

Southworth



House

THE REMARKABLE TRANSFORMATION
OF A STATELY 19TH CENTURY MANOR
INTO A 21ST CENTURY UNION HEADQUARTERS

LABORERS LOCAL 860 CLEVELAND, OHIO



“The rehabilitation of Southworth House reflects the dedication of Tony Liberatore to the Local 860 membership and, equally as important, to the City of Cleveland. The scope of the effort sets a standard for historic restoration and community revitalization, not only for Cleveland but for the entire country.”

FRANK G. JACKSON, MAYOR, CITY OF CLEVELAND



“The renewal of Southworth House is stunning. Tony Liberatore’s vision sets the standard for state-of-the-art office and meeting space in a large historic home. The project is a showcase for craftsmanship, thoughtfulness, and care. Moreover, it adds to the continued economic and aesthetic improvement of the Upper Prospect Avenue Historic District.”

KATHLEEN H. CROWTHER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CLEVELAND RESTORATION SOCIETY

BUILDING ON A FIRM FOUNDATION

Laborers Local 860 has proudly served the Heavy Highway and Utilities Construction trades since we were chartered in 1937. Today, we have more than 2,200 active members, including 400 retirees, along with over 98 percent market share of public highway and utility infrastructure work in Cuyahoga, Lake, and Geauga counties.

We are an affiliate of the Washington, D.C.-based Laborers International Union of North America, founded in 1903, and dedicated to protecting the wages and benefits, jobsite safety, and employment opportunities of more than 600,000 working men and women nationwide.



Our members are engaged in public works that benefit the community — highways, waterworks, sewers, utilities, and airports. Among these are the Euclid Corridor Transportation Project and the Cleveland Innerbelt Project — both only steps away from our new headquarters. Others include the gigantic interceptors for the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District and new runways for Cleveland Hopkins International Airport.

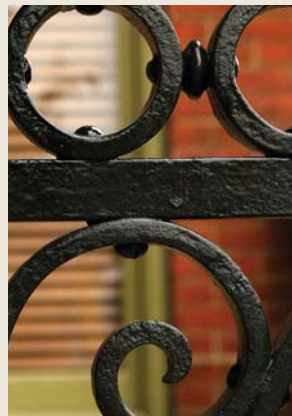
Local 860 not only helps employers to win projects and market share, we respond to their increasingly challenging workforce needs. These include state-of-the-art apprentice training and safety programs that reduce accidents, advance productivity, and lower costs.

Furthermore, as a progressive union dedicated to the well-being of our members, we have secured an alliance with Cleveland State University to train our retirees to become utility and road construction inspectors.

The acquisition, restoration, and renovation of Southworth House — fully-funded from our prudent investment returns — insures that our members will have the finest union facility in America for years to come. In fact, the investment is far less than what a new headquarters would have cost.

Finally, in safeguarding this 19th century treasure, we are reaffirming our commitment to the community we serve.

— *Anthony D. Liberatore, Jr.*
Business Manager/Secretary Treasurer
Laborers Local No. 860



Foreword

AN ENDURING 70-YEAR COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITY

Anthony D. Liberatore, Jr., business manager of Laborers Local 860, along with the Local's Executive Board, made the decision in 2006 to restore and remodel a grand 19th century red-brick manor on the edge of downtown Cleveland into a Union headquarters.

In the end, of course, the project was made possible because of the versatile, productive, and competitively compensated (through wages and fringe benefits) members. In fact, the decision already had been endorsed by a vote of the membership, which shared Liberatore's vision.

Little did the Local realize at the time that the home's original builder and occupant, William Palmer Southworth, a prosperous entrepreneur and builder, had contracted with the City of Cleveland after the Civil War to lay the original pavement on Euclid Avenue – then and now Cleveland's Main Street.

"It is ironic that we Laborers who lay the concrete on Northeast Ohio streets can trace our roots to the contractor who initially paved Cleveland's streets," says Liberatore.

