A SHORT HISTORY

of

Bridgeport, Ohio

1806—1931

BELMONT COUNTY SERVICE
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125 YEARS OF PROGRESS
BRIDGEPORT OFFICIALS

Mayor ............................................. John Kuhn
Marshall ............................................. William Gretzinger
Clerk ............................................. Charles H. Sprague
Treasurer ............................................. Thomas Q. Howard
City Solicitor ............................................. Ross Michner
Chief Fire Dept. ............................................. Charles Cook
Clerk of Water Board ............................................. C. J. Hill
Bookkeeper Water Dept. ............................................. Lottie Martz

Council

Fred Neininger                  Harry C. Curtis
George Holler                   Norman Young
Carl Laipple                    John Shane

Board Trustees of Public Affairs

Fred Cook                       A. K. Conway
Frank McDaniels
JOHN B. KUHN

Mayor of Bridgeport

Mayor Kuhn was born and reared in Bridgeport, Ohio, was graduated from Bridgeport High School, attended Ohio State University, and is a member of the Phi Delta Theta college fraternity. He takes an active part in our schools, and all civic improvements. He has been associated with the American Sheet & Tin Plate Company for a number of years.
WM. D. GRETZINGER
Chief of Police

Wm. D. Gretzinger, known as "Big Bill", is now serving his second term as Chief of Police. He is very popular and has made many friends during the administration.
CHAS. COOK

Fire Chief

Chas. Cook, Chief of our Fire Department, has been fighting fires since big enough to run with a hand reel. He was appointed Fire Chief in 1918 and has been serving ever since. During the World's War he enlisted in the Navy and saw service overseas. This picture was taken during that period.
Bridgeport Schools

Bridgeport's present educational facilities consist of four modern school buildings in various parts of the community. Three of these buildings house grade schools, the other, Bridgeport High School.

The High School building is the most modern structure of its kind in the county, having large airy class rooms, gymnasium and locker rooms, in fact all the modern equipment necessary to present day standards of educational requirements.

The grade schools of the city are some distance apart so that young children are not forced to go far from home. One of these is the West End School; another the Brookside School and the third a central school in the same lot as the new High School.

Bridgeport's schools are under the direction of Mr. Howard Ely, Superintendent.

Bridgeport's educational facilities have few equals in cities of the same size.
AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF BRIDGEPORT

Any attempt to outline the history of the town of Bridgeport must necessarily include much of the legend of the founding and growth of its neighbor, Wheeling, W. Va. just across the river. Not that there is lack of distinctive historical data available on the development of the Ohio side of the Ohio River, but its proximity to the West Virginia shore makes the story of the political, social and economic growth of the two sections parallel so closely that the line of distinction between them is almost undiscernable.

It has not been long, as historians count years, since the fertile bottom land occupied by the present city of Bridgeport shorn of its buildings, bare of populace, was the rendezvous of the wild animal and the Indian scarcely more tame. Yet such was the condition of the junction of "Weeling" Creek with "La Belle Riviere" when white man first laid eyes upon it.

We must turn back time to the spring of 1749 to see this picture. The land of the Ohio Valley was claimed by England through title purchased from the Indians. Spain claimed it by right of discovery. France held that Spain's discovery claim was insufficient because they had never even seen the land and that England's title was woefully weak. Without entering into the political opinions of the nations too great a degree, it is easy to see that at that early date, might made right, west of the Alleghenies. The country was owned by no nation. It belonged to the kingdom of the wild.

France knew this better than perhaps either of the other nations involved. French traders had come down the Ohio in canoes and had reported back to their government that here was a land worth having. Their government heed their enthusiastic declarations and had sent one Bienville de Celeron with a considerable party of men down La Belle Riviere (the beautiful river) to claim the surrounding territory in the name of the Sovereign of France.

One spring morning in 1749 this party reached the present site of Wheeling. There they gathered under the Tri-color of France and with pomp and ceremony buried a leaden plate near the mouth of Wheeling Creek. This is the first official record of whites having seen the place where the two Wheeling Creeks join the Ohio.

