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NATURAL BRIDGES

We Can Boast of at Least Nine of Them In This Country.

OUR FIRST WOODEN BRIDGES.

They Were Built About 1800 in the Eastern and Central States, and Then Came the Covered Structures—Few Iron Bridges Prior to 1850.

Nature has provided this country with at least nine natural bridges, one in Virginia with a span of about ninety-three feet and about 200 feet high; one in Alabama with a span of about seventy feet and about 130 feet high; five in California, the largest of which has a span of about eighty feet and is about twenty feet high; one in Kentucky with a span of about seventy feet and about 130 feet high, and one in southern Florida of somewhat smaller dimensions.

Bridge building in the United States is of comparatively recent accomplishment. The early settlers were compelled to ford the streams or cross them on rafts or in dugouts. When Washington crossed the Delaware with his army there were no bridges over that river, and history records many instances of streams being forded with untold hardship and the consequent disasters and delays. Such incidents become serious matters when, for example, physicians are unable to reach the sick or injured because of impassable fords or are compelled to expose themselves to unnecessary danger. Traffic conditions in general are demoralized by unsafe bridges or culverts.

Pontoon bridges have served temporary need in many instances, but especially in warfare. Mention is made of their use very early in history, and one of the most notable occasions was when the Persian army under Xerxes crossed the Hellespont on two pontoon bridges consisting of one of 300 vessels and the other of 314. These were anchored head and stern alongside of each other, with their keels in the direction of the current.

The Romans had wickerwork vessels covered with hides destined to support the timber platform of a bridge. These formed a part of the train of their armies throughout the history of the empire until 476 A. D.

The construction of highway bridges in this country began to assume practical proportions about the year 1800, when many wooden bridges were built in the eastern and central states by Theodore Burr and Timothy Palmer.

The wooden lattice truss was introduced about 1820 by Ithiel Towne. Many of these bridges, consisting of planks pinned together in lattice work, were built from this time on, and they became well known as "Towne" or "covered" bridges. It is doubtful if much attention was given to economical design. An effort was made to protect the trusses from the weather by wooden roofs and sides in some instances, but very few were ever painted to preserve the timber. This early type of bridge did service for many years, and some are still in existence in Indiana and elsewhere.

The first covered bridge to be built in Tippecanoe county and one of the first in central Indiana was the Brown street bridge over the Wabash river at Lafayette, according to the records on file in the office of public roads, department of agriculture. This old structure, that had been condemned for a good many years, has long since disappeared. However, a number of covered wooden bridges that were built more than a half century ago are still being used within a radius of fifty miles of Indianapolis.

Few iron bridges were built in this country prior to 1850, and it was only in 1847 that the first publication in the United States, discussing the rational design of bridge members, was issued by Squire Whipple of Utica, N. Y. Wrought iron began to replace cast iron about 1863, but steel was not used until about ten years later. The advantage of steel over cast or wrought iron lies in its greater tensile strength.

"Foremost among structures representing some of the attractive as well as substantial features in good bridge designing of the present age may be mentioned the Washington bridge over the Harlem river in New York," said the superintendent of construction of bridge engineering, office of public roads, Washington.

AN ALMANAC OF YE OLDEN TIME

FORTUNATELY for our forefathers, the almanacs had some claims to literary merits in their day. Reading matter was scarce outside of the larger towns of the colonies. Magazines were practically unknown. Filled with prognostications as to the weather, with snatches of wisdom and humor, verse and essay, the annual almanac became a compendium of useful knowledge that was most eagerly awaited and was hailed as an important event in many a home. One might say that it was treated as a household god, for, hung upon a hook in some corner, it always was ready for instant reference. The wise saws and quaint sayings which ran through its pages were read over time and again by every member of the family.

There were numerous almanacs published during colonial days in this country. The popularity of Poor Richard's Almanac, edited by Benjamin Franklin, went hand in hand with that of its illustrious maker.

The first Ames Almanac, issued in 1728, was conventional in form and closely followed other almanacs of the period. Its maker was a physician. It contained a table of the movements of the planets and sundry prophecies concerning the weather. That the doctor was afraid of severe criticism of this first effort is indicated by the following stanza, which also illustrates the style of his poetry: Read, then, and learn, but don't all fault its object, Since they can only judge that can correct.

