

= Riverton ? Belvidere Bridge =

The Riverton ? Belvidere Bridge is a bridge crossing the Delaware River . It connects Belvidere , New Jersey with Riverton , Pennsylvania , United States . There is no toll for crossing on either side , after tolls were abolished by the Joint Commission for the Elimination of Toll Bridges in 1929 . The bridge is 653 feet (199 m) long , holding a load of 8 short tons (16 @, @ 000 lb) of traffic from County Route 620 Spur (Water Street) in Belvidere to former Pennsylvania Route 709 on the Riverton side . The bridge was first constructed in 1836 , replacing the local ferry across the river . The board of freeholders in Warren County supported the replacement of the ferry with a bridge for safety of passengers . In 1832 , the state created the Belvidere Delaware Bridge Company , which was funded with the job of building a bridge from Riverton to Belvidere . The new covered bridge was built by Solon Chapin , a contractor from Easton , Pennsylvania . The bridge survived two large storms in 1836 and 1841 , although sustained major damage both times . In 1903 , the floods that destroyed bridges along the Delaware River Valley , including taking out the entire covered structure at Riverton and Belvidere . They rebuilt the structure in 1904 , using steel instead of wood , and the new span has remained since , with rehabilitations at certain points .

= = History = =

= = = The first bridge (1836 ? 1903) = = =

Original reports indicate that a ferry , operated by a doctor who went by " Dr. Belvidere " , once ran along the alignment of the Riverton ? Belvidere Bridge . This ferry , crossing one of the most dangerous parts of the Delaware , was reported to have opened as early as 1802 . On May 17 , 1825 , the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the ferry permitted raising the rate to cross the river via ferry . However , by 1832 , the ferry crossing was becoming dangerously busy , and required a bridge be constructed in its place . That year , the Belvidere Delaware Bridge Company was established by both the states of New Jersey and Pennsylvania . However , in constructing the bridge , the company was only allowed \$ 20 @, @ 000 (1832 USD) to construct the bridge . The bridge company had the designs for the bridge run by Solon Chapin , a contractor from Easton , Pennsylvania . Chapin was also the construction contractor on the nearby Riegelsville Bridge as well .

Although things seemed to start off smoothly , when construction began on the bridge in 1834 , things went downhill . The bridge was constructed fast , and when completed in the spring of 1836 , it was a wooden covered bridge at a length of 654 feet (199 m) . Within days of opening the bridge , on April 9 , 1836 , a storm blew through the valley , destroying two of the bridges three piers and rendered the new bridge unusable . After restarting construction later , the bridge was redone using the same piers and in 1839 , was completed and opened once again . However , in January 1841 , another storm , dubbed the Bridges Freshet of January 1841 , blew through the valley , destroying most of the bridges in the area , and causing major damage to the structure from Riverton to Belvidere . However , this time , the bridge survived the storm . A local historian stated that because of the constant repairwork on the bridge itself , the bridge company had never paid one dividend of money to its stockholders . Although , after society on both sides of the bridge began to live life with it , money started flowing into the accounts of the stockholders .

In 1903 , the demise of wooden covered bridge would be seen , as a storm , dubbed the Pumpkin Flood of 1903 , struck in October of that year . The storm struck both communities , and the bridge in between , causing the loss of many lives , and on October 17 , the toll collector on the bridge closed off the gate and did not allow any person to cross . At 6 : 40 that evening , a crash was heard , and seconds later , the bridge was no more , after tumbling into the Delaware River below . Remnants of the bridge were swept downstream , and smashed on the side of the new Northampton Street Bridge , constructed just a few years before . After the storm cleared , the community of Belvidere put a ferry to Riverton back in almost immediately .

== Construction of the current bridge (1904) ==

After the 1903 destruction of the original wooden bridge at Belvidere , plans to construct another bridge started immediately . After the storm , the substructure of the crossing had survived the strong storm . The bridge corporation set a completion date , August 17 , 1904 , which was the day that the Farmer 's Picnic was held in Belvidere . However , the contractor of which they hired to reconstruct the bridge , the New Jersey Bridge Company of Manasquan , New Jersey , believed that the new bridge would need new abutments and piers to be completed by that time , instead of using the old wooden bridge 's piers . The three piers from the wooden bridge were used , and would require them to be heightened to be above any high flood waters . On June 3 , 1904 , the bridge construction began on a barge in the river , with promises to be complete by the set date of August 17 . On August 17 , the bridge was not complete , but usable , that when the Farmer 's Picnic (the predecessor to the Warren County Fair , occurred , people were allowed to cross a majority of the bridge . The picnic itself was a complete success , attracting over 15 @, @ 000 people , most of which walked the bridge .

Although the bridge was usable , work still had to be completed on the new bridge . The contractor promised the bridge corporation that the bridge would be finished by Labor Day of 1904 , or September 5 , 1904 . The bridge corporation and a local group called The Red Men scheduled festivities and the official turnover of the bridge back to the corporation . On September 5 , 1904 , the day of the transfer , the chief executive of the contracting company , W.H. Keepers arrived , he found the bridge to be unacceptable . Bolts were missing in places of the bridge and paint was not completed , both of which were in violation of the contract . The festivities for the bridge were canceled , and visitors were disappointed . The Red Men held events , but the turnout was light . A high point of the events that day was done by a man named Murphy Jones , who as a stunt , jumped a 65 @-@ foot (20 m) plunge into the Delaware River from the bridge . The festive stunt got Jones a total of \$ 15 (1904 USD) and the event became an annual one . Work finally came to a conclusion in 1904 , and the people were beginning to cross the new structure . However , since the turnover had never occurred , the bridge was free of charge .

== The current bridge (1904 ? present) ==

On September 5 , 1904 , the bridge finally got its transfer to the bridge corporation , and a new toll @-@ taker was hired for the new bridge . After this , life went back to normal in both communities . In October 1928 , after the charter and opening of the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission , the bridge company was asked to sell the bridge to the commission for \$ 60 @, @ 000 (1928 USD) , and on June 14 , 1929 , the commission abolished tolls along the bridge , making it free to cross at either end . With the bridge now under the control of the toll bridge commission , extensive repairs began on the 25 @-@ year @-@ old structure . This construction included new beams for the bridge , new flooring , and an extensive repair to one bridge pier . Although the construction had only taken four months to complete , it still caused havoc in commuting across the structure . In 1940 , the Pennsylvania approach to the bridge was designated as Pennsylvania Route 709 , a designation that would last six years , being decommissioned in 1946 . The structure would face its most recent strength test in 1955 , after the massive flooding from Hurricane Diane wreaked havoc in the area . The structure received minor damage in the flood , and the traffic was only halted for a day or two afterward . The design in the 1904 plan worked , as the structure was not at flood level .

Starting in October 2006 , the Toll Bridge Commission began an \$ 8 @. @ 8 @. @ million rehabilitation of the structure . The rehabilitation helped extend the life of the bridge for years rather than shutting the bridge down constantly for the next 15 years for major repairs . The Commission replaced the flooring , repairing or replacing of certain steel portions of the bridge , blast @-@ cleaning and repainted the structure .