



Kentucky Transportation Cabinet • District 1

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Bridge History & Photo Info Below

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KY Transportation Cabinet schedules explosive demolition of old US 68/KY 80 Lake Barkley Bridge at Canton *Detonation of two main spans tentatively set for April 11*

PADUCAH, Ky. (March 21, 2018) – The explosive demolition of two main spans on the old U.S. 68/KY 80 Lake Barkley Bridge at Canton has been tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 11, weather permitting.

Over the last month, a demolition crew removed the concrete deck from the 86-year-old structure. A specialized demolition crew completed a detailed survey of the two steel Parker truss spans to plan placement of explosives to bring down the old bridge.

Use of explosives to bring down the spans will require highway traffic across the New U.S. 68/KY 80 Lake Barkley Bridge to be halted for several hours the morning of the blast. River traffic will also be halted for up to 24 hours the day of the blast.

Once the main steel truss structures are dropped into Kentucky Lake, cranes will move to the site to remove the fallen steel. The Coast Guard requires the contractor to clear the main channel within 24 hours to minimize disruptions to commercial river traffic.

“Our engineers will be meeting with the contractor and the explosives team daily starting about five days prior to the detonation date to determine if weather conditions will allow the use of explosives to bring down the main spans,” said Mike McGregor, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) District 1 chief engineer. “The potential conditions that would cause a delay would be heavy rain or thunderstorms with lightning.”

The contractor and KYTC personnel will be joined by Kentucky Emergency Management, the Coast Guard and law enforcement agencies to provide security on the day of the blast. A 1,500-foot clear zone will be enforced around the site.

Unlike the explosive demolition of the old Eggners Ferry Bridge, which had a ready-made overlook from the Kenlake State Park amphitheater, the explosion of the old Lake Barkley Bridge will not be as easily observed by area residents.

“There are limited viewing areas along the Land Between the Lakes side of the lake,” McGregor said. “An overlook area at the end of Eleanor Way, just upstream from the old bridge out of the clear zone, will provide the best view. Other potential observation sites are either in the clear zone or at locations where the new bridge blocks the view of the old structure. We’ll develop a final schedule and provide the public with guidelines for observing the explosion as we get closer to the tentative date.”

Constructed as a toll bridge, the old U.S. 68/KY 80 Lake Barkley Bridge initially opened to traffic on February 6, 1932. Tolls were removed in August 1945. Also known as the Henry R. Lawrence Memorial Bridge and the Canton Bridge, the 3,104-foot-long structure has two 321-foot Parker through truss main spans and a 121-foot Pratt deck truss.

In 1963, the old bridge was elevated 10.5 feet to allow additional clearance for the impoundment of Lake Barkley.

PCL Civil Constructors, of Denver, is the prime contractor on the \$128 million project to remove the old structure and construct the new bridge at the Canton crossing. The new 3,805-foot-long bridge has a 550-foot basket-handle arch main span that is a twin of the U.S. 68/KY 80 Eggners Ferry Bridge over Kentucky Lake at Aurora just under 9 miles away.

The new U.S. 68/KY 80 Lake Barkley Bridge, located at U.S. 68 milepoint 8.596 in Trigg County, is 9 miles west of Cadiz and serves as the eastern entrance to Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area. The bridge is at Cumberland River navigational milepoint 63.1.

While the new bridge was opened on Feb. 12 to two-way traffic on what will become the eastbound lanes, construction of a multi-use path, completion of permanent roadway connections, painting of the main arch, and other finish work will continue along the new bridge for the next year. The new Lake Barkley Bridge is expected to be ready for four-lane traffic late this year.

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Recent Photos of the Old US 68/KY 80 Lake Barkley Bridge are posted at

www.facebook.com/kytcdistrict1

Historic Perspective on the Old Bridge is below. Special Thanks to Dan Thomas for a major portion of the historic research.

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History of the Cumberland River Crossing at Canton in Trigg County

In 1748, explorer Dr. Thomas Walker named the Cumberland River in honor of England's Prime Minister the Duke of Cumberland. Abraham Boyd, traveling the river in search of land with

other men in flat-bottomed boats, stopped near a high point on the eastern river bank in 1799 at what is today Canton, KY, and decided it would be a good place to settle.

Trigg County had yet to be established and his settlement, "Boyd's Landing," was then a part of Christian County. Ordered by the county court, a public road was built from Hopkinsville to Boyd's Landing. Today, that road is now KY 272. Boyd was also able to get authorization for a public road to be built from his landing to Pentecost's Ferry on the Tennessee River. It went through the area long known as "Between the Rivers", which is now the Land Between The Lakes National Recreation Area.

Boyd's choice of a town site had previously attracted the attention of others. It had been occupied by ancient Native Americans for centuries prior to the arrival of European settlers. A 2015 archaeological survey and excavation to prepare for construction of a new bridge found the bluff overlooking the river was the site of a Paleo-Indian village and one of the longest continuously human-occupied sites in Kentucky.

