

= Big Four Bridge =

The Big Four Bridge is a six @-@ span former railroad truss bridge that crosses the Ohio River , connecting Louisville , Kentucky , and Jeffersonville , Indiana . It was completed in 1895 , and updated in 1929 . The largest single span is 547 feet (167 m) , with the entire bridge spanning 2 @, @ 525 feet (770 m) . It took its name from the defunct Cleveland , Cincinnati , Chicago and St. Louis Railway , which was nicknamed the " Big Four Railroad " . It is now a converted pedestrian and bicycle bridge from Louisville into Jeffersonville , Indiana .

Access to the Big Four Bridge is limited to pedestrian and bicycle use . A pedestrian ramp on the Kentucky side was opened on February 7 , 2013 . The original approaches that carried rail traffic onto the main spans were first removed in 1969 , earning the Big Four Bridge the nickname " Bridge That Goes Nowhere " . The George Rogers Clark Memorial Bridge downstream , which carries U.S. 31 across the river , was previously the only bridge allowing bicyclists and pedestrians to travel between Louisville and the neighboring Indiana cities of New Albany , Clarksville , and Jeffersonville .

In February 2011 , Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear and Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels announced that the two states , along with the City of Jeffersonville , would allocate \$ 22 million in funding to complete the Big Four Bridge project , creating a pedestrian and bicycle path to link Louisville and Jeffersonville . Indiana would spend up to \$ 8 million and the City of Jeffersonville would provide \$ 2 million in matching dollars to pay for construction of a ramp to the Big Four Bridge . Kentucky pledged \$ 12 million to replace the deck on the bridge and connect it to the spiral ramp that was completed in Waterfront Park .

On February 7 , 2013 , the Louisville ramp was opened for pedestrian and bicycle traffic . Initially planned for August 2013 , the Jeffersonville ramp opened on May 20 , 2014 .

= = Description = =

The Big Four Bridge is a six @-@ span bridge , totaling 2 @, @ 525 ft (770 m) long , with a clearance of 53 ft (16 m) . The northernmost span is a riveted , 8 @-@ panel Parker through truss . The next three spans are 547 ft (167 m) long , and are riveted , 16 @-@ panel Pennsylvania through trusses . The two southern spans are riveted , 10 @-@ panel Parker through trusses . It carried a single track of railway .

= = History = =

The Big Four Bridge was first conceived in Jeffersonville in 1885 by various city interests . The Louisville and Jeffersonville Bridge Company was formed in 1887 to construct the Big Four Bridge , after a charter by the state of Indiana ; Kentucky also chartered the company in 1888 . The riverboat industry , a big economic factor in Jeffersonville , had requested that the bridge be built further upstream from the Falls of the Ohio , but the United States Army Corps of Engineers approved the building site , even after the vocal protestations .

= = = Construction = = =

Construction began on October 10 , 1888 . The Big Four Bridge would be the only Louisville bridge with serious accidents during its building ; thirty @-@ seven individuals died during its construction . The first twelve died while working on a pier foundation when a caisson that was supposed to hold back the river water flooded , drowning the workers . Another four men died a few months after that when a wooden beam broke while working on a different pier caisson .

The Big Four Bridge had one of the biggest bridge disasters in the United States , occurring on December 15 , 1893 when a construction crane was dislodged by a severe wind , causing the falsework support of a truss to be damaged and the truss ? with forty @-@ one workers on it ? to fall into the Ohio River . Twenty of the workers survived , but twenty @-@ one died . The accident

almost cost more lives , as a ferry crossing the Ohio River just barely missed being hit by the truss . Hours later , a span next to the damaged span also fell into the river , but was unoccupied at the time , causing no injuries . As a result , falsework was longitudely reinforced to prevent further occurrences , and also to prevent strong winds from causing similar damage by using special bracing on the bottom frame of the truss . Also , a new rule was enforced : " never trust a bolted joint any longer than is necessary to put a riveted one in place " .

The Big Four Bridge was finally completed in September 1895 . Because of the location of the bridge and the growth of the Kennedy Interchange , the interchange had to avoid the columns that were on the approach to the bridge , causing the interchange to have several two @-@ lane ramps rather than a single stretch of highway , and helped earn the nickname Spaghetti Junction . Due to the various accidents , the Louisville and Jeffersonville Bridge Company was financially strapped after building the bridge , and later in 1895 sold it to the Indianapolis @-@ based Cleveland , Cincinnati , Chicago and St. Louis Railway , also known as the Big Four Railroad . This gave the railway its first entry into the Louisville market , although the railroad would have likely used the bridge even if they had not bought it , as they desired access to Louisville .

= = = Rail operation = = =

One effect of the opening of the Big Four Bridge was increased transportation of freight by rail , significantly decreasing the number of packet boats that at one time crossed the Ohio River by the dozens .

On February 19 , 1904 , a Baltimore and Ohio train accidentally crossed the Big Four Bridge , due to engineer Dick Foreman falling asleep and going the wrong way at Otisco , Indiana . The fireman kept shoveling coal and did not pay attention . It was the conductor that finally noticed the error midway across the Big Four Bridge . The wayward train had to back up all the way back to Otisco .

On September 12 , 1905 , the first interurban crossed the Big Four Bridge . In January 1918 , two interurbans collided on the Big Four Bridge , killing three and injuring twenty aboard .

