

*GUIDE TO*  
*NORTH RIDGE SCENIC BYWAY*  
*LORAIN COUNTY, OHIO*



*Charles E. Herdendorf*

*Sheffield Village Historical Society  
and  
Avon Historical Society*

---

***GUIDE TO  
THE NORTH RIDGE SCENIC BYWAY  
LORAIN COUNTY, OHIO***

*by*

***Charles E. Herdendorf, Ph.D.***

*Professor of Biological & Geological Sciences  
The Ohio State University*

*Prepared for  
Sheffield Village Historical Society  
Village of Sheffield, Ohio  
and  
Avon Historical Society  
City of Avon, Ohio*

*July 2010*

---

---

# ***GUIDE TO THE NORTH RIDGE SCENIC BYWAY LORAIN COUNTY, OHIO***

***Written by***

***Charles E. Herdendorf, Ph.D.***

*Professor of Biological & Geological Sciences  
The Ohio State University*

Narrative and graphic layout by Ricki C. Herdendorf,  
EcoSphere Associates, P.O. Box 66, Put-in-Bay, Ohio 43456

*EcoSphere Technical Report No. 251*

This publication has been produced with financial assistance to the Sheffield Village Historical Society & Cultural Center, Avon Historical Society, Village of Sheffield, Ohio, and City of Avon, Ohio from the Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio Scenic Byways Program [Agreement No. 15339] and the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, National Scenic Byway Program [Grant No. OHSB801].

***Citation:***

Herdendorf, Charles E. 2010. *Guide to the North Ridge Scenic Byway*. Sheffield Village Historical Society and Avon Historical Society, Sheffield Village and Avon, Ohio. 284 pp.

***Cover:***

Winter scene at the Milton Garfield House, Garfield Farms, 4921 Detroit Road, Sheffield Village, Ohio (photograph by Charles E. Herdendorf, December 4, 2005).

© 2010 Charles E. Herdendorf

All rights reserved. No parts of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior written permission of the author. Photographs by the author except where noted.

---

# Table of Contents

PREFACE .....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vi
SCENIC BYWAY MAP.....	viii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
GEOLOGY .....	2
Landforms .....	2
Formation of North Ridge.....	3
Bedrock Geology .....	9
Glacial Deposits.....	15
NATURAL HISTORY .....	17
Soils.....	17
Native Forest Vegetation.....	17
Early Records of Native Vegetation.....	20
Today's Vegetation .....	28
Wildlife .....	30
PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY.....	36
Native American Occupation.....	36
Archaeological Sites .....	47
CULTURAL HISTORY .....	52
Connecticut Western Reserve .....	52
History of Sheffield.....	55
Avon History .....	66
SCENIC BYWAY TOUR .....	73
Tour Introduction .....	73
Sheffield Township .....	80
Sheffield Village.....	85
Avon.....	134
AFTERWORD.....	207
APPENDIXES .....	209
Appendix A: Checklist of Vascular Plants .....	210
Appendix B: Checklist of Fish.....	227
Appendix C: Checklist of Birds.....	229
Appendix D: Checklist of Amphibians, Reptiles, and Mammals .....	235
GLOSSARY.....	238
Part 1. Glossary of Architectural Styles .....	238
Part 2. Glossary of Architectural Elements.....	249
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES CITED.....	256
INDEX .....	264



*Barn reflected in a farm pond on North Ridge in Sheffield.*

---

## PREFACE

Welcome to the *North Ridge Scenic Byway*. You are traveling along the crest of an ancient beach ridge created some 12,800 years ago at the southern shore of glacial Lake Warren—a predecessor of our modern Lake Erie. A few millennia after its formation, early Native Americans began to arrive in the area and use the sandy ridge as a convenient byway to traverse the territory that would become northern Ohio. Down through the centuries the ridge continued to serve this purpose, variously named North Ridge and Detroit Roads, and eventually being designated as Ohio Route 254.

