

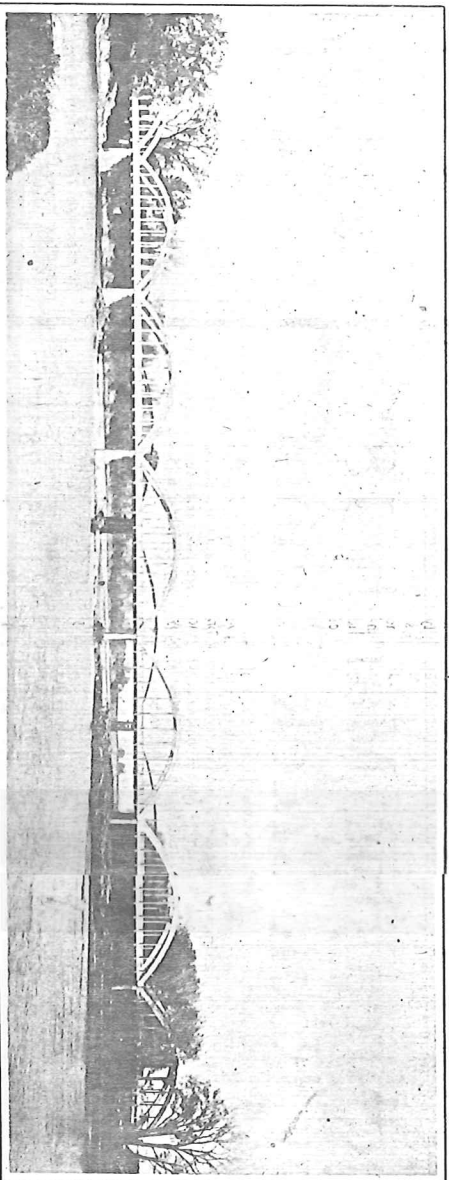
Times
Extra

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 Pottawatomie and Wabunsee
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THE BRIDGE



This photo was taken shortly after the dedication of the new Kaw River Bridge on November 11, 1929, when it was christened as the "Longest Marsh-type Rainbow Arch Bridge in the World." The

seven-span bridge stood much taller than its metal downriver predecessor, which can be seen in this photo.

Wamego's famed landmark nears passage into history

The seven spans of Wamego's Marsh Rainbow Arch bridge are steel and concrete, not flesh and blood, but when the bridge dies at the hands of a contractor's crew this spring, many Wamegoans are going to feel a personal loss.

The bridge has been the subject of poems, paintings, countless photographs and stories, much like a well-loved child of whom the parents are intensely proud.

When the present bridge was completed in 1929—a drabmy replacement for the old iron bridge built in 1872—it was welcomed into the community with three parades, flowers, speeches, music, a dance and a football game. Dedicated to the memory of the 57 people from Wabunsee and Pottawatomie Counties who died in World War I,

it symbolized not only past sorrows but hope for new beginnings. NOW ANOTHER world war and several smaller ones later, the bridge is deemed too old, too narrow and too frail to be serviceable. And Wamegoans, many of them truly grieving, are going to tell it goodbye in a ceremony similar to the one with which the community greeted its completion 61 years ago.

As before, there will be speeches, poems and flowers. No parades or football games will be held before the ceremony, which has been postponed from March 10, and tentatively set for March 17.

The Wamego Historical Society Board, setting the schedule for the March 17 event, has invited anyone who attended the 1929 opening to come to the Wamego Senior Citizens Center after the final playing of taps March 17. Jan Nicklas, museum director, said a group picture will be taken and recollections will be recorded.

One who has already accepted this invitation is Percy Morrison of Paxico, Morrison, who has 22 years old when construction began on the bridge, turned the first shovelful of dirt to prepare the site for building. During the next 24 months he did everything from pouring concrete on the forms, to operating the hoist which lifted heavy materials to the top of the structure, to working 32 feet below the surface of the water in a protective "cave" which kept the water out while the men worked.

MORRISON, WHO said he feels tremendous sadness every time he looks at the bridge because "it's a shame to tear down such a good bridge," said the workers had to root out a deep rock foundation before they could build the bridge.

The work was hard and hours were long as the men used wheelbar-

rows to begin carrying out the rock under the bridge site.

"We worked 10 hours a day, six days a week if the weather was good," he said. "We made 35 to 40 cents an hour. There wasn't much safety equipment—we didn't wear hard hats or steel-toed shoes or safety gloves and goggles. We walked around on these arches like spiders in a web. I fell off once, but the Lord gave me some of the forms above my head to grab onto and I was pulled back in."

Morrison was also instrumental in saving the life of one of his co-workers who was seriously injured. The late Henry McQuire of Bellevue lost an arm when the sleeve of his jacket was caught under the rope which constantly turned around one of two drums on a stationary hoist which moved the boom to maneuver heavy materials to the top of the bridge.