Some years later, George Washington made a trip from Fort Pitt down the Ohio as far as the Kanawha. In his diary he mentions the creek which comes into the Ohio, called "Weeling by the Indians." As he makes careful mention of all cross creeks (creeks which enter as do the two Wheeling creeks from two different directions almost exactly opposite to one another) he encountered on his trip, except the Wheeling cross creeks, we judge that the eminent statesman steered his canoe down the back river on the side of the island nearest Bridgeport and did not even see the site of Wheeling.

Even when Washington came down the Ohio there were no settlements except Indian villages on its banks, it was still a wilderness almost untouched by civilization.

One year later, however, a group of men headed by Ebenezer Zane came to the top of the last hill of many they had crossed to feast their eyes on the beauty of the present site of Wheeling. These men determined that they would live here and thus came the founders of Wheeling and Bridgeport to the land we now inhabit.
An Historical Sketch of Bridgeport—(continued)

The following year Ebenezer Zane returned to the Ohio with his family and set about to build a cabin. Following him came more and more in spite of the hardships of the trail and the highly precarious existence “enjoyed” on the frontier.

Within a few years the settlement had attained considerable proportions and had been named Fort Henry, in honor of the eminent statesman Patrick Henry. The settlers managed to eke a living out of the country mainly because the fertility of the land made up for the crops and stock lost to marauding bands of Indians. Their existence was anything but pleasant we may believe, however, for the Indians had been incensed by the nations fighting for ownership of the territory and were by this time pitted against all white people on general principles.

In 1781 the crisis was reached with the battle of Fort Henry. Hundreds of redskins under the leadership of Simon Girty, a renegade white, attacked the fort. The siege lasted for three days during which time the powder supply within the fort was depleted and Betty Zane the heroine of Fort Henry dashed out in the face of the fire of the redskins to bring a new supply from a cabin some distance away.

With the arrival of reinforcements under the command of Major McCulloch from Van Metre’s Fort on Short Creek, however, the Indians were repulsed and Fort Henry was saved from the ravages of the redskins.

The Ohio side of the river was not settled as yet. The river was a sort of a barrier to the Indians. On the Ohio side danger was present at all times but on the eastern bank there was comparative safety. Nevertheless, scouts were constantly going into Ohio to spy on the Indians and try to ascertain the extent of their operations. These scouts knew the country near the bed of Wheeling Creek almost as well as the Indians. We can almost hear them describing their hair-raising experiences in the forbidden land across the river for the entertainment of those who were less adventurous than were they. Small wonder that none wanted to reside in this terrifying land.

Progress is never halted for long, however, and it was inevitable that the civilization of the whites should cross the barrier of the Ohio. So in 1789 Captain Joseph Kirkwood built a cabin on the south side of Indian Wheeling Creek. He was a brave man who had seen much action in the Revolutionary War. Due to the gallantry with which he had served in the sole regiment recruited from the State of Delaware, the Captain had been given the tract of land upon which he built his cabin.

He had not lived there long before the Indians made their first raid. Howe’s Historical Collections of Ohio describes the attack as follows:

“On the night of the attack, fourteen soldiers under Captain Joseph Biggs, with Captain Kirkwood and family, were in the cabin. About two hours before daybreak the captain’s little son Joseph had occasion to leave the cabin for a few moments and requested Captain Biggs to accompany him. They were out but a few minutes, and, although unknown to them, were surrounded by Indians. They had returned and again retired to sleep in the upper loft, when they soon discovered the roof in a blaze, which was the first intimation they had of the presence of an enemy. Captain Kirkwood was instantly awakened, when he and his men commenced pushing off the roof, the Indians at the same time firing upon them from under cover of the blockhouse.
An Historical Sketch of Bridgeport—(continued)

(The blockhouse here referred to was under the process of construction) Captain Biggs, on the first alarm, ran down the ladder into the room below to get his rifle, when a ball entered a window and wounded him in the wrist. Soon the Indians had surrounded the house, and attempted to break in the door with their tomahawks. Those within braced it with puncheons from the floor. In the panic of the moment several of the men wished to escape from the cabin but Captain Kirkwood silenced them with the threat of taking the life of the first man who made the attempt, asserting that the Indians would tomahawk them as fast as they left.

