

**CONCERNING HOWARD SHAW
IN HIS HOME**

by Frances Wells Shaw (1926)

**with Other Biographical Material
Assembled by the Author
and with a
List of Some of Shaw's
Architectural Work**

*Compiled by his Daughter
Evelyn Shaw McCutcheon, in 1977*

Brought Together Here By
Paul A. Myers
for
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*By Frances Wells Shaw
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Making out the lists of the facts of Howard Shaw's ancestry, education, honors, list of buildings, etc. has made me want to start a collection of photographs of his work with the dates and addresses where they may be seen. Perhaps one of his four grandsons may become an architect or even his granddaughter. The material is scattered, mostly with the members of his former office. If I do not get them together, I hope someone else may go on with the work.

The material on hand seems so dry and lifeless compared to the picture in my mind of his tireless zeal, personal activity and humorous ways.

For a picture of him as an architect, it would be necessary to consult his office force, the contractors, clients and workmen with whom he was associated.

He first worked during his last college vacation as draughtsman in the office of Jenny and Munide (Louis Sullivan had done the same ten or twelve years before.) He was working there when we were married in 1893 but about a year later started out for himself in an attic on the top floor of his father's house at 2124 Calumet Avenue. Robert Work was his one draughtsman. I had not got used to his concentrated ways at that time, and one day he did not answer the call to luncheon. So I sent up a large paper bag tied at the top and had it left beside

him. He soon came down for the bag contained his baby, Evelyn, in her birthday clothes.

His first design, before we were married, was a house for my father in Lakeville, Conn. It was built by a contractor on Wells Hill while Howard was studying and traveling in Europe. That was the only time I ever knew him to desert a house in process of construction. It still stands with its gold cupola which, I am told, is still photographed and sketched by students of Colonial.

Next followed two gray Bedford stone Tudor houses, now vinecovered, at 4843 and 4845 Lake Avenue. They were built with keen anticipation for my sister, Mrs. Charles Atkinson, and her husband, and for our own selves with a door between on the second floor. I think they are as livable as any he ever built, and you may see them across from the little Blackstone Library. Our house is still owned (1926) by the family to whom we sold it when we moved to the North side in 1911.

After these houses for family came the proud moment when he designed a brick barn in Kenwood, and a small residence on East End Avenue for Mr. Henry Thompson. We used to walk by them of a summer evening, and after that I remember no lull and the establishment of a real office in the old Montauk Bldg. down town.

Writing of our first homes makes me want to tell a little of our marriage on April 20, 1893. I was twenty (plus 10 days) and he was twenty (minus 16 days). I have no recollection of becoming formally engaged to him. I had met

him when he was the tallest boy in Bournique's dancing school on 23rd Street. I think we had an "understanding", with a few ups and downs, from those days on. I have letters in the chest at Ragdale to prove it. He just took me for granted as his property, and I was pleased and flattered to be so considered. When he was at Yale and I at Farmington, he used to leave a box of marshmallows under the loose plank of the sidewalk in front of the house where I lived, and I would slip out after dark to get it. He was a draughtsman at Jenny and Mundie and was getting \$25.00 a week when we married. I was proud to wear his Grandmother's solitaire. Our two sets of parents promised help if we got stuck, but we lived very frugally as he was of no mind to be helped beyond the wedding gift of the house in which we started housekeeping. In two years' time he was in his own downtown office, and I never knew him to have an idle moment.

Here are the homes in which we lived:

1893, after our marriage. Top floor
2906 Groveland Avenue with Charles and
Martha Atkinson (my sister) dividing
the housekeeping.

1894 (during the building of our own
houses - Atkinson's and ours - while the
Shaws were in Europe) at 2124 Calumet
Avenue. HS's office on top floor.

1895 Own English Tudor house, 4843
Lakeview Avenue. Atkinson, at 4843
with door between. Built by H.S.

1899 Lake Forest, Ill. Ragdale on the
Green Bay Road. Built by H.S.

1909 Rented for winter Wm. Hibbard
house, 1618 Prarie Avenue.

1910 Rented for winter John Jenkins
house, 2625 Prarie Avenue

1911 Own Apartment, top floor 1130
Lake Shore Drive. Built by H.S.

1921 Rented apartment and studio for
Sylvia, 305 Fullerton Parkway.

1923 Own apartment, 2450 Lake View
Ave. to date. Built by H..S.

Howard Shaw never had a partner. He wished to do every detail himself. That trait was his undoing physically. He was impatient with anyone who did not do as well as himself. And he did everything well. Carpentry, brick-laying, tree planting, gardening, shingling, stone-laying, sign painting, stage setting, lighting effects and scenery. At all these occupations he spent busy Saturdays and Sundays, as long as he could keep upon his feet. I will never forget his skills with a brick-layer's trowel, hitting off the corners of the bricks, for a summer house, with half-timber work sides, in our back yard at 4843. It is still there. He and the gardener built the sleeping porch off of our bedroom at ragdale. When he got to the tin roof he sent for a roofer. The union questioned the job, and next day three men

