

The 1943 WPA guidebook to Greater Cincinnati described the neighborhoods of Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights as "quite similar in general character." That volume, as well as newspaper articles from the 1940s, suggested that the two areas were so alike that even residents could not discern the boundary between them. While this perception of similarity has not always been so strong, the identities of Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights have been consistently intertwined.

Both communities began as rural farmland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, evolved into commuter suburbs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and have become integrated city neighborhoods in the late twentieth century. Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights are the northeastern-most portions of the City of Cincinnati, surrounded primarily by independent communities: Norwood on the southwest, Golf Manor and Amberley Village on the north, and Silverton to the northeast. They also share portions of their southern boundaries with unincorporated areas of Columbia Township.

In the early 1790s, John McFarland and Joseph Ferris purchased the land on which the two suburbs are now located from John Cleves Symmes. In 1795, McFarland established a fortified station along present-day Kennedy Avenue, about half a mile from Kennedy Heights Park, and began selling off smaller pieces of property that he had bought primarily for speculation. After selling his last plots in 1808, McFarland left the area. Ferris, on the other hand, intended not only to sell parts of his tract but to settle on it. In 1799, he built a house at the intersection of Ridge Road and Montgomery Pike, then known as the Zanesville Road.

Those who bought land from Ferris and McFarland were mostly farmers, and during the greater part of the nineteenth century, the land was used primarily for agriculture. A small village developed at Ridge and Montgomery with a few businesses to serve the basic needs of the farmers. Some residents called the village Cross Roads, while others referred to it as Pleasant Ridge, a name drawn from the nearby Pleasant Ridge Cemetery, established around 1798. When John C. Wood, a landowner who had purchased the last section of McFarland's tract, platted the village in 1825, he used the name Cross Roads. But the more appealing name of Pleasant Ridge remained common. The post office established in 1832 was called the Pleasant Ridge office, and in 1849, the community was replatted under that name.

At mid-century, the village had a population of one hundred. The area had three large commercial enterprises, nursery companies that had offices in Cincinnati but used farmland in Columbia Township to raise their seedlings. The small business district included the shops of two blacksmiths, two carpenters, a cobbler, grocer, tailor, and two taverns. To make other purchases or find entertainment, residents had to take the horse-drawn omnibus that made a daily trip into Cincinnati.

In 1867, the Wood family laid out a subdivision near the crossroads, but growth was relatively slow until transportation improved. In 1874, the Miami Valley Railroad laid track through Columbia Township which encouraged some development. But the area's land boom came only after 1885 when the Cincinnati, Lebanon & Northern (CL&N) Railroad took over the line and improved it. The railroad allowed people who worked in Cincinnati to commute from Columbia Township in thirty to forty minutes. Better transportation combined with the growing

popularity of suburban living opened up Pleasant Ridge and shifted the center of the community away from Montgomery Pike.

Many of those who speculated in land in Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights were members of families who had originally settled in the area. In the 1880s, these landowners began switching from agriculture to promoting real estate. The Durrell and Cortelyou families laid out small subdivisions in Pleasant Ridge, and Isaac M. Wood and Thomas Kennedy platted a larger subdivision in 1886.

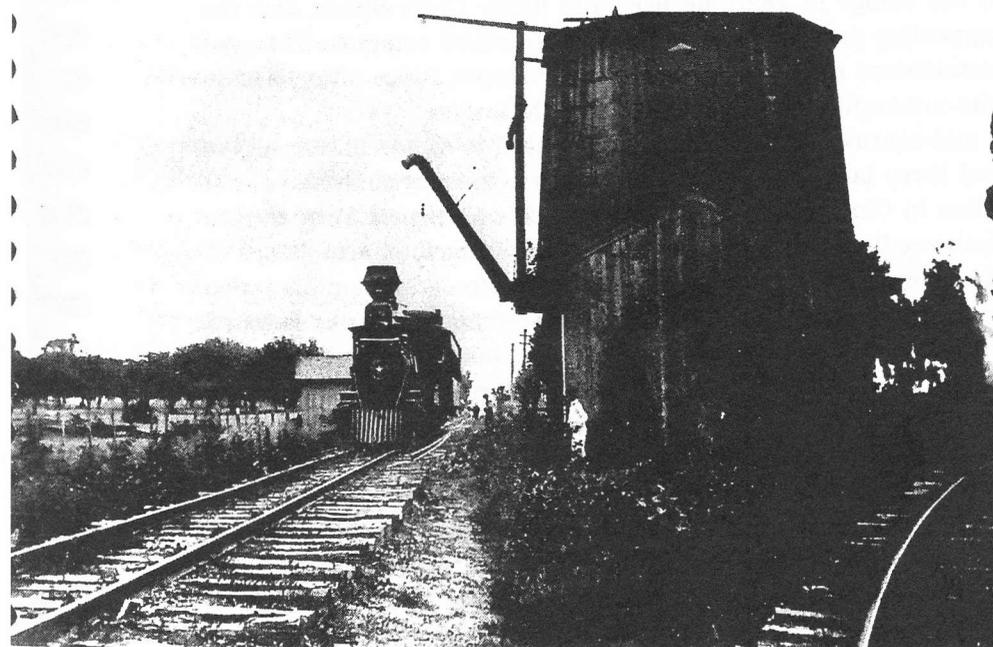
Among the most active developers in the area was Thomas Kennedy's brother, Lewis. The Kennedy family had owned farmland near Pleasant Ridge since the late 1790s, and Lewis Kennedy inherited some of it. He acquired more land when he married Delia McCullough, whose family owned nurseries in the area, and by purchasing nearby farms. In late 1884, Lewis laid out the Kennedy Subdivision between Pleasant Ridge and Silverton. Two years later, he organized the Kennedy Heights Loan & Building Association, which platted an even larger tract, calling the combined subdivision Kennedy Heights.

Lots in Kennedy Heights sold well, in part because of Lewis Kennedy's aggressive promotion but also because the subdivision was on the CL&N line. One of the investors in both the railroad and the subdivision was Anthony D. Bullock (1824-1890), president of the City & Suburban Telephone Company, who decided to build a hotel in Kennedy Heights. The Yononte Inn opened in 1887 as a country club for the exclusive use of shareholders in the hotel association and their guests. The venture was not successful, and after Bullock's death, Kennedy took over the hotel and opened it to the public.

