

As you drive around Bella Vista, perhaps without realizing it, you pass a number of historically significant sites. Only a few of them are marked; the rest you can learn about from reading local history or visiting the Bella Vista Historical Museum. One excellent source of information is the book by Gilbert Fite, *From Vision to Reality: A History of Bella Vista Village 1915–1993*, which can be purchased at Allen's Foods and the Bella Vista Flea Market year-round and at the museum March through December.

The few historical markers that are visible in Bella Vista are there thanks to the early efforts of the Bella Vista Historical Society, which was created in 1976 as an outgrowth of the national Bicentennial celebration. With the help of a \$1,000 donation from Cooper Communities, the markers were purchased from a firm in Pennsylvania.

Plans were made for a dozen markers, but only seven were ordered and erected. The Benton County Daily Democrat on June 10, 1981, reported the first marker being placed for Dug Hill in Town Center. Next came markers for the Hay Bluff, then the Sunset Hotel. Unfortunately the marker for the Sunset Hotel mistakenly stated that the hotel was opened in 1930 instead of 1929, an error discovered too late to be corrected.

Evidently some citizens objected to a marker being erected at the Hay Bluff site, which local farmers had named the Indian Bluffs, since it was thought to be of archaeological importance. Eventually that marker was placed at Town Center as well, stating that the Bluff was located 7/10 of a mile north. Due to its weather-beaten state, the marker was moved in 2013 to the Bella Vista Historical Museum.

The fourth marker was erected in front of Wonderland Cave on March 30, 1982. The Society's March/April 1992 newsletter reported that a fifth marker was placed in 1982 at Crystal Cave. The sixth marker is not an upright one; it is flat on the ground next to the last picnic bench at the south end of the rest stop across from Lake Bella Vista on Highway 71. It tells about the original Linebarger 9-hole golf course that was located along the west side of Lake Bella Vista, long before four-lane Highway 71 was built.

The last of the seven markers was placed at Cunningham Corner. All but one of the markers are still in their original location or are on display at the Historical Museum. The missing marker is the one for Wonderland Cave up on Dartmoor Road east of Cooper School.

All pictures courtesy of Xyta Lucas. Lucas is a docent at the Bella Vista Historical Museum, located near the corner of 71 and Kingsland. The museum closed the end of December for the winter and will re-open March 1. For more information, see [www.bellavistamuseum.org](http://www.bellavistamuseum.org).

