded glass window effect when the viewer is looking through to the outside. Front and center of the building is a larger-than-life faux "temple entryway," also covered in a decorative lattice, with a functional double doorway inset into it below. The elegant doors are covered in ironwork over the glass. Two elongated front windows on either side of the entryway span two stories.

An early architectural rendering shows the original temple design to be more mausoleum-like, with the final plan being slightly less elaborate, but still awe inspiring. The building has three floors (the top floor windowless), and a main formal stairway and other access stairways. The lower level is split and contains offices, meeting rooms, a book store, a social hall with fireplace, and back kitchen. The second floor has meeting rooms, a large auditorium with stage, restroom lounges, and a dressing room with the original Masonic lodge lockers (for ceremonial regalia). The windowless third floor contains more masonic lockers and access to an auditorium balcony room whereby lighting and music are produced for the stage effects. Original lighting fixtures of the 1920's still hang in most places throughout the building.

Following the stone mason tradition, the cornerstone for the East Cleveland Masonic Temple was placed in the northeast corner of the building. It is shown here slightly cracked, perhaps from the wearing down over time and the fact the temple sits on inclined land pointing up towards the Heights (the slant of the geological portage escarpment of the Allegheny Mountains). During the original cornerstone laying ceremony, the Masons would have instilled special powers upon the stone, rendering it the guardian over the building, as well as giving it other secret attributes. The sanctioned stone may have well stood watch, as the building majestically prevails while so many others in the neighborhood have met their fate with a demolition crew.



Stylized Lotus (water lily) and papyrus flower bands decorate the front of the building. These plants, which grew along the Nile river in ancient Egypt, represent creation and rebirth as well as innocence and modesty. This motif, as well as other Egyptian inspired designs for the East Cleveland Masonic Temple, resemble those found in the stone carvings of the Kom Ombo Temple in Upper Egypt (180-47 B. C. E.).

The Cleveland Heights Historical Society



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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.

From the President...

Did anyone notice a general "parks" theme in our Preservation Month 2018 programs, following Marian Morton's comprehensive article in our Fall 2017 "View?" Cleveland Heights has a strong, well established park system for a community of this size, and its parks' history covers most of the 20th century. This is almost as long as Cleveland Heights itself has been in existence.

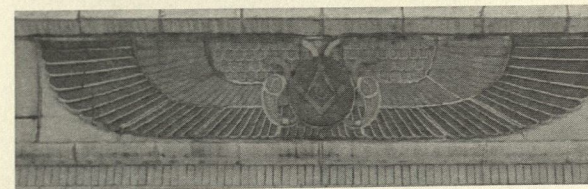
Cummings Road houses have a whole strip of creekside land for residents to jointly enjoy, and there's quite an appealing natural area adjoining the creek behind several houses on streets between Washington Boulevard and Coventry Road. There's the remaining woods formerly part of the Severance estate. But we have very large such areas as well. Parts of Lakeview Cemetery and around the northern two Shaker Lakes, where North Woodland Road runs between two lakes, and where North Park Boulevard heads towards Park Drive - the views could make one think he or she is far from civilization.

Another spectacular wilderness is situated behind the Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland houses on the north side of Oakhill Road; some of this is visible from the public sidewalk. Speaking of East Cleveland, for this issue of View Board member Korbi Roberts has contributed an exhaustive article on the former East Cleveland Masonic Temple - relating it to Cleveland Heights, where likely some of its members resided as did the building's architect at one time.

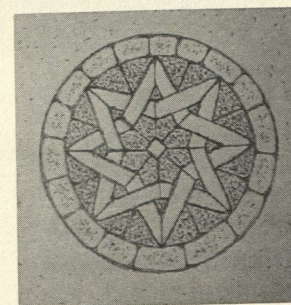
Please remember: the Historical Society is always interested in your ideas for programs and services, and we can ever use volunteer help - including with our website. Do we have your current e-mail address? If not, please make sure to send it to us. — Ken Goldberg



Attractive south facing view of the former East Cleveland Masonic Temple — now the Living Truth Center. Most of the lower windows were bricked in at some point.