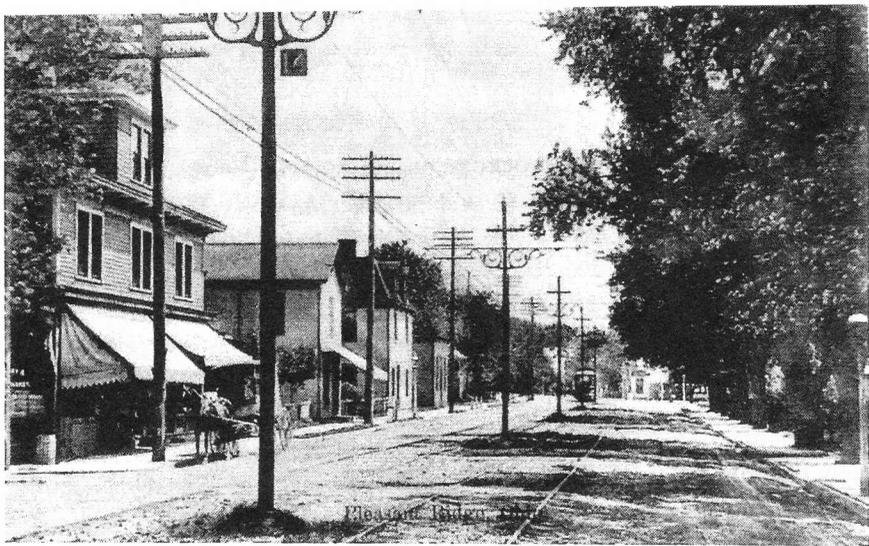
The Yononte became a popular summer resort and sparked interest in the community as a year-round commuter suburb. Kennedy laid out spacious lots of 100 to 160-foot frontage, as well as streets, sidewalks, and roads suitable for recreational driving.

While Kennedy Heights attracted affluent buyers, lower-priced subdivisions nearby were not immediately successful. In 1888, a group

Pleasant Ridge and the surrounding area grew rapidly after the tracks of the Cincinnati, Lebanon & Northern Railroad were converted from narrow to standard gauge.



By 1910, Montgomery Road had become a commuter thoroughfare, thanks to the Interurban Railway & Terminal Company.



of investors organized by Robert Cresap laid out a large subdivision northeast of Kennedy Heights. Two years later, Lewis Kennedy platted a new subdivision, Belmont, west of Montgomery Road, opposite his original properties. These subdivisions had lots half the size of those in Kennedy Heights. They failed to sell well because Cresap's property was on low-lying, unattractive land, and Belmont was too far from the rail lines. Development here began after Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights were incorporated and streetcars began running through the area.

The Village of Pleasant Ridge was incorporated in 1891, largely through the efforts of residents who believed that they would receive better public services and developers who felt that incorporation would increase the desirability of their properties. Older residents, who saw little benefit in return for increased taxes, opposed the move and kept Kennedy Heights from becoming a village for another five years.

After incorporation, both villages provided police and fire protection, installed sewers, and contracted with the City of Cincinnati for water service. While these services made Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights more attractive, the completion of the interurban electric trolley in 1903 made them viable middle-class commuter suburbs.

The Interurban Rapid Transit line, running down Montgomery Pike, connected areas such as Belmont and the small subdivisions in Pleasant Ridge to Cincinnati and Norwood where many residents worked. The interurban also shifted the center of the two communities back to that road, aiding the small business districts located there.

Following the improvements in transportation and services, Kennedy Heights and Pleasant Ridge grew rapidly. Between 1900 and 1910, the population of Kennedy Heights increased from about 200 to more than 600, and Pleasant Ridge grew from 1,000 to 1,200.

The IRT even boosted the sales of Cresap's Euclid subdivision, except for those lots in a section of low ground farthest away from the line. A few years later, Cresap began selling property there to black home buyers, creating a working-class black community in Kennedy Heights that grew after the 1960s.

As Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights grew, officials made a decision that affected both villages. Not only did they make no effort to attract industry, but they expressly discouraged it. Residents, businessmen, and real estate developers all agreed that manufacturing would reduce the villages' appeal. During these years, the last farming and summer resort activity died out. The Yononte Inn closed in 1907,

and shortly thereafter, most of the remaining farms were subdivided.

As a result of rapid growth, the village governments were soon unable to provide adequate services. In 1909, the Villages of Pleasant Ridge, Kennedy Heights, and Silverton thought of consolidating but could not agree on arrangements. Kennedy Heights also considered joining Norwood, but annexation to Cincinnati seemed more practical. Cincinnati annexed Pleasant Ridge in 1912, and Kennedy Heights two years later.

Residential development in the two suburbs continued to flourish, largely because of industrial growth and a shortage of worker housing in nearby Norwood. From the late 1910s through the 1940s, Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights were built up. In Pleasant Ridge north of Montgomery Road, large homes were constructed for affluent families. But otherwise, both communities consisted of moderately priced, single-family homes on side streets and multiple-unit dwellings along Montgomery Road. In the 1920s, community civic organizations were formed to publish newsletters and to lobby City Hall for special services or improvements, such as playgrounds or street lighting. With the completion of the Dillon's Woods subdivision in Kennedy Heights in the 1940s, most of the land in the two suburbs was in use.

At mid-century, Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights were stable, desirable communities, drawing residents from older city neighborhoods. The houses were attractive to young families, and those who moved in tended to remain.

This changed in the early 1960s when black families began to move from older suburbs such as Evanston or Avondale, to neighborhoods like Kennedy Heights that already had a black population. Many white homeowners feared that property values would fall. In 1963, concerned citizens formed the Kennedy Heights Community Council, modeling their organization on the North Avondale Neighborhood Association. The council helped fight block-busting and panic selling, and worked to maintain a stable, integrated neighborhood. By the early 1970s, more than 60% of Kennedy Heights residents were black, and the area had become known for its commitment to integration.

