



Saving the Scofield Mansion

The First Important Step

By Kathleen Crowther



The Scofield Mansion in Cleveland is perched on the first eastern rise to the Heights in an area now known as Woodhill. The mansion was built by Cleveland architect and sculptor Levi Scofield in 1898 as a beautiful home for his family. It is a home that represents the culmination of his highly successful career in architecture and the arts.

Close your eyes and imagine this place over 100 years ago. The top of this hill was largely undeveloped, likely forests and perhaps farmland. Breezes from Lake Erie flowed upward and caressed the Scofield family as it gathered on the spectacular front porch. The porch and all of the windows on the front façade of the home offered remarkable views to the developing city of Cleveland and the vast blue of Lake Erie. Can you imagine watching sunsets from this site? Can you envision living each day with the panorama of Cleveland's tree canopy below, and perhaps a glimpse of church spires, leading to the expanse of our great Lake Erie?

Few people knew this place remained, hardly recognizable today. The home is located in a forgotten corner, with no through streets – a place where most would have little reason to pass. The magnificent façade of the mansion

is now obscured by trees, disfigured by an addition, and robbed of its crowning jewel, the front porch.

The Scofield family lived in the home until 1925 at which time it became a convent for Sisters of the Most Holy Trinity, religious women affiliated with nearby Mt. Carmel Church. By then, the neighborhood was strongly Italian, particularly around Woodland and E. 110th. Immigrants from the Italian village of Rionero Sannitico had settled here, building up the area with homes and businesses. When the sisters moved to Euclid, Ohio, in 1953, the old Scofield home transitioned into a nursing care facility which then ceased operation in the 1990s.

The parcel on which the Scofield Mansion sits runs from Baldwin Road toward the base of the hill, up to Mapleside Road at the top. In the 1960s, the hill was



- A) Rear of the home, now the primary front facing facade on Mapleside Road.
- B) Second floor hallway.
- C) Original pocket doors.
- D) Newel post, matching in design to others found inside buildings by Scofield.
- E) Stairway to second floor.



The turreted north corner of the home. Just a few years ago the Scofield Mansion was a candidate for demolition. Now, work has begun to relieve the premise of extra vegetation, protect the home from water, and secure the envelope.



cut away to enable the construction of a nursing home. It is this newer building which caught the attention of Rosaline Lyons whose dream was to create social services for the needy, surrounding neighborhood. In 2012, Ms. Lyons purchased the parcel at a tax forfeiture sale and was subsequently startled to realize that the parcel had a second building on it, the Scofield Mansion!

Over a five-year period, Ms. Lyons did not realize her dream and found herself in Cleveland Housing Court with a large tax bill and fines. The mansion was in a highly deteriorated condition, and a danger to the community in that it was accessible to kids and vandals. The then director of Cleveland's Building & Housing Department, Ron O'Leary, asked the Cleveland Restoration Society to look at the property. It was a candidate for demolition due to its blighted condition. Thus began a campaign to assess the property and consider whether it was possible to save.

The Cleveland Restoration Society gathered together a group of restoration experts to make an assessment of the mansion. The intrepid group included seasoned professionals from Precision Environmental Company, Coon Restoration & Sealants, JERA Contractors, and architects Weber Murphy Fox. At this point, the mansion was thought to be structurally sound, the stone block walls plumb and the original slate roof remarkably stable.

Since that first assessment in 2015, saving the Scofield Mansion has become a community effort. Ms. Lyons gave the property to the Cuyahoga County Land Bank which will hold the property while our expanding team stabilizes and works on a redevelopment plan. Thus far, a great deal of work has been completed. Leading the effort is Jim McCue of Coon Restoration and Joe DiGeronimo of Precision Environmental. Precision has been incredible in its work to clean out Scofield, which was filled with debris, and to remove asbestos. Coon has stabilized walls and installed window clear-boarding material generously donated by SecureView. 1st Choice Roofing has "droned" the roof of the structure and patched the double gutter system to prevent further water infiltration. First Energy has removed ten mature trees too close to the mansion. Oswald Companies' Design and Construction Group spent a

morning broom-cleaning the building in anticipation of public tours.

Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, a non-profit community development entity, will now lead the effort to find a use for the mansion and a partner to bring it to life. Justin Fleming, Director of Real Estate Services, is our energetic and capable partner. All manner of donated services will gladly be accepted should you desire to be part of this endeavor. Potential tenants and/or developers are also welcome to inquire.

The big idea is that the worst eyesore in a challenged Cleveland neighborhood will be transformed into a beautiful and useful historic site. The aforementioned companies are in the business of restoring Cleveland landmarks. In this instance, they have donated their time and specialized services to secure the future of the Scofield Mansion, one of only 10 remaining Scofield

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Historic 1911 photo courtesy of Cleveland Public Library Digital Photograph Collection

buildings to our knowledge. We greatly appreciate their expertise, dedication and generosity.

Now we look to the future and wonder what could Levi's mansion become? What type of new use would add value to this neighborhood, helping its residents? How can more Clevelanders take in the views to downtown and the lake? Please consider joining us by donating money or services to save this important landmark. And certainly, speak up if you are interested in leasing or developing the Scofield Mansion. Please call Kathleen Crowther directly to discuss the possibilities. ❖