Adorning the top of the entryway of the temple, and again on the upper front of the building, are motifs of Egyptian winged sun discs and serpents with the Masonic emblem in the center. Even the pummeling Cleveland weather, seesawing from sizzling sun rays to frozen precipitation, hasn't dulled the eye-catching beauty of the blue, jade green, orange, and metallic gold of these adornments. The winged sun disc represents the Egyptian sun god Ra, whose rays gave life to the earth. The sun disc sits centered in wings of a hawk, with the disc encircled by two sacred cobras, situated to confer protective powers for the temple. The Egyptians believed the winged sun disc was a vehicle upon which the soul was taken up to heaven as part of the cycle of rebirth and eternal life. The Masonic symbol has a "G" in the center which stands for Grand Artificer/Supreme Architect of the Universe. It also symbolizes the concept of Geometry, which represents order in the Universe. Framing the "G," are the indispensable tools of the "operative" masons (those practicing the trade), called the square and compass. To the "speculative" masons (Freemasons of the fraternity), the square (the rulers at right angles) represent integrity and virtue. It is a reminder of right action and obedience to the laws of our country. The compass tool represents circumscribed boundaries, wisdom of conduct, indispensable bonds of union, and understanding for one's fellow man, regardless of differing religious or political views. Together, the masonic emblem represents the goal of the Masons to strengthen character and improve oneself morally and spiritually, all within sight of the Great Creator.



Architect Harold Morse fashioned this eight-pointed star emblem (see drawing) in the floor tiles of the main lobby representing a "Seal/Signet of Melchizedek" (pronounced mehl-KHIZ-eh-dehk), known also as the "Symbol of the Devine." Melchizedek, known as the King of Salem, was a much recorded figure in history, and was nicknamed the "King of Righteousness" and "King of Peace." He was revered by many religions. There are multiple references to him in the Bible (Genesis 14, Hebrews 7, Psalms, etc.). The Freemasons looked to the wisdom of the Bible for guidance, and had special regard for St. John, a disciple of Jesus Christ. Another important eight-pointed star relates to the 47th Problem of Euclid. The freemasons looked to the work of the great mathematician Euclid, not only for solutions to building problems, but also for clues on understanding the mysteries of the Universe.



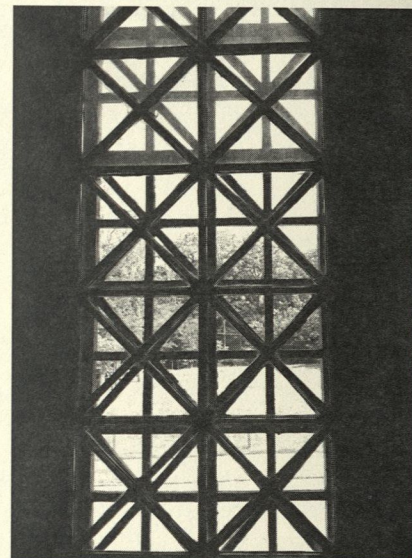
Two stylized Egyptian sarcophagi guard the main stairway banister and were carefully cleaned with toothbrushes and restored by the Living Truth Center when they took over the building around the 1990's. The Egyptians created human shaped coffins to safeguard the preserved and mummified remains of the dead. It was believed that these vessels helped the dead stay connected to the living. Egyptians "cared for" the deceased by putting out food offerings for the returning soul.

Beautiful Egyptian-styled details were fashioned into the outside door-knob plates. The original bright blue and yellow paint of the fixtures are quite worn by time and weather.

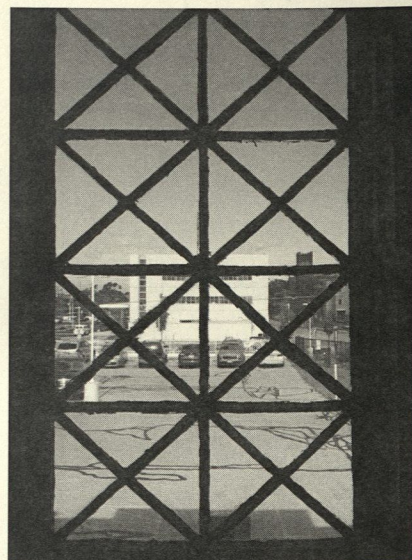




The fireplace in the lower level Social Hall features Masonic imagery such as the lion, a symbol of strength and sovereignty, and scarab beetles, an ancient Egyptian symbol for eternity. The scarab beetles have an interesting story. Thousands of years before Christ, the ancient Egyptians had formed mythology based on observing scarabs (dung beetles) rolling around dung balls wherein they had laid their eggs. The ball was likened to the sun being rolled across the sky in the solar cycle of day and night. The bursting forth of the baby beetles, hatching from the ball, was likened to the life-giving powers of the sun. The Egyptians also had a scarab god Khepri, who represented the cycle of birth, death, and afterlife through which all living things transformed.



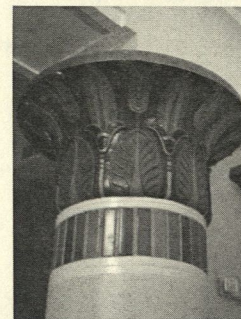
Looking out a front window, with its double lattice coverings from the main stairway.