Proposed by the Historical Societies of Avon and Sheffield Village, and endorsed by municipal and county officials, on August 21, 2007, the Ohio Department of Transportation designated the entire 9-mile segment of Ohio Route 254 in Lorain County as the *North Ridge Scenic Byway*. Starting at its western terminus at the intersection with Ohio Route 57 in Sheffield Township, Ohio Route 254 traverses the eastern portion of the Township, the Village of Sheffield, and the City of Avon before passing into Cuyahoga County. These communities are rich with human history that begins several thousand years ago with Native American Indian settlements on North Ridge and along French Creek. Soon after the War of 1812, hearty pioneers from New England and New York recognized the natural attributes here and began to settle the new land, naming it after their towns in the East. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century German immigrants purchased land and enriched the communities with their heritage. Churches and schools were built and rural villages flourished as they produced men and women of outstanding strength and character.

A recent highway survey revealed that 26,000 vehicles travel the *North Ridge Scenic Byway* each day. Today, the communities along the *Scenic Byway* are in transition, as they become modern residential and commercial centers. As they move forward, it is fitting that the efforts of those who built these towns before be recognized, along with their contributions to our heritage. Much can be learned about ourselves, and how to cope with our current struggles, by understanding the hardships and joys of our predecessors. To this end the *North Ridge Scenic Byway* is dedicated.

Charles E. Herdendorf, Director  
Sheffield Village Historical Society



*North Ridge Scenic Byway sign at Garfield Bridge over the Black River.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals have graciously contributed to the preparation of this guidebook. The Sheffield Village Historical Society and the Avon Historical Society wish to thank them for their kind assistance and we are pleased to hereby acknowledge their efforts. The production of this guidebook would not have been possible without a grant from the National Scenic Byways Program of the U.S. Department of Transportation (Grant No. OHSB801), administered by the Ohio Department of Transportation (Agreement No. 15339). We gratefully acknowledge these agencies for their support.

Robert J. Bartolotta, Botanist, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland, Ohio—flora of North Ridge.

William L. Bird, Director, Lorain County Historical Society, Elyria, Ohio—history of Avon and Sheffield Townships.

Dr. James Bissell, Curator of Botany and Natural Areas, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland, Ohio—flora of Sheffield.

Doris Burrell [deceased], Historian, Sheffield Village, Ohio—early history of Sheffield.

Ken Carney, Lorain County Engineer, Elyria, Ohio—vehicle usage of scenic byway.

Brent Eberhard, Archivist, Ohio Historic Preservation Office, Columbus, Ohio—Ohio Historic Inventory data for Avon and Sheffield Townships.

Dr. Delbert Fischer [deceased], Past President, Avon Historical Society, Avon, Ohio—documentation of Detroit Road history.

Jean Fischer, Avon Historical Society, Avon, Ohio—historic photographs of Detroit Road.

Carol Hartwig, Chair, Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission, Avon, Ohio—historic photographs and landmark designations.

Ricki Crowl Herdendorf, Publication Designer, EcoSphere Associates, Put-in-Bay, Ohio—edit and layout design for scenic byway guidebook and brochure.

John Hoag, Trustee, Sheffield Village Historical Society, Sheffield, Ohio—greenhouse industry on North Ridge; editorial contributions.

Patsy Hoag, Secretary, Sheffield Village Historical Society, Sheffield, Ohio—editorial contributions.

Thomas K. Hoerrle, Trustee, Sheffield Village Historical Society, Elyria, Ohio co-author of North Ridge Scenic Byway proposal and historic photographs.

John D. Hunter, Mayor, Village of Sheffield, Ohio—grant facilitation and administration.

Lynne Lisner, Marketing and Communications Manager, Lorain County Visitors Bureau, Amherst, Ohio—Lorain County Beautiful Awards.

Karis Lyon, Librarian, Lorain County Historical Society, Elyria, Ohio—early history of Avon and Sheffield Townships.

---

Steven McQuillin of Steven McQuillin & Associates, Westlake, Ohio—inventory of historic buildings of Avon and significance of a Route 254 scenic byway.

Dr. Brian Redmond, Curator, Department of Archaeology, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland, Ohio—archaeological sites of Lorain County.

