

Historic bridges in the United States

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4. Historic Bridges in the United States

As a follow-up of the IABSE Symposium in Washington, DC, 1982 on «Maintenance, Repair and Rehabilitation of Bridges», Mr. Eric DeLony – speaker at the Conference – informs us of efforts done in USA for the *rehabilitation, restoration, relocation or adaptive reuse of historic bridges*. IABSE members interested in obtaining copies of the Historic Bridge Bulletin, published by the Society for Industrial Archeology, or wishing to exchange information about historic bridges, are invited to contact

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WHAT THIS SPECIAL BRIDGE SUPPLEMENT IS ABOUT

Replacement of old bridges has stimulated interest in their preservation and history. The Society's Newsletter has reported on these and other topics related to bridges over the years. Because interest has increased and new threats have not abated, several members of SIA discussed the possibility of starting a bridge interest affiliate group at the Society's 1983 annual meeting. Rather than start another organization, the SIA Board advised that it would be more appropriate to prepare special bridge supplements to the SIA Newsletter as events and issues develop. It was also pointed out that certain individuals and groups who could be effective in saving historic bridges were not being reached by SIA and its publications. SIA members for the most part are already converted and many, either individually or as chapter groups, work in their communities to avoid crisis situations when historic bridges are threatened. An example of this type of activity was the efforts in the spring of 1982 by SIA's Montgomery C. Meigs Original Chapter (Washington, DC) to save Wilson's Bridge, an 1819 five-span, stone-arch structure on the National Road near Hagerstown, MD. Partially washed out by floods in 1982, this 163 year old bridge was scheduled for demolition. How this threat was avoided will be reported in a future issue of the bridge supplement.

Groups presently not being reached by SIA include local, state and federal highway and transportation officials, engineers, and even practitioners, educators and enthusiasts of American history and historic preservation. If there is to be any hope of saving some aspect of our bridge building legacy, then these people must be made aware of the plight facing them. A special effort will be made to reach highway engineers by reporting on the range of options that are technically and financially feasible within existing laws and engineering standards. These are the goals of the "Historic Bridge Supplement."

This Supplement will be an occasional publication. The content will be both academic and advocative, covering such topics as the rehabilitation, relocation and adaptive reuse of bridges; regulations and standards affecting historic bridges; bridge recording projects; legislative initiatives that may protect historic bridges; findings of historic bridge inventories being completed by state highway departments; abstracts of papers, theses and dissertations on bridge companies and patentees; how bridges were fabricated and marketed; the advantages of one truss type or patent over another; and other topics of interest. The Supplement will also include an open-ended bibliography of published materials on historic bridges.

The editors are Pamela Thurber, Bruce Eberle and Eric DeLony. Thurber, a master's candidate in Historic Preservation at Cornell University completing her thesis on the Groton (NY) Iron Bridge Company, is Information Services Assistant with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Eberle is an archeologist with the Federal Highway Administration. He is involved in cultural resource management and training that relate to transportation projects. DeLony is president of the SIA's Montgomery C. Meigs Original Chapter and is Principal Architect with the Historic American Engineering Record.

The Supplement editors and the SIA Board assume that there are engineers, highway and transportation officials, concerned citizens, serious scholars and even "closet" bridge enthusiasts who are interested in America's historic bridges. We welcome any news or contributions on the subject of historic bridges. If you share our concerns and know of an item that may be of interest, please submit it to the editorial address at the bottom of page one. We hope you enjoy this issue and that the topics are of interest.