"MCGUIRE HAD COME to work that day in a brand new jacket that was too big for him. He tucked his sleeve into his glove and when the sleeve caught under the rope he couldn't get his arm out. I heard him scream and pulled the choke and killed the engine that was winding the rope. He'd have been killed if I hadn't gotten that engine turned off. When we got to him, his hand was hanging clear to the ground."

Morrison, who has worked on bridges all over the western United States, said he wishes "we hadn't let them tear this one down."

Sharing his feelings are Mike and Sheila Burke of Wamego. The Burkes have appealed to the Kansas Department of Transportation several times, but have been told there is nothing that can be done now, since Wamego's bridge was not chosen for the National Register of Historic Sites and would be too costly to maintain in its current state.

Inez Owens, author of the bicentennial history of Wamego, said she is sorry to see the bridge go, too. She was a small child when the bridge opened but remembers the excitement and some of the activities. She said she remembers the lighting of Wamego's "White Way" in conjunction with the bridge opening. The "White Way" consisted of new street lights along part of Lincoln Avenue. Some of the original poles are still at various places around town.

THE PLAQUE at the Wamego end of the bridge with the names of those lost in World War I from Pottawatomie County has already been removed and presented to the Wamego Historical Society. Exact dates for the demolition of the bridge have not been set. Jan Nicklas said an attempt will be made to save the dates engraved on the crossbeams of the arches at each end of the bridge so that they can be displayed at

Alma and Wamego after the other spans are gone.

Transportation across the river to Wamego began with a ferry in 1866 which ran until 1884. The building of the iron bridge in 1872 was hailed as a great improvement. And the Marsh Arch Bridge, longest of its type in the country, was the pride and joy of the community.

Will the new bridge, stronger and wider, be pictured, photographed and memorialized? Or has Wamego lost, forever, a unique part of itself—a well-loved child that grew old too fast under the demands of progress?

April 6th.  Nov. 11th. 1918
 Dedicated to the Brave Boys of Wabunsee County who gave their lives in the Supreme Sacrifice for their Country during the World War.

Ed Palenka	Charles Woody	Trey W. Cleland
Chas D. Raymond	Ray H. Young	Oliver Dufney
James E. Bonick	Elmer Zerk	Charles Ferguson
Harold Seaver	Dwight E. Bullock	Mark V. Henner
Ray E. Vanney	John Carey	Henry Hileget
	Edward G. Carlson	Harry D. Mader

April 6th.  Nov. 11th. 1918
 Dedicated to the Brave Boys of Pottawatomie County who gave their lives in the Supreme Sacrifice for their Country during the World War.

Francis Miller	Fred Hartshorn	Clarence George
Theodore H. Olson	Ward McVeyar	Earl Greer
Guy F. Proctor	Jed H. Martin	James Fitzpatrick
Albert Senlar	Fred W. Martin	Clifford Billie
Ray Swain	Floyd W. Kemp	Orrville Eychison
Charley Trezise	Harold M. Johnson	William Fonton
Russell Taylor	George W. Holm	Ely Dorsey
Arben J. Weidling	Joe Hoy	Kester Dugan
Jama Wilker	Oyde E. Kenney	Ernest L. Bomker
Lan W. Stock	Arlynne Himes	Robert G. Himes
Alan W. Zwick	Joseph Himes	Walter Bladledge
Edwin J. McGlinchey	Gustav E. Gaudreau	Lewis Beard

KANSAS'S RIVER BRIDGE
 WAMEGO, KANSAS.

Pottawatomie County Commissioners	Wabunsee County Commissioners
F. E. Bowles	F. J. Arnd
F. J. O'Brien	I. C. Chase
M. J. Thompson	Frank Kemble
Ray Fulmer	H. L. Schwarting
Fred H. St. John	A. N. Winkler
County Clerk.	County Clerk.

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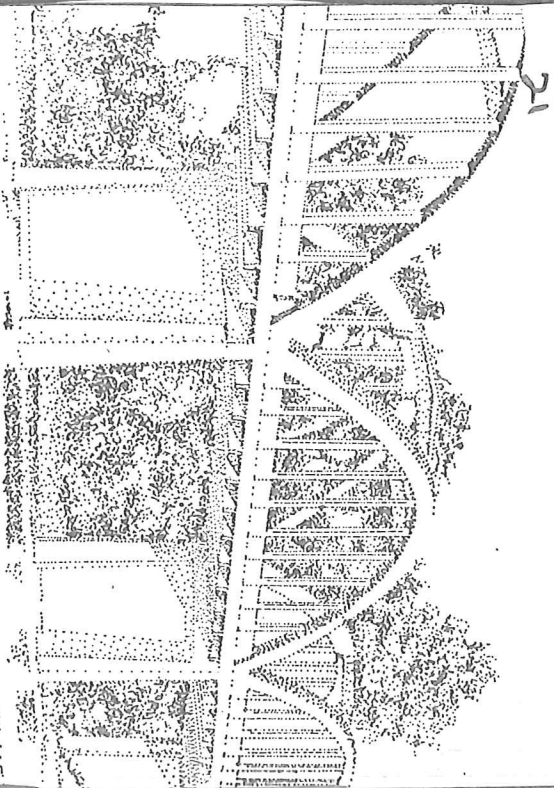


