



MUTTER GOTTES WALKING TOUR



Approx. 30 Minutes
6/10 Mile Tour

Mutter Gottes Walking Tour

The City of Covington would like to welcome you, as you embark on one of seven tours designed to celebrate our thirteen National Register Historic Districts. The National Register of Historic Places, established under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, is a listing of "districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects significant in American History, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture." The City of Covington is proud of its abundant collection of important structures; they are a treasure that we wish to share and keep alive, both for our citizens and the many visitors who come to our city each year. We thank you for your interest and are confident that you will find your experience in the Mutter Gottes Historic District to be informative, enjoyable and positively memorable!

HISTORY

Covington's greatest period of growth fell between 1840 and 1860, when large numbers of German immigrants settled in the midst of the original settlers were being rapidly succeeded by large numbers of German immigrants. The unrest in Germany that eventually resulted in the revolution of 1848 was the major impetus for this heavy influx. Advertisements citing the similarities in topography between the Ohio and Rhine River Valleys enticed the eager Germans to Covington at the rate of 200 per day by 1840. Among the first area to be effected by this migration was that encompassed by the Mutter Gottes Historic District, an area situated immediately southwest of the original city limits.

By the late 1870's, the present neighborhood character was well established, with a dense concentration of mid-nineteenth century vernacular architecture, predominantly Italianate in style. Erected by the working class Germans who settled here, these structures range in size and grandeur, from the modest frame and brick two story homes on Craig, Kentucky, Athey and Sixth streets to the brick and stone mansions that line Fifth Streets. A small representation of commercial buildings can be found in the area as well. The existence of these establishments served to complete an atmosphere of neighborhood unity a condition that has been strengthened in recent years by widespread renovation and restoration projects.

The Mutter Gottes district derives its name from the Mother of God Church (Mutter Gottes Kirche), the first German Catholic parish in a city with a very strong German Heritage. Your tour will begin in front of this most visible and notable landmark, and proceed through a neighborhood of self-sufficient ambiance and charm.

1. Mother of God Church and Rectory – 119 West Sixth Street c. 1871

This commanding Renaissance Revival Structure is the oldest Roman Catholic Church in continuous use in Covington. 87 feet wide and 200 feet tall, this majestic Italian basilica is considered one of the most beautiful in the region. The silhouette of these slender twin towers, topped with gold

crosses and of the domes provide impose a permanent impression on the skyline typical of American multicultural urbanized cities.

2. 120-128 West Sixth Street c. 1880

This row of six townhouses boasts a unique feeling of rhythm and continuity. All done in the Italianate style, these buildings represent a typical two-bay configuration. Note the decorative hood molds surrounding the windows and the decorative cornice supporting the roofs of these five identical structures.

3. 130-132 West Sixth Street c. 1880

The Morwessel Drugstore has been a fixture in this community since 1881. Operated continuously by the same family, this establishment adds to the sense of unity and neighborhood ambiance that you will experience on this tour. Done in the Italianate style, this building retains its cast iron storefront, appearing much like it did at the turn of the century.

Turn south on to Russell Street and then turn east on to Athey Alley

Athey Avenue

This late nineteenth century working class neighborhood contains modest dwellings flanking a brick, tree-lined street. One of the most interesting features of this street, however, is not the older structures, but the newer infill buildings. 212 and 221 are good examples of successful attempts at integrating new structures into an old neighborhood. The passerby may even be deceived by the well executed facades adorned with graceful porches, fish scale shingles and leaded glass doors.

4. 226 Athey (1879)

This structure was the home of John Herman Koors. There was a small family fun cigar manufacturing business located in the home. There were 10 part time employees working here. In the rapidly changing atmosphere of the time residents would run a small cottage industry out of their homes and would very typically rent out spare rooms to outsiders.

Athey Avenue ends at Craig Street. Continue north as the road zigzags and eventually forms a Y. Continue straight and you will be on Craig Street.

Craig Street

The homes on Craig and Kentucky Streets range from one-story frame shotguns to more substantial two-story brick Italianate buildings, fashioned after the imposing structures lining the 100 block of Fifth Street. Built as a working class neighborhood, this pocket of building remains a peaceful enclave, rich with the heritage and sense of pride evoked by its original German inhabitants.

Note before the Rail Road was built, Craig Street was a business corridor much as main street is today. The corner of Athey Avenue and Craig Street had a Newspaper office on one corner and a Barber shop on the other corner. On the east side of the tracks there was a dairy. Between Athey and

6th and Johnson there was a cemetery.

Reaching Fifth Street you will now proceed west until you reach the intersection. Continue north along the edge of the district, until you reach Fourth Street. At this point you will continue walking east on Fourth Street.

The south side of this block contains a row of six houses, three of which have gingerbread carved porches, indicative of the imaginative structures erected in the Queen Anne style, c. 1865 (223, 221, 219 West Fourth Street). They add richness to the streetscape. They act as a buffer against the commercial and industrial development that occurred as a result of urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s which eliminated hundreds of Victorian homes. Note the sprawling IRS complex on the north side of this block that exemplifies this development.