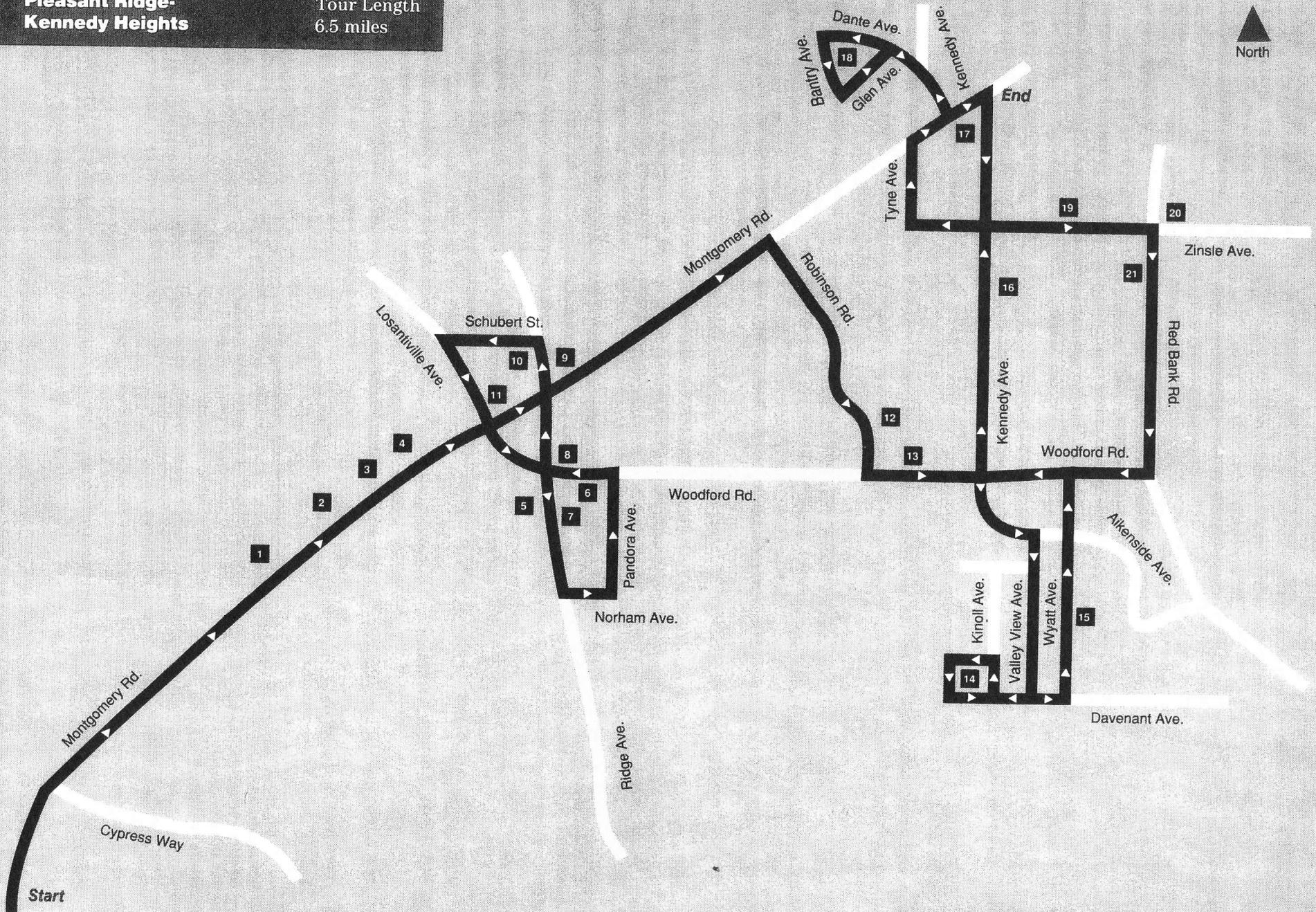
Pleasant Ridge also began to attract black residents in the 1960s, although the process was slower and began later than in Kennedy Heights. As a result, homeowners in Pleasant Ridge did not form a Community Council until 1966. The black population quickly stabilized at about 15% and remained at that level through the 1970s.

As both suburbs adjusted to integration, the community councils shifted their efforts. In the early 1970s, both neighborhoods fought zoning changes and the construction of multi-unit complexes that residents feared would burden public schools and services. The Kennedy Heights Council, in particular, was anxious to prevent the creation of additional low-income housing within the community. Both suburbs tried to revive their Montgomery Road business districts which suffered from competition with the newer shopping centers. Pleasant Ridge, with a stronger business community, has been more successful.

Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights continue to attract first-time homeowners seeking well-built, affordable, older homes close to downtown, and those who wish to live in stable, integrated neighborhoods.

**Pleasant Ridge-
Kennedy Heights**

Tour Length
6.5 miles



Tour begins on Montgomery Road just north of Cypress Way.

1 Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights Housing reflects the development of these two neighborhoods. The earliest houses still standing are frame structures, often farmhouses or early transitional suburban homes dating from the late nineteenth century.

Around the turn of the century, the coming of commuter and street railroads triggered movement to these suburbs. Many of the brick Bungalow and Four-Square style houses date from that period. Within a decade and for the next twenty years, subdivisions along Montgomery extended suburban growth. In Pleasant Ridge, subdivisions to the west of Montgomery Road were developed for the relatively affluent, while the more modest houses to the southeast were built for working-class residents.

Beginning in the late 1930s, multi-unit housing went up in both communities. In the 1970s, residents organized to block plans to build high-density housing that, they felt, would put too great a strain on the schools and public services.

After Pleasant Ridge was annexed by Cincinnati in 1912, Fire Company No. 53 replaced the volunteer fire department composed of a chief, a part-time assistant, and a hose wagon drawn by a rented horse. The new company consisted of a wagon, a paid fire fighter, and a horse provided by the city, all housed in a firehouse on Losantiville Avenue near Montgomery Road.

In 1920, a new state law mandated a 2-platoon system for municipal fire departments. The City of Cincinnati hired another seventy-one officers and closed eight fire houses, including the one in Pleasant Ridge. For the next eleven years, the community relied on Engine Company No. 48 in Carthage.

