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Century bridge removed in Mercer County

by: **Gerry Ricciutti**

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SHARPSVILLE, Pa. (WKBN) – A big piece of the Shenango Valley and Pennsylvania history is finally coming down.

Crews used heavy cranes and cutting torches to dismantle the 124-year-old Kelly Road Bridge between Sharpsville and Hermitage.

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Local resident Rod Alexander spent years working with PennDOT and federal authorities to save at least part of it from the wrecking ball — the old steel trusses.

“It’s the number one architectural feature that’s disappearing in the United States,” Alexander said.

Workers will salvage 17-foot sections from each end of the bridge and will eventually attach the two together again in a small park.

“They are going to make a mini 30-foot bridge that’s always going to sit on the Sharpsville side of the river,” Alexander said.

In the late 1800s, the span was built at a factory in Beaver Falls and shipped to Mercer County, but it wasn’t the first bridge to cross the Shenango River.

“There was a covered bridge there from 1880 to 1897. In 1897, they replaced it with a steel bridge,” Alexander said.

For years, the bridge tool by itself, allowing only one-way traffic. In the late 60s, the second span was added so that cars could travel in both directions at the same time.

PennDOT closed the bridge in 2005. At that point, it had deteriorated so badly it was no longer safe. Alexander says repairing it would have cost millions.

“We are so happy with the solution. It was a practical solution for everybody,” he said.

A new concert bridge should be completed by spring 2023.



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https://www.sharonherald.com/news/kelly-road-bridge-comes-down/article_69e9d74a-5790-11ec-bbd7-4bfa1ae16740.html

ALERT FEATURED

Kelly Road Bridge comes down

By David L. Dye Herald Staff Writer
Dec 7, 2021



A construction crew works on deconstructing the Kelly Road bridge Tuesday in Sharpsville.

TANNER MONDOK | Herald



SHARPSVILLE — Kelly Road Bridge started coming down Tuesday, as workers took the old bridge apart piece by piece.

The rusting bridge, built in 1897 for horses and buggies, was cut into sections of about 30 to 40 feet by workers from Mekis Construction. The sections, some weighing 20 to 30 tons, were then hoisted away by a crane, located on a temporary causeway that reached halfway across the Shenango River, said Project Manager Nick Tsikouris.

The work Tuesday was part of a project by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to replace the aging bridges spanning the Shenango River that connect Sharpsville with a Hermitage neighborhood, the Shenango River Dam, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers offices and other facilities.

A second, narrow span was built beside the original bridge in 1967 and remains open to a single lane of traffic, allowing cars to occasionally pass slowly while crews worked nearby. About 475 cars use the bridge per day, according to PennDOT.

Traffic cones and stoplights were arranged to guide traffic through the construction zone. Due to the bridges' age and the signage already in place before construction, Tsikouris said motorists seemed used to slowing down, so speed had not been an issue.

Tsikouris said crews started dismantling the bridge at about 7 a.m. and would work so long as they had daylight.

Once the Kelly Road Bridge is completely removed, crews will begin building half of the new bridge in its place. That half will then be opened to traffic, while the second bridge will be demolished and replaced with the new bridge's other half.

Kelly Road Bridge's entrance portals and some of the bridge's stonework will be preserved in a nearby park after the bridge is dismantled.

The \$4.065 million project is being paid for with 80 percent federal funds, 15 percent state funds and five percent municipal funds.



A construction worker cuts a beam of the Kelly Road bridge Tuesday as the bridge is disassembled for removal.

TANNER MONDOK | Herald



A construction crew works on deconstructing the Kelly Road bridge Tuesday in Sharpsville. A newer bridge adjacent to the metal bridge that has been used for all traffic in recent years will remain until half of a new bridge is built.

TANNER MONDOK | Herald

Work is expected to be completed in the spring of 2023.

