

# JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER JR. AND THE FOREST HILL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN CLEVELAND, OHIO

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The ideas and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and are not intended to represent the Rockefeller Archive Center.

## **[Image #1]**

I am pleased to be back in Cleveland and to have the opportunity to talk about the two subjects that have been at the center of my career as a professional historian – Cleveland and the Rockefellers. I was very fortunate to have been able to move from working on the Encyclopedia of Cleveland History in 1987 to the Rockefeller Archive Center, where my knowledge of Cleveland history has come in handy. I always appreciate receiving requests from and about Cleveland, especially from people working on aspects of Cleveland history that intersect with the Rockefellers.

I hope that most of you have seen the book by Grace Goulder on Rockefeller's years in Cleveland, which the Western Reserve Historical Society has recently republished. Ms. Goulder used the Rockefeller Family Archives even before the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) was created. As her book suggests, there is a lot of Cleveland history at the RAC, and not all of it is always readily apparent. There are insights into the histories of various Cleveland institutions, some prominent – Case Institute, Western Reserve University – some of them obscure, such as the Floating Bethel Mission and its one-armed founder, the Reverend John Davis Jones, and Rockefeller's support for the Home for Aged Colored People, with detailed descriptions of its needs at various points in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>1</sup> The Rockefeller Family Archives often contains very interesting glimpses into the lives of individual Clevelanders, such as the aspirations of May Brown, an African American Clevelander who had graduated from the local high school but who for two years tried without success to find a teaching job. "The object has been raised against my color," she explained in a letter to Mrs. Rockefeller, "as I am the *darkest* colored girl who has ever finished in the schools." Rather than become discouraged, however, she had turned her attention "to writing the 'Lives of the most noted Colored Women of the Age.'"<sup>2</sup>

Then there is the intriguing story of veteran temperance worker F. Jennie Duty, who was one of the leading figures in the Central Friendly Inn, a nonalcoholic tavern that promoted temperance. Between 1878 and 1895 she received more than \$5,000 as salary from Rockefeller to support her temperance work, with an additional \$600 in presents for her personal use. After toiling for decades in the temperance movement, Duty was approached with a business proposition by the promoters of "Eucrazy, the cure for Alcoholism." The promoters proposed to form a joint-stock company, to license the product from the national company and to treat

alcoholics — at \$75 per treatment — in the Cleveland area. She thoroughly investigated the promoters' claims of success and was convinced of their validity. Especially impressive, she reported, was the fact that Eucrazy had never produced “hurtful results,” unlike its main competitor, the Keeley cure. Duty invested \$3,000 in the company and was paid for the use of her well-known name to endorse the product. “I have for years felt, as thousands of other temperance workers now believe, that Alcoholism is a disease (sometimes acquired, often hereditary), as well as a vice, and that it therefore should be treated as any other disease.” By August 1893 she had resigned her position as chairman of the Central Friendly Inn and became manager of the Northern Ohio Eucrazy Company.<sup>3</sup>

Or the story of S. Louise Patteson, a stenographer who Rockefeller employed in 1888 as a missionary for the Peoples Tabernacle Church in Cleveland. The mission work that Patteson undertook with Rockefeller's support involved teaching classes at the church, transcribing sermons for publication and other clerical work, but mostly she visited the sick and troubled members of the church and residents of the neighborhood, including those who she called “irregular” Sunday school students. She was, in some ways, a friendly visitor for the church. She sent Rockefeller several monthly reports that briefly describe the family circumstances of those in her charge. By July 1888 Patteson realized that the key to effective case work is quality, not quantity. “I used to measure my usefulness by the number of visits I made,” Patteson wrote, “but am learning to measure it by the kind of visits made.”<sup>4</sup>

I have often wondered what became of each of these three Cleveland women after the trail in the correspondence at the Archive Center comes to an end.

So part of my mission today is to entice as many people as possible to visit the Archive Center to pursue various aspects of Cleveland history in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and to do so

by telling you another story from these files – the story of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s development of the Forest Hill homes in the 1920s and 1930s on that part of the family estate bounded by Lee, Mayfield, Taylor and Glynn roads.

The Forest Hill housing development is an uncharacteristic project for JDR Jr. In the 1920s he was involved in a variety of building and restoration projects in the U.S. and abroad, but most of his housing projects had a progressive, reformist air about them. His most notable housing endeavors were apartments that promoted cooperative ownership on easy terms to give working people a tangible asset, an investment. He insisted on giving the tenants a quality product, a livable space with certain amenities, yet he always sought to return a profit for the investor – 6%. Thus there was an educational component for the investment community: that providing decent, affordable housing for the working class can return an acceptable profit. Rockefeller insisted that each of these housing endeavors was a business enterprise, not a philanthropic project. But by the mid 1920s when he embarked on many of these housing projects, JDR Jr. had made his reputation as a philanthropist, not a businessman, and these kind of high-minded, reformist housing projects tended to mix business and philanthropy in ways that proved problematic for what other people expected, including some of his own staff. If your reputation as a philanthropist precedes you – if you are known for your generosity and your wealth – when and how do you revert to business principles without just appearing to be stingy and cheap?

In the Forest Hill development, JDR Jr. was not dealing with poor people or the working class – this was a development for people of culture and taste, for the up-and-coming young executives and professionals. So this development would seem to be purely business, and thus be freed from some of the reformist aspects of his other housing projects. Yet it too had a certain



commingling of philanthropy and business: indeed, the whole of the Rockefeller estate was divided in half, with one part reserved for philanthropy, and the other part for business. But as we will see, it was not always easy to separate the two. Some of the early critics of the Forest Hill development saw a certain crippling idealism in the business side of the project that spoke to this “philanthropic” sensibility.

Forest Hill was, of course, the Rockefeller family’s home for the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and even into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As home to the founder of the Standard Oil Company and one of the nation’s wealthiest industrialists, it became a well-known location, as this post-card shows. **[image #2]** John D. Rockefeller (Senior) acquired two parcels of land along Euclid Avenue, nearly 110 acres in all, in June of 1873, for investment purposes. Real estate was an investment he turned to often in the 1860s and 1870s, while the oil industry was particularly volatile. At one point in the early 1870s, while on business during a period when the industry was in a dismal-looking situation, he wrote to his wife to reassure her that they were independently wealthy outside of their oil investments<sup>5</sup> – and I am sure that his real estate investments in Cleveland was one of the things he had in mind. In 1877 Rockefeller sold some of this property to a company that built a sanitarium “on a high knoll about 1500 feet south of Euclid Avenue, commanding a fine view of Lake Erie.” **[image of the real house #3]** The sanitarium failed, however, and the property was returned to Rockefeller in 1879. After a short stint as a club for Rockefeller and his friends, the former sanitarium became the summer home for the Rockefeller family from 1880 through 1914. The family customarily made Forest Hill their home each summer from the last week of June until the second or third week of September, when they would return to New York. For the Rockefeller family, Forest Hill was a place of retreat, rest, and relaxation. It also was a place for gathering friends and providing a retreat for

those deserving men and women engaged in good works – especially ministers and missionaries, and, as in this image, temperance workers. **[image 4]** Rockefeller continued to buy land and developed the whole property as a country estate, as a place of natural and enhanced beauty that would nurture the soul and spirit.<sup>6</sup>

Use of Forest Hill as a family residence ended with the death of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller – Laura Spelman Rockefeller – on March 12, 1915. Fire destroyed the house on December 17, 1917. Following these two events, the question of what to do with all of this property became more immediate. It had long been assumed that much of the property would become a park. The archival record is not clear on the question of the origin of the idea for a housing development on the former Rockefeller estate. As early as 1917, the local real estate developer B.R. Deming had written to Rockefeller suggesting a housing development on the site. Between 1913 and 1924, John D. Rockefeller (Senior) and Deming were partners of sorts in the development of the Euclid Golf allotment in Cleveland Heights.<sup>7</sup>

In 1921 Rockefeller agreed to another partnership for a housing development – this one with O.P. and M.J. Van Sweringen, the developers of Shaker Heights. Exactly how this partnership came into being is not clear from the archival record (at least not yet), but it is possible to see in this plan the origins of the ideas that would result in the Forest Hill homes. The plan agreed to by Rockefeller and the Van Sweringens made provisions for the donation of part of the Forest Hill estate as a park, and the other part of the estate would become part of a joint real estate venture, to be managed by the Van Sweringens, with the profits to be shared equally between the Van Sweringens and Rockefeller. Rockefeller, however, pledged that up to a million dollars of his share of the profits were to be designated for an endowment for “the care, maintenance and improvement” of the park. This commercial real estate development would

pool 301 acres of the Rockefeller estate east of Lee Road, to be known as Forest Hill Gardens, with lands that the Van Sweringens already owned or pledged to acquire “still further easterly of Forest Hill, comprising approximately one thousand (1000) acres.” These lands would be pooled together “under a common plan for the development and ultimate sale thereof as high class residence and business property.” An important part of the plan were proposals for new transportation facilities to make these lands more accessible: “said plan of development contemplates the location and construction of a boulevard connecting said lands and Forest Hill with the existing Rockefeller Boulevard and Parkway at a point near the present Nickel Plate Railroad crossing of Cedar Avenue, and also contemplates the location of a railroad right of way from said crossing easterly through said lands, so as to afford access both by boulevard and transit facilities to Forest Hill and to the residential district.” In order to facilitate this plan, the pooled lands were to be conveyed to a trustee – the Union Trust Company – which agreed to advance certain moneys for the development of the project at a rate of 6% interest. The agreement called for Rockefeller to turn over the park property to something called the Community Improvement Association, while the 301-acre Forest Hill Gardens property would be conveyed to the Union Trust and prepared for the market. The agreement gave the Van Sweringens two years to accumulate and transfer their 1,000 acres to the Union Trust.<sup>8</sup>

This agreement between Rockefeller and the Van Sweringens collapsed, however, for reasons not entirely clear from the archival record. But it seemed to be an ill-fated agreement from the beginning: two of the Rockefeller lawyers assigned to the deal died within a short time, and that contributed to some delay in finalizing the agreement. Rockefeller also apparently heard some disturbing reports about the Van Sweringens’ financial standing and decided to pull out of the agreement.<sup>9</sup>