stood in the drive and watched him staining the rafters and posts. He never looked up, and they sent him a tin man that afternoon.

He made a mould for the cement posts that holds the split rails that enclose our meadows. It has been copied many times. He laid the brick rim of our fountain pool, and designed the bowl, and asked me to find a suitable motto in three lines of verse to go around the edge. I hunted and hunted and finally submitted several to him, from which he chose:

"Purling fountain cool and gray
Tinkling music in thy spray
Singing of a summer day"

It was not very good poetry, but it filled the space to his satisfaction, and I never told him until long after that I made it up!

He did most of his designing for his buildings in his mind before he set to work. Then he worked almost every evening of his life except when we went out, but it was not bad because he liked to have me read aloud to him while he worked. At first I could not believe that he could pay attention, so one night when he looked particularly absorbed as I was reading Bleak House, I inserted, in a conversational voice, the opening lines of the Declaration of Independence. He looked up at once and told me just what I was reading. We read chiefly fiction or lighter essays, nothing very abstruse. He loved poetry and never went on a business trip without a volume in his suitcase. He once left my Oxford Book of Verse on the train and bought me a handsome replica with an inscription in it to pacify me for the loss of my "well

loved volume" by a villain.

He loved to have children around, his own and the neighbors', and as a result, our children always planned to spend their weekends playing at Ragdale. When he grew older, his grandson did the same. I have a picture of little Jackie McCutcheon helping him carry one end of a heavy plank down the grape arbor; and of the baby, Shaw McCutcheon, sitting watching him build the Berry-Patch Gate.

He always protested at going out to social affairs but, when there, he was always gay and humorous and always glad that he had been made to go.

It is true that Howard Shaw rarely wanted to go out in the evening, but he had a good excuse in addition to his hard day at his office, or supervising buildings. From college days he was the victim of a nervous intestinal reaction in time of nervous strain. Examinations at school, public speaking, any worry always brought on some physical weakness which vanished as quickly as it came. It never interfered with his work. He never took a vacation unless urged by a doctor, and once away he usually became well and vigorous. Considering what he accomplished with this serious handicap, one wonders how much farther he might have gone without. It was very hard for me to be always getting him out of evening social engagements. I could not keep on giving illness as an excuse when the disappointed hostess of the night before might see or hear of him at eight o'clock next morning superintending a building, balanced on a slippery I-beam, five stories above

the street with an icy wind blowing! - demonstrating to an impressed foreman what he considered to be a careful oversight. I have heard workmen pay him the highest tributes, in spite of the picturesque names he called them when their work did not come up to his ideas. But it was embarrassing to explain this conduct of the invalid of the night before!

He had big ideas. He was willing to take public work or responsibility but not leadership or public acknowledgment. Market Square in lake Forest involving the getting rid of the old street front; a harbor for the lake front; a better city plan; a model worker's village - all these ideas are recorded on stray bits of envelopes. Some of them he carried out.

He worked on charitable boards from a sense of duty, but his heart was with the Chicago Art Institute, in all its activities. He was trustee from 1906, and on the Art Commission and instrumental in helping to found the Burnham Architectural Library and in selecting its first books on one of our journeys to Paris and London. At one time he was urged to be Director.

He often said that happiness was to be found in creative work and he inspired every member of his family to make an effort in that direction. Sylvia Shaw Judson's bust of her father is a tribute to that belief. We all tried to come up to his standard in one way or another.

One of our happiest times was the preparation for plays to be given at Ragdale Ring, the sunken amphitheatre with the elevated stage and evergreen wings which he had built on

the north part of the Ragdale property in imitation of the outdoor theatre in the Villa Gori near Sienna. He made colored masts and forked gonfalons and a circuit of orange lanterns easy to install. He practiced lighting effects of moonlight in the deep glade and sunsets from the wings. We had dancers and stringed instruments, and he worked on the settings, and I worked on the pantomimes or dramatizing of the plays, and when the day dawned fine and auspicious, it was the very happiest time we ever had at Ragdale. That - and the Harvest Moon Bonfires in the Ragdale meadow, and the cider-making every autumn in the Ragdale orchard.

