



...till you drop.

THE businessmen of Bellevue created this masterpiece with white lettering on black plastic ovals, black lettering and red arrows on white plastic rectangles bordered in red, and two steel poles. Intended to promote the first suburb west of Pittsburgh on Route 65, the piece, with its stark literality, is considered by some to be a “must see” for their out-of-town visitors.

The Chamber of Commerce installed the sign in the late 1950s or early '60s — accounts vary — and it was recently updated, with many rusting original steel parts recast in plastic. This will allow it to be lit and to look like the signs of the franchise eateries and quickstops along the strip.

The 640 acres that are now Bellevue were originally part of the “depreciation lands” sold to James Robinson and Hugh Henry Brackenridge in the 1790s. These speculators had sold the land by the early 1800s and it was subdivided into five farms. Frenchman Andrew Jacque is considered the first of these farmer-settlers; he is known for piloting the first steamboat on western waters, the Pittsburgh-built *New Orleans*, down the Ohio and Mississippi in 1811.

The area was part of Ross Township until 1867, when 33 property owners petitioned to form their own borough, citing the slow pace of municipal improvements. Positioned on a bluff with sweeping (and now generally industrial) vistas of the Ohio River valley, Bellevue — “beautiful view” in French — was the result.

Borough officials say the sign generates a lot of interest, occasionally getting a mention on radio or in the paper. For its message to be clear, they caution, read the words slowly and as three distinct ideas. — *Photograph and text by Paul Roberts, with research help from Brian A. Butko*

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