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https://www.sharonherald.com/news/work-set-to-begin-on-kelly-road-bridge-project/article_5ffd6792-3ce2-11ec-b9ef-b318be4087f7.html

ALERT FEATURED

Work set to begin on Kelly Road Bridge project

By David L. Dye Herald Staff Writer
Nov 3, 2021



The original half of the Kelly Road Bridge in Sharpsville was built in 1897 and has been closed since 2005. Some of its ornament will be preserved in a nearby park.

TANNER MONDOK | Herald



SHARPSVILLE — Work on the long-awaited Kelly Road Bridge replacement project, a matter of discussion for state and borough officials for several years, is set to begin today.

The project will replace two parallel spans, both owned by Mercer County, located over the Shenango River between East High Street in Sharpsville and the entrance to the Shenango River Lake Recreation Area in Hermitage, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

The original Kelly Road Bridge, a steel, through-truss structure, was built in 1897 for horses and buggies. It was closed to traffic in 2005 due to severe deterioration.

Since then, all traffic has been routed onto a newer, I-beam bridge that was built in 1967 and never officially named. That bridge is classified as being in poor condition. About 475 vehicles a day use the single-land bridge, PennDOT said.

The 1967 bridge, which has a weight limit of just under 30 tons, is the only way to access the Shenango River Lake Recreation Area, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers offices and about a dozen Hermitage residences on the east side of the bridge.

When work is completed, the two existing bridges will be replaced with one steel-girder bridge with a sidewalk and two 10-foot travel lanes. Other features will include new roadway approaches and updated guide rails.

PennDOT originally unveiled plans for replacing the Kelly Road Bridge in 2018. That proposal called for building a temporary bridge to maintain traffic before replacing the main bridge.

The current plan involves building half of the new bridge, then opening that half to traffic while workers demolish the old bridge and complete the new bridge's other half. At least one lane of traffic will be open to drivers throughout the project, and traffic will be controlled by temporary signals, the release states.

The contractor is Mekis Construction Corp, of Fenelton. The \$4,065,052 cost will be paid for with 80 percent federal funds, 15 percent state funds and five percent municipal funds, with work expected to be completed in the spring of 2023.

Plans call for a portion of the existing Kelly Road Bridge's portals and stonework to be preserved for use in a planned park, which will be located nearby. The bridge is adjacent to a park that holds the last intact, stone lock from the 19th-century Erie Extension Canal.

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David Dye



LIFE

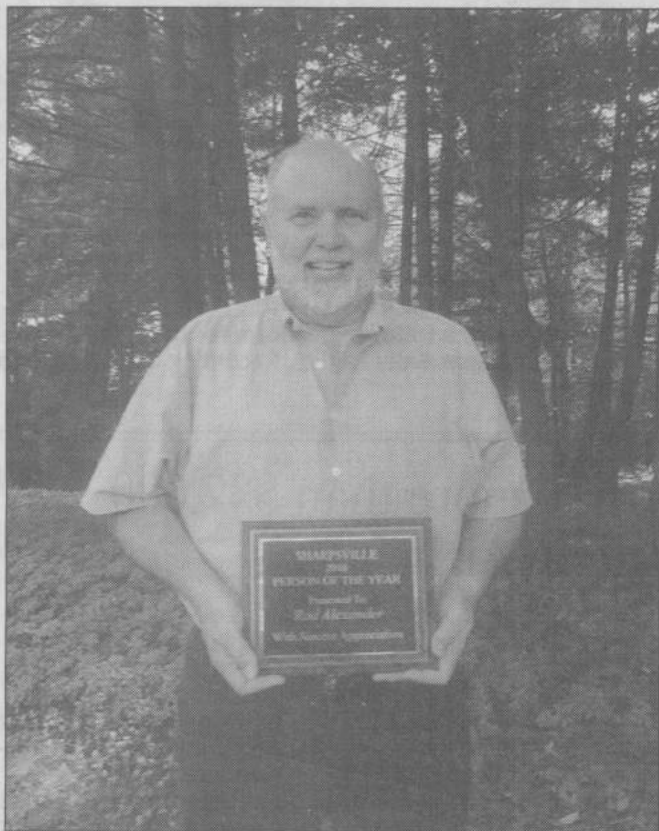
Wednesday, September 21, 2016

The Herald

Sharon, Pennsylvania

A-7

COMMUNITY SCRAPBOOK



Sharpsville honored citizens

Contributed

Pete and Judy Grandy and Rod Alexander were honored recently by the Sharpsville Historical Society as "Sharpsville Citizens of the Year." The award is presented annually to individuals for their service to the community and efforts to preserve and enrich the history of Sharpsville.



