



Final Report

Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board Grant

December 7, 2022

Digitizing and Providing Online Access to WHS's Archives of the Waterville Interurban Bridge

Institution/Organization Name: Waterville Historical Society

Project Title: Digitizing and Providing Online Access to WHS's Archives of the Waterville Interurban Bridge

Project Director: Verna Rose, Chair, Archives Committee

Summary of Project Activities and Accomplishments

The purpose of this project was to identify, digitize, and provide online access to Waterville Historical Society's (WHS) archival records associated with the Waterville Interurban Bridge. This is WHS's first digitization project. Prior to this, there was no online access to any of the Wakeman Archival Research Center's 415 cubic feet of records and photographs of Waterville area history from 1830 to the present.

WHS archivists volunteered over 200 hours to identify relevant records, digitize them, edit/upload them into PastPerfect, and coordinate with PastPerfect to create the WHS online launch page and link it through the WHS website (<https://watervillehistory.pastperfectonline.com>). The resulting collection has 105 historic photographs, maps, and postcards depicting the Roche de Boeuf and the Waterville Interurban Bridge. While outside OHRAB's purview, it also includes related artwork (e.g., drawings, a carving, and paintings). The Waterville Interurban Bridge Online Collection launched on September 24, 2022, in association with Waterville's annual Roche de Boeuf Festival.

The oldest records in the collection are an 1875 map and postcards of the Roche de Boeuf, a rock outcrop in the middle of the Maumee River. It was a landmark and council meeting place for the Miami, Shawnee, and Lenape tribes, who met there before the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. Despite assurances that the historic site would not be altered, approximately a third of the rock was blasted away to construct the Waterville Interurban Bridge. The bridge was built in 1908 and is on the National Register of Historic Places (#72001036). It was once the world's largest earth-filled, reinforced concrete bridge. It carried the Ohio Electric Company interurban trolley line over the Maumee River. This line ran from Toledo to Lima with connections to the Dayton-Springfield-Urbana line. When the interurban line was abandoned in 1937, the bridge began to slowly deteriorate. It now faces imminent demolition, which has sparked renewed interest in it and its history. The online collection includes extensive photographs of the bridge's construction, most taken by Waterville amateur photographer John Isham (see Figure 1 below for an example record as it appears in PastPerfect Online). The collection also includes photographs of Ohio Electric trolleys.

Project Self-Assessment

The project has accomplished the following:

- Volunteer archivists identified and uploaded 105 digitized records to create the Waterville Interurban Bridge Online Collection;
- Pre-existing PastPerfect records were updated to broaden and achieve consistency in search terms in preparation for online accessibility;

- An “online collections” tab was added to the WHS website to link the website (<https://www.watervillehistory.org/>) to the PastPerfect Online WHS launch page (<https://watervillehistory.pastperfectonline.com/>); and
- WHS archivists acquired skills and experience that can be applied to future digitization projects.

Impact

In the first two weeks after launching the Waterville Interurban Bridge Online Collection, there were over 230 views of the Online Collection tab of the WHS website, making it the third most-visited tab and showing the success of our launch publicity. Principals within the Anthony Wayne school district responded to the announcement flyer (see Figure 2 below) with enthusiasm and were excited to share the information with their teachers so that both teachers and students could learn about this new resource. Upon receiving the flyer, the manager of the local history and genealogy department of the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library wanted to copy it and pass it out at TLCPL’s Genealogy Fair, seeing online accessibility to WHS records as a valuable new tool for local historians. This project and its publicity have also benefitted WHS, with Waterville residents, regional historical societies, and our area public libraries and schools gaining knowledge about WHS, its mission, and its archives.

Building on Success

WHS has already launched its next digitization project. Archivists are in the process of identifying, digitizing, and uploading WHS records related to the Waterville School, which was demolished in 2017. WHS archives include an extensive collection of photographs (1898-1950), school yearbooks (1920s to present), grade cards, graduation programs, and diplomas. Over 50 records have already been made available online. The aim is to have the collection fully online for the City of Waterville’s dedication of Parker Square and Memorial Park, which will be located on the old school site.