The changing dynamic within the Rockefeller family also may have played a role in JDR's withdrawal from the agreement with the Van Sweringens. **[image 5 JDR & JDR Jr]** Between 1917 and 1922, JDR transferred a sizable portion of his wealth to his only son, so that there was a shift of power and responsibility within the family. In those five years, JDR Jr.'s net worth "soared from \$20 million to about \$500 million."<sup>10</sup> Along with this transfer of wealth went a transfer of property, as JDR Jr. bought from his father the various properties that he owned. In May 1923, JDR Jr. bought the Forest Hill property from his father for \$2.8 million. For this he acquired 284 acres in Cleveland Heights and 358 acres in East Cleveland.<sup>11</sup>

Although I have no evidence for this, I suspect that another contributing factor in the collapse of the Van Sweringen deal was that somewhere within this transfer of wealth and property to JDR Jr, his real estate advisor, Charles O. Heydt **[image 6]**, got a look at the proposed deal with the Van Sweringens and saw a golden business opportunity that need not be shared with anyone. Charles O. Heydt has recently been partially resurrected from historical obscurity by Daniel Okrent's book on Rockefeller Center, *Great Fortune*. Heydt was more than JDR Jr's real estate agent, as Okrent shows. Heydt had entered the work force as an office boy at age 14 in 1890, and he had been hired into the Rockefeller offices as a stenographer on October 2, 1897, the day after JDR Jr. himself began work there. The genial but hard-working Heydt soon was the confidential secretary for John D. Rockefeller and his wife, and he was tapped for several special assignments, including accompanying family members on trips. By 1905 he was JDR Jr.'s personal secretary and, as Okrent argues, "his closest business associate." When JDR Jr. traveled to the Colorado coal fields in 1915 to investigate conditions after the Ludlow massacre, Heydt was the only member of the family staff to accompany him. Professionally, as Okrent suggests, the two men "grew up together" and JDR Jr. "extended to

Heydt a degree of trust that” he afforded no other staff member. Over the years Heydt became “a real estate specialist, a capable negotiator of leases and terms of sale,” but until the 1920s he was “the real estate specialist in an office barely concerned with real estate.” But in the 1920s that changed dramatically and Heydt’s workload – and, I would suggest, his ambition -- increased substantially. He was the person responsible for assembling the properties that would become Colonial Williamsburg; he was JDR Jr.’s “field general” in what Okrent describes as “the various Battles of 54<sup>th</sup> Street” in Manhattan to preserve the value of the Rockefeller homes there; and, as Okrent shows in detail, it was Heydt’s foresight and real estate savvy that was responsible for John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s involvement in what would become Rockefeller Center. “It is not entirely far-fetched to suggest,” Okrent writes, “that Junior was pulled into developing Rockefeller Center because a member of his staff wanted to enhance the value of the family’s holdings in the neighborhood.”<sup>12</sup>

The archival record suggests that it also was Charles Heydt who pulled JDR Jr. into several other real estate ventures in the 1920s, including and perhaps especially, the Forest Hill development.

The third person important in developing Forest Hill was the architect Andrew J. Thomas. Thomas first came to the attention of Charles O. Heydt and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. in late 1922 or early 1923, at the recommendation of an engineering and contracting firm that in turn had been recommended by Winthrop Aldrich, JDR Jr.’s brother-in-law. At the time Thomas was a relatively unknown architect with some novel ideas about improving urban housing. He was then at work on a six-block apartment complex in Queens for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. When that project was completed in 1924, Thomas proclaimed his goal “to

abolish every slum in New York City” with the help of charitable organizations and the state.<sup>13</sup> In Charles O. Heydt, Thomas found a kindred spirit and a future partner.

Thomas and an associate first met with Heydt in the hopes of building apartments for workers on a parcel of land that JDR Jr. owned along the East River near the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. Heydt did not think that was a feasible site for the project, but he soon suggested another plan: building two apartment houses for employees of the Institute. Thomas drew up plans, but that project was delayed amid concerns about the Institute’s legal standing to construct an apartment building.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, Heydt was captivated by Thomas’s progressive ideas about architecture and his reformist zeal, and he soon involved Thomas in an effort the Rockefellers had been interested in for a number of years. Heydt “thinks [Thomas is] quite an extraordinary man,” JDR Jr. wrote to C.J. Hicks of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey on January 27, 1923. Since about 1915, Hicks and officials of other industrial firms in Bayonne, New Jersey had been concerned about the poor housing situation for their workers, and Rockefeller was writing to Hicks to suggest that he meet with Thomas. In January 1924 Thomas was commissioned by the Bayonne Housing Corporation to design and supervise construction of five garden apartments for Bayonne wage-earners, and in 1925 these apartments opened for occupancy. The leaders of the Bayonne experiment were so pleased with their results that they trumpeted Thomas’s ideas in a booklet entitled *Industrial Housing*, crediting Thomas as the author.<sup>15</sup>

Heydt and Thomas did not waste time in proposing their next venture. By late July 1925 Heydt had proposed a “project in the Bronx” that would be “another step of progress.” “Thomas and I firmly believe that a demonstration of cooperative apartments for the wage earner will be a great success,” Heydt wrote to JDR Jr. Cooperative apartments – apartments that the tenant

could buy over time – would give the tenants a stake in the building and their neighborhood, and allow them to build up a financial asset. “The project which Mr. Thomas and I suggest to you is strictly a business proposition,” Heydt explained, “on which we would expect you to make a clear 6% [profit] and have your money out of the proposition . . . within four years.”<sup>16</sup> Over the next several years, Thomas designed and built three such cooperative garden apartment complexes with Rockefeller money: The Thomas Garden Apartments in the Bronx, the Paul Laurence Dunbar Apartments in Harlem, and the Van Tassel Apartments in North Tarrytown.

**[images 7 and 8]**

Exactly when the partnership of Heydt and Thomas set their sights on Forest Hill is not clear from the archival record. The first public sign that JDR Jr. was considering a housing development in Forest Hill came in February 1925, when Heydt reported to the Metro Park Board that JDR Jr. was undecided about the disposition of Forest Hill, “except [for] that part of it which is located between Lee and Taylor and Glen and Mayfield. This latter tract he is thinking of developing as a high class residential district.” Two months later, on April 17, 1925, the *Cleveland Press* reported that JDR Jr. had begun work on “a billion-dollar subdivision . . . one of the most costly exclusive residential districts in the world.” “Work on the sewage system and other utilities already has been started,” the *Press* reported, and the projected completion date of the development was within five years. The report also speculated that the golf course on the property would be converted to a university campus.

The idea that part of Forest Hill should be used as a university campus was a persistent one. Indeed, John D. Rockefeller (Senior) himself had suggested as much to his friend and advisor, the Rev. G.O. King, in 1880, when he indicated a willingness to donate part of the estate to relocate Denison University from Granville to Cleveland.<sup>17</sup> In May 1926 Charles Heydt

resurrected the university idea. In a letter to JDR Jr. Heydt noted that many prominent officials had suggested the idea since 1922 with reference to Western Reserve University and the contemplated creation of a University of Cleveland; and he reported that Western Reserve had made an appeal as recently as May 1925. Heydt argued that many in the real estate business believed that giving fifty or seventy-five acres for a college “would be a stroke of good business.” “It would attract to the rest of the property people of culture and refinement and vastly increase the value of the lands to be sold.” To drive his point home, Heydt reported that three key people involved in the housing project – Thomas, Frank S. Staley (another Rockefeller advisor), and Heydt himself – “all agreed on the suggestion of the university campus.”<sup>18</sup>

This plan never came to fruition, of course, but the persistence of the idea indicates, on one hand, the expectations that others had of Rockefeller’s philanthropy, and on the other hand, it reflects how Rockefeller’s advisors, especially Heydt, maintained a focus on the bottom line for this business venture – even to the potential detriment of a park. Indeed, as late as September 1930, Heydt was arguing against seeing the vast acreage of Forest Hill as two distinct parcels – one to be set aside for housing and the other to become a public park. “I am wondering whether we would not do just as much in the long run for Cleveland by creating values in business buildings and housing as we would by giving the land as a park, possibly a good deal more,” he wrote to JDR Jr. “There is no doubt that an immense sum of money could be made out of the development of the park area. The Euclid Avenue frontage alone is worth millions,” he argued, pointing out that “the corner of Euclid and Superior is the third busiest corner in Cleveland so far as traffic is concerned,” and within five years probably would be “second only to the corner of Euclid and East 9<sup>th</sup>.” “[A parcel of land] 100 [feet] x 100 [feet] on the corner of Euclid and Superior will be worth more than \$1,000,000,” he reasoned. “I think we would be supported by



the large department stores if we created a business centre at the corner of Euclid Avenue and Superior which would make it unnecessary for the people on the Eastern section of Cleveland to travel downtown.” Lest his proposals seem less than reverential toward the former family home, Heydt added that he was “still very sentimental about the house site and would like to see that kept for a memorial. It would make a beautiful setting for a handsome chapel.”<sup>19</sup> So Heydt continued to keep part of his focus on the bottom line – on ways to make money for his boss even though he understood that JDR Jr.’s main focus was on the park. Indeed, the business ambitions at the heart of the Forest Hill development seem to have been much dearer to Heydt than they were to JDR Jr.

