

Towpath Companion

OHIO & ERIE
CANALWAY

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A TRAVELER'S GUIDE TO THE
OHIO & ERIE CANAL TOWPATH TRAIL

Old Portage

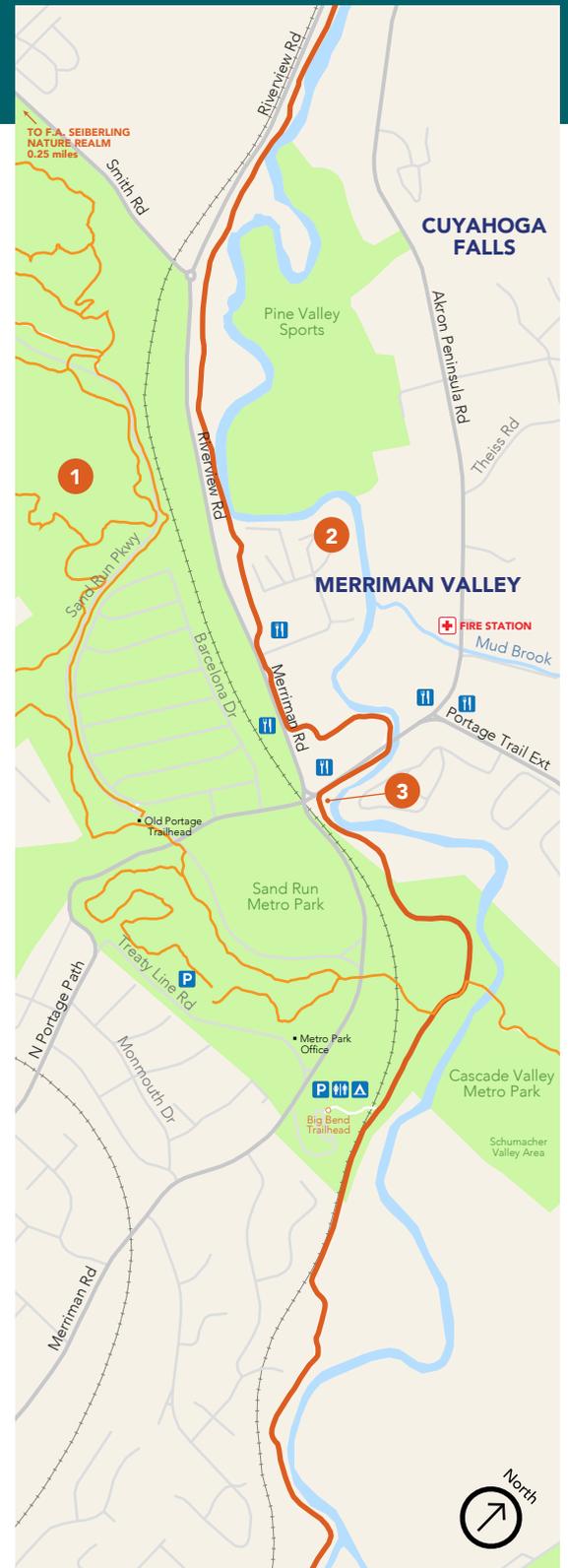


The name “Old Portage” was commonly used in historical writings to describe the place on the Cuyahoga River where Native Americans hauled their canoes out of the river to begin the eight-mile portage to the Tuscarawas River. Old Portage was located approximately where North Portage Path now crosses the river. Today’s Towpath travelers call the area Merriman Valley. As an easy place to take a break, the “Valley” is a popular food stop. There are numerous restaurants, bars and pubs in the area.

Points of Interest

- 1 SAND RUN METRO PARK**
- 2 WEATHERVANE COMMUNITY PLAYHOUSE**
- 3 NORTHERN TERMINUS OF PORTAGE PATH**

After the canal was abandoned early in the 20th century, it was appropriated in some areas for roads or sewers. South of Merriman Valley, the trail is occasionally elevated on boardwalks and bridges to maneuver over and around Akron’s main trunk sewer line.



Old Portage

The trail is bordered once again by the Cuyahoga River and passes through scenic, mature woodland. Near the southern end, the low-lying land along the Little Cuyahoga River was formerly used for a landfill. A young growth of trees and shrubs now borders the trail.

1 SAND RUN METRO PARK

The 992-acre Sand Run Metro Park was established in 1929 and is visited more often than any other Metro Park in Summit County. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) of the 1930s built Sand Run Parkway and many of the structures within the park. Hiking trails follow Sand Run, cross tributary streams and reach upland forests. Hikers can reach Sand Run Metro Park from a connector trail that intersects the Towpath Trail between North Portage Path and the Big Bend Trailhead. Bicyclists can reach the park from North Portage Path.

Side Quest

F.A. SEIBERLING NATURE REALM & VISITORS CENTER

F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm, operated by Summit Metro Parks, is a 100-acre area within Sand Run Metro Park that has been set aside for the study and enjoyment of nature. The Nature Realm is well worth visiting for such features as the Rock & Herb Garden, a variety of hiking trails and an innovative, partially-underground visitors center. Visitors of all ages enjoy the creatively designed exhibits, a gift shop and a bird viewing window. Adventurous hikers can access the park via the Valley Link trail near Big Bend trailhead, a trek that takes visitors along multiple trails and up a steep hill before reaching Nature Realm. Visit summitmetroparks.org.

Old Portage

2 WEATHERVANE COMMUNITY PLAYHOUSE

Established in 1935, Weathervane Community Playhouse offers a full season of comedies, dramas and musicals for audiences of all ages. Visit weathervaneplayhouse.com.

3 NORTHERN TERMINUS OF PORTAGE PATH

Portage Path follows the route that Native Americans used to portage canoes between the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas Rivers. This important portage made it possible for Native Americans to travel from Lake Erie to the Ohio River and beyond. The 1785 Treaty of Fort McIntosh also established the Portage Path as one of the boundaries demarcating Native American territories from lands claimed by the United States Congress. On a plot named Courtney Park for the first land donor to Summit Metro Parks, a boulder and plaque west of the Valley Railway notes an early surveying headquarters and a War of 1812 military post associated with this site. East of the railway, the Summit County Historical Society and Yeck Family Foundation have erected a larger than life-sized bronze statue designed by Native American sculptor Peter Jones to commemorate the original Portage Path.