His children and grandchildren will never forget Howard Shaw as he invariably was on Christmas Eve and Christmas morning - the jolliest, funniest, most whimsical person in the world. The ceremonial of stocking hanging, of the surprise tree on Christmas morning, endured from the time of one baby of his own, to the third one; of three grown daughters, three grandsons, a granddaughter, and another grandson on the way. He always put the tacks in for the stockings above the living room fireplace. He always put a glass of milk and a cookie for Santa, and in the morning, singing Jingle Bells, he led the children to peek through the curtain to see if the milk was gone, and the cookie bitten. And it always has so happened to their great joy. There was often a note of thanks in a strange print from Santa himself beside the empty glass.

He never seems to have gone from us. No day passes without his name upon his children's lips. "I wish Father could have seen

this." "I wonder if Howard Shaw would have thought that right?" The new evening primrose in the Ragdale garden or the new chairs in the McCutcheon dining room are all looked at through his eyes. Any humorous doings of his grandchildren are submitted in spirit to his appreciation over and over. They rarely visit his grave because he is not in it. The other day the little three-year-old Judson boy said, "I've got lots of friends, but do you know who my best one is? It's my Grandpa." No one knows who told him that. Our last journey to England where we spent the summer, he was much taken with an old shop-front in a gallery at the S. Kensington Museum. He expressed the hope that some time he could give one like it to the Art Institute, and bought a photograph to take home.

On our return he completed the Goodman Memorial Theatre, a great engineering feat underground on East Monroe Street behind the Art Institute. He did the John P. Wilson house at North State Parkway and the country place of Robert P. Lamont on Ridge Road in Lake Forest.

Late the following winter, we went to John McCutcheon's Treasure Island near Nassau, and there, although hardly strong enough to get about, he insisted on supervising the building of a stone watch tower at the entrance to the lagoon, looking toward Nassau. He directed the native builders in every detail, even the hanging of the ropes and pulleys for landing stone, and the arduous job of raising into place an old iron cannon which he had got

permission to rescue in the clear waters of Nassau Harbor.

He sat happily in a steamer chair with his hat over his eyes, the children playing about, and the tower growing forty feet up to its suitable, effective Spanish arches with the wrought iron cressets on its crenulated battlemented top. Quietly we enjoyed its amusing dedication with the governor and guests in attendance, while a pirate was hanged in effigy. It was his last building.

He stopped in Baltimore on his way home, hoping to be given in some miraculous way strength to go on with the Brest Naval Monument and the Flanders Field Government work, the Donnelley Tower, and many other things, including a speech he was to make at the 60th convention of the American Institute of Architects to be held in Washington in May. He was asked to be President, but declined and sent word he would not even be able to be there. The night before he died, during his last conscious hour, a telegram came, announcing that he had been awarded the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects for his services to American Architecture. "The American Institute during along series of years has four times signalized its approval of living American architects....The roll of honor is now increased by a fifth American name, the ninth of an international group of famous architects....The medal is awarded to Howard Van Doren Shaw of Chicago for distinguished service to American architecture." I read the message to him. It was his bed time. He smiled and said, "Pleased."

The next day he was unconscious and went to sleep in the afternoon not to awaken.

Among his papers I had, in his writing, a request that when he came to die, his funeral should consist of a "short service to be read at the grave with only the family present." He made that request when he was full of concern for many older men who were so often giving of their strength and sympathy at the funerals of their friends. He felt that the practice should stop as demanding too great a sacrifice, willing though it might. I carried out his wish.

It was sad about William Morris, "You can not lose a man like that by his own death, only by your own."

I know his family feels this to be true of Howard Shaw.

