Philippi Covered Bridge
Restoration

Background

Lemuel Chenoweth completed the Philippi Bridge in 1852 as part of the Beverly to Fairmont Turnpike. About ten years later, the bridge was the site of the first skirmish of the Civil War between Federal and Confederate forces. As a result of its history, it is one of the most visited historic sites in West Virginia. In February 1989 the bridge was set on fire during a traffic accident.

Scope

The bridge was restored in three phases. First, a bridge builder removed the reinforced concrete deck that had been installed in the late 1930s to enable the bridge to carry increased vehicular traffic. The Institute for the History of Technology and Industrial Archaeology (IHTIA) was the general contractor for the second phase of the restoration of the historic fabric that included extra-long, heavy timbers milled from rough logs. The first log arrived on site in April 1990 and almost one year later the phase was complete. Finally, in the third phase, Summit Construction Company completed the reconstruction, installing a new reinforced concrete deck, replacing the stone wing walls, and installing a lighting and fire protection system.

Results

The bridge was restored as closely as possible to the conditions of June 3, 1861 as a commemoration of the first land skirmish of the Civil War. It continues to carry a high volume of traffic over U.S. Route 250 through central West Virginia. The bridge is a focal point of the community and remains a popular tourist attraction.

Principle Investigator: Emory L. Kemp
Clockwise from top: Philippi Covered Bridge before the 1989 fire. (Kemp Collection); Typical vertical replacement member being fabricated, 1991. (IHTIA Collection); Philippi Covered Bridge during restoration. (Kemp Collection)