

Historic bridge is returned to its birthplace

By JoAnne Castagna, PPMD

The Doty Road Bridge has carried vehicles over New Jersey's Ramapo River for over a century.

The bridge was located where New York District's Ramapo River at Oakland Flood Control Project is underway. Several years ago it was determined by project managers that the bridge would be an obstruction during floods and that it should be removed. The New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office stated that something needed to be done with the bridge in terms of mitigation because it is a cultural resource and deemed eligible for being listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1989.

Lynn Rakos, a District archaeologist, took the lead in finding a home for the bridge, particularly its trusses. The rest of the bridge was weather-worn and had deteriorated. "Our goal was to provide it to a non-profit, at no charge and to make sure it would still be accessible to the public," said Rakos.

Rakos marketed the trusses nationwide. She contacted various historical societies, distributed material about the availability to park managers and engineers, and placed an advertisement in a magazine. As a result, New York District received numerous calls from a wide range of individuals who expressed an interest in the bridge. "Engineering professors, interested in the bridge's history, said they wanted a piece of the truss. Another person offered to place it by a stream on his ranch in North Dakota!" exclaimed Rakos.



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The bridge was disassembled and trucked from Oakland Borough, N.J. to Phoenixville, Pa. where it was crafted over a century ago.

New York District recently found a home for the bridge's trusses in Phoenixville, Pa., where the bridge was originally assembled and where it will continue to serve the public in a local public park. The plans for the park include walking and biking trails along a creek and a bridge will be constructed over the creek that will connect the park to the trails. The Doty Road Bridge trusses will be placed alongside the bridge as a decorative element.

"The bridge was named after the Doty family, early settlers in Oakland Borough, Bergen County, N.J. The original bridge was 80 feet long and constructed in 1891 and spanned the Ramapo River in an area traditionally referred to as the ponds," said Rakos.

The Phoenixville Area Economic Development Corporation purchased the truss for a symbolic dollar after several years of locating a home in December 2002.



"We sent the bridge home in its dotage," said Rakos. She adds, "It is unique that bridges get moved. This doesn't happen too often. With the enthusiasm of the PAEDCO, I have confidence it will be a happy ending."