In 1931, the **2 Firehouse of Engine Company No. 8** opened at the corner of Langdon Farm and Montgomery Roads. Designed by Gustav W. Drach's architectural firm, the Bungalow style firehouse reflects the desire of city planners to complement prevailing style of homes in the neighborhood. The only major change

to the building has been the replacement of its original barn doors with a more efficient rolling door.

Engine Company No. 8 is staffed by fifteen officers working in three shifts. It is the first fire company to respond to fires in both Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights. In the event of two alarms, Engine Company No. 2 in Carthage comes to its assistance.

3 Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, 5950 Montgomery Road, is one of the oldest occupied sites in Pleasant Ridge. The congregation dates back to 1790 when eight members established the Cincinnati-Columbia Presbyterian Church, the first Presbyterian congregation in the Northwest Territory. Six years later, the church split. One group settled in Cincinnati, and the other moved first to Duck Creek and, four years later, to Pleasant Ridge.

tion during its period of greatest growth. In 1923, a final addition was completed. After World War II, the congregation decided to replace the old church and began to raise building funds.

In 1952, work began on a new chapel and educational building designed in Colonial Georgian style by architect Joseph Lyle, a member of the congregation. Seven years later, the old church was razed and a new sanctuary was designed by Hake & Hake to match the educational building. This church, which seats more than 600 people, was dedicated a year later.

Until recently, Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church has grown steadily. In 1840, church membership was eighty, and in 1890, there were 137 members. Membership rose from 575 in 1925 to 833 by 1940. Growth continued during the post-World War



The Presbyterian burial ground on Montgomery Road was known as Pleasant Ridge Cemetery long before the surrounding village was platted.

In 1800, this group put up its first church near this site, a 24' x 30' log structure that had been taken apart and transported from its previous location near Edwards Road. In 1818, the congregation officially took the name of Pleasant Ridge from the nearby cemetery, and in 1825, erected a larger, brick sanctuary. By 1870, a second church in Suburban Gothic style with a prominent steeple had been erected. This structure, with later additions, served the congrega-

tion baby boom and peaked at 2,400 in 1960. Thereafter came a slow decline as children grew up, married, and moved away. By 1980, the congregation had stabilized at 1,500. In 1988, membership stood at 1,415.

The Pleasant Ridge Cemetery is adjacent to the church. According to local legend, it was begun in 1793, when a settler named Brewster was looking for a place to bury his wife and child, and a neighbor told him of a "pleasant ridge" nearby where their remains would not be disturbed. The first recorded burial in the cemetery dates from 1800. A number of families prominent in the history of Pleasant

Ridge are buried here, as are thirteen Revolutionary War veterans.

The community of Pleasant Ridge has been served by a series of schools located on or near the site of **4 Pleasant Ridge School**, 5945 Montgomery Road. The first, a single-room log cabin, was built in 1819. To complete it, school trustees had to solicit aid from the nearby Presbyterian church. In exchange for a contribution of twenty dollars, the congregation was allowed to use the building outside school hours. In 1870, the first brick schoolhouse was erected, and in 1897, a high school was established.

The present school consists of two Neo-Classical Colonial Revival buildings. The older of the two, the columned structure to the north, was designed by Hunt & Allan and dates from 1909. It was built to replace the older high school building. Pleasant Ridge High continued to operate as a Cincinnati school for seven years after annexation; in 1919, it merged with East High, which later became Withrow. In 1932, the second building was constructed from a design by C. C. Weber.

As Pleasant Ridge grew and enrollments climbed after World War II, temporary buildings were erected and three new primary schools, Losantiville, Eastwood, and Swifton, were built nearby in the 1950s. Enrollment was close to 1,000 in the early 1970s, and the student body was more than 90% white. Over the next ten years, as the school age children grew up, the number of students declined by almost 50%.

By the 1970s, enrollments climbed as young families moved in, many of them black. In 1980, hoping to improve the school's racial balance, the Board of Education made Pleasant Ridge both a neighborhood school with a traditional curriculum and an alternative school, offering a bilingual Spanish program, for grades K-5. With the closing of Kennedy School that year and the institution of the Spanish language program (one of five in the city), enrollment climbed to 650. By 1988, the school was 60% black and 40% white.

Turn right on Woodford Road, right on Ridge Avenue.

Speaking at the August 1974 dedication of the **5 Pleasant Ridge Community Center**, 5915 Ridge Avenue, in Pleasant Ridge Park, Cincinnati mayor Theodore M. Berry congratulated local residents for their "patience and persistence" in seeking the facility. In fact, the effort arose from the fear that Pleasant Ridge was about to lose its character as an attractive residential suburb and become an aging, inner-city neighborhood. Seeking to prevent this, the Pleasant Ridge Community Council brought pressure on the city to build a community center in Pleasant Ridge Park.

The city purchased the 8.7 acres of parkland from H. P. Cooke, president of the Fourth National Bank, in 1913. The same year, the Park Board, cooperating with the Pleasant Ridge Welfare Association, built tennis courts and baseball diamonds there. For decades, this was simply a park and playground. But in the early 1970s, residents campaigned for a community center. In response, the city constructed an \$800,000 complex that included crafts rooms, a gymnasium, a sauna, and an outdoor swimming pool.

Today, the Pleasant Ridge Community Center offers recreational activities, arts and crafts classes, pre-school and after school programs, a summer day camp, and sponsors events such as the annual Christmas Tree lighting, an Easter Egg hunt, and Ridge Day. The center is also a meeting place for the Pleasant Ridge Community Council which actively seeks neighborhood development funds and block grants, and promotes business development in the community.

Turn left on Norham Avenue, left on Pandora Avenue, left on Woodford Road.

In early 1917, forty Catholic families met in the Pleasant Ridge Town Hall to form the **6 Church of the Nativity of Our Lord**, 5935 Pandora Avenue. Within a few months, parishioners acquired property at Ridge Avenue and Woodford Road, and built a chapel. As Pleasant Ridge grew, so did Nativity parish. In 1920, a new church and school were constructed, and by the late 1920s both had been enlarged. The parish

continued to grow through the 1960s when membership was 1,100 families. The original sanctuary was replaced by a modern structure in 1969. The parish listed 1,214 member families by 1988.

A number of families who live outside the immediate area have joined the parish in order to send their children to **7 Nativity School**, 5936 Ridge Avenue, founded in 1921. With additions to the original 4-classroom building in 1928 and 1952, the school now has eighteen classrooms and is staffed primarily by lay teachers.

