

Terradise to Cincinnati Expedition

Mouth of Salt Creek to State Route 32 Bridge

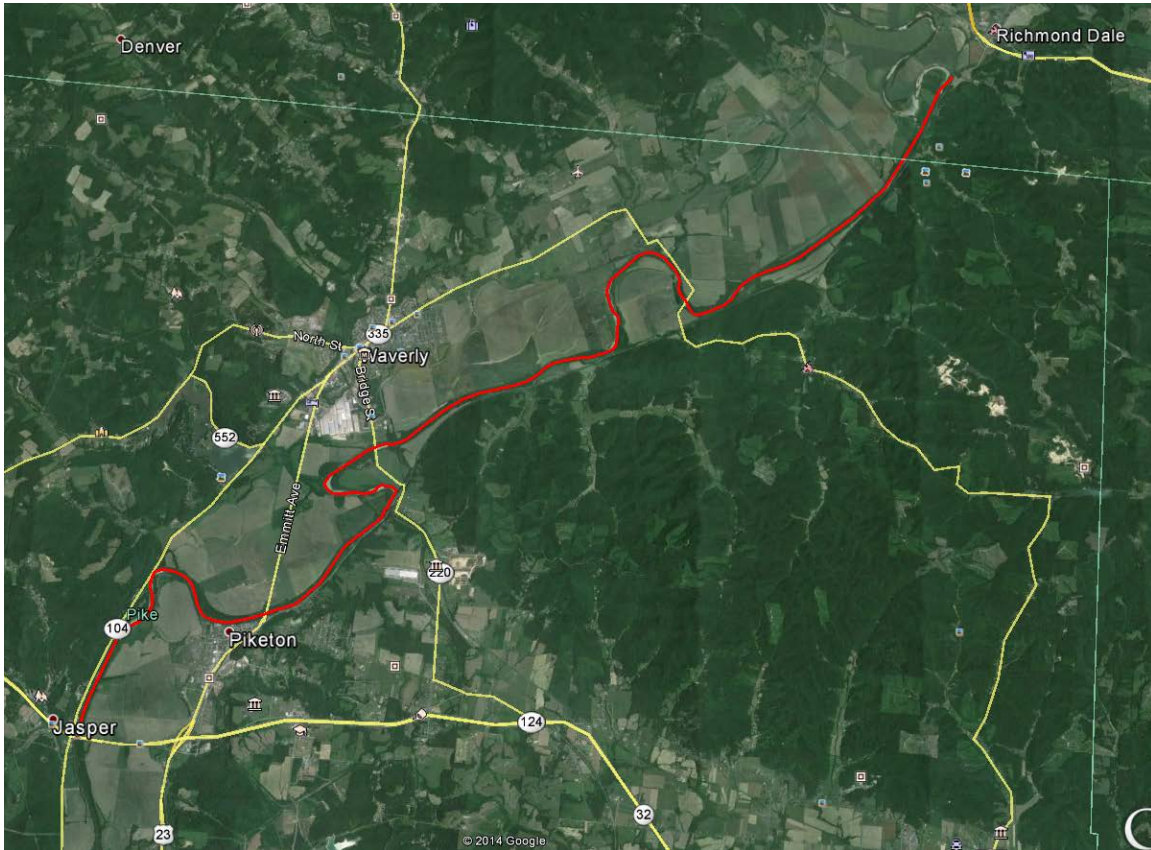
September 13, 2014

5:30 AM to 8:15 PM 21.6 miles

Preface

The last installment (October 16, 2011) said that I would finish a short segment from Kinnikinnick Creek to Chillicothe. It looks like that will not happen, so I'll stop promising it! Some day...

So here we are 3 years later! I'll put aside the excuses and just say it was great being back on the river, this time with my son Josh and his dog Lego, who proved herself an able seaman.



1- 21.26 miles off the Ohio-Erie Canal

Planning for this segment began as soon as the last one was completed back in 2011, but only on Wednesday this week did we decide to make it happen. I invited Jed and Josh, but Jed was busy this weekend, so it ended up just Josh and me and Lego. Because the aluminum canoe is pretty hard to handle with just one person, I decided to accompany him and leave the Ocean Kayak at home on this trip. Josh graciously let me steer from the rear, and he did a yeoman's job at the helm.



2 - Before



3 - After

The Big Breakthrough

A big event happened sometime about two years ago. As you recall in the last exciting installment, Jed and I had a pretty tough time navigating the last couple of miles which consisted of a huge oxbow, white cap waves, wind and sun in our faces, etc. It turns out that geology, normally the story of millennia of erosion and deposition, makes its biggest changes in a matter of hours or days and decided to pull a fast one, and performed a cut-off one of the oxbows, shortening the river by about 2 miles. This meant the take-out place from last time ended up being in a bayou where the Salt Creek joins the Scioto. Since that is an ideal place to put-in, I decided that we still should continue from that point, even though the river essentially has abandoned that course.