Joseph D. Richvalsey, Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission, Avon, Ohio—architectural and editorial contributions.

Frank Root, Sr. [deceased], resident, Avon, Ohio—history of Logan Gas Company and greenhouse industry.

Franco Ruffini, Deputy Director, Ohio Historic Preservation Office, Columbus, Ohio—Ohio Archaeological Inventory data for Avon and Sheffield Townships.

Steven A. Shepherd, LPA Coordinator, Ohio Department of Transportation, District Three, Ashland, Ohio—grant administration.

Lois Shinko, Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission, Avon, Ohio—historic photographs and landmark descriptions.

James A. Smith, Mayor, City of Avon, Ohio—grant facilitation.

Taylor J. Smith, President, Avon Historical Society, Avon, Ohio—history of Avon Township and documentation of early Avon homes; editorial contributions.

Paul Staley, Policy Coordinator, Ohio Department of Transportation, Columbus, Ohio—grant submission and administration.

Christine E. White, Avon Historical Society, Avon, Ohio—editorial contributions and document procurement.

Ralph D. White, Archivist, Avon Historical Society, Avon, Ohio—co-author of North Ridge Scenic Byway proposal and Avon photographs.

Robert Young, Scenic Byways Program Manager, Ohio Department of Transportation, Columbus, Ohio—grant administration.

Kenneth Wright, Ohio Department of Transportation, District Three, Ashland, Ohio—grant administration.



*North Ridge Scenic Byway streetscape in Sheffield Village.*

# SCENIC BYWAY MAP



Map courtesy of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



North Ridge Scenic Byway (SR 254) Lorain County, Ohio (map courtesy of Lorain County Engineer).

---

# INTRODUCTION

The *North Ridge Scenic Byway* follows a historic route, west of the Cleveland, Ohio urban area, through the rural landscape of Avon and Sheffield. The roadway follows one of the more significant topographic features of the region, an ancient beach ridge. Ohio Route 254 is the roadway through the *Byway* corridor. Once known as North Ridge Road along its entire length in Lorain County, the segment east of the Black River is now named Detroit Road.

Most of the roadway remains two-lane, except at commercial areas where an additional lane or two has recently been added. Detroit Road has a rich history as the major route leading east from Detroit to Cleveland, hence its name, derived from an era when Chicago and Toledo were not yet established. Even earlier, it was a route for Native American migration, the most northerly practicable pathway south of the Lake Erie shoreline with its rugged cliffs and deep tributary ravines that made passage difficult at best.

North Ridge was also a favored route of early European pioneer settlement as its soil was rich and easily worked due to the sandy beaches of an Ice Age prehistoric lake. Just a few hundred feet north and south of the ridge, the soils are markedly different and less productive. North Ridge also made an excellent location for houses and barns, as they could be placed so as to provide for walkout basements and barns with two principal levels. Several of these “bank-barns” can still be seen along the roadway.

In an era before railroads and with no east-west canals, North Ridge provided a less muddy and well-drained pathway for horse-drawn wagons and stagecoaches. The *Byway* is lined with some of the largest and most imposing pre-Civil War farmhouses in the region. Sheffield and Avon retain some magnificent farmhouses, many with foundations and some with exterior walls, made of locally quarried sandstone.

The *North Ridge Scenic Byway* gently meanders through a diverse assemblage of agricultural, residential, commercial, and natural settings. Travelers are treated to an array of working farms [a number of them with mid-19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouses], parks, attractive commercial centers, and small-town neighborhoods with colorful antique shops, gift stores, and restaurants. The purpose of this guide is to highlight the natural and cultural features that occur within this scenic corridor and thereby enhance the pleasure of your journey along North Ridge. The term *corridor* is used here to indicate the terrain visible to the traveler along Ohio Route 254, and in a few cases, notable places and features that can be seen with a minor side trip.

This guide is organized to familiarize the traveler with the natural and historic setting of the North Ridge corridor first and then provide a mile point by mile point illustrated description of the most noteworthy features, both natural and cultural, that can be seen while traversing the *North Ridge Scenic Byway*. Enjoy your trip!