

*Bellaire High School 100th Year
All Class Reunion Celebration*

Event Information

SATURDAY, JULY 3

Entertainment Schedule

OPENING CEREMONIES

10:15 - 10:45

HOLLOW

11:00 - 1:00

**TAYLOR JO AND THE
COPPER CREEK BAND**

1:30 - 3:30

RYAN DODDS

4:00 - 5:00

STRAIT SHOOTER

5:30 - 7:30

EASY STREET

8:00 - 10:00

BHS

TOURS

11-3

Bellaire
Businesses will
be participating
to also serve
food/drinks!!

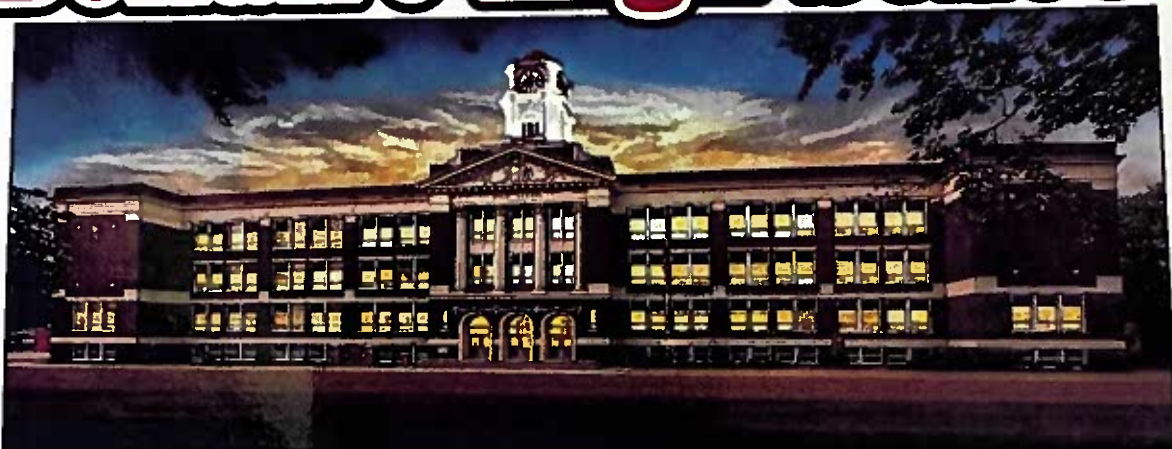
"DORA"

FOR ALCOHOLIC
BEVERAGES IN
EFFECT

Food Trucks / Stands 10-9

- Gingos Tacos
- Kirk's Ice Cream
- Ideal Provisions
- Honey's Kettle Corn
- Sons of Italy
- Central Grille
- Shreff's BBQ
- D. Sweets

Bellaire High School



1925-2025

Celebrating 100 Years

Education in Bellaire, Ohio

Written by Attorney Daniel Fritzl, Jr.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 proclaimed that "education shall ever be encouraged" in the lands northwest of the Ohio River. And education, as with any worthwhile pursuit, must be fostered by the hope, the faith and the belief that even just one person imparting knowledge to another can make a difference in a community. In 1802, Jacob Davis first settled upon the lands which we today, more than two centuries later, know as Bellaire, Ohio. Davis was by most accounts self taught, and a rugged pioneer of the Old Northwest. Yet the value of education was to become a part of the community which he founded.

In 1834, the son of Jacob Davis platted "Bell Air" along the north bank of McMahon's Creek, and within five years, the first school to provide education to the children of this community was established. In 1839, a small one story frame building measuring no more than 18 feet square was erected on Pultney Street (later 27th Street) near the first Methodist Church. Jacob Davis, son of the town's founder, was one of the first to teach the young people of the community at this school. As with most of Jacob Davis' Old Bell Air, the schoolhouse on Pultney Street can no longer be found. The land where it once sat now lies under the bridges and pavement of a highway we call State Route 7. Yet from this tiny school sprang forth an educational legacy boasting thousands of graduates of those schools which followed to meet the demands of a growing industrial community.

The early schoolhouse of old Bell Air was to be transformed during the 1850's when the Central Ohio Railroad connected the community to the state capitol in Columbus, and just two short years later in 1856, another railroad connected the community to Pittsburgh and Cleveland. There was an influx of immigrants to take on the many labors associated with building a new community. Many were unable to read, write or speak the English language, yet all were eager to learn. A growing community demanded schools, and in 1860, the Board of Education acquired a building known as the "shoe factory" on the corner of Belmont and Fifth (now 35th Street) for more space. The building was new, having been constructed only four years earlier. The old shoe factory building would serve the community until 1871, when the magnificent Union School, also known as Central School, was built on the corner of Guernsey and Fifth.

