

**Historic Bridge Tour
Scioto County, OH and Greenup County, Ky
September 2022**

Meet at the Scioto Rest Area (mile marker 15 in northern Scioto County) on OH-US 23, September 17, 10 AM.

Turn southbound on OH-US 23 and proceed about 4.5 miles to OH 348 and turn right. Proceed west on OH 348 to OH 73 in Otway. Turn left and follow OH 348 when it turns right. Turn right onto Curtis Smith Road and stop to see the:

Otway Covered Bridge (35-73-15), a 129-foot Smith truss built over Scioto Brush Creek in 1874 by the Smith Bridge Company of Toledo, Ohio, on especially substantial stone abutments erected by W. H. Wheeler. The Smith Bridge Company, founded in Tipp City, Ohio, in the 1860s by Robert Smith, was among the earliest in the country to see bridge building in modern business terms. After patenting two truss designs in the 1860s—both of which were designed to economize on materials by inclining the compression braces at 60° angles—Smith organized a large group of agents. They were authorized to sell a bridge outright, or sell and orchestrate erecting the bridge, or simply sell plans for a bridge. In the case of the Otway Bridge, the timbers for the bridge were obtained from a local sawmill, the Thompson and Freeman mill, instead of fabricating them in Toledo and shipping them to Scioto County. This may have been an effort to take advantage of the more extensive timber supplies in southern Ohio. The length of the bridge—spans longer than 100 feet were especially challenging—may have soon resulted in some sagging, and in 1896, only two decades after the original construction, laminated wooden arches and iron rods were added to strengthen the bridge. A low steel bridge was added to the eastern end of the bridge in 1923, one of the few examples of a covered bridge and metal span—a once common combination—still remaining in the entire state.

The bridge became part of the state system in the 1930s, and the state proposed to bypass the bridge in the 1960s. A local group of preservationists headed by Gladys Riley and Demia Penn, was organized to save the bridge under the name Otway Community Society for the Preservation of Historic Landmarks. With the help of the Ohio Covered Bridge Committee led by John Diehl, they got the bridge recognized with a state historical marker and later, with the help of Miriam Wood, got it listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Along with the Zanesville group that led in the creation of our own organization, the Otway effort represents one of the early covered bridge preservation efforts in Ohio.

Return to OH 348 and turn right onto southbound OH 73. Follow OH 73 for about 10 miles to OH 104 and turn right. As you approach Portsmouth, you will pass the exit for OH 239. Continue ahead on OH 104/73 into Portsmouth. It will become Second Street. You will be driving through the:

Boneyfiddle Historic District that stretches 6 blocks along Second Street. It is a commercial and residential historic district listed on the National Register of

Historic Places in 1979 and represents Portsmouth's prominence as a river port, terminus of the Ohio & Erie Canal, and as an industrial center. The buildings predominately date from the 19th century. The origin of the name remains unclear but has been attributed both to the 18th-century French explorer Celeron de Bienville and to the expression "Bow 'n Fiddle" referring to its popularity as an entertainment center.

At Washington Street, turn right and proceed to Front Street. Turn right to see the:

Portsmouth Floodwall Murals, an outdoor art gallery depicting the last two centuries of the history of Portsmouth and the surrounding area. The artwork includes 60 separate pieces of art standing 20 feet high and stretching for 2,090 feet. Robert Dafford of Lafayette, Louisiana, began the painting in 1993, and it is an ongoing project.

Follow Front Street to Madison Street and turn right. Turn right again onto Second Street and follow it to OH-US 23 and turn right (southbound) to cross the:

U.S. Grant Bridge crossing the Ohio River. Built by the C.J. Mahan Construction Company of Grove City, Ohio, between 2001 and 2006, it was the first cable-stayed bridge built for the Ohio Department of Transportation. Suspended from towers that rise more than 300 feet, the total suspended spans stretch a total of 1,685 feet.

After crossing the river, continue on southbound US-23 and turn left. Follow it to the Speedway Station in South Shore and turn right on Route 7. Follow Rt. 7 about 8 miles and stop to see:

Bennett's Mill Covered Bridge (17-45-01), a 155-foot Wheeler truss over Tygarts Creek. It was built in the 1870s to serve the B. F. and Pramley Bennett Mill. Isaac Wheeler of Sciotoville, Ohio, received a patent for his unusual truss in 1870 using three chords and a unique subdivision of compression members. Miriam Wood determined that five Wheeler trusses were built in Scioto County and one in Lawrence County, but this is the only surviving example. In 2003, the bridge was dismantled and carefully rebuilt following the original design, but only 15% of the original material could be salvaged.

Return to Rt. 7 and turn left. Follow Rt. 7 about 10 miles to Route 2 and turn left (or east). Follow Rt. 2 about 6 miles and turn right onto Route 1459. At the T-intersection, turn right onto Route 1. Follow Rt. 1 to the entrance for Greenbo Lake State Park and turn right onto Greenbo Road, or Route 1711. Follow it to the picnic area and turn right to park for lunch. Those who did not bring a lunch can proceed up the hill to eat at the restaurant at the Jesse Stuart Lodge. Following lunch, we will cross the street to see:

Buffalo Furnace, a charcoal iron furnace originally constructed in 1851 and active during the Civil War. Following the war, it stood inactive until 1869, when, after a

false start, it reopened as a hot blast furnace. By 1871, it returned to a cold blast system, but 1875 marked the final blast here. The land was converted to a stock farm, and the furnace machinery was dismantled and sold for scrap in Cincinnati.

Return to Route 1 and turn right. Follow Rt. 1 to Oldtown. About a half-mile south of Oldtown, turn left onto Route 311 to see:

Oldtown Covered Bridge (17-45-02), a 2-span, 188-foot multiple kingpost truss over Little Sandy Creek. Built in 1880 for \$4,000 by an unknown contractor, it features two unequal spans. The 145-foot main span includes a double truss system while the shorter, 41-foot span, uses only a single truss system. The bridge was repaired in 1972-73 by the Green Thumb Environmental Beautification program that provided jobs for eligible senior citizens. The bridge was bypassed in 1987.

Return to Route 1 and turn left. Follow Rt. 1 to Route 3306 or Tunnel Branch Road and turn left to see:

Hopewell Bridge, over Little Sandy River, a 160-foot, wrought iron Whipple truss built in 1868 by the Phoenix Iron Works of Phoenixville, PA, one of the nation's largest iron manufacturers at the time. The compression members are all hollow Phoenix columns, created from semi-circular, rolled plates that are stitch-riveted together. This design was patented by Samuel J. Reeves in 1862 and became a highly successful and widely utilized structural system. It can be found, for example, in the elevator shaft of the Washington Monument, completed in 1880. Today, the importance of this influential system is little appreciated.

Following Route 1 north will return you to US-23 at Greenup, Kentucky. Turn left and follow US-23 to return to Ohio.