



2026 ASHTABULA COUNTY COVERED BRIDGE FESTIVAL

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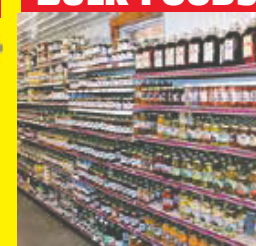
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WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

The portable covered bridge was at the Smolen-Gulf Bridge during the 2025 Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival in Plymouth Township.

Covered Bridge Festival draws people from all over the country

BY WARREN DILLAWAY
warren@starbeacon.com

JEFFERSON — A beloved Northeast Ohio event is just days away, as the Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival

will put the spotlight on the county's 19 covered bridges this weekend.

The county's covered bridges are set for review and people from all over the country are heading to town. Ashtabula County

Covered Bridge Festival Executive Director Ginger Whitehead said she has been getting regular calls about where to stay and what fun side trips are available.

As the festival planning

wound down, it was announced that Whitehead will step down. Sandra Ranck will take over the festival following the festival's board of directors meeting in November, Whitehead said.

"I will be working with her for the next year," Whitehead said of the transition plans for the event that has seen numerous celebration locations over the years.

For many years, the

festival was centered on the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds and included a parade, with the event later moving to Giddings Park, then back to the fairgrounds and now

See **Festival** on 11

Numerous activities at Covered Bridge Festival

Staff report

According to information from the Covered Bridge Festival, events start at the Harpersfield Covered Bridge Saturday, with souvenir and craft booths opening at 10 a.m., along with kids' activities and The Spoon Man.

A trio of strolling entertainers, Bigfoot and Abe and Mary Todd Lincoln, will tour the site from 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

The festival closes at 5 p.m. Saturday.

On 8:30 a.m. Sunday, a 5K is scheduled for the



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Visitors to the 2025 Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival hang out near a bonfire at the Harpersfield Covered Bridge

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pavilion on the North side of the river. Souvenir and craft booths open again at 10 a.m., and at the same time, there is a church service by Harvest Church.

Bigfoot and Abe and Mary Todd Lincoln will return from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday.

The band Simply Us is scheduled to perform from 3-5 p.m.

On Saturday, there are a pair of special bridge dedications scheduled.

At the Creek Road Bridge in Conneaut at 1 p.m., there will be the dedication of a memorial plaque to Bob Marcy. At

See **Activities** on 10

A look at the county’s 19 covered bridges



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

John Gaub, of Edinboro, takes pictures at the Netcher Road Covered Bridge during last year’s Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival.

Netcher

1544 Netcher Rd, Jefferson
CLEARANCE: 14’ 6” (2.7 mi. from Center of Jefferson)
The bridge over Mill Creek was open to traffic in 1999. It features a timber arch with inverted Haupt Trusses. The “Neo Victorian” designed structure is 110’ long, 22’ wide, and 14’ 6” high.

South Denmark

2670 South Denmark Rd, Jefferson
CLEARANCE: 9’0” (2.7 mi. from Netcher Road Bridge) Built in 1890, this Town lattice bridge spans Mill Creek. The 81-foot structure was bypassed in 1975.

Caine

4699 Caine Rd, Pierpont

Township

CLEARANCE: 11’0” (6.7 mi. from S. Denmark Rd Bridge) This first Pratt Truss bridge in Ohio was built in 1986 in honor of Ashtabula County’s 175th Anniversary. The 124-foot long bridge

See **BRIDGES** on 6

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BRIDGES
CONTINUED FROM 5

traverses the west branch of the Ashtabula River.

Graham
4646 Graham Rd, Pierpont Township
BYPASS (5.9 mi. from Caine Rd Bridge) Built from remnants of a bridge washed downstream in the 1913 flood, the bridge now sits in a small park on the south side of the road.

Root
4680 Root Rd, Conneaut
CLEARANCE: 8'4" (3.9 mi. from Graham Rd Bridge) A 114-foot-long Town lattice

built in 1868, Root Rd. Bridge was raised 18" during the rehabilitation in 1982/83. New laminated girders and a center concrete pier were also added.

Middle
910 Middle Rd, Conneaut
CLEARANCE: 13'6" (8.3 mi. from Root Rd Bridge) This 136-foot long Howe Truss bridge was built in 1868 over Conneaut Creek, which is a favorite Stealhead Steam. It was rehabilitated in 1984 with the help of seven volunteers.

Conneaut Creek
5899 State Rd, Conneaut
CLEARANCE: 16'2" (5.1 mi. from Middle Rd Bridge)

Containing 97,000 feet of southern pine and oak, the State Rd. Bridge was erected in 1983 across Conneaut Creek. This 152-foot-long Town lattice was the first covered bridge designed and built by County Engineer John W.Smolen, Jr. A 4' opening spans the length.

Creek
371 Creek Rd, Conneaut
CLEARANCE: 11'4" (3.4 mi. from State Rd Bridge) The construction date of this 125-foot long Town lattice bridge is unknown. It sits 25' above Conneaut Creek and was renovated in 1994.

