

# Covered Bridges, Reminder of the Past

BY CLEO SYMONS  
Special Writer

Michigan's remaining covered bridges, now reduced to 6, are among the nation's most picturesque.

Certainly the best known is the restored "Ackley Bridge" at Henry Ford's Greenfield Village in Dearborn. It is visited annually by thousands of tourists from all over the world.

Originally a toll bridge, this much-traveled relic was built in 1832, with timbers brought from the Joseph Ackley estate in Maine. It formerly spanned Wheeling Creek, linking Washington and Greene Counties, Pa.

Representative of hundreds in the eastern states, it was moved by Ford in the 1930's and reassessed among other treasured reminders of the past.

ONCE AGAIN its wooden planks resound to the clatter of hoofs, bringing a nostalgic moment to reflective visitors as horse-drawn carriages transport them through its length and the Village.

The more practically minded may reflect that in the old days the toll for a load of livestock, ranging from four cents a head for sheep, eight for cattle and 12 for a person, would have netted less than the \$1.25 per person for today's carriage ride.

If romantically inclined, one might test the legend that a wish made while crossing the bridge will come true, providing he can hold his breath all the way.

Near Centreville, in St. Joseph County, among rich meadows dotted with dairy herds, you may catch the glint of the metal roof that covers a faded red "Langley Bridge," Michigan's longest.

This three-spanner, each measuring 94 feet in length, 16 feet high and 19 wide, is a famous landmark.

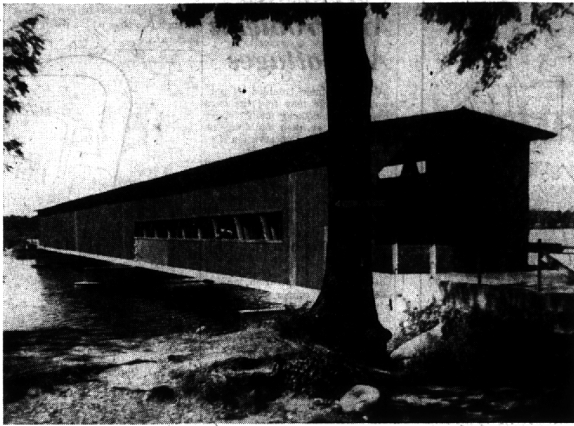
CONSTRUCTED in 1887 across the St. Joseph River, it has attracted artists and photographers for more than three quarters of a century.

It cracked under the weight of ox-drawn carts when the state was still a wilderness; resounded to the pounding hoofs of running mounts; and rumbled beneath the wheels of horse-drawn wagons, stage coaches and fancy carriages long before the days of motoring.

It served alike the needs of farmers, peddlers, merchants, doctors, lawyers—even highwaymen.

In 1910, when the Sturgis River Power Co. raised the river level by building a dam, the old bridge was threatened. But not until 1951 was it jacked up and its stone masonry and abutments strengthened to withstand modern traffic.

Although updated with paint and



LANGLEY BRIDGE near Centreville in three-spanner, each span 94 feet long, and St. Joseph County is longest of the six remaining covered bridges in Michigan. It is a

metal reinforcements, the original design was not altered.

IN THE OLD days before openings were made in the sides to accommodate fishermen, the bridge was a spooky place, shunned by timid school children. But even rumors of a murdered body flung into the bushes beside the abutment failed to daunt young couples.

Countless pairs of initials carved along its shadowy length record its popularity among the "sparkling set."

The "Morris Bridge," privately owned and built as a hobby, is an interesting bit of Americana tucked away at the back of the 800-acre Bob-O-Lou Farms in Berrien County near Miles.

Beyond a magnificent stand of spruce and cedar, a trail winds through lofty beeches and maples to a leafy thicket.

There, in cathedral-like quiet, the rustic timbers of the state's smallest specimen extend over an algaecovered logjam alongside steep St. Joseph River.

THE PRESENT structure, built by Ernest A. Morris in the 1930's, is reportedly a replica of the famous "Window Pogue" in Ionia County, and the third to occupy the site: Unique arches of laminated wood are used as a strengthening device for the sides of this single-track, 30-foot span. Thoughtfully located, with con-

venient picnic facilities, here the visitor may pause an hour to refresh his soul, admire the view and be grateful for one man's monument to our heritage from the past.

The Morris Bridge, so small and secluded, is the perfect tribute and companion piece for the Old Center Meeting House not far away. Here in the grassy churchyard the mortal remains of Sophy and Timothy Ives (born 1796) and some 40 Ives kinsmen await the judgment day beneath a topping, time-eroded slab.

BY SOME coincidence, Michigan's three remaining covered bridges are centralized within a radius of 20 miles of each other in Kent and Ionia counties in the Grand Rapids area.

One of the finest examples of covered bridges anywhere—with perhaps the stormiest history—is the "Bradfield Bridge" over the Thornapple River in the village of Ada.

Built in 1867 by Will Holmes & Bros., the 125-foot span has survived floods, ice and threats of demolition. In June, 1904, it was saved (wooden pegs and all) from being washed away by anchoring the ancient timbers to a mighty elm nearby and driving a bridgeful of wagons loaded with heavy stones onto it.

Planks from old barns of like vintage were often floated down-

tourist attraction—and short cut to the ball park!

The spine-chilling sounds of war whoops and the madly howling for fallen braces once echoed along the shores of Flat River at Fallsburg, site of an ancient Indian village.

TODAY THERE is no hint of either in tranquil Fallsburg Park near Lowell, where the state's oldest covered bridge is located. By no means the largest in this single track, 125-foot span.

