

Register of Old Buildings
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: 890 West William
Legal description - McClelland and Moeller's Addition, Lot 1.

Date of original construction: 1915, Assessor's office, estimate.
Begun in 1908. Completed in 1910.
(Mrs. Judd Gustin, present owner.)

Name of original owner: George E. Moeller.

History:

1. An incomplete chain of title follows:
(Source: Mrs. Judd Gustin, with data being cross-checked with city directories.)
1911 through 1926 - George E. Moeller (president, Decatur Coffin Co.)
1927 - Gladys Moeller, wid., George E.
1929 through 1955 - John H. McEvoy, pres., Home Mfg. Co.
1956, 1957 - Mary L. McEvoy.
1958 through 1964 - George May.
1965-67 - John E. Wiegel, sales mgr., G. E.
1968 - present - Judd E. Gustin, rl est.

2. Data from the Decatur Township assessor's office follows:
(Mrs. Gustin's corrections are in parenthesis.)

Building class - B. (Family dwelling)

2 story, 8 rooms, 3 bathrooms, 1 2-fixture toilet room.
(3) story, (13) rooms, (4) bathrooms, (powder room.)

Masonry construction, brick foundation and exterior.

Gable roof, medium pitch, slate roof.
(Roof with brass nails and copper guttering.)

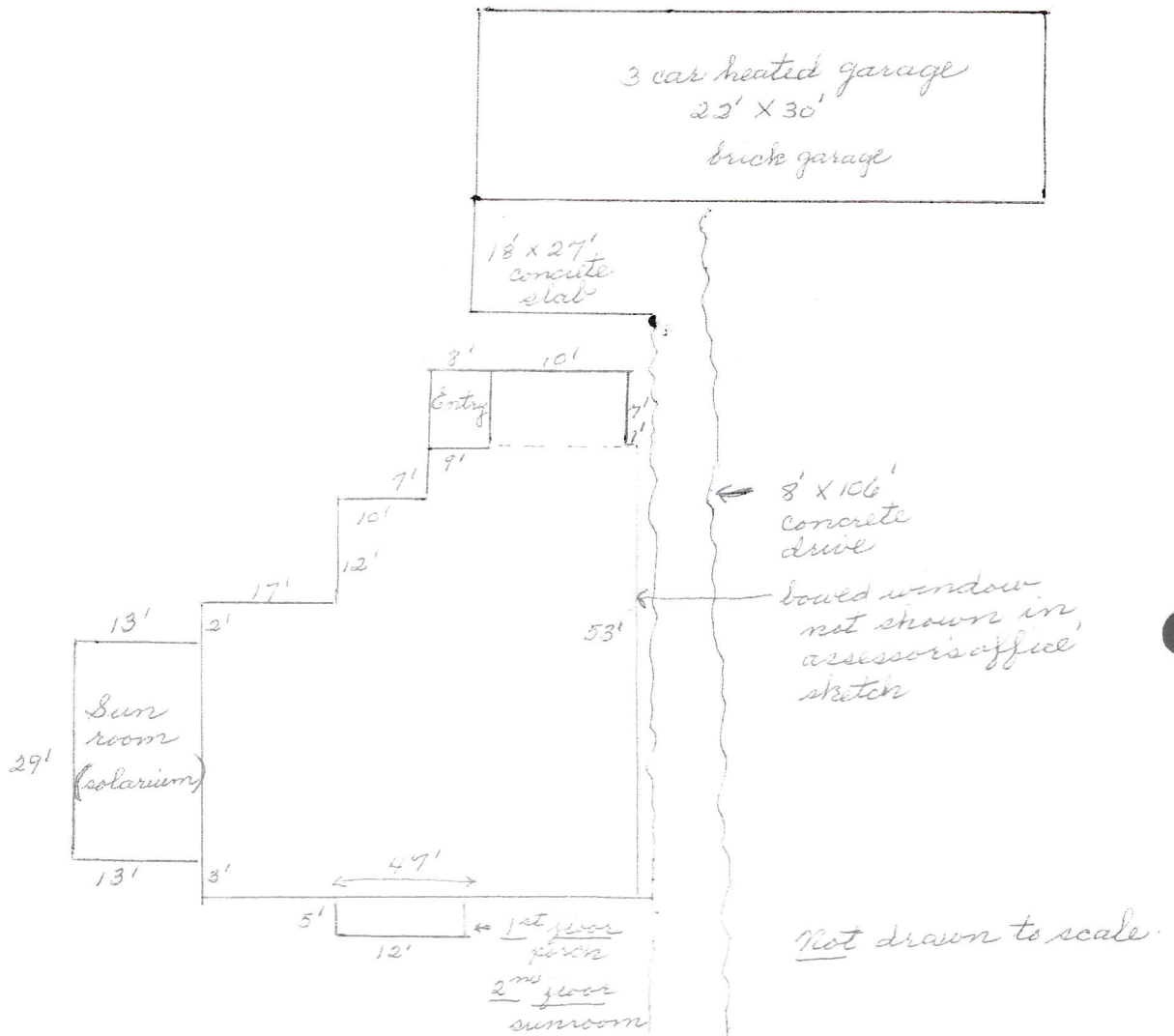
2 porches, front 5x12, rear 7x8, enclosed.
(All exterior window sills of stone.)