"The people of Wheeling—one mile distant—hearing the noise of the attack, fired a swivel to encourage the defenders, although fearful of coming to the rescue. This enraged the Indians the more; they sent forth terrific yells, and brought brush, piled it around the cabin, and set it on fire. Those within in measure smothered the flames, first with the water and milk in the house, and then with damp earth from the floor of the cabin. The fight was kept up about two hours, until dawn, when the Indians retreated. Had they attacked earlier, success would have resulted. The loss of the Indians, or their number was unknown—only one was seen. He was in the act of climbing up the corner of the cabin, when he was discovered, let go his hold and fell. Seven of those within were wounded and one a Mr. Walker, mortally. He was a brave man. As he lay disabled and helpless, on his back, on the earth, he called out to the Indians in a taunting manner. He died in a few hours and was buried the next day at Wheeling with military honors. A party of men undid General Benjamin Biggs, of West Liberty, went in an unsuccessful pursuit of the Indians. A niece of Captain Kirkwood, during the attack was on a visit about twenty miles distant, on Buffalo Creek. In the night she dreamed that the cabin was attacked and heard the guns. So strong an impression did it make, that she arose and rode down with all her speed to Wheeling, where she arrived two hours after sunrise.

"After this affair Captain Kirkwood moved with his family to Newark, Delaware. On his route he met with some of St. Clair's troops, then on their way to Cincinnati. Exasperated at the Indians for their attack upon his house, he accepted the command of a company of Delaware troops, was with them at the defeat of St. Clair in the November following, 'where he fell in a brave attempt to repel the enemy with the bayonet, and thus closed a career as honorable as it was unrewarded.'"

This is one historian's story of the siege of the Kirkwood cabin and the fate of the Kirkwoods. He has apparently erred in thinking that the family moved back to Delaware because another historian tells us that Josephine Kirkwood, a daughter of the Captain, married a Mr. Mitchell and they built a house on the plot adjoining the Kirkwood cabin.

We are further told by this historian that when Kirkwood's young son died they wanted to bury the body in the orchard, so they made a miniature cemetery. Mr. and Mrs. Kirkwood, their daughter and Dr. McConnaughy are said to be buried there. As this cemetery is enclosed in a stone wall and may be seen today at the corner of Lee and Whitely Streets, it would seem that the earlier historian Howe may have gone somewhat astray in the latter part of his anecdote.

Bridgeport was laid out by Colonel Ebenezer Zane in the year 1806, as nearly as it can be ascertained. Ohio was by that time a state. It had been admitted to the Union three years before. The town was first named Canton. This was later changed
to Bridgeport for very obvious etymological reasons, brought about by the building of a bridge between the town and Wheeling Island.

The next historical high-point in the growth of Bridgeport was the coming of the National Road to Wheeling in 1818. This old road was the first "Federal Good Road Project" and was made possible by the sale of public lands in Ohio. After nearly fifteen years of work and an even longer period of political bickering the National Pike arrived at its destination, the east bank of the Ohio.

It was not long after this that Congress made additional appropriations to extend the road to the west. Freight was moving over the route in thousands of Conestoga Wagons. Passengers and mail were being carried to the west with almost unthought of speed. The east was beginning to learn about the west and with this knowledge they wished to participate in its economic development.

As a consequence the National Road was ordered continued across Ohio and eventually was extended to Vandalia, Illinois, from whence its further reaches were lost in the plains of the great west.