Built in 1861 by Jared Brass, at the unbelievable cost of \$1,500, it is remarkably well preserved. Comparatively little is known of the bridge's history or the vital role it played in the pioneer economy of the region. The weathered structure sits astride the brooding waters, ancient, inscrutable; the murmurous haunt of wasps and twittering swallows.

Fallsburg Park is a popular spot for Sunday picnickers and anglers, but the clattering bridge is "old hat" for daily users.

"WHITE'S BRIDGE," or the "Window Pogue," is far removed from sterile expressways with little to offer beyond speed, mutilated stands of timber and the cheerless backslides of farms.

Flat River, meandering through century-old farmland, hoary trees and rolling hills, boasts this second span just over the Ionia County line, a few miles beyond Fallsburg. Considered most charming of all these roofs over Michigan's rivers, "White's Bridge" has had little history recorded except that it was erected after the Civil War, in the late 1860's.

In a delightfully picturesque setting of quiet meadows and wooded hills, the red-roofed "Pogue" pops unexpectedly into view as the road spirals gently down to a parking area at bridge-site.

An artist's-eye view from a vantage point dear to sightseers and fishermen will disclose the bridge's gray and enduring timbers through a dappled pattern of lights and shadows.

STROLL THROUGH its mud-daubered length. You will take a

## City Beat

(Continued from 1-B)

mayor one year, from April, 1959, until April, 1960.

It is interesting to note some of the people named with Denyes to the plan board in 1951:

William H. Burgum, now our mayor; Wylie E. Groves, veteran member of the board of education and for whom Groves High School has now been named; W. Coit Allee, recreation board member.

ERNEST W. Seaholm, the man for whom our other high school has been named, was chosen for the plan board but was forced to refuse because of his duties as school board president and the press of other matters.

Major projects initiated during Denyes' term as mayor were municipal parking lots, the Baldwin Library addition and the Springdale Park clubhouse.

When he left public office in 1961, Denyes explained that the commissioners operate on the principle that to be effective they must work toward developing an informed citizenry.

"Problems are created," he said, "when people aren't informed of the facts of a given issue. In Birmingham we are constantly striving to present the facts and educate the public."

DENYES, 45, resides at 1447 Buckingham. He is an architect with offices in Pontiac.

He was chosen to complete the appeals board term of Thomas Hewlett, also an architect, who resigned recently because of business pressures.

The term expires Oct. 10. The question now is, does Denyes feel he has been out of office long enough to develop new views and to accept an appointment of greater tenure if it is proffered?

Under the care of the Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges, it should stand to delight generations yet to come.

The right of way is what many ex-motorists thought they had. The institute for safer living warns that motorists should never insist on taking the right of way at intersections, either from pedestrians or motorists. In theory the right of way may be yours, but the other driver often feels the same way about the matter. Always play it safe and alert. Be prepared to yield.

Gaze through its windows. You will see, emerging from between steep, tree-clad banks, the river's gently undulating current as it slips silently over mossy stones beneath the venerable frame. Soon it shallows out, with pools and riffles where a brown trout lurks and ghostly minnows play.

Restored and provided with metal tracks to preserve the wide plank floorboards in 1923, the 125-foot span remains in daily use, a tenuous but enduring link with the past.

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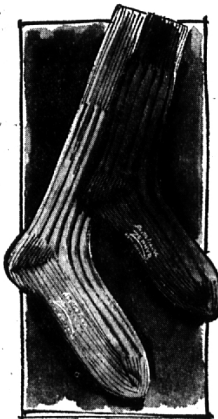
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(SAVE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE)

HURON STREET	51.40* ROUND TRIP TO DETROIT
PONTIAC	INBOUND TRAINS 6:35 7:05, 7:45 AM 4:23 PM
LONG LAKE ROAD	51.14* ROUND TRIP TO DETROIT
BLOOMFIELD HILLS	INBOUND TRAINS 6:43 7:13, 7:53 AM
CHARING CROSS	11.04* ROUND TRIP TO DETROIT
CHARING CROSS	INBOUND TRAINS 6:48 7:15, 7:55 AM
EAST MAPLE ROAD	89 CENTS* ROUND TRIP TO DETROIT
BIRMINGHAM	INBOUND TRAINS 5:51 7:20, 8:00 AM 4:37 PM
OAKWOOD BLVD.	78 CENTS* ROUND TRIP TO DETROIT
OAKWOOD BLVD.	INBOUND TRAINS 5:57 7:26, 8:05 AM
ROYAL OAK	58 CENTS* ROUND TRIP TO DETROIT
ROYAL OAK	INBOUND TRAINS 7:01 7:31, 8:09 AM 4:43 PM
PLEASANT RIDGE	64 CENTS* ROUND TRIP TO DETROIT
PLEASANT RIDGE	INBOUND TRAINS 7:04 7:34, 8:12 AM
FERNDALE	58 CENTS* ROUND TRIP TO DETROIT
FERNDALE	INBOUND TRAINS 7:08 7:38, 8:14 AM
HIGHLAND PARK	OUTBOUND TRAINS 5:12 5:42 PM
HILLWAUKEE JUNCTION	OUTBOUND TRAINS 5:05 5:36, 11:10 PM
HILLWAUKEE JUNCTION	DSR Shuttle Bus to GM Bldg. and New Center
DETROIT	DSR Shuttle Bus Service Via Woodward and Griswold Avenues to Grand Circus Park
DETROIT	HEATED STATION
DETROIT	OUTBOUND TRAINS 12:15, 4:55, 5:25, 11:00 PM
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