



Bridges and Byways

Journal of the

Ohio Historic Bridge Association
Volume XXIX Number 4
Winter 2015-2016

Meeting Notes:

OHBA

March 20, 2016, Meeting 1:30 pm Ohio History Connection Auditorium, 800 E. 17th Avenue, Columbus, OH (Exit 111 off Rt. 71). **Speaker:** Doug Christian with a presentation on the history of Covered Bridges in Miami County.

May 15, 2016, Spring Bridge Tour. Tour Of Miami County with special presentation of the Eldean Covered Bridge by Jim Barker and Doug Christian. Time and meeting place TBA

July 17, 2016, noon
Summer Picnic at the Salt Creek Covered Bridge.
Speakers: TBA

September 18, 2016
Fall Bridge Tour TBA

November 20, 2016, 1:30 pm
Annual Business Meeting. Ohio History Connection Auditorium, 800 E. 17th Avenue, Columbus, OH (Exit 111 off Rt. 71)

Other Meetings:

May 18-20, 2016
Iron & Steel Preservation Conference in Lafayette, Indiana. See details in Bridge News.

Contents:

The President's Corner:
David Simmons.....2-4

Bridge News4-6

OHBA Officers and Membership Information.....7

Our website is currently off-line. For updates about meetings and tours or call one of our officers:

Covered Bridges and the Birth of American Engineering is now available free to you. Executive Editors are Justine Christianson and Christopher H. Marston of the Historic American Engineering Record (National Park Service). Our own David Simmons served as one of the editors. To request a copy, email Christopher_Marston@nps.gov the author or write him at National Park Service, 1201 Eye St. NW, Room 270, Washington, DC 20005

Ohio's Pioneer Covered Bridge "Collectors"

Among the many delights of exploring the John Diehl Collection has been the light shed on the state's early covered bridge enthusiasts. I came across a 1945 article by late Rick Allen, one of America's prominent covered bridge historians and early editor of *Covered Bridge Topics*, on "covered bridge collecting." In it, Allen recognized the important link between photography and "covered bridgers," pointing out that many enthusiasts started from behind the viewfinder of a camera. But he went beyond that narrow focus to emphasize that the hobby had links with many "kindred" disciplines: geography, history, engineering, biography, carpentry, masonry and wood studies, as well as with those interested in the life and mannerisms of an earlier day.

So how did Ohio's covered bridge collectors get organized? The first "official" body was the informal group of interested individuals organized in 1941—with John Diehl as chair—at the Ohio State Museum. Intended to be statewide in scope, it may have been limited by its very name, the Ohio Covered Bridge Committee. It remained an informal body whose numbers never seemed to grow very large. Still, as the state's initial organization, the committee served the essential function of locating and publicizing covered bridges by producing a series of statewide covered bridge maps based on the model of an Ohio highway map and created under John's careful and precise guidance in 1953, 1956, 1961, 1965, 1967, 1970, and 1972.

Ohio's first covered bridge "club" was conceived as a chapter of the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges (NSPCB). That group had been organized in Boston in early 1954. Among its charter members was the Reading, Massachusetts, resident Charles Wilson, a sales engineer with the Quaker Chemical Products, who later became a NSPCB officer and director. Late in 1957, Wilson moved to Euclid, an eastern suburb of Cleveland. But if it were not for a manufacturer's rep living in Cleveland Heights named Alfred Dreyfoos, an Ohio group might never have been organized. An avid photographer, Dreyfoos picked up a copy of the 1956 Ohio Covered Bridge Map. While using it, he met others with similar interests and joined the NSPCB. After inquiring about fellow Ohio members, he was referred to Wilson. Dreyfoos contacted him and suggested organizing a club but initially found Wilson hesitant, thinking Dreyfoos expected him "to shoulder all the work," an experience he had had in the past. Dreyfoos expressed a willingness to help and suggested that Wilson get a list of national members from Boston and contact them. Wilson agreed and sent them a questionnaire. He also convinced the editor of the *Cleveland Press* to write an article discussing the intention to organize a local covered bridge group.

