

OPINION

HENDERSON HISTORY

At least 5 bridges have crossed Highland Creek at U.S. 60



Yesterday's News

Frank Boyett
Guest columnist

The U.S. 60 bridge that crosses Highland Creek into Union County is more than eight decades old – and its construction delayed Kentucky 359's crossing of the creek.

The road from Henderson to Morganfield, what we now call U.S. 60, has had at least five bridges over Highland Creek, including the current one, but when the road was first authorized in 1823 the creek was crossed by a ferry, according to a history of local roads written by Spalding Trafton in *The Gleaner* of Oct. 5, 1924.

I'm not sure when the first bridge was built. A history of Union County indicates there had been at least two different bridges across Highland Creek by the time the book was published in 1886. Some may have been covered bridges.

Henderson County began building steel truss bridges around the turn of the 1900s. At least six were built between 1902 and 1906; the crossing of Highland Creek was one of them.

That bridge was proving inadequate to meet the needs of the automotive age as the 1920s rolled around. There was lots of talk about building an improved road between Louisville and Paducah that would be called the Ohio River Route, but which would eventually be renamed U.S. 60 in the mid-1920s.

The improvements initially were modest: grading, drainage and (near major towns) surface treatment. The *Gleaner* of June 7, 1922, carried the first mention of a new bridge over Highland Creek.

The June 25 *Gleaner* carried further details: "Work will be started on the Ohio River Route within a few weeks and when the road near the Union County line is improved the route from Henderson to Morganfield will be in excellent condition. An 80-foot steel span bridge is to be erected" accompanied by a 300-foot concrete approach.

The new bridge looked nothing like that, however, when it opened two years later. Construction proceeded through 1923 and the first half of 1924. The Kiwanis clubs of both Henderson and Morganfield gathered about 150 members to dedicate the bridge, according to *The Gleaner* of May 7, 1924.

The bridge didn't open to traffic until

two weeks later, so they had been a little early in dedicating "the long concrete bridge spanning the little stream that meanders placidly along in summer and in winter is a raging torrent, turning its flood over the lowlands and ruthlessly tearing at the frail structures that (formerly) provided means of crossing."

The nearby "hospitable home of James Thomas Hancock offered a fitting site for the gathering," where they enjoyed a meal of barbecue. The featured speaker was Richard W. Owen of Owensboro, a member of the state highway commission, who was namesake for the 1931 Spottsville bridge.

The *Gleaner* of May 22 noted the bridge had been opened to traffic the previous day. "Now the long spidery bridge stretches across the lowland that borders Highland Creek, clasping in concrete bands the neighboring counties of Henderson and Union."

That story gave the impression that the structure would serve for generations, which was probably a reasonable assumption in 1924, but it lasted less than 20 years. Next time you're crossing Highland Creek take a quick look upstream and you'll see the remains of that bridge.

Building the bridge across Highland Creek, however, was just the first step for the boosters of the Ohio River Route.

The roads on either side of the bridge were no more than graded dirt. The *Gleaner* of Aug. 7 and 8 reported equipment had been moved in to improve the Union County portion.

Gravel was first laid on the Union County side, which can be attributed to the fact that supporters in Union County, along with Union Fiscal Court, by Aug. 8 had collected \$39,000 in pledges to start laying gravel between the bridge and Morganfield.

Henderson Fiscal Court didn't move quite as quickly. The *Gleaner* of Oct. 24 noted fiscal court had appropriated about \$22,500 to gravel the three miles between Corydon and Highland Creek, "which will give a continuous rock road from Henderson to Morganfield."

It apparently took a while, though. Bids were opened April 21, 1925, but *The Gleaner* of Aug. 6 of that year reported the Ohio River Route between Corydon and the bridge was still "graded earth road," although it was gravel on the other side of the creek.

As I alluded to earlier, the 1924 bridge across Highland Creek lasted less than two decades. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet lists the current bridge opening in 1943. The *Gleaner* confirms

that, although not in any detail. The March 31, 1943, issue reported that a Madisonville firm had been awarded a contract worth \$36,205 to build a half-mile of concrete approaches to the new bridge. "The department said a concrete bridge there is nearing completion."

Meanwhile, there had been plans afoot for several years to bridge Highland Creek at Kentucky 359. Earle C. Clements was Union County judge when the project was first presented to the Kentucky Highway Commission.

Plans were drawn up for the bridge in 1940. Union Fiscal Court unanimously adopted a resolution in favor of the bridge, according to the Union County Advocate of Feb. 6, 1941, arguing it would further national defense to more easily allow Union County people to work at defense plants in the Henderson-Evansville area. At that time the estimated cost was \$40,000.

