

Belmont Mansion

Belmont Mansion, an ornate Italianate villa built in 1850 outside the city limits of Nashville, was the home of Joseph and Adelia Acklen.

Belmont was built on one of the highest hills in Nashville. Originally, the estate was known as Bellemonte, Italian for “beautiful mountain.”

The mansion today is furnished in Victorian opulence with original and period pieces, gilded mirrors, marble statues from Europe, and oil paintings. During your guided tour you will learn about Belmont’s mistress, Adelia Acklen, who prevailed throughout the Civil War, three marriages, ten children, and the management of one of the largest fortunes in America.

An extraordinary character, Adelia Acklen was one of the wealthiest women in the United States, with land holdings in Tennessee, Louisiana, and Texas.

At the time of the Civil War, the 180-acre estate included formal gardens with statuary and gazebos, a bear house, zoo, deer park, bowling alley, and art gallery. Many lavish formal balls were held in the mansion, usually on moonlit nights.

Joseph Acklen, who was Adelia’s second husband, was forced to flee to Louisiana when Union troops occupied Nashville in February 1862 and he never returned to Belmont.

During the war, Adelia’s husband died at their Louisiana plantation, and she was forced to travel there to preserve her property holdings. By plying the Union and Confederate authorities against each other, she was able to sell 2,000 bales of cotton to buyers in London. She traveled abroad after the war to collect her money and spent it on a shopping spree across Europe.

Although the mansion was located at the Union fortification line, it was not damaged during the Battle of Nashville in 1864. Union scouts used the 105-foot-tall brick water tower, which still exists, as a lookout point and to relay signals. The mansion served as the headquarters for Union Gen. T.J. Wood during the battle.



The mansion, the second largest antebellum house still standing, features the Grand Salon, the most elaborate domestic room in prewar Tennessee. It is furnished with Corinthian columns, chandeliers, and fine paintings and statuary. A lavish reception for 2,000 guests was conducted there following Adelia’s marriage to her third husband in 1867.

The mansion also features a grand staircase, the lavishly furnished tete-a-tete room, upstairs bedrooms, parlors, pantries with original china, the library, and the front hall with the marble statues of “Ruth Gleaning” and “Sleeping Children.”

Belmont Mansion was named a National Historic Place in 1971 and opened to the public in 1976.

Belmont Mansion is located on the campus of Belmont University at 1900 Belmont Boulevard. The phone number is (615) 386-4459. Guided tours are available. Admission is charged; group rates are available. Hours are June through August, Mon.-Sat., 10-4 and Sun., 2-5; Sept. through May, Tues.-Sat., 10-4.