Turn the corner onto Russell Street and continue south until you reach Fifth Street.

5. 417 Russell Street c. 1870
This simple two-story, three-bay brick Italianate building is notable primarily for its abundance of wrought and cast iron work. The intricate iron porch that shelters the first floor façade and the equally elaborate iron fence in front of the home distinguish this otherwise plain house from others in the district.

Covington Avenue

This one block street extends from Russell to Johnson Streets is another unique enclave that serves to set this district apart from other areas of the city. Most of the homes have been restored to their original charm with the help of the Covington Avenue Properties Partnership organized under the leadership of Rev. William H. Mertes, Pastor of Mutter Gottes Kirsche (Mother of God Church). Father Mertes rehabbed 228 Covington and lived there until his death in 2003. A Covington Register plaque recognizes this same home as Margaret Yunker House a pre-civil war design brick home built c. 1850-65. As you stroll down this serene bricked avenue, you will find an admirable representation of Italianate townhouses, adorned with decorative window molds and molded cornices with ornate brackets. Many of the structure have a side rather than front entrance. This particular plan appears to be found only in Northern Kentucky and is known locally as the Covington Townhouse. Check out 226 Covington built by Oliver Jones Heater, 1878 as an example of this townhouse design. Formerly 30 Covington Street and renamed 224 Covington Avenue this home was built by Ernest Hegge c 1876, a jeweler. In 1974 it was purchased and restored by Kentucky Colonel V.J. Canfield and R.M. Stacksteder, two of the original members of the Covington Avenue Properties Partnership.

Before turning east onto Fifth Street, continue south on Russell Street for #6 & #7.

6. 501-505 Russell Street c. 1884
This three-story brick structure that anchors the southwest

corner of Fifth and Russell Streets boasts a slate mansard roof façade broken by gabled dormers, which is unusual for this district. These elements are indicative of the Second Empire style, examples of which can be seen more commonly in other areas of the city.

7. 515 Russell Street c.1870
The Albert B. Koett house is perhaps the most eye-catching of the strictly residential homes in this district. Built in a block of houses with more common looking architecture, the Koett House is a three story narrow, elaborately detailed "castle" with a side entrance. The façade with its rounded sleek-surfaced brick work and other details accented with colored tile, constantly attracts the attention of passers-by.

West Fifth Street

For your final segment of this tour you will be strolling down one of Covington's most widely traveled thoroughfares. As you will see, this block between Russell Street and Madison Avenue contains the grandest and most commanding homes found in the Mutter Gottes district. We hope you will find this to be a fitting conclusion to a most enjoyable journey.

8. 118 West Fifth Street c. 1860
This Civil War Era townhouse, of simple Italianate style, is most noteworthy for the stone quoins that grace the edges of the four-bay façade. If you look closely you will see a number engraved in one of these stone blocks, denoting the old system of street numbers.

9. 40 West Fifth Street c. 1880
This commanding structure boasts a gabled façade and long side porch, creating an eclectic appearance that significantly contrasts with its bold Italianate neighbors.

10. 28 West Fifth Street c. 1870
The most elaborate of the Fifth Street mansions, this Italianate structure is best known for its elegant recessed doorway. Note the carved heads that sit atop the flanking columns.

11. 14 West Fifth Street c. 1894
This Victorian Gothic church presents a gabled façade with a central Tudor style arch that draws attention to the entrance. The parish of the First Christian Church has served the Mutter Gottes district since 1864.

12. 103 & 109 West Fifth Street c. 1870
Set well above the modern street level, these equally imposing stone dwellings are characteristic of many such Italianate mansions built following the Civil War. Note the unusual sweeping staircase at the approach to 103.

Before continuing, look to the south, up Montgomery Street to find #10.

13. 511 Montgomery Street c. 1850
Originally built as a five bay structure, this home has been significantly altered by the demolition of half of the initial

structure. The large front yard is also unusual for this area, suggesting that this home was once a farm house in the country, long before the current neighborhood was built up around it. Of special note on this building is the classical cornice devoid of decoration brackets, and the Flemish bond brickwork. This pattern of brickwork is a rare find in that such structural integrity was expensive and time consuming in its alternate header and stretcher pattern.

14. 102 West Sixth Street c. 1898

This structure, once Covington's Central Firehouse was built in the Romanesque style, characterized by the round arches found on the front of the building. Used as a firehouse until 1975, it has since been adapted to use as a restaurant and bar.

This ends the Mutter Gottes Walking Tour. Please stop by the Economic Development and Community Relations Department at 638 Madison Avenue, Rm. 407, to pick up the other Walking tours. There are seven tours in all and each is unique in its own way.

*Downtown
Latonia
Licking Riverside
Main Strasse
Mutter Gottes
Seminary Square
Wallace Woods*