The Union School building was a four story brick Victorian structure complete with mansard roof, tower and town clock. It measured 85' by 90', and was complete with a large open hall on the fourth floor. The cost of construction was between \$18,000 to \$21,000.00 financed partly by a school levy which raised nearly half of the construction cost in one year. The curriculum taught when the school was opened to the students of Bellaire was Grammar, Arithmetic, Algebra, Book-keeping, Botany, Physiology, Philosophy, Chemistry, Geometry, Trigonometry, Rhetoric and Latin. The Superintendent of Schools had offices in the tower room on the fourth floor, and the Board of Education maintained offices just beneath. Girls entered the Central School from the north side, while the boys entered on the south side. Classes for high school students required them to climb and descend four flights of stairs each morning, recess, and at day's end.

Notes:



BHS Clock Tower at Dusk 1999

This magnificent school was constructed just as a legal confrontation over the ownership of the public square, or Union Square as some had called it, was brewing in the courts. The original proprietors of the town had proposed in 1857 to donate the land to Belmont County if the courthouse would be removed to Bellaire. This never occurred despite repeated attempts to have the county seat of justice removed from St. Clairsville. At the time of the completion of the Central School, the public square was no more than a field, and attempts by the original proprietors to take control of the square were resisted by the municipal government. This resulted in the filing of lawsuits which were not fully resolved until 1879 when the Ohio Supreme Court declared that the land was public land over which the municipal government now gained control. The land was then declared to be a park, and consequently, it became a campus of sorts for the Central School.

In 1887, the Central Auditorium and clock tower of the Central School were partially destroyed by fire following a lodge meeting and rehearsal held in the auditorium. Although it was not confirmed with certainty, officials believe that a cigar or cigarette left by one of those in attendance was the cause of the fire. This occurred in the spring, and disrupted classes while repairs were made. The basement of the Methodist Church was used for temporary classrooms until the Central School was fully repaired. Once the building was repaired, school resumed only to find that high school students were crowding out the other younger students. The high school actually took over the entire 4th floor auditorium by 1880, as well as 4 other classrooms. As the 20th Century approached, the need for a new and separate High School building was clear.

To ease the overcrowding at the Central School, the board of education moved to find other neighborhood schools. In 1876, the South Bellaire Building was erected at 18th Street and Guernsey. This building survived until 2022 as the oldest standing school building in the community. Shortly thereafter, a neighborhood school in North Bellaire was also constructed at 45th and Noble Streets. In 1888, another school was constructed as the Union Street School Building to alleviate overcrowding at the South Bellaire Building. A second Ward School Building was constructed in similar design to the Union Street Building along north Guernsey Street, and a new building was constructed at Indian Run. Despite all of these new buildings, however, the Central School was still overcrowded due to the large number of high school bound students.

In 1904, a new dedicated High School Building was built facing Guernsey Street just to the north of the Central School (Union School). This first high school building became known in later years as Central School, but when originally built, it was the first Bellaire High School. This new High School Building was intended to house all high school students in the community, yet by 1915, high school classes were once again overflowing into the Central School Building. Students from outside the Bellaire City School District came to Bellaire from one room county schools to obtain a high school diploma. Therefore, Bellaire was faced with educating not only the resident students of the community, but the outlying students from Pultney Township as well. By 1923, both the Central School and first High School buildings were overflowing with high school students. Only three rooms in the Central School building were occupied by elementary students.

The only solution to this overcrowding problem was clear—a new and much larger High School Building would have to be built. At the November election that year, a bond issue was submitted to the voters of the district, and by an overwhelming 3 to 1 margin the citizens of the community responded favorably to building the most magnificent of school buildings in all of eastern Ohio. This structure is the Bellaire High School that we know today, and which was completed in 1925. Now in 2025, this magnificent structure is 100 years old, and it continues to stand proudly as a symbol of the commitment to education in the Bellaire community.

The present high school building, the second dedicated high school building, stands on the site of the old *"shoe factory"* and *"brick row"* of buildings that faced the Park along 35th Street stretching west from Belmont Street. It also stands on the site of the Victorian Union School Building which had been at the corner of 35th and Guernsey since 1878. Stretching the entire width of the block, this magnificent new High School was finally large enough to meet the educational demand of the community. The present high school building is three stories tall with a full basement. A large public auditorium with balcony and theater seating holds 1,400 persons for stage, musical and athletic events. The distinctive mark of the building, however, is the clock tower that stands thirty feet above the roof, and which tells all the time and chimes out the hour to all who look and listen. This bell is was re-cast in 1888 when the bell from the old Union School was destroyed by fire. This re-cast bell was placed in the clock tower during construction of the new clock tower of the present high school, and has chimed the hour for the past 137 years.