To whom my works appeal, and if I find The sons of art to favor them incline'd, With their propitious smiles it shall suffice.

To counterpoise the frowns of enemies. An examination of the files of the Ames Almanac shows that nearly every conceivable subject was discussed by the doctor in its nearly forty years of publication. Sometimes he indulged in flights of imagery, as in November, 1730:

Old winter's coming, void of all delight, With trembling steps, his head is bald and white. His hair with robes of icicles is hung, His chattering teeth confound his useless tongue.

He makes the rich to spend and poor to buy For want of that which would their wants supply.

In the opening lines of the almanac for 1738 Dr. Ames takes a fling at lawyers, priests and doctors and blames old, overburdened Adam for their existence. Thus:

Had Adam stood in innocence till now And his blest sons had deign'd to hold the plow No labor had fatigu'd nor time had spoil'd His youth, but spring had ever blooming smiled.

No lust for pelf nor heart distressing pain Had seized the miser nor the rural swain, Nor vice, as now, with virtue ne'er had wad, And heaven's omnipotence itself def'd, Nor lawyers, priests nor doctors ne'er had been If man had stood against th' assaults of

But, oh, he fell! And so accurs'd we be, The world is now oblig'd to use all three.

Probably the most interesting portions of these almanacs are the bits of wisdom and humor which went



ALWAYS READY FOR INSTANT REFERENCE.

with each calendar month. A few illustrations will suffice to show the sort of thing that amused our ancestors:

FEBRUARY, 1733. Pretty cold, freezing nights, followed with a short storm. Let travelers be upon their guard to defend their noses.

FEBRUARY, 1740. The farmer now's resolv'd he will not freeze While he has pipes, tobacco, fire, with good bread and cheese.

OCTOBER, 1733. Those that are husbands good Should now get in their cider, grain and wood. An honest friend is good company, but a good conscience is the best guest.

SEPTEMBER, 1753. Virtue is praised more than followed. To some men their country is their shame, and some are the shame of their country.

Love and Time. "Charm, New Year, of your good grace, These sad wrinkles from Love's face.

"Wan and weary now he seems, Bring him back the dreams, the dreams! "Arch above him April skies, Kiss th' light into his eyes.

"Lead him back to moments fled—Lure Love's roses from the dead!"

"Nay," the New Year saith; "his day Hath o'erpass't the daisied way.

"Though he wearth now the thorn, North the rose leaves it was born.

"Now the stem, of rose bereft, Love must keep the thorn that's left.

"Merry in the wintry morn, Love is dead, and Love is born!" —Baltimore Herald.

TOYS OF A STORM

An Experience on a Mountain Top Alive With Electricity.

MEN GLOWED WITH SPARKS.

The Discharge From the Lightning Laden Cloud Enveloped the Party and Turned It Into a Sort of Human Pyrotechnic Display.

We had spent a week in pathless and dense woods, working toward a high mountain in northwestern Montana. At last we left the pack horses in care of the guide, and three of us set out on foot for the peak. We carried a plate camera, provisions, gun, ice pick, aneroid barometer for determining elevation and other necessary articles. For several hours we climbed over ridges and up ravines.

The final ascent was a slope of rotten shale. For four and a half hours we climbed the loose rock, with not a solid bit of footing. Halfway up the slope we observed that a storm cloud had gathered southwest of us, not far above a ridge which we had crossed early in the morning. Suddenly a bolt of lightning flashed from the cloud to the earth. A little later a wreath of smoke ascended from the ridge, and we knew a fire had started from the lightning.

About half past 1 we reached the summit, a narrow top but a few feet in width, on which was a pile of rocks shoulder high, a government triangulation monument. Before was a precipice, at the foot of which was an unnamed and unexplored glacier. Behind was the rotten shale up which we had scrambled. To the right a narrow ridge, with boulders as large as a small house, connected our summit with the one beyond.

Against the eastern face of this summit great masses of snow and ice formed the head of the glacier. To the left was a steep, open slope.

