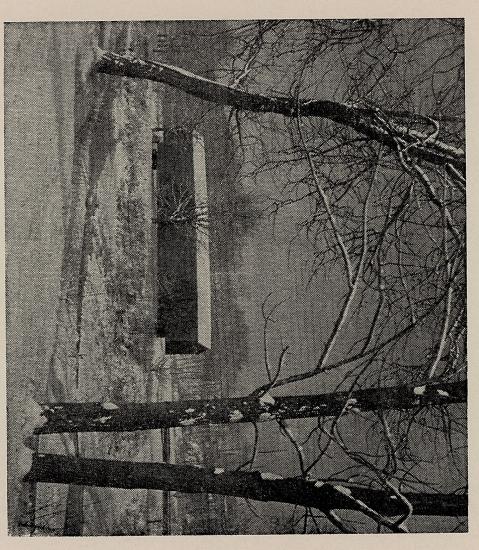
Dedication Souvenir Booklet

of the

Covered Bridge

Perkasie, Bucks Co., Pennsylvania



Presented by the Perkasie Historical Society and interested citizens of the community as a monument to a passing part of the American scene.

Dedicated, Saturday, August 15, 1959

10:30 A. M.

Price 50c

Program

Pastor First Evangelical United Brethren Church	
BENEDICTION Rev. Edward Rutledge Cook, S.T.D.	BENE
SELECTION Pennridge High School Band	SELE
ACCEPTANCE OF THE BRIDGE	ACCE
TURNING BRIDGE OVER TO PROPER AUTHORITIES	TURN
PLACING DATE STONE Mrs. Frank Lichtfuss President Woman's Club of Perkasie	PLAC
LL SING Down By The Old Mill Stream	ALL S
ADDRESS Hal Clark President Delaware Valley Protective Ass'n.	ADDF
INTRODUCTIONS by the Master of Ceremonies Congressman Willard Curtin and other guests	INTR
SELECTION Pennridge High School Band	SELE
WELCOME REMARKS Andrew H. Schuler President Perkasie Historical Society	WELG
INVOCATION Pastor St. Andrew's United Church of Christ	OANI
STAR SPANGLED BANNER Mrs. Mary Wenhold	STAR
J. Claude Bowen Master of Ceremonies	J. Cla

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That Refused To Die The Covered Bridge

In preparing this brief history of the covered bridge which today we dedicate as a community shrine, rich in the tradition of the old and historic community which it served for 126 years, the Perkasie Historical committee formally recognizes a community achievement, unique perhaps in the annual of Description of the property of the

nals of Pennsylvania and rarely, if ever, matched in this country.

Further, the Committee attempts to set forth briefly the many interestpreserved except through unrecorded statements handed down from generdedicated men and women who spent many, many days in searching and proving records and "running down" rumors and reports which never were ation to generation. ing incidents as well as the disappointments encountered by the group of

council named a committee to prepare a fitting program for the observance of the 75th anniversary of the incorporation of the borough. The seeds that germinated, grew, flourished and finally come into full fruition today, August 15, 1959 in the formal dedication of this masterpiece of community achievement, were sown in 1954, when Perkasie borough

quately emphasized the achievements of the municipal government as well as the economic, social, industrial and religious life of the community and when the program had ended the committee had left on its hands, volumes any individuals nor group whose responsibility it was to preserve these reof interesting facts and information of the development of the borough. There were no facilities for the preservation of this material nor was there The committee planned and promoted a week-long program that ade-

tee immediately available there would be no program here today. torical group was formally created. Without the services of that commitpreservation of the Anniversary records as well as other matters as they This matter was freely discussed and without exception public sentiment definitely indicated that a permanent organization should be created for the tee be continued with the designation of Historical Society added to the develop or are revealed. Someone suggested that the Anniversary commit-The plan was approved by councilmanic action and Perkasie's His-

street near Chestnut, Perkasie and there is more than an even chance that a fund will be made available in the very near future as an endowment.

