

## Shawnee Lookout Tower -

The Shawnee Lookout is the last lookout tower remaining on the Wayne National Forest. It was built in 1939 by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). It is shown in the photo below shortly after construction.

The Shawnee Tower was staffed for fire detection until the 1970's. It is 100 feet tall, made of steel, with a 7 foot square cab and wooden steps. The original blueprints indicate a cabin or guard station, a latrine, and a garage once stood on the site (all made of logs).

According to Roland Schaar, Athens District Ranger in 1935, a telephone line was supported by 'crooked but durable' chestnut poles ran to the tower. It was common for these remote towers to be the first sites in a rural area to get a telephone or radio, and they served as the area's link to the outside world.

The Shawnee Lookout Tower was the third tower in the country to be listed on the National Historic Lookout Register and is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The tower was completely restored in 1994, and still serves as a telecommunication relay station. It is now closed to the public due to damage from a severe wind storm in 2004. *See reverse side of brochure for location map of Shawnee Tower.*



## Contact Us

The Athens Ranger District has two offices to serve visitors. Office hours are 8 - 4:30 Monday through Friday.

**Athens Ranger District**  
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Nelsonville, OH 45764  
Phone: 740-753-0101

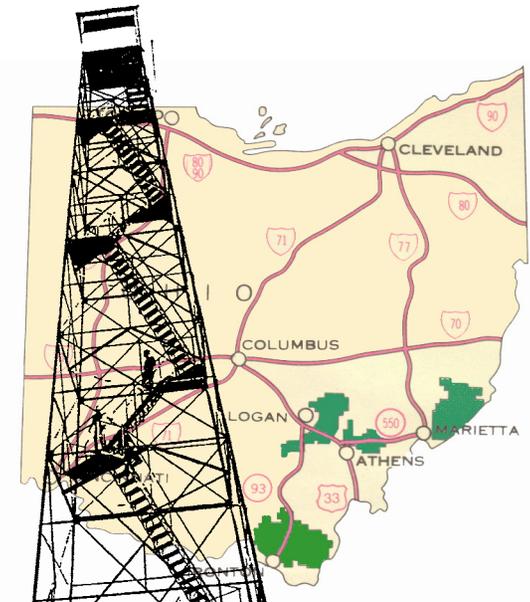
**Marietta Unit Office**  
27515 State Route 7  
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Phone: 740-373-9055

Federal relay system for the deaf and hearing impaired: 1-800-877-8339  
**website: [www.fs.usda.gov/wayne](http://www.fs.usda.gov/wayne)**



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## Wayne National Forest *Points of Interest* on the Athens District



# Points of Interest on the Athens Ranger District

The Athens District of the Wayne National Forest has several points of interest for visitors. Those featured in this brochure focus on places of historic and cultural interest.

The land that is now the Wayne National Forest has a rich history of settlement and use by people over time. The stories and patterns of use are what make each of these points of interest unique.

## Lookout Towers -

Lookout Towers were sentinels built to protect a fledgling forest from wildfire. There were eight lookout towers constructed on Forest lands in Ohio in the 1930's but only the Shawnee Lookout was never dismantled. It still stands on its hill south of New Straitsville. The Shawnee, Snake Ridge, and Iron Point Towers once stood on the Athens Ranger District and Kimble, Long Hollow, New Castle, Pilot Knob, and Telegraph Towers were on the Ironton Ranger District.

The New Castle Lookout, the Wayne's first tower, consisted of a platform built on the top of a tree trunk until it was replaced by a metal structure.



*A lookout is shown here plotting the location of a smoke column using a firefinder.*

**Snake Ridge Lookout Tower -**  
The Snake Ridge Lookout was reconstructed on this site adjacent to the Wayne National Forest Headquarters Office in 2007. This tower once stood along S.R. 278 south-west of Nelsonville in Athens County and was originally built in 1939.

It was dismantled in the 1970s and donated to Hocking College where the top 50 feet was used for firefighting exercise drills. When the new Wayne Headquarters was built on US 33, a suggestion was made to use the reconstructed tower as an interpretive facility. The College was no longer using the tower so it was returned, and the lower portion was re-fabricated to restore it to its 100-foot height.



