

Clay County Kentucky

Land of Swinging Bridges

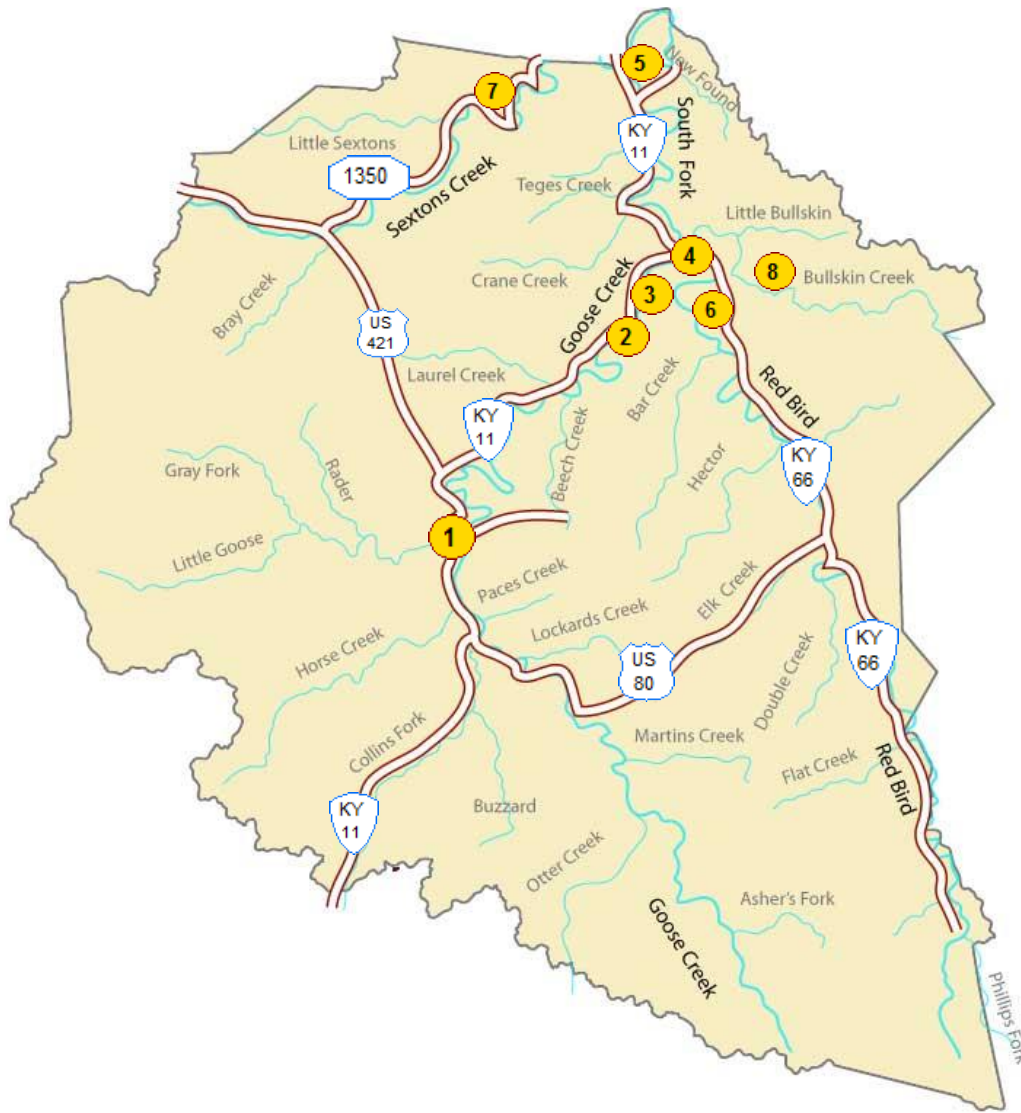


Though Clay County is bent on looking forward and progressing toward a bright new future, Clay Countians everywhere keep in their heart romantic images of their past. Nothing evokes such notions as do the county's numerous swinging bridges across Goose Creek, Red Bird and the South Fork rivers. The brooding colors of the old bridges are the very stuff of soulful memories, and are worth seeking out as you drive around the county.