The big challenge came unheralded at the August 1957 meeting of the Board of County Commissioners when it decided to replace the old covered There was little to do except arranging and filing the records of the Anniversary program. The committee next directed its efforts toward providing a plan for the maintenance of the Stout Burial plot on Eighth

ton and more recently the bridge was declared unsafe for school buses. In addition to the public school buses, two parochial schools, St. Agnes Catholic, Sellersville and the Mennonite school at Souderton used the Main street bridge in its bus schedules. bridge with a modern concrete span.

From a practical standpoint the decision of the Commissioners was quite acceptable to the borough. For years speed on the old bridge was restricted to a little more than a walk. Weight restrictions were cut to five

Continued on Page 5

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"We Moved the Bridge"

While most folks were loudly proclaiming the great forward step embodied in the Commissioners' action public sentiment began to take hold in the community and eventually the possibility of preserving the old relic became the Community's first problem. Naturally if anything was to be accomplished in the way of preserving the bridge it had to have a sponsor and just as naturally none could suggest a more fitting group for the sponsorship than the three-year old Historical committee.

of which was that community interest must be developed if the plan is to be carried to a successful conclusion and that's everybody's job. The committee accepted the assignment with certain conditions, chief

After several months of preliminary promotional work among Service Clubs, business leaders and public officials the Historical Committee named a special committee of ten men and women with instructions to procure a site and, more important, to promote a plan of financing the relocation of the old covered bridge.

The committee included Ralph Keller, J. Claude Bowen, Joseph Boorse, Clayton Pritchard, Mrs. Thelma Baringer, Mrs. Marion Baum, Miss Margaret Bowen, Walter Herstine, Charles Beer and Andrew Schuler. The committee organized with Andrew Schuler as president, Mrs. Marion Baum, secretary and Ralph Keller, Treasurer.

The committee invited suggestions as possible sites for the permanent "home" of the old relic. On January 12, 1958 three of the sites submitted were turned over to Perkasie Borough Council. The sites were: placing the bridge across the Branch creek at Market street; another suggestion recommended that the bridge be placed across Pleasant Spring creek at Spruce street and the third proposal suggested that the bridge be placed in Lake Lenape park at a site agreeable to council, the Park Commission and the Bridge Committee. On April 12 the three groups met at the park and sented that the park and sented the site. lected the site now occupied by the bridge.

In May, 1958 a contract for moving the bridge to the site in Lake Lenape Park was awarded to E.A.Gallagher & Sons, Philadelphia, at a bid of

\$4,300.00.

in and work began in earnest. inches above its foundation and a day later heavy equipment was moved On August 14 the firm started work on elevating the bridge about 12

Among the equipment used was a 40-ton crane, 25-ton crane, fork lifts, one fork furnished without charge by the Yale & Towne firm, trucks and tractors of varying size and weight.

of a mile and placed upon a temporary foundation in eight days, with considerable over-time nearly every day. With this equipment and ten men the old bridge was moved four-fifths

but the construction of the approaches and wing-walls remain unfinished but it will be completed before freezing temperatures set in this fall.

Twenty years ago, in 1938 it had been proposed at a meeting of the County Commissioners that the bridge be replaced. Hundreds of local residents in the control of the county commissioners that the bridge be replaced. Concrete foundations for the re-located bridge and needed repairs to the frame structure were completed before freezing weather set in last fall

dents signed a petition recommending that the bridge be repaired instead of removed. The Commissioners made the suggested repairs.

Perkasie, with its longest railway tunnel in the country back in 1857 when the tunnel here was completed, the bi-ennial encampment of the

boating, its early consolidation of public schools with Sellersville borough Park with its annual campmeetings, conferences and Youth programs, Menlo Park, with its appealing shade, quiet and supervised amusements, including National Guards on Tunnel Hill after the turn of the century, its Perkasie