By May of 1926 plans for a housing development at Forest Hill had progressed considerably. Thomas had been on the site and was “about to undertake the laying out of roads and streets,” Heydt reported, and “the model of Forest Hill is nearing completion.”<sup>20</sup>

**[images 9, 10, 11 models]**

By the end of 1928, the planning was complete and Heydt had prepared a financial prospectus. Thomas and Heydt’s plans envisioned the construction of 280 homes at an average cost of \$11,500 each, with sale prices set at an average of \$20,000 each. “We intend to establish a young people’s community,” Heydt explained, reporting that the real estate people in Cleveland who they had consulted “are unanimous in stating that there is no question of the success of this effort.” “The profits on a conservative basis will be fully \$5,000,000,” he assured JDR Jr. “So convinced of this am I that I unhesitatingly recommend your approval.” Before he sailed for Egypt in January 1929, JDR Jr. authorized expenditures of up to \$4,276,000 to carry out Heydt and Thomas’s plan.<sup>21</sup> **[image 12 street layout]**

In a letter to JDR Jr. in January 1931, Heydt explained how the planning for Forest Hill had evolved. Initial planning for the development seemed to waiver between single family houses and apartment buildings, the latter, of course, being Thomas's specialty. After a study of building permits issued in Cleveland convinced Heydt and his associates "that the city would eventually run to apartment houses," they planned to build apartments in Cleveland Heights. But when they discussed this idea with Cleveland Heights Mayor Frank Cain, Heydt reported that "we found him so definitely opposed to apartment houses – we think most unreasonably – that we had to shelve the idea and turn back to single family houses." Heydt and Thomas then looked to East Cleveland, where "the officials . . . were in a more friendly state of min[d] toward the development," and decided to "build single family houses in the Glynn Road district in East Cleveland." Moreover, they decided to upgrade the quality of the work they planned. "We also decided that the whole development was of a much finer character than was formerly thought would be the case, and that instead of building cheap houses, such as were originally planned for and upon which I based my letter of December 30, 1928, [this was the proposal for 280 homes that JDR Jr. approved before his Egypt trip] we should, in our first enterprise, construct fewer houses but a somewhat better type on larger lots. We also felt that we should set a style of architecture and quality of construction which would distinguish this Forest Hill development from the usual development with its mixture of all sorts and kinds of architectural types and of cheap construction."<sup>22</sup>

A new plan thus took shape: "Four blocks in the Glynn Road area were selected on which we have erected 81 single family houses to sell, with land and landscaping, all complete, for prices ranging from \$25,000. to \$30,000., and with a few at corners, from \$35,000. to \$40,000." Heydt estimated that the average cost to build each home was \$19,500. Heydt and Thomas also

decided to build “an office and apartment building at the corner of Lee and Mayfield estimated to cost \$750,000, again with a view to setting the style and quality of business and apartment buildings which the Development would warrant.”<sup>23</sup>

Heydt and his associates also made one other fateful decision. Rather than improving each block as construction there began, “we found,” Heydt reported, “that it would be wiser and cheaper for us to undertake the improvement of the entire tract, with all the necessary utilities, grading, curbing, paving, sidewalks, curb lawn trees, etc., in order that, whether we constructed houses or not, the entire tract would be quickly developed ready for sale, and possibly save us the necessity of building any houses.” This was a decision that would haunt them for years. By the end of 1930, Heydt and Thomas had spent more than \$2.8 million of JDR Jr.’s money for improvements on the entire tract, and an additional \$1.8 million to build the 81 homes, the office building and the sales office. Adding to these costs the value of the land, the cost of taxes, and interest, Heydt estimated the cost of the development to be \$7.5 million.<sup>24</sup>

**[images 13, 14. 15. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23]**

By mid August of 1930, the first fifteen homes were ready for sale.<sup>25</sup> Although he continued to put on an optimistic front for his boss, a real estate specialist with Heydt’s experience and insight must have understood that selling the 81 initial homes during a depression would be tough, and he began to look for ways to give Forest Hill extra advantages over its competitors. Couching his arguments in terms of enhancing value rather than promoting sales, Heydt proposed to JDR Jr. that certain elements of the park be used as amenities for residents of the development. “We have been assured [that] we could raise our prices” from between \$2,500 and \$5,000 “if we could bring into the development some real attraction which could be offered

at a fair and reasonable price, for exercise and amusement . . . . That leads me to inquire if you will consider permitting us to do three things,” he asked JDR Jr.:

“1. To take over on a 5 to 10 year lease the present golf course, with sufficient land to extend the course to 18 holes . . .

“2. To do some landscaping around the lake and build a small recreation house there . . .

“3. To construct some ten or a dozen tennis courts to the east of the lake along Lee Road.”

These improvements “would add \$1,000,000 in value to the development,” Heydt argued. “The Van Sweringens could not possibly compete with us, and we would have the whole field of clients for houses of \$50,000 or less all to ourselves.”<sup>26</sup>

Heydt’s inquiry provoked from JDR Jr. a letter that is as stern as any that I have seen in his files. Writing from his summer home in Seal Harbor, Maine, JDR Jr. did not dismiss Heydt’s suggestion out of hand, but his letter made clear his priorities and his attitude toward both the park and the real estate development, and it bears quoting at length to convey the tone and attitude of a man feeling manipulated and put upon: “This may be a wise thing to do,” JDR Jr. wrote of Heydt’s suggestion, “I can see its value and am giving it further consideration. The thing that disturbs me, however, is this: When I agreed to your going ahead with the development of a real estate program on the far side of Lee Street, I assumed, and from everything you said had no reason not to assume, that the development could be carried on successfully as an entirely separate and distinct thing from Forest Hill. My consent to the enterprise was based on that understanding, which I think you will not question. You knew at the time that I had in mind to give Forest Hill as a whole to the City for a park. You knew also that I have strongly and constantly, and almost without exception, resisted requests for portions

of Forest Hill for other purposes, yielding only in connection with the school, the hospital and the Masonic Lodge; . . . Now comes your suggestion about the athletic features. Had I been advised at the outset that these encroachments upon Forest Hill property would be urged as more or less essential to the highest success of the real estate venture, I very possibly might have decided not to go into the real estate development. In any event, I could have reached my decision with all of the facts before me. But to have these things presented from time to time, after I am committed to the general enterprise and cannot turn back, gives me a little sense of discomfort and unpleasantness.” He reiterated his main point for emphasis: “I would wish . . . to be able to make my decisions from time to time according to my best judgment and without being under pressure to agree to something because it now proved to be necessary or highly desirable in order to save or make more successful a venture which I assumed was entirely self-contained and sound, irrespective of what might happen to Forest Hill.” He closed by questioning how much he was paying the architect, implicitly wondering whether he was being taken advantage of: “What is Thomas’s compensation for the work which he is doing on this allotment, whether in connection with the houses or the general layout and development of the land?”<sup>27</sup>

Heydt was undoubtedly shocked by the tone of JDR Jr.’s reply. Indeed, he attributed his delayed response to “a little physical upset” which he blamed on “the heat.” His five-page reply reviewed the history of requests for encroachments on the park property and argued that he was only doing his duty in recommending to JDR Jr. the improvements that local real estate agents assured him would only increase the value of the property and thus JDR Jr.’s profits on sales. He reiterated his belief that the extra recreational facilities would be worthwhile and would not be

detrimental to the park. He would repeat these requests in two more detailed letters before JDR Jr. finally consented to improving the golf course for \$150,000 in early February 1931.<sup>28</sup>

After years of planning and construction, in September 1930 the initial 81 homes in the Forest Hill development were put on the market, and an onslaught of advertising began to promote the homes. On September 21, 1930, the Cleveland newspapers and the *New York Times* announced the availability of homes in the development.

The development received much praise, especially by James G. Monnett, the real estate editor of the *Plain Dealer*. Monnett wrote an article for the local *Building Arts* magazine that lavished praise upon Forest Hill and JDR Jr. and was highly critical of the quality of other developments. “Most of the houses built here since the World War have been so poor,” Monnett wrote, “that the great majority of persons with whom I come into contact . . . express doubt that it is at all possible for them to get a good home.” “Poor building kills the market,” Monnett argued. Forest Hill “is perhaps the greatest object lesson ever presented to an American city in good building . . . . The very evident satisfaction of high quality in workmanship and materials is making exactly the impression upon these hundreds of visitors [to the development] that Greater Cleveland long has needed. . . . The Rockefeller construction serves to prove to [its visitors] that they can [get a good home] . . . [V]isitors who do not purchase Rockefeller homes are getting ideas that soon will appear in homes they build elsewhere.” Monnett welcomed “the lesson of high quality” he found in the Rockefeller homes, and also praised JDR Jr. for “point[ing] the way for other men of wealth to invest their funds in helping to provide additional housing and helping to provide employment for labor.”<sup>29</sup> Monnett soon reported to Rockefeller’s advisors that this article endangered his career at the *Plain Dealer* because at least one large builder took offense

at his criticisms of the poor building practices of area builders and complained to senior management at the paper.<sup>30</sup>

Even national publications like *The Ladies Home Journal* were recruited to promote the new homes. *The Ladies Home Journal* furnished a home that it promoted in one issue. It described Forest Hill's architecture as "European Provincial" and praised its harmonious design. Forest Hill "answers the somewhat vague though real desire for quality in a ready-made real-estate subdivision. . . . Unlike many subdivisions, here is a delightful lack of discord. There is harmony, restfulness and relief from unrelated house designs."<sup>31</sup>

But there were dissenting voices. In its November 1930 issue, *Fortune* said that the development "threatens to be a most resounding failure. . . because it is a New York project located in Cleveland." The new development totally missed the mark in terms of local needs and tastes. "When he went adventuring in Cleveland real estate, [JDR Jr.] was on strange terrain," since "crowded, land-hungry New York" is a much different market than "expansive Cleveland." As a result, "Clevelanders expected a great deal more than Mr. Rockefeller had arranged to give" in terms of architectural variation and "the small space between homes."<sup>32</sup>

These sentiments were echoed by a local Cleveland magazine, which blamed both Andrew Thomas and JDR Jr. and their shared idealism for the project's defects. An article entitled "The Story of Forest Hill" provided a short profile of Thomas, "who looks like a circus ringmaster and talks like the author of all the sentimental songs ever written." He is described as "an idealist" who "is determined to give people the sort of homes they ought to have." The article mocked his self-confidence, his arrogance, and his idealism: "Mr. Thomas had never built detached houses, didn't believe in them for city-dwellers; but he went ahead confidently, as he always has . . ." Rockefeller and Thomas "think that metropolitan Cleveland needs" the sort of

housing they have built, “and they intend to show us they are right, if it takes years.” The article also criticized the marketing campaign, which it described as “educational rather than salesman like.” Yet the article grudgingly praised the quality of the development: “Anyone who goes to live in Forest Hill will get a well-built, conveniently planned house and modest grounds, beautifully and expensively landscaped with shrubs and trees. . . . But first they will have to reconcile themselves to giving up the idea of expressing their own individualities through the exterior of their homes.”<sup>33</sup>

Sales of the homes were extremely slow, however. In July 1931, Heydt analyzed the development’s “prospects.” He reported that a total of 2,530 prospective buyers had visited the properties, but noted that half of them were curiosity seekers. “Our difficulty in selling is not because of the houses,” he argued, “but principally because of general conditions and because we have refused to make trades.”<sup>34</sup> By March of 1932 JDR Jr. had grown impatient with the slow pace of sales and wanted a new plan of action. He appointed a housing committee consisting of Heydt, Staley and his son, Nelson A. Rockefeller.<sup>35</sup> Creation of the committee diminished Heydt’s power within the decision-making regarding the housing development, but he remained the chief contact for James C. Jones, the manager of the Cleveland-based company that managed the property and handled sales, the Abeyton Realty Company. **[image 24, Jones, JDR Jr. and Jay Downer, October 1938]** Over the next few years, the housing committee would expand to include other Rockefeller advisors, including another of JDR Jr.’s sons, Laurance.