These suspension footbridges are often called swinging bridges because the bridge sways beneath your feet as you walk across. They are also referred to as rope bridges due to their historical origin based on the ancient Inca rope bridge. Swinging bridges would span a wide river without the need for foundation pillars in the middle. This meant there was no obstruction to river traffic

and no danger of the pier being damaged during floods. They were also cheaper to build than pier designs. Typical construction would start with a ball of twine to judge the curve and distance. The upright piers were constructed first before being pulled into position by men in boats or on horses or mules. The cable was then dragged across by hand using a wheel or pulley. Men would mix cement and haul river gravel and timbers from local farms.

Many of these historic relics of Appalachian history still tower over Goose Creek, Red Bird and the South Fork rivers. Visit Clay County Kentucky, the Land of Swinging Bridges, and discover the romance, history and adventure of these cherished swinging bridges. Some have succumbed to aging and are continuing to do so year after year. Keep your camera handy as you pass these reminders of a simpler time. It may be your last chance.





1. Historic Manchester's Goose Creek Swinging Bridge

Goose Creek Swinging Bridge in Downtown Manchester has recently been restored. Those brave at heart can cross the bridge, which connects Manchester on the Square to the River Walk Trail and park system. Goose Creek Swinging Bridge was originally constructed to replace the old wagon bridge that was washed away in the Flood of 1947. This unique icon of cultural heritage literally connects the area's history...the Heritage Pavilion on the Square to the Warrior's Path on the other side of Goose Creek. Walking Goose Creek Swinging Bridge takes you back in time. It is located on the actual route taken by Daniel Boone in 1769, and before him, Dr. Thomas Walker when returning to Virginia after constructing the first building in Kentucky in 1750.

2. Frazier Rd Swinging Bridge

This work of art, hanging above the Goose Creek, was recently restored by local families to allow pedestrian access over the river during flooding. From Oneida, head south on KY-11 South for 6.8 miles. Turn left on Frazier Rd, go .4 mile (veer right at Goose Creek to stay on Frazier Rd.) For a scenic drive, continue on Frazier Rd back out to KY-11 after 5.3 miles.



3. Old Homeplace Swinging Bridge

This unique, all-metal swinging bridge is located 1.4 miles south of Oneida, KY on the east side of KY-11 across from Gas Plant Hollow Rd. There is also a low water driving bridge offering photo opportunities. Just a few minutes south of the swinging bridge, take an incredibly scenic drive on Sutton Branch Rd. Go south on KY-11 South for 4.2 miles. Turn left onto Beech Creek Rd, then left onto Chandler Br Rd, then right onto Sutton Branch Rd.



4. OBI Swinging Bridge

This well maintained swinging bridge is located on the south side of the Oneida Baptist Institute campus in Oneida, KY. It connects the ball fields on the campus to

OBI Farm Rd. Also on the campus is the James Anderson Burns' Museum & Gift Shop. The two room museum offers a glimpse into the rich and fascinating history of the area. The Oneida Baptist Institute was founded in 1899 by Professor James Anderson Burns as a way to help stop the feuding at the end of the 19th Century. The large gift shop includes handmade items by volunteers. From KY-11 near Downtown Oneida, go northeast on KY-66 South/Riner St to 2nd St. Turn right onto 2nd St. 2nd St becomes Oneida Bottom Rd. Go about .3 mile and turn right on OBI Farm Rd. Follow it around the farm to the bridge.



