

Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Annual Dues: _____ New _____ Renewal

___ Student	\$ 5.00
___ Individual	\$ 10.00
___ Family	\$ 15.00
___ Club or Organization	\$ 30.00
___ Supporting	\$ 50.00
___ Sustaining	\$100.00
___ Benefactor	\$250.00
___ Donation	_____
___ <i>Life Member!</i>	\$1,000.00

TOTAL _____

I would also like to donate:

___ Labor
___ Equipment _____

Detach and Mail this section.

Please make your check payable to:

Firelands Rails To Trails, Inc.

44 East Main St. Norwalk, OH 44857

Membership fees and donations to Firelands Rails to Trails are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

ABOUT FIRELANDS RAILS TO TRAILS

Firelands Rails to Trails, Inc. is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 all volunteer organization dedicated to completing the rail trail across Huron County. This will become part of the North Coast Inland Trail, large portions of which are already enjoyed by families in adjacent counties across Northern Ohio. When complete, the trail will stretch from Lorain to Toledo, in most areas using the almost level grade of the scenic former New York Central Railroad's "Norwalk Branch".

Firelands Rails to Trails, Inc. (FRTTI) and park districts in five nearby counties currently own over 15 miles of former Penn Central railroad property stretching through the northern part of Huron County.

Your support of this trail system will provide a safe, clean, and picturesque route for bike riders, walkers, joggers and skiers. The NCIT is also the only public equestrian trail in Huron County.

NORTH COAST INLAND TRAIL

The North Coast Inland Trail is a non-motorized recreational trail stretching from Lorain to Toledo and is the perfect venue for walking, running, bicycling, and cross country skiing. The Bruce L. Chapin Bridge is a key link in the NCIT spanning the Vermilion River and joining trail sections in Lorain and Huron Counties.

HISTORY OF THE NORWALK BRANCH



The Toledo, Norwalk and Cleveland Railroad was built in 1851 as a route connecting Toledo, Norwalk & Grafton. In 1853 the railroad merged with the Junction Railroad to become the Cleveland & Toledo Railroad. The line served the rich agricultural regions of Northern Ohio and later became the east-west main line of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern which formed the original transcontinental route between New York and Chicago.

In the 1860's, the original route to Grafton was abandoned in favor of a connection to the new main line at Elyria which proceeded west through Sandusky.

After 1869, our route through Norwalk was reduced to a secondary line by the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern with the newer line through Sandusky becoming the current main line. The New York Central merged the LS&MS in 1914. Unprofitability, poor track, and a washout near Norwalk led to abandonment in 1976 by Penn Central, successor to the NYC System.

BRUCE L. CHAPIN

When Bruce walked into his parent's home situated on the family farm that was established just south of Norwalk, Ohio by his great-grandfather, he saw hanging on the wall just inside the front door a framed print of a stone double-arched railroad bridge, a gift to his parents from Kenneth and Lucille Buckley.

In 1946, Kenneth, President of the Wakeman Bank, placed his trust in Robert Chapin, a returning World War II B 24 co-pilot, by extending him a loan to start the construction company Chapin and Chapin, Inc. The business relationship grew into a lifelong friendship. Kenneth understood Robert's passion for firm foundations, lasting structures, and stonework. Kenneth knew of Robert's appreciation of the stone double-arched bridge that spanned the Vermillion River just down from the Buckley's home which overlooked the banks of that same river. In recognition of this appreciation and in honor of their friendship, Kenneth and Lucille gave Robert and Troas the framed print that was displayed in a prominent spot in the Chapin home.

The Chapin's would later purchase the actual bridge and corner lot in Wakeman, Ohio, to ensure that this historic landmark would be preserved in spite of its uncertain future with trains no longer running on its tracks.

Robert passed on to Bruce, the eldest Chapin son, his love of firm foundations, lasting structures and stonework and his love of the outdoors, earth, and trees; and upon his death, Robert passed the double-arched bridge to Bruce, as well. Upon Bruce's death in 2008, the bridge passed to Firelands Rails to Trails.

Bruce L. Chapin was born June 7, 1946, Norwalk, Ohio, the same year that his father established the construction company Chapin and Chapin, Inc. He was a 1964 Norwalk High School graduate; a Purdue University graduate with a B.S. in civil engineering; and a Miami University graduate with a M.S. in business administration. Bruce worked for many years with the family's heavy and highway construction company Chapin and Chapin, Inc. He served as a captain in the Ohio Air National Guard. He was an avid pilot, golfer, and photographer. He found pleasure in working with stone and wood, and in growing trees.

This former Lake Shore and Michigan Southern double-arched bridge now sees walkers, runners, and bikers and will be forever known as the Bruce L. Chapin Bridge in his honor.

