

Plaque Mounted Near The Jersey Bridge
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JERSEY BRIDGE - 1882

Noteworthy as a witness and survivor of the Flood and Fire of 1896 and listed on the **National Register of Historic Places**, the Jersey Bridge was renovated in 1998 and was placed on the current structure. Situated over Oil Creek, it is the keystone of the path to Edwin L. Drake's famous well. The current design has large I-beams underneath to carry the loads, and the old structure was placed on top to preserve and display it. The 133-foot long "Pratt" through-truss bridge has entered its second century of service as the northern gateway to "The Valley that Changed the World."

Jersey Bridge, near Drake Well, outside Titusville, in Venango County

Major rehabilitation was recently done to this 19th century Pratt through truss bridge. Well - maybe "major" and "rehabilitation" aren't exactly the right words to use in this case. Only a portion of the old bridge remains today. The trusses were saved, the flooring system was discarded.

The abutments are concrete with a finish that looks like cut stone if you don't look too closely.

The casual observer will see this bridge and think of it as a 19th century metal truss bridge. The more observant observer will notice that this is really a 20th century steel girder bridge with a 19th century metal truss mounted on top for decorative purposes.

I'm extremely pleased that a portion of the old bridge was saved when the new bridge was built. It's too bad that the whole bridge wasn't saved though. I'm sure that the decision to do partial preservation was a compromise.

One might think that I'm being a spoilsport for giving a less than

enthusiastic round of applause for the preservation work that was done for the Jersey Bridge. That's not my intent. Any preservation effort is, after all, better than no preservation effort.

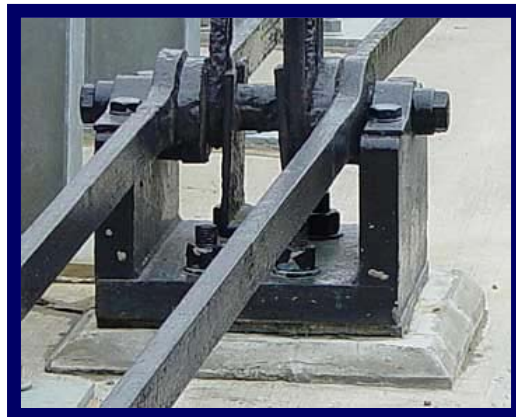


Detail of floor system connecting to truss on the old **Utica Bridge** while destruction was in progress.
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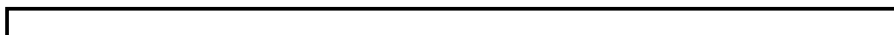
I just don't think that the preservation model applied to this bridge is one of the better ones available. With this preservation model, the entire flooring system was lost. The pin connections and hangers that fastened the flooring system to the trusses were lost. If the old bridge couldn't have been rehabilitated to carry traffic, a more beneficial preservation scheme would have been one where the entire old bridge could have been incorporated into the new bridge.

But from a distance the new Jersey Bridge looks a lot like an old bridge and a piece of the bridge's historic character has been saved. That's a *good* outcome - just not the *best* outcome.

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How the old truss is mounted to new bridge
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The Relationship Of Old and New Bridges
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