Creation of the housing committee did seem to generate some new marketing ideas. In April 1932 a plan was launched to lease some of the unsold houses for \$110-\$160 a month. A *Plain Dealer* article on April 21, 1932 reported that six homes had been rented (and named the six renters) and also reported that the house at 15541 Brewster Road had been sold to William A.



Doyle. A few days later Heydt wrote to JDR Jr. to report that eleven homes had been rented and that “there are numerous inquiries.” Having renters in the homes helped, Heydt noted, since “the place does not look like a deserted village.”<sup>36</sup>

The place would have looked even less like a deserted village had the development’s managers been less selective about who they considered the “proper type of tenant” for their new homes. Among the visitors to the Forest Hill homes in 1931 was Charles Sands and his wife. Sands was the owner of the jewelry and optometry firm, The Charles Sands Company, located in the Old Arcade. “I was requested to look over the premises,” Sands wrote to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., on June 26, 1931. He reported that he and his wife “were very much impressed with the beauty, the unique manner in which the homes were built, and to put it mildly we were most agreeably surprised.” But the purpose of his letter was not simply to express his appreciation of the new houses. “I write you to express my sincere astonishment at learning that Forest Hill does not admit anyone of Jewish faith. Knowing the broad mantel of charities your father and you have adopted, I thought to ask you directly the reason for this action.”<sup>37</sup>

Sands did not receive a direct reply from John D. Rockefeller, Jr., nor did he receive a fair reply. Rather than answer Sands directly, JDR Jr. turned the letter over to Charles O. Heydt for a reply. “There is not the slightest truth in the statement that we have discriminated against any persons of the Jewish faith in our sales program at Forest Hill,” Heydt wrote in response. Heydt argued that “a campaign of slander and unfair criticism is being directed at the whole development.” “You will be interested to know that rumors have been circulated that we would not sell to Catholics. As a matter of fact I think we already have a family of the Jewish faith in one of our houses.” Heydt apparently hoped that an effusive show of concern and kindness would mollify Sands. He promised to visit Sands in his office during his next visit to Cleveland

and referred him to J.C. Jones “if there is any house in the development which appeals to you particularly.”<sup>38</sup>

While there may not have been a formal, stated policy of excluding Jews from Forest Hill, there can be little doubt that, between Heydt and the managers of the realty company, there was an understanding that Jews would not be welcome in Forest Hill, as well as an understanding of the need to insulate members of the Rockefeller family from any embarrassment over such discriminatory practice. “In my own mind,” J.C. Jones wrote to Heydt, “I am positive it would be a terrible mistake at this time to allow a Jewish family, regardless of their position or standing, to become a resident of Forest Hill, but at the same time I fully appreciate that your Chief does not want to be put in the position of antagonizing any particular race or creed.”<sup>39</sup>

Public awareness within the Jewish community of the discriminatory practices at Forest Hill may have been enlightened in part by an exchange that occurred on February 14, 1931, when a Mr. Goldsmith of the Weidenthal Publishing Company called at the office of John H. Jameson of the McCann-Erickson company, which handled the advertising for Forest Hill for the Abeyton Realty Company. Noting that Forest Hill was being advertised in the *Catholic Bulletin*, Goldsmith asked about carrying advertisements in some of the Jewish weeklies he represented. Jameson reported their exchange to J.C. Jones: “After some discussion with him,” Jameson reported, “I finally said that I was going to be very frank with him and I hoped that he would understand the situation and appreciate it. I said that, as matters now stood, we were not particularly interested in attracting the Jewish people to Forest Hill and, for that reason, were not in a position to advertise directly to them through any of the Jewish publications. I told him that I thought it would be a saving of his time and ours if he understood that situation right at the

outset. He thanked me for being frank with him and said that he was glad to have that understanding, although sorry that the situation stood as it does.” Jones reported the incident to Heydt, who responded that Jameson “handled the matter very well and [I] am willing to stand back of him on what he said.”<sup>40</sup>

Although Jones reported that he had “successfully handled several applications for leasing our homes from people of the Jewish faith,” he was especially concerned in September 1932 when he learned that Rabbi Barnett R. Brickner might be interested in leasing a home in Forest Hill. Noting that Brickner was “without question . . . the leading Rabbi in Cleveland and ha[d] a national reputation, Jones recognized that this could be “a tough spot.” He was relieved the next month to learn that Brickner had decided to move to Forest Hill’s arch competitor, Shaker Heights, “presumably because of transportation facilities.”<sup>41</sup>

Sales and rents continued to be very disappointing to the managers of the Forest Hill development. Between 1930 and 1936, no new lots were sold in the development,<sup>42</sup> and sales of the original 81 homes moved slowly, although I have not been able to locate any sales figures for these homes. Sales and rentals were so slow that some within the Rockefeller circle urged a reconsideration of the exclusion of Jews. “I think it is good if you are not going to let any Jews [sic] in,” wrote Frank Staley, “but the others evidently don’t want to buy and can we afford to turn away purchasers – It seems to me we should think this over very carefully.”<sup>43</sup>

JDR Jr.’s housing committee did solicit new ideas to make the development more attractive. In 1933, the housing committee commissioned a study of the development by Norman Bel Geddes, the noted industrial designer. The report his team prepared was highly critical of the development. “At the present time the reputation of the Forest Hill development does not compare with that of Shaker Heights,” the report argued. “The present 81 houses have

little to recommend them aside from their appearance of quaintness and the honesty of their construction. They lack privacy and are monotonously arranged. They have suffered from the monotony of street layout, from uniformity of set-back lines, flatness of the land, and from their placement in one of the most unpleasant sections of the property.” The report urged changes in the layout of the development and physical changes to the 81 homes already built, including whitewashing the bricks of some houses, adding stucco to others, and changing some of the details on porches, doorways and chimneys to add variety to the design. It also urged a drastic reduction of the prices on the houses and argued for viewing the park and the housing development as a single development, not distinct parcels.<sup>44</sup> None of the redevelopment projects the Geddes report recommended were taken up, nor were the prices lowered.

By 1936, as economic conditions improved and the managers saw some hope of renewed sales, they began new efforts to attract developers and prospective home buyers to the development. They began to feature building innovations and new amenities as a means of attracting publicity and interest, and the development became a showplace of construction and consumer innovation.

In 1936 the Arcy Corporation built five new steel-framed houses on Monticello Boulevard. They also constructed Laurance Rockefeller’s new home on the Rockefeller family estate in Pocantico Hills, New York using the same method. **[images 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32]**. But the Arcy Corporation soon went bankrupt, and these homes were taken over by the Abeyton Realty Company. By July 1937 the steel-frame homes were on the market for \$22,500 apiece.<sup>45</sup>

Abeyton Realty put 200 housing lots on the market in the middle of 1937, and in July the Gundersen-Shepherd Company bought lots for a 20-house development on Kew Road, with the

houses designed by R. Franklyn Outcalt. This was reported to be “the first large-scale group of buildings” constructed in Forest Hill since the original homes were built.<sup>46</sup>

**[images of Gunderson-Shepherd homes, 33, 34, 35]**

General Electric outfitted a house **[image 36]** on Chelsea Drive; the colonial was designed by the architect, Charles Hinman, and built by Keyes-Treuhaft, who claimed the house was “the ‘most completely electrified home in America.’”<sup>47</sup>

These innovations were accompanied by an aggressive advertising campaign that featured ads like this one **[image 37 Natives ad]**

Perhaps the most well-publicized of these events was the grand opening on September 8, 1937 of the Kelvin houses, trumpeted as “Cleveland’s first homes built for and equipped with Complete Year-‘Round Air Conditioning.” Two of these homes were opened – one in Forest Hill at 3202 Rumson Road, and another in the Beach Cliff section of Rocky River. These houses were developed by the Nash-Kelvinator Company of Detroit, which was represented in Cleveland by Oil Heating Devices, Inc. The dedication ceremonies were broadcast over WGAR radio at 2:30 PM. and full-page newspaper ads celebrated the home’s amenities. The Kelvin Home pointed “toward a New and Better Way of Living,” featuring “the Latest Discoveries and Achievements of Housing Sciences,” including the “Modern Electric Kitchen” with the Kelvinator Electric Range and Plus Powered Kelvinator Electric Refrigerator.” Other modern appliances included the Kelvinator Washing Machine and the Kelvinator Electric Ironer. “They’re homes where all the drudgery is eliminated – where tasks are done electrically,” the advertisement boasted. “And yet – you can ‘operate’ each of these homes at no greater cost than that of running an ordinary six-room house! That’s because they have been engineered by Kelvinator to ‘Cut the Cost of Better Living.’”<sup>48</sup>

By the late 1930s Forest Hill's managers recognized they needed to change more than their advertising campaign and the amenities their homes offered if they wanted to improve business. Builders had long complained that Abeyton Realty's high prices and sales policies worked to their disadvantage, and in 1938 the company liberalized its policies to allow "responsible" builders to build on lots and to pay for the lot when the house was sold, rather than paying for the lot first. This change, along with the improving economy, helped spur development. Only four lots were sold in 1937, after a six year drought of no lot sales at all; but 14 lots were sold in 1938; 26 in 1939, and 42 in 1940.<sup>49</sup>

Despite this progress, after more than ten years of attempted sales, 785 lots in the development remained unsold in January 1941. A report that month estimated that JDR Jr. had lost \$800,000 on the development, largely because lot prices were too high to be competitive with Shaker Heights and University Heights, and because of the unwise "over-development in 1930 when several miles of streets, sidewalks, etc. were constructed and other improvements were made long before there was any need for such improvements." Regardless of the more liberal policies for builders, the managers continued to try to exercise too much control over the development in ways that were detrimental for business. "It is my opinion," wrote the analyst, George Williams, "that we are trying to develop a utopia when we place the many building and other restrictions on purchasers of these lots. The average prospective purchaser loses all interest when he is told that he must build a house within one year and that he must meet many other tests of acceptability as a possible resident." As evidence he pointed out that individual buyers were not purchasing Forest Hill lots for either investment or home-building purposes. Only builders were buying lots in Forest Hill.<sup>50</sup>

While Abeyton Realty's policies and practices had not changed enough for Williams, they may well have changed too much for John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Clearly things had changed considerably since the first 81 homes were put on the market in 1930. The managers had abandoned the idea of an aesthetically homogenous development, and were allowing other architects and other builders to design and construct homes. **[images of homes, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42]** When JDR Jr. visited the development in October 1938, he toured the site with Jay Downer and J.C. Jones. "The Brewster Road houses **[image 43]** were very much admired," Jones reported to Frank Staley, but "nothing much [was] said about the new houses excepting the small one [that] Gaiser is building on Hereford Road for Ewings. **[image 44]** He thought the architecture was terrible, but you will remember [that] this is one of the very cheap homes."<sup>51</sup> Despite the best of intentions, Forest Hill by 1940 was looking more like what Heydt and Thomas had hoped to avoid in 1929: "the usual development with its mixture of all sorts and kinds of architectural types and of cheap construction."