W.P., as Palmer was known, built his house in pre-income tax 1879 at the dawn of Cleveland's golden years, when newly rich entrepreneurs were proud to show off their good fortune.

Over the years, the magnificent house, designed in the romantic Italianate architectural style, passed through a variety of owners and fates until Liberatore recognized that it would be ideal for his Union's need for modern offices.

"This preservation almost didn't happen," concludes Liberatore. "Although it was on the National Historic Register, its fate was far from safe. After years of neglect and abuse, and stripped of most original fixtures, it was destined to become a shell again for carved-up dusty little offices. Over the centuries, however, Southworth maintained a quiet dignity, and once I stepped inside, I knew it was right for us."

Fortunately, Southworth House had been shielded from demolition since 1984, because it is on the National Register of Historic Places. Moreover, such a designation allowed the Union to apply for tax credits through the Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program, which were sold to National City Corporation in consideration for offsetting renovation costs.

Following the detailed design of Cleveland restoration architects Scott and Analia Dimit, some 50 skilled union men and women worked 18 months to transform Southworth House. Today it is one of the most attractively restored and renovated 19th century homes in America, and one of the best union headquarters anywhere.

Shortly after moving into Southworth House, Local 860 purchased the 14,000-square-foot storefront warehouse on the adjoining lot to the west for parking and meeting facilities. The Union is reconfiguring the building to make it architecturally green and similar to Southworth House.

"We are pleased that Local 860 is renovating this historic mansion," says MidTown Cleveland Executive Director James A. Haviland, who administered the \$28,000 Cleveland Storefront Renovation project grant. "The Union's vision will benefit the community, while providing a spectacular headquarters for its members."

W.P. would be proud that more than 125 years later his dream home is once again a Cleveland treasure.



THE SOUTHWORTHS: A FAMILY DEDICATED TO CLEVELAND



*Louisa M. Southworth, wife
of W.P. Southworth.*

THE WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY, CLEVELAND, OHIO

Iron ore, Great Lakes shipping, steel, and oil vaulted Cleveland into the Reconstruction whirlpool that followed the Civil War. The men who led this boom — Rockefellers, Hannas, Mathers, and Wades — built magnificent homes on Euclid Avenue reflective of their stupendous and virtually untaxed new wealth.

While Euclid became Millionaires Row, Prospect Avenue, one block south, emerged as Cleveland's second most prestigious address. The homes were not as enormous, but they were indeed splendid. In fact, Prospect's popularity surged after 1860 when Cleveland's first street-car line was laid along Prospect from Public Square to East 55th Street.

Grand homes, carriage houses, spacious apartments, and row houses soon lined the street. On Upper Prospect, from East 30th to East 55th, numerous churches followed. Unfortunately, only one has survived: the Zion Lutheran Church, built by German immigrants.

William Palmer Southworth planned his home for a vacant lot at 3334 Prospect, then an affluent locale on the outskirts of downtown. Born in Connecticut, Southworth came to Cleveland in 1836 as a 17-year-old.

With little formal education, he soon prospered in various trades, first in carpentry and building on a small scale. After the Civil War, Southworth opened a retail grocery store near Public Square and soon was recognized for his strict business practices as well as his generosity to budding charities.

"He established a business policy that was new to the trade, and one freely predicted to surely fail," wrote Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham in *The Pioneer Families of Cleveland*, published in 1896 for the Cleveland Centennial Commission. "Every sale was on a cash basis. An article had to be paid for then and there. The wealthiest customer...was granted no more favor in respect of payment than the poor one...Some of the former, accustomed to the convenience of monthly bills, pleaded in vain."

"Mr. Southworth possessed great executive ability," adds the author. "He was a strict disciplinarian in the conduct of his business." As the store prospered and expanded nearby, Southworth's became a household word.

Meanwhile, City Bank of Cleveland had opened in 1845. It was the first bank in a city of 9,500 in an era predating gas, electricity, public waterworks, and railroads. At the close of the Civil War, however, following the discovery of iron ore in Northern Michigan and oil in nearby Pennsylvania, this outpost in the wilderness began to boom. Consequently, City Bank secured a national charter in 1865 and changed its name to National City Bank.



