

Getting Out There: Seven Bridges Road

AUDREY TUSKEN
ATUSKEN@CSS.EDU

Seven Bridges Road is a four mile section of East Skyline Parkway that follows the bluffs of Amity Creek down to Lake Superior. The approximately 400 feet of elevation drop is a cascade of waterfalls in the creek around which the road snakes.

The road was the idea of local land developer Samuel Snively, who envisioned a way to show off the scenic land. The first bridges were completed in 1899 and 1900 as wood timber trestles. Snively donated land and money as well as collected donations for the bridges' construction. Upon completion, it was donated to the city of Duluth.

Snively's parkway was a popular attraction, but the city did not invest money to maintain the road. As a result, the timber bridges rapidly decayed and fell into disrepair. The road was no longer safe for travel by 1910.

Snively was elected Mayor in the late 1930s. One of his projects was to develop the connection between Skyline Parkway and what was then called Amity Parkway. The connector road would cross the face of Hawk Ridge. It was finished about 1939. This was the last section of Skyline Parkway to be built, with the remainder of the road having been completed in the late 1920s.

When the Hawk Ridge extension was built, the road was placed slightly south of where Snively had originally planned. As a result, planned bridges eight and nine were no longer needed, and they were abandoned. The old roadway has since been developed into a cross-country ski trail, and is used for hiking in the summer. These two bridges are a very easy walk from the small parking area by Bridge #7.

The modern series of bridges are a traditional stone arch style, and are passable by only one car at a time. Both the road and the creek banks themselves are frequented by walkers, hikers, or swimmers (in the summer months) who enjoy the beauty of the area in all of its seasons.

The first bridge on the road (approached from E Superior Street) is actually not one of the "seven" bridges at all, but rather bridge "zero," which connects Occidental Blvd. to E. Skyline Parkway (Seven Bridges Road). It was originally constructed in 1928, and replaced in 2007 to better fit the style of the other seven bridges.

The first official bridge is about 90 feet long, with a span across the river of 32 feet. It was in a state of too great disrepair to preserve the original structure, but it's rebuild 2002 was done with many of the original remaining materials.

The second bridge was in the worst condition of all the original bridges, and it was the first to be replaced in 1997. The project was done so well that the city decided to invest in a total repair project of the remaining bridges in order to preserve the parkway for future generations to use.

The third bridge was replaced in 2004, and retains a very similar look to the original. This bridge is the only one of the seven that is "ruler straight" and not built around a curve.



Above: A drawing of one of the bridges on Seven Bridges Road by Duluth artist Kelly Beaster. Beaster's work was featured in the 2020 Freshwater Review. Below: a horsedrawn carriage crosses one of the original wooden trestle bridges on Seven Bridges Road. Submitted Photos.



The fourth bridge is very similar to number three, but unlike that one, it is the original 1912 structure that has been repaired.

The fifth bridge is the largest (in terms of span and height) bridge. It has a double arch, each arch being about 32 feet wide, with a total bridge span of 67 feet. It was reconstructed in 1999.

Bridge number six was also rebuilt in 1999, but retains many of its original elements. A unique feature of this bridge is that while the bridge itself is level, the roadway is not. A pedestrian can observe how the roadway slopes down toward the lake.

The seventh and final bridge is located on the "official" E Skyline Parkway, not Seven Bridges Road and is a reconstruction of the original.

To follow the road down, drivers can access it from Skyline Parkway off of Glenwood Street. This is a bit of a lengthier drive, but it passes by Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve (another beautiful Duluth destination for bird watchers and hikers) before jutting down the hillside to the lake.

To follow the road up, drivers can access it from E. Superior Street just past the Lakeside Super One Foods. The road is initially named Occidental Blvd, but turns into E Skyline Parkway after a few blocks.

Oh, the Places You'll Know: Photography Darkroom

HEIDI VOIGT
HVOIGT@CSS.EDU

While the world has turned to online formats, the photography department at the college has kept a foot in the past and continues to operate a darkroom. The darkroom, located in Tower Hall, is only open to students taking courses that rely on light sensitive photography materials, such as film. Communications professor Ed Smith spoke on which photography classes would include time in the darkroom.

These film classes will both introduce students to the world of film photography and fulfill fine arts requirements.

A lower level course—Photography I, Black and White—has historically had high enrollment. This course can be taken as an introduction to the world of photography, and students learn about the basics of operating cameras and composition as well as learning how to develop film.

The other course that currently allows students to use the darkroom is an upper level course called Alternative Photo Methods. This course uses nineteenth century printing techniques, such as using watercolor paper as a base rather than photographic paper. Students will first prep the watercolor paper and then use sunlight to expose contact negatives that are the same size as the paper. The course also uses pinhead cameras—made from ordinary boxes, that take a narrow view of the subject and create vignette edges—and photograms, a three-dimensional looking photograph created by laying objects on photographic paper and exposing it by shining a light through the paper and the objects.