Rockefeller may well have been discouraged by his visit to the development that Heydt had once assured him would bring a profit of \$5 million. Nine months later, on July 11, 1939, in a meeting with Thomas Debevoise and Frank Staley, JDR Jr.'s patience with the Forest Hill development appeared to finally run out, and, according to Staley, he "instructed that all Cleveland Property should be sold as rapidly as possible, even though prices be cut to move it." JDR Jr. gave specific directions for the sale of the property. He wanted the sale handled in such a way that protected "the present property owners . . . as far as keeping the development of the right type of people but not as a price protection to those who have purchased homes." He instructed that the office building be sold for \$150,000 or even as little as \$100,000 "if we can sell it to one who will operate it so that it will not be a detriment to the balance of the property."

He hoped that his remaining interest in Forest Hill could be sold as one parcel for a million dollars, but if it could not be sold as a single parcel he was willing to have it divided “into four or five parcels and get what we can for each of them.” If that did not succeed, then he proposed to reconsider the prices being charged for individual plots and reduce the prices in particular districts in order to “make it possible for builders to sell houses and lots at a lower price than they are asking at present.”<sup>52</sup>

As was the custom at Forest Hill, Rockefeller had set his price too high, and it would take nearly a decade more to sell the property for one-fifth of what he originally hoped to get. In July 1948, he agreed to sell the remaining 650 lots for \$200,000 to a group of investors led by George A. Roose and John S. Harris.<sup>53</sup> Rockefeller’s financial losses of the Forest Hill development evoked little sympathy, of course, and the development he left behind continues to have its charm and beauty.

The Forest Hill development was the product of an odd three-way partnership of unequals, or, rather, of two partnerships involving three people – the idealistic and bold Andrew Thomas and Charles Heydt on the one hand, and business-minded Charles Heydt and the philanthropic John D. Rockefeller, Jr., on the other hand. Heydt had the ideas, Thomas the designs, and Rockefeller the land and the money – and he ultimately called the shots. Yet Rockefeller was always more interested in the park – in the philanthropic aspect of this property – than in the business of the housing development. Rockefeller’s trusted advisor, Charles O. Heydt, always seemed more deeply interested in the housing development and its business possibilities than JDR Jr. It had to be a blow to him, then, when JDR Jr. established the housing committee and effectively took away his sole authority over the project. By the early 1930s, Thomas was out of the picture on this and other Rockefeller-sponsored housing projects. In a



letter of reference for him in 1936, Heydt described Thomas as “a very active man but somewhat temperamental,” a man who “some times antagonizes the people with whom he is working by his brusque, curt manner.”<sup>54</sup> Perhaps that is why Heydt seemed to create a distance between Thomas and JDR Jr. and to serve as the intermediary, the lynch-pin connecting the two idealists.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Rose, Kenneth W. "John D. Rockefeller's Philanthropy and Problems in Fundraising at Cleveland's Floating Bethel Mission and the Home for Aged Colored People." *Ohio History* 108 (Summer-Autumn 1999), pp. 145-161.

<sup>2</sup> May M. Brown to Mrs. J.D. Rockefeller, August 26, 1889, folder 42, box 5, Rockefeller Family Archives, Record Group 1 John D. Rockefeller Papers, Office Correspondence Series, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>3</sup> See Duty to Rockefeller, May 5 and 11, 1893, and especially the two letters dated May 17, 1893, Rockefeller Family Archives, RG 1, John D. Rockefeller Papers, Office Correspondence, box 13, folder 98. I have not been able to locate information on the Eucrazy treatment. On the Keeley Cure, see H. Wayne Morgan, "No Thank You, I've Been to Dwight: Reflections on the Keeley Cure for Alcoholism." *Illinois Historical Journal*, Volume 82: No. 3 (Autumn 1989), pp. 147-166. I am grateful to my son Tom for locating a copy of this article for me.

<sup>4</sup> Patteson, "Report for Mr. J.D. Rockefeller of Missionary Work Done in June 1888," and letter dated July 14, 1888, Rockefeller Family Archives, Record Group 1, John D. Rockefeller Papers, Office Correspondence, box 31, folder 235. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>5</sup> John D. Rockefeller to "My Dear Laura," March 21, 1872, Rockefeller Family Archives, Record Group 1 John D. Rockefeller Papers, Office Correspondence Series, box 36, folder 270.

<sup>6</sup> This history of Rockefeller's Forest Hill property is taken from "Questions and Answers Regarding Forest Hill Property, Cleveland, Ohio," in the Rockefeller Family Archives, Record Group 2, Office of the Messrs Rockefeller, Real Estate Interests, box 7, folder 55.

<sup>7</sup> See "B.R. Deming-Euclid Golf Allotment," folders 35-36, box 4, Rockefeller Family Archives, Record Group 2 Office of the Messrs Rockefeller, Real Estate Interests series; and Deanna L. Bremer and Hugh P. Fisher, *Euclid Golf Neighborhood*. Images of America Series, Mt. Pleasant, North Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Draft of an "Agreement in Trust Between John D. Rockefeller, O.P. and M.J. Van Sweringen, and the Union Trust Company," 1921, Rockefeller Family Archives, Record Group 2 Office of the Messrs Rockefeller, Housing Interest Series, box 1, folder 12.

<sup>9</sup> A full exploration of the Rockefeller-Van Sweringen deal and its collapse is beyond the scope of this essay, but a more complete picture will emerge from a thorough review of the documents in "Park Matter," folders 10-12, box 1 in Housing Interests and the folder of Van Sweringen correspondence, folder 64 in box 6 in Housing Interests.

<sup>10</sup> Ron Chernow, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.* (1998), pp. 623-624.

<sup>11</sup> "Purchase by JDR Jr., 1922-1923, this material is in the Housing Series, box 2, folder 16. Deed dated May 31, 1923.

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<sup>12</sup> Okrent, *Great Fortune*, pp. 45-49. On Heydt's biography, see the obituary in the *New York Times*, January 6, 1958.

<sup>13</sup> See the obituary for Andrew J. Thomas in the *New York Times*, July 27, 1965. A copy is located in Housing 13: 117.

<sup>14</sup> On the timing of their meeting, see JDR Jr. to Hicks, January 27, 1923; on the other details of events, see Heydt to Hicks, December 27, 1923, both in Business 133: 995.

<sup>15</sup> JDR Jr. to Hicks, January 27, 1923, Business 133: 995; Andrew J. Thomas, *Industrial Housing* (Bayonne, New Jersey: The Bayonne Housing Corporation, 1925.)

<sup>16</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., July 22, 1925, Business 133: 995.

<sup>17</sup> See the Rev. G.O. King to Rockefeller, March 31, 1880, in the John D. Rockefeller Papers, Office Correspondence, box 23, folder 178. "I remember a conversation we once had with reference to Cleveland being a better location for a College than Granville," King wrote, "and your offer to donate the land for the the purpose at Forest Hill if a change could be made in location." King had agreed with Rockefeller that Cleveland would be best, but after spending two weeks on the Denison campus teaching elocution, he found his views "modified very much." "There are not so many things in Granville to distract the attention of the students from their studies," he had found, and "there are not the same temptations to dissipation." Moreover, King argued that "the atmosphere of city social life is unfavorable to correct habits of study to those who inhale it and especially such as inhale it freely."

<sup>18</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., May 19, 1926, Housing 2: 17.

<sup>19</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., September 16, 1930, Housing 2: 17.

<sup>20</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., May 19, 1926, Housing 2: 17.

<sup>21</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., December 31, 1928, with JDR Jr.'s signed approval noted at the end, Housing 2: 17.

<sup>22</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., January 27, 1931, Housing 2: 17.

<sup>23</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., January 27, 1931. Housing 2: 17.

<sup>24</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., January 27, 1931, Housing 2: 17.

<sup>25</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., August 12, 1930, Housing 2: 17.

<sup>26</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., August 12, 1930. Housing 2: 17.

<sup>27</sup> JDR Jr. to Heydt, August 22, 1930. Housing 2: 17.

<sup>28</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., August 29, 1930, December 23, 1930, and January 27, 1931; and JDR Jr. to Heydt, February 5, 1931, all in Housing 2: 17.

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<sup>29</sup> James G. Monnett, "Rockefeller Development." *Building Arts* (November 1930), pp. 13-14, 31-32.

<sup>30</sup> J.C. Jones to Heydt, November 8, 1930, Housing 6:60.

<sup>31</sup> "European Provincial. Andrew J. Thomas, Architect." *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1932, p. 23. Housing 6: 61.

<sup>32</sup> "Mr. Rockefeller Returns to Cleveland . . . and finds that in his native town he is a real-estate prophet without honor." Handwritten notation indicates *Fortune*, November 1930. Housing 6: 60.

<sup>33</sup> "The Story of Forest Hill." Undated clipping from a Cleveland magazine [apparent from the advertisements], perhaps *Cleveland Town Topics*. Housing 6: 60.

<sup>34</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., July 31, 1931. Housing 2: 17.

<sup>35</sup> JDR Jr. to Heydt, March 22, 1932, Housing 2: 17. "That some new policy must be devised and adopted from now on, based not on tradition and the experience of the past, but on the new situation with which this country is now confronted, seems to me clear," JDR Jr. wrote. In his letter, Rockefeller tried to take some of the sting out of the fact that he was diminishing Heydt's role. "My investment in the real estate development adjacent to Forest Hill has run into a good many millions of dollars. I have continued to pour large sums of money into the property and thus far nothing has been taken out. That this has been due in large measure to the times, there can be little question. On the other hand, because of the magnitude of the investment, because of the extraordinary difficulties under which practically every business enterprise is now being conducted and because I do not feel that I am justified in any longer asking you to carry this heavy responsibility alone, I desire to appoint you, Mr. Staley and Mr. Nelson as a committee to represent me from now on in the handling of the enterprise."