HOWARD VAN DOREN SHAW, Architect

Information furnished for

*The National Cyclopaedia of
American Biography
James T. White & Co.
Publishers, New York*

- 1) Name in full: Howard VanDoren Shaw
- 2) Born - May 7, 1869 - Chicago, Illinois
- 3) Father: Theodore Andrews Shaw, 1836-1906
wholesale drygood merchant
- 4) Mother: Sarah VanDoren - daughter of
William Howard Van Doren
- 5) Education: Harvard School, Chicago
Yale University, Class of 1890
Mass. Institute of Technology
Architectural School - 1892
- 6) Yale, 1890 - B.A.
- 7) Professional career began: in the office of
Jennie & Mundie, Architects, Chicago,
1892 for himself: - 1894 - till death
- 8) Place of business:
 - 1) 3rd floor of his mother's house, with
one draughtsman
 - 2) shared office with George Harvey
 - 3) Mentor Building, Chicago - which he
built for Mr. Pike

- 4) Monroe Building - top floor
- 9) Never had a partner
- 10) Special commissions:
 - R.R. Donnelly & Sons - Printing building
- Chicago
 - Lakeside Press Building
Market Square, Lake Forest, Ill.
Model steel town at Indiana Harbor
- for Inland Steel
 - Quadrangle Club - University of Chicago
 - University Church of the Disciples
- Univ. of Chicago
 - Racine Memorial Hall, Racine, Wisc.
 - Goodman Memorial Theatre
- Art Institute of Chicago
 - Lake Shore Country Club
1130 lake Shore Drive
- apartment building
 - 2450 Lakeview Ave, - apartment building
 - John P. Wilson - town house
 - City & country houses all over the U.S.
- and gardens
- 11) Public Positions:
 - Governing Member of Chicago Art
Institute - and Trustee since 1900
 - Governing Member, United Charities of
Chicago, 1913
 - Member - State Art Commission
- 12) membership in Clubs:
 - Yale Club - Onwentsia, L.F.
 - Shore Acres, L.F. - University Club

Cliff Dwellers - Arts Club
Coffee House, N. Y. C.

- 13) Honorary degrees, decorations, etc.
Fellow of Am. Institute of Architects
Awarded Gold Medal of above in 1926
Appointed to do U.S. Memorial Chapel
on Flanders Field and a Naval
Monument at Brest, France -
1926 by U.S. Battle Monuments
Commission
- 14) Religious affiliations - Presbyterian
- 15) Personal traits, etc.
Love of his profession
Love of constructive work around house
& garden at Ragdale, Lake
Forest, Ill.
Pleasure in his home and family
- 16) Married: April 20, 1893
Wife: Frances Wells, daughter of Moses
D. Wells, wholesale shoe merchant (born
in Mass.)
- 17) Children:
Evelyn Shaw - married, 1917,
to John T. McCutcheon
Sylvia Shaw - married, 1921,
to Clay Judson
Frances Theodora Shaw - married
to John L. King

18) Dominating personal characteristics:
Constructive mental & physical activity -
Love of beauty - both architectural and
natural

19) Earliest paternal ancestor:
John Shaw, born 1617 - Quaker -
came from England on Wm. Penn's 2nd
voyage - settled in Plumstead, Pa.

20) Direct line of descent from that ancestor:
1st) John Shaw, 1617 - & wife, Susanna
Society of Friends,
North Hampton, Pa.
2nd) James Shaw - 1694
3rd) Alexander Shaw - 1734
4th) George Shaw - 1740
5th) David Shaw - 1796
6th) Theodore A. Shaw - 1836 (HVD's
father) wife: Sarah Johnson
VanDoren, 845 - 1918 from
Brooklyn, N. Y.

21) Any important facts regarding ancestors:
Sarah VanDoren's family goes back to the
first white child born on Long Island - they came
from Holland also to General Jeremiah Johnson, 1st
Mayor of Brooklyn. S. VanD S. painted well - has
pictures owned by Art Institute of Chicago

JOURNEYS OF HOWARD SHAW

With health commentary - in view of what he accomplished in his work.

