## Belle Mina

Belle Mina is a community in southeast Limestone County just north of Mooresville. It is named after the plantation of Thomas Bibb, who became Alabama's second governor in 1820 after the death of the state's first governor and Bibb's brother, William Wyatt Bibb. Belle Mina Plantation originally contained 2,500 acres with the 1826 Georgian style house at the center of the property. Bibb first established a sawmill and brick kiln on the site to manufacture building materials.

He then selectively purchased enslaved craftsmen to construct the house and surrounding buildings. He invested heavily in human property, as the census from 1830 shows his household containing 264 enslaved individuals. Bibb died in 1839, leaving his son, Thomas Bibb, Jr., the plantation. Census records show that Thomas, Jr. owned fewer slaves at Belle Mina than his father: 61 in 1840, 13 in 1850, and 57 in 1860. At the beginning of the Civil War, 50 enslaved people was about average for plantations in the area.

The Bella Mina plantation house, along with nine acres surrounding it, remain along Mooresville Road south of the center of Belle Mina. The house

was added to the National Register for Historic Places in 1972 (#72000164). The endeavors of the Bibb family had a profound influence on the area's landscape. According to the Limestone County Historical Society, "the grand houses [the Bibbs] built, rows of

(Left) Belle Mina – Governor Thomas Bibb House, Limestone County, Alabama, 1933 (Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress) (Below) 1830 Federal Census Showing Thomas Bibb's 262 Slaves (National Archives and Records Administration via Ancestry.com) slave cabins, and cotton growing for miles around gave this area the look of 'Plantation Alley.'" Thomas Bibb's son, Porter Bibb, built Woodside Plantation in 1860. Thomas Bibb is buried at Maple Hill Cemetery in Huntsville, but his son, Porter, and many of his descendants are in the Bibb cemetery on the former plantation.

The Belle Mina community became predominately African American after the Civil War. Many community residents are thought to be descendants of those enslaved at Belle Mina Plantation and others. Fisk Jubilee singer Patti Malone was born on a plantation known as Cedars Plantation, possibly the one also known as the Garrett Homeplace, west of Belle Mina.

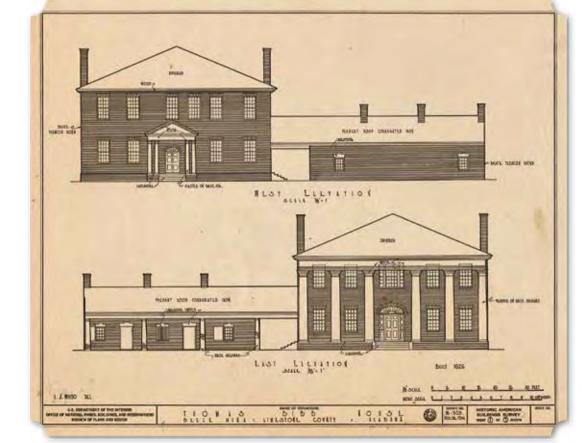
Bella Mina grew after the Memphis and Charleston Railroad ran a line through the town and built a station in 1855. The route was originally planned through Mooresville, but the residents there did not want the noise and smoke. The construction date of the Belle Mina train depot is unknown but there is speculation that it may be one of the oldest in Alabama. In 1904, President Teddy Roosevelt took a tour by train and is said to have stopped at the Bella Mina station where he spoke from the rear vestibule of the train. The depot was moved from its original location along the tracks to the corner of Mooresville and Garrett roads with hopes of restoration.

The small community of Belle Mina has had at least four African American churches: Jerusalem Primitive Baptist, Morning Star United Methodist, New Heaven Cumberland Presbyterian, and New Zion Missionary Baptist. Counting all the churches in Belle Mina, there



(Above) Photograph of Belle Mina Railroad Station, 1941 – Note the Two Entrances, the One of the Right is Marked "Colored." (Limestone County Archives, Athens, Alabama via AL.com) (Below) "North Alabama Railroad Club's 2-8-0, No. 77, High Balls through Belle Mina, Alabama with Club's First Excursion Train, 'The Charles Smith Special', on May 16, 1971. This Bit of Old Time Nostalgia is Contributable to the Fine Cooperation of the Southern Railway System." (Photograph by Craig Faulkner)







CEMETERIES CHURCHES PLANTATIONS SCHOOLS