In addition to a traditional curriculum, Nativity has an all-day kindergarten, and classes in Latin and computer science. Nativity takes part in the Ohio Arts Council's Artists in Education program, which brings artists into the classroom. Since 1979, the school has also participated in a student exchange program, the International School to School Experience.

The 1987-1988 enrollment of 420 represented a decline from the peak of 796 in 1964, but an increase from the low of 321 in 1983. The student body is approximately 10% black and 10% non-Catholic.

Turn right on Ridge Avenue.

8 Pleasant Ridge United Methodist Church, 6000 Ridge Avenue, was founded by fifteen members in 1849. In 1858, a substantial, single-room brick church was erected on land acquired in 1850 at the present-day intersection of Losantiville and Woodsfield Avenues. In its early years, the church was part of several Methodist circuits and had no permanent pastor. It did have heavy building debts, and at various times the congregation rented the building out to other Protestant groups. At one point, no Methodist services were held for a year.

As Pleasant Ridge changed from a farming community to a suburb, the number of Methodists in the area increased, and by the end of the nineteenth century, the congregation was well established. In 1904, membership stood at more than a hundred, and a new church was needed. Lacking adequate space to build at the original site, the congregation pur-

chased two lots at Ridge Avenue and Woodford Road, and in 1908, the cornerstone for the present Gothic Revival style building was laid.

Pleasant Ridge Methodist, like other churches in the community, grew rapidly in the years before World War II; by 1949, membership was 539. Several building campaigns in the mid-1950s enabled the church to renovate the sanctuary which had been damaged by fire and rebuilt in 1939, and to construct a new educational building designed by local architect Charles F. Cellarius.

In 1988, the church had some 270 members, many of whom lived outside Pleasant Ridge but returned here to worship.

Pleasant Ridge's German heritage is represented by **9 St. Peter's United Church of Christ**, 6120 Ridge Avenue, founded as St. Peter's German Evangelical Church in 1876. Led by the Reverend William Eckermeier (d.1898), a Montgomery physician and herbalist who was also the first pastor, the congregation, mostly German farmers, laborers, and dairy-

The Pleasant Ridge Hotel, shown in this 1876 photo, is still standing at the northwest corner of Montgomery Road and Ridge Avenue.

men, began meeting at Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church. Within two years, they purchased land and erected a simple white frame church with a traditional spire. In 1893, the congregation purchased and renovated a nearby house to serve as a parsonage.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the congregation grew as nurserymen and truck farmers moved from Wooden Shoe Hollow in Winton Hills to the more open land in Pleasant Ridge, Oakley, and Golf Manor. Church services were held in German until World War I. After that, the congregation became increasingly bilingual. Since World War II, English has been used exclusively. The church's ethnic heritage continues, however, with the presence of members of German descent and a dozen German-born families.

Having outgrown the original church, the congregation built the current yellow brick sanctuary in 1921. In 1937, the chancel was renovated and a new Schanz pipe organ was installed. The church also has a set of chimes and at 6:00 p.m. plays hymns that can be heard throughout the area. In the mid-1950s, when membership peaked at about 500, additions to the building and an educational annex designed by Joseph

Stith were erected.

Membership has since declined to 150. Still, the church has remained active in the community and sponsors monthly luncheons in the spring and fall that bring together church members, senior citizens, and business and community leaders.

10 Pleasant Ridge Masonic Temple, 6125 Ridge Avenue, was built in 1884 as a town hall for Columbia Township, of which Pleasant Ridge was the seat. In its earliest years, the building housed the community's only auditorium which was used for many local functions, including town meetings and school dances.

By 1891, Pleasant Ridge had more than 1,000 residents and was incorporated as a village. For the next twenty-one years, the building housed municipal offices, including those of the mayor, the village council, the police and fire departments, and the library. A single jail cell was in the basement.

The town hall was planned as a single-story structure, but a second floor was added to accommodate the Pleasant Ridge Masonic Lodge No. 282, chartered in 1856. After Pleasant Ridge was annexed to Cincinnati in 1912, the lodge bought the building



and continued to meet here. For many years, the first floor has been rented by a series of dancing schools.

Turn left on Schubert Street, left on Losantiville Avenue, left on Montgomery Road.

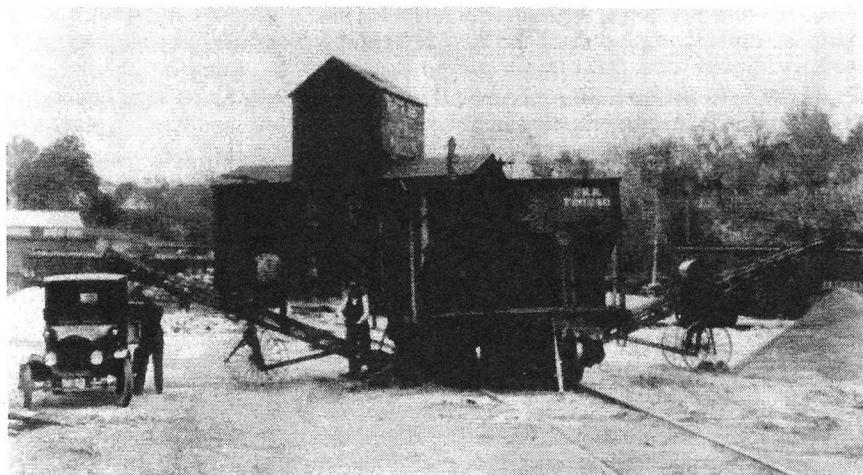
As early as 1830, a few businesses clustered at Montgomery Pike and Ridge Road. The intersection, known as Cross Roads, formed the nucleus of **11 Pleasant Ridge Business District** and has reflected both change and continuity in the community.

Cross Roads was first a stopping place for those traveling to and from Cincinnati. One of the earliest businesses was the Pleasant Ridge Hotel, 6097-6099 Montgomery, a frame structure now hidden by a late nineteenth-century brick addition and an early twentieth-century brick facade.