Marcia Chapin Weller, sister of Bruce L. Chapin

1872

BRUCE L.
CHAPIN
BRIDGE

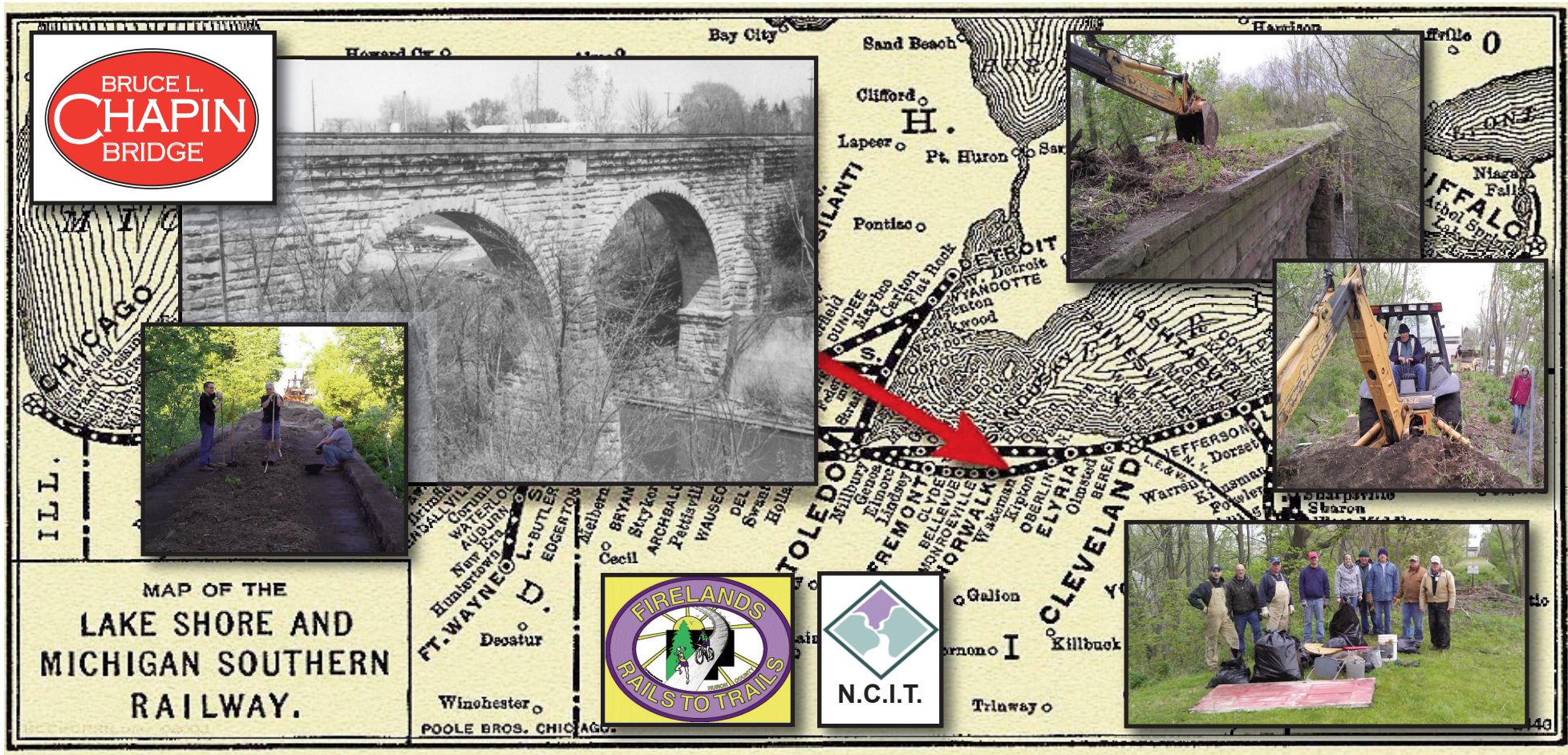
Wakeman, Ohio



The Keystone of the
North Coast Inland Trail
in Eastern Huron County



WWW.FIRELANDSRAILSTOTRAILS.ORG



HISTORY OF THE BRIDGE

This double 60' x 54' stone arch bridge is 273 feet long and is approximately 80' high and was built by the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway in 1872, replacing the original wood trestle which was constructed in 1851 by the Toledo, Norwalk and Cleveland Railroad. Located 18 miles from Elyria, the bridge was known as Structure #136 by the New York Central Railroad. The bridge was constructed by the E. W. Ensign Company and contains 2,447.75 perches of Berea Sandstone in the bridge and 341.3 perches in the piers, which equates to almost 2,600 cubic yards of masonry. As the Norwalk Branch became just that, a branch line, its beautiful sandstone bridges were not replaced with modern steel structures as the case on the newer main line through Sandusky.

THE RETROFITTING PROJECT

In 2009, local realtor Jay Ewell alerted Firelands Rails to Trails that he was selling the bridge from the Estate of Bruce L. Chapin. Trustee for the Estate, and business partner of Bruce, Stan Chapman, began negotiations with FRTTI and Lorain County Metroparks. Once in park ownership in early 2012, volunteers from Firelands Rails to Trails began making plans to retrofit the bridge for trail use.

Dozens of dedicated individuals climbed down the embankment and picked up bag after bag of litter and debris which had piled up over several decades. Next, thirty-plus years of tree growth and vegetation were removed from the bridge deck and approaches. The efforts picked up steam when Wakeman resident Kenny Tkach removed hundreds of yards of soil, old stone ballast and organic matter from the top of the structure with his backhoe. FRTTI volunteers shoveled along side Kenny as the beautiful sandstone deck of the bridge came into view, the volunteers now working late into the night. The excavation revealed a perfectly smooth, eleven foot wide sandstone surface ready for railings to be affixed to the top. Thanks to forward thinking by State Senator Gayle Manning and Wakeman Fiscal Officer Trish Summers, State Capital Funds were granted and this beautiful 1872 bridge now can safely carry walkers and bikers across the Vermilion River on the North Coast Inland Trail and Buckeye Trail offering spectacular views year-round.