Project Expenses

Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board Grant Final Budget			
	Grant Funds	Matching Funds	Total
Salaries and Wages			
Volunteer hours - 225 hours at \$28.54/hour		\$6,422.00	\$6,422.00
Equipment			
Fujitsu ScanSnap SV600 Overhead Scanner	\$580.00		\$580.00
HP Envy TE01-1111 Desktop PC, Intel i5, 12 GB, 1 TB hard drive, DVD drive	\$770.00		\$770.00
Contracted Services			
IT Specialist	\$90.00	\$20.00	\$110.00
Other Eligible Expenses			
PastPerfect Online Upgrade	\$285.00		\$285.00
PastPerfect Online Annual Hosting Fee		\$489.00	\$489.00
Summary Budget			
Salaries and Wages	\$0.00	\$6,422.00	\$6,422.00
Equipment	\$1,350.00	\$0.00	\$1,350.00
Contracted Services	\$90.00	\$20.00	\$110.00
Other Eligible Expenses	\$285.00	\$489.00	\$774.00
Total Project Budget	\$1,725.00	\$6,931.00	\$8,656.00

Publicity and Crediting

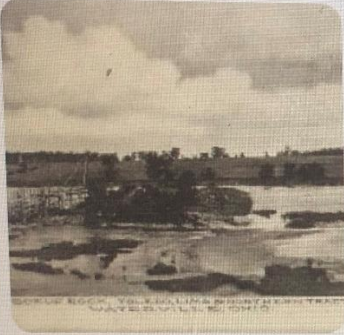

WHS publicized the award of the OHRAB grant in our May 2022 WHS News Bulletin to our members and online (<https://www.watervillehistory.org/newsletters-2>) and in a June 1 Facebook post with a related article (<https://www.facebook.com/WSH43566/>). We also recognized OHRAB in crediting letters sent to Waterville Mayor Tim Pedro, Ohio Representative Derek Merrin, Ohio Senator Theresa Gavarone, U.S. Representative Robert Latta, U.S. Representative Marcy Kaptur, U.S. Senator Sherod Brown, and U.S. Senator Robert Portman.

On September 7, 2022, WHS began announcing the online launch of the collection. The Waterville Interurban Bridge Online Collection flyer (see Figure 2) was posted on our website, emailed to over 200 WHS members, and posted on our Facebook page, which has about 2,100 followers. The collection's launch was featured in a September 22, 2022, article in the local newspaper, The Mirror (see Figure 3 or online at <https://themirrornewspaper.com/waterville-historical-societys-collection-now-available-online/>). WHS then sent an announcement and the flyer to fourteen area historical societies, eight area public and college libraries, and the schools within the Anthony Wayne Local School District. The Online Collection tab of the WHS website credits OHRAB so that those linking to the PastPerfect Online launch page will know of OHRAB's support for the Waterville Interurban Bridge project and WHS's sincere appreciation to OHRAB for laying the foundation for future WHS digitization projects.

Figure 1. A screen shot of a record from the Waterville Interurban Bridge Online Collection as it appears on WHS's PastPerfect Online site. The collection, subject, search terms, and catalog number fields are included in the records but not shown in this figure.

Photo Record

[Return To Search](#)
[Email to a Friend](#)
[Send Us Feedback](#)

Title Roche de Boeuf and the start of the Waterville Interurban Bridge

Object Name Postcard

Description This postcard shows the beginning of construction of the Waterville Interurban Bridge forms, from the Lucas County side of the Maumee River to the Roche de Boeuf, looking southeast toward the Wood County side of the river. The postcard is titled on the front: "Roche de Boeuf Rock, Toledo, Lima & Northern Traction Co. Bridge, Waterville, Ohio, and has a postmark for Bakersfield, California, dated Nov. 10, 1907. The back of the postcard has a Series 1902 1 cent stamp and 2 postmarks: one for Maricopa, California, dated Oct. 11, 1907, and another for Waterville, Ohio, dated Nov. 6, 1907. The message reads: Does this scene look familiar to you? How is the wife? (signed) P. A. G., and it is addressed to Frank Boulger of Maricopa, California. The original photograph for this postcard was taken by J. F. T. Isham.

People Isham, J.F.T.

