

For the last ten years or so, our family has been utilizing various segments of the ever evolving Ohio to Erie Trail. This pretty much started when our children were young, riding 20 and 24 inch wheel bikes. We first would go out to London and ride southwest toward South Charleston. Later on we traveled to Mount Vernon and rode east to Danville. Of course we also used the parts of the trail in central Ohio. At that time the Olentangy Trail was part of the Ohio to Erie and of course the Westerville trails heading out to Genoa Township up to Plumb Road, where it ended at that time.

Then in 2012 Stacy and I started to make a concerted effort to ride on as much of the Ohio to Erie as we could, with a goal of riding on every mile of it. It has taken almost seven years, but as of last Saturday (January 5, 2019) we completed the task with a ride up to Cleveland to visit Lake Erie. I know some folks do the trip in a week, a couple days, or even one day. So we're a little slower, but we can now say we have ridden the entire trail. And as new off-road sections are added, we do go back and check them out. Thus, I'd like to share some of the rides with you, including trailhead info and the overnight options we chose.

Since most choose to do the Ohio to Erie from south to north, as the name states, I will organize my story from that direction. However, we did not do the trail in that order. It was more of a hunt and peck, as we felt the urge. Also, since most of our trips were out and back, we have ridden the Ohio to Erie in both directions for about 95% of the trail. At any rate, here we go.

Milford to Cincinnati to Milford - Ironically, this is one of the last segments we did. It was in combination with a Reds game. We caught the baseball game on Saturday and then stayed at the Milford Holiday Inn Express that night. On Sunday morning (July 22, 2018) we drove to the Milford Bike Trail Park, unpacked and headed toward "The Natti." The nice thing about starting from that location is you get in a little over four miles on the trail before you jump out into traffic onto Wooster Pike. The sign is there on the trail, but do pay attention. It's easy to miss, and the off road trail does continue. Wooster Pike is US Route 50, so according on the time of day, it can be busy. It is four lanes however, with a sharrow in the right lane. So cars do have ample space to pass. Warning also, there is a little bit of a hill going into Mariemont. After Mariemont you and Wooster Pike take a left off of Route 50, where the traffic volume decreases quite a bit. Then at Linwood there's an interesting little loop around the Appalachian Highway. There was also some construction at the time we went through, which made it really interesting on the return trip. Once through that little loop however, you get to the Lunken Airport Trail, where yes, no cars. Just do make sure to cross the road at the airport to get on the Ohio River Trail. I missed that on the way down and had to backtrack a bit. After crossing US Route 52 the trail runs along the Ohio River for a couple miles and then pops you up on a bike lane alongside the main road. This actually wasn't as bad as I thought it would be at first. After a couple miles out on the road you jump into a park on the left which eventually becomes the parking lot for the Montgomery Inn. From there you are on a dedicated trail down to the Purple People Bridge, where we crossed over the Ohio River to Kentucky, and where we had brunch at Tom+Chee. The return trip seemed much easier, except for the construction at Linwood, which involved walking through some mud. The total out and back route was just over 36 miles. The worst part

was the traffic on Wooster Pike, but I know that part of the future plans includes getting that out of the equation. I look forward to biking into Cincinnati again when the trail system is complete.

Milford to Kings Mills - This was one of the first bike trips we made to explore the Ohio to Erie. It was on a Saturday in 2012, celebrating my 50th birthday. Yes, we're creatures of habit, as we also did this in conjunction with a Reds game. Leaving Columbus pretty early, we drove to the Avoca Park trailhead along Wooster Pike, about three miles southwest of Milford. We rode north on the Little Miami Scenic Trail, through Loveland up to Kings Mills. This ride was all on the trail, and yes indeed it was very scenic. One of the highlights was riding by the old Peters Cartridge factory, which many say is haunted. And of course Loveland is a treat in itself. It is the definition of bicycle friendly. I will always have fond memories of sitting in Paxton's Grill, eating lunch and watching the, what seemed, hundred of cyclists go by on the trail. If you haven't done so already, you must make a visit. This round trip was just under 40 miles. After the ride, we checked into our hotel and headed down to Cincy to see the Reds.

Kings Mills to Waynesville - during the spring of 2011 we drove down to Kings Mills on a Saturday to check out the Little Miami Scenic Trail. There is a nice trailhead across the road from the old Peters Cartridge factory on Grandin Road. This section is all trail with just a few road crossings. The most interesting thing I found on this section is riding under the I-71 overpass of the Little Miami River. After driving over it for years, it felt almost surreal to be looking up at the freeway above. The round trip was just over 40 miles. The only drawback to this section is that there are very few stops available along the trail. The Little River Cafe in Oregonia is about the only thing until you get to Waynesville. And then you will need to go off the trail in order to get into town.