Bridgeport, still known as Canton, now began to prosper. It was the place of landing of the ferry which brought the wagons and stages across the Ohio. As such it enjoyed a favorable advantage over other settlements in the vicinity. Then came even more activity on the Old Pike with the building of the suspension bridge across the Ohio at Wheeling and the old covered bridge across the back river to Bridgeport.

Searight in his history of the Old Pike says: "It is estimated that two fifths of the trade and travel of the road were diverted at Brownsville, and fell into the channel furnished by the slack water improvement of the Monongahela, and a like proportion descended the Ohio from Wheeling, and the remaining fifth continued on the road to Columbus, Ohio, and points further west. . . . The distance from Wheeling to Columbus is one hundred and twenty nine miles, and the road enters the capital of Ohio by way of High Street. Before the era of railroads Columbus derived its chief business from the National Road."

So even though only a fifth of the heavy travel of the Old Pike went west of the Ohio it will be seen that this fifth was a considerable portion as it proved enough to make Columbus the great city it is today.

Bridgeport was in the thick of the activity of the new road. Travelers must be kept overnight and when it is recalled that keeping a traveler in those days often meant feeding his six or eight horses, putting him up for the night and feeding him plentifully, it will be obvious that inn-keeping was no job for loiterers.

Again quoting Searight: "Moses Rhodes kept at Bridgeport, and hailed the west-bound traveler on his entrance to the borders of Ohio. A short distance further west one Cusic, and after him Nichols in the same old tavern, ministered to the wants of the traveler on the nation's old highway. A short drive from Nichols brought the wayfarer to the house of Chambers, ever ready to wait upon the public, and a little beyond was the Woodmancy house, kept by Isaac Gleaves, who afterward hung up his sign at a house further west. Passing Woodmancy's, the next old tavern was McMahon's,
An Historical Sketch of Bridgeport—(continued)

a veritable con of Erin, overflowing with native generosity. This part of the road seems to have been an Irish row, since the next old tavern, after passing McMahon’s, was kept by one McCaffrey. A short distance west of McCaffrey’s the town of St. Clairsville come into view, one of the oldest towns of Ohio, the seat of justice for Belmont County, and named in honor of the illustrious old Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, soldier and patriot, General Arthur St. Clair.

“In St. Clairsville, James Smith kept the stage office, and bowed in genuine old pike style to the coming and going passengers.”

Through this we get some picture of the ways of the Old Pike and those who were a vital part of its tradition and activity. Bridgeport was in the midst of this great east and west movement, the portal of the great State of Ohio, then even as it is today.

The old road reached its hey-dey in 1852 and from then on it fell into disuse except for local travel for a period of over sixty years. The railroad came and took the glory of the old pike away. For a while it seemed as though it would never return as an artery of transportation, but today it has turned the tables on the railroads and has them worried over the continuance of their profitable traffic. Ten ton trucks and motor buses today roll over the road in a matter of hours where it took days in another time, carrying freight and passengers once more over the Highway of the Nation.

When the National Road was first built it extended straight down Main Street in Bridgeport to the Ferry Wharf. When the bridge was built the route was changed to accommodate the road to the new portage.

Little of record of the growth of Bridgeport is available from the time the old pike reached the height of its trade until 1877 when a historian gave us many interesting statistics about the town. This Historian says: “Bridgeport lies upon the Ohio River 135 miles easterly from Columbus, on the old National Road and exactly opposite Wheeling, W. Va., with which it is connected by a bridge, and on the C. L. & W. and the C. & P. railroads. It joins the town of Martins Ferry; forming with it to the eye but a single city. Back of it rise very bold hills and the site is highly picturesque.

The Population of Bridgeport in 1840 was 329; in 1880, 2,390; and in 1930, 4,655.

Present day Bridgeport is a city which has kept abreast of the times socially, economically and politically.

Bridgeport has a population of 5,508. There are sixty six streets within the limits of the town. The principle industries of the city are the plants of the Scott Lumber Company, the Extruded Metal Products Company and the American Sheet and Tin Plate Company.
An Historical Sketch of Bridgeport-(continued)

Nine churches and twenty-seven associations and clubs are found in Bridgeport while three automobile sales agencies, one bank, one building and loan association, one candy factory, one cigar factory, eight coal companies, four ice manufactories, one machine shop and one welding shop, comprise the nucleus of the business effort of the city.

