

History of Reynoldsburg

As we look through the pages of history, we find the pioneers must have been more than adventuresome. It was not only the wild animals, but the dense growth of trees and shrubs, the rugged terrain, the friendly and the not-so-friendly Indians, the weather conditions, disease, lack of food, and transportation at a snail's pace over unblazed trails that challenged the hardy or desperate traveler. The pioneers travelled under conditions of unsurmountable perils with no promise of better times, only dreams of such. It was these dreams that became reality and gave us the city which celebrates her sesquicentennial this year.

Thomas Palmer of Massachusetts was the first settler in 1803 on the land known as Reynoldsburg. He purchased 316 acres in Section 7, east of present Lancaster Ave. and north of Main St. Our pilgrim fathers brought the township form of government to America in 1620. The township in Ohio predates our state government.

Truro Township was established and organized in 1810. It had originally been part of Liberty Township. The first election of township officers was held at the residence of the Robert Taylor family on Big Walnut Creek. Those attending the meeting elected to name the new township Truro, in honor of Truro, Nova Scotia, whence several settlers had come.

The Village of Reynoldsburg was surveyed by Abiather Vinton Taylor, platted in 1831 on the land of John D. French. It has been said that French named the area Frenchtown, but no written record has been found to substantiate this.

It was James C. Reynolds, a young merchant from Zanesville, for whom the village was named. Reynolds came in early 1831, boarded with French's family, and opened the first store in a hewed log cabin on the present lot of the United Presbyterian Church. He was appointed the first postmaster in 1833. In 1839, he was influential in getting the village incorporated.

Reynolds was Franklin County's sole representative in Ohio's 39th General Assembly for the year beginning Dec. 7, 1840. He was active in the militia, being commissioned a brigadier general. He built a steam grist mill on Blacklick Creek and later moved to Carroll to build the Junction Mills.

Henry Besse bought land in Section 8 on Oct. 16, 1828, and promptly began to quarry the blue freestone he found on his property. This natural resource would provide employment for the area.

Even before the National Road was built, there was some sort of trail along its general line through the little village that became known as Reynoldsburg. Called the "Old Corduroy," it began as an animal and Indian trail. It was slightly improved by the white man who laid down logs and posts across it and tied them with withes. Settlement progress was slow until 1820. All the

old histories refer to trouble with the Indians, but they give only a few specific instances.

By 1830, the National Road was drawing near the little community on the Old Corduroy.

Within six years of the beginning of the road through Reynoldsburg, four taverns had been built, two churches were established, two additions to the village had been platted and registered, and a school and a post office had been started. In March 1839, French's village was incorporated as Reynoldsburg. In the fall of 1840, the residents went from a township to a borough form of government and held the first borough elections.

The 20th Century brought many changes to this small community that stood on the threshold of great expansion. In 1900, the first telephone was introduced to the area. The years passed and by 1909, there were 212 subscribers. In 1902, the inter-urban railway came through the middle of town, linking Reynoldsburg to Columbus and Newark. By 1904, gas service was available, a rural free delivery mail route was established and a bank opened. Automobiles became more popular, making the first traffic lights inevitable in 1927. This brought to a close the use of the inter-urban railway in 1929. With water service arriving in 1936, Reynoldsburg was moving towards other goals — making possible an official fire department, organized in 1937 by Vinton H. Raymer, chief.

World War II brought changes to the Burg, like so many small towns around the country. With the baby boom came the need for housing. Since materials and craftsmen were not plentiful, it was not uncommon to live in cramped quarters or for several families to share a home. With the 1950s came housing developments, bringing new families to the area and new businesses to serve their needs. Shopping centers that sprang up shifted the center of town westward. By 1958, the country image of "small town" was exchanged for city status.

In the period from 1940 to 1980, Reynoldsburg's population increased 2,700%. She stretches to the west and south on Brice Pike which is now named Brice Rd. Those people who have moved from the area as recently as five years ago would be amazed at the growth north of Main St. The eastern part of Reynoldsburg is rapidly changing as well.

Each generation leaves a little good and a little bad for those who follow. Our generation has seen the smashing of the atom, the development of many miracle drugs, the eradication of some diseases and the conquering of space. We have transportation that has enabled individuals to visit and exchange ideas that previously they could only read about in history books. The airways of communication have bridged countries and families that are separated by great distances.

Our education system has enabled those with learning disabilities and those needing challenges to have the opportunity to succeed. In 1988, the community gained a new Senior Citizen Building which offers many opportunities to those retired and semi-retired. A new Municipal Building and Police Station have replaced antiquated quarters. The Blacklick Municipal Park is located in Reynoldsburg as well as the nicely developing city parks. The National Road, which is now State Route 40, is only one artery of several that links Reynoldsburg to the State Capital, municipal airport and other nearby communities.

We leave you our faith in God and in Mankind, the beliefs in free enterprise and a country that is at peace, a government that is of the people, and by the people, and for the people. And we leave you our love. All this is our legacy to you, the future of Reynoldsburg.

This was compiled from information taken from The History of Reynoldsburg written by Cornelia M. Parkinson. Additional remarks were submitted by Helen M. Kitzmiller of the Sesquicentennial Commission.