Waynesville to Xenia - as part two of my 50th birthday we stopped in Waynesville on the way back from Milford on Sunday morning. As you enter the town from I-71 on Route 73 there is trailhead parking just after you cross the Little Miami Scenic Trail. There are also a few places to overnight in Waynesville. One of those is the Creekwood Motel, but a much nicer stay is at the Sinclair House Bed and Breakfast. We jumped on the trail riding northeast toward Xenia with aspirations of making it to Cedarville. It was a very nice trip up to Xenia, and Xenia has a great hub, an old train station, where several of the trails connect. That is where we ran into problems finding the Prairie Grass Trail which continued to Cedarville. Instead we ended up staying on the Little Miami, heading north toward Yellow Springs. It was a nice ride, but not what we intended. Keep in mind, this was in the days before we had Google maps on our phones (flip phones at the time) and it was a year before I would get my first Garmin. At any rate, we headed back to Waynesville, and although we got somewhat lost, any day on a bike is better than a day without riding. FYI, this segment is just under 15 miles one way. And once you do figure out how to stay on the correct trail, it's just over 22 miles to get up to Cedarville one way from Waynesville.

Xenia to Cedarville - on one of our cycling trips to Cedarville we finally found the trail heading out of Xenia, but it was not easy. Not sure what makes it so difficult. The sign is there. The trick

is that as soon as you cross Detroit Street take an immediate right on Hill Street, then take a quick left onto the trail. Seems easy after you've done it once. Of course this time, which was August 7, 2015, we both had Garmins and smart phones with Google maps. Thus mystery solved. As it so happened, we started this trip on August 6th from Columbus. This was Day 2 of our trip. Our routes that day went through parts of the Calvin's Challenge route, then on to Yellow Springs for lunch at Young's Dairy, and down the Little Miami Trail to Xenia. Once we did find the connection to the Prairie Grass Trail, it was just about 8 miles back to Cedarville. Xenia is a great hub and takeoff point for rides. There is nice ample parking at the station, 150 South Miami Avenue, and you then can bike in several directions, not only to Cincinnati and Columbus, but also to Dayton & Piqua, Springfield & Urbana, and with a little roadwork, Washington Court House & Chillicothe.

Cedarville to London - this 22 mile section is all trail, except for a little street riding in South Charleston. But it's not bad at all. We even had the kids on it when they were pretty young. And you get to go by The Purple Monkey, a nice place for pizza & ice cream. There's a trailhead in South Charleston with parking and restrooms. The London trailhead is behind the Madison County Senior Center at 280 W High Street. Those in the Westerville Bike Club may know this stop, since we meet there for several rides, including the Young's Dairy ride.

London to Galloway - the Prairie Grass Trail ends right after the Madison County Senior Center at Midway Street. At this time you will need to get out on the streets in order to get across London to the Roberts Pass Trail. The signage gives you two options. The shortest and easiest is to use Center Street. However, you then miss most of the food stop options in town. There is a gas station at the corner of center and Main. They even have a sign up saying cyclists are welcome. The other route takes you on High to Main and then First Street. These streets have much more traffic, probably won't recommend for kids, but there are several food stop options, including the London Coffee Peddler at 127 South Main. It is just a half a block off of the route. Once on the Roberts Pass Trail it's smooth sailing until you reach Georgesville and the Darby Creek. FYI, the Roberts Pass Trail turns into the Camp Chase Trail when you cross Wilson Rd SE. After crossing the Darby Creek alongside Alkire Road you will go downhill into a trailhead. Here the signage will take you down to the creek on the Darby Creek Trail and then up to a parking area with an access road out to Darby Creek Drive, where you will reconnect with the Camp Chase Trail. This would all be good, except the last time I rode down the part by the creek it was not paved, and although it was dry enough to avoid the mud at the time, I could see this getting pretty mucky. Thus, typically when I get to the trailhead at Darby Creek, I jump out on Alkire road and take it up the hill by the cemetery and the Oak Grove Tavern. You can then take a right on the roundabout at Darby Creek Drive followed by a left onto the Camp Chase Trail, or you can go on through the roundabout on Alkire and then take a left on the Camp Chase Trail. Either way, do take care when crossing the railroad tracks. The total distance from London to Galloway is about 17 miles, according to which options you take at London and Darby Creek.

