

*A look back at Blue Ash History...*

As the Covid 19 restrictions impacting large groups continue, you may consider a warm spring evening for a socially-distanced walking tour that will take you past some of the older homes and establishments in the Cooper Road area of Blue Ash. The Park and Ride lot at Blue Ash and Cooper Roads at Railway Avenue can be your starting point. The route is approximately 1 mile long and will take approximately 30-45 minutes (see map on page 3). Let's begin....

Cooper Road ran from the original settlement to Montgomery and was originally known as Denman Road, named after Nathaniel Denman, one of Blue Ash's early settlers. His log house was at the corner of Plainfield and Denman Roads. Denman Road became Cooper Road in the 1800s.

**1. Railroad comes to Blue Ash, Cooper Rd. and Railroad Ave.**



From this starting point, imagine the stagecoach as the first public transportation in the early 1850s. It took 30 years to complete the track from Cincinnati, through Blue Ash, to Lebanon. Many of the laborers were Irish, and they boarded in farm houses that were along the tracks they were laying. Trains carried both passengers and mail - sometimes mail bags were delivered or dropped as trains sped by. Mail would be sorted as the train sped along.



The Interurban streetcars that ran on electricity and connected cities were introduced in the 1880s with tracks running on what is now Kenwood Road. When the Interurban Railway and Terminal Company completed an "electric road" in 1903 that extended to Lebanon, railroad ridership fell so much that trains reduced their schedules.

Trains ran every day from Blue Ash to Cincinnati, at the rate of twenty-two per day in the 1920s. Excursion trains hauled passengers to amusement parks, such as Highland Grove, which was north and east of the intersection of Kenwood and Pfeiffer Roads. The Interurban was in its last days in 1921, and railroad passenger service ended in 1934, after 53 years.



**2. Across the street from the intersection of Blue Ash and Cooper at 4720 Cooper Road** you'll see a two-story brown house

known as the Radabaugh house, built in 1906. It originally sat across the street where the CVS store is now. In its original location the building served as a dry goods store, post office, and the home of the first telephone exchange in Blue Ash. It was moved to its present location in 1928 to make room for the expanding Blue Ash School.

**3. Proceed west to 4677 Cooper Road, corner of Railroad and Cooper, circa 1900** The Louis Weber family moved to Blue Ash in 1921 and opened Weber's

Grocery Store, currently occupied by Leist Realty. Mr. Weber added room for a post office to the rear of the grocery store adjacent to the train tracks on the south side of Cooper Road. In addition, the first Blue Ash library was also in Weber's Grocery Store. Books came from the downtown library by train. Alma Weber, daughter of the owner, earned five cents for each borrowed book.





**4. 4658 Cooper Road** Isaac Conklin arrived in Hamilton County in the early 1800s and moved to Blue Ash in 1845. He

built this home circa 1845 and it was inherited by his son John when he passed away. The original parcel totaled about 100 acres. John's son, Charles, owned the house and five acres in 1914.



**5. 4624 Cooper Road.** This was the original Blue Ash Building and Loan office, founded in 1907. Edwin L. Strawser started

with the local loan company in 1915. He stored the receipts from the day's business in a cigar box that he took home at night. This one-room building served the bank until 1952 when they moved to the current location at 4811 Cooper Road. It was open only one night a week. In addition to the limited hours of operation, customers were required to have a good reason for withdrawing their money. It has the honor of being the longest-running business in Blue Ash.



**6.** Proceed on Cooper Road, to Cooper and Miller. The boarded-up building at **4610 Miller** was used as a concession stand, probably to serve the

spectators who came for the shows at the airport.



**7. Ridgeway and Cooper Roads**

Across the road was what may have been the first municipal airport in Ohio,

originally called Grisard Field. It was named after the late Lieutenant John J. Grisard, the only Cincinnati

aviator killed in action during WWI in May, 1918. It was originally an old army base. Famed aviator Eddie Rickenbacker attended its dedication ceremony. It was later developed by brothers Hugh and Parks Watson and became known as the Watson Airport. This was the site of the first airmail delivery into the Cincinnati area in 1922 from Chicago. Later routes to Cleveland and Louisville were established.

**8. 4531 Cooper Road,** built in 1926, was called the Airport Inn, popular in the 1930s with its outdoor beer garden and small concrete dance floor.



The Airport Inn supposedly had somewhat of a "honky-tonk" atmosphere, which was probably why it was so popular. They had live entertainment with orchestras performing regularly on Saturday nights.

Reversing course, now go east and follow Cooper to Conklin. The Sarah (Sadie) Garber farm ran along this area. Mrs. Garber smoked a pipe and farmed her land. Since it was the custom to wear a dress on Sundays and Sadie needed to do some plowing one Sunday, she wore a dress over her coveralls. She died in a housefire in 1948.

**9. 9544 Conklin.** Built in 1902, the carriage house at the rear of the house is said to have housed the early fire department.



**10. 9561 Conklin.** Built in 1888, this was once the home of John Conklin, son of Isaac Conklin. It was later owned by John Hilsinger, one of the founders of the Blue Ash Building and Loan.



Now proceed east on Perry to Highland Avenue.





