



BICENTENNIAL BULLETIN No. 18 **—Sheffield Celebrates 200th Birthday**

The Sheffield Bicentennial Commission will issue a *Bicentennial Bulletin* each Monday throughout 2015 that illustrates the rich heritage of our communities. **View them at — www.sheffieldbicentennial.org or sheffieldvillage.com**

EAST 31ST STREET BRIDGE (original construction 1913; reconstructed 1977) *Linking South Lorain and Sheffield Village across the Black River Valley*

The first bridge to cross the Black River in Sheffield was most likely an iron truss structure in the vicinity of John Day's grist and saw mills, about 1,000 feet upstream of the current East 31st Street Bridge. A river crossing at this location is indicated on both the 1851 and 1874 tax maps of Sheffield Township. The road leading to and from the bridge was unpaved with steep hills climbing the bank of the Black River on either side of the bridge. Because of its location near the dam that provided a constant head of water to power the mills' waterwheels, the bridge was known as the Day's Dam Bridge.

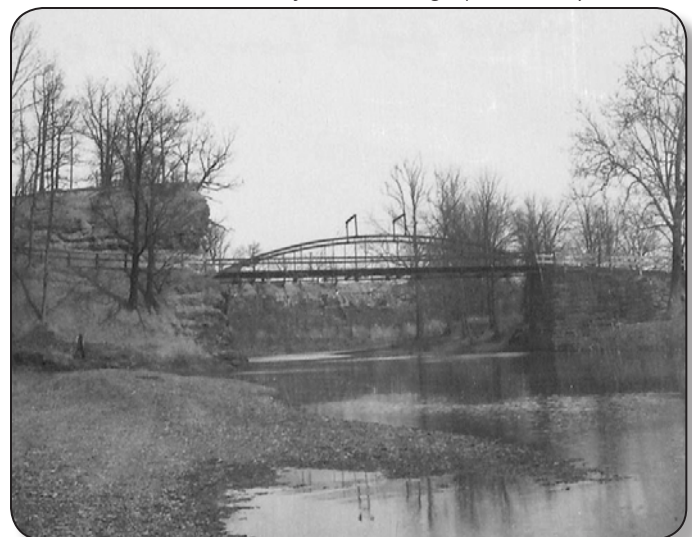
As early as 1904, the local newspapers mentioned the need of a new bridge and by 1906 farmers and merchants from South Lorain and Sheffield began to express their desire for a high-level bridge to the Lorain County Commissioners. In 1911 the County Commissions were presented with a petition signed by 896 property owners requesting that a new bridge be built. The president of the Lorain Chamber of Commerce, W. N. Little, was the principal promoter of the bridge project and encouraged the Commissioners to place a \$68,000 bond issue before the voters. Oberlin and Wellington were opposed to the project, and the Elyria Council went so far as to pass a resolution asking their voters to vote against the measure, noting that the bridge would cost Elyrians some \$14,000. The countywide referendum for the bridge passed with a 686-vote majority, Lorain voting 6 to 1 in favor of the new bridge. Grateful farmers and merchants presented Mr. Little with huge baskets of fruits and vegetables.

The contract to construct the bridge was awarded to the Pittsburgh Bridge Company for \$62,000. The viaduct-style bridge consisted of a series of graceful steel arches spanning a 370-foot wide ravine

South abutment to Day's Dam Bridge (circa 1910)



Profile view of Day's Dam Bridge (circa 1910)



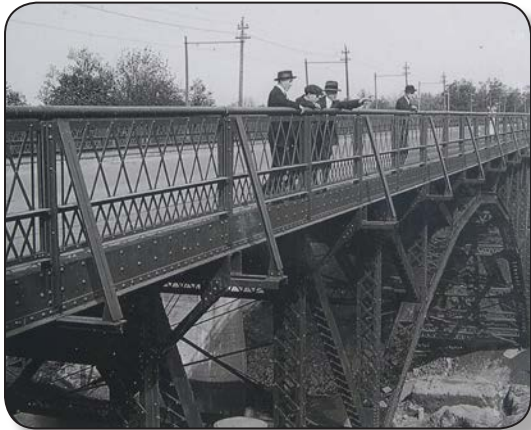
Causeway for 1913 viaduct bridge



Steel arches of 1913 viaduct bridge



Opening of 1913 East 31st Street Bridge



Early traffic on 1913 East 31st Street Bridge



flanked by steep shale bluffs. The bridge roadway was paved with hexagonal wooden blocks and creosoted planks were installed to form sidewalks. Additional contracts were let to vacate the old truss bridge and to place a cut-stone retention wall along the steep, 800-foot-long causeway-like approach on the Sheffield side of the bridge. Opened in November 1913, the bridge was in service for 64 years. In 1977 it was replaced with a more modern, 4-lane, concrete-pillar bridge. Although the 1913 bridge is gone now, the magnificent stonework on the Sheffield approach is still visible on the south side of the causeway to ones adventurous enough to scale the wall. Three steel-reinforced, concrete pillars from the old Lake Shore Electric Railroad bridge over the Black River can also be explored south of the stone wall.

Retention wall for 1913 causeway (2008)



New East 31st Street Bridge (built 1977)

