

Bridges and Byways

Journal of the

Ohio Historic Bridge Association
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Meeting Notes:

OHBA

September 19 & 20, 2015

Fall Bridge Tour Ashtabula County . See page 4 for details.

November 15, 2015 1:30 pm

Annual Business Meeting. Ohio History Connection Auditorium, 800 E. 17th Avenue, Columbus, OH (Exit 111 off Rt. 71)

Other events:

Sept. 12: Covered Bridge Music Series, Ohio University, Lancaster

Sept. 12: Covered Bridge Bicycle Tour, Canal Winchester

Sept. 18,19, & 20: Union County Covered Bridge and Bluegrass Festival

Oct. 9-18: Parke Co. Indiana Covered Bridge Festival

Oct. 10 & 11: Ashtabula Co. Covered Bridge Festival

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Our website is currently being reconstructed. If you have questions, call or email one of our officers.

Bridge Maintenance

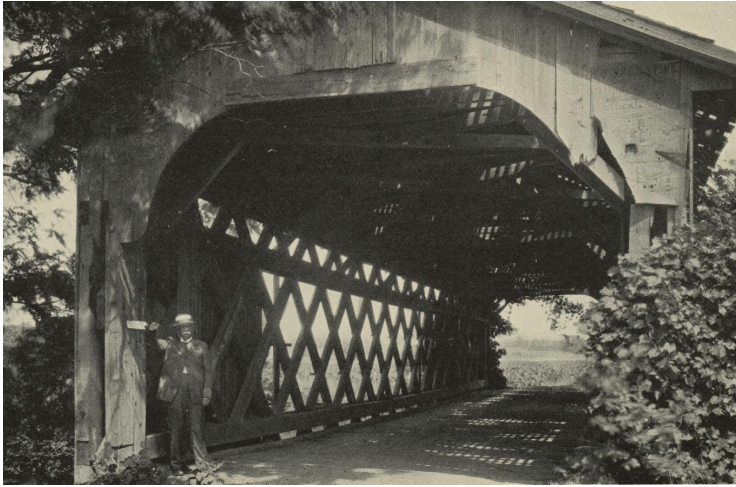
Vern Mesler was working as a welding instructor at Lansing Community College in Lansing, Michigan, in 2009 when a revelation came to him. He had long been a specialist in the preservation of old metal truss bridges. Since 1998, he had partnered with the Calhoun County Road Commission to relocate and restore five historic iron bridges that were being replaced. In fact, if you're in the Battle Creek area it's worth a visit to the Historic Bridge Park at 14390 Nine Mile Road. Two pony trusses and three through trusses have been painstakingly restored and are on exhibit there, along



Charlotte Highway Bridge, Calhoun County Historic Bridge Park with an 1892 stone arch still used by Amtrak. One of the most impressive is the 177-foot double-intersection Pratt through truss, the former Charlotte Highway Bridge, built in 1886 by the Buckeye Bridge and Iron Works of Cleveland, Ohio.

Vern recognized that there is a record of the craftsmen who fabricated the bridge incorporated in the structure itself. As he says it, "Every part of the bridge tells a story," and he became expert at reading those stories. It occurred to him that the special skills needed to preserve old metal truss bridges were slowly being lost. So in 2010, he held the first Iron & Steel Preservation Conference (ISPC) at Lansing Community College. The first day was devoted to classroom lectures on topics pertinent to metal preservation. Then two days were scheduled for actual hands-on training with the special techniques. Vern was kind enough to ask me to be a speaker on the first day to explain the 1898 development of the hand-held pneumatic riveter that made possible field riveting of metal bridges. The tool has changed very little in a century and was used in the following day's workshops. Holding a riveting hammer in your hands and attempting to rivet something gives you a respect for the skill of the craftsmen that erected the bridges we are striving to preserve. And it remains the only such workshop series in the United States. These workshops are highly recommended for anyone interested in metal bridge preservation, regardless of your role. Even if you're not a professional in the field, it's extremely important to understand what's possible. The next workshop, scheduled for May 18–20, 2016, will feature a new venue: Purdue University's S-Brite Center (Steel Bridge Research, Inspection, Training, and Engineering Center). The laboratory there includes a "Bridge Component Gallery" that has pieces from the infamous I-35W Bridge that collapsed in Minneapolis in 2007, as well as parts of other 19th-century bridges.

At the 2012 ISPC, I met Mark R. Zimmerman, the Seneca County Engineer, who gave a presentation titled "A Way of Life: Bridge Maintenance." He explained how he regularly sends



crews out to sweep debris off the county's bridges. Accumulated dirt can trap moisture, the enemy of all types of bridges, whether wood, stone, iron, steel, or concrete. It sounds almost too simplistic to require workers to clean the bridges, but it fits nicely into the county's "fix it first" policy.