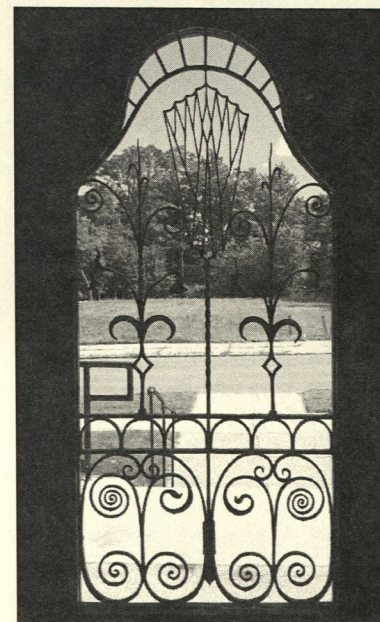
Looking out a northern facing window toward the Cleveland Clinic's Stephanie Tubbs Jones Health Center on Euclid Avenue.



Left: Front entryway detail. Temples were designed to impress. The tall, decorative faux entryway looms so large that it seems scaled for only the gods, dwarfing the functional doors below for the mere mortals.



Column designs within the auditorium feature Egyptian Nile fronds and other flora in muted colors of burnt red, orange, yellow, and green (think of the refrigerator and stove colors of the 1960's). Many of the original designs of the Masonic temple have been retained and kept in lovely repair by the LTC congregation.



Decorative iron work embellishes the front doors with curlicues and fan designs.

THE MASONS

Who are the Freemasons (also known as Masons)? In a nutshell, they are the oldest and largest fraternity in the world, believed to go back to at least the stone mason guilds of the middle ages. There is much written about them by others, and by themselves. Historically, Masons stood for the rights of the individual, and for freedom of education and religion. Many of the "founding fathers" of the United States were Masons such as George Washington, John Hancock, and Benjamin Franklin. Freemasonry has been defined as a system of morality, whereby one strives to strengthen and improve one's mind and character and therefore become a better person. Although membership to the Masons is reserved for males, they have an associated organization called the Eastern Star for women. Historically for white males, today the Freemason organizations are open to all people of all races, ethnicities, and from all religious backgrounds.

Although some people claim the Masons are a "secret society," the Masons maintain they are not. Masons are, however, about ritual and ceremony in which moral truth and lessons are imparted, and this does go on behind closed doors. Their ideology includes the belief of the fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man, with the "great lights" of the Bible, square, and compass as guides. The "smaller lights" include the concepts of the sun, moon, stars, and guidance from the Master Mason. The Masons are historically philanthropic, raising money for orphans, widows, and the aged. The Masonic lodges are their social meeting centers. The membership of the Masons

and Eastern Star have declined over time, but are still thriving. Many area Masonic buildings have been repurposed into churches and businesses. In Ohio City, the impressive 2831 Franklin Blvd. temple will soon be a technology, Yoga, and rock-climbing center called "Cleveland Rocks."

ABOUT HAROLD M. MORSE

Architectural engineer Harold Marston Morse was born May 29, 1881 in Newton (Auburndale), Massachusetts to parents Charles Henry Morse and Frances (nee Kimball) Morse. He married Cleo (aka Mary) Bell Franklin, born October 30, 1885, in New York c.1909, and came to the Cleveland area after 1911. Their two children were Cleo Adelaide Morse-McNelly and Robert Marston Morse (also an architectural engineer). Morse received a B.S. from Dartmouth (1903), and then graduated from the Thayer School of Civil Engineering (1904). To his career credit, Morse designed munitions plants during World War I, truck terminals, and industrial buildings in many states including Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Ohio. He was also involved in building facilities for steam and hydro-electric power, his most notable project being the Elkhart Power Plant in Elkhart, Indiana. Harold Morse, along with his son Robert, created the H. M. Morse, Co. and designed many industrial buildings in the Cleveland area. Some of which are: The Euclid Road Machinery Company (in Euclid, Ohio, which became part of GM), the Cleveland Cap Screw Company, and the small "Ideal Bronze company" building (still standing at 1265 E. 55th Street in Cleveland, Ohio). This last building mentioned bears a sign "The Geo. H. Porter Steele Treating Co." and is an example of a small and modest industrial building. It is interesting to note that the name "Euclid," found all over the



Above: The parcel for the Masonic Temple is evident in the center of this map on the edge of what was previously John D. Rockefeller's Forest Hill estate land. So many of the houses and buildings shown as "footprints" (rectangles) on this late 1920's view of the Belmore area are no longer standing. Huron Hospital, once next to the temple, has been razed too, and the land is now a huge vacant lot with grass and wildflowers, awaiting new development.



