



Bellaire

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Before the Ice Age the Ohio River flowed north-eastward but the ice dammed up the water so a new channel was cut to the south-west. Erosion created the "shelf" of which much of Bellaire stands and at one time Noble Street above Forty-first passed through a gravel bank giving that area the nickname, "The Cut." The railroad had excavated the cut but later abandoned it.

Eventually Mound Builders occupied this area but evidence of them have disappeared from within the city limits. This is also largely true of the Indians although a grave was found near Thirty-sixth and Belmont Streets. Probably there was no Indian village within the present city boundaries but Mingo, Shawnees and Delawares (to a lesser extent) were known to have frequented the area. The Mingo were especially savage but the Indian threat was removed by 1795 at the time of General Wayne's Greenville Treaty.

Bellaire was established as a village later than many other towns in Belmont County but let us follow the story to see how she did get going and for many years became the leading city in the county.

John Duer bought the central area of Bellaire from the Steubenville land Office in 1792 but being more interested in making a speculator's profit soon sold it to John Buchannan (July 3, 1795) who in turn left it to his three sons. The son whose part lay south of Indian Run sold his part to John Rodefer and the others sold their shares to Jacob Davis who then lived for many years in a log cabin near the mouth of the creek. In 1834 he realized that he had a desirable site for a village so he had six acres of building lot sites surveyed above present Twenty-seventh Street west to present Belmont. He named it Bell Air after his former home in Maryland. His lots were gradually sold and for twenty years the village grew as any other might have. The mining and shipping of coal by John Fink was important from 1830. Jacob Heatherington, of "The House that Jack Built" fame became the outstanding coal operator later. The first church services were held in a cooper shop and the first church building, a Methodist, was erected in 1839 near Twenty-seventh and Union Streets. Nearby an 18' by 18' school building was built in the same year and Jacob Davis, Jr. was a teacher. Two years later a post office was established. Before this, mail had been delivered to Pultney, now Avondale, the early county seat.

Bellaire's first big boost for growth came with the building of the Central Ohio Railway (Now B. & O.) and Col. John Sullivan should receive the credit for bringing it to Bellaire which became the eastern terminus. Goods were unloaded at the foot of Thirty-third Street and the area was expanded to the north to accommodate the Cleveland and Pittsburgh (later Pennsylvania and now Penn Central). One track ran along the south side of the present First Methodist Church and the City Park. The U.S. Dry Cleaning building was originally a railway depot. A round house and cattle pens were located near what is now Central Avenue. Ferry boats carried the goods to south Wheeling where they were shipped on the B & O eastward. One can imagine the chaos at times when hogs and other animals got into broken sacks of grain, or literally upset people as they ran into them! The demand for a government to curb rowdiness and control drunkenness led to incorporation on May 5, 1860.

The Civil War added to the boom times in Bellaire. Fort Jefferson was established near where Rodefer-Gleason Plant is today and from it General McClelland moved troops across a pontoon bridge into West Virginia to keep it from being taken over by Southern forces. The B & O even had its own hotel and restaurants where its employees could stay over between runs from Columbus.

In 1860 a nail works was organized. In 1866 the Bellaire Nail Works started operation and it became the forerunner of the Carnegie Steel Mill which down through the First World War was listed as one of the leading U.S. mills.

The Stone Bridge which was copied after the Roman aqueducts was completed in 1871. The stone was cut as the present City Park site was floated down the river to build the piers. Horse cars appeared and the Bellaire Street Railway was organized in 1875. Bellaire's first water works was started in the same

year but down through the first World War public water pumps stood on many street corners. Bellaire High School graduated its first class consisting of four members in 1878 and football appeared in the 1890's. In 1877 the City Park was donated by Sullivan, Barnhart and Cowen. Bellaire's first bank was started in 1873 and the First National began operations in 1876. The O. R. & W. started service in 1879 and was abandoned in 1929. A part of Union Street was paved in 1887 and the story is told of how a piece of a bowling alley was laid along the side of Belmont Street to make a "side walk." Bellaire was reorganized as a city in 1878 when it had a population of 8,000 having grown in forty years from a six cabin village dependent on trade and shipping. Since Bellaire had very excellent transportation facilities she was able to challenge St. Clairsville for the location of the county seat until the coming of the automobile.

Bellaire's first glass house was built in 1861 and during the 1870's and 1880's the industry was probably the city's leading one. J. H. Sullivan was an outstanding promoter and was personally interested in about half of the plants. In the 1880's half of these were lured away by the promise of cheap natural gas in north-western Ohio and Indiana but by 1912 the local industry was employing more people and producing fifty percent more product. In the 1870's the present Rodefer-Gleason was organized as the Rodefer Plant when the Rodefers bought the old National Glass Company, and shortly after 1900 the Imperial was organized. It is well to report here that Bellaire did not give up when the glass plant left but set about to see what could be done to remedy the situation.