Hardwood floors, tile in bathrooms.

6 natural fireplaces.
(3 car heated garage. 3rd floor, full story, with maple floors.)

Present owners: Judd E. and Leah A. Gustin.

2. Data Cont'd.:



3. In an interview with Mrs. Judd E. Gustin, December 6, 1974, the following facts were learned:
- a. The architect was Howard Van Doren Shaw of Lake Forest, Illinois. The style of architecture is "authentically proportioned English Georgian." Data regarding Mr. Shaw is included in the book, Architecture in Chicago and in Mid-America, a photographic history, by Wayne Andrews, N. Y. Athenium, 1968. It includes a reference to his work on the Village Square in Lake Forest.

3. Interview with Mrs. Gustin Continued:

b. The house has three full stories.

(1) The basement has the same floor plan - ie, is partitioned to include the same rooms as the first floor. There is an apartment, including a bathroom, in the basement. The Os-good's, who lived the first house to the east when this house at 800 W. William was being built, have reported to Mrs. Gustin that the foundation was laid in 1908 and allowed to stand (settle) for a year before further work was done to it. All walls, interior and exterior, are of brick, 8" thick.

(2) Regarding the first floor:

- (a) Where bricks are used as in the front walk, or for fireplace hearths, or in the floor of the sunroom on the west (called a solarium on the blueprints) they are in each case laid in herringbone pattern.
- (b) The herringbone front walk leads to a portico with entrance into a central hall. To the left (west) of the hall is a 14' x 34' living room with a very large stone fireplace, wood paneling, floor to ceiling in quarter-grained oak, and with a north library end with six bookshelves. The living room opens into a solarium or sunroom on the west, with a brick herringbone floor and 256 French-paned windows.
- (c) To the right (east) of the central hall is a 20' x 14' sitting room with a walnut mantel.
- (d) Behind the east sitting room (to the north) is a 20' x 20' dining room with a 5-windowed bow window (not a bay, but a bow in typical English fashion). This room has a fireplace mantel of oak. (There is a total of six wood-burning fireplaces in the house.)
- (e) One of the very few modifications of the original house was the enclosing of a first floor porch to convert it to a breakfast room.
- (f) A back service stairway leads to the second and third floors.

3. Interview with Mrs. Gustin Continued.

- (3) On the second floor, two bedrooms (including the master bedroom), have wood burning fireplaces, and three of the five bedrooms have adjoining bathrooms.
- (4) The third floor, completely floored in maple, has been variously used as a ballroom, a game room and for sleeping quarters.
- (5) Originally the house and garages were served by the heating plant (located near the railroad tracks on West William), that served all of the Millikin Place and the 800 block West William Street houses. Later, each house converted to its own plant.

Several Decatur persons have commented on the quality of the materials and construction work in this house, referring to Mr. Moeller's position with the Coffin Company, where caskets in the early days were all of wood, fine cabinet makers being in Mr. Moeller's employ. They see similar, fine work in this house.