Benetka

4500 Benetka Rd, Sheffield Township
CLEARANCE: 11'0" (11.5 mi. from Creek Rd Bridge) A 138-foot-long Town lattice with Arch bridge, Benetka was built about 1900. It was renovated in 1985 when a laminated arch 9" wide, 38" thick, spanning the length of the bridge, was added.

Olin
1880 Dewey Rd, Plymouth Township
CLEARANCE: 12'0" (2.5 mi. from Benetka Rd Bridge) Olins have owned property next to the bridge since it was built in 1873. The 115-foot-long Town lattice structure

over the Ashtabula River was renovated in 1985.

Smolen-Gulf
7001 State Rd, Ashtabula
CLEARANCE: 14'6" (2.6 mi. from Olin Bridge) The longest covered bridge in the U.S. is of Pratt Truss construction. Engineering and structural design by John W. Smolen, Jr. (former County Engineer) and architectural design was done by Timothy J. Martin (current County Engineer). Dedicated in 2008, it is 613 foot long and stands 93 foot above the River. With clear width of 30 feet, it will support full legal load traffic and has a life expectancy of 100 years.

Riverview
Indian Trails Park, 4761 State Rd, Ashtabula This

bridge is 150' long and 14' wide, making it one of the larger bridges, yet it carries only pedestrian traffic. It mirrors the Pratt arch design of its big brother, Smolen-Gulf, which rises above. Both cross the Ashtabula River at Indian Trails Park. Riverview, dedicated in 2016, provides exercise trials and a place to enjoy the beautiful river scenery.

Giddings
1400 Giddings Rd, Jefferson
CLEARANCE: 15'6" (8 mi. from Smolen-Gulf Bridge) Pratt Truss construction was used for this 107-foot long bridge built in 1995. It crosses Mill Creek in Jefferson Township.

See **FESTIVAL** on 8



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Visitors leave the South Denmark Road Covered Bridge during last year’s Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival.



WARREN DILLAWAY |
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**Tammy and
Greg Bailey, of
the Pittsburgh
area, check
out merchan-
dise during
last year’s
Ashtabula
County Covered
Bridge Festival
at Harpersfield
Covered Bridge.**

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FESTIVAL

CONTINUED FROM 6

Doyle

1300 Doyle Rd, Jefferson
CLEARANCE: 13'6" (1.8
mi. from Jefferson) A 94-foot
long Town lattice bridge
built in 1868, Doyle spans

Mill Creek, a tributary of the
Grand River. This bridge was
renovated in 1987 when a
laminated arch was added.

West Liberty

94 West Liberty St, Geneva
CLEARANCE: 15' (10.6
mi. from Doyle Rd Bridge)
The shortest covered bridge

in the U.S., Liberty spans
only 18 feet. The structure is
supported by a single King-
post and its roof is a scissor
Truss, which gives the bridge
a light, open feeling. Timber
for this bridge was harvested
from county land owners.
The bridge was modularly

constructed by students of
Ashtabula County Joint Voca-
tional School (now A-Tech).

Harpersfield

1122 Harpersfield Rd,
Geneva
CLEARANCE: 10'9" (3 mi.
from Liberty St Bridge) This
two-span Howe Truss bridge

is 228' long, and is the second
longest bridge in Ohio. Built in
1868, it is listed in the Nation-
al Register of Historic Places.
A 1913 flood altered the river,
requiring a steel bridge to link
the covered bridge to the north
approach. A walkway was
added in 1992. The bridge was
recently renovated.

Mechanicsville

1153 Mechanicsville Road,
Austinburg.

The Mechanicsville Covered
Bridge is believed to be the
oldest covered bridge in
Ashtabula County. Built in
1867, this impressive 156-foot
Howe truss with arch grace-
fully spans the Grand River,
making it the second-longest
single-span covered bridge in
the county. Its arch, made of
15 layers of 2x8 lumber en-
cased within the large beams
of the truss, showcases classic
19th-century craftsmanship.

Riverdale

3349 Riverdale Rd, Rock
Creek

Built in 1874, the Riverdale
Covered Bridge showcases the
timeless beauty of a 114-foot

Town lattice design. Over the
years, it has undergone several
renovations to maintain its
strength and charm. Steel brac-
ing was added in 1945, and in
1981, the floor was rebuilt with
glue-laminated wood girders
for extra reinforcement. After
floodwaters washed out the
road at the east end in 1987,
a new concrete abutment was
constructed to ensure its stabi-
lity for generations to come.

Windsor Mills

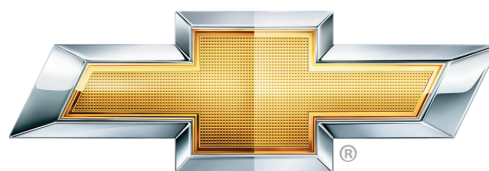
7696 Warner Hollow Rd,
Windsor

CLEARANCE: 11'3" (14.5
mi. from Riverdale Bridge)
Windsor Mills is 120' long
and spans Phelps Creek, a
tributary of the Grand River.
Built in 1867, the Town lattice
bridge rests on abutments of
sandstone (quarried nearby)
and creek stone. The field
stone center pier was replaced
with stone-look concrete when
it was renovated in 2002-03.