Continued on Page 9

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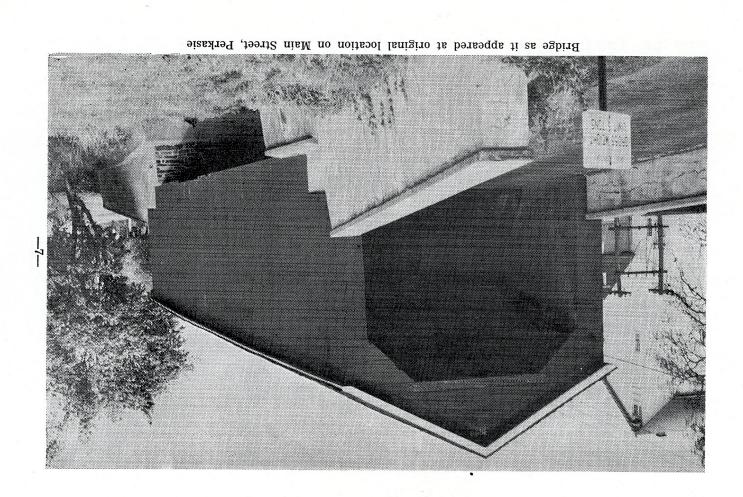
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schools and later the more extensive consolidation with seven other districts has had more than its share of highly gratifying publicity during its

Never, however has the name and achievements of the borough even remotely approached the wide-spread publicity and acclaim it received during the brief, eight-day period when the old bridge was moved.

From the very first day the local "gallery" asserted itself when scores

of folks, mostly drawn from the "Over-65" group carried chairs of every

vintage and description, benches, boxes and hastily constructed supports of anything that would serve as a "grandstand seat" for the spectacular that never before nor never again would occur here.

The seats were arranged under old shade trees in the meadow on the down-stream side of the bridge. From early morning and continuing during each working hour the seats were occupied, if not by its owner, by a friend with permission. Before the end of the second day, a typical August scorcher, vendors appeared with soft drinks and ice cubes. The sales

were limited only by the incapacity of the youngsters to supply the demand.

But local interest was completely submerged under the unprecedented advance upon the scene by news gatherers for every type of news dissemi-

Newspapers from New York and Philadelphia and scores of dailies from eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey had news as well as cameramen on the scene here daily. Two national Television networks had cameramen here to get the news as well as the actual photo of the making of the news which was seen by millions, throughout the nation.

Radio in Philadelphia and Allentown together with county outlets play-

ed the story up big with every news broadcast.

Two major press services sent the story of Perkasie's unique preservation of the handicraft of the founding fathers of this, one of the oldest areas of European colonization of the "new world".

Andrew Schuler, chairman of the Bridge committee, after realizing the widespread interest in Perkasie's program began a scrap book of the wide publicity that marked the venture and its successful conclusion.

preserve every item that appeared in a newspaper but rather to preserve evidence of the widespread interest in Perkasie's unique project. The clippings, including reproduced photographs add up to a total of 117, 20-inch newspaper columns. The purpose of the scrap book was not to

each one expressing a keen interest in the program, particularly the cost.

The actual cost involved in moving, providing foundation and wing walls, repairing, paint and incidentals is shown in detail elsewhere in this hundreds of inquiries, including letters, telephone and telegraph messages, Attesting further to the widespread interest were the scores, perhaps

What cannot be compiled are the uncounted hours, adding up to many days given by scores of volunteers whose only purpose was a prideful interest in a community project that had to be done, quickly—or never. The Commissioners had awarded a contract for the construction of a new bridge on the site of the old covered bridge, with a deadline for

work started and the first step in the program as far as the contractors were concerned was removing the old covered bridge. the completion of the new bridge.

The local committee was plain "flat" as far as cash was concerned.

With a deadline to meet, contractors were primarily interested in getting

The local Jaycees relieved the anxiety considerably with an offer to forthwith conduct a fund-raising campaign for the relocation of the bridge.

