



Roundwood Manor

Roundwood Manor is significant as a Country Estate that served as a status symbol for a succession of Cleveland's corporate elite after the Van Sweringens and continued in the prestigious Daisy Hill Colony the reputation that the area had garnered as a rural oasis for Cleveland's most successful businessmen.

Hunting Valley, Originally part of Orange Township, had been an agrarian community of farms before the early 20th Century, when some of Cleveland's wealthiest families began to purchase farms and create country estates. During the 19th Century, Cleveland's business elite had preferred lakeside communities, such as Bratenahl, Lakewood, and Rocky River.

The first "gentleman farmer" to create a country estate in the valley was Edward A. Merritt. Merritt was an avid horseman, and he began to buy up property in the valley in 1894. "Well connected through marriage and active in matters of the horse and the hunt, Merritt and his wife played a pivotal role in Hunting Valley's development."¹ Jeptah Homer Wade II was the next prominent Clevelander to create a country estate in Hunting Valley. Euclid Avenue neighbors of the Merritts, Wade—the grandson of the founder of the Western Union Telegraph Company—was an avid fisherman and bird hunter. Between 1906 and 1917, the Wades purchased 470 acres of farmland that straddled the Chagrin River. He constructed a rambling summer home—named Valley Ridge Farm—in 1908.²

In 1904 a "bankers special" run of the Cleveland & Eastern InterUrban line made it possible to commute to downtown Cleveland from the far eastern suburbs. The train departed at 7:05a.m. from the Maple Leaf Inn in Gates Mills and arrived at Public Square at 8:30a.m. The Inn became the clubhouse The Chagrin Valley Hunt Club in 1909 after enough \$500 subscriptions raised the funds for the purchase. These developments made the purchase of a country estate in Orange Township even more appealing to affluent Clevelanders.³

In 1911, attorney Andrew Squire and his wife Eleanor began purchasing land—culminating at 300 acres—for their Valleevue Farm. Designed by Cleveland architectural firm Walker & Weeks, the stone manor house was completed in 1930. In the intervening years, the nature-loving Squires they were happy to hike, garden and picnic on their estate.



Photo Caption?? Photo by Rob Erick

Windsor Thomas White—founder and president of the White Motor Car Company—acquired Huntington Place from the departing Merritts in 1915. White continued to acquire property, increasing the size of the estate to over 1,000 acres, and changed the name to Halfred Farms.

One of Orange Townships' most interesting estates was Hillbrook. Edmund Stevenson Burke, Jr. began creating the estate in 1920. Burke was an investment banker, but also had inherited wealth. His grandfather helped to found Corrigan, McKinney (later Republic Steel), and his wife was the granddaughter of another Cleveland steelmaker. Burke would eventually head the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. Burke built a three-story Tudor manor designed by the prestigious architectural firm Meade & Hamilton. The house's attached guest wing had been transported from England. The three-story inn had been shipped from Ashford, Kent to Philadelphia in 1917 by John Wanamaker, owner of Wanamaker's Department Store. The Burkes had seen a scale model of the house in Wanamaker's window and inquired about buying the house. The inn was reassembled by George Washington Brown, a noted local stonemason and builder.⁴

Oris Paxton (O.P.) and Mantis James (M.J.) Van Sweringen began to acquire property in Orange Village in 1911, with the purchase of a twenty-five acre farm on which to raise Holstein cattle. The farm was in the name of their business partner, Benjamin L. Jenks. Much of the Van Sweringen property was in the name of land agents they employed. Jenks and his wife Louise ("Daisy") remodeled two farmhouses into a comfortable country home. The Vans were extremely close to the Jenks, as the Jenks had been among the first to believe in the Van Sweringen vision for Shaker Heights.

They extended the Van Sweringens credit at their lumber yard and purchased the first home site in the new community.⁵ In 1919, the Vans decided to move to Daisy Hill full-time, leaving the Shaker Heights home at 17400 South Park Boulevard to their unmarried sisters, Carrie and Edith.