http://www.sharonherald.com/news/another-kelly-road-bridge-work-delay-irks-commissioner/article_0d6d99c5-fe37-5a46-88d3-ed0ed9305311.html

Another Kelly Road bridge work delay irks commissioner

By SANDY SCARMACK Herald Staff Writer Apr 22, 2016



JASON KapUSTA | Herald fileThe Kelly Road bridge in Sharpsville was closed for repairs. Bridge work continues to be delayed.



MERCER COUNTY – County Commissioner Chairman Matt McConnell was only half-kidding.

“If while we’re waiting for the state to take care of the historical clearances and whatnot, and Kelly Road bridge falls into the water, we might have to get that Eagle Scout we recognized to build us a temporary bridge so those folks over there aren’t totally stranded,” he said about the most recent delay in work.

County Bridge Superintendent Mark Miller told the board there was an additional cost of \$18,724 for coordination between agencies trying to determine the feasibility of preserving part of the truss bridge built in 1897. No money comes from county coffers, because the work is funded 80 percent by the federal government, 15 percent from state programs and 5 percent from monies from the oil and gas industry.

Miller said there is a resident who was interested in developing a park near the Shenango River in Sharpsville and part of that plan called for preserving a 17-foot section of the bridge for in the park. State Historical Commission officials determined that 17-feet was too small a span because it isn’t self-supporting and, instead, suggested preserving 34 feet of the bridge.

McConnell said there are two bridges over the river, linking the area around the Shenango Dam with the borough. “One is closed. The other is fading fast. What happens to those people for whom there is no detour, no other option, if a further weight restriction makes it unable to handle traffic?”

Miller has explained several times at meetings that the process to repair or replace a bridge is lengthy, involving multiple state agencies who look at environmental, biological and community impacts. Mercer County is responsible for 252 bridges, significantly higher than many other counties in the state.

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The Herald, Sharon, Pa.

November 25, 2012

Kelly Road bridge is coming down

By Joe Pinchot

Herald Staff Writer

SHARPSVILLE — Rod Alexander has given up trying to save the historic Kelly Road Bridge but is supporting a new plan to preserve parts of it.

Sharpsville council and state officials have blessed the idea of expanding a borough park to display remnants of the bridge.

“The bridge is kind of neat,” said Borough Manager Kenneth Robertson. If we can use a portion of it to preserve that part of engineering history, let’s do it.”

The county-owned bridge actually is two spans, built years apart. The bridges cross the Shenango River, with one end in Sharpsville and the other in Hermitage.

The span that has history and bridge buffs all atwitter was built in 1897, a Parker or Camelback truss bridge, that is rare. This bridge is closed to all traffic, even pedestrians.

The second bridge, built in 1967, is open to traffic but has a 30-ton weight limit - larger fire trucks are too heavy - and can handle only one direction of traffic at a time.

The county has studied various options, from rehabilitating both bridges to tearing them down and replacing them with a single, two-way bridge, while history advocates have pushed ideas including moving the Parker bridge to a new location and rehabilitating it where it is and building a new bridge beside it.

In the end, even Alexander, the apparent spokesman for the bridge and history community, calls trying to save the old bridge “cost prohibitive.”

Advocates came up with a new plan that borough officials embraced: saving two sections of the bridge and the stones that hold it up and displaying them in a riverside park.

The borough applied to the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for a \$11,000 grant, which the state announced Tuesday had been awarded.

Borough officials plan to buy 1½ acres from the Grandy family to extend Canal Recreation Park north on High Street. To match the grant, the borough plans to provide \$2,750 and the Grandy family \$8,350, Robertson said.

