

Heartland Waterways Corridor Heritage Tourism

Preserving the past is a way of paying homage to family ancestors. And that duty is taken seriously in the Heartland Waterways Corridor. Folks honor their heritage, preserving historical sites and writings and passing down oral stories of who and what came before. The past is proudly displayed and shared for visitors interested in understanding the ways of the area. Of course, the corridor has some very important places to preserve and events to commemorate. After all, the early settlers who forged a life for their families in the wilderness also helped lay the foundations for the nation.

"Now all you who believe as I do, follow me out the west door." It was Saturday morning, November 18, 1809. The words echoed in the rough-hewn beams of the Mill Creek Baptist Church. The congregation of some 200 people had gathered for the last time as one church. Baptist minister John Mulkey was at the center of a religious movement that would soon sweep the nation. After Mulkey's plea, more than 150 people stood with their preacher.

The church in which this historic moment took place was to become known as the Old Mulkey Meetinghouse. The controversy that severed the church occurred in what religious historians have labeled the "Great Awakening," a period of religious revivalism that swept the American colonies throughout the latter part of the 18th century and the early 19th century. The Old Mulkey Meetinghouse is a well-preserved log church that is now a state park and museum telling the story of the Great Awakening. Tradition claims that the Old Mulkey Meetinghouse was established in 1765, thus being the first church located west of the Appalachian Mountains. About two miles from Tompkinsville, the church is also noted as the oldest wooden building of its kind in the state. Daniel Boone's sister Hannah was a member of the congregation and is buried in the small cemetery.

The state's oldest courthouse also is located in the Heartland Waterways Corridor. Built in 1802 in Greensburg, the Green County Courthouse is the oldest courthouse west of the Alleghenies. The courthouse is now home to a regional museum. A number of other historic buildings can be seen around Greensburg, many of which are on the National Register of Historic Places. A walking tour helps point out a fine collection of Federal-style architecture, reflecting a phase in the Western Movement from the latter part of the 18th century and first two decades of the 19th. Built in 1815, the original structure of the Greensburg Academy is where Mentor Graham was headmaster. Graham is credited with Abraham Lincoln's formal education. Also in Greensburg is the Goose Creek Foot Bridge, built in 1928 at a cost of \$4,500. It was erected to solve the problem of having to tread the steep valley on each side of Goose Creek. At its highest peak, the bridge is 40 feet high. It is almost 445 feet long and 5 feet wide and is reportedly the only stationary foot bridge in Kentucky.

At the town entrance to the Footbridge is the 1930s Old Waterworks Plant, which now houses the Kentucky Waterways Alliance. Behind the building is a Heritage Garden and the "River Runs through It" mural, which portrays the bio-diversity of the Green River, home to 151 fish species and 71 mussel species.

Around 1845, a man named Ezekiel Neal drilled an artesian well that flowed year round from what was known as the "gum." The water contained sulphur, magnesia, salt and iron and was valued for its medicinal qualities. Located south of Edmonton along KY 163, the spot became known as Sulphur Well and was once the location of a health spa where people came to drink the sulphur waters. The county now owns the roadside park known as Sulphur Well Park and the water continues to flow freely from a spout in a concrete arch at the river edge as it has done since 1845. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Sulphur Well also boasts two restaurants, a country store, post office, croquet yard and horseshoe pitching area.

The first oil discovered in this country and maybe the first well of the gusher type in the entire world was in Burkeville in Cumberland County. The first explorers and settlers of pioneer Kentucky usually brought small quantities of salt with them to season the game they killed and cooked in the wilderness. Salt was very expensive yet necessary for the pioneer family. When their supply of salt ran out, settlers went to the known "licks," nearby salt springs for re-supply. Enterprising men turned to drilling shallow wells for natural brine in order to provide the necessity.

On March 11, 1829, well driller Martin Beatty hit a burst of oil. The old "American Oil Well" was the first recorded oil well on this continent. The gusher spouted upwards of 50 feet, flooding into the Cumberland River from bank to bank for a distance of almost 200 miles. Oil continued gushing for three weeks or longer, an estimated flow of 50,000 barrels. Someone apparently ignited the oil slick and folks told of it burning like a "river of fire" from Burkesville to Celina, Tennessee, for almost a month. Later the oil from the well was bottled and widely sold for medicinal use in the United States and Europe. Claims of the oil's superior quality merited it the name of Old American Oil. Visitors can see an historical marker for the well on Highway 61 North outside Burkesville.

