

# The Ohio Literary Trail: A Guide

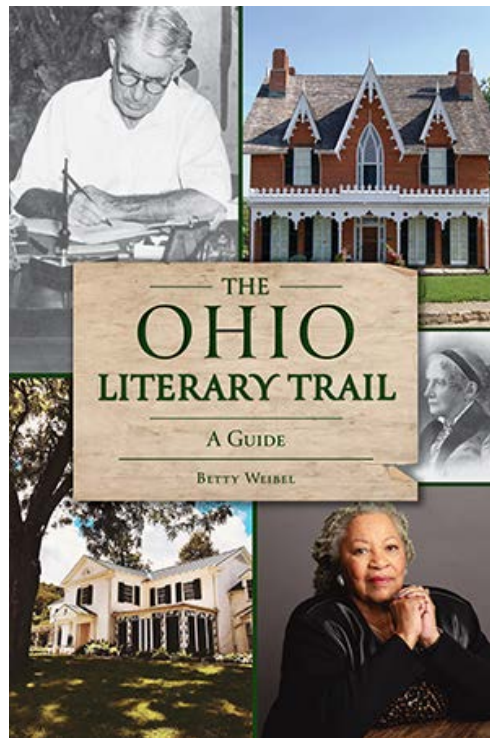
A Review by Morgan Peters, Ohioana Program Coordinator

If you're a frequent reader of the *Ohioana Quarterly*, then you're likely more aware of Ohio's literary significance than most. You probably know about many of the notable authors and literary locations around the state. Even so, if you've had the chance to look over the Ohio Literary Trail, which debuted on [www.ohioana.org](http://www.ohioana.org) last summer, then you might have found out that there was so much still to discover. This is the main goal of the trail: to introduce Ohio's rich literary prominence to Ohioans, travelers, and readers everywhere.

The year following the trail's debut has been tumultuous and unusual. The COVID-19 pandemic has put much of our lives on hold, and that includes piling into the car for a road trip. In that sense, it may have seemed like an inopportune time to unveil a program focused on traveling. Fortunately, the opposite has been true: the Ohio Literary Trail serves as an incredible resource for Ohioans who are looking for an excursion that doesn't take them across state lines, allows them to stay socially distant, and provides them with something new and valuable while fostering pride and interest in their home state. Many of the stops on the trail are outside or viewable from afar, which makes them easy and safe to visit.

Now, a year after the debut of the trail online, author and Ohioana trustee Betty Weibel—the mastermind behind the Ohio Literary Trail—continues to expand upon the original project with a full travel guide titled *The Ohio Literary Trail: A Guide*. Using Weibel's own words, the *Guide* is described as “a convenient travel guide to introduce you to Ohio's literary accomplishments and encourage further exploration.” The *Guide* seeks to expand upon the original map of sixty-one unique marked locations with descriptions, details, and historical context. And it does just that.

The Ohio Literary Trail, as well as the *Guide*, divides the state of Ohio into five unique regions, which can be called the “Five Ohios:” Northwest, Northeast, Central, Southwest, and Southeast. The *Guide* then explores each of these regions in detail, breaking them down further to explore individual counties. Within each county, the locations on the trail are further divided into subtypes of literary landmarks, historical markers, and festivals. Museums, libraries, and historic homes fall into the category of literary landmarks, while historical markers are a collection of about 1,700 unique plaques that are a result of a program headed by the Ohio History Connection. These markers are more “short stops” on the trail, located primarily in public places such as parks and marking significant locations or people. Finally, although the numbered locations on the trail focus on Ohio's literary heritage, Weibel takes care also to mention an annual book fair or festival from each region, which are ongoing celebrations of the continuously evolving literary culture of the state.



This breakdown of landmarks, markers, and festivals makes the *Guide* incredibly convenient to use—for example, if you find yourself in Lucas County, it's easy then to flip the book open to the Northwest section, navigate to Lucas, and discover that you are near the *Nancy Drew* Collection at the Toledo Lucas County Public Library. From there, you can read more about Mildred “Millie” Wirt Benson, who was the original Carolyn Keene, author of the wildly popular *Nancy Drew* books. While you page through the Lucas County section, you may then be inclined to stop by the historical marker for Toledo's First High School and Lucas County Public Library. If you don't have time for every stop, there's no need to worry—the *Guide* includes the full text of every marker included on the trail.

*The Ohio Literary Trail: A Guide* and the entire Ohio Literary Trail project is a love letter to Ohio and its rich literary legacy. From small towns on the shores of Lake Erie, to the busy streets of our largest cities, to the wild and wonderful parks and reserves around the state, Ohio is full of beauty and literary greatness. These locations and authors deserve to be recognized and celebrated, and the trail delivers on that. The authors and books mentioned on the trail span time periods, genres, and topics, ensuring that there is something to interest you regardless of your literary preferences.

The Ohio Literary Trail shines most brightly when you learn about a marker or location that exists practically in your own backyard that you never knew about. In those moments, there's magic in opening up the *Guide* and reading more about your new discovery. For longtime residents of Ohio who may feel that they have seen it all, the *Guide* can widen their eyes to a wealth of undiscovered locations. For newer Ohioans, the *Guide* is a wonderful companion for unlocking the gems and secrets of the Buckeye State. Whichever category you fall into—lifelong Ohioan, Ohio transplant, or visitor—*The Ohio Literary Trail: A Guide* should accompany you on your travels as you explore, learn, and read.

To view the Ohio Literary Trail map with links to literary landmarks, markers, and festivals, please visit <http://www.ohioana.org/resources/the-ohio-literary-trail/>.



Top: Hart Crane Historical Marker. Photo credit: Ohio History Connection. Middle: Library Room at The Wagnalls Memorial Library. Photo credit: The Wagnalls Memorial Library. Bottom: McGuffey House and Historical Marker. Photo Credit: Ohio History Connection.