Pictured here is the son of Harold Morse, Robert Marston Morse (1913-1992), from the East Cleveland Shaw High School 1931 yearbook. Robert attended Case Western Reserve, and then Dartmouth, and assisted his father in the "H. M. Morse, Company." Robert lived in Chardon, Ohio for many years.

Cleveland area also stemmed from the great mathematician Euclid, after Moses Cleveland's surveyors chose it for Euclid Township in 1797. This is the original township from which Cleveland Heights and several other near eastside cities are derived.

Brown-eyed, five-foot eleven inches tall Harold Morse served as a commission member of East Cleveland (1930-1938), and was a member of Al Koran Shrine, the University Club, and the Cleveland Athletic Club. Howard was a 32nd degree Mason of the Scottish Rite, and served as Grand Master of the East Cleveland Windermere Lodge in 1922. As the population of East Cleveland blossomed, the six East Cleveland masonic lodges and local chapters of the Eastern Star were looking for a location in which to consolidate. Harold was given the honor to design their new temple on Belmore Road, and today it still survives to serve and delight the area in its architectural uniqueness. Harold Marston Morse died in 1973 at the age of 91 at the Margaret Wagner House in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. We are proud to claim him as one of our own.

THE LIVING TRUTH CENTER

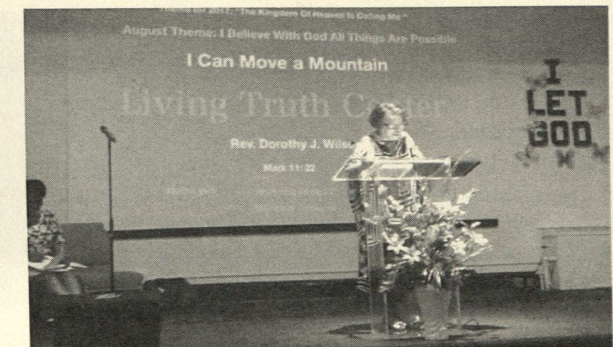
Celebrating nearly 30 years at the Belmore location in the East Cleveland Masonic Temple building, is the congregation of the Living Truth Center for Better Living, Inc. The LTC is a member of the Universal Foundation for Better Living (UFBL), which was founded in 1974 by Rev. Dr. Johnnie Coleman in Chicago, Illinois. UFBL was based on the teachings of Myrtle and Charles Fillmore, founders of the Unity Movement. The



Reverend Dorothy J. Wilson,
Sr. Minister

Living Truth Center is a Bible-based "New Christian Thought" church promoting practical Christianity. Their mission is to empower, teach, and awaken the presence of God that lives within all of us. They teach others how to attain a happy, healthy, and prosperous life, through right thinking, followed by right action. The basis of right thinking is love, meaning love for God, our fellowmen, and for ourselves, as taught by Jesus Christ. The ideology does not take in the concept of heaven or hell, but

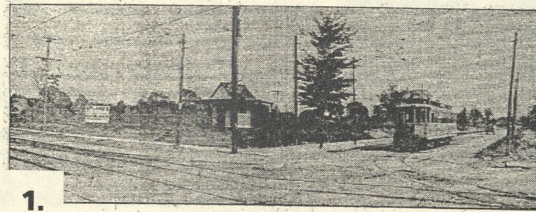
rather promotes the concept that the kingdom of heaven is within us. In asking the question about funeral services (as the Masons used the building for many funerals over the years) I learned that memorial services are conducted for the departed, but not funerals with the physical remains of the deceased. The LTC has the belief that the body is simply housing the soul. The soul itself is eternal, and at death it is reincarnated into a new life. It continues thus until it reaches the transformation of the Christ within all of us.



Main auditorium of the Living Truth Center on the second floor of the temple. A lovely backdrop for the current LTC services, ceremonies, and other events. The Freemasons, and Eastern Star chapters before the LTC, used the auditorium for many stately funerals as well.

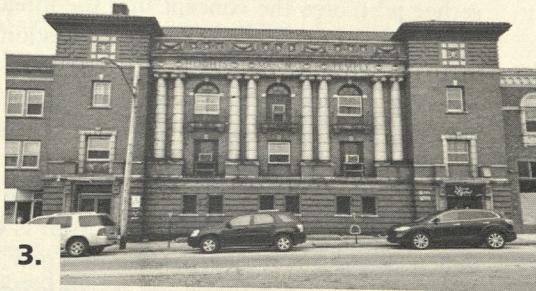
Cleveland Heights Masonic Temple

1636 and 1637 Lee Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio



1.