The first meeting was held on October 14, 1958, and Wilson was named president and Dreyfoos the treasurer. Monthly meetings were held in a bank's community room in South Euclid and attendance grew rapidly, nearly overflowing the room. In this early stage, President Wilson identified county engineers as the group's "implacable enemy," and hoped to arouse interest in preservation that might help "convert" these public officials. He pointed to examples in New England where wooden bridges had been underpinned with new steel beams as well as cases where bridges had been marked and disassembled for relocation to public parks. In the spring of 1960, the group began producing a newsletter called *Buckeye Bridge Briefs*. Interestingly, meetings were often held in conjunction with local historical societies around northeastern Ohio. Clearly, the group saw their purview as the entire state. Articles in the newsletter covered all of Ohio, and both the newsletter masthead and the group's first stationery featured images of bridges from Fairfield County.



Photo 1:

These 22 individuals attended the first meeting of the Northern Ohio Chapter of the NSPCB at the First Unitarian Church in Shaker Heights on October 14, 1958. Charles Wilson is at the left rear.

Helping to provide a statewide perspective for the northern Ohio chapter was longtime covered bridge researcher Tom J. Malone, who lived on a farm in western Columbiana County (35-15-96 at Beaver Creek State Park was, following his death, named for him in 1971). He organized a two-day tour through his home county in June 1961. As reported in *Buckeye Bridge Briefs*, a total of 85 people, ranging in age from 93 to 21 months—said to just be learning how to even say “covered bridge”—and hailing from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Florida participated over the two days. Most of those attending on Saturday were members but Sunday included many who had read about the tour in local newspapers. As Rick Allen had suggested in his “collecting” article, the tour hosted camera bugs, botanists, bird-watchers, rock hounds, and at least one steam engine enthusiast. When the latter insisted that the caravan stop long enough to photograph a nearby farmer’s traction engine, the owner graciously agreed to fire up the boiler to provide some smoke. It resulted in a 40-minute stop until those less enthralled with the delay laid on their car horns to recall the sidetracked men and resume the tour. One car ran out of gas but its occupant was rescued by a fellow driver who finished the tour and then returned to the abandoned car with a tank of gasoline. Later that same year, the officers decided to change the name to the Northern Ohio Covered Bridge Society. It remained active until officially dissolved in 2009.

The Southern Ohio Covered Bridge Association (SOCBA) had a similar background to the northern group. The founding members initially discovered a common bond in covered bridge photography, and, when they assembled at Anita Knight’s home in Zanesville on March 31, 1960, decided to solicit the NSPCB to identify other *Buckeye Topics* subscribers that would likely support preserving Ohio covered bridges. After mailing 110 letters throughout southern Ohio and receiving

25 responses, the group decided to organize. It was, however, distinct from the northern Ohio group in one important way: they were motivated to preserve an actual covered bridge. The farmer who had acquired the 1876 Salt Creek Cover Bridge from Muskingum County officials offered to sell it and 2/3 acre of land for \$300. Fund raising for the purchase began immediately, and by the summer, all but \$85.80 had been collected. In light of the group's involvement with a real bridge, much of their early activities centered around making money and completing work on the bridge itself. Sixty individuals assembled for the first summer picnic at Salt Creek on July 17, 1960, and it has been an annual event ever since. A deputy sheriff led the group's first tour of Greene County a month later.



Photo 2:
The officers of the Southern Ohio Covered Bridge Association gathered at the summer picnic in July 1961. Kneeling (r to l) are: M. L. Young; James A. Moore; Eldon M. Neff. Standing (r to l) are: Floyd T. Patterson; Mrs. Moore; Anita Knight; Miriam Wood; Bob McManness; and Louis Paxton.

Hoping to increase both the exposure of the group and its credibility, SOCBA established "honorary" memberships. The first such individual was famed covered bridge historian Richard S. Allen, who was soon followed by John Diehl, Preble County's Seth Schlotterbeck, the former Union County engineer N. W. Llewellyn, and Smith Bridge Company researcher and collector Eldon Neff from Springfield.

The early minutes for the SOCBA indicate that the two groups, northern and southern, frequently worked together. Numerous individuals had memberships in both and individuals from each spoke at the other group's meetings. Hallie Jones from Columbiana County was named as a "go-between," and joint tours were held in Columbiana and Ashtabula counties in the 1960s. A joint committee was formed between the two organizations in 1969 to develop guidelines for preserving a covered bridge whenever a public entity abandoned it.