While the grant is only for the acquisition of land, borough officials agree with the concept of the park espoused by Alexander, and envision it containing a walking trail, a pavilion, a parking lot and a canoe launch, developed with the help of Shenango River Watchers, Robertson said.

Game Time, a playground equipment designer and manufacturer, has awarded the borough a grant to install a tot lot in the park, Robertson said.

The existing 1-acre park along the Shenango River already features an Erie Extension Canal lock and the Raisch Log Cabin.

Alexander's father, Dean, sold the land for the original park to the borough for \$1 in the mid-'80s, Robertson said.

Alexander said he also believes the dirt unearthed during the bridge demolition can be used in the new park, scrap metal can be salvaged by borough businesses, and decking sections can be reused in local bridges.

The ornamental work on the bridge could be reinstalled at the entrance to the new park, Alexander said.

The borough will work with Mourice Waltz Planners and Consultants, Sharpsville, to design the park.

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Kelly Road Westbound Bridge



The Kelly Road (Westbound) Bridge is a rare pin-connected camelback truss. It is one of the only camelback trusses in western Pennsylvania. According to the PAHBI, "The 1897, pin connected, single span, 187'-long, Parker thru truss bridge is supported on ashlar abutments with flared wingwalls. The polygonal upper chords are built up box sections, the verticals are toe-out channels with lacing, and the diagonals and lower chords are eye bars. The bridge is historically and technologically significant as an early and complete pin connected, Parker thru truss bridge. The technology is rare in Pennsylvania. Approximately 15 pin connected Parker truss highway bridges survive statewide [as of 1998, many have since been replaced], and only three date from before 1900. Adding to its significance is its association with the Penn Bridge Company, a prolific regional fabricator of metal truss bridges. " According to www.mercercotrussbridges.com, "The bridge now carries northbound traffic only, while a parallel, two-span, post-1956 stringer bridge carries southbound traffic. The bridge crosses the Shenango River at the east entrance to the Sharpsville Canal Lock Recreation Park, which has been created at the site of Lock No. 10 of the mid-19th century Erie Canal Extension. The abandoned and dewatered canal and stone canal lock chamber is located a short distance southwest of the bridge. The Penn Bridge Company of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, was organized in 1868 as T.B. White & Sons. At the time, the firm constructed wooden bridges. The plant was initially established in New Brighton; it was moved across the Beaver River to Beaver Falls in 1878. In 1887, the firm reorganized and incorporated as the Penn Bridge Company, producers of wrought iron, steel, and combination bridges; iron substructures, buildings, and roof trusses; and plate, box, and lattice girders and architectural ironwork. In the 1890s, the Penn Bridge Company's output averaged 5,000 long tons, ranking it as a small bridge fabricator. The Penn Bridge Company remained independent of the American Bridge Company, and continued to grow over the first two decades of the twentieth century, producing large and small structures and structural steel work. The company added new physical plant in 1902, reincorporated in 1905, and employed more than 500 workers in 1908. The Penn Bridge Company built bridges and structures in nearly all U.S. states and territories. It was particularly prominent in Pittsburgh, the City of Bridges. By 1908, the company

had built four bridges over the Ohio River, five over the Monongahela River, and two over the Allegheny River, as well as the original Ohio River Dam Nos. 2, 4, 5, and 6."

Recognition

Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places

Location

41.26763, -80.47013

Mercer County, Pennsylvania





External Links

- <http://www.bridgehunter.com/pa/mercer/437303038823040/>
- <http://www.historicbridges.org/pennsylvania/canal/index.htm>

Key Facts

NBI Structure Number:

437303038823040

Feature Carried:

TR 388, Kelly Road Westbound

Feature Crossed:

Shenango River

Year Built:

1897

Status:

Closed to traffic, to be replaced

Type:

Thru Truss

Subtype:

Camelback pin-connected

Length of Main Span / Total (ft):

187

Builder or Contractor:

Penn Bridge Company

Owner:

Mercer County

Sufficiency:

19.1%

Average Daily Traffic (ADT):

0

Year Photographed:

2003

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