The glacier was furrowed by hundreds of chasms. The yellow rocks of the neighboring summits were flanked by great masses of ice on the one side and by tremendous precipices on the other. Far away the mountains blended with the blue sky. On the crags were a few mountain goats.

"What is that noise?" shouted one of the boys suddenly.

"What noise? I do not hear it," I replied.

"Over at the monument."

"I will go and see."

The monument was not a dozen steps away. As I approached it I smelled the pungent odor of ozone, and instantly I knew. We had forgotten the storm cloud gathering near us to the south. The summit on which we stood presented to the electric cloud above a sharper point in comparison with the earth than can be made on any electric machine. The exchange of electricity between the charged cloud and the earth began at the rock monument, which was a little higher than the place where we stood. I may have heard the noise; I do not remember. I smelled the ozone and turned toward my companions with the cry: "We are in an electric storm! We must run for our lives!"

In a few seconds the electric discharge had increased with wonderful rapidity. My rifle was shooting sparks from the end of the barrel, which were visible in broad daylight. I did not drop the gun; I threw it. My scalp felt as if each hair was a bristle on end pushing against my hat. I could feel the discharge from fingers, cheeks, nose and chin, and I was wearing heavy rubber soled shoes, which should have assisted in making me a nonconductor.

One of my companions threw away his ice pick, as I had thrown my gun. The other, seeing my white face—as he afterward told me—was completely unnerved and knew not what he was doing or what to do. Before was the cliff. Behind was the rock shale, with no protection. To the right was the impassable ridge, connecting the summits and blocked with masses of rock. There was only one way—to the left.

"Shall we go this way," said one, extending his hand in that direction. The extended hand and fingers were aglow with sparks shooting outward from the body, and instantly the arm was jerked back to the body with a startled exclamation. Stronger and stronger grew the charge. It seemed to fill our bodies and crackled from every projecting rock.

Half dazed, I hooked my arm in the carrying case of my camera and with it dashed down the ridge, followed closely by my two companions. We crawled under a big rock and, with our feet against the ice and our backs against the solid mountain, felt safe. Thus we remained for perhaps an hour. Then we began to feel hungry and in this trying position ate our luncheon.

We returned to the summit. Fortunately the cloud had passed to the south of us, and we had experienced only the edge of the manifestation of electricity. Had the cloud been directly overhead this story would perhaps never have been written.—Morton J. Elrod in Youth's Companion.

Reasoning It Out. "I have calculated that I can't lose much if I put my money in electrical illumination."

"Why not?" "Because there couldn't possibly be a heavy loss on a light investment."—Baltimore American.

When a friend asks, there is no tomorrow.—George Herbert.

A THRILLING RIDE.

Flight of a Fast Mail Train to Make Up Lost Time.

When the first really fast mail between Omaha and San Francisco reached Evanston, Wyo., at the foot of the Wasatch mountains, it was fifty minutes late. There it was met by a powerful engine in charge of a reckless engineer, Bill Downing by name. Captain James E. White, ex-superintendent of the railway mail service, tells in his reminiscences how Bill made up the fifty minutes.

"The distance to Ogden is seventy-six miles. 'I shall not be happy,' said Downing to one of the newspaper reporters who were to make the run on this first fast mail, 'until I have done that seventy-six miles in seventy-two minutes.'"

When he threw the lever and opened the throttle the train made a start that settled everybody's dinner. And once the train was fairly under way it seemed as if the curves on the line were all straightened out by the tremendous speed.

Going down Weber canyon the pace was awful. "Three miles in two minutes" gasped Captain White.

But Downing did not reduce the speed. Down the winding line of Taploca gulch the rear coach was swinging from side to side. You could hear the wheels grind on the curves and feel the continuous striking as they bore first against one rail and then against the other.

Faster and faster the train swept along, roaring over bridges, tearing through tunnels, rocking round pronouncements. Some of the newspaper men fainted through nervous exhaustion, and many of the other passengers had already succumbed.