There are in addition to the nine churches, seven public buildings in the city; i.e., City Hall, Post office and five homes of fraternal organizations.

Guests in Bridgeport are offered comfortable accommodations in any of four hotels, while seven modern restaurants are equipped to feed the traveler. Two theaters offer entertainment.

The retail merchandising activities of the city number among their many ramifications: two bakeries, eight coal yards, nine confectioneries, four dairies, two department stores, three fruit stores, two furniture stores, thirteen automobile filling stations, thirty-five grocery stores, one jewelry store, three newsstands and one photographic studio.

There are several imposing office buildings in the city. Among these are, the Bridgeport National Bank Building, the Bridgeport Bank Building, the Cilles Building, the Freter Building and the Heinlein Building.

Bridgeport boasts an array of professional talent remarkable for a city of its size. The legal profession is represented by fourteen law firms and there are five physicians, three dentists, an optometrist and two druggists in the city.

And so perhaps in this short outline of Bridgeport's history we have imparted some of the enthusiasm caught by the student of another day. Many anecdotes which are of interest to this age have been omitted for the obvious reason that all could not be told in this brief article. The town of Bridgeport has a mass of legend connected with its history. We have tried to confine our remarks to well substantiated facts. There has never been a complete history of the city written. Perhaps by combining the facts gleaned from many sources we have consolidated them into an interesting tale of progress. If so we have succeeded in our ultimate purpose if not we have at least compiled under one cover something near an accurate presentation of the background of the town in which we dwell.

Bridgeport today, is far removed from the Canton and the Kirkwood of another day. It has raised itself by its bootstraps to a thriving metropolis. Our hope is that its citizenry will continue in the ways of those hardy pioneers who carried on in spite of the threatening specter of defeat to make our city what it is today. If we carry on our city will become ever better. Let progress be our motto, let Bridgeport be our creed.
1930 STATISTICS OF BRIDGEPORT

Village Clerk Chas. H. Sprague in his Annual Report for 1930 reported the following pertinent facts.

Tax valuation is $5,862,250, and the tax levy is $28 per $1,000.
Balances in the different funds are practically the same as last year, the general fund showing a gain of about $1,000.
Largest receipts of the village are from general taxes, which last year amounted to $15,306.38. Next comes gasoline taxes which netted the village $3,073 and motor license taxes $3,954.33. Fines and cost collected by the village amounted to $1,675.20.
Largest disbursements from the general fund were $26,120.64.

General village funds: Balance January 1, 1930, $4,950.05; receipts for the year, $27,912.95; total, $32,863; expenditures for the year, $26,772.14; balance December 31, 1930, $6,090.86.

Municipal industries (water works): Balance January 1, 1930, $17,316.69; receipts for the year, $20,763.84; total, $38,080.53; expenditures for the year, $24,507.12; balance December 31, 1930, $13,573.41.

Sinking funds: Balance January 1, 1930, 10,585.23; receipts for the year, $16,854.20; total, $27,439.43; expenditures for for the year, $20,567.19.

Balance December 31, 1930, in sinking funds, $6,872.24; total balance all funds, December 31, 1930, $26,536.51; outstanding warrants, December 31, 1930, $3,868.23.

Treasurer’s cash December 31, 1930 (except sinking), $23,532.50; cash in sinking funds, $6,872.24; cash in all village funds, $30,404.74; balance in trust fund, $2,799.25.