Print size 3.5" x 5.5"

Year Range from 1907

Figure 2. Announcement flyer for the Waterville Interurban Bridge Online Collection.



**THE WATERVILLE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
ANNOUNCES**



**THE WATERVILLE
INTERURBAN
BRIDGE
ONLINE
COLLECTION**

Over 100 historic photographs,
postcards, maps, artwork, and
objects related to the bridge and
the Roche de Boeuf



ABOUT US

Our mission is to collect, preserve, provide access to, interpret and foster an appreciation of the history of the Waterville area.

This project is supported in part by an award from the **Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board**, through funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), National Archives and Records Administration.

NOW AVAILABLE!

THROUGH OUR WEBSITE

Visit www.watervillehistory.org and click on "Online Collection"

THROUGH PASTPERFECT ONLINE

Visit www.ansp.pastperfect-online.com, click on "View All Collections, and find WHS under Ohio listings

THROUGH GOOGLE

Search related key words in Google, including the Ohio Electric Interurban Bridge, Roche de Boeuf, Lake Erie & Southern Railroad Co, and J.F.T. Isham.

For more information, email vjr12938@aol.com	Visit our archives 401 Farnsworth Road Wednesdays 10:00-2:00	More online records coming soon!
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Figure 3. Article in The Mirror newspaper announcing the launch of the Waterville Interurban Bridge Online Collection.

September 22, 2022

THE MIRROR

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The Waterville Historical Society has more than 100 images of the Roche de Boeuf Interurban Bridge online at www.watervillehistory.org.



A team of Waterville Historical Society volunteers worked to digitize more than 100 images of the Roche de Boeuf bridge and rock, available online at www.watervillehistory.org under "Online Collections." Pictured are (from left) Stan Lepiarz, Randy Studer, Bob Chapman, John and Verna Rose, and Barb Jones.

MIRROR PHOTO BY KAREN GERHARDINGER

Waterville Historical Society's Collection Now Available Online

BY BETH HYDER
WATERVILLE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In 1908, the sound of men and hammering disturbed the quiet along the Maumee River just south of the village of Waterville.

A forest of wooden forms grew from the shore toward the Roche de Boeuf rock midriver. Construction on what was once the world's largest earth-filled, reinforced concrete bridge had begun.

Soon, that quiet stretch of river may be disturbed by the sounds of machines and blasting as the Waterville Interurban

Bridge is demolished.

Whatever its future, the Waterville Historical Society (WHS) will be there to preserve its history. Today, WHS is providing people one more way to engage with that history.

"We are excited to announce that part of our archives, the Waterville Interurban Bridge Collection, is now available online," said project director and archivist Verna Rose. "The collection has over 100 historical photographs, postcards, maps, artwork and objects from before the bridge was constructed to the present."

The collection includes photos of the Roche de Boeuf as it was before about one-third of its mass was blasted away. It also includes artifacts related to Waterville's J.F.T. Isham, who photographed much of the bridge's construction.

The project is supported in part by an award from the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB), through funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, National Archives and Records Administration.

WHS archivists volunteered over 200 hours on

this project. They identified relevant records at the Wakeman Archival Research Center. They digitized them with a new contactless overhead scanner and uploaded them into museum software that allows the records to be shared online. The easiest way to search the collection is to visit the WHS website and click on "Online Collections" (www.watervillehistory.org).

"The OHRAB grant made our online presence possible," Verna said. "Now, we're deciding what our next digitization project will be."

Waterville schools might be that project, since Wakeman Archives houses an extensive collection of original graduation photos from the old Waterville School.

WHS's archives contain over 415 cubic feet of records of Waterville's history from 1830 to the present, including founding families, canal life, schools and businesses.

Since 2016, WHS has utilized Past Perfect software and has a yearly subscription to the historical software that is used by hundreds of historical societies across the United

States – giving users access to a variety of images and information from other Past Perfect subscribers. For information, visit www.ansp.pastperfect-online.com.

The WHS website, www.watervillehistory.org, also regularly features articles about Waterville history, written by a team of archivists and volunteers.

"Keep checking the website," Verna said. "Of course, if you can't wait for something to be online, come visit the archives. We're open every Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m."