840 West William Street



Photo - Margaret M. Meyer - 1974



Photo - Margaret M. Meyer - 1974

SHAW, Howard Van Doren, architect, was born in Chicago, Ill., May 7, 1869, son of Theodore Andrews Shaw and Mrs. Sarah (Johnson) Van Doren Shaw, and a descendant of John Shaw, an English Quaker, who came to America with William Penn on his second voyage in 1699, and settled in Plumstead, Pa. He received his education at the Harvard school in Chicago and at Yale University, where he was graduated B.A. in 1890. After taking the architectural course of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he established a practice in Chicago as an architect in 1893, beginning with an office in his mother's house with one draughtsman, and pursued his profession in that city throughout his career. He excelled in designing many beautiful country residences and gardens along the north shore on Lake Michigan and in other suburban sections of the country which were notable for their simplicity and American character in the interpretation of traditional architectural forms. The model steel town of Indiana Harbor, Ind., was also constructed from his plans, as well as the buildings on Market Square at Lake Forest, Ill., and the Fourth Presbyterian Church (jointly with Ralph Adams Cram), the Donnelley printing houses, Mentor building, Goodman Memorial theatre of Art Institute, Quadrangle Club of the University of Chicago, University Church of the Disciples of Christ, all in Chicago. Among his other structures of note were the Lake Shore Country Club, Lake Shore Drive apartment building, and the Memorial Hall at Racine, Wis. In 1926 he was appointed by the U. S. battle monuments commission to design two war memorials of America's participation in the World war, namely, the chapel at Flanders Field, Belgium, and the naval monument at Brest, France. Mr. Shaw was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, which awarded him its gold medal in 1926 for his architectural achievements, and a trustee of the Chicago Art Institute and the United Charities of Chicago, chairman of the Illinois State Art Commission, and a member of the Architectural, City, Onwentsia, Cliff Dwellers, University, Yale and Shore Acres clubs of Chicago. Politically he was a Republican and a Presbyterian in creed. His chief



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Howard Shaw

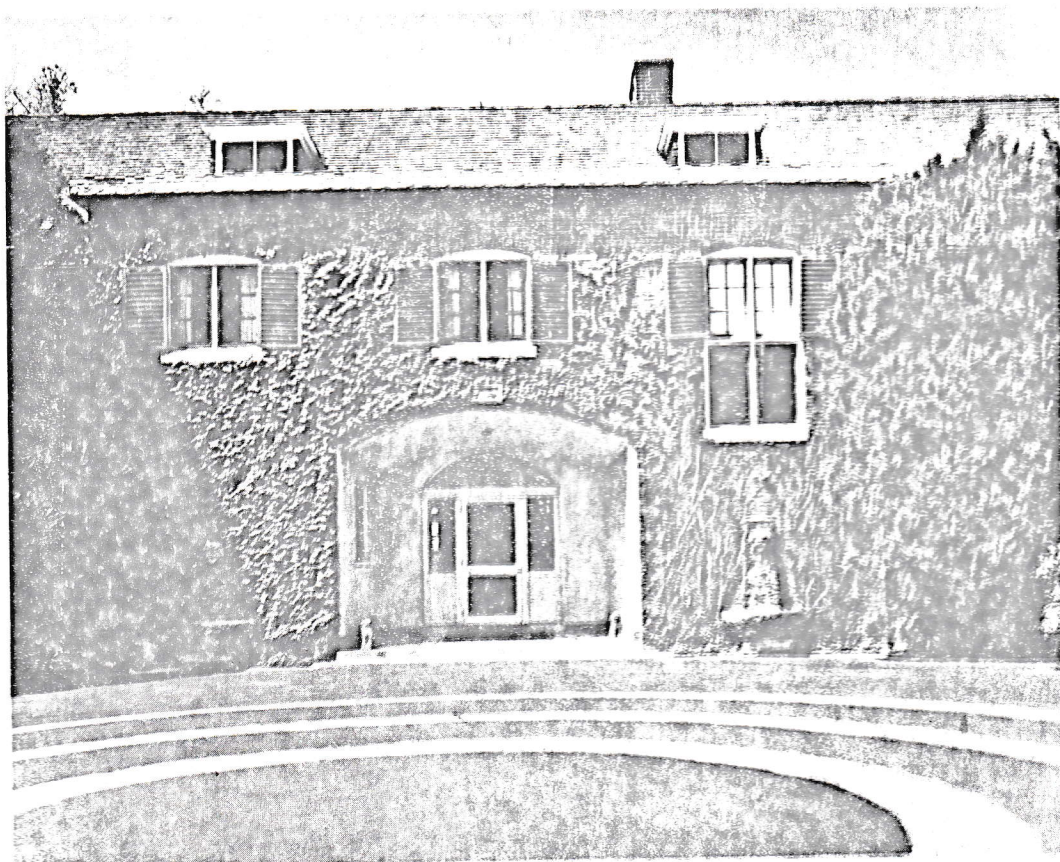
recreation lay in the pursuit of his profession, in garden design and structural work at his summer place in Lake Forest, and in travel. Mr. Shaw was married, Apr. 20, 1893, to Frances, daughter of Moses D. Wells, wholesale shoe merchant, of Chicago, and had three children: Evelyn, wife of John T. McCutcheon, the cartoonist; Sylvia, a sculptor, wife of Clay Judson, of Chicago, and Frances Theodora Shaw. He died in Baltimore, Md., May 6, 1926.