World War II intervened, along with plans for widening U.S. 60 and building a new bridge for the only paved road between the two counties.

"It developed that a move was also under way to get U.S. 60 widened, and as a result of this plan being carried to completion, the (Kentucky 359) bridge project was again tabled," according to the Advocate of March 10, 1949.

That story announced that a contract worth \$89,188 – more than twice the original estimate -- had been awarded Feb. 25 to a Tennessee firm.

"Completion of the 284-foot-long, all-concrete bridge will open up a new route to Henderson via Hitesville and Smith Mills." In fact, the story noted, the new route to the ammonia plant vicinity would also be shorter -- although not by much. "It is 19.2 miles from Morganfield over Ky. 359 to the intersection on U.S. 60, and 19.3 miles from Morganfield via U.S. 60."

The Advocate of Feb. 9, 1950, reported the bridge "dream of nearly 10 years" had recently opened. Traffic undoubtedly was lighter by detouring around Camp Breckinridge, but there was one main drawback: "All of Kentucky 359 is gravel, but it is expected it will be hard surfaced within a short time."

75 YEARS AGO

The newly incorporated Henderson Sportsmen's Club announced it had bought 127.5 acres from Drs. George and Layson Swann about 13 miles south of Henderson, according to *The Gleaner* of May 8, 1949.

Oliver Van Meter, president of the

club, said there were plans to build a dam to create a 45-acre lake, which he said should be completed by Sept. 1 of that year.

"Seven springs in the proposed lake bed will keep the water fresh."

50 YEARS AGO

Henderson Fiscal Court unanimously passed a resolution agreeing to join a seven-county district health department, according to *The Gleaner* of May 7, 1974.

Two years earlier the General Assembly had passed legislation allowing the creation of multi-county health departments to improve health services. The Green River District Health Department was to encompass Henderson, Union, Webster, Daviess, Ohio, Hancock, and McLean counties.

"None of the programs started now will be discontinued or lessened," said Dr. Julian Cole, Henderson County's health officer, who noted it also would not increase taxes. "It can only lead to more and expanded programs for the people of Henderson County."

"Moneywise, we can't lose either. A health department made up of seven counties will be eligible to apply for a federal grant whereas one county is not eligible."

25 YEARS AGO

The city of Henderson was in the process of replacing all of its street signs, according to *The Gleaner* of May 9, 1999.

"I think we're looking at roughly 1,000 street name signs," said X.R. Royster, the city's public services director. "Of course, we won't be replacing them all in one year."

The new signs were bigger – nine inches tall instead of six – and made of highly reflective material. "It's called diamond-back design," said City Manager Jeff Broughton. "It's reflective and very visible with very little light."

Other changes included using a typeface approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation and printing street names in a mixture of both upper and lower case characters.

The city manager noted the city was also changing its method of crafting signs. Safety concerns prompted the change, which was to take place over three years at a total cost of \$45,000.

Readers of *The Gleaner* can reach Frank Boyett at YesNews42@yahoo.com.

How you can help control the mosquitoes in your yard



Andy Rideout

Guest columnist

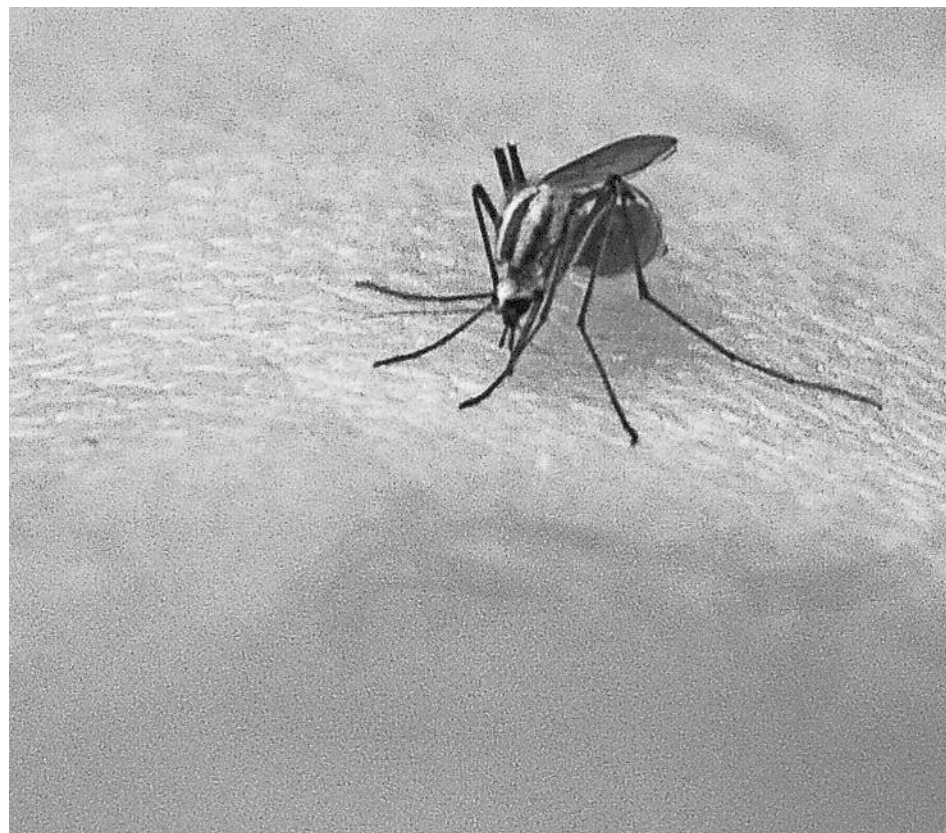
It's getting warmer out there, and rain is common in the spring, so it's time to look out for several species of mosquito in the Evansville/Tri-State area.