The tower is used as a communication tower and is open for limited public use.

*Snake Ridge Lookout Tower in 1971 at its original location (left) and today at the Nelsonville Headquarters.*



*Ironton District Ranger, Anthony Quinkert instructs school boys on the use of fire tools. Boys were once released from school to help whenever the Forest Service needed firefighters.*

## Tinker's Cave

Although known as a cave, Tinker's Cave is a rockshelter tucked between two ridges at the head of a valley near Shawnee Tower. It was carved by an ancient creek beneath overhanging rocks. In the hundreds of years since it was formed, many have undoubtedly taken shelter under the rock roof. It is said to be large enough to stable 20 horses - an attribute which won the cave a notorious place in history.

According to folklore, Shep Tinker was a horse thief who began stealing horses and hiding them in the cave in the 1850s. His exploits were even written up in the New York Times. He pastured them in nearby meadows before herding them north to auctions in northern Ohio. On his way back from the auctions, Tinker would steal horses in northern Ohio to sell to farmers in southern Ohio.

Tinker pursued this lucrative business venture until the 1860s. Here, local accounts vary, some say Tinker served as a Union soldier during the war. Others recall that Tinker stayed home and

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continuing to round up horses and peddle them to both Union and Confederate troops. One of his more famous customers was reportedly General John Morgan, who outfitted his calvary from Tinker's herds for his famous raids through southern Ohio.

On one occasion Tinker is said to have appropriated a horse belonging to Dr. James Dew. Dr. Dew leaped on a fresh horse and gave chase. As twilight overtook the two horsemen, Tinker realized his pursuer was narrowing the gap. To evade capture, he wrapped the nose of the stolen horse in white cloth, then turned the tired horse around and headed back down the road.

When Tinker drew abreast of Dr. Dew in the shadows of the dark road the doctor did not recognize his own horse with its white camouflaged nose. Instead he hailed Tinker and asked if he'd seen a rider heading west on a solid black horse. Tinker acknowledged that he had indeed, and that the rider was going "lickety-split" down the road in the other direction. The doctor thanked him and hurried on.

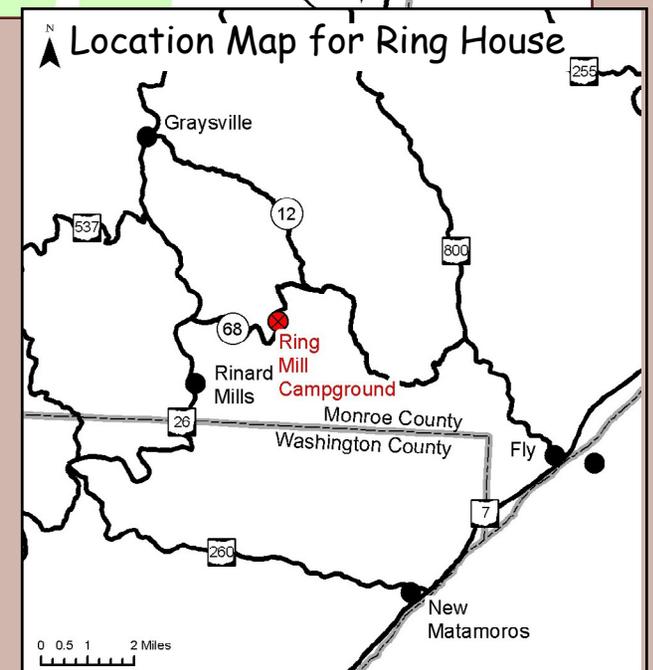
Although the clever Shep Tinker usually es-

*Tinker's Cave today.*



caped prosecution, he apparently disappeared sometime after the Civil War. Some believe an irate horse owner, catching Tinker in the act of stealing his horses, killed him. Shep Tinker was never seen or heard from again, although legends and stories are still told of his exploits and the amazing geologic formation still bears his name.

Although Tinker's family is buried in a cemetery on Spencer Ridge in southeastern Perry County, his grave has never been found.



## Payne Cemetery

The Payne Cemetery sits on a narrow ridgetop along State Route 595 south of New Straitsville. It is the only remnant of a freed African American community known as Paynes Crossing.