ECLECTICS IN THE MIDDLE WEST



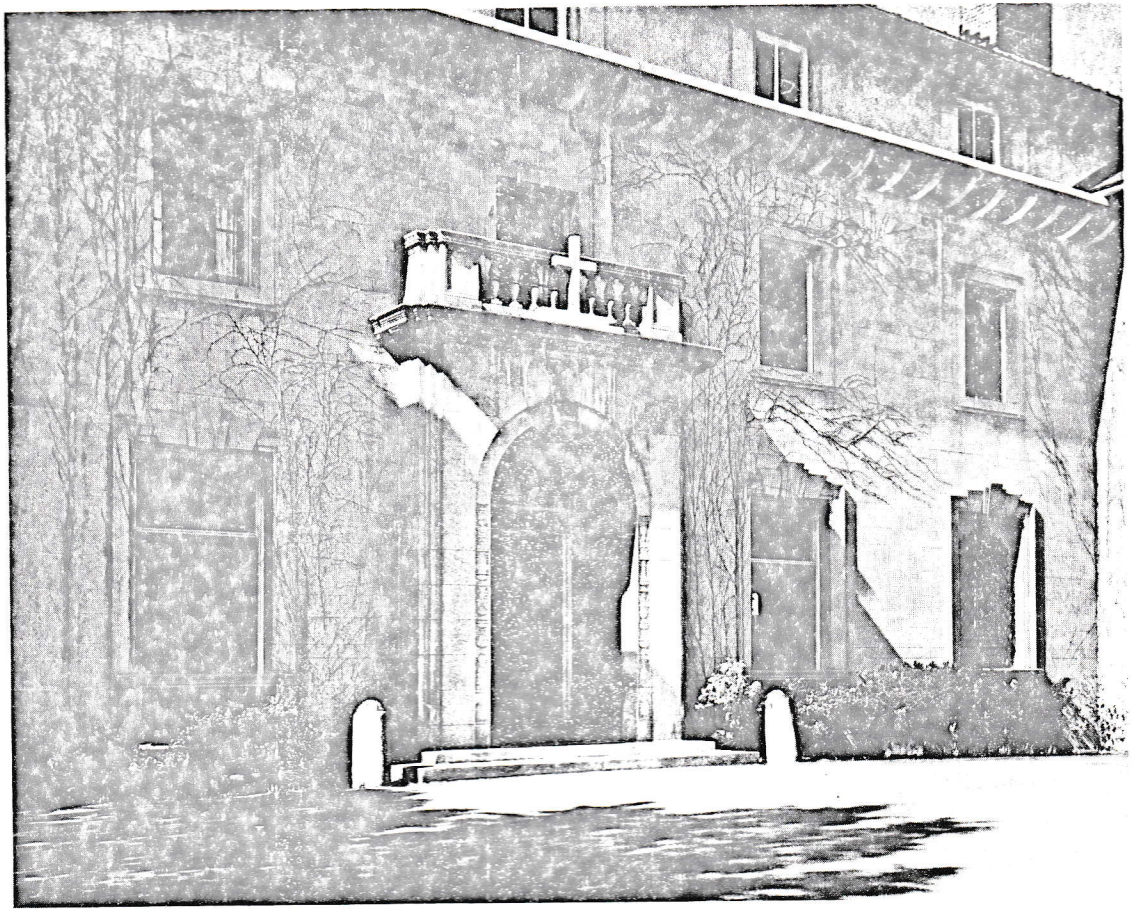
ABOVE: Ragdale, residence of Howard Van Doren Shaw, Lake Forest, Illinois, 1897 (Howard Van Doren Shaw). BELOW: Market Square, Lake Forest, Illinois, 1913 (Howard Van Doren Shaw). The most distinguished Chicago eclectic—that is, the most distinguished Chicago architect who referred to historical precedent in his work—was Howard Van Doren Shaw, many of whose finest achievements may be seen in Lake Forest. The Market Square, an unusually graceful shopping center, was commissioned by a group of businessmen headed by Cyrus Hall McCormick II. Erwin Andrews, Hayden, Architecture in Chicago and Mid-America, Athenaeum, 1968.