<sup>36</sup> Heydt to JDR Jr., April 26, 1932, Housing 2: 17; "Will Lease Some Abeyton Houses," *Plain Dealer*, April 21, 1932, Housing 6: 61. The renters were listed as Gerard Cowen, C.A. Smyth, Joseph D. Coadler, John Z., Heizer, Dr. George W. Ryall, and G. Saxon Thompson. William A. Doyle was the president of W.A. Doyle Company.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Sands to JDR Jr., June 26, 1931, Housing 3: 27.

<sup>38</sup> Heydt to Chas. Sands, July 22, 1931, Housing 3: 27.

<sup>39</sup> Jones to Heydt, September 26, 1932, Housing 3: 27.

<sup>40</sup> John H. Jameson to J.C. Jones, February 14, 1931; Jones to Heydt, February 17, 1931; and Heydt to Jones, February 19, 1931, all in Housing 3: 27.

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<sup>41</sup> Jones to Heydt, September 26, 1932 and October 26, 1932, Housing 3: 27.

Jones solicited advice from Heydt on how to handle a possible application from Brickner, and Heydt responded with a lengthy discussion of strategy:

“My judgment is that when you are face to face with a problem and have to make a decision, I would first call the attention of the applicant to the people who are at present in the development, that they are Gentiles and not Jews, that it must be evident from a universal feeling against the Jews that he would not be welcomed in the neighborhood by those already in the houses – that no man, Jew or Gentile, would want to put himself in a position in which he would be snubbed by his neighbors. . . . Any man of common sense would see it in that light.

“The difficulty with the Jew is that he wont [sic] admit, even to himself, that he will be unwelcome, especially a man of the type to whom you refer. Again, if we can show that the feeling of all of our tenants and purchasers would be against having a Jew, you can explain that because of the hard times we have been forced practically to follow a course which we did not wish to take, but having so many houses occupied now and in view of the continued hard times, we would certainly be most unwise to risk losing 28 or 29 tenants just to please a single newcomer. You can tell him how careful you are discriminating among the applicants. His answer will be that if he moves there, his friends and associates and followers will also want to come in. We can then tell him to produce them before we act, but in that case we would want not want to rent – we would only sell the whole complete subdivision to some syndicate of Jews and they can thus fill it up with Jews or not as they like.

“If the application is made, then say it must be passed upon by me and I will take the onus of turning him down, if that is necessary, but, of course, I would try to reason it out with the applicant first before taking a definite stand.”

“What I fear most is that the applicant will say we have so much vacant land and that we should sell him a lot near the temple for instance, on which he could build a house. That would be a very difficult situation. The answer in that instance is that we are not selling any single lots, that we want to hold the property for better times and possibly develop it ourselves or sell only whole blocks at a time.” (Heydt to Jones, October 10, 1932.)

<sup>42</sup> See George C. Williams, “Memorandum to Mr. Keebler,” January 29, 1941, Housing 1: 8.

<sup>43</sup> Staley handwritten, undated note on a cover note from C.O. Heydt, Housing 3: 27.

<sup>44</sup> “A Study Leading to the Development of Forest Hill,” Norman Bel Geddes & Company, (1934), Housing 4: 41; Heydt to Norman Bel Geddes, July 20, 1933, Housing 4: 39; and “Normal Bel Geddes” *American National Biography*, vol. 8, pp. 822-823.

<sup>45</sup> Milton Widder, “Starts 20-Home Development in Forest Hills,” *Cleveland Press*, July 6, 1937, “Cleveland Publicity – 1938.”

<sup>46</sup> Milton Widder, “Starts 20-Home Development in Forest Hills,” *Cleveland Press*, July 6, 1937, “Cleveland Publicity – 1938.”

<sup>47</sup> “Completely Electrified,” unidentified, undated clipping, “Cleveland Publicity – 1938.”

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<sup>48</sup> The Kelvin house in Rocky River was located at 21261 Stratford Avenue. See the advertisements in the September 7, 1937 editions of the *Cleveland News* and *Cleveland Press* and the September 8, 1937 *Plain Dealer*. See also “All-Year Air Conditioned Homes Set for Inspection,” *Cleveland News*, September 7, 1937; “Dedicate New Home,” *Cleveland Press*, September 8, 1937; “Sees Big Jump in Air-Conditioning,” *Plain Dealer*, September 9, 1937, and “Building Boom Here Sighted by Kelvin Chief,” *Cleveland News*, September 8, 1937.

<sup>49</sup> George C. Williams, “Memorandum to Mr. Keebler,” January 29, 1941, Housing 1: 8.

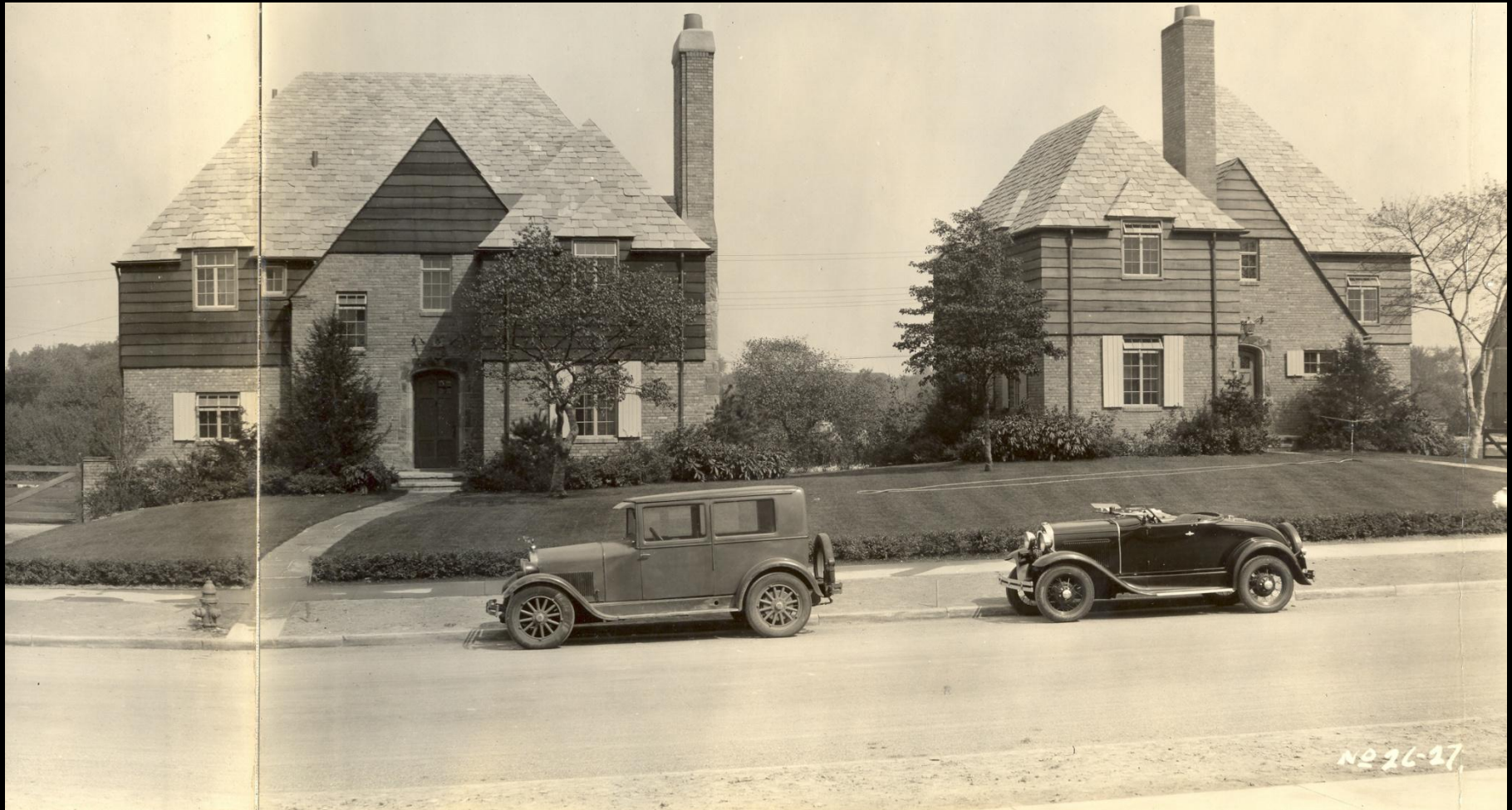
<sup>50</sup> George C. Williams, “Memorandum to Mr. Keebler,” January 29, 1941, Housing 1: 8.

<sup>51</sup> Jones to Staley, October 15, 1938, Housing 3: 27.

<sup>52</sup> Staley memo to Laurance Rockefeller, Nelson Rockefeller, Charles O. Heydt, Jay Downer and Philip Keebler, July 11, 1939, Housing 2: 18.

<sup>53</sup> JDR Jr. signed the sale agreement on July 28, 1948. See the documentation in Housing 3:34; see also “Adin C. Rider, “Rockefeller Sells Out in Forest Hill,” *Plain Dealer*, October 19, 1948; and “Forest Hill Buyers May Offer Ranch Homes,” *Cleveland Press*, October 19, 1948, in Housing 3: 33.