Due to the increasing weight of the rail traffic , contracts were finalized in June 1928 to build a bigger Big Four Bridge , which opened on June 25 , 1929 . The new Big Four Bridge was built on the piers of the old bridge , a " novel building process " , as it sped up the time necessary to build the new bridge ; the old one served to reinforce the new one as it was being built . The old piers would still be used , but the falsework was entirely removed . During construction , the Big Four Bridge 's usual rail traffic was routed over the Kentucky & Indiana Terminal Bridge . The interurbans that used the Big Four Bridge would instead disembark at Sellersburg , Indiana and have the passengers board buses into Louisville for the duration of the Big Four 's reconstruction .

= = = Ownership = = =

In 1988 Oscar Arias , President of Costa Rica , contacted Louisville mayor Jerry Abramson to inquire about buying the bridge to dismantle it and reassemble in Costa Rica , as he believed it would be cheaper to import the bridge than build a new one . At the time the city did not actually own the bridge , and the plan never went through .

= = Post @-@ railway use = =

The Big Four Bridge fell into disuse after the Big Four Railroad 's parent company , the New York Central Railroad , was merged into the Penn Central in 1968 . The Big Four Bridge 's former traffic was then routed over Louisville 's Fourteenth Street Bridge . By 1969 both approach spans had been removed and sold for scrap . As a result , the Big Four Bridge became the first Louisville bridge to fall out of use , and gained the nickname " Bridge That Goes Nowhere " .

During the 1970s and 1980s , local radio station WLRS @-@ 102 FM lit up the Big Four Bridge as part of their " Bridge the Gap " Christmas promotion , which was used as a fund raiser for needy local families . Some of the lights spelled out " LRS 102 " .

After unsuccessful litigation to stop the project , the Big Four Bridge was converted into a pedestrian and bicycle bridge as part of Louisville Waterfront Park and the ongoing revitalization of the Louisville riverfront . This conversion had been proposed and planned since the 1990s . The Indiana Department of Transportation pledged \$ 1 million for the project to build a ramp to the Big Four Bridge on the Indiana side , on Riverside Drive , and Jeffersonville pledged \$ 200 @, @ 000 ; early estimates were that the Indiana ramp would cost \$ 2 @. @ 8 million , but was likely to increase . The Kentucky ramp was expected to cost \$ 4 million ; the ramp foundation is already done . Fixing the Big Four Bridge was expected to cost \$ 3 million and take 18 months . The only other facility still standing that was owned by the Cleveland , Cincinnati , Chicago and St. Louis Railway is the Spring Street Freight House . However , the mayor of Jeffersonville , Tom Galligan , called for a redesign of the entrance ramp to the bridge on the Indiana side , stressing that the proposed ramp would be unattractive and that the building of the column on a flood plain would probably not be possible . Galligan pointed out that neither the United States Coast Guard nor the Army Corps of Engineers had approved of the planned rampway . Galligan said he would rather have a ramp that reached over the floodwall and ended on Mulberry Street , causing a less severe incline on and off the bridge . Previous plans to access the Big Four Bridge included building an elevator .

The plans for bicycling included a suspension ramp that would allow bicyclists to leave the Big Four Bridge without dismounting their bikes . Due to the length of time any new downtown bridge would take to be built , and needing an alternative for cyclists and pedestrians to get across the Ohio River when the George Rogers Clark Bridge is closed , which happens yearly during Thunder Over Louisville , bicyclists preferred the idea of converting the Big Four rather than relying on a new downtown bridge or the Clark Bridge . By mid @- @ July 2009 , work had begun to convert the bridge to a pedestrian walkway . With the approach ramps , the bridge will span about 1 mile . In February 2013 , pedestrians were allowed to access the completed bridge from the ramp on the Kentucky side with construction still continuing on the Indiana ramp . The Indiana ramp opened on May 20 , 2014 . Lighting along the bridge is required for safety and had been redesigned to please nearby residents . Originally , the lighting was to be like on the Kentucky side , which has computer @- @ controlled lights that can show various colors . The Indiana construction also had to be cautious of historic properties .

During Thunder Over Louisville , the Big Four Bridge sets the limit on how close private boats can get to the fireworks , which are centered two bridges away on the George Rogers Clark Memorial Bridge .

The Waterfront Development Corporation plans to spend \$ 500 @, @ 000 in upgrades to the Louisville Waterfront Park near the bridge , which will take place from late 2015 to early 2016 . Improvements will include additional landscaping , a new path west from the ramp , and a plaza underneath the bridge .

= = Fires = =

Between its closing as a rail bridge and its reopening as a pedestrian span , the bridge has seen occasional fires ; two in the 1970s , one in 1987 and one in 2008 . In 1987 Christmas lights posted on the bridge to promote a toy drive started the fire ; both the Jeffersonville and Louisville Fire Departments fought six to eight hours to put out the blaze .

On May 7 , 2008 the bridge caught fire a quarter @- @ mile (400 m) north of the Louisville end , shortly after noon , 70 to 80 ft (21 to 24 m) above the Ohio River ; suspected to have started from an electrical problem . This fire had more troubles due to the age and condition of the bridge ; the wood trusses on the bridge were unsafe for firefighters to scale , due to the fire on the bridge ten years before . Louisville Fire & Rescue chief Greg Frederick decided that firefighters were not to be sent onto the bridge ; a boat from the Harrods Creek Fire Department was used to put out the fire , as Louisville 's fire boat did not have a hose that could reach the blaze on the bridge .

It took two and a half hours to control the fire . Navigation lights used for the heavy barge traffic were being changed at the time of the report , according to Mike Kimmel of Louisville Waterfront Development . The Coast Guard shut down river traffic for about a mile around the bridge because

debris was falling off the aging bridge . An official determination on the cause of the fire was expected in June 2008 .