As Pleasant Ridge developed into an agricultural community, Cross Roads evolved to serve the needs of nearby farmers. By 1869, there were several grocers, physicians, basket-makers, dairymen, and blacksmiths located here. By the end of the century, part of the Pleasant Ridge Hotel had become a feed store. The district had expanded, but its character was essentially unchanged.

In the next decade, Pleasant Ridge's business center was transformed as the community became a suburb. The old hotel building was again converted, this time to serve as shops and apartments. In 1909, the village got its first bank, Citizens Bank & Savings, at the northeast corner of Montgomery and Ridge, and Steinkamps's blacksmith shop was torn down to make way for Pleasant Ridge's first modern commercial block at 6096 Montgomery.

Phil White, soon to be the village's leading pharmacist, moved in. White later opened the first movie theater in Pleasant Ridge. The business district also got gas street lamps in place of oil ones, and cement sidewalks to replace boards. The Pleasant Ridge Building & Loan Association, founded in 1883, began meeting at 6071 Montgomery, where, as Merit Savings Association, it still does business. The district also housed numerous small enterprises—groceries, butchers,



Harry Ewers & Sons, Inc., (in the foreground of this 1926 photograph) and Rathkamp Brothers Company provided construction materials and coal to build and heat Pleasant Ridge homes.

drugstores, shoemakers, barbers, realtors, and attorneys—to serve the neighborhood.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Pleasant Ridge business district underwent another transformation. While local grocers such as H. W. Lillie and George Todd remained successful, chains like A&P and Kroger moved in. Similarly, Ridge Dry Cleaning faced competition from Fenton United. Nevertheless, local businesses, such as Jones' Dry Goods and Men's Shop at 6097 Montgomery, A. O. Rust Shoes at 6085, Ridge Jewelers at 6217, and the Wright-Delape Bowler Drome at 6014, all flourished.

This mix of local businesses and chains remained constant through mid-century. Freuchtemeyer's Drug Store, which replaced White's was, in turn, succeeded by a Dow drugstore. In 1956, Irving Feuer moved into the Dow Building where he still does business as an independent druggist and wine seller. Also, Fifth-Third built a new bank at the present site, and Kroger moved into a larger building at 6136 Montgomery, now an IGA. The Monte Vista Theater, 6214 Montgomery, showed first-run films.

Over the next twenty years, large shopping centers such as Swifton and Kenwood undercut the prosperity of neighborhood business districts. The bowling alley closed, and the Monte Vista began showing "adult" films. A number of shops became vacant, and marginal businesses moved into and out of the area.

By the 1970s, the Pleasant Ridge

Community Council was seriously concerned about a neighborhood business district that seemed increasingly less viable. The Pleasant Ridge Business Center Task Force saw a need to consolidate the area, rather than stringing new businesses out along Montgomery. In 1973, planners and urban consultants concluded that the district would go into decline unless it was totally renovated.

Despite this prediction, the Pleasant Ridge business district of the 1980s remains much as it has been. There is a core of stable businesses, banks, drugstores, shoe stores, a jeweler, florist, market, stationer's, and several beauty shops and small restaurants. There are some vacant stores, and a few older buildings have been torn down. But newer specialty shops have moved in and succeeded.

The community council keeps watch over business in the area, forcing out the "adult" films and opposing new liquor licenses. The Pleasant Ridge business district continues to serve local needs as it has for over one hundred years.

Turn right on Robison Road.

In 1930, the Cincinnati Park Board and the Recreation Commission paid the Elizabeth Gamble Deaconess Home Association \$25,000 for a 12-acre parcel of land at Woodford and Robison Roads that became **12 Kennedy Heights Park**. The city planned to create a park and a playground, but the land was some distance from nearby houses and thus was better suited for a park. The Recreation Commission turned it over

to the Park Board in 1935.

Throughout the 1930s, the Kennedy Heights Garden Club made donations for planting and improving the area. In 1941, the city resolved a boundary dispute over the park, paying a \$300 judgment to three charitable organizations in exchange for a small piece of land that had been willed to the organizations.

Residents of both Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights use Kennedy Heights Park, located at the boundary between the two communities.

Turn left on Woodford Road.

At the turn of the century, the Cincinnati, Northern & Lebanon Railway was the major freight link for Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights. Two companies, The Rathkamp Brothers Company, formerly at Woodford Road and the rail line, and **13 Harry Ewers & Sons, Inc.**, 3512 Woodford Road, reflect the commercial importance of the CL&N in the development of these areas.

Lewis Kennedy, who planned to develop a residential suburb in Kennedy Heights, founded a building supply firm in the late 1880s. In 1898, he sold the business to Henry and Conrad Rathkamp, and through much of the twentieth century, Rathkamp and Ewers supplied coal to businesses and homes in the area. They also sold feed and grain to farmers and dairy-men, and provided lumber and building supplies to those constructing new homes and businesses in Pleasant Ridge and Kennedy Heights. For many years, the Rathkamp family also ran an automobile repair business in Pleasant Ridge.

As trucking replaced the railroad as the primary means of moving freight, both Ewers and Rathkamp faced competition from other firms located along Montgomery Road. In 1962, Rathkamp Brothers, still family-owned, closed. Ewers & Sons (est. 1908) is still in business at the original location, although it no longer relies on the railroad for its supplies.

Turn right on Kennedy Avenue, left on Aikenside Avenue, right at Valley View Avenue, right on Davenant Avenue.

In 1885, Lewis Kennedy (1836-1913) laid out plans for a subdivision on farmland acquired from H. W. Stegemoeller. Kennedy wanted to create a spacious, park-like environment where Cincinnati's wealthy families could maintain summer homes away from the heat of the city, but within commuting distance on the CL&N Railway.

Kennedy's associates included Anthony Bullock; H. M. Lane (1854-1929), son of P. P. Lane, president of the Lane & Bodley foundry; B. F. Ehrman, an area resident, and Ward Baldwin, an engineer and trustee of the University of Cincinnati.

The key to the project was to be a 50-room hotel and country club intended for "the exclusive use of shareholders and their properly introduced friends." The **14 Yononte Inn**, named after a legendary Indian maiden who was supposedly married

on that spot, was designed by the noted Cincinnati architect, A. O. Elzner (1862-1933). The Yononte prospered only after Kennedy opened it to the public, but by 1907, this summer resort hotel had no place in a residential community, and it closed. Two years later it burned down.