Galloway to McKinley Ave. - in the old days, this section was a bear and, quite frankly, almost dangerous. However, with the newly added trail portion this 7 mile segment is almost delightful. Do be careful of the crossings, especially at Norton and Haul Roads. There are still two, relatively easy, road sections. At Sullivant you'll take a left and then a quick right on Industrial Mile. Then cross over Georgesville Road to a ride sidewalk which will take you back to the trail. Then when the trail dead ends at Eureka, you'll follow signs on Valleyview Drive and Harper to take you down to McKinley, where you'll get on the Hilltop Connector Trail.

McKinley Ave. to Westerville - no matter how you get through downtown, there are going to be issues. I certainly understand the reasoning for the current routing, but let's discuss some other options. The signage is very good through the next set of trails getting you across and alongside the Scioto River up to Spring Street. As you turn right to cross the Olentangy River, looking across Spring/Long Street you'll see the Olentangy Trail. In years past this was where the routing went. But with the completion of the Alum Creek Trail on the east side, it has become a much better option. So instead you will turn right, cross the Olentangy, continue along Spring and cross at the North Bank Park Pavilion onto Neil Avenue, then turn right on Nationwide Blvd. After you cross 4th Street Nationwide becomes E. Naughten and then dead ends into Cleveland Ave. By the way, if you were going the opposite direction, coming south on Cleveland, you would turn right on Mt. Vernon Ave. and then at 4th it would become Nationwide. It's a one way street deal in that area. But as we are headed north on Cleveland we'll pass Columbus State on our right, go under I-670, cross Jack Gibbs Blvd. and get on the bike path that runs alongside Jack Gibbs and then Leonard Ave. After crossing over I-670 on Leonard, watch the signage carefully, as you'll turn right, cross Leonard onto the I-670 Bikeway. Follow this path up and cross 5th Ave. I will be honest, I'm not a fan of the Leonard to I-670 trail. It's very loud, the trail is not in good shape at all, and I have found glass numerous times on this section. I do still ride it now and then, but if I had my choice where E. Naughten dead ends into Cleveland Ave. I would turn right and go south on Cleveland, then take a left on Long Street. Then take Long all the way east where it dead ends at Nelson Ave. At that point, right beside the Old Bag of Nails Pub, there is a pedestrian bridge, which crosses Alum Creek. Take it across the creek and you are now on the Alum Creek Trail. Take a left, follow it north through Nelson Park and it will then meet up with the original route at I-670, just south of 5th Ave. There are a few trail issues here with tree roots and walnuts, but I still prefer it compared to Leonard and I-670. Also, there are other ways to get east to Alum Creek, such as Mt. Vernon and Oak. At any rate, once north of 5th Ave you are on the new section of the Alum Creek Creek. Enjoy. This will take you all the way through the northeast side of Columbus and into Westerville. Do take care on Schrock Road. This is a side lane on the road and then there's a left onto the trail just before Charring Cross Dr. It may be safer to use the sidewalk here. All in all this section is about 20 miles. There are some city streets involved downtown, which can be tricky, especially during rush hour. If you can, try to plan the ride so you avoid the high density traffic times. Lastly, there is a nice depot in Westerville, right beside the library. There are restrooms and water and additional parking at the library. It's a nice place to launch a group ride.

Westerville to Centerburg - the next 22 miles includes many new additions to the trail system. Sit back and enjoy. There's more to come. As you head north from the Westerville Depot, do be aware, there are many eating spots available just west of the trail on State Street and a little farther north at Maxtown. You can buzz right by and miss out on a multitude of options. After Galena you are out on the roads for a while as you go through Sunbury and head east. The drivers in this area are used to cyclists, but there are always those one or two, so do be careful. You will get back on the trail off Huffman Road, just south of Columbus Road (Rt. 3/36). This is the Heart of Ohio Trail, which will take you all the way into Mt. Vernon. However, there is a trailhead at Centerburg, and if you take Clayton Street off of the trail, there are some convenience stores and gas stations, the InTown restaurant and a Subway.