Continued on Page 13

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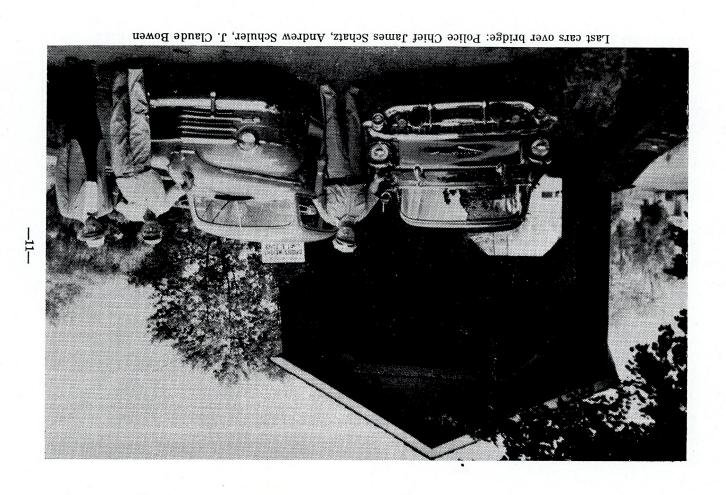
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With nothing more than a promise that a fund campaign would be made, the committee asked for bids and upon opening the bids, awarded a contract to the E. A. Gallagher & Sons Company, Philadelphia. The bid

The results of the Jaycee drive for funds were rather discouraging but there was no turning back. The committee worked all the harder. There was much encouragement in the individual as well as organizational interest in the project. Scores of individuals, many who had never before heard the name "Perkasie" wrote to express their interest in the project tions. stantial contributions. Organizations, particular groups organized for the Preservation of Covered Bridges became interested and, in addition to and among such inquiries and other communications came rather subfinancial aid, provided much literature on activities among such organiza-

the bridge. The writer explained that she was the mother of three boys who had never seen a covered bridge and asked whether it would be posof the bridge in a magazine and inquired about the possibility of seeing plained that the writer had read As recently as a month ago, a letter addressed to the committee ex-ned that the writer had read an article illustrated with a photograph

sible to see the bridge if they came to Perkasie.

Naturally, the answer was "yes" and in addition was an invitation to the dedicatory program. Further the lady had used her husband's stationery, indicating the nature of his business.

Incidentally, the lady was advised, "there will be published here a de-

dicatory program, with advertising and the prices were quoted.

A check for a full page ad came by return mail, not to sell the product, but with "Compliments of interested Friends".

Perhaps the most tedious task in arranging the program and compiling a very brief history of the bridge was procuring authentic records and facts about the early history of the bridge.

It is known that the area in the vicinity of the bridge, now the Third Ward of Perkasie was an early business center for farmers and settlers

over a wide area.

Two mills both operated by water power were located within half a mile of each other along Pleasant Valley Creek. One of these, the present mile of each other mile. Benfield Mill, has been in continuous operation since. The other mill then in operation was begun and continued operation nearly a century by the Groff family. In addition to grinding grain the Groff Mill was equipped

to saw timber and lumber and according to descendants of the Groft fore-bearers, the owners did a thriving business in preparing building material from logs cut and brought to the mill from a wide area in the fertile valley. The original Groff land holdings in the area embraced more than 300 acres, roughly described today as the area between Main Street and Branch Creek extending from Market Street, south, along Main to the vicinity of the Charles Bacorn farm.

The last member of the Groff family to own and operate the mill was David Groff. His daughter, Mrs. Hannah Baringer, widow of the late Irwin Y. Baringer, Perkasie, not only survives the last owner of the Groff Mill, but at 88 years has a keen recollection of many incidents that took place in the area during her girlhood in the Groff household, which was in a portion of the mill along Pleasant Spring stream. Mrs. Baringer said that her father rebuilt and enlarged the mill during the Civil War and continued operations until 1894 when it was destroyed by fire and never rebuilt.

resulted in a cash gift for the committee and a keep-sake for Mrs. Baringer that quite likely will go down through the future generations as an An interesting and most unusual incident revealed by Mrs. Baringer