Seneca County's Last Bridge, South of Tiffin, circa 1930

It seemed like a good example, and it got me thinking about our own Salt Creek Covered Bridge. The annual picnic allows a regular physical assessment of the bridge. This year, I noticed that a lot of modern debris, dirt, and leaves had piled up on the lower chord. So I spent several hours during a recent afternoon picking up cans and broken bottles and sweeping the lower chord, which is, of course, made from two separate beams. Leaves had become wedged between the two, and the biggest part of the time was spent forcing this natural debris out. I also noticed that someone had spent time under the bridge slinging mud against the middle of one lower chord, as if blasted with a paintball gun, so I made sure to scrape that off.

In addition, I met with a tree arborist from a South Zanesville tree service company. I had noticed that a white oak tree at the north end of the bridge (where we always have our picnic) had some branches that looked stressed. He confirmed that the tree was suffering from a fungal attack caused by the excessively wet spring and summer, but that 99% of the time it does not kill trees. So he recommended trimming, especially where it hung over the bridge. The huge sycamore at the opposite end of the bridge he pronounced to be one of the healthiest in the area. Still, he suggested some trimming to minimize branches falling on the bridge. Two other sycamores on the roadside he recommended trimming to improve views of the bridge. The fifth tree, a sycamore on the north, or picnic side, was obviously dying, so we agreed that it should be cut down. The lower trunk will be left in place to minimize erosion into the small tributary.

I also met with Reid Mudgett from nearby Mudgett's Monuments about a large abutment stone that had fallen (or been pushed) into the adjacent small stream. We agreed on a spot to install it, complete with stainless steel pins to hold it in place, at the rear of the abutment wall.

Zimmerman's talk about that county's metal bridges helps remind us that even for a covered bridge with as minimal traffic as ours, maintenance is an ongoing consideration.

Fall Bridge Tour Details.....Elma Lee Moore

Our Fall Bridge tour will be in Ashtabula County. Since there are so many bridges both old and new, we have divided the tour into two days September 19 Saturday and September 20 Sunday. We mailed a postcard with details to all members at the end of August in the event there is a delay in getting the newsletter because of the Labor Day holiday.

Members can tour one or both days. There are many bed and breakfasts in the area— Geneva, Ashtabula, Jefferson, and Conneaut - in the event that members want to make a week-end of the tour. There are also a number of wineries in the area which may be a great side trip for tasting or dinner. We have not planned a formal dinner meeting place for Saturday but we perhaps can come up with a great idea (not the Covered Bridge pizza joint).

We will meet both days at 10 am at the McDonalds in Jefferson - 104 N. Chestnut St. (Route 46), Jefferson, OH 44047. Join us one or both days.

There are two routes for the Ashtabula Covered Bridges:

1. Saturday: North & Eastern Tour: 12 bridges and approximately 69 miles round trip. Bring your own lunch as we will picnic at one of the bridges.
2. Sunday: The South & Western Tour: 6 bridges on this tour and approximately 68 miles round trip. Bring your own lunch as we will picnic at one of the bridges.

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

Old Zoarville Fink Truss over Conotton CreekTom Fritsch

Member Tom Fritsch sent us a correction for our article on page 5 of our Spring *Bridges & Byways* about **Old Zoarville Fink Truss over Conotton Creek**. We stated that “the bridge was restored in 2007 through the efforts of Camp Tuscazoar, the local Boy Scout Camp.”

Per Tom, “this is untrue. It was closed by the Boy Scouts in 1986. Immediately, Camp Tuscazoar alumni formed the Camp Tuscazoar Foundation, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation. They are responsible for operations, including restoration of the bridge. The Boy Scouts of America has no interest in the camp.” Thanks Tom for making this correction.



Charles Loucks Covered Bridge (35-23-21) in Fairfield County.....David Simmons, Warren White, and Elma Lee Moore

David Simmons gives us some background about this bridge:

During the 1970s Fairfield County was notorious at one time for a program of giving away their covered bridges. In the 1970s, Robert Reef, the county engineer, insisted he just couldn't justify spending public money on these old structures. So he actively advertised a giveaway program that said you could take one if you 1) held the county harmless if you hurt yourself 2) paid for it yourself and 3) let it be open to the public once a year.

To continue this story, our member Dan Brock forwarded an email he received from Warren White. The text is below:

As you are aware Charles Loucks Bridge was sold to a party in Texas at Arroyo Seco Historical Park in Richmond. This park was later sold to the George Ranch organization and has been under several names with George Ranch Historical Park being the present entity The George Foundation being the overseer. All locations are in Richmond, TX.

On my trip from May 10 through July 10, 2014, I spent time searching in the Richmond area, only to find everyone is aware of George Ranch, but all I was getting was sparse information that led to one George entity or another George entity. They apparently own a large part of Richmond. Also I was in Richmond on a Sunday, which did not help. But I had clues and actually went to the sprawling George Ranch (a real large ranch operation) at 10215 FM 762 Road in Richmond. But, being Sunday, I was not able to get any information.