Centerburg to Danville - this 27 mile segment is all trail with just a few busy road crossings. There have been some major improvements to this section. For instance, this very first part used to kick you out onto Route 3/36 almost all the way to Mount Vernon and getting across Mount Vernon was somewhat dangerous in spots. About 12 miles up the trail you'll enter Ariel-Foundation Park. If you're tired of riding, stop and climb the tower. Or if you are hungry, there are several food options. The best place to access them is to get off the trail at Main Street. It's a little busy at times, but traffic is usually slow enough to get around pretty safely. Taking a left and going north will take you to the town square with restaurants, coffee shops and the bike shop. There are couple of overnight options, including the newly remodeled Grand Hotel. I usually prefer to take a right and head south. There is a Speedway, and then McDonalds and then Southside Diner. Right across the street is a Subway. Then to get back to the trail, head back north and the trail is on the right. Leaving the downtown section you will cross Mt. Vernon Ave. and the Heart of Ohio Trail will become the Kokosing Gap Trail. At that point there is a gravel parking lot. No restrooms or water, but still and good place to launch from. Continuing on up the trail about 5 miles is Gambier. There is a nice Depot there with water and restrooms. About 5 miles from there are some rustic restrooms at Howard, and then four miles later is the parking area in Danville. Be aware that there are limited overnight options between Mount Vernon and Millersburg. Basically you have two bed and breakfast establishments, the Kenyon Inn and Restaurant in Gambier and the White Oak Inn located several miles off of the trail south of Danville at 29683 Walhonding Rd. The White Oak is a favorite of the Westerville Bicycle Club.

Danville to Millersburg - there is a little bit of street riding in order to get across Danville to the Mohican Valley Trail. Other than crossing Route 62, however, there is very little traffic and the signage is very good. About four miles up the trail is the Bridge of Dreams, which has parking and restrooms. Then in another mile you'll cross under Route 62 and on to the Holmes County Trail. This is a very new addition to the trail system, and quite interesting, as it does not follow the typical "rails to trails" path. Since the route of the former railroad went through some very low, wet areas, the Holmes County Trail instead climbs up the ridge and then down into Glenmont. At this point you are about 12 miles from Danville and the trail, at this time, ends there. So this section itself would not be a bad out and back. But if you do decide to continue on from the parking area at the end of the trail, you'll take a left on Clifton Street, and then a

right on Route 520 and take it out of town. The stretch of 520 into Kilbuck is about 7 miles. As it turned out, this is a pretty nice road to bike on. We did this section on a Sunday afternoon and had very little company either direction. Once in Kilbuck the signage directs you through town to the trailhead where the Holmes County Trail continues up to Millersburg. There is no official trailhead here, however, the locals use the back of the Walmart parking lot, which connects to the trail, as a parking spot and launch for their rides. There is a Speedway, McDonalds and Taco Bell on that side of Route 62. And if you cross 62 at the light you'll find Trail Side Deli and Jitters Coffee House. We have found both of those establishments very welcoming. The one way trip from Danville to Millersburg is 25 miles, so a 50 miles round trip, but it really doesn't seem that far. The variety of roads/trails and the scenery make it a very enjoyable day in the saddle.

Millersburg to Dalton - Heading on up the Holmes County Trail from the Walmart you'll pass by an access to downtown Millersburg, where you can find overnight accommodations. Then six miles later the village of Holmesville, and four miles after that you'll arrive at Fredericksburg. This is where the Holmes County Trail ends. If you are with kids or inexperienced riders I'd suggest heading back from here since the remainder of this section is all out on the county and township roads. There is no major traffic, but there are some hills and areas where the vehicles are running 45 to 55 mph. There are a couple spots to stop here, Lems Pizza, the Salt Creek Cafe and the market. Also, on up the road about 9 miles at Apple Creek there is a pretty nice BP station to get drinks, etc. And there is a pretty "nice" climb on the section between Fredericksburg and Apple Creek. It's not as bad heading north, but coming back south is a little steeper. As you cross route 30 into Dalton and there are several food/drink options. Heading in to Dalton you'll take a right on Main and then to head on to the Sippo Valley Bike Trail take a left on Freet Street, However, if you turn right on Freet it will take you into Village Green Park, where there are restrooms and plenty of parking spots. The locals launch rides from here almost daily. Overall the 28 mile Millersburg to Dalton section is a little more challenging than most of the other sections of the trail, but a very scenic ride and a nice change of pace.

Dalton to Akron - from Village Green Park (41 S Freet St) take Freet Street across Main and follow the signs to the Sippo Valley Bike Trail. From this point all the way to Akron it is all trail. The definition of trail, however, changes a bit. Most of the Sippo Valley Bike Trail and the Towpath Trail, heading north out of Massillon, is crushed gravel. If you have never ridden on it, for the most part, it's not as bad as it sounds. In fact, when dry and packed down, it rides much like pavement. And in those perfect conditions, one can almost ride a road tire on the trail. But when the conditions get wet, soft and/or rutty, you will need a fatter tire. I would recommend 32 mm at least; however I feel most comfortable on a 35mm tire. After about 10 miles, the Sippo Valley Bike Trail takes you into Massillon and over the Tuscarawas River, onto the Towpath Trail. Once you cross the river you will see plenty of food stops, as well as a Hampton Inn. Then about a mile up the trail is Ernie's Bike Shop (135 Lake Ave NW) and the Blue Heron Cafe. Eight miles later you'll be in Canal Fulton, another four miles to Clinton, and then another seven to Barberton. After another six miles you'll be approaching Akron with paved trails for awhile. A little over 38 miles from Dalton, 28 from Massillon, you will arrive at Lock 3 Park. This

