BUTLER COUNTY HISTORICAL MARKER DRIVING TOUR

Central and Northeastern Butler County:
Fairfield, Lemon, Madison and St. Clair Townships

BUTLER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MIAMI ERIE CANAL
Rentschler Forest MetroPark
5701 Reigert Road, Hamilton

Construction began in 1825 on the 20-mile segment of the Miami Canal from two miles north of Middletown to the head of Mill Creek. Canal boats were operating from Hartwell's Basin near Cincinnati to Middletown by Nov. 28, 1827. This early link in what became the Miami and Erie Canal joining in 1845 Toledo and Cincinnati by water was restored in 1971 by the Butler County Park district. The dimensions of the canal channel were 26 feet at the bottom and 40 feet wide at the top. The depth of the canal averaged four and one-half feet. The 12 locks were 80 feet long with 14-foot wide interior chambers which could accommodate boats up to 80 tons. The canal from Middletown to Cincinnati was 42 miles, cost about $10,400 per mile to build, and had a speed limit of four miles per hour.

Directions to Next Marker: Go south on Reigert Road. Turn right .3 miles past Springcrest Drive. Turn left onto Indian Meadows Drive. Turn left onto Hamilton Middletown Road (Ohio Rt 4). Turn left (north) onto Liberty Fairfield Road which becomes Wayne Madison Road. Turn right onto Woodsdale Road.

WOODSDALE & CHRISHOLM FARMSTEAD
2070 Woodsdale Road, Trenton

This hamlet, located one mile southwest from here, was never platted, but was named after William Woods, president of the three-story brick Woodsdale paper mill constructed in 1867. Flanking the mill were the company office and store and several workers' houses. Previous to this, the area flourished from the presence of two grist mills on the Great Miami River and from the Miami & Erie Canal. Additional enterprises such as a stone quarry, ice cutting company, and grain elevator operated here during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Woodsdale was also known for the Woodsdale Island Amusement Park and the LC&D Railroad depot. The park, established on an island between the Miami & Erie Canal and the Great Miami River in 1891, as the site of picnics, political rallies, a large dance hall, and amusement rides--including a beautiful swan boat. The great flood of 1913 completely destroyed the park.

This farm, Chrisholm (German for home farm of Christian Augspurger), was established in 1830 by Christian Augspurger (1782-1848), leader of the Amish Mennonite settlement in Butler County. The Amish selected this area because of rich, fertile farmland and proximity to the Great Miami River. Christian's son, Samuel, inherited the farm and lived there with his wife, Eliza Holly, and their seven children. The large, two-story farmhouse was built in 1874 and after fire destroyed the original 1830 stone house. It typifies the stark simplicity and balanced building style of Amish Mennonite settlements in Ohio. The property also features a large bank barn with a stone foundation. Samuel Augspurger (1825-1900) was an innovative entrepreneur responsible for Woodsdale's industrial growth. Among other things, he directed the construction of Woodsdale's first bridge over the Great Miami River, served as director of three turnpikes, and oversaw grist and sawmills. An incorporator of the paper company, he was also instrumental in establishing the Woodsdale school and post office.

Directions to Next Marker: Turn left onto Woodsdale. Woodsdale Road will become South 1st Street. Turn Right (east) onto Sycamore Road. Turn left (north) onto Radabaugh Road. Turn right onto East State Street (Ohio 73). Turn left (north) onto South Main Street. South Main becomes Tytus Avenue. Turn slightly left onto Verity Parkway.

GROUNDBREAKING FOR MIAMI ERIE CANAL
Canal Museum
1605 N Verity Parkway, Middletown

At Middletown, Ohio, on July 21, 1825, ground was first broken for the Miami-Erie Canal, which eventually linked Cincinnati and Toledo. The canal created much change in the region, including increased population and commercial, political, and industrial growth. Products grown and manufactured in this previously isolated area now had access to world markets. Prosperity reigned until the 1860s when railroad competition caused a slow decline in canal transportation. The canal was officially closed on November 2, 1929, again, as it had started, in Middletown. The canal bed was converted into a modern highway, known as Verity Parkway, which runs parallel to this park.
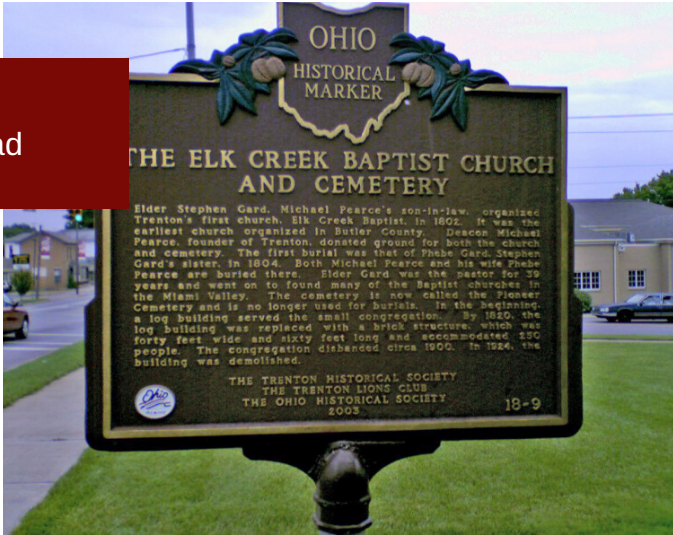

Directions to Next Marker: Turn right (south) on Verity Parkway to Central Avenue. Turn Right (west) on Central Avenue, cross the Great Miami River. Turn left (south) on Trenton Franklin Road (Route 81). Turn left on Eck Road, then left (west) onto Howe Road.