VIEW OF "UPLANDS" ALLOTMENT AS SEEN FROM COR. MAYFIELD AND LEE RDS.



3.

1. Pictured here is the 1909 view of the Mayfield and Lee Roads southeast corner before the Cleveland Heights Masonic Temple was built. This section of Cleveland Heights became the "Uplands" allotment by Charles Post, and then by real estate developer Grant Deming (boundaries include Whitethorn, Sycamore, Oak, Cumberland, and parts of Lee, Euclid Hts. Boulevard, and Somerton). The street car visible in the picture on Lee road is on a short, specially-built side rail from the Mayfield Road line, laid-down to facilitate property sales in the new Uplands neighborhood.

2. Pictured here is the same southeast corner of Mayfield and Lee Roads in 2018, with the decorative and attractive Cleveland Heights Masonic Temple building (built 1915) in the foreground, with its attached Masonic annex building (built 1928) seen further in the distance. One of the first businesses



2.

was the popular Needham Drug Store occupying the big corner store. It is said that the Rockefellers would walk over from their Forest Hill estate to enjoy the ice cream there on hot, summer evenings. ["The Proud Heritage of Cleveland Heights;" by Mary Emma Harris and Ruth Mills Robinson. Howard Allen publisher. 1966. page 135]. The Masons no longer use the building today, but it is still home to many businesses serving the Heights area. As a point of interest, architect F. W. Striebinger also designed the beautiful Tremaine-Gallagher Home at 3301 fairmount Boulevard in Cleveland Heights.

3. Pictured above (in 2018) are the main entrances of the former Cleveland Heights Masonic Temple located at Lee and Mayfield Roads (1636 Lee Rd.) with the annex building (1637 Lee Rd.) attached off to the right. This building complex was designed by two well-known Cleveland area architects, both



devout Freemasons. The main temple structure was built in 1915, of brick with stone trim to give it an "exotic" aura. It was designed by Frederick William Striebinger (1870-1941), and featured a Masonic Temple, stores, and living apartments. [American Contractor V. 36 Oct. 2, 1915, page 37]. The annex was built in 1928, in the Italian Renaissance style by architect John Frederick Steffens (1882-1943). The plans called for 8 stores, 8 offices, and a large studio with fireplace for the use of "several dancing and music schools using the premises." Its side wing, along Whitethorn Road, was to feature 13 four-room suites with newfangled electric refrigeration (no more chunks of ice and ice boxes)! Steffen's vision was to make his Masonic Temple Annex an "art and music center" for the area. [Cleveland Plain Dealer Feb. 19, 1928]

The Living Truth Center has an open-door policy and welcomes all interested people, and from all religious affiliations to attend. They offer worship services, Bible study, Sunday school, spiritual educational workshops and certification, fellowship, counseling and healing, baptisms, christenings, a call-in prayer line, and community events. The LTC has yearly and monthly themes to guide the lessons, and they encourage healing through learning and prayer. Recent themes include "The Kingdom of Heaven is Calling Me" and "I believe with God, all things are possible". I found the service to be very moving and memorable. It left me with much food for thought. The friendly folks I met were caring and encouraging and made me feel right at home. The officiating readers and choir were top notch, the highlight being the ear-pleasing, soul-lifting gospel melody from dear 98-year-old member Lewis Preston. Intelligent and talented Senior Minister Rev. Dorothy J. Wilson imparted an enlightening sermon with valuable lessons inspiring and hopeful. Not only was Rev. Wilson knowledgeable and personable, but I immediately felt a bond and a sense of trust with her. These few paragraphs will not do justice to the lovely, endearing people at the Living Truth Center!

There are many more architectural "treasures" just waiting to be discovered near you.



The lower floor Social Hall of the Living Truth Center where events, fellowship, delicious food, and heart-warming company are enjoyed by all.

*Cuyahoga County, OH deeds book 2926, page 430 AFN 192405130032

Sources include: Western Reserve Historical Society; Cleveland Plain Dealer Historical from NewsBank through the Cuyahoga County Public Library; the writings of the Freemasons; Rev. Dorothy Wilson, Kay, Victor, and other kind members of The Living Truth Center; Cuyahoga County Recorder Office deeds; numerous published histories on Cleveland; and Ancestry.com. My special thanks to Stephen Titchenal, Ken Goldberg, Suzy and John Miller, Pattie and Dan Jackson, Kelsey Roberts, Kelly and Michael Small.

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The Cleveland Heights Historical Society

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