

The Bridges of the Western Reserve

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Since the earliest civilizations, cities have been defined by their geographical features. The Western Reserve is no exception. In order to allow for the development of industry and commerce, our forefathers built bridges, bridges and more bridges. These bridges, where, why and how they were built are the result of many socio-economic factors. At the point in history they were constructed, the thoughts, dreams, desires and technology have become frozen in time.

This presentation will explore how specific Cleveland area bridges relate to past and current socio-economic factors. To highlight these factors, the presentation will focus on the Veteran's Memorial Bridge (Detroit-Superior), the Central Viaduct (Innerbelt Bridge), the Clifton-Westlake Bridge, and others. For example, traffic volume on the Veteran's Memorial Bridge is less than 50% of its historic peak. Was a \$50 million cost to rebuild it prudent? Why was the Clifton-Westlake Bridge rebuilt from the piers up when the structure was but 40 years old? The answer to these questions, and others, will provide insight into the socio-economic factors of bridge building.