Meanwhile the enamel industry was started and Tom Strong, who had worked in the glass plants, became a leader in the enamel industry. He developed an important patented process which made Bellaire one of the greatest enamel centers of the early 1900's. Unfortunately he moved to Sebring, Ohio. The Phillips Stamping Plant occupies the building of the last enamel plant. The site of the latter and the present Kroger site were once occupied by enamel and glass plants. It is strange that Bellaire hasn't a single park or important street named after Jacob Davis, Col. Sullivan or Tom Strong!

Bellaire has been changing over the years. In the loop from Crescent Street up Belmont Street to Thirty-seventh past St. John's and down Guernsey past Busack's to Crescent Street a pedestrian should be able to pick out fifty to seventy five significant changes in the appearance of Bellaire which have taken place in that many years. This is especially evident on Thirty-second Street from Union Street to Hamilton.

Bellaire will continue to change. The building of the new Number Seven Highway may seem like a major surgical procedure but it will take many dwellings out of the flood area. Bellaire has been fortunate in the past that the main business district has been above the flood danger. In time the Bellaire housing should be better off with the development of Bel Capre and the Winding Hill area away from the highest floods.

Bellaire still has most of the advantages it enjoyed in the past. We have the highways, the river and an abundance of coal but we do need leaders with vision as we had in the past. Given the opportunity many of the young people who have been leaving Bellaire for openings elsewhere may stay to develop our potentialities. We need small industries to supplement what we have to give employment and diversity in industry. At one time Bellaire had small industries like shoe factories, ice plants and brick kilns. What can we develop today in this respect?

Bellaire is outstanding in the financial savings field and we have the coal fields around us. We have been producing leaders in many fields of endeavors, and with resources, potential manpower and leadership can we not develop a bright future?

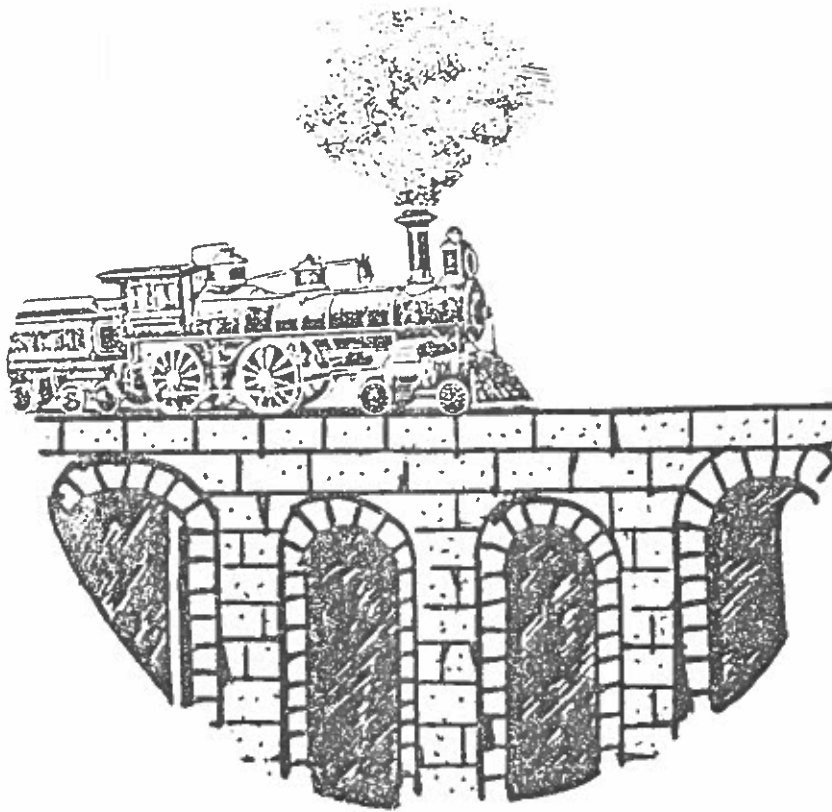
May we quote from R.C. Faris as reported in the BELLAIRE LEADER in the Armistice Day edition of 1928:

"Now some of the things we think are indispensable were not invented then but began to need things and realizing how they went about getting improvements that they wanted, I have always been struck by the fact they did not call for outside help, but did things themselves. There were no bonuses offered. The Nail Works started as the Bellaire Works with a charter that allowed it to do almost everything and was owned and operated largely by the workmen themselves. The Belmont Glasshouse and the Bellaire Window

Glass House, the Union, the Crystal and the Enterprise and the National (later Rodefers) were all local organizations. Even the stone for the B. & O. bridge represents the work of local cutters.

“When the people of Bellaire many years ago, realized the need for a water works, such a plant was built; when they realized that artificial gas could be manufactured, the local gas house was started and when transportation was to be improved, it was the people of Bellaire who built their own street car lines
“Bellaire has possessed enterprising and capable men who have conducted the affairs of the city, and to them is credit due for the advancement that has been made here.”

(Mr. Faris had lived in Bellaire from 1871)



Were 150 Years Young