Continued on Page 17

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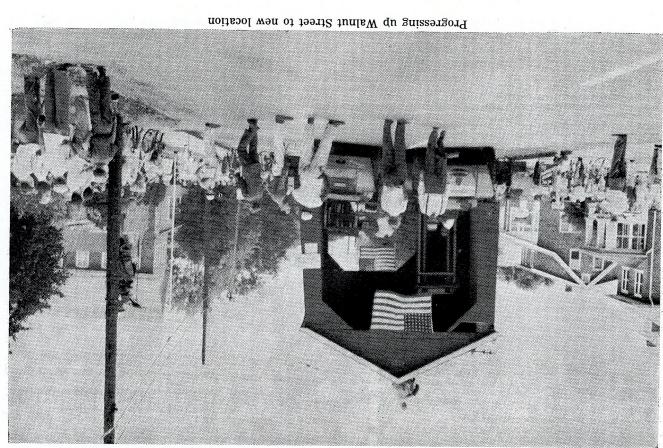
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valuable memento of the early history of the Groff family.

In discussing with Mr. Schuler, President of the Bridge Committee, incidents pertinent to the covered bridge, Mrs. Baringer related how her father, David Groff, had frequently told his children how "I helped to build the covered bridge" and the explanation was something like this. As a youngster in the early teen-age of his life when the new bridge was constructed he spent many hours at the scene watching the bridge "grow". One day as a workman was driving in the wooden pins that hold together the framework, he suddenly turned to the lad, handing him several pins and said, "you drive these pins in and you will grow up to explain how you helped to build this bridge." He drove in the pins and

according to his daughter, frequently did just what the mechanic predicted, "grew up to explain how he helped to build the bridge".

Continuing, Mrs. Baringer expressed as her fondest wish, possession of one of those wooden pins in the bridge. In moving the bridge one of the beams had rotted out considerably and in examining the damage, Schuler, with another committeeman, tore away from the beam a considerable portion of the rotted beam and coming with it, in almost perfect condition, was one of the wooden pins. Schuler forthwith headed for the home of Mrs. Baringer and came back with a donation for the Bridge Committee together with a new and keener conception of a truly grateful "thank you".

The dam that held the water for power was located in the rear of what now is the Royal Pants plant conducted through a race to the mill site about four blocks down-stream. The old race, overgrown with brush

and weeds may still be identified.

Until the bridge was built in 1832 farmers using this road in coming

to the settlement had to ford the stream. Ordinarily the crossing could be negotiated without difficulty but heavy rains in summer and snow and ice in winter frequently made the stream impassable.

The most interesting fact uncovered by the committee was gleaned from an issue of the Doylestown Intelligencer of January, 1833. Here it was noted that the Board of County Commissioners authorized payment at \$1,329.41, the cost of constructing a bridge across Pleasant Spring Creek in Rockhill Township.

The committee in searching the old files of the County Commissioners learned the Board of Commissioners at the time the bridge was built was comprised of M. H. Jones, Henry Eckel and William McHenry. The secretary of the Board was Cornelius Sellers.

The ladies who spent nearly a week in searching the old files of the newspaper and records of the Board of Commissioners are Mrs. Reba Moyer, Mrs. William Kramer, Mrs. Thelma Baringer and Miss Margaret

Bridgetown under which the Post Office was operated until 1888 when Benjamin Harrison, Republican, defeated Grover Cleveland for President Bowen. The settlement in the vicinity of the bridge early took the name of

changed to Benjamin in honor of the new president.

In 1898 Perkasie Borough annexed what now constitutes the Third Ward including the village of Bridgetown. Benjamin Post Office continued operation until 1917 when mail delivery was begun in Perkasie Borough the Benjamin Post Office was discontinued.

Today in Perkasie remain quite a few folks who have resided here since

local Republicans succeeded in having the name of the Post Office

bridge played in the lives of every generation of youngsters.

