

Bella Vista Historical Society

In 1975, Bella Vista Village was celebrating its 10th birthday, and the nation was coming up on its 200th birthday.

In August of that year, the POA, upon the recommendation of Cooper Communities, set up a meeting to discuss having the village apply for designation as a Bicentennial Community for the 1976 celebration. At that meeting, a committee of local residents was appointed to lead the effort.

Minutes from the second meeting held the following week state, *“Informal discussion (was) held by the group regarding an inclusive Bicentennial program to be submitted....The program must include three thematic sections: 1) Horizons (lasting value), 2) Heritage, and 3) Festival. The committee decided upon: 1) promotions of various colors of crape myrtle as a village flowering shrub; 2) history of old and new Bella Vista to be published, 3) building of shelves and setting aside space in the Bella Vista library for authentic history books of the American Revolution and US History, 4) Antique and Hobby Show...; 5) Bicentennial patriotic festival...; 6) ...encourage residents to fly an American flag daily during the Bicentennial year.”*

Bella Vista Village was approved to become a Bicentennial Community in September, 1975, by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration. The committee of Bella Vista residents then moved into high gear for the rest of 1975, busily planning the activities which took place throughout 1976.

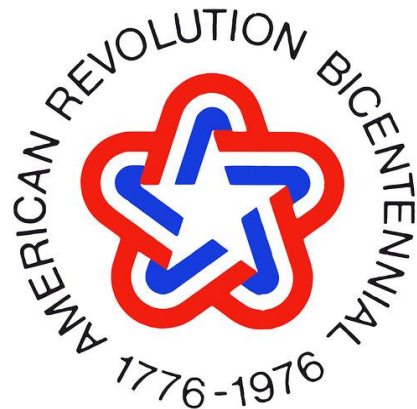
The focus on the history of Bella Vista resulted in a separate Historical Committee being set up, which then led to the formation of a permanent Bella Vista Historical Society. On March 8, 1976, officers were elected, and the next issue of the Village Vista stated that the *“...Society will now take up the responsibility for completion of a pictorial written history of the area begun by the historical committee of the Bella Vista Bicentennial Committee, and also provide motivation of other special projects involving preservation and restoration of places and things pertinent to the history of the Bella Vista area.”* The Society was incorporated as a nonprofit organization on November 19, 1976, and begun a fundraising drive for a permanent home.

In 1980, the Historical Society published the written history that had first been planned in 1976, a book called *The Bella Vista Story*, edited by George Phillips, and

made possible by a \$20,000 loan from Cooper Communities, a loan that was paid off by 1983.

As a result of various fundraising efforts, including book sales, plans were being made by February, 1984, for a modular building to be erected on the east side of Highway 71 at Kingsland, next to the American Legion, which had moved into an old farmhouse on that corner in October, 1981. Groundbreaking was held in July 1984, and the following year, in April 1985, a grand opening ceremony was held.

Since 1985, two additions have been made...what is now called the Cooper Room was added in 1996, and the Harter Room was added in 2015. The museum is staffed by volunteers, and funded by donations, membership fees and financial assistance from the City of Bella Vista, with support services provided by the POA and others. It has been totally remodeled over the past year few years, and visitors are welcome to come see their “new” museum!



The American Revolution Bicentennial Administration held a logo contest in 1974 and selected the design of Bruce N. Blackburn, co-designer of the modernized NASA insignia used from 1975 to 1992. His Bicentennial design consisted of a white five-point star inside a stylized star of red, white and blue.



The Bella Vista Historical Museum as it looked in 1985.



The Bella Vista Historical Museum as it looks in 2016.