*Information from the
Ashtabula County Covered
Bridge Festival and Ashtabula
County Visitors Bureau.*

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Skip Craine, right, greets visitors to his teepee at the Harpersfield Covered Bridge Saturday during the Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival.



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

Olivia Slike, of Madison, reacts with joy while working on a mural at the Harpersfield Covered Bridge during the 2025 Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival.



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

Joel Huffman, of Huffman Acoustics, performs at the 2025 Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival at the Harpersfield Covered Bridge



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Activities

CONTINUED FROM 4

the Wiswell Bridge, a century bridge plaque dedication will take place.

Bridges throughout the county will have special activities.

Activities at the Benetka Road Covered Bridge will be hosted by youth OPPORTUNITIES! and A-Tech Special Grants, offering chili, cornbread, coffee, water, baked goods, handmade youth items and a fall photo spot.

At the Caine Road Covered Bridge, Stepping Stones Solutions LLC's Steppin' Out Independence Program and Katie Krieger will have hosting duties, featuring a CF boutique for cystic fibrosis awareness, a warming center and youth center tables, cotton candy, lemonade, family crafts, Angels of the Lake, a bounce house, food, drinks and snacks.

Boy Scout Troop 41 will

provide fresh cobbler, hot dogs, and hot and cold drinks by donation at the Doyle Road Covered Bridge.

The East Jefferson Grange will be set up at the Graham Road Covered Bridge, providing picnic boxes with a choice of soup, pumpkin bread, an autumn dessert, and hot cider or hot chocolate.

The Harpersfield Covered Bridge will be at the center of the festival, with vendors, the official souvenir booth, entertainment, food trucks, a coloring mural, kiddie train rides and other activities.

The Liberty Street Covered Bridge will host Helping Hands Farm Animal Rescue, with food and drinks, a 50/50 raffle, duck pond game, cowboy hats, and picture props.

The American Cancer Society will coordinate activities at the Mechanicsville Covered Bridge, with the ability to dedicate



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Food trucks are expected to be a part of the Ashtabula County Covered Bridge celebration at the Harpersfield Covered Bridge.

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and decorate luminaries in honor or memory of a loved one, along with a bake sale, photo booth, and information about the organization.

The Middle Road Covered Bridge will be open with no activities.

At the Netcher Road Covered Bridge, the Ashtabula County Humane Society will provide walking tacos, crafts, baked goods, humane society shirts, volunteer information, and poten-

tially dogs, depending on the weather.

The Ashtabula Dream Center will be at the Olin Covered Bridge, with baked goods, coffee and water for sale.

The Riverdale Road Covered Bridge will have representatives of the Conversation Station, with drinks for sale, along with festival information and souvenirs.

The Ashtabula Action Club and the Ashtabula County Board of Develop-

mental Disabilities will be at the Root Road Covered Bridge, with homemade potato chips, hot dogs, nachos, a bake sale and fun activities.

The Smolen-Gulf Covered Bridge will host the East Plymouth Grange, with cabbage rolls, hot dogs, chili, baked goods, and a large selection of souvenirs.

The Leon United Methodist Church will be at the South Denmark Road Covered Bridge, with a bake

sale, homemade pepperoni rolls, quilt raffle tickets, chips, pop, hand-made cards and a Sunday church service at 10 a.m.

The Monroe Township Fire Department will be at the State Road Covered Bridge, with the opportunity for attendees to cook their own hot dogs over a fire, along with drinks and baked goods.

As of time of writing, activities have not been finalized for the Wiswell Covered Bridge.

Festival
CONTINUED FROM 3

focused at the Harpers-field Covered Bridge.

In the present, format each bridge will be a focal point for visitors seeking to experience the covered bridge historical experience, or the architecture of the United States’ largest covered bridge.

Former Ashtabula County Engineer John Smolen was key for the maintenance and construction of covered bridges in Ashtabula County, and now has one that bears his name.

In past interviews, Smolen said he learned from previous county employees about the historical significance of the bridges, and later was a major champion of repairing

old covered bridges and designing the Smolen-Gulf Bridge.

Construction of the Smolen-Gulf Covered Bridge included major road revisions that improved the safety of the river crossing. A smaller pedestrian bridge was added later, providing greater access to a park beneath the present bridge.

The festival is a major point of interest to tourists, who have purchased hundreds of maps of the county covered bridges at \$5 a piece, said Ashtabula County Visitors Bureau Executive Director Stephanie Siegel.

She said the map is one of the most purchased items online, and people seek out more information on area tourist options as well.

For visitors seeking to reach every covered bridge this weekend, a great deal of planning is necessary in Ohio’s largest county. The bridges are located in every part of the county, and provide a look back into history at each bridge.

The groups participating at each bridge also bring a special experience that reflects their particular organization. Many of the bridge presentations include historical information, as well as food, drinks and items for sale.

The festival has a permanent home in the basement of the old Ashtabula County Courthouse where phone calls are received, decisions made and merchandise stored.



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The path to the Riverview Covered Bridge in Indian Trails Park in Plymouth Township was used for vendors during the Covered Bridge Festival for the first time last year.



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