Top, from left: Mary Upson and Frances Southworth Goff, daughters of W.P. Southworth, and Frederick H. Goff, husband of Frances and founder of The Cleveland Foundation. Circa 1900.
COURTESY OF THE CLEVELAND FOUNDATION

Above: The W.P. Southworth General Store is recreated at the 19th century Cleveland Street of Shops, part of the permanent exhibition of the Western Reserve Historical Society.
COURTESY OF THE WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

W.P.'s business success won him a seat on the National City board in 1870. "His policies allowed no wastage or leak," according to *A Century of Progress*, the 1945 centennial history of the bank. "There were the smallest margins of profit and satisfaction for both customers and management. This appealed to the [National City] Board of Directors."

Three years later, in 1873, Southworth was elected the fourth president of National City. The bank, which claimed \$1 million in assets, was located near Public Square. "For 16 years, until failing health intervened, Southworth carried the double responsibility of a large business house and bank," observes *A Century of Progress*.

W.P.'s daughter, Frances, recalled her banker father in a reminiscence written in 1940 for the Western Reserve Historical Society: "His dress was always the same: a black broadcloth suit with frock coat, white shirts with collar and cuffs attached and fastened with white pearl buttons — always boots and a silk hat."

After marrying in 1855, Southworth and his wife, Louisa, lived comfortably near Public Square. With new-found success and business prominence, in 1879 they began building their manor on the south side of Prospect and moved in a year later. The house was richly designed in the Italianate style of medieval villas that had impressed American architects during their travels in Italy.

The surviving original features include a grand staircase, with ornate railings, and elaborate base, crown, and door moldings in the high-ceilinged drawing rooms on the main floor. All are carved in the bas-relief geometric decorative style of celebrated 19th century architect and furniture designer Charles Locke Eastlake.

Five gas fireplaces, with stone and wood mantels, served as heating outlets. The red brick exterior incorporated intricate bracketed cornices and roof eaves, along with a wooden entrance porch. Cast iron window hoods shielded the front windows. One of W.P.'s first acts was planting an oak tree that still has command of the front lawn.

In 1891, at the height of the Gilded Age when Cleveland already had a population of more than 250,000 and was America's 10th largest city, Southworth died; four years later, Louisa expanded her home to 19 rooms, including a new enclosed back porch designed in the Colonial Revival style, popular at the time. The addition increased the home size to 12,000 square feet.

Before 1900, she also built a large, three-floor brick carriage house at the rear of the property for horses, a blacksmith shop, and an apartment for servants. Before she died in 1905, Louisa was active in women's suffrage, and often entertained the legendary Susan B. Anthony at Southworth House.

None of the four Southworth children stayed in the home, though they left their mark on Cleveland. Son Otis, who controlled the family fortune, built his grand home at University Circle, now a student residence for the Case Western Reserve University College Scholars Program.

Frances married lawyer and banker Frederick H. Goff in 1894, after their courtship at Southworth. As president of Cleveland Trust, from 1908 to 1923, Goff greatly increased bank assets and customers. In 1914, as one of the city's leading citizens, he organized The Cleveland Foundation as a means for wealthy Clevelanders to leave their money to civic causes. Almost a century later, the Foundation has grown into the nation's second largest community foundation, with assets of \$1.6 billion.



Prospect Avenue, looking west from Sterling Avenue, now East 30th Street, 1870.

STANLEY L. McMICHAEL COLLECTION OF PICTURES
IN THE CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY.



Southworth House, 1960s.



Southworth House, 1950s.



Prospect Avenue in the late 1920s, when auto dealerships already had replaced many of the gracious 19th century homes.

A CENTURY OF ASSORTED TENANTS

After the turn of the 20th century, the automobile changed everything. The first families abandoned their grand Prospect homes for the suburbs. Stores and other commercial structures popped up, along with the early auto dealers and suppliers. European immigrants flooded the city.