A grand example of the area's dedication to the past are two historic sites saved from destruction by progress. The Jacob Hiestand House and the Friendship School would have been reduced to dust if people hadn't care about their historic value. Built in 1823 in Campbellsville, the Jacob Hiestand House is one of only 12 German stone houses in the state and only two still standing in Taylor County. The construction of this fine quality, handtooled masonry work was rarely equaled in 18th and 19th century domestic American architecture. Jacob Hiestand rejected his pacifist upbringing and became a colonel in the 99th Regiment of the Kentucky Militia. In 1998, when the property was threatened by urban development, the house was moved about a half mile north of its original location. It contains period furniture and is a museum open to the public.

Another building that was moved from its original location for preservation is the Friendship School. A humble little one-room schoolhouse built in 1918, the school is now located behind Taylor County High School in Campbellsville. The school is used as

a museum and classroom. It has two seater desks, a pot bellied stove, lunchboxes, water bucket and dipper, even an outdoor privy. The walls are lined with photos of one-room schools in the area and many of the children in the photos have been identified.

In Columbia, the Trabue-Russell House was built in 1821 by Daniel Trabue. A Revolutionary War veteran, Trabue moved from Virginia to Kentucky in 1782 by pack boat down the Ohio River. The restored house is now a history museum.

Both sides in the Civil War considered Kentucky a key to victory. Fighting raged for control of crucial mountain passes, navigable river and railroad junctions. Civil War sites in the corridor tell the story of the Civil War and its impact on the development of the nation. Located near the Tennessee border, Adair County had two Civil War camps – Union Camps Boyle and Billy Williams. The country also was the site of a minor skirmish on Dec. 12, 1861, the Battle of Bradyville.

North of Columbia, just off Highway 55, is Green River Lake State Park and the starting place for a self-guided tour of sites associated with the Battle of Tebbs Bend, fought in early July 1863. This battle marked the beginning of Confederate General John Hunt Morgan's daring campaign, known as the Great Raid into Indiana and Ohio, which ended later in July when he and his men were captured in Ohio.

The Battle at Tebbs Bend ended when the Confederates were demoralized by what they mistakenly thought to be Union reinforcements arriving. Union commander Colonel O.H. Moore actually had fooled the Confederates into thinking back-up troops were pouring in all night by having his men cross back and forth over a Green River bridge. Another unusual deception in this battle was found out afterwards when one of the Union wounded turned out to be a 16-year-old girl named Lizzie Compton from Ontario who was posing as a man. The nearby Atkinson-Griffin House is a one and a half story double-pen log building used by the Confederates as a hospital after the battle. The house is now a museum with Civil War exhibits and bloodstains on the upstairs bedroom floor.

The Young and Shirley General Store, located in Wisdom at the intersection of 68 and 640, was established prior to the Civil War. It is one of the few country stores owned by five generations of the same family. The store was one of the first to have electricity and a telephone that everyone in the community used. If the store looks familiar, the Young brothers of the Kentucky Headhunters country music group are kin to the store family and have used the store in many of their music videos.

DESTINATIONS:

- * Old Mulkey Meetinghouse, Tompkinsville: 270/487-8481.
- * Green County Courthouse, Greensburg: 270/932-4298.
- * Greensburg Academy, Greensburg: 800/417-3365.
- * Old American Oil Well, Burkesville: 270/433-5133.
- * Jacob Hiestand House, Campbellsville: 270/789-4343.
- * Friendship School, Campbellsville: 270/465-5410.
- * Trabue-Russell House, Columbia: 270/384-6020.

* Battle of Tebbs Bend: 800/738-4719.

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS:

* Folklore of the Old West, Columbia, 1st weekend in June: Celebration of the history, heritage and folklore of the community. 270/384-5658.

* Adair County Fair and Horse Show, Columbia, second week in July: Featuring demonstrations, horsemanship, food, crafts, games. 270/384-6020.

* Classic Car Show, Columbia, Labor Day weekend: Time to buy, sell, swap and trade. Craft shows, square dancing, country western concerts, classic car show. 270/384-6020.

* Mark Twain Band Festival, Columbia, September: Listen to bands galore and eat festival food. 270/384-6020.

* Christmas Parade and Craft Show, Edmonton, December. Get ready for the holidays with the arrival of Santa and plenty of crafts to start the Christmas shopping. 270/432-3222. 270/432-3222.

* Tebbs Bend Flea Market, Taylor County, September: Bargains galore along with handmade crafts. 800/738-4719.