ABOVE: Residence of T. E. Donnelley, Lake Forest, Illinois, 1911 (*Howard Van Doren Shaw*). BELOW: Residence of Prentiss Coonley, Lake Forest, Illinois, 1908 (*Howard Van Doren Shaw*). T. E. Donnelley was president of the printing firm of R. R. Donnelley & Sons. Prentiss Coonley was the brother of Wright's client in Riverside.

Thorn Andrews, Wayne, Architecture in Chicago and Mid-America, Athenaeum, New York, 1968



ABOVE: Entrance, residence of E. L. Ryerson, Lake Forest, Illinois, 1913 (Howard Van Doren Shaw). BELOW: Side view. In 1968 the steel magnate's mansion serves the needs of Saint Bonaventure's Novitiate, Order of Friars Minor.



G. E. Moeller Dies In Home

Succumbs After Prolonged
Illness.

ACTIVE IN BUSINESS

Had Worked Up to Head
of Decatur Coffin Co.

George E. Moeller, for sixty-seven
years a resident of Decatur and dur-



GEORGE E. MOELLER.

ing all of his active life closely identified with the business interests of the city, died Monday afternoon at his home, 220 West William street. He would have been sixty-eight years old in May. His death was caused by chronic heart trouble. His condition had been serious ever since early in January.

WENT TO CALIFORNIA.

Mr. and Mrs. Moeller went to California last July, hoping that a change of climate would prove beneficial. There was little improvement, and none of a permanent nature. They returned to Decatur last January and Mr. Moeller had been confined to his bed practically ever since. Mr. Moeller was born in Somerset,

O., May 1, 1858. The family moved to Decatur the following year. His father was a druggist and engaged in that business here, but died within a year after coming to Decatur. Mrs. Moeller lived fifty years longer, dying here in 1908.

EDUCATED HERE.

George E. Moeller attended the Decatur grade schools and the high school and then took a position as a clerk in the Decatur postoffice. That was in 1877, during the term of Postmaster R. P. Lytle.

Mr. Moeller held his position in the postoffice for three years and found that there was no future to such a position. Postoffice employes at that time were not under civil service regulations and the personnel of the force often changed with every change in the administration. He wanted something more promising.

He accepted a position as traveling salesman for the Decatur Coffin company, continuing in that position for fifteen years. He was given an opportunity to invest his savings in stock in the company and he took advantage of the opportunity.

He quit the road and entered the office of the company and in 1897 he was elected vice president of the company. Following the death of O. Z. Greene in 1910, Mr. Moeller was elected secretary-treasurer of the company. Later he became president, holding that position until his death.

ON MILLIKIN BOARD.

Mr. Moeller was closely identified with the business, religious and educational life of Decatur. He had been a member of the First Presbyterian church since boyhood, and had served on the official board. He was an active and interested member of the Rotary club.

He had been a member of the board of managers of the James Millikin university for a number of years, and during most of that time was chairman of the committee on buildings and grounds. He superintended the building of the power plant at the university. A few years ago he wanted to retire from the board, but was induced to remain. Last June, however, because of his ill health he resigned and was made an honorary member.

FOUR CHILDREN.

Mr. Moeller was twice married. His first wife was Miss Laura Ayers of Jacksonville. They were married April 22, 1891. Three children were born to them. They are George A. Moeller, Sydney D. Moeller and Helen A. Craig, wife of Harry Craig of Winnetka.

Mr. Moeller's second wife was Miss Gladys Schmachtenberger of Decatur, and to them was born one child, Miss Jane Alice Moeller. She with her

mother survive him. Mr. Moeller also leaves a sister and a brother, Mrs. A. M. Lapham of St. Louis and Louis K. Moeller of Galena, Kan.

The body was removed to the Dawson & Wikoff undertaking establishment and prepared for burial.

The Moeller home designed by Howard Van Doren Shaw of Chicago shows many of the Georgian characteristics which are common among the larger Decatur homes. This house follows strict Georgian lines except for the second story, central column-supported bay which is a mid-western addition that would not have appeared in a true Georgian house; however, it does not detract from its over-all style. The symmetric design characterized by the dormers, chimneys, windows, columned entrance and classic cornice are definite Georgian features.

Brad Cantrell,
Architectural Consultant
January, 1976