- 1893 - Wedding trip -
weakness and stomach trouble
Returned OK
- 1896 - New Orleans, etc.
badly rundown - bowel trouble
Returned OK
- 1898 - Mt. Clemens
rheumatism of back
Returned worse than ever
- 1900 - 1st European trip
(F & H) Clovelly etc. frequent attacks of
rheumatism
Returned OK
- 1904 - 1st Camping trip with Ted Donnelley
All run down; feared TB
Returned in fine shape
- 1905 - 2nd Camping trip - Hills
(F & H) Rheumatism - Mother worried
about dampness
Returned OK
- 1908 - 2nd European trip
(F & H, E & S) Poisoned leg before
sailing, bowel trouble in Rome, Paris
Returned OK
- 1910 - 1st Nassau
bad rheumatism, couldn't walk much for
3 weeks
Returned in fine shape
- 1911 - Bermuda
mild rheumatism (F's back)
Returned OK
- 1911 - Yellowstone & Canadian Rockies
(H, F E, S)
Returned OK
- 1912 - 2nd Nassau
(F Sick) Returned OK
- 1913 - 3rd European trip - alone
Strep Throat, sick in Budapest
Returned OK
- 1914 - Annisquam -
faralysed - or TB for sure, All in.
"Done for"
Returned OK
- 1915 - New England motor trip
Arthritis; stiff neck; tonsils out.
- 1916 - 3rd Nassau - H & E
Bronchial cough - Cuba -
Returned OK
- 1917 - China - H & S
Eye trouble in Japan
Returned OK

1918 - 4th Nassau (H & F with Atkinsons)
Heart palps; "done for." Bad pheumonia
- sold 1130

Returned best of health

1919 - 5th Nassau - Bill n' Ethel - Ortolan
- Built Fort

Returned OK

1920 - 4th European trip (H, F & S) - Frequent
bowel trouble, Sick in Montreal, Porlock
& steamer

Returned OK

1922 - 6th Nassau - Bad bronchitis
- all worn out - 3 wks

Returned OK

1923 - Baltimore.

All tired out. All organs OK but anemic.

1924 - 6th European - F & H (age 54)

Less endurance, but cheerful, well whole
time to Sept. 1924

Returned OK

Doctors:

| | |
|-------------------|------------|
| Billings | Freer |
| Cary | Cameron |
| Davis | Herrick |
| Babcock | McCullough |
| Parmenter | Lewis |
| Capps | Barker |
| Walker | Cross |
| Rsenau - Shambeau | Clough |

He died on the eve of his 57th birthday - of
Pernicious Anemia but worked actively up to
Five Weeks of his death. Was ill in bed in Balti-
more for only two weeks - on his return from
Nassau May 6, 1926.

All doctors pronounced hearing & other organs
normal. Anemic - lack of hydrochloric acid.
Must not over-work at his age with his nervous
record.

A List of some of Mr. Shaw's work:

R. R. Donnelley & Sons Co.
- Printing Building, Chicago
Lakeside Press Building, Chicago
Ginn & Co. Chicago - Publisher's Building
B.F. Goodrich Office Buildings
- (2) New York City
Market Square, Lake Forest, Illinois
- Civic Center
Model Steel Town, Indiana Harbor
Fourth Presbyterian Church - Chicago,
Parish Buildings of this group
University Church of the Disciples of Christ
- Chicago
Racine Memorial Hall, Racine, Wisconsin
Goodman Memorial Theatre, Chicago
Quadrangle Club, Chicago
Lake Shore Country Club, Glencoe, Illinois
2450 Lake View Avenue, Apartment Building
- Chicago
1130 Lake Shore Drive, Apartment Building
- Chicago
W. B. Martin, Apartment Building, Chicago
G. F. Swift, Town House, Chicago
Edward Morris, Town House, Chicago
Frederick D. Countiss, Town House, Chicago
Fortune Houses (s) - Town Houses, Chicago
W. O. Goodman, Town House, Chicago
Morris Rosenwald, Town House, Chicago
Lester Armour, Town House, Chicago
John P. Wilson, Town House, Chicago
C. C. Bovey, Esq. Town House, Minneapolis
E. L. Ryerson, Country House, Lake Forest, Ill.
George Thorne, Country House, Lake Forest

T. E. Donnelley, Country House, Lake Forest
D. R. McLennan, Country House, Lake Forest
A. G. Becker, Country House, Ravinia
George Pick, Country House, Ravinia
Wm. V. Kelley, Country House, Lake Forest
A.C. Bartlett, Country House, Lake Geneva
Hugh J. McBirney, Country House, Lake Forest
Clayton Mark, Country Place, Lake Forest
Walter Douglas, Country Place
- Lake Minnetonka
B. G. Work, Town House, Akron, Ohio
Jas. M. Willcox, Country Place, Radnor, Pa
Hubbard Carpenter, Country Place
- Lake Geneva
A. G. Thompson, Town House
- Duluth, Minnesota
West View Farms (Robert P. Lamont)
- Country Place, Lake Forest
Warren K. Fairbanks, Town House, Indianapolis
"Ragdale" on Green bay Road, Lake Forest
His own country place.

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