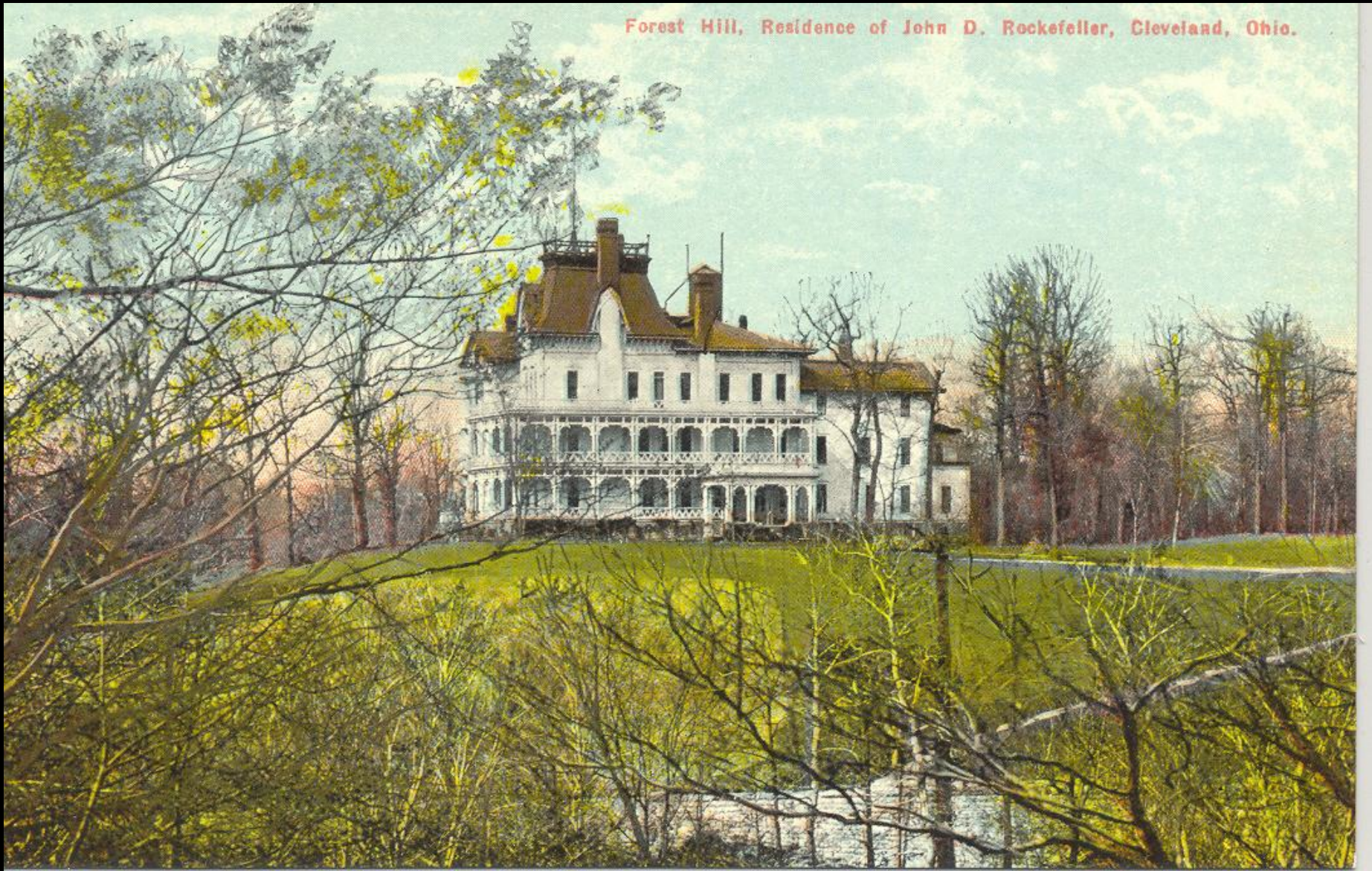
<sup>54</sup> Heydt to William J. Bradford, December 19, 1936, Housing 13: 117.



John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and the Development of the Forest Hill Houses



Forest Hill, Residence of John D. Rockefeller, Cleveland, Ohio.









Photograph by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. of the Rockefeller family and friends at Forest Hill, in the early 1880s.

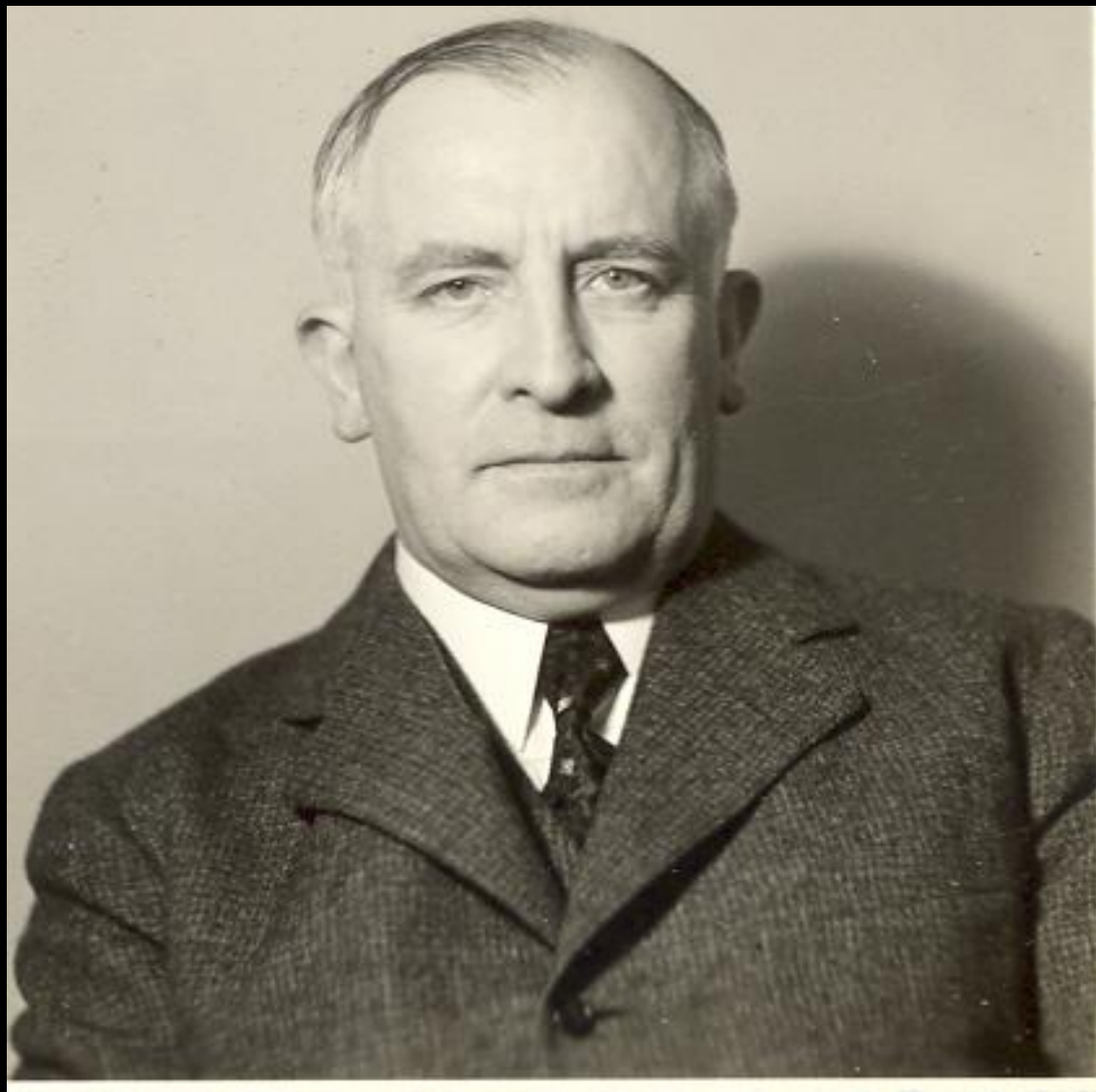
*Standing* (from the left): John D. Rockefeller, Lucy Spelman (JDR's sister-in-law), Mrs. Richard Arnold, Richard Arnold (JDR Jr.'s violin teacher and concert master of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra), George Rogers (JDR's secretary)

*Seated* (from the left): Laura Spelman Rockefeller (Mrs. JDR), J. Ellen Foster (temperance activist), Florence Briggs Benjamin (JDR Jr.'s cousin), Bessie Rockefeller, Edith Rockefeller, Felix Arnold, Lucy Henry Spelman (JDR's mother-in-law)

*Lying on the ground:* Alta Rockefeller







Charles O. Heydt



Paul Laurence Dunbar Apartments

Andrew J. Thomas projects for John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

Model or reformist apartment projects:

Bayonne, New Jersey (1925)

Thomas Garden Apartments, 840 Grand Concourse (1927)

Paul Laurence Dunbar Apartments in Harlem on 149th and 150th streets  
at Seventh and Eighth Avenues (1928)

Van Tassel Apartments in North Tarrytown, New York (1930 )

Forest Hill development in Cleveland – 81 homes (1930)

Others:

666 Fifth Avenue

Lavoisier Apartments at 67th and 68th streets, east of Park Avenue

York Avenue between 65th and 66th streets  
(near Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research)