is a very popular spot in downtown Akron. Here there is a parking garage (52 W State St), which is free to park on weekends. The next two miles up to the Memorial Parkway Trailhead can be quite challenging, according to what is going on in Akron. You will be out on the street (Bowery and Quaker) for just a bit, and then back on the trail. During this section you'll also see the spur you'd take to get over to the train station. Then at North Street, the last time I was there, the trail was closed due to construction of the Interceptor Tunnel. If that detour is still there, it does involve street riding and a bit of a hill. That detour will put you back on the trail just south of the Memorial Parkway Trailhead (499 Memorial Pkwy). This is a great place to launch a ride with plenty of parking. Also, you're just south of the Big Bend stop on the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad. The total distance from Dalton to Akron is about 40 miles, so it would be a quite lengthy ride for an out and back. There are plenty of hubs, however, to leave from. I've included some of the addresses. We have left from Dalton and rode up to Clinton. We once left from Lock 3 Park in Akron and rode down to Canal Fulton. And looking forward to the next section, we have loaded up the bikes at the Akron Train Station (27 Ridge St) got off at Rockside Station (7900 Old Rockside Rd, Independence) and rode the towpath back to Akron. Also, Ernie's Bike Shop would be a great place to ride from in either direction.

Akron to Rockside Station - this section, again is all trail and still mostly the same crushed gravel surface. The entire section runs parallel to the the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad. Their website <https://www.cvsr.com/take-the-train/bike-aboard/> explains all the details, but basically for \$5 you put your bike on the train, it takes you to one of 8 different stops, you then ride back to where you got on the train. Or, of course you ride to one of the stops, put your bike on the train and ride it back. It is a great way to do this section. The entire section is under 30 miles with the village of Peninsula being about half way. There is a bike shop in Peninsula along with several restaurants.

Rockside Station to Cleveland - this last 12 mile section makes an easy out and back, while leaving some extra time and miles to ride around Cleveland if you wish. The great thing about starting at Rockside is that is where the crushed gravel ends. However, this is also where the great signage of the Route 1 Ohio to Erie Trail comes to a screeching halt, at least at this time. Best guess is that, due to the future trail updates, they are not posting the signs on this part of the route until the new trails are in place. Yes, it is all pavement the rest of the way, but you will be on some streets after about 6 miles of trail. There at Harvard Ave you'll take a left and then a right on Jennings Road. You are now at the south end of the Canalway Partners four stage Towpath Trail system <http://canalwaypartners.com/> . Thus, routes and signage through this area is somewhat fluid as they open new sections of trail. From Jennings, at some point, you will be directed back to the trail and follow it up to Quigley Road. From there, the last time I was on the trail, you are directed up the hill and on to West 14th street. However, when phase 3 is completed, it will keep you on the trail around the east side of Tremont Park. Eventually you end up on Abbey Ave and take it west over to 25th Street and the West Side Market. Phase 4 has a trail that will take you over to Franklin Blvd also. Then take a left on either Franklin or Detroit to get over to 65th Street. Follow 65th all the way north until it dead ends at Father Caruso Drive. Then cross over the street onto the trail. Go through the tunnel, cross 73rd

Street, go under Hwy 20 and you're at Edgewater Park and Lake Erie. As far as stops along this route, there are all kinds of choices. The west side is exploding with micro breweries. One of our favorites is Koffie Cafe right beside the Great Lakes Brewing Company.

So there you have it. Took us about 10 years, but we have biked it all, at least in its current state. The challenge now is to revisit sections as they are updated. I am very much looking forward to the Cleveland situation. We are already making plans to go back up there next summer. I guess most of us are fairly up to date with the central Ohio developments. The other two areas of concern are Akron and Cincinnati. Guess we'll keep checking things out in anticipation of new developments. In the meantime, do check out the developments of the trail, along with the Interactive Map, at <http://ohioerietrail.org/>. And for the members of the Westerville Bicycle Club, there are Ride With GPS maps posted on the WBC Organization page <https://ridewithgps.com/organizations/1176-westerville-bicycle-club/routes>. They are tagged Ohio to Erie Trail.

Hope you get to check out a section of the Ohio to Erie Trail soon,

Bill & Stacy Dilts