

# Return to those thrilling days of yesteryear . . . in small-town Ohio

**R**ICHFIELD, OHIO. Contemporary travelers are very comfortable in a 19th century world, especially when they are within driving distance of urban high-rises as they are here, halfway between Cleveland and Akron.

The sprawling clapboard shape of the Taverner of Richfield, once a stagecoach stop between the two cities, dominates the center of this old village. Eight miles away in Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, another 19th century village dominates the scene: Hale Farm and Village, restored by the Western Reserve Historical Society.

The farm is served by a turn-of-the-century stream train that runs weekly down the Cuyahoga Valley, roughly parallel to the old Ohio and Erie Canal, a waterway that was responsible for all this activity in eastern Ohio a century ago.

This was farm country in the early 1800s, when produce was easy to grow but hard to transport to waterways that fed rich eastern markets. The Ohio and Erie changed all that in mid-century, when canal boats carried produce out of places like Hale Farm and brought goods and passengers into villages like Richfield.

**SINGLE TRAVELERS**, as well as families, feel very much at home in this century-old setting, whether it is restored or as active a part of 20th century life as is the Taverner of Richfield. Photos of Lewis and Amanda Elias hang over the fireplace amid the polished wood and the early-American wallpaper of the dining room. Elias was the canal builder who constructed this tavern as an inn in 1886. It has been through several colorful stages in its history.

"In its best days, the Rockefeller family would rent it for whole summers at a time. During its worst days, it had a 'beer and shot bar' downstairs and eight rooms for 'ladies of the night' upstairs.

It wasn't in very good shape when Mel Rose, a Stouffers Hotel employee with three years' service in Detroit, bought the dilapidated old building and restored it as a tavern in 1977.

Today it is rated by Mobil Guides as a four-star restaurant and by its regular customers as a charming and comfortable place to eat, especially for Sunday brunch or dinner.

There are no bedrooms in the Taverner now, but the Holiday-Inn Coliseum is nearby and there are plenty of good accommodations a 20-minute drive north in Cleveland or south in Akron.

Someday the Western Reserve Historical Society hopes to have an inn on Hale Farm property, but in the meantime, you can visit the houses and craft buildings on a day trip.

**THE FIRST THING** you must do in a 19th-century restored village is slow down until you can hear the birds



**Iris Jones**  
contributing travel editor



The Taverner of Richfield, constructed in 1886, went through a steady decline until its restoration in 1977.

clattering in seven bird languages amid the trees between the blacksmith's shop and the woodworking shop, and the thong of heels across the wooden bridge that leads to the smokehouse, the barn and the Hale farmhouse.

There is a smell of sawdust that goes naturally with the buzz of a sawmill and busy sounds from the old Sugar House, where the potters work now.

At noon on Saturday, you will hear a sound that was familiar here a hundred years ago: the whistle of the Cuyahoga Valley Line Steam Railroad. The train does one round-trip between Cleveland and Akron every Saturday. It can be boarded in Cleveland at 11 a.m. or at Hale Farm at 12:15 p.m. It arrives in Akron at 1 p.m., where free shuttle buses are waiting to take you to various sightseeing locations in the city.

The train leaves Akron for Hale Farm and Cleveland at 3:45 p.m., but only return-trip passengers are boarded there.

For more information, contact Hale Farm and Village, 2655 Oak Hill Road, Bath, Ohio 44212.



The Hale Farm and Village operates as it would have in the 19th century. Fields are plowed the old way — without gasoline.



The Taverner today is rated as a four-star restaurant.

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