Seen from today, a controversy in 1966 has a contemporary feel. A proposal had been made to build a concrete span with a covering at Mohican State Park. The SOCBA immediately expressed their opposition to it since "it would not be an authentic covered bridge." The heated discussion at the meeting focused on sending "a vote of censor" to the state engineers. (Interestingly, this "modern-bridge-with-a-roof" remained a viable concept for another decade. I was similarly incensed when state funds were later directed towards a "fake" covered bridge at Mohican instead of preserving genuine historic bridges. Then working in the state historic preservation office, I tried to redirect

my anger to something productive, and began a series of articles on various historic iron, stone, concrete, steel, and covered bridges throughout the state that ran in the quarterly *Ohio County Engineer's Magazine* for many years.)

In 1996, during a major structural restoration of the Salt Creek Covered Bridge through a federal-grant-in-aid, the name of the SOCBA was changed to the Ohio Historic Bridge Association and papers filed to officially define it as a nonprofit.

Bridge News.....Elma Lee Moore, David Simmons, and Doug Miller

Spring Meeting and Spring Bridge Tour.....Doug Miller

OHBA officers have recommended a different bent to our meetings and tours for this year. The Spring meeting at the Ohio Connection and the Spring Bridge tour will focus on one specific county and emphasize one particular bridge in detail. The spring meeting will host Doug Christian who will provide a PowerPoint presentation on the history of covered bridges in Miami County. The spring tour will visit the Eldean Covered Bridge (35-55-01) in Miami County. It is one of two covered bridges in the county. It was built in 1860 and has its original Long truss design details, making it very unusual in the entire United States. Jim Barker, the engineer of the recent renovations at the bridge, will be there to point out many of the historic features of the bridge as well as how the repairs have retained its historic integrity. Doug Christian will again join us with pictures and displays about the bridge. We hope that many of you will join us for this in depth view of a bridge as opposed to our previous tours which focused on seeing many bridges.

Harpersfield Covered Bridge (35-04-19) Ashtabula County Proposal.....David Simmons

A proposal was recently sent to the Ohio Department of Transportation to remove the historic Harpersfield Covered Bridge and replace it with a new covered bridge. OHBA sent a letter to Tim Miller, Ashtabula County Engineer, objecting to this proposal. As David Simmons said in his letter,

Sadly, the replacement of two genuine historic bridges with a new covered bridge is the polar opposite of historic preservation and can only be questioned by serious preservationists. If you are assuming that since the metal truss was determined ineligible that it is expendable, think about the impact of its demolition on the 1868 wooden truss. The metal bridge, even if not the most significant bridge individually, has been a part of the Harpersfield setting for more than a century and can hardly be discounted. The combination of metal truss and wooden truss is one of the few such remaining in the state, and I would argue that it makes the combination highly significant in its own right. The combination of engineering types was once a fairly common sight in the state. But today where else is there such a prime and educational example of the impact of the 1913 flood on the state's engineering heritage?

That is quite apart from the proposed loss of a bridge that has been a part of the local history at Harpersfield for nearly a century and a half. It is one of the most-photographed in the entire state whose loss would be tragic. No one could again visit that structure and get a feeling for all the thousands of individuals and wagons and automobiles that have crossed it nor the untold numbers who have found an undeniable connection with the past through visiting it. And if you were thinking that the substitution of a new covered bridge would stand-in as a replacement, I must object even most strenuously. Once you destroy the old bridge, you have lost that history for all time. No new



bridge can substitute for those feelings and connections with the past. I must register a strong objection to this plan and hope that you might be dissuaded from such a drastic departure from the county's previous exemplary record. Please let me know if you would like to discuss this further.

The Fall bridge tour visited the Harpersfield Bridge (see left and back cover). It was a most idyllic location. We had lunch in the park and stayed there longer than any other of the sites. We enjoyed this bridge and location more than any other in the two day tour.

