

FRANKFORD AVENUE BRIDGE

The Frankford Avenue Bridge, also known as the Pennypack Creek Bridge, the Pennypack Bridge, the Holmesburg Bridge, and the King's Highway Bridge, erected in 1697 in the Holmesburg section of Northeast Philadelphia, in the U.S. state of Pennsylvania, is the oldest surviving roadway bridge in the United States. The threespan, 73-foot-long (22 m) twin stone arch bridge carries Frankford Avenue (U.S. Route

13), just north of Solly Avenue, over Pennypack Creek in Pennypack Park. The bridge was designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers in 1970. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1988. Anyone who crossed over the bridge traveled to Philadelphia by horseback or coach from the northern colonies, including delegates to the First or



Second Continental Congresses, such as John Adams, from Massachusetts. In 1789, George Washington crossed the bridge on his way to his first presidential inauguration in New York. In 1803, the bridge was paved with macadam, and at its south end a toll booth was erected, remaining in operation until 1892 when the turnpike was purchased by the city of Philadelphia. The bridge was widened in 1893 to accommodate streetcars, which commenced service in 1895, and again in 1950 to better accommodate automobile traffic. It remains in use today. The bridge was reconstructed during 2018.

HISTORY

The 1831 London Bridge was the last project of engineer John Rennie and was completed by his son, John Rennie. By 1962, it was not sturdy enough to carry the increased load of traffic; the bridge was sold by the City of London in April 1968 to make way for its replacement.

The purchaser, Robert P. McCulloch, was an entrepreneur and real estate developer who founded Lake Havasu City. He installed the bridge to attract tourists and retirement home buyers to his properties there.

CONSTRUCTION

The bridge, built at the request of William Penn to connect his mansion with the new city of Philadelphia, was an important link on the King's Highway that linked Philadelphia with cities to the north (Trenton, New York, and Boston). On March 10, 1683, the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed a law requiring the building of bridges across all of the rivers and creeks along all of the King's Highway in Pennsylvania, from the Falls of the Delaware (at Trenton, N.J.) to the southernmost ports of Sussex County (now part of the state of Delaware).

The bridges, which were to be completed within 18 months, were to be ten feet wide and include railings along each side.

The areas on either side of the bridges were to be cleared to facilitate horse and cart traffic. Each bridge was to be built by male inhabitants of the surrounding area; those who failed to appear were to be fined 20 shillings.

Plumer arranged with a cargo shipping company that was going to sail a newly built ship, without any cargo, from the U.K. to the U.S. Plumer negotiated to pay for all the voyage's operating costs, in return for carrying the bridge stones as cargo to the U.S., which was far less than the going rate shipping costs..

In 1970, the bridge earned an award by the American Society of Civil Engineers, Philadelphia Section, as an outstanding engineering achievement and a historic civil



engineering landmark. A bronze plaque was placed on the western parapet in commemoration.