Two years after Mrs. Southworth died, the family sold the house to the Baptist Church. Cleveland was then the sixth largest city in the nation, with more than 500,000 residents. With matching funds from John D. Rockefeller, it became a refuge for impoverished Baptist widows. In 1920, the Baptist Home moved to a bigger location on Cedar and eventually morphed into the Judson Manor Retirement Community.

Shortly after the Baptists left, the new owner carved Southworth House into offices for small businesses — accountants, engineers, and other professionals. Over the next half century, as Prospect Avenue continued to decline, the once-grand manor — known as the Edelmar Building and later the Accountants Building — was bought and sold many times. Rent was at a minimum. So was maintenance.

By the 1970s, Prospect had degenerated into a strip of sleazy hotels, bars, tenements, stores, and warehouses. Only a handful of the great 19th century homes survived.

Nonetheless, from such ruin dramatic rebirth was beginning. In 1977, Cleveland City Council designated Prospect Avenue a local Historic District. Less than a decade later, Midtown Cleveland, an economic development corporation, and the Cleveland Restoration Society helped to get Prospect — from East 22nd to East 55th and some side streets — designated federally as the Upper Prospect Multiple Resource Area.

This designation protected 27 historically significant structures, including Southworth and seven other single family homes, from the wrecking ball. It also provided tax credits for their rehabilitation and spurred the Restoration Society in 1999 to refurbish the large Sarah Benedict House on the north side of Prospect for its offices.

Southworth House itself was put on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 and, in 1995, the City repaved Prospect and added new lighting and landscaping.

One of the neighborhood bright spots in the 1970s was the expansion of nearby Cleveland State University. In 1973, a fraternity at CSU bought Southworth, and hundreds of young men lived and partied there for two decades, even fashioning themselves a basement rathskeller bar.

Party days aside, the fraternity experienced its own campus troubles and sold the house in 1996 to Michael Chesler, a well-known developer of historical properties, including others on Prospect.

Chesler sold Southworth to a Bratenahl businesswoman, who operated a home health-care services company and lived there part-time. She even had preliminary plans drawn up to restore parts of Southworth into elaborate offices. Her plans hit a dead end, however, in 2005 when she pleaded guilty to fraud in federal court stemming from lying about accounts receivable to secure some \$6 million in illegal and unpaid bank loans. She also pleaded guilty to defrauding Medicaid.

Although the judge sentenced her to prison, she was not finished with Southworth. She defaulted on the mortgage, but her associates repurchased Southworth at the Cuyahoga County Sheriff's auction. Lack of payments again forced the Sheriff to auction Southworth six months later. This time, in the summer of 2005, Chesler bid the highest. Southworth was the only historic Prospect structure then not rehabilitated.

Chesler, whose offices were in the restored Kies-Murfey House next to the old Local 860 building on Prospect near East 40th Street, intended to lease Southworth to small businesses. In 2006, however, as he was drawing up a strategic restoration design to qualify Southworth for historic tax credits, he discussed the century home with Anthony Liberatore.

It was serendipitous. Local 860 needed new offices to replace the outdated industrial shop that had served as headquarters for more than 50 years. Chesler and Liberatore came to terms, agreeing that restoring Southworth House for one committed tenant made sense economically, historically, and civically.



THE CONVERSION EXPERIENCE

“Fortunately, through it all, Southworth House was not horrendously damaged,” says architect Scott Dimit. “Most of the original details, including the Eastlake woodwork, survived virtually untouched over the years.”

To qualify for the federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program, administered by the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, Local 860 had to adhere to strict restoration guidelines involving restoration of the interior as well as the exterior. Known as the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, they emphasize preserving the building’s original character.

The restoration also had to meet the same standards to qualify for a modest grant from the federally funded City of Cleveland Storefront Renovation Program.