All that remains of the Yononte today are two brick gateposts at 3627 Davenant Avenue, one with a "Y" worked into it. A group of houses built in the 1920s now occupies the grounds. Many of the summer homes built in the 1880s and 1890s still stand on the surrounding streets.

Turn right on Kinoll Avenue, left on Davenant Avenue, left on Wyatt Avenue.

Between 1977 and 1983, residents



With fifty rooms and a country club, the Yononte Inn was intended to draw fashionable individuals to Lewis Kennedy's planned resort.

Kennedy, O., June 15, 1888.

The Kennedy Heights Hotel Company requests the presence of yourself and ladies at the House Warming of Yononte Inn, on Saturday, June 23, 1888, at 7 o'clock. Refreshments at 9:30.

R. S. Y. P. Dancing.

A special train will leave the station of the Cincinnati, Lebanon & Northern Ry, at Court Street and Broadway, at 6:30, City Time; and returning, will leave the station at Kennedy at 11 o'clock.

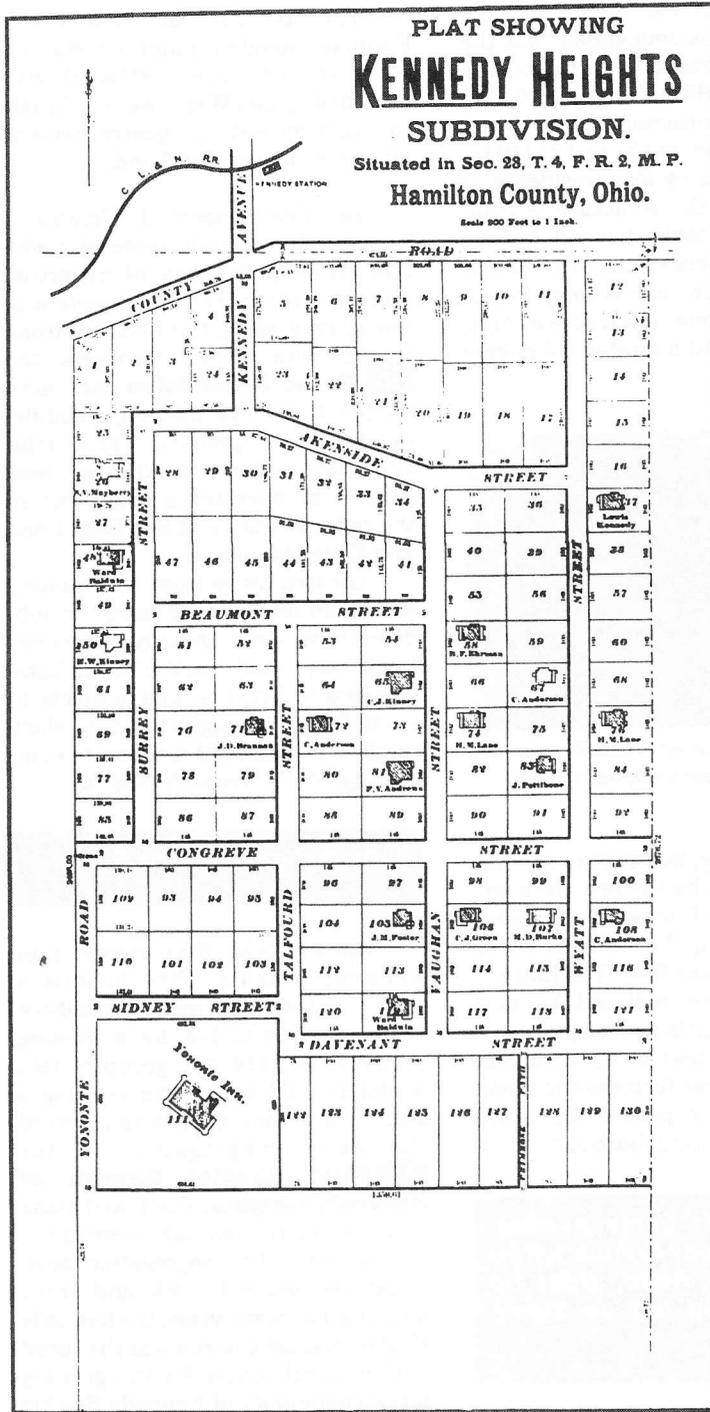
♦ B. L. & R. R. Y. ♦

Pass bearer and ladies to Kennedy at Return, on special train, 6:30 p. m., City Time, June 23, 1888.

THE KENNEDY HEIGHTS HOTEL CO.

created the Kennedy Heights Urban Redevelopment Corporation (KHURC) to rehabilitate and then sell area homes. With a \$5,000 loan from the Kennedy Heights Community Council as seed money, the group began its first project, the **15 Ehrman House**, 5858 Wyatt Avenue.

Located within the Kennedy Heights subdivision, the Ehrman House was built in 1850. Lewis Kennedy added to it in 1887, and



opment dried up and interest rates rose to record highs. In 1982, KHURC had to sell one house at a loss. With no source of funds and a stagnant housing market, the group ceased operation in early 1983. Nevertheless, KHURC helped to create an awareness of the need for redevelopment and was able to save several houses from decay.

Turn left on Woodford Road, right on Kennedy Avenue.

In 1891, Presbyterians in Kennedy Heights applied to the Cincinnati Presbytery for permission to form a church. But there were too few signatures on the petition, and for another eighteen years, the group made do with a Sunday school and services held by visiting ministers. In 1909, seventeen people founded the **16 Kennedy Heights Presbyterian Church**, 6312 Kennedy Avenue. Three years later, the congregation built a white frame church with arched Gothic windows. A kitchen and social hall were added in 1913.

In 1930, the congregation dedicated the present brick Colonial Georgian style church capable of seating 270 people. By the end of the decade, church membership had reached 600. Like most churches in the area, Kennedy Heights Presbyterian grew rapidly in the post-World War II era. In 1951, the congregation added an educational and recreational annex, and a decade later, when membership exceeded 1,500, the sanctuary was renovated and expanded. During the 1960s, membership fell to less than 1,000, and stood at 452 in 1988.