Once the second High School building was completed, the first High School building became generally known as Central Building, and it served as a school for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade classes. Shortly after the construction of the first High School, the district also undertook to build new community based elementary schools. In 1906, a new First Ward School was built to serve this growing part of town, and to replace the original building built in 1876. The Union Street Building continued in use. Two years later, a new Rose Hill School was built to ease the crowding that had occurred in this area of the city. Prior to its construction, Rose Hill students were forced to hold classes in large homes, such as those formerly owned by James Kelly and Colonel J. H. Sullivan. The new Rose Hill School allowed all students to be housed in one building. In 1913, a new Gravel Hill School was built to replace the one at 45th and Noble Streets, and in 1917, the old Indian Run School was demolished, and the present building constructed on the same site. Key Ridge School followed in 1925, West Bellaire School in 1927, and finally Pultney School in 1958. These schools educated students in their own neighborhoods before sending them on to 8th grade classes in the Central Building (first high school), and then on to the present Bellaire High School.

In 1934, Bellaire High School relocated its football field to a more central location in the community. Prior to this time, all games were played at Riverview at the north end of the city above Gravel Hill. The new stadium, Nelson Field, was built during the great American Depression with the assistance of the WPA at a site lying along McMahon's Creek south of 26th Street. The new stadium was named for the beloved Superintendent of Schools, J. V. Nelson. Bleachers from Riverview were relocated to the new stadium, and



Alumni Auditorium



Bellaire High School at Dusk

the first game was played on September 21, 1934 against Shadyside. In later years, Nelson Field would be equipped with the only regulation track in the Ohio Valley, and became known as the site of the Bellaire Relays. In 2024, the long standing tradition of Saturday afternoon football games was challenged by the placement of lights at Nelson Field. The change was welcomed by most fans of the school. The Big Reds now play football on Friday evenings in the early season heat, and continue to play Saturday games during the cooler months of the football season.

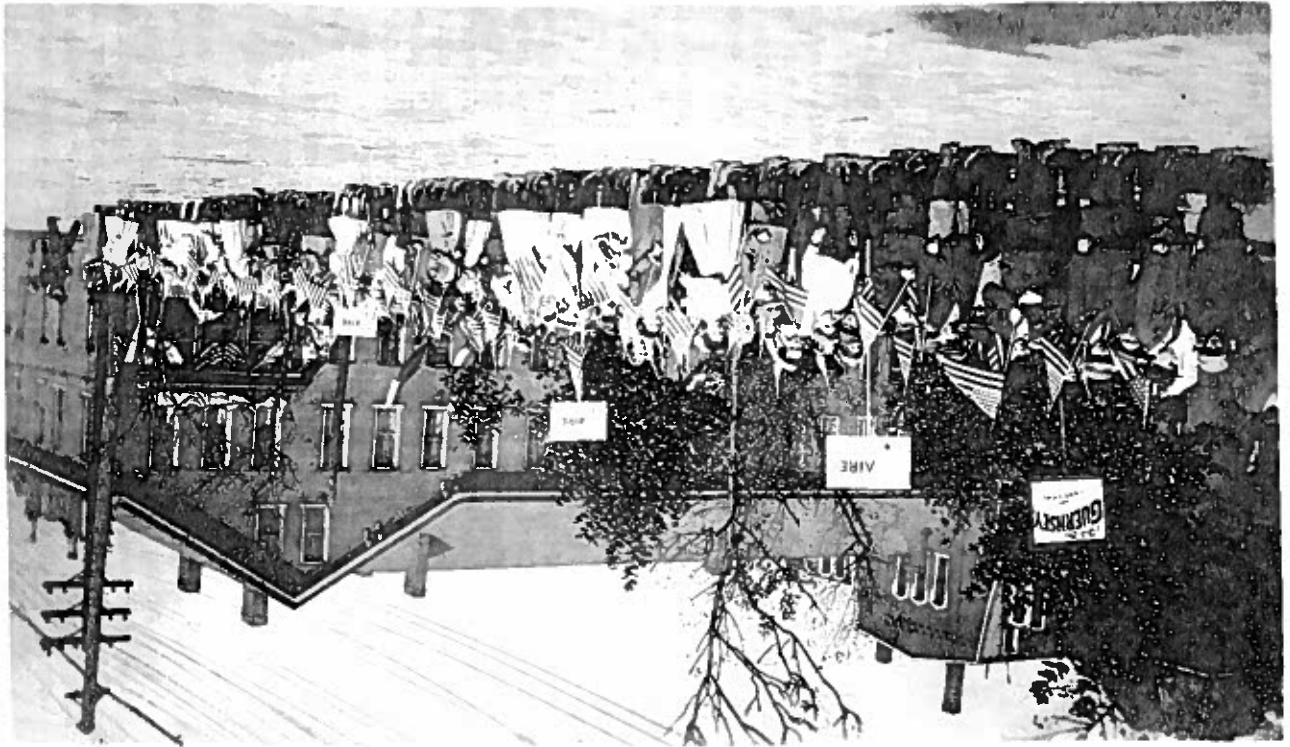
In 1965, Bellaire High School constructed a new Industrial Arts Building opposite the Central Building on Guernsey Street. This new facility cost \$104,000.00 including the land on which it was built. Drafting room; finishing rooms; and separate machine, woodworking, electrical and metal shops were included in the new building. In 1968, the old Central Building (the first high school) was torn down to give way to a new cafeteria, band room and gymnasium. After serving more than 64 years, it now was forced to yield to the progress of a growing school district, just as the Union School had been demolished to build the present High School. The new cafeteria, band room and Gymnasium complex stretches from the courtyard to the Bellaire High School Auditorium north to the corner of 36th Street. The new addition is brick, and was originally intended to match the high school. Problems were encountered during the construction process with obtaining the matching brick in time to complete the structure, and therefore, the brick work was completed with a more common brick with differing color, much to the consternation of the Board of Education of that time. The cafeteria is used student lunch meals and for meeting room space for the school and the public. The gymnasium is used for all athletic events played indoors, and has provided the large theater auditorium for graduations, musical and theater performances, and pep rallies.