The restoration details approved by the Ohio Historic Preservation Office include:

- Conversion of the first floor to offices and a meeting hall in the rear.
- Refashioning an executive conference room from a first-floor salon.
- Renovation of the attic into a retiree lounge with a walk-out roof deck.
- Renovation of the basement with slate-style flooring into a lunchroom, restrooms, offices, and utility rooms.



The adjacent storefront building, purchased after the Southworth restoration, will be converted to Local 860 meeting and parking facilities. Rendering by Dimit Architects.

Southworth’s magnificent architectural details restored.

Left: The Charles Eastlake design style is reflected in the entrance to a second-floor office.

Above right: The west facade, before and after.





The side entrance, before and after.

- Delineation of 27 parking spaces on the half-acre grounds and the installation of a front yard flagpole and an oversized, custom-made Laborers Local 860 pewter medallion.
- Addition of seven-foot-high security gates painted in dark tones to match the appearance of the original cast iron railings at the entrance porch.
- Restoration of the oversized double-hung windows.
- Extensive repairs and restoration to the plaster ceilings, walls, woodwork trim, and floors.
- Cleaning the exterior masonry facade.
- Restoration of the original cast iron window hoods, including castings of missing decorative leaf elements.
- Repairs and restoration of the exterior wood trim, including the roof cornice, eaves, and scroll brackets.
- Extensive restoration of the glazed Colonial Revival west porch addition with the original fan-like windows, as well as the front entry porch.
- New exterior and interior lighting.
- Creation of new ADA-compliant bathrooms and kitchen pantries.
- New electrical, plumbing, and ventilation services, as well as five furnaces.
- New roofing and slate-style shingles.
- Installation of a state-of-the-art audio visual system and high-speed Internet access.
- Additions and renovations to permit access for the handicapped per ADA guidelines, including installation to all floors of an elevator. Part of the elevator shaft was fashioned from a huge basement-to-first floor vault.
- Rehabilitation of the carriage house into a training center.



A carpenter finishes woodwork in the meeting room.

SPLENDOR IN THE DETAILS

Under the supervision of Frank Rini and Jay Reeths of Rinello Construction, few details were overlooked during the 12 painstaking months of Southworth restoration.

“We had no idea how beautiful this house really was and how much effort it would take to restore it to its original magnificence,” says Frank Rini, president of Rinello.

Starting at the top third-floor level, workers installed a new roof and skylights and turned a vacant attic into a spacious room with kitchen, bath, and outside deck for the use of union retirees.

On the second floor, they converted high-ceilinged bedrooms into bright offices. New window casings, trim, and door moldings were milled to match precisely the few that had survived the years. Most doors were replaced with reproductions that match the originals. Plaster medallions, copied from an original, decorate ceiling lights in each room.

Painters used muted greens, golds, and other subtle hues reminiscent of the era. Workers restored marble fireplace mantels and hearths. They fashioned the Business Manager’s large office on the second floor from an old sitting room, using wood and glass doors rescued from an abandoned office in the Old Arcade downtown. In the same office, they created new window casings to match the ones made in the 19th century.

The splendid mahogany staircase and banister between the first and second floors were restored and given a stunning new finish. In the conference room near the entrance on the first floor, a pair of double doors and casings were reproduced and set with beveled glass transoms and brass openers. They replaced the original missing pocket doors. The conference room — a former sitting room — has one of the four hand-carved mahogany fireplace mantels that craftsmen carefully refinished.

Workers preserved unique decorative brass trim, original doors, and figured oak trim in the original Eastlake style in a first-floor office. At the rear of the first floor, workers converted a side porch into a large union meeting room while restoring the hand-shaped elliptical windows.

New administrative offices, also on the first floor, were refashioned from parlors and a dining room. All windows and exterior doors are now covered with shatter-resistant security glass — placed on the inside because of Preservation guidelines.

The basement includes a large lunch room as well as utility rooms and restrooms. Complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act, workers installed an elevator that travels from the basement to the top floor. Moreover, they installed plumbing, electrical, heating, air conditioning, and advanced security and audio-visual systems.

