

## = Benjamin G. Humphreys Bridge =

The Benjamin G. Humphreys Bridge was a two @-@ lane cantilevered truss bridge carrying U.S. Route 82 / U.S. Route 278 across the Mississippi River between Lake Village , Arkansas and Greenville , Mississippi . It was the first bridge to connect the two towns . The bridge was named for Benjamin G. Humphreys II , a former United States Congressman from Greenville .

Hailed as progressive when it opened in 1940 , it became functionally obsolete as vehicle and river traffic increased . Because of its narrow two lanes with no shoulders , the bridge often became blocked by accidents or by the crossing of large vehicles like farm equipment . Due to its location near a sharp bend in the Mississippi River , the bridge became a hazard to river traffic ; barges and towboats frequently collided with it . In 1994 , a study concluded that a new bridge was needed and the old one should be torn down .

A new bridge , the Greenville Bridge , was built as a replacement further downriver from the sharp bend . It opened in 2010 . In 2011 , work began to remove the Benjamin G. Humphreys Bridge .

## = = Description = =

The Benjamin G. Humphreys Bridge , very modern in its time , was a two lane , steel cantilevered truss bridge that carried US 82 / 278 over the Mississippi River , and connected the towns of Lake Village , Arkansas and Greenville , Mississippi by road for the first time . Prior to the bridge , local vehicles and local freight could only cross the river by ferry . It was named after Benjamin G. Humphreys , a US Congressman from Greenville who co @-@ authored a flood control bill in 1917 establishing a national flood control program on the Mississippi , and promoted the concept of flood control to contain the river .

The bridge opened on October 4 , 1940 to great fanfare . Its main span width was 840 feet ( 260 m ) , the highway bridge with the longest span on the Mississippi River . The width of the roadway was 24 feet ( 7 @. @ 3 m ) ? two lanes of 12 feet ( 3 @. @ 7 m ) each ? with no shoulders .

## = = History = =

In the late 1930s , talk started on the construction of a bridge to cross the Mississippi River at Greenville . In 1936 , a group called the Arkansas @-@ Mississippi @-@ Alabama US 82 Association was formed to raise funds for the bridge . In 1937 , Milton C. Smith ( the mayor at that time ) worked with John A. Fox , ( the secretary of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce ) , to get Congress to pass a law authorizing the bridge . The bill authorizing the bridge was signed into law in August 1937 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt . In 1938 , Smith applied for money from the Works Progress Administration to fund the estimated \$ 4 @. @ 5 million it would take to build the bridge . The Works Progress Administration agreed to the proposal in September 1938 , and construction started on the bridge a few months later .

The Benjamin G. Humphreys Bridge was built by the company now known as HNTB and opened to much fanfare in 1940 as the " pathway to progress " for the Mississippi Delta . It was a through @-@ truss design and had a span of 840 feet ( 256 meters ) . Until 1943 , this was the longest bridge for vehicles on the Mississippi River . Over time , the bridge supported increasing volumes of highway traffic and vehicles hitting the bridge . In the 1950s , an Air Force plane crashed into the bridge . Though the bridge remained structurally sound , it was becoming functionally obsolete . It had only two narrow highway lanes and no shoulders . An accident or the crossing of very large vehicles such as a large combine could force the bridge to close .

With river traffic increasing , damage from barge collisions increased . By 1972 , the Greenville Bridge was hit more times by barges than any other bridge on the Mississippi . The bridge was located close to a sharp bend in the Mississippi ; towboats and barges had difficulty making the sharp turn and regaining their course in time to avoid a collision with the bridge . Over the years many have not been able to make the turn quickly and have hit it . The bridge had become a danger to river traffic .

A 1994 engineering study by the Mississippi Department of Transportation explored alternatives to upgrading the crossing of US 82 and issued a report that explored a four @-@ lane crossing at Greenville . It concluded the best of several alternatives it identified was to build a new bridge 0 @.@ 5 miles ( 0 @.@ 80 km ) downriver from the old one , and to remove the old bridge . Additional studies evaluated the type of bridge to build , and by 1995 the cable @-@ stayed bridge was chosen as the best design to fit the river and soil conditions , as well as providing sufficient clearance for river navigation . Engineering plans were completed in 1999 for the Greenville Bridge , its replacement .

= = Destruction = =

The new Greenville Bridge opened to traffic on August 4 , 2010 . In 2011 the massive process of removing the old bridge by cutting into small sections to be recycled was begun , and was expected to be completed by September 2012 . At times the river has been closed to traffic to aid the demolition . The job is dangerous and two workers have died .