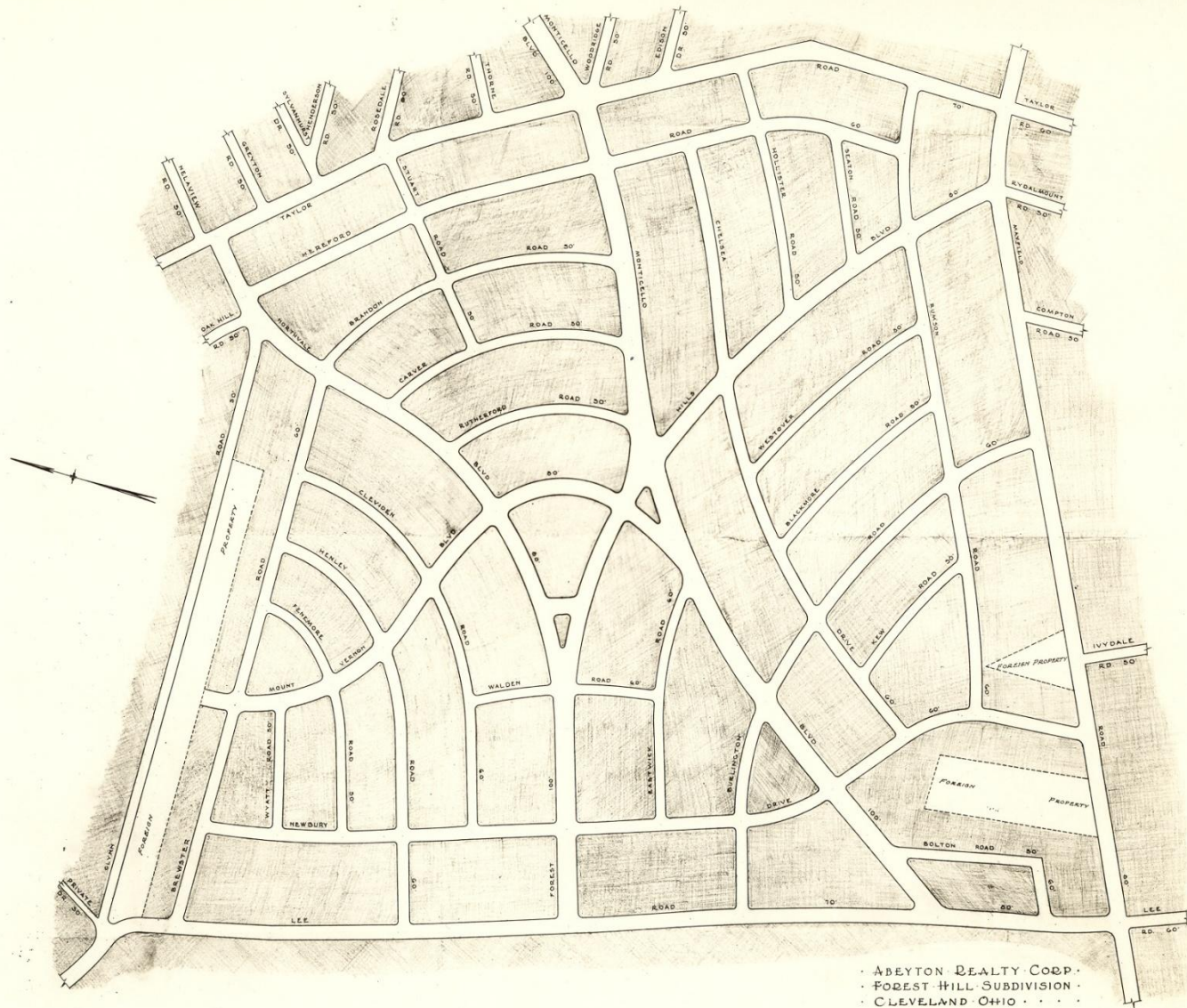
Forest Hill Housing Model







\* 3 7/3



Forest Hill Street layout, with Lee Road at bottom











1/3-30  
x2 Metal Lathing for Plastering

Metal Lathing for Plastering, 1930



Balsum Wool Insulation, 1930





King Ferrante Sign Standard  
Design No. K-1713  
Forest Hills, Cleveland, Ohio

11 2176



King Ferronite Lamp Standards  
Design No. K-1714  
Forest Hills, Cleveland, Ohio.  
2-K-76





The Cole Nursery Co. delivering trees



















J.C. Jones, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and Jay Downer, October 12, 1938





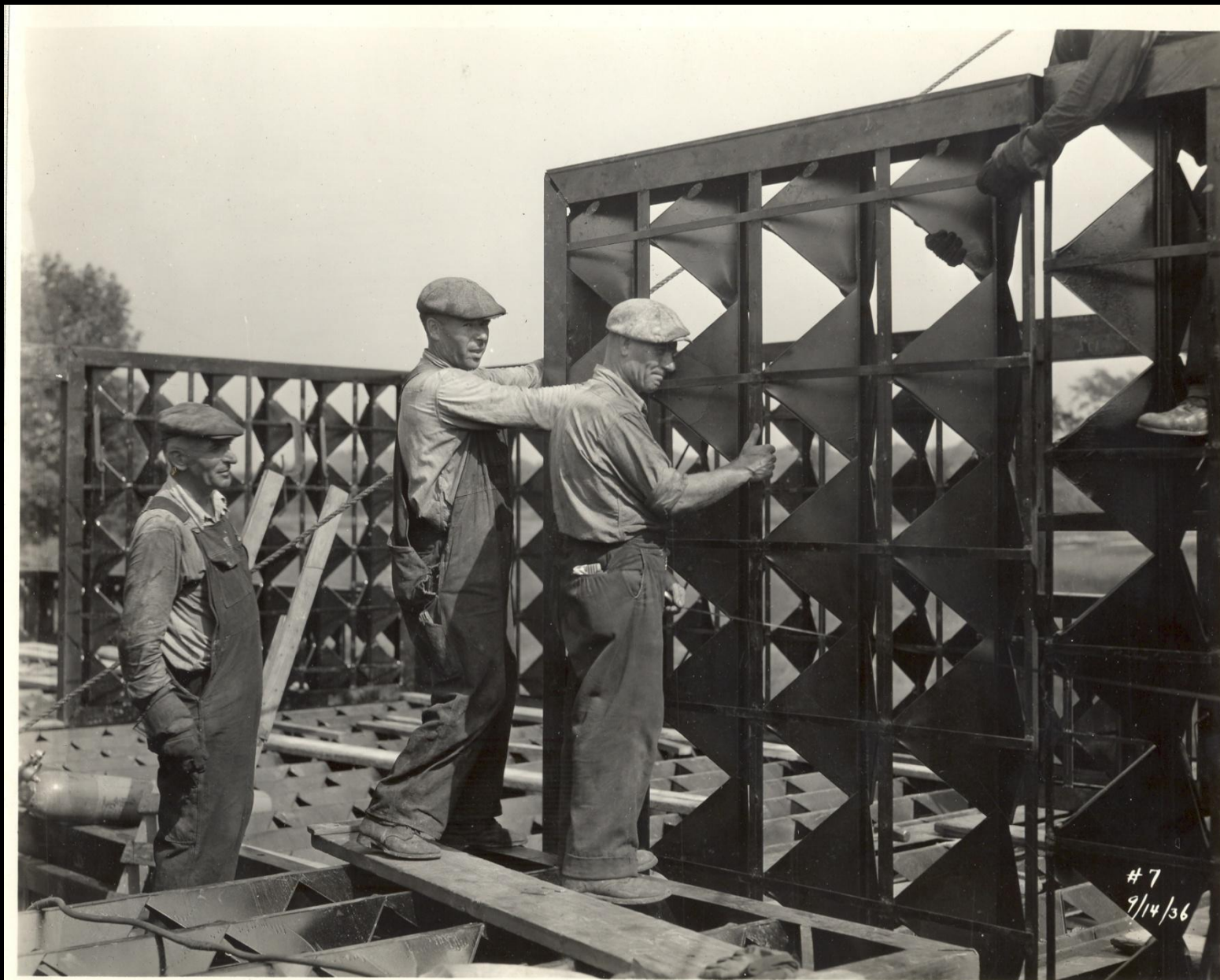
Looking West on Monticello Blvd.





Arcy Houses under construction, Monticello Blvd.

















House No. 101, Monticello Blvd.







Gundersen & Shepherd, Kew Road





Gundersen & Shepherd, Kew Road





Kew Road, Looking East



General Electric House, Chelsea Drive



# FOREST HILL



## NATIVES

Must Carefully Select the  
Spot for Their Hut

PROTECTION in a wild country is their chief concern, and protection must be your chief concern in selecting a location for your home in a great metropolitan area.

It requires discriminating care with reference to cultural surroundings—adequate restrictions, intelligently administered—natural beauty—improvements of the highest grade, both material and workmanship—convenience of location to the heart of the city.

LARGE LOTS—REASONABLY PRICED  
WE INVITE YOU TO

*Beautiful Forest Hill*

Sales Office Corner Lee Blvd. and Monticello Blvd.  
YELLOWSTONE 3500



C. J. McCormack, Newbury Drive





Keyes-Treuhaft Co., Chelsea Drive

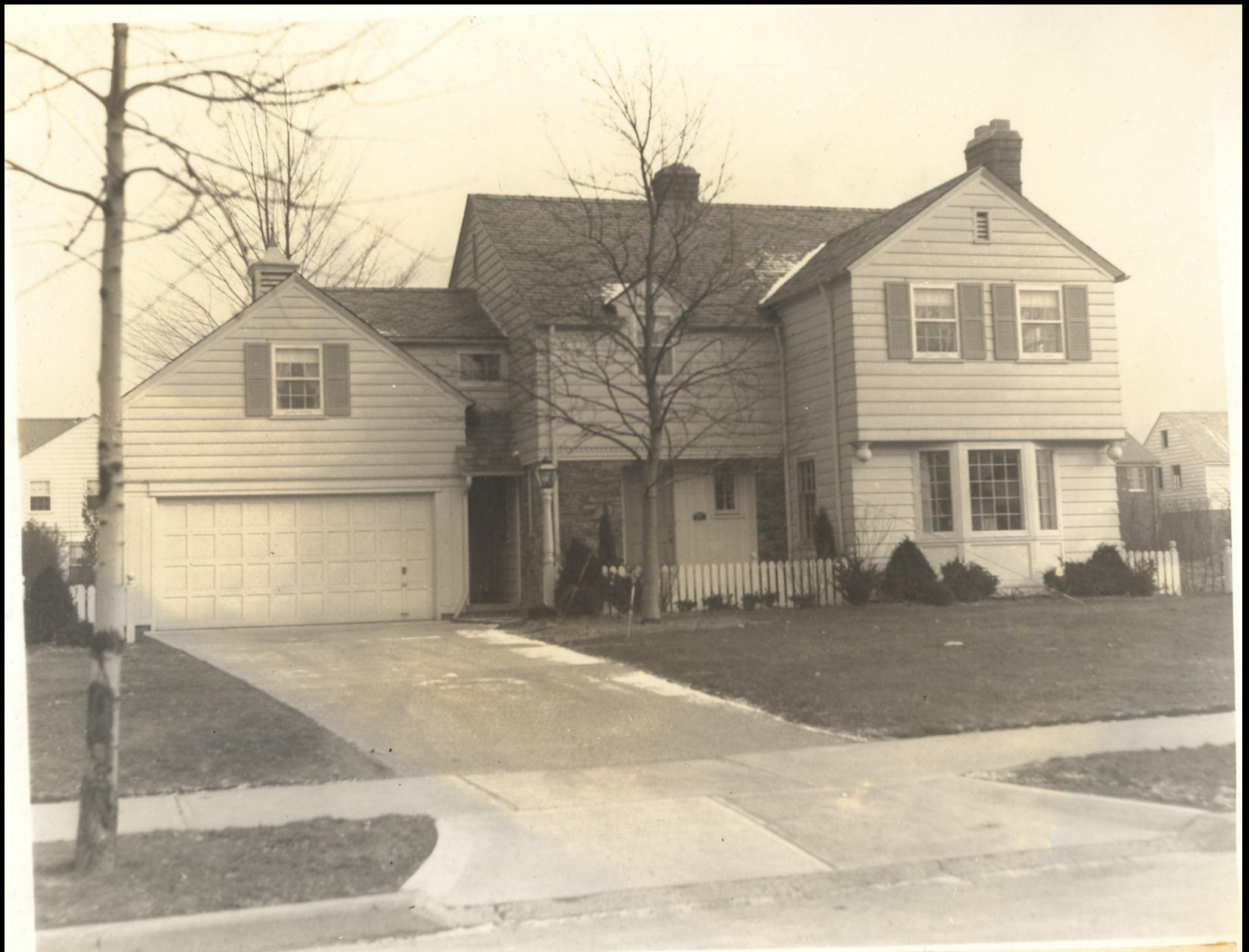


Keyes-Treuhaft Co., Chelsea Drive





Harry H. Baer, Newbury Drive



H. W. Thomas, Inc., Kew Road









Ewing, Hereford Road