



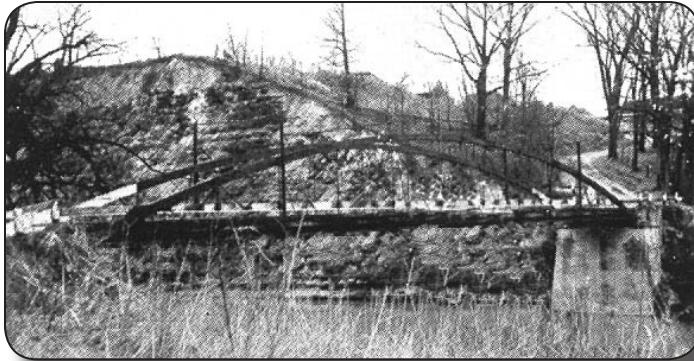
## BICENTENNIAL BULLETIN No. 5

### —Sheffield Celebrates 200th Birthday

The Sheffield Bicentennial Commission presents a weekly series of *Bicentennial Bulletins* on topics that illustrate the rich heritage and fascinating diversity of our communities. **Collect them all and join in the 2015 Celebrations!**

### **GARFIELD BRIDGE** (original construction 1936; reconstructed 2003) Linking Sheffield Village and Sheffield Township across the Black River Valley

Original steel-truss bridge, late 1800s



First viaduct bridge, 1936



Original bridge abutment and Bridgeway Trail bridge, 2009



Original steel-truss bridge, circa 1900



*G*arfield Bridge, an impressive viaduct-style bridge over the Black River at North Ridge, has a heritage that extends back over 150 years. The current bridge completed in 2003, is the third in a series of bridges that crossed the river at this location. The earliest surviving map of Sheffield, 1851, indicates a roadway leading down the bluff on both sides of the river and a shallow ford across the watercourse. The next map, 1874, reveals that a bridge had been constructed above the old ford. Early photographs show that it was a steel-truss structure with massive abutments. Locally known as "Gashouse Hill Bridge," by the early 1930s it had become old and rickety. After an inspection, it was condemned as unsafe for loads of more than four tons.

Plans were made to replace the low-level bridge with a viaduct across the entire valley that would eliminate the dangerous, steep approaches down the riverbanks and the poor alignment that involved several abrupt turns in the roadway. This second bridge, originally known as the

Black River Viaduct, was christened as Garfield Bridge when it was opened in 1936 on the newly dedicated State Route 254. The significant length and height of the viaduct necessitated careful study to perfect the design. Cost was also a concern because of the State's limited financial resources during the Great Depression years.

Few of the travelers who crossed the viaduct during its 67 years of faithful service realized that it was supported by a novel, but elaborate, system of structural steel bents—a framework transverse to the length of the bridge designed to carry lateral as well as vertical loads. The structure consisted of a series of continuous steel deck girders on high steel bents, with a concrete roadbed and railings. Spanning the full width of the valley, the viaduct was 1,470 feet long, 90 feet above the riverbed, and had a roadway width of 30 feet between the sidewalks. The total cost of the structure was \$258,840.

Eventually the steel viaduct succumbed to corrosion and metal fatigue. Thus, it was dismantled in 2003 to make way for an elegant, concrete-pier viaduct, capable of carrying four lanes of traffic. In 2008, the Lorain County Engineer placed a bronze plaque on the southeast bridge abutment to commemorate both the 1936 and the 2003 Garfield Bridges.

Once the 1830s homes of the Garfield cousins, John and Milton, graced the roadway along North Ridge. When the 1936 bridge was built, John Garfield's Greek Revival-style house was demolished to make way for the eastern approach to the bridge. A quarter of a mile to the east the Milton Garfield house still stands. The bridges were named to honor the Garfield Family as founding pioneers of North Ridge.



New viaduct bridge, 2003