Today I was able to talk to a person within the George Ranch complex who was there in the early 1980s. Here is what happened to the bridge. It had been purchased by a person or persons who eventually sold the bridge to the George Ranch entity. After time, some of the bridge lumber and stone was used to build an uncovered bridge structure at George Ranch at 10215 FM 762 Road in Richmond. They used the granite slab abutments from Charles Loucks Bridge for the abutments here. As this was a smaller bridge, they used only some of the lumber to construct this bridge. I was unable to determine if this was a truss bridge or just a deck bridge, but I suspect it was not a truss bridge. Over time more of the lumber was used for other purposes or sold to other parties (they do use auctions to sell various excess items - typical for Museums and the George Ranch organization owns the Fort Bend County Museum). Some of the material is still in storage at George Ranch. I had spoken with the Curator of The Fort Bend County Museum, who was very helpful.

The sad story is that Charles Loucks Bridge is no more and never will be. Whatever materials that may be left will eventually find a new use.

OHBA has two photos in our files of this bridge.

The photo on the right of the Loucks Bridge was taken in 1949 by John Diehl. The bridge looks to be in fair condition at that point.

The photo below was taken by David Simmons in 1983. The considerable deterioration can be seen.



Summer Picnic.....Elma Lee Moore

David Simmons began the meeting with a prayer. He then thanked the Cash's for their stewardship in caring for the Salt Creek Bridge. Joe Charles reported that our membership is now 361. Terry Miller commented that our membership exceeds that of many other bridge organizations. David Simmons brought items from the John Diehl Collection. Diehl's legacy included glass slides, negatives, slides, photos, journals, correspondence, books, postcards, articles, and maps. He was instrumental in the adoption of the present bridge numbering system. John Diehl interviewed Stock Bower, one of America's the last covered bridge builders, and photos of the Bower family's bridge projects and of Stock Bower are in the collection. David and Elma Lee have been sorting through the items. Diehl had a wonderful catalogue system. He recorded everything about specific bridges on cards organized by county and then by bridge number.

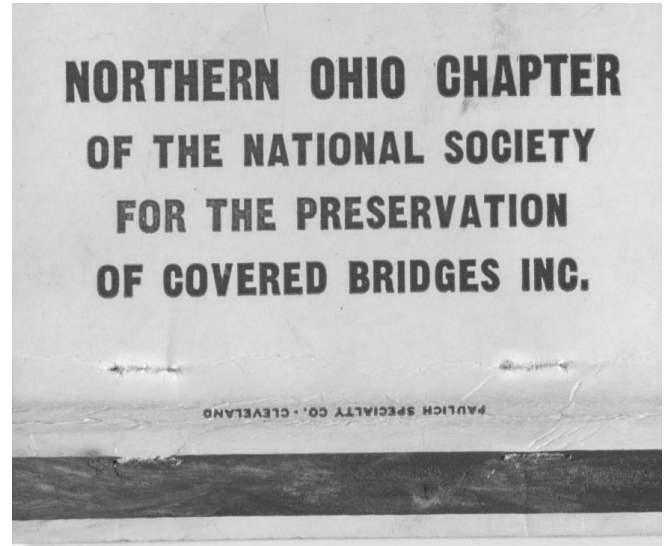
Terry Miller then discussed his trip to Pennsylvania covered bridges with two researchers: Phil Caston, a European covered bridge authority teaching in Germany and Liu Yan, a Chinese covered bridge researcher. Caston you may recall wrote articles in *Bridges & Byways* several years ago. Terry described the meticulous nature of their measurements and details which included recording measurements twice and recording features like cracks and defects in the wood. The researchers are documenting the original workmanship and what happened to the wood over time. This is is being done in the traditional methodology of industrial archeologists.

This lead to a discussion among the membership of what did constitute an original bridge. Some types of restoration of bridges have rendered the bridges "ruined." Jim Barker was cited as doing excellent work to preserve as much as possible of an original bridge during renovation with Indiana bridges. Some Ohio covered bridges have been torn down and then completely rebuilt such as the Charlton Mill Bridge in Greene County and other bridges in Noble County. The Island Run (Helmick Mill) Bridge in Morgan County preserved the original bridge inside a "jim-jam" which served to preserve the original bridge. Doug Miller pointed out that there are federal funds involved in many of these renovations and replacement projects which have an impact on the route the engineer takes with the bridge. The discussion ended with David commenting that this continues our on-going discussion of renovation versus conservation of the old bridges.

Several members inspected the bridge and the surroundings.

Miscellaneous.....Elma Lee Moore

What were they thinking? In working with the John Diehl Collection, I came across the following matchbook "artifact," about which I thought you might get a chuckle.



OHBA Officers & Membership Information

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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.



Summer Picnic 2015

Front: Sue and Ed Chapdelaine, Ken Cash, David Simmons, Sara Miller, Sharon and Jim Gnagy.
Second Row: Joe and Diane Charles, Doug Miller, Melinda Simmons, Terry Miller, George Cash,
Matt Cash, Katie Holtz, Linda Cash Not pictured Elma Lee Moore the photographer.