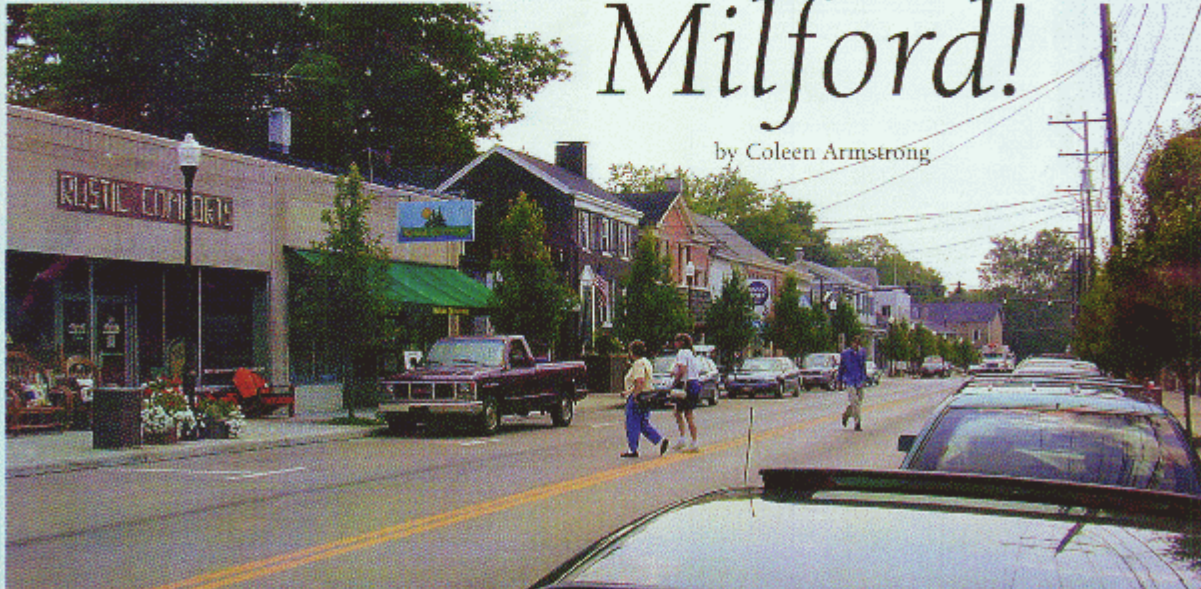


an afternoon  
**stroll**

# Milford!

by Coleen Armstrong



Some of the best surprises come in small packages. This cozy neighborhood may be tucked away, but once you find it, you'll never forget its charm.

Two decades ago, Milford might have been described as a sleepy little town, easily overlooked as drivers passed through on their hurried ways toward Terrace Park or Mariemont. Today it's wide awake and ready for visitors. Although really a city (since 1980, in fact), it still wears a small-town costume, and fans like it that way. If you love old-fashioned brick buildings with wrought iron railings which offer old-world ambiance in a neat row, friendly retailers who love to chat about their wares, along with some very unusual finds, then Milford is the place for you.

Our first stop: Row House Gallery, where co-owners Nancy and Janie Meyer are well known in the art world as lovers of wildlife, whimsical and western-themed works. Your eyes will be drawn to the treasures created by the likes of James Christensen, Bev Doolittle, Will Bullas and Mark Eberhard - all of whom regard Nancy and Janie as personal friends. So do their regular clients, who stop in to show off grandbaby photos, leave plates of fresh-baked cookies, even mail postcards to the gallery while away on vacation. You also never know when a local artist, perhaps someone who painted or sketched one of your most cherished pieces, will drop by just to hang out.



Row House Gallery

Next stop: Switzer Arms, which carries wartime memorabilia. Think you're not interested in battles - or in seeing guns, swords, daggers, flags and uniforms? Think again. We guarantee that once you start browsing, you'll have a tough time getting out of there. Imagine the fascination of a World War I doughboy's hat, silverware owned by Eva Braun, a Civil War musket or a steel helmet (c. 1600) from a castle in England. Owner Bill Switzer frequently buys medals and ribbons, even purple hearts from veterans and their wives and is continually astonished, he says, to hear how close they came to throwing those valuable artifacts away. To those who suggest that perhaps Bill shouldn't deal with things that once promoted so much violence, he replies, "Well, you can't bury history. My son is a social studies teacher at Loveland High School, and he borrows some of these things for his classes.