5. Rooster Branch Swinging Bridge

This cherished relic of times gone, still in use, hangs above the Kentucky River in a breathtakingly beautiful location. Take HWY 11 north from Oneida 5 miles to Rocky Branch Rd. Turn right onto Rocky Branch Rd, go about 1.5 miles. The swinging bridge is at the intersection of Rocky Branch and Rooster Branch (dirt road). Additional historic attractions nearby include Laurel Point Cemetery: Revolutionary War Veteran Adoniram Allen Final Resting Place, and the Cedar Valley School Ruins. To reach the cemetery, cross the low water bridge near the Swinging Bridge. Follow the gravel road, New Found Rd, to Laurel Point Cemetery. Beyond the cemetery, about a mile or so, turn left on Cedar Valley Road and follow it a short distance to the Cedar Valley School Ruins. The school is on the left in a field.



6. Red Bird Swinging Bridges

Numerous old, weathered bridges swing over the Red Bird River south of Oneida. From Oneida, take HWY 66 South for 4.6 miles to Martin Cemetery Rd. Turn right onto Martin Cemetery Rd. An old swinging bridge is on the left. Another .4 mile south on HWY 66 turn right onto Salmon Rd. Cross the river and veer left for .3 mile to the Swinging Bridge Farms bridge, still in use. An additional .8 mile south on HWY 66, turn right on Laurel Branch Rd and take Laurel Branch Rd about 1/4 mile. A bridge will be on the left. About 1 more mile south on HWY 66, turn right onto Bar Creek Rd to view another swinging bridge. Continuing south on HWY 66 for 24 miles takes visitors on an especially scenic drive to Red Bird Mission, home of the historic Dillon Asher Cabin and Red Bird Mission Crafts. Dillon Asher's cabin is one of the oldest structures in Clay County. Red Bird Mission Crafts offers Appalachian crafts including works by gifted artisans in wood carving, weaving, basket-making, toy making and corn shuck flower making...to name a few. Red Bird Mission has been marketing local crafts since the early 1960's and continues to be a source of secondary income to mountain families today.



7. Sextons Creek Swinging Bridges

From Oneida, take HWY 11 N for about 9 miles. Turn left onto KY-577 W and drive about 3.5 miles. A swinging bridge will be on the left. Continue south for about 1 mile to another swinging bridge; restored with remnants remaining of the original structure. About 4.5 miles further south lies the Old Joe Clark Home. The legends are many about Joe Clark, of Sexton Creek. The text on the Kentucky Historical Highway marker refers to just one. He was a soldier in Clay County's Colonel T. T. Garrard's Seventh Kentucky Infantry in the Civil War and fought in the Battle of Wildcat, the first battle of the war in Kentucky in the fall of 1861. A mountain ballad sung during World War I, and later wars by soldiers from eastern Kentucky, featured this shiftless and rough mountaineer. His enemies were legion; he was murdered in 1885. In the moonshining days of 1870s, he ran a government-supervised still. Also nearby is Bishop Bend. While not technically a park, Bishop Bend offers breathtaking views of the river, hiking and ATV opportunities, and scenic nature. Bishop Bend is an old road originally populated by the Bishop Clan that housed the Bishop Bend School. An old cemetery, Bishop Cemetery, is still located on Bishop Bend



School Road. To reach Bishop Bend from the Sexton Creek swinging bridges, turn right on HWY 11 going south, heading back towards Oneida. Go about 1.9 miles. Bishop Bend will be on the left.



8. Bullskin Creek Swinging Bridge

From Oneida, head northwest on HWY 66. Continue onto HWY 1482. Go 7.7 miles to Martin Branch Rd. Turn right onto Martin Branch Rd. An old, weathered swinging bridge lies across scenic Bullskin Creek. Just minutes from the swinging bridge is one of the area's best kept secrets, Leatherwood Recreation Area. This beautiful picnic area and boating destination offers breathtaking views of the lake and mountains. Continue northeast on HWY 1482. Go 1.6 miles. Turn left onto Hwy 484. Go 5.7 miles. The road dead ends at the park.



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