The Day Begins

Up at 4:20 AM, I packed a few last minute things and headed to Josh's with the aluminum canoe on the Nissan pickup. Josh would drive the Prius I inherited from mom (Trella) to use to shuttle us between start and end points. We got on the road – this time an easy straight shot from Cincinnati to Jasper, Ohio on the James A. Rhodes Appalachian Highway. Thanks again Jim for your foresight in improving Ohio's infrastructure! State Route 32, as the highway is known, is an excellent 4 lane divided highway which heads straight for the edge of Appalachia in Adams and Pike Counties.



We arrived at the Scioto River (pronounced Sy-Oh-Toe) as the morning dawned a dull gray and the temperature around 54 degrees – perfect weather for paddling. Bright sun makes it hard to read the river!

Since this was our take-out point, we left the Prius here to use as a shuttle at the end of the trip. Everything going on the river went with us in the Nissan pickup to the put-in at the mouth of Salt Creek (which has its start in the Hocking Hills).



This lovely setting is the bayou formed when the Scioto cut across an oxbow about a mile downstream. Salt Creek is entering from the right, and it technically lengthened by about the same mile!



4- View up Salt Creek from under the Chessie System Bridge

While we were unloading, another group pulled up in the cornfield parking lot (as it were) – they were setting up their shuttle from putting in at Chillicothe, upstream. I hope they were aware of the change in course – ‘cause they would miss this spot totally if they follow the river.

Got on the river by 8:15 AM to start this segment. The pool from the mouth of the Salt Creek to the new cut-off is about a mile long with no current to speak of. As we approached the cut-off, we could see the results of the breakthrough – gravel all over the place and dead trees cluttering the channel. I’m glad we didn’t have to navigate that!



The woods on the right gives an indication of what this looked like before the cut-off occurred, sometime probably in 2012.

After exploring this area a bit, we headed downriver (southwest) for a long 5 mile reach before our first major U-shaped bend in the river. This meant we had to go three miles to cover what would have been one mile were the river straight. But straight rivers are pretty boring, and studying meander effects has always kept me fascinated. It is handy to know that when the river bends, the current will always follow the side of the river that has higher banks. This can speed the trip, and avoid the gravel bars that collect on the inside of the curve.

We saw our share of great blue herons, the most widespread of the heron groups, and a beautiful bird. As we passed long pools of still waters which finally gave way to shallower depths and a faster current, only to settle into another mile or so of calm water, we had plenty of time to observe the birds, which because of the gray day, were hiding out for the first half of the trip. As the clouds broke up, the birds went fishing, including a juvenile bald eagle that cried out scolding us, and then did a dive about 75 feet in front of us and came up with a fish! Thrilling! The belted kingfisher was common, along with

barn swallows and other riverine species. I was disappointed at the lack of turtles, usually found sunning themselves on logs. We also saw no muskrats, raccoons or other mammalian river visitors. Perhaps the gray day kept them inside.

The Chessie System tracks parallel the river in this area and many trains (northbound with coal and southbound going back for more) passed us. You can hear them traversing this wide valley for miles, and near Waverly the tracks merge and divide where the line heads toward Wheelersburg down another abandoned Teays valley. The Scioto follows this ancient valley through this un-glaciated portion of Ohio, where the Teays River (it's upper reaches are now called the New River in West Virginia) flowed northwest toward Fort Wayne, Indiana. The glaciers buried its valley 20,000 years ago. When they melted the water rushed down the old valley which used to run north, and helped form the new Ohio River where it continues to flow today. The Scioto is what's left of that massive drainage, and the gravel it constantly re-arranges testifies to their glacial origins.



5- Lego stretching her legs on a gravel bar

After noon, we passed under the double Chessie tracks which pass through Waverly. Just before that bridge are the abutments for the old single track bridge, and just downstream is the state route 220 bridge:



After Waverly, we had another loop which reversed our direction for a mile or so, and then rounded a curve to hear a waterfall. Knowing there were no low-head dams on this portion of the river, I was nevertheless cautious in approaching this obvious hazard. A fisherman was fly-fishing, but seemed oblivious to us as we pulled up to portage around this 3 foot drop. From below, it appeared we might have been able to shoot this small falls, but from above it was not obvious which path to take to avoid the sharp rocks it was tumbling over.



6- *The Niagara of the Scioto*

We rounded a few more bends before heading straight south and the SR 32 bridge, in sight after a rest period of drifting. One hundred more paddle strokes and we were at the take out.



We took all valuables in the Prius and left the canoe under the bridge, hoping no one would help themselves to it. In the Prius, we headed back to Salt Creek to pick up the pickup (I love saying that). In the activity associated with launching the canoe, I had dropped my key to the truck (Josh had a spare), but I wanted to look again to see if I could find it. I looked for a minute or so, when Josh had the idea to let Lego smell his copy of the key. She did, and immediately proceeded to a grassy spot and started sniffing around. I spread the grass apart where she stood, and there was the key! Amazing example of man's best friend! Thanks, Lego, and thanks Josh for a great trip and insisting on bringing Lego along. She was a great companion and behaved herself the whole trip.

Next leg – 30 miles to the Ohio River – can we do it in one day?"

David and Josh Haldeman and Lego
Saturday, September 13, 2014