

Belmont: Then and Now



Adelia Acklen

Belmont's history began in the mid-1800's, when Adelia and Joseph Acklen, residents of Louisiana, built their summer home, "Belle Monte" on 180 acres south of Nashville, overlooking the city. The estate stretched from its present location to Hillsboro Road (21st Ave.) on the west, to Franklin Road (8th Ave.) on the east, and on the south to Woodmont Boulevard.

Besides the elegant mansion of Italian villa design, there were extensive gardens, a zoo and a lake with alligators. In addition, the property also boasted numerous wrought-iron gazebos, (many of which remain today), fountains, a 300-foot conservatory and a separate art gallery. It is understandable that it became quite a cultural center for the city. Nashville society doted on invitations to the lavish parties given by the famed hostess.

Before her death in 1887, the then Mrs. Adelia Cheatham offered the property for sale for the purpose of establishing a school. Her dream, however, was not realized until three years after her death.

The Belle Monte Estate, circa 1854, in a painting which hangs in the permanent collection of Cheekwood Fine Arts Center.

