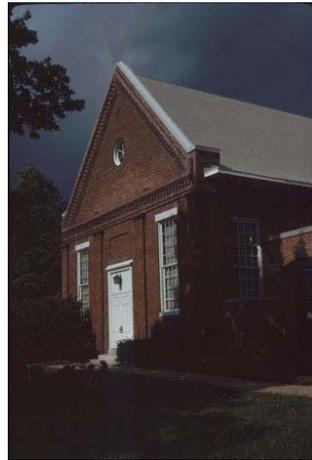


**Bellefontaine Methodist Church, 10600 Bellafontaine Rd., Bellefontaine
Neighbors, 1854-1855**



Organized in 1806, the Methodist congregation gathered at members' homes and by 1852-1853 had reached a size that justified the erection of a church building in the Bellefontaine area. James Bissell, who had been in charge of the church's Sunday school since 1848, donated eight acres of land for the new church and played a key role in the construction process. With the participation of the entire congregation, including many slaves, the new Greek Revival church building was completed in 1854-1855. The building was in harmony with the classic proportions of the new style, which was an architectural novelty and which made the Bellefontaine Methodist Church a truly modern building.

Daniel Bissell House, 10225 Bellefontaine Rd., Black Jack, c. 1844



After Daniel Bissell (1769-1833), a native of Connecticut, assumed command of Fort Belle Fontaine in 1809, he acquired land and started building a house for his family. It is believed that the first structure he built was a log cabin, followed in 1814-1815 by a stone house. The two-story brick house, completed between 1817 and 1819, is the building which exists today. During the General's years the house had seven rooms: a parlor, a

dining room, a hall and Daniel Bissell's bedroom on the first floor, with a nursery on the second floor. As was common in those years, the kitchen was detached, occupying the earlier stone building in back. Food was brought to the dining room through the south hallway. Daniel Bissell died in 1833 and the house was passed to his son James Russell Bissell.

Soon after his son James Russell Bissell married in 1849, the new family began alterations to the home. They replaced the wood trim and all three mantelpieces on the first floor. In place of the old black mantels with elaborate design, James put new white ones in the Greek Revival style. The designs of the front doorway and porch we see today are also a product of the same desire for remodeling. Forty years after James Bissell made these changes new alterations became necessary. The kitchen was torn down, and a large frame wing was built in its place, housing a new kitchen and dining room on the first floor and bedrooms on the second, with a two-story gallery facing north. The shutters were replaced and the cast iron hinges of a new type were used in place of the old ones made of wrought iron. More significantly, the look of the house was dramatically changed by replacing the east and south porches with larger, classically derived structures, which had started gaining popularity in St. Louis. The east porch was extended across the entire width of the house. A small semicircular balcony was constructed on the second level of the new porch, approached from the old hall door. The 1890 innovations also included replacement of the old square porch columns with round and elegantly detailed ones.

James Bissell's son, French Rayburn Bissell, continued remodeling the house after he and his wife acquired ownership. Once again, the Bissell house changed its appearance when around 1924 the classical east porch was entirely removed to be replaced by a concrete terrace, and a small Gothic canopy was placed over the doorway. Only ten years later, after French Rayburn's death in 1933, new work on the century old house was begun. The extensive improvements included reinforcing the floors and the roof, rebuilding the chimneys and the fireplaces, restoring the hearths with original bricks found on the property and updating and improving the electrical and sanitary systems. The most significant alteration was the reconstruction of the front porch. The Gothic canopy was removed, and the porch was recreated as closely as possible to photographs taken in 1875. After this restoration, the house underwent very few repairs following the donation by Janet Bissell Diamond to the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation in 1960. The Bissell House was dedicated and opened to the public as a museum in 1964.

**“Tanglewood” (Gibson House), 1060 Chambers Rd., Bellefontaine
Neighbors, 1866**



“Tanglewood” was built in 1866 by James E. Gibson. In 1833 a tract of land south of Chambers Road and West of Bellefontaine Road was purchased by Dr. John Wright Gibson. After his death in 1869 the land was divided up between his seven children, including James Edward Gibson. James Edward Gibson was also a doctor and graduated from Centenary College in Jackson, Louisiana, and from St. Louis Medical College. After acquiring land from his father James Edward Gibson began the building of “Tanglewood” in 1866. The house is a two-story white-painted brick structure in the vernacular Italianate style. After the death of James Edward Gibson and his wife, three of their children, Harriet, Maude and Peter Baldwin Gibson continued living in the house. The children combined their property in 1906 and formed the Gibson Estate, a stock corporation. In 1952 the Friedens Evangelical and Reformed Church purchased the house and it was used as a chapel, but most recently the house has been vacant.