Originally 90,000 square feet and the centerpiece of a 660-acre estate, Roundwood Manor wasn't completed until 1927. After the deaths of the Van Sweringen brothers in the mid-1930s, the house remained vacant for about a decade. Beginning in 1940, Union Properties, the receiver, parceled the estate into twenty-seven

parcels of eight to twenty-five acres. The gatehouse, caretaker's cottage, garage group and paddock were each sold and converted into private houses. Roundwood Manor finally sold in 1946 to Gordon Stouffer, and he was followed by a succession of owners who represented successful firms.

Gordon Stouffer, 1946-1956. His widow remained until 1960.

Gordon Stouffer was Chairman of the Board of Stouffer Corporation, which he headed with his brother, Vernon. Shortly after purchasing Roundwood Manor in 1946, the Stouffers opened their first suburban location in what would become their flagship—Shaker Square.⁶ It is likely that this opening was already in the planning stages when he decided to purchase Roundwood Manor, and it is fitting given the similar Colonial Revival design by Philip Small. Colonial interiors had been part of the Stouffer brand, and likely helped promote both their restaurants and frozen foods business. Presenting a dining option in a homey, pseudo historic setting might help alleviate any guilt the busy house-wife might feel about having her family eating dinner out rather than cooking at home. In 1960, his widow remarried and moved to New England, selling the home to James A. Bohannon.



Photo Caption?? Photo by Rob Erick

James A. Bohannon, 1960-1968.

He was a millionaire industrialist who had retired as president of the Brewing Company of America in 1949, when he sold the company to Carling Brewing of Canada.

Bohannon had come to Cleveland in 1929 at the Van Sweringen's behest to assume the Presidency of the Peerless Motor Car Company. As the Depression progressed, Peerless was dissolved in 1932 and Bohannon changed the plant to the Brewing Company of America. A \$1 million benefactor of John Carroll University, Bohannon's name was on the science center there, until it was replaced by the Dolan Center.⁷ Upon his death in 1968, Bohannon left the house to the university. They sold it to John and Anita Fazio.

John & Anita Fazio, 1970-1978.

John Fazio was President of Fisher Foods, Inc., a grocery chain with a long history in Cleveland.⁸ The Fazios lived at Roundwood from June of 1970 until April 1978 when they separated. Mrs. Fazio sold off the contents and put the house on the market for \$1 million.⁹ It sold for \$700,000.

Joseph Hrudka, 1978-1988.

Joseph Hrudka was the founder and former president of Mr. Gasket Company. Hrudka had raced cars when younger, and figured out that gaskets could be prevented from over-heating and blowing off if they were made of asbestos. The Hrudkas remained for about a decade. In 1988, they moved to Paradise Valley Arizona and sold Roundwood Manor for \$1.4 million to Samir and Sylvia Korey.¹⁰

Sylvia Korey, 1988- Present

Sylvia Korey raised her family at Roundwood Manor, and has been an incredible steward of the property. When she purchased the home, cement had been laid over the slate on the first floor to create a level base for wall-to-wall carpet. Sylvia had it carefully removed and the slate restored. She rescued original features like the Van Sweringen's sconces and chandelier with an eagle motif (originally in the Ship Room) from the swimming pool and had them reinstalled in parts of the main house. She also had the worn roof redone in Buckingham Slate. Today, Sylvia seeks a zoning variance to allow the home to be adapted as condominiums, an appropriate way to preserve the unique house into the future.

¹ Tittle, *Hunting Valley*, 50.

² Tittle, *Hunting Valley*, 52.

³ Tittle, *Hunting Valley*, 57-58.

⁴ Tittle, *Hunting Valley*, 88-89.

⁵ Diana Tittle and Mark Gottlier, *Hunting Valley* (Cleveland, OH: Hunting Valley Historical Society, Inc., 1990) 54-56.

⁶ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 14, 1946. “\$175,000 Shaker Link in Stouffer Chain Previewed.”

⁷ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 2, 1968. “Industrialist, Brewer, James A. Bohannon Dies.”

⁸ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 18, 1970. “A New Era for Roundwood.”

⁹ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 17, 1978. “A look at Grandeur: Buyers, Gawkers Flock to Sale of Fazio Manor Furnishings.”

¹⁰ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 10, 1989. “CSU Man Buys Vans’ Posh Place.”

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