Pleasant Spring Creek, in recent years has been little more than a birth, who cherish fond recollections of the interesting role the old covered

Continued on Page 21

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excellent fishing immediately adjacent to and under the old bridge. drainage ditch for excess water during heavy or protracted rainfall but the older residents fondly recall the swimming hole, the ice skating and

cesses during the heat of a summer day, its challenging beams and rafters for minor gymnastics and acrobatics. Every generation yielded to the lure of the bridge, and its shady re-

she described the reaction as something similar to losing an old friend. She finds much satisfaction in the fact that the "old friend" has not been lost, simply moved down stream six blocks. Mr. Freed too cherishes similar memories, not the least of which was the day when he was a mere lad fishing through a hole in the bridge he landed a giant sucker just as the baker was driving through the bridge. The driver stopped to admire the unusual catch and within minutes, the driver left the scene with a big sucker in his wagon and Freed was sitting on the sidelines with half a dozen cinnamon buns which vanished before the hook was baited. Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Freed, both past the three score and ten mark have resided within a block of the bridge for many, many years. Mrs. Freed, retired as a pensioned school teacher in the grade schools here with a record of more than fifty years. After the removal of the old bridge

Wilson L. Yeakel, ex-assemblyman, was born and spent his early childhood in what is now the Third Ward. His most vivid recollection of his adventures in the old bridge was the time he lost his footing while climbing up the framework and fell nearly twenty feet to the floor of the bridge. He suffered a four-inch gash high on his forehead. Afraid of the consequences if he told of his mishap at home, he invariably wore his cap in the presence of his parents for nearly a week.

In the old bridge today hangs from the rafters a sizeable length of rope that has been there more than twenty years. Many folks saw the rope and wondered, workmen who moved the bridge asked hundreds of local spectators just how and why the old rope was hung to the rafters. Finally a resident of the Wisler tract, several blocks from the bridge explained.

He didn't remember the exact date but it was on a Hallowe'en night when, in driving through the bridge he saw the body of a "man" dangling from the end of the rope. He hastened to get a close-up at the "suicide" only to learn that it was an extremely life-like dummy and he recalled, it was Hallowe'en. He stood on the bumper of his car and cut the rope. That explained the mystery of the length of rope, still dangling from a cross

An Acknowledgement

the data and information and planning the dedicatory program. valuable aid and assistance rendered in searching old records, compiling The committee gratefully acknowledges with sincere thanks the in-

scores of individuals. Departments, Pennridge Junior Chamber of Commerce, together with Among these are the scores of newspapers, particularly the local News-Herald, Bell Telephone Co., Perkasie Borough's Light, Highway and Police

We would especially mention the timely suggestions and advice, the publicity, and appeals in the lower end of the county by Hal S. Clark, president, Delaware Valley Protective Association.

-The Committee

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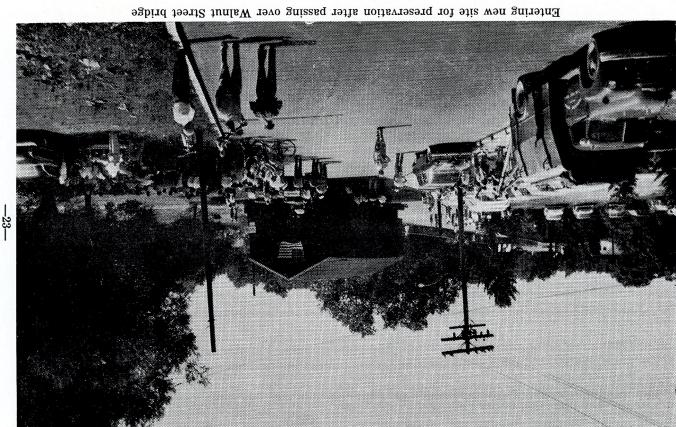
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FINANCIAL STATEMENT

\$3,522.86	Total Owing (and needed)
566.50 7.75 3.37	Rockhill Materials
7.5	Shelly & Fenstermacher News-Herald
\$2,800.00	Expenditures E. A. Gallagher & Sons Expenditures Henry Kramer
\$6 211 50	
$\frac{7.75}{516.30}$	Postage and Bank fees William Horn, repairs
7.73	News-Herald, printing
9.58 672.98	Rockhill Materials, concrete
\$4,300.00 147.25	L. A. Gliagner & Sons, contractors Harvey Kramer, labor

The above statement embraces all receipts and expenditures up until June 1, 1959

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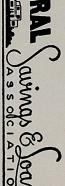
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