" Speaking of history, Milford has several antiques shops from which to choose. Most are delightfully musty, the kind that make you feel as if you're poking around in someone's attic. There's also The Mercantile, which houses several different vendors under one roof, and everything from embroidered dish towels to garden accessories. No hard-sells in Milford; owners will let you look, comment, ask questions. Nobody seems rushed. Definitely a small-town atmosphere!

## No hard-sells in Milford; owners will let you look, comment, ask questions.

At Lots of Dolls, which carries collectibles ranging in price from \$2 to \$5000, we ask to speak to the owner. "He's out running the streets looking for cats," a salesperson named Mark tells us. Huh? "A stray cat which we feed just had babies. After the last rain she carried them one by one across the street - in heavy traffic! We're not sure where she wound up." Owner Malcom Burnside enters, looking triumphant. He's located the mother and her little ones. We introduce ourselves, then Malcolm happily points out several beautiful dolls by Hildegard Gunzel - looking so lifelike that they're almost spooky. After a pause, he inquires, "By any chance do you need a kitten?"



Lots of Dolls

## Something about it reminded me of Europe.

Did we mention the small-town atmosphere? At Main Street Trading Company, Tom and Belinda Abruzeeze focus on 18th and 19th century reproductions of Shaker furniture, along with folk art, period lighting, pottery, candles, soaps and floor coverings - "the highest quality handmade products by American artists," says Tom. "It's almost like going to Colonial Williamsburg!" He actually makes the furniture himself, and when you examine it amidst fragrant candle scents like buttered rum, snickerdoodle and baked apple pie, you have to agree it's like stepping back in time. Rustic Comforts is a must-see if you're furnishing a log home - or perhaps you just want a close-to-nature



Gay's Custom Design

look for a bedroom or office. "It's not about geography; it's more about lifestyle," says co-owner Paula Jenkins. Check out the woven blankets, the Smokey-the-Bear themes and, of course, the log-look furniture. Something really cool: wildlife china by Zrike, with faux antler tableware. Each place setting features a different animal, and bear or deer tracks decorate the edges of the dessert plates.

It's time for a late lunch, so we take a break at Freeport Attractions. No ordinary cafe, this one has a reading room complete with a loveseat and chair, bistro tables, a collection of books to browse – also frames, glassware and pottery for sale. And lavender faux walls! (Not to mention an incredibly yummy bean salad.) Owner Sharon Kinder-Geiger recalls driving through Milford for the first time several years ago. "Something about it reminded me of Europe. It's such a nice little town." Attractions originally began as a craft shop which just happened to have a coffee service, but has since evolved into a pastry-deli-breakfast-lunch retreat. "I lived overseas for a long time," Sharon explains. "There people just take the time to stop, relax and enjoy food and coffee.



Freeport Attractions

I thought it would be nice to have a place like that right here." Warm, friendly, unpretentious - and a delightful surprise. Just like Milford itself.

## An historical note

Originally built on a survey belonging to a Revolutionary War veteran who lived in Virginia and never actually visited, Milford was sold in 1802, then resold in 1806 and laid out as 46 lots. The choice lot was #1, where the Millcroft now stands. Its price was \$35. Water power ensured the growth of the community; the first mill was built in 1803. Around 1815 Milford got its name because it was the first safe ford north of the Ohio River across the Little Miami. By then several brick "row" houses had been erected on Main Street. At one time the only telephone in town was located at the Adams Bakery on the corner of Main and Garfield. In 1907 street lights were installed. The town band celebrated by marching from light to light as they played. Roads and streets were then merely dust in summer and mud in winter. Until 1910, sidewalks were do-it-yourself, made of cinders, gravel or planks. 1922 saw the beginning of home mail delivery. In 1956 the first Milford Shopping Center was opened. In 1971 the village gained a city manager, and in 1980, with a census count of 5,232, Milford attained city status.

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