**11. 9476 Highland.** Roxie Snell's blacksmith shop was once located at the corner of Cooper and Kenwood Roads and

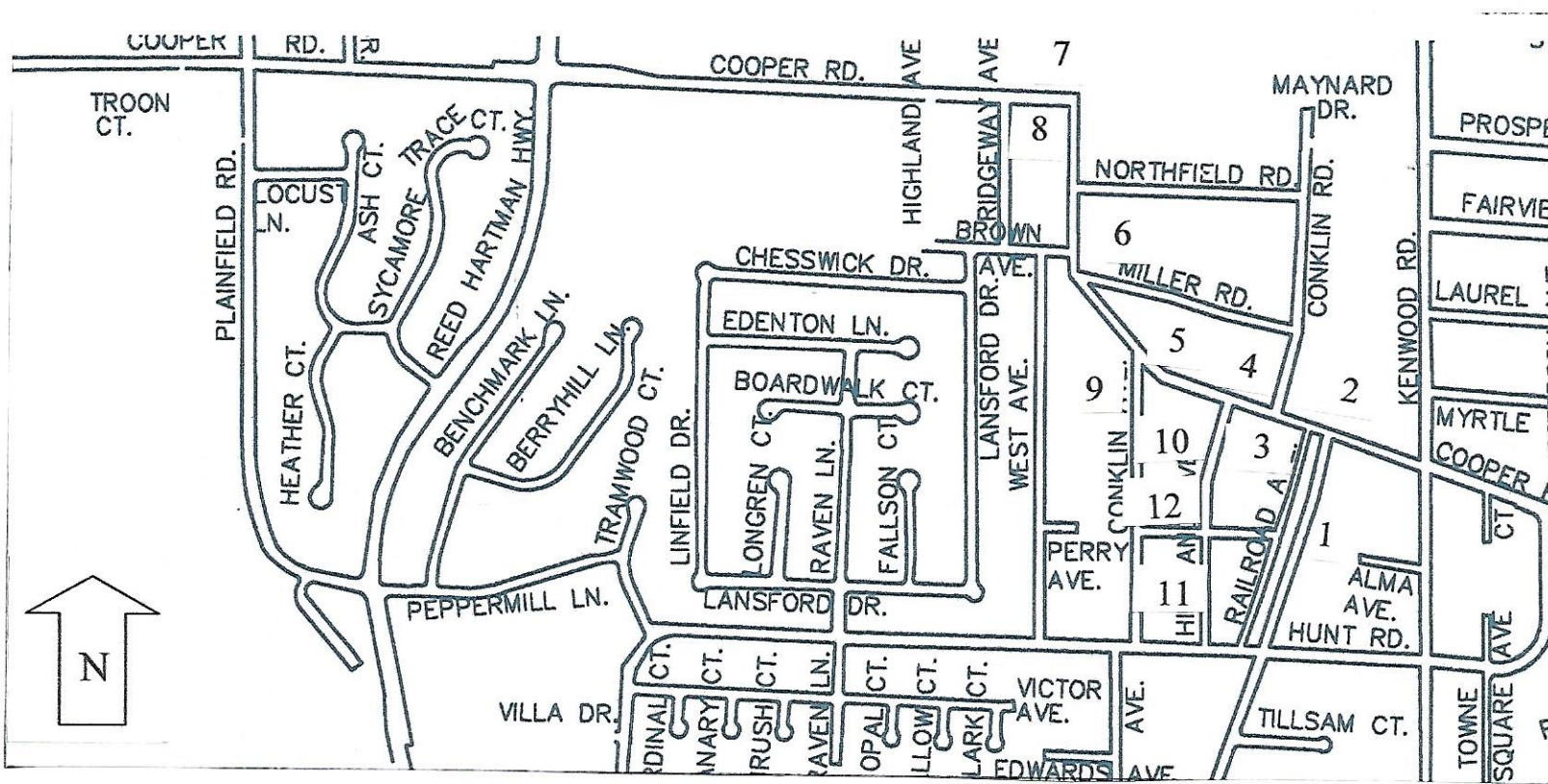
owned by John Vorhees. Roxie Snell took over the business and moved it to the Highland Avenue location when Harlan Hosbrook opened his motor car business at the original site of the blacksmith shop. Mr. Snell worked on cars, but he always preferred horses. He developed a portable forge that could be used at customer's homes. He also worked on plows and wagons.

**12. Mission Baptist Church, 9501 Highland Avenue.** The church was built in 1912 and was originally the Blue Ash Presbyterian Church.



The congregation was founded in 1908 and met in the Blue Ash School until this building was constructed. According to the Miami Purchase Association, its architecture is known as Spanish Mission. It is also a relatively rare type of architecture with only twelve examples in Hamilton County. The Mission Baptist Church has since made modifications to the building.

**Return to Perry Street east to Railroad Avenue and you're back where you started! We hope you enjoyed this brief history lesson on the beginning of Blue Ash!**



The information given on the walking tour is a compilation of history found in *History of Blue Ash, Ohio, 1791-1991* by Mary Lou Rose, the research and files of Beverly Mussari, past president of the Blue Ash Woman's Club and the Blue Ash Historical Society, and others with knowledge of the early days of Blue Ash.