Current research indicates that Paynes Crossing was involved in the Underground Railroad Movement, and may have been established expressly for this purpose. Paynes Crossing was not a “town” per se, but a system of farmsteads spread out on a rural landscape.

The free people of color by the name of Norman, Lett, and Harper who came to Paynes Crossing were the first settlers in this area, arriving in the 1830’s. By the 1850’s, they owned a considerable amount of land here and tax records indicate that some were rather wealthy (\$1,000 personal property). According to the census records for this time period, whites are living in black households, and vice versa. Most of the families came from Virginia and some even traveled to Ohio together.

Some of the men enlisted in the U.S. Colored Troops and fought in the Civil War, and some of the men stayed behind (presumably to conduct Underground Railroad activities). One of the men, Elijah Lett, married into the Woodson family – confirmed slave descendants of Thomas Jefferson.

The Payne family, for which the area was named, did not arrive until the 1860’s which suggests that the settlement may have had another name during the early 19th century. By 1900, coal companies had bought up most of the land in the area and the families had moved. Mining operations soon obscured any remains of the community, leaving only the ridgetop cemetery.

The Payne Cemetery was used from 1852 to 1945. Family burials include the Betts, Cookes, Hardens, Mabrays, Priests, and Striblens.

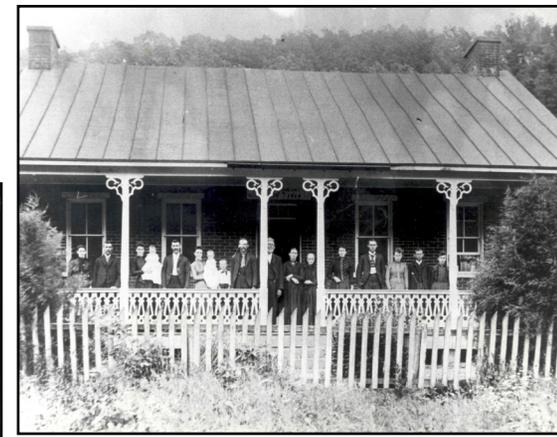
The cemetery was restored through the tireless efforts of many partners from the surrounding



*One of the USCT stones at Payne Cemetery.*



*The Ring House as it looks today and as it looked in 1890.*



region. It was transformed into a shining example of early African American history in rural America, now a frequently visited interpretive stop.

The historic marker was installed in 2010.

## Walter Ring House

The Ring family came to America in the 1700’s, first settling in New York and then in Belmont County, Ohio in 1812. Walter and Margaret Ring settled here in Monroe County in 1836, when it was owned by John Cline who operated a grist mill here which he built in 1817.

Millers by trade, the Rings then bought the property in 1840, at which time they began work on the stone house. They lived in a log house until this house was completed in 1846. They replaced the old grist mill with a new one in 1848 and added a sawmill in 1850.

The grist mill is described as a spectacular 5-story structure which measured 28-feet square. Its mill stones were brought from Pennsylvania, and each one weighed 1,600 pounds.

In addition to the milling activities, the Rings also farmed the land. One account even mentions that there was a schoolhouse situated between the house and mills.

A covered bridge was built across the Little

Muskingum here in 1882, but was replaced by a metal truss in 1955. The adjacent community which developed was hence known as Ring’s Mill.

Four generations of Rings lived here and operated a fairly successful milling business until 1921 when a heavy ice flow washed out the dam. The Rings were a prominent family in this area, helping organize the first church community in the township and became involved in local government as township trustees.

The stone house was occupied by members of the Ring family until 1972 when the property was purchased by the Forest Service.

Also known as the “Old Stone House”, the Ring House was constructed of hand hewn sandstone which was quarried from the adjacent hills and hauled to the site by teams of oxen. It has 1 1/2-stories, the walls are 2 feet thick, and it sits on a raised foundation, apparently due to the threat of flooding. One of the most unusual decorative features of the house was that the exterior walls were painted to resemble brick (some of this is still evident, especially on its north side).

The whole site, encompassing approximately 6 acres, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981. Though the historic house has been stabilized it is not open to the public at this time.