In 1820, Trigg County authorized Boyd to operate a ferry. With two roads and a ferry, Boyd also got a stagecoach stop at his landing on the route from Cincinnati via Louisville to Columbus, KY on the Mississippi River. Steamboats to and from Nashville, New Orleans, and other destinations stopped at Boyd's Landing.

In 1823, the village that had grown up around the landing was renamed Canton and was incorporated in 1828. The town prospered and became the shipping point for much of western Kentucky until the railroad was built into Hopkinsville after the Civil War. In the 1850s, Canton (pop. 1,500) had a hotel, three large meat-packing houses, several tobacco warehouses, with as many as fifteen side-wheel steamboats docked at one time loading and unloading cargo.

In 1855, the county granted a new ferry franchise to Joshua Hopson, who with his descendants operated the ferry across the Cumberland until 1932. Employees lived in ferry houses, one on the west bank and three on the east bank. The 16-foot-wide by 30-foot-long ferry barge was propelled by hand oars which were replaced by a system of cables with mules walking the bank. Motorboats replaced the mule system and eventually tugboats were used to power the ferry.

By 1904, a campaign was underway to build a bridge to replace the ferry. County magistrates Spiceland, of Golden Pond, and Creekmur, of Canton, persuaded the county judge to have a bridge company submit estimates and specifications for a bridge. *Cadiz Record* publisher Henry R. Lawrence lent his paper's editorial support, and became a major figure in the effort to construct a bridge. Mr. Lawrence wrote that the people of Between the Rivers had borne a great hardship in paying ferriage in order to reach Cadiz, their county seat. He wrote further to say that they had contributed their proportionate part toward erecting bridges across streams in other parts of Trigg County and that it would be only fair and proper that a toll-free bridge at Canton be built. He described it as a "public benefit" to people living in all parts of Trigg County. He suggested that the county could pay for a bridge by issuing four percent bonds to be paid in thirty years and suggested that five or ten cents per \$100 of property value be added to county tax bills

to pay for its cost. Mr. Lawrence advocated the question be submitted to Trigg County voters at the next election; however, that never came about.

Over the next twenty-five years, Lawrence, an influential figure in the state Democratic Party, continued to press for a bridge. These efforts finally came to fruition in 1928 when the Kentucky legislature passed the Murphy Toll Bridge Act, which permitted the state to condemn or purchase privately-owned toll bridges or ferries and to issue bonds to build new toll bridges. Governor Flem Sampson signed it into law in 1929. The legislation authorized twelve new bridges including those over the Cumberland River at Canton and at Eggner's Ferry over the Tennessee River.

Noted bridge engineer J.M. Johnson of Louisville designed and oversaw construction of the bridge. Work began in December 1930 and took a little over a year. Building the 3,104-foot bridge cost over \$566,000. The ferry owners were paid \$30,000 as compensation for the loss of their franchise. The bridge opened to traffic on February 6, 1932, but naming was deferred and it was simply referred to as "The Canton Bridge." Mr. Lawrence died in June, 1933. Within six weeks, the state highway commission honored him by designating it "The Henry R. Lawrence Memorial Bridge

The bridge had a toll collector stationed in a booth on Canton end. The job, especially on the evening or midnight shifts, could be anything but boring with all sorts of characters crossing the bridge, and even high-speed chases. Some toll collectors, who after getting a certain headlight signal, would leave the gate up for fleeing moonshiners and quickly drop it in front of the pursuing federal revenue agents.

Bridge tolls were collected at Canton for over thirteen years. Cars and small trucks paid thirty cents and the toll increased, based on vehicle size up to two dollars. Carriages or wagons drawn by animals were charged fifty cents for a single horse or mule, or sixty cents for two. Pedestrians paid a nickel toll, the same for livestock on the hoof. In the early 1940s, Governor Keen Johnson began an effort to expedite retirement of the toll bridge bonds. In August 1945, Governor Simeon Willis traveled to Eggner's Ferry for a ceremony celebrating the lifting of tolls on 8 bridges, including the Lawrence Bridge at Canton, five years ahead of schedule.

In 1963, the Canton Bridge was closed to traffic for about seven months while motorists once again rode ferries. The shutdown was necessary for the bridge to be raised ten and a half feet due to accommodate river traffic after the impoundment of the Cumberland River to create Lake Barkley.

For many years, the bridge was adequate for the needs of Trigg County and motorists traveling US68/KY80. But with nearly 3,000 cars a day traveling to the two lakes, Land Between the Lakes, the two state parks, college students commuting to Murray, and other increased travel, the bridge was deemed functionally obsolete by the end of the twentieth century due to narrow ten-foot traffic lanes and absence of shoulders.

Governor Steve Beshear announced in February 2015 that a state of the art basket-handle tied-arch \$128-million bridge would be built crossing the Cumberland River/Lake Barkley at Canton. It will have four eleven-foot traffic lanes, four-foot shoulders, and a separate ten-foot multi-use walkway tied to trails in Land Between The Lakes.

Adapted with permission from an article by Dan Thomas in the Cadiz Record, May 20, 2015.