Percy and Mary Arne Morrison of Paxico vividly recall the

week and earned 35 to 40 cents per hour. Morrison said he turned the first shovelful of dirt in preparing the site for the

Bronze plaques at either end of the bridge named the bridge engineer and construction company, the Pottawatomie and Wabunsee County Commissioners at the time, and also the names of those who lost their lives in World War I, from whom the bridge was dedicated.

MHC
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Memorial service Saturday

Community to bid farewell to bridge

The memorial service for Wamego's ~~Wamego Rainbow~~ ~~rainbow~~ bridge will be held this Saturday, but the opening date of the new Kaw River Bridge—and subsequent closing of the old—is still very much dependent on the weather.

The memorial service for the old bridge will begin at 1:30 p.m. this Saturday, March 17. If a lane of traffic on the new bridge has been opened by that time, the service will be held on the old bridge. Otherwise, the service will be held on the new bridge. In the event of inclement weather, the entire service will be held in the Wamego Area Senior Citizens Center and Community Building.

The service will include an invocation by the Rev. Tony Mattia; comments by Wamego Mayor John Lichtenhan; and a history of the bridge by Don Eisenbeis. Charlene Peddicord will give a reading of the 1929 memorial bridge poem written by T. Leonard, and the 1990 memorial bridge poem, written by Reva Obrecht McAnaney, will be read by Dan McAnaney. **MRS. MCANANEY'S** poem, printed below, was one of 12 submitted in the bridge poetry contest conducted by the Wamego Historical Society. A 1947 graduate of Wamego High School, Mrs. McAnaney now resides at Pratt.

Following the reading of the poems, the Harold Johnson Post 172, Wamego American Legion, will conduct a memorial service, followed by a reading of Potawatomi and Wabanssee County veterans killed in action in World War I, to whom the bridge was dedicated in 1929. The reading will be conducted by representatives of the Wamego and Alma American Legion Posts.

The placing of wreaths in the water, a gun salute, and the playing of Taps will conclude the ceremony.

Following the ceremony, the Wamego Historical Society and anyone who attended the dedication ceremony in 1929, will gather in the senior citizens and community center for pictures, coffee and cake.

As for the opening of the new bridge and the ultimate demise of the seven-span Marsh Rainbow Arch, weather is still the determining factor.

WITH GOOD weather, contractors hoped to begin pouring an asphalt approach to the north end of the new bridge this week, allowing the opening of a single lane of traffic by this Friday, according to Gene Bellinder, engineer with the Kansas Department of Transportation. If there is any rain, however, the asphalt approach will likely be delayed, he said.

If the weather cooperates, demolition of

the two northernmost spans of the old bridge could begin as early as next Tuesday, March 20, Bellinder said. Demolition will begin with removal of the bridge deck, using a wrecking ball. After the deck is removed, a demolition company from Council Bluffs, Iowa will destroy the two spans with strategically placed charges, forcing the structure to fall eastward and away from the new bridge.

Some of the debris from the old bridge will be used for slope protection at the north end of the bridge, while the remainder will be used to fill a hole near Armentz Gardens south of Wamego, Bellinder said.

An exact time and date of the demolition will be published when the information becomes available.

MARSH RAINBOW BRIDGE

by Reva Obrecht McAnaney

*The Rainbow Marsh on the River Kaw
Has served for sixty years,
But now it's time to tear it down—
No sorrow and no tears.*

*The bridge is narrow, cracked, and weak.
It's old with years of wear
The seven spans are dull and grey
By weather year on year.*

*It spanned the banks from North to South,
It served its purpose well,
Think of the traffic back and forth,
Oh—the stories it could tell.*

*It's seen the floods come many times,
It's seen the tines of drought,
It's seen the dirt washed from the banks,
Then dumped down at its mouth.*

*The traffic's been of many kinds
Horses, bikes and cars,
Trucks of wheat and hogs and corn—
Countless as the stars.*

*It's seen the sorrow and the joy
Of people passing by,
A new born baby's first ride home—
And a soul about to die.*

*It's seen the hearse go passing by
It's seen the lover's park—
The fishermen along its arc,
And a rainbow from its arc.*

*Fare thee well—the Rainbow Marsh
And make way for the new,
Just hope that it will serve, as well—
Until two thousand fifty-two.*