Amount of salaries and wages paid during 1930, $19,173.06.
Fifty-seven years can make a big difference. These two photos were taken from the exact spot in Bridgeport, who still remember the way the downtown area appeared at left. Back then there were two sharp, the old photographs have been demolished either for the relocation of Rt. 40 to eliminate the two right angle turn photo has been removed and plans are now progressing for construction of a new building to replace the old structure in West Wheeling, to the Bridgeport Eagles Club for insertion in the cornerstone of the club's new building. Stone laying ceremony for the club is scheduled for today at 2 p.m.
Brings Many Changes

MAIN ST. BRIDGEPORT CT. 1964

port and they show Main Street as it appeared in 1909 and on Aug. 18, 1966. There are several residents of right-angle turns on Rt. 40 but it posed no problems for motorists. Most of the buildings that can be seen in 8 or for new building or remodeling projects. The second floor of the city building which can be seen in left cture. The 1909 photo of Main Street was provided by grandchildren of the late Mrs. Eva Reynolds, who ing. The new building will be located on Main Street, across the street from the city building. The corner-
HISTORY AND HIGHLANDS--1905-1955
MEMORIES

HISTORY AND HIGHCHITS—1905-1955
DOWNTOWN RIDGEPORT
DEEDATION OF NO COMMANDMENTS MONUMENT 1966
This home was situated on a picturesque, now owned by H. Dorsey.

The image shows the exterior of a building.

The First Home of Bridgeport Aerie of Eagles

Minutes of the First Meeting—February 28, 1905

The following are the complete minutes of the first meeting.
THE GOLDEN EAGLE Award, a check for $10,000 was presented to the Belmont County Committee on Aging at Wednesday's meeting of the county commissioners. In the photo are front row, Commissioner President Anita Wiley, left; Penny McCarthy, COA nutrition coordinator and Ohio Representative Charlie Wilson, D-Bridgeport. Second row, left to right are, G. Robert Laxton, COA executive director; Commissioner Mike Bianconi and Richard Kolb, Bridgeport Eagles, representing the National Eagles.

Belmont County Committee on Aging soars with $10,000 Eagle check

By ED POLLI
Times Leader Staff Writer

THE GOLDEN Eagle Grand Award was presented to the Belmont County Committee on Aging (COA) at Wednesday's meeting of the county commissioners.

The presentation of a $10,000 check was made by Richard Kolb, representing the National Eagles. Kolb is also affiliated with the Bridgeport Eagles. G. Robert Laxton, executive director of the COA, said he was grateful to the Eagles as well as to Penny McCarthy, the COA's nutrition coordinator, who applied for the award.

"This award will enable our agency to increase senior services," McCarthy said. She said the COA has served over 60,000 meals this year, serving seven senior centers in the county and 395 homebound clients.

"We deeply appreciate the generosity of the Eagles, and especially of their commitment to present awards to many worthy causes," McCarthy said.

Ohio Rep. Charlie Wilson, D-Bridgeport, attended the ceremony and funded the work of the Eagles, both at the national and local levels. He thanked McCarthy for submitting the application, and the Eagles for their commitment to the community.

"What you have done here will help so many people who are deserving of assistance," Wilson said. "Much can be accomplished when we all work together."

Kolb said the Eagles is celebrating its 100th anniversary, and this year is awarding $1 million to various causes.

"This is money that is being returned to our local community and we are proud to make this presentation," Kolb said.

The commissioners also thanked the Eagles for their generous award.

"We appreciate the work done by the Eagles and the other service organizations who make life better for those in our communities," said Commission President Anita Wiley.

Commissioner Mike Bianconi said the Eagles have always been noted for donations to humanitarian causes. "We deeply appreciate what you have done today," he said.

Kolb said that this year the Bridgeport Eagles has donated $1,000 to the Bridgeport Library fund, $1,000 to the Bridgeport Police Department, $1,000 to the Bridgeport Volunteer Fire Department and $1,000 to the Bridgeport High School Band Boosters to buy new uniforms for the band.

"We do a lot for our communities and are proud of it," Kolb said.

Also present for the ceremony were Herb Barritt, Bridgeport Eagles; Gerald Younkins, Martins Ferry Eagles POE 456 and Joseph Elrose, District Director from U.S. Rep. Bob Ney's Bellaire office.