Stevenson Road Covered Bridge (35-29-15) Dedication.....Elma Lee Moore

On December 4, Elma Lee Moore and Doug Miller attended the dedication of the Stevenson Road Covered Bridge in Greene County (near Wilberforce on CR 76). Although the day was crisp, there was a good turn out of community leaders and residents of Greene County. An historic marker was unveiled by the Ohio History Connection. There was some discussion as to the correct date of the building of the bridge. The representative from the Greene County Historical Society said that her records indicated that the date on the bridge marker is incorrect. This led to a lively discussion after the dedication. Miriam Wood's research indicated that the Smith truss was built in 1877 by the Smith Bridge Company. It spans Massie Creek. Although various dignitaries spoke, by far the most



interesting was Jim Barker. Barker discussed the fine points of bridge restoration and the difficulty of maintaining the integrity of the original bridge builder. He pointed out many parts of this bridge that had been preserved, yet keep the bridge in good maintenance. Bob Geyer, Greene County Engineer talked about additions to the bridge such as lighting at night and camera surveillance to deter vandalism. Doug Miller briefly presented information about the engineering design of the restoration. The Stevenson Road Covered Bridge became under severe scrutiny in 2012, when it was announced that the U.S. Department of Transportation provided a grant to Greene County in the amount of \$520,000 for the restoration of the bridge.

Brief News from Doug Miller.....Doug Miller

John Smolen has designed two bridges: one a bike trail and the other at Englewood in Montgomery County. Otway CB will receive another award, an Outstanding Small Project Award from American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) on March 10. The Ballard Rd. Covered Bridge in Greene County's design is completed and will be set for bids. Monroe County, Foraker Covered Bridge: Bridge currently has an 11 inch sag. Plans for rehabilitation are in ODOT Central Office. Monroe County, Knowlton Covered Bridge has several major issues including complete fracture of both upstream lower chord members. County has installed temporary fix to stabilize structure. County has submitted a letter of interest to ODOT for Transportation Alternative funds to fully rehabilitate the structure.

Iron & Steel Preservation Conference.....Elma Lee Moore

Lansing Community College and Purdue University are offering an Iron & Steel Preservation Conference and Workshop May 18-20, 2016. The Conference will be held in Lafayette, Indiana. The focus will on the preservation techniques of historic iron and steel bridges. The half-day workshop on May 20 is hands-on. The conference cost is \$375.00 and the workshop, \$175.00. OHBA is offering a scholarship for the conference cost to Ohio public officials wishing to attend. Please contact David Simmons. Details of the conference can be located by contacting Vern Mesler at meslerv@gmail.com or calling (517)-614-9868

OHBA Officers & Membership Information

President: David Simmons, Ohio History Connection, Timeline Office, 800 E. 17th Ave., Columbus, OH 43211-2494, 614-297-2365 (work) dsimmons@ohiohistory.org
740-965-4023 (home)

1st VP: Edmund Chapdelaine, 217 E. Main St., West Lafayette, OH 43845,
740-545-6696 schapdelaine@gmail.com

2nd VP: Douglas D. Miller, 7228 Pineview Dr., Englewood, OH 45322-2600 937-832-0817
(home) dmiller94@woh.rr.com

3rd VP: Elma Lee Moore, 4489 Choctaw Trail, Jamestown, OH 45335 937-675-9115 (home)
elmphd@aol.com

Treasurer: Joseph W. Charles, Jr., 726 Newark-Granville Rd., Granville, OH 43023-1451, 740-587-2266, jdcharles@windstream.net

Corres. Sec'y: Miriam Wood, c/o Howard Wood, 5995 Springburn Dr., Dublin OH 43017

Rec. Sec'y: Ellen Rupp, 612 Glenridge Pl., Columbus, OH 43214, 614-847-9634 mailellentoo@yahoo.com

Trustees: Ken & Linda Cash, 1657 Spruce St., Zanesville, OH 43701, 740-453-3840

Editor of Bridges & Byways: Elma Lee Moore, 4489 Choctaw Trail, Jamestown, OH 45335
937-675-9115 elmphd@aol.com

Web Master: Ron Jones ronjones@insight.rr.com

Dues: Senior (age 55 and over) \$8; Student \$8; Single \$10; Family \$15; Contributing \$25; Supporting \$40; Life \$250.

Annual dues include subscription to Bridges & Byways, quarterly journal of the OHBA. Dues period is the calendar year. Dues paid after October 1st cover the succeeding year. Renewal dues to be paid by 1/15

Please fill out the membership application form below and send it with your check made out to the OHBA and send it to Mr. Charles at address above. Be sure to include your 9 digit zip code.

I wish to join/renew membership with the OHBA. My name is _____

My mailing address is _____

My email address is _____

Enclosed is my check made out to the OHBA in the amount of _____ for a _____ year membership.



Harpersfield Covered Bridge photo by Elma Lee Moore

Fall Bridge Tour September 20, 2015