MILTONVILLE
NE corner of Howe Road and Elk Road
Middletown

The village of Miltonville, located along the banks of Elk Creek, was platted in 1816 by George Bennett, Theophilus Eaglesfield, and Richard V. V. Crane. The creek served two grist mills, one built around 1804 and operated by a free black, Bambo Harris, and the second was built by George Bennett in 1815. An Indian burial ground was located on the east bank of Elk Creek near the site of Huff's Ferry. Eagle Tavern, the area's first three-story brick inn, was a stopover for stagecoach lines traveling the Miltonville-Trenton Turnpike.The village was known for pottery factories, vineyards and wineries, and Frisch's brickyard, established in 1880. The United Brethren,

organized in 1811, and Miltonville Cemetery were the sites of church conferences and celebrations. The Miltonville School operated from the 1800s to 1936, and the local post office was in service during the years 1889-1904.

Directions to Next Marker: Go south (left) on Elk Creek Road (Rt 77) to State Street (Ohio 73). Turn Right onto State.
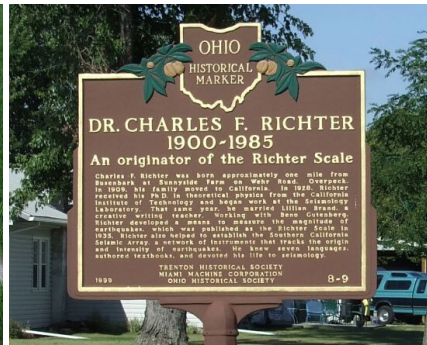

TRENTON
Founder's Park
1 S. Miami Avenue, Trenton

Trenton's founder, Michael Pearce, came to the area in 1801. The original village of 33 lots was named Bloomfield. When the post office was established in 1820, it was named Trenton to honor the founder's home state of New Jersey. Pearce's son-in-law, Squire Littell, was the first resident doctor in Butler County. Originally settled by the English, Trenton saw a migration of Germans by 1840. By 1851, the farming community became a grain center with the introduction of the Cincinnati, Hamilton, and Dayton Railroad. Further development occurred when a franchise was granted to operate interurban electric traction cars through the village in 1896. Early commercial endeavors were Dietz, Good & Company grain elevator, Trenton Foundry, and Magnode Corporation. By 1991, the largest industries were Miller Brewing Company and Cinergy/Cincinnati Gas & Electric. Elder Stephen Gard, Michael Pearce's son-in-law, organized Trenton's first church, Elk Creek Baptist, in 1802. It was the earliest church organized in Butler County. Deacon Michael Pearce, founder of Trenton, donated ground for both the church and cemetery. The first burial was that of Phebe Gard, Stephen Gard's sister, in 1804. Both Michael Pearce and his wife Phebe Pearce are buried there. Elder Gard was the pastor for 39 years and went on to found

many of the Baptist churches in the Miami Valley. The cemetery is now called the Pioneer Cemetery and is no longer used for burials. In the beginning, a log building served the small congregation. By 1820, the log building was replaced with a brick structure, which was forty feet wide and sixty feet long and accommodated 250 people. The congregation disbanded circa 1900. In 1924, the building was demolished.

Directions to Next Marker: Go west on State Street (Ohio 73) to Busenbark Road. Turn right (south) and follow Busenbark to the round about where the marker is located.

BUSENBARK & CHARLES RICHTER
West side of intersection of Riverside Drive and Busenbark Road, Trenton

In 1833, Robert Busenbark deeded land to the directors of School District No. 6 for Busenbark School. Twenty years later, Robert and son David granted a right-of-way on their property for a station on the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton Railroad (CH&D). One of eleven depots in Butler County, Busenbark station attracted the Kinsinger-Augspurger Warehouse and the Kennel Grain Elevator to the area in the 1860s. The railroad also enabled the cross-

roads settlement to host an American championship prize fight in 1867. Fighting with bare knuckles in an outdoor ring, Mike McCoole bested Aaron Jones in a match seen by thousands. The Busenbark generating station supplied power to interurban lines until 1912 and later furnished electricity to local residents. Farmers and the Miami Poultry Yards depended on the trains and interurban to ship produce. The railroad depot disappeared between 1914 and 1916;

Busenbark Station – Photo taken Sunday, September 5, 1897, by L. C. Overpeck
L-R Charles Whitman, Henry N. Wagner (Night Operator), Samuel D. Hime, Jay Warwick, Wm. Fetherland, Wm. Warner, Hans Schmitt, Ed Richter, Harry Kline (Day Operator)

the school closed after 1937; interurban service ended in 1939. All that remains of Busenbark is Busenbark Road, which was established in 1858.

Charles F. Richter was born approximately one mile from Busenbark at Sunnyside Farm on Wehr Road, Overpeck. In 1909, his family moved to California. In 1928, Richter received his Ph.D. in theoretical physics from the California Institute of Technology and began work at the Seismology Laboratory. That same year, he married Lillian Brand, a creative writing teacher. Working with Beno Gutenberg, Richter developed a means to measure the magnitude of earthquakes, which was published as the Richter Scale in 1935. Richter also helped to establish the Southern California Seismic Array, a network of instruments that tracks the origin and intensity of earthquakes. He knew seven languages, authored textbooks, and devoted his life to seismology.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING OUR TOUR OF WESTERN BUTLER COUNTY. STAY TUNED FOR MORE TOURS OF HISTORICAL BUTLER COUNTY!

PHOTO CREDITS: Many of the photos and text are courtesy of Ohio History Connection / RemarkableOhio.org, MetroParks of Butler County or from the Butler County Historical Society/Kathy Creighton. Please note: all MetroParks of Butler County are open from 8:00 am until dark daily.