Education has continued in Bellaire, Ohio for the past 186 years since that first schoolhouse where Jacob Davis acted as the school master. As we approach the second century of this heritage, the present Bellaire High School Building stands as *"Old Main"* of the school district to educate the youth of the community. It is as magnificent today as it was when built, and is the pride of the school district, and the *"faithful and true hearted"*.
HAIL ALMA MATER!



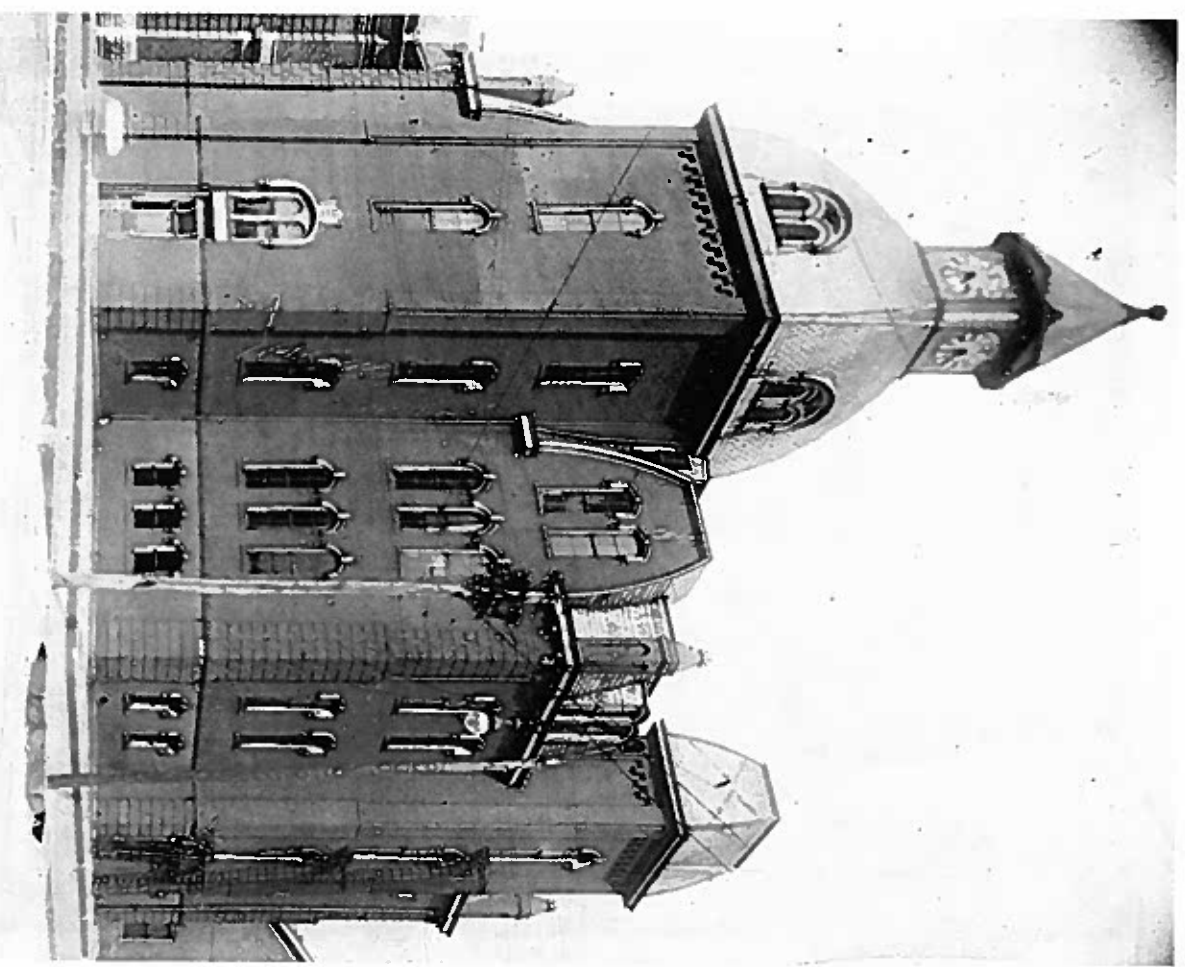
Clock Tower OHS Marker

The Shoe Factory and Brick Row