Suddenly, in rounding the reverse loop in Antelope gap, the rear coach careened till it hung by one wheel on the rail. As soon as the moment of suspense was over General Manager Dickinson sprang to his feet and called:

"Pull the bell rope, quick, Brown, and run forward and tell Downing to stop this if he wants us to reach Ogden alive!"

Then, not to risk another such second, the general manager sprang to the rear platform and twisted up the brake with all his might.

The seventy-six miles of intricately curved track were covered in sixty-five minutes. It was a hair raising record, and several passengers who went through the experience did not recover from the shock for a long time.

BEST OF SCREWS.

They Look Like Specks of Dust and Are Used in Watches.

The smallest screws in the world are made in a watch factory. They are cut from a steel wire by a machine, but as the chips fall from the knife it seems as though the operator were simply cutting up the wire for his own amusement. No screws can be seen, and yet a screw is made at every third operation.

The fourth jewel screw is next to invisible, and to the naked eye it looks like a grain of dust. With a magnifying glass, however, it is seen to be a screw with 200 threads to the inch, and with a very fine glass the threads may be seen quite clearly.

These little screws are four one-thousandths of an inch in diameter. It is estimated that an ordinary thimble would hold 100,000 of them. About a million are made in a month, but no attempt is ever made to count them.

In determining the number 100 of them are placed on a very delicate balance, and the number of the whole amount is calculated from the weight. All the small parts of the watch are counted in this way, probably 50 out of the 120.

After being cut the screws are hardened and put in frames, about 100 to the frame, heads up. This is done very rapidly, but entirely by the sense of touch instead of by sight, so that a blind man could do it as well as the owner of the sharpest eye. The heads are then polished in an automatic machine, 10,000 at a time. The plate on which they are polished is covered with oil and a grinding compound, and on this the machine moves them very rapidly by a reversing motion until the polish is perfect.—Exchange.

Japanese Have Fresh Air.

Different from other nations, we Japanese are accustomed to keep the rooms freely opened in order to facilitate the cool breeze to invade. Thus the blind is generally hanged down from the porch capable to protect those who occasionally peep in. The blind or shade is made of split bamboo or reeds. It is so fixed that one who is in the behind the blind only could look at one who is in front place, or, in other words, those who sit in darker side could only recognize one in lighter side, but never vice versa.—Tokyo Life, the International Review.

Which Is Which?

Above a certain cafe there are two rooms, the one being occupied by a woman's "sewing circle," the other being the dining room of the cafe. Outside the cafe hangs the sign, "Girl Room Upstairs."

The German proprietor of the cafe is still wondering why the president of the sewing circle denounces the sign as libelous and demands its removal.—Judge's Library.

The Only Way.

It's tough upon a bard to find there's no demand for verse. His life becomes a sordid grind. He goes from bad to worse. "The thing for him to do, I wish, when the market goes in to discontinue his verse like this and work it up as prose."—Washington Herald.

PERFECT GAUGES.

The Process of Their Making Is a Profound Secret.

LOCKED IN ONE MAN'S BRAIN

So Accurate Are These Wonderful Standards That Twenty or More of Them Rubbed Together Adhere as Though Made of One Piece of Metal.

In a closely guarded room of a small shop in an obscure Swedish village a man tells in secret, says a writer in Cassier's Magazine, just how he accomplishes what he does no one knows, not even his sons who work with him. Johannsson has made the world best a path to his door, for he has discovered the secret of making a more accurate limit gauge than any previously in use. A single set of his gauges gives a practically unlimited series of sizes, rising by steps of a ten-thousandth of an inch—much less than the traditional hair's breadth—to twenty-six inches. It is said that 50,000 combinations of these gauges are possible.

No dimension within their limits has been cited that they failed to reproduce. Extreme accuracy in building machinery, particularly that of motors, is of the greatest importance, and the first step toward that end is the perfection of a standard. Making such standards is a tedious and expensive process. But Johannsson has not found it so, or else he trains his secret lightly from the peculiar point of view, for he is able to pay Uncle Sam a duty of 45 cent and still offer his gauges in the American market for a few hundred dollars, although they could not be made here for many times their price.

When two of these Swedish gauges are "wiped" together so as to