The container-breeding Asian Tiger Mosquito and the Eastern Treehole Mosquito are likely to see big increases, especially if temperatures remain warm. Although these mosquitoes are annoying, most people are concerned about are the Culex mosquito species which are known to be a primary vector of the West Nile Virus. The larvae and pupae of these mosquitoes are found in permanent or semi-permanent standing water.

In fact, all mosquitoes are dependent on water to complete their life-cycle. Adult mosquitoes lay eggs on the surface of water or in places where water is likely to accumulate. The eggs will then hatch to a larvae or "wiggler" stage. After several molts they will pupate and emerge from the water as an adult. The entire life-cycle is completed in about two weeks, or as little as 10 days during warmer weather.

Since mosquitoes require water to complete their life-cycle, water management is essential for control. You can make an effective and long-term effect on mosquito breeding sites by implementing one or more of the following:

- Empty objects that have collected stormwater (i.e., tire swings, buckets, flower pots, trash cans)
- Clear gutters and downspouts of debris so water can run properly
- Clear debris from drainage ditches



Shown is a mosquito sucking blood from its host's ankle.

MATTHEW DAE SMITH / LANSING STATE JOURNAL / USA TODAY NETWORK

- Fill in holes left by uprooted trees or depressions in your lawn
- Empty and wash birdbaths weekly
- Fill, drain, or treat holes in trees
- Remove old unused swimming pools
- Stock garden and lily ponds with top-feeding minnows
- Keep the margins of small ponds clear of vegetation

If standing water cannot be eliminated, it can be treated. Many mosquito larvae are available and are safe to use in fish habitats. The most common product available to homeowners is

Mosquito Dunks, a biodegradable, bactericide that kills mosquito larvae in the water.

But mosquitoes are difficult to control

Because they are strong fliers and move easily between neighborhoods, adult mosquitoes are often difficult to control.

Creating a less than favorable environment by reducing unnecessary lighting (which attracts some mosquitoes), keeping weeds mowed and your lawn

and shrubs neatly trimmed, keeping your home's door and window screens intact, and using mosquito netting as screens around decks are a few options that may help.

Since mosquitoes will rest in tall grasses, shrubs and weeds, applying a residual spray such as carbaryl (Sevin) or malathion one to two days before the use of the area is effective for temporary control. Be sure to read the label before use.

You can also protect yourself from mosquito bites by wearing light-colored clothing and using repellents such as Deet. Deet is very effective but should be used carefully as severe allergies can develop. Concentrations higher than 20% should not be used on children.

There are a few mosquito-control strategies that unfortunately produce less than desirable results.

Electronic devices, such as those that mimic predator sounds show no significant effect on mosquito behavior.

"Bug zappers" do kill a lot of bugs, however many are beneficial insects and none are mosquitoes.

Purple martins are noted as being great insect-feeders; however research has shown that mosquitoes make up only a small portion of their diets. There is even a "mosquito repellent plant" which is advertised to repel mosquitoes because it produces an oil called citronella.

In high concentrations, citronella oil is repellent to mosquitoes, but there does not appear to be adequate scientific literature to substantiate the claim that enough citronella is released by a stationary plant to repel mosquitoes.

A little prevention goes a long way, but if you spend significant time outdoors, a bug spray often is necessary.

P. Andrew Rideout is the UK Extension Agent for Horticulture and can be reached at pandrewrideout@uky.edu.