35th Street

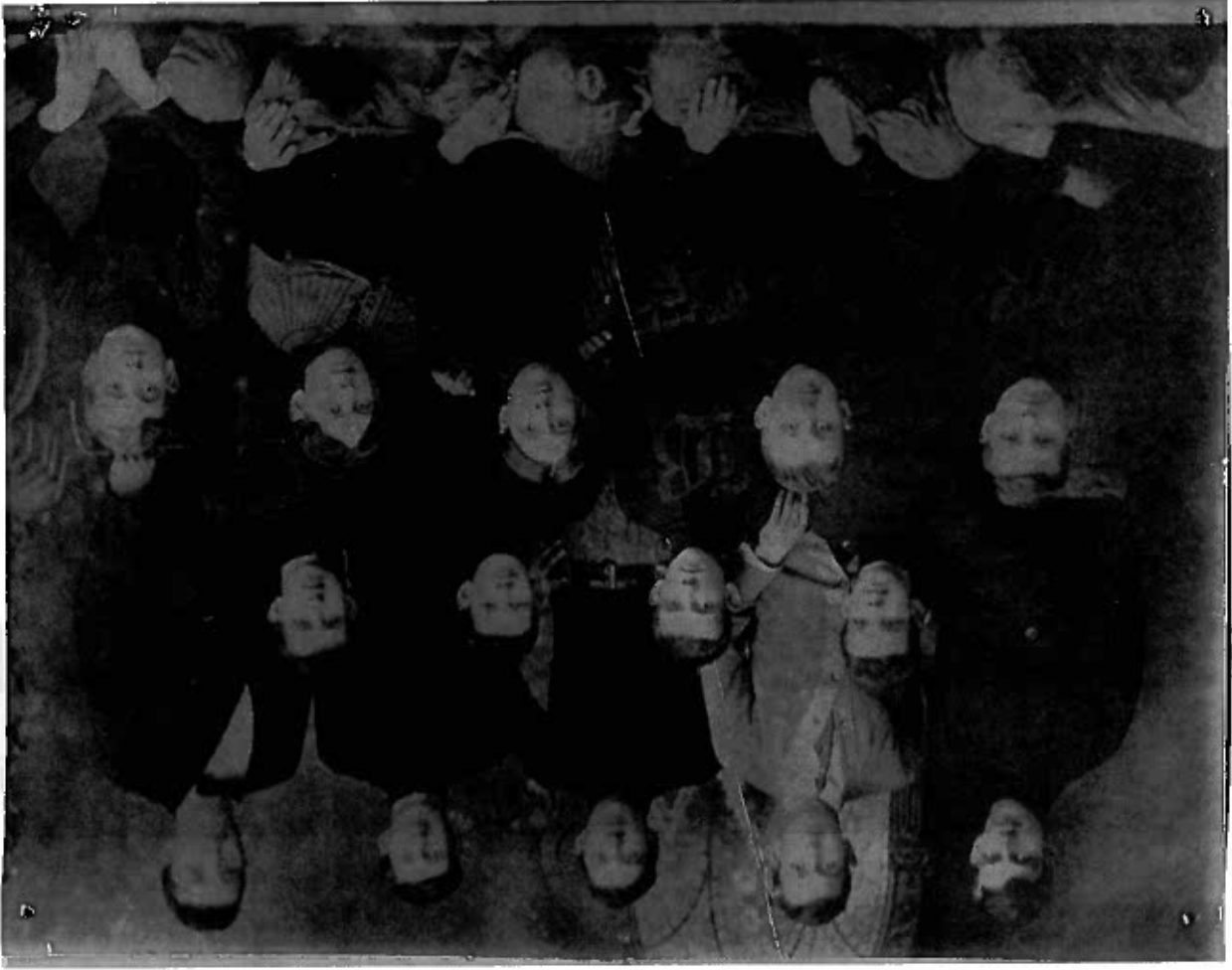




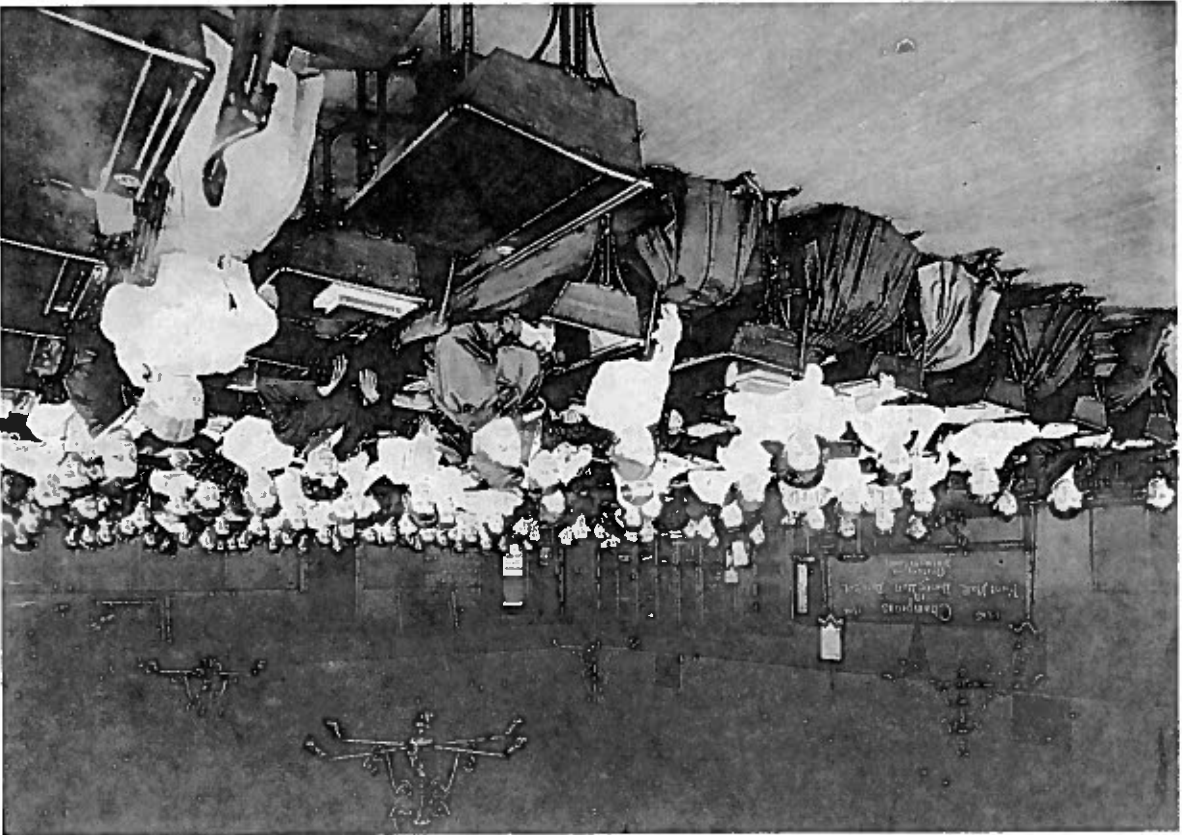
Woody Hayes at Nelson Field 1930's



**Union School
35th & Guernsey**



Union School - Third Floor



Nelson Field 1950's

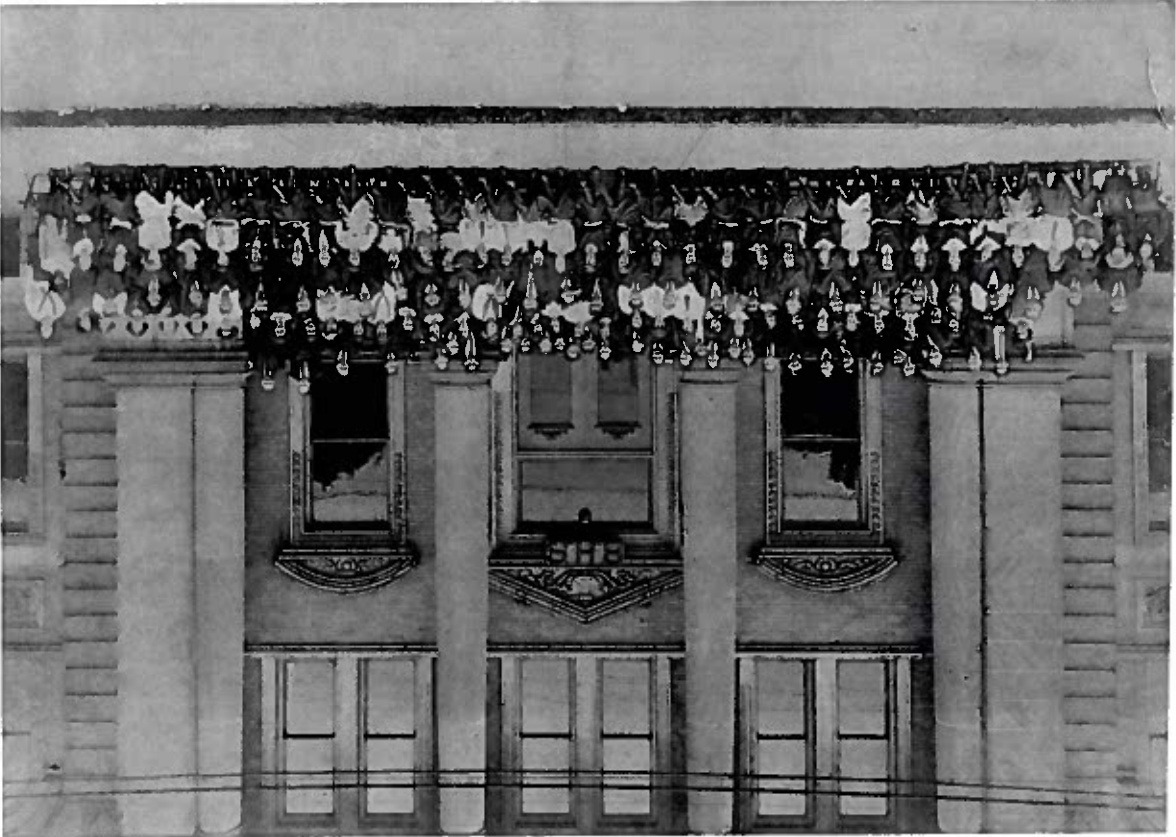


First Bellaire High School 1904 - 1925



Superintendent
J.V. Nelson

High School Graduation





Our New High School Building

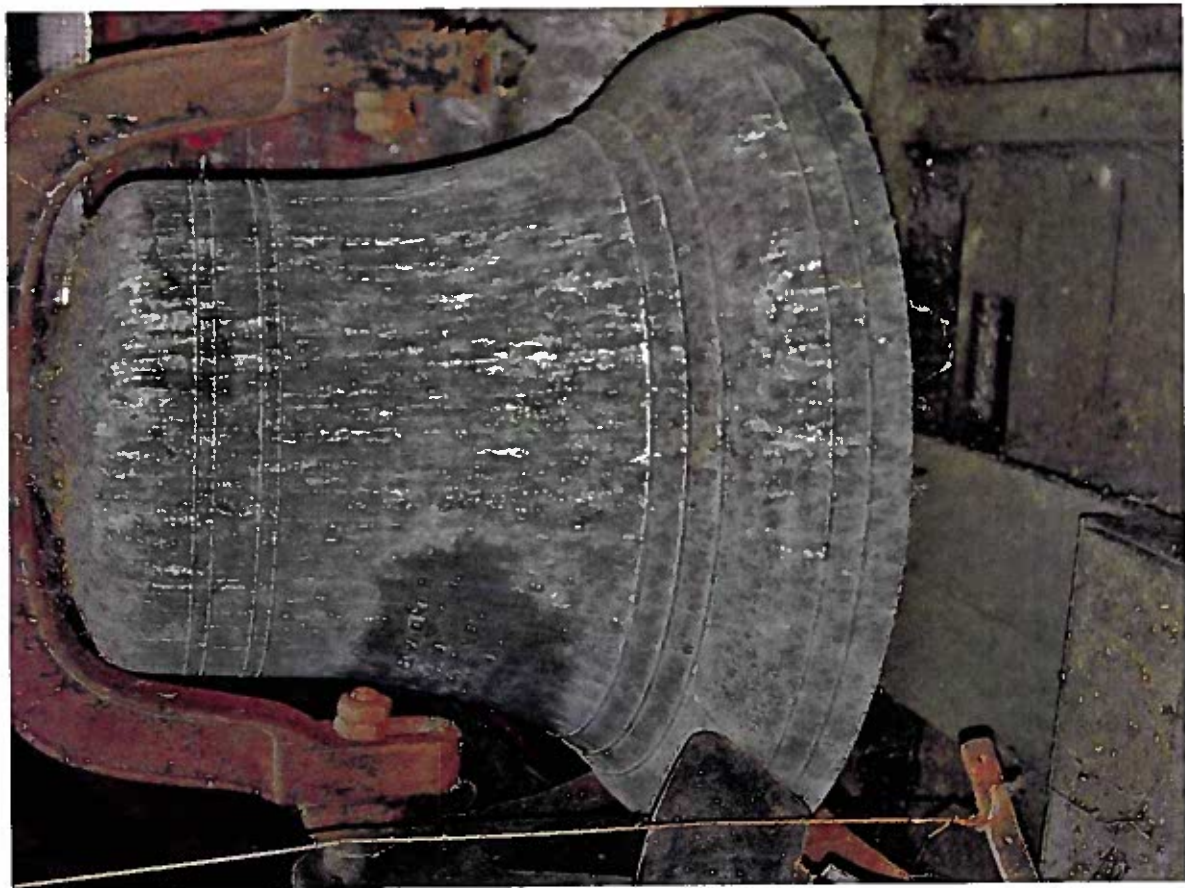
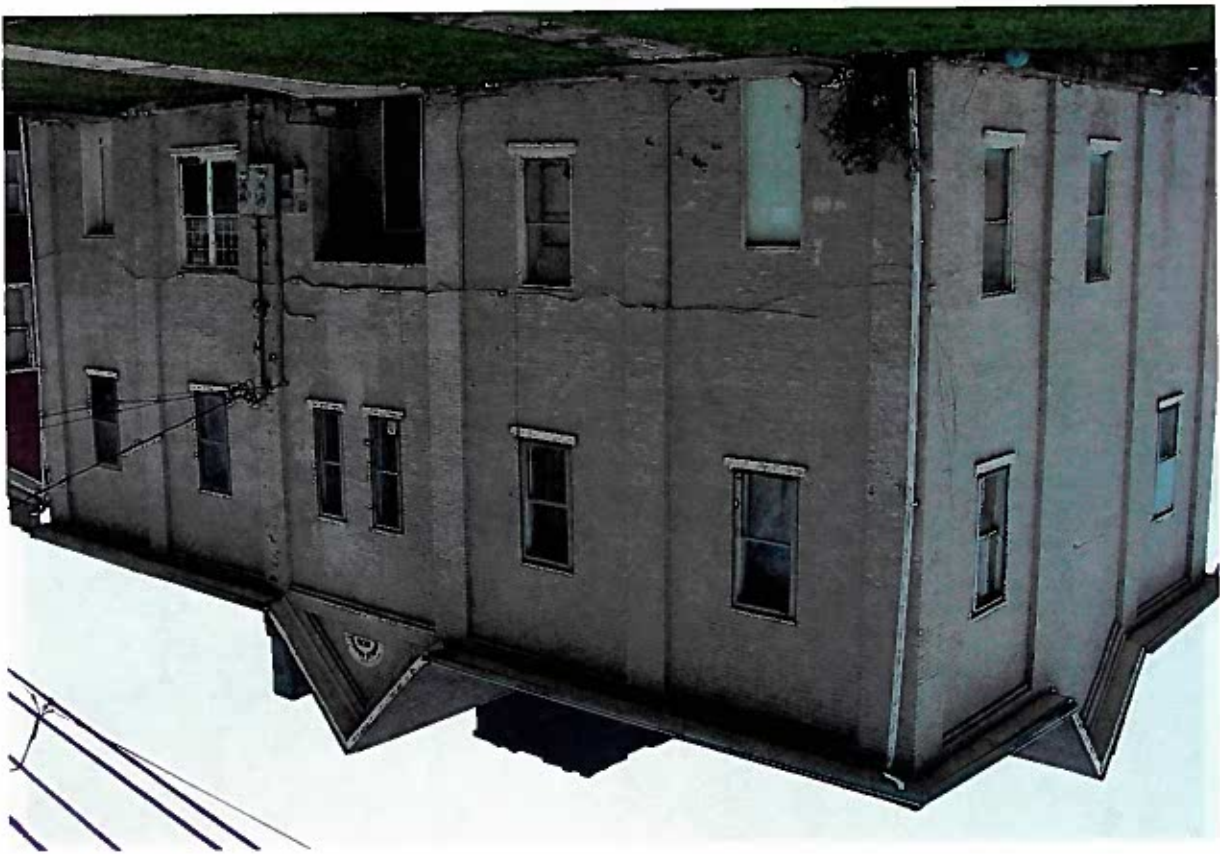
LAST year a great deal of noise was heard when the Central School Building and the Brick Row were torn down. This year there is a noise of a different kind for a new building is being completed where the old once stood. Now the thoughts of the old schoolhouse with its lofty tower and large clock are but memories to those who attended school there, and the new building offers visions for the near future when we will be able to study there.

Years ago in 1904 when the present High School was built it was considered large enough to accommodate pupils for a long time. Yet by 1915, this building was so crowded that the old Central had to be used for classes. This new schoolhouse is being built with the same feeling. Now it seems very large to us because it can accommodate about 1200 pupils, but some day it too may become crowded, because the number of pupils attending school steadily increases.

Every day we can see the work on the new building progressing, and it makes us realize with joy that we will soon be obtaining knowledge in this beautiful schoolhouse. However, it is with regrets that we leave the old High School where we have had so many good times.

Next September when we come back to school again it will not be to the building which we have attended but to this new one where we will have to start all over again. Indeed the upper classmen will not have the chance to laugh at the freshmen getting lost because they themselves will get lost; but who wouldn't wander astray when there is such a large building in which to wander around? The greater size of this building, however, offers better conditions for the teachers and pupils now as well as for the pupils in the years to come.

First Ward Grade School 1876



**Clock Tower Bell
Cast 1888**