A few yards behind Southworth, workers began converting the carriage house into a union training center, remaining faithful to its original design from when W.P. Southworth escorted his family from there for horse-pulled carriage rides along Prospect and beyond.

“My favorite moment came when we learned that the missing mahogany doors that led into the hallway from the front entrance were at a local antique house ready to be sold,” says Reeths. “We rushed there, brought them home, and restored them. Like so much else in Southworth, they are not only grand, they are irreplaceable.”





BEHIND THE SCENES

Architects Scott and Analia Dimit are largely responsible for the restoration design. They also provided interior design services, including material selections, paint color schemes, and interior and exterior lighting. Moreover, they prepared documents for the code-compliance work and Historic Tax Credit application. Far right: Local 860 Business Representative Dennis Arian coordinated the planning and construction of Southworth House.



Top: The new meeting room with the original beveled windows, incorporating a former summer porch.

Left: Upstairs hallway.

Below: Multi-purpose flat screen monitor.

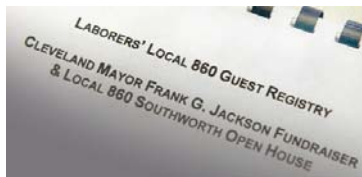
Right: Conference area in the office of the Business Manager.







Anthony Liberatore with Michael J. Taylor, president of National City Community Development Corporation, which partnered with Laborers Local 860 to obtain Historic Tax Credits to restore Southworth House.



Below: CLEVELAND MAYOR FRANK G. JACKSON RECEPTION

Right: Attorney Basil W. Mangano.





LOCAL 860 TAKES ADVANTAGE OF FEDERAL TAX CREDITS TO CUT CONSTRUCTION COSTS AND PRESERVE AN HISTORIC RESOURCE

Because Southworth House is on the National Register of Historic Places, Laborers Local 860 saved 20 percent of the restoration costs while partnering with National City Bank Community Development Corporation in preserving one of Cleveland's — and America's — historic structures.

"This is a win-win situation for all involved," says Anthony D. Liberatore, Jr. "The union preserved a cultural resource for our members and our community. Moreover, we were able to cut our construction costs and help the bottom line of a major Cleveland employer — National City."

The details of the tax credits may be complicated, yet the reasoning behind the financing is simple. It is guided by the goal of preserving our nation's historically significant cultural resources.

Here is how it works:

Under federal legislation passed in 1976, the National Park Service, a branch of the U.S. Department of the Interior, has allowed owners of buildings on the National Register to apply for a 20 percent tax credit for restoration. The law was motivated by the desire of Congress to preserve cultural resources that otherwise might be lost and to stimulate economic development.

This credit is available for properties rehabilitated for commercial, industrial, agricultural, or rental residential purposes, but not for properties used exclusively as the owner's private residence. Since the law was adopted, thousands of structures across America, including some others on Upper Prospect, have qualified for billions of dollars of restoration credits.

Guidelines for Historic Tax Credits are strict. They ensure that the rehabilitation remains faithful to the initial edifice. In Ohio, they are enforced by the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, working with the National Park Service. Southworth is no exception; to qualify, the union had to preserve and restore the original exterior and interior as much as was feasible, according to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

That guarantee allowed Local 860 — a nonprofit organization — to partner with publicly held National City Corporation. The bank subsequently used the Southworth House purchase/restoration cost as a one-time tax deduction against corporate profits. Meanwhile, National City returned roughly 20 percent of the construction cost of that tax deduction to Local 860.

"This is an ideal way for Laborers Local 860 and National City Bank to join together on an important civic investment," says Paul G. Clark, president of National City Bank of Northeast Ohio.

"It is not lost on us that our partner in this superb project is National City Bank, where W.P. Southworth was president some 130 years ago," adds Liberatore.



Anthony Liberatore addresses the first Local 860 meetings at Southworth House for active members and retirees.



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*Many Thanks
to the Local 860 members who contributed so much
to the Southworth House restoration. This publication
is dedicated to them.*



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