Kennedy Heights Presbyterian Church has long been active in the community. In 1963, it helped to form the Kennedy Heights Community Council, and along with several other area congregations, it currently helps support the Caring Place, a community pantry which provides food for needy families. The church also sponsors the Kennedy Heights Senior Citizens.

Turn left on Zinsle Avenue, right on Tyne Avenue, right on Montgomery Road.

The developers of the original Kennedy Heights Subdivision, which spread out to the northeast of the Yononte Inn, produced this map to help sell lots in that new suburban community.

another addition was made in the early 1960s. When KHURC purchased the house at sheriff's auction in 1978, one member described it as a "complete mess."

The house was renovated with volunteer labor and sold at a profit. Using the proceeds, the Redevelop-

ment Corporation acquired three other houses and initiated a program to redevelop the Kennedy Heights business district. Having convinced the city to give it title to property on the north side of Montgomery Road between Kennedy Avenue and Ravenal Court, KHURC planned to build a medical arts building and bank, and to use the rental income to purchase and rehab more homes.

In the early 1980s, however, government grants for urban redevelop-

When Lewis Kennedy married Delia McCullough (1840-1907) in 1859, he joined the firm of commission seed merchants, J.M. McCullough & Son, and acquired part of the McCullough lands near Pleasant Ridge. By 1877, Kennedy was in business on his own as a commission merchant dealing in seeds and produce.

By then, Kennedy had also joined a number of downtown businessmen who were moving to the suburbs, living first in Norwood, and then in Pleasant Ridge. Shortly thereafter, Kennedy began to speculate in real estate. In late 1884, he platted the ambitious Kennedy Heights Subdivision between Pleasant Ridge and Silverton, as well as a business area to the west.

Lewis Kennedy was initially successful, selling real estate and building homes in the area. In 1892, the **17 Lewis Kennedy House**, 6546 Montgomery Road, was completed. Located in a park-like setting, the 14-room residence included seven bedrooms, a billiard room, a sewing room, and a summer sleeping porch. During the depression of 1893, Kennedy sold his mansion and his building supply company, and moved downtown. Kennedy remained in real estate and, for a time, ran a downtown hotel.

Kennedy's house sold first to a family named White. In 1911, it was bought by William C. Beschorman, assistant manager of the National Lead Company. In 1928, Beschorman sold it to Stanley High, an undertaker, who moved his funeral home here. In 1948, the firm remodeled the building and added another eight rooms.

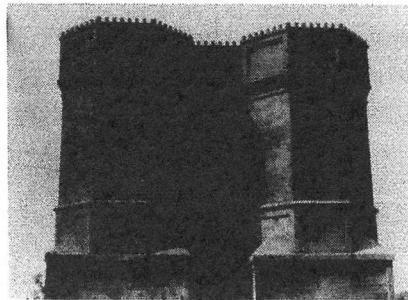
Turn left on Kennedy Avenue, left on Dante Avenue, left on Bantry Avenue, and left on Glen Avenue.

North of Montgomery Road is Lewis Kennedy's second subdivision, Belmont. It was platted in 1891 with lots of 60-foot frontage which were meant for middle-income home builders. The 1893 depression halted development, and by 1898, only three homes had been constructed.

Generally, Kennedy Heights grew more slowly than investors and the city anticipated. After Kennedy Heights was annexed to Cincinnati, the Water Works Department found that the Eastern Hills Pumping Station

was putting out too much water for the area and recommended that the city build several storage tanks. The **18 Eastern Hills Tanks**, 6510 Glen Avenue, were constructed in 1916 and went into service at the end of 1917.

Referred to by local residents as "the fortress," the structure is composed of five tanks housed in four castellated towers with a fifth tank in the center. Each tank is forty feet in diameter and one hundred feet high, and the five hold a total of 4.6 million gallons.



The formidable Eastern Hills Reservoir Tanks are no longer used, but remain standing.

By the 1970s, however, the northeastern suburbs had grown considerably and looked forward to more growth. By then, the tanks actually impeded the water flow. The Eastern Hills Tanks were replaced by new tanks constructed in Rossmoyne. Built too strongly to tear down at a reasonable cost, these fortress-like tanks recall an earlier period and lend character to the neighborhood.

Turn right on Dante Avenue, right on Kennedy Avenue, left on Montgomery Road, right on Kennedy, and left on Zinsle Avenue.

Constructed around the turn of the century, the **19 Homes on Zinsle Avenue** in the 3600 block represent the kind of modest housing that Lewis Kennedy intended to build along both sides of Montgomery Road.

A number of these houses have been rehabilitated in recent years. Several others have been "modernized"—primarily by having stucco applied to their exteriors—and present an interesting contrast in methods of preserving and updating older housing.

The structure at 3630 is the Kennedy Heights pumping station. Built in the early 1950s, it was intended by City Water Works officials to "conform with the general style of homes in the neighborhood."

In 1888, Robert J. Cresap, a Cincinnati real estate speculator who had developed areas of Silverton, platted a subdivision on a section of low ground along the CL&N railroad tracks. With 50-foot frontages, the **20 Euclid Subdivision** was more modest than Lewis Kennedy's middle-income developments. The Euclid Land Association, formed to sell these properties, operated a field office in the railroad station at Red Bank Road and Zinsle Avenue.

Located away from Montgomery Road and on low-lying land, the subdivision was not initially a success. Desperate to sell lots, the Euclid Land Association began selling to blacks in 1906. By 1914, roughly a dozen black families had formed a separate community within Kennedy Heights.

Turn right on Red Bank Road.

When blacks first moved into Kennedy Heights, they formed a "prayer band" that met in members' homes and was led by a visiting minister. In 1914, the group bought a plot of land and began erecting a small plain white church that served the early congregation of the **21 First Baptist Church of Kennedy Heights**, 6201 Red Bank Road, for more than half a century.

In 1966, the congregation dedicated the present brick and stone building. For many years, the Kennedy Heights Baptist Church was the social and spiritual center for the growing black community of Kennedy Heights and remains a major presence in the Kennedy Heights-Pleasant Ridge Area.

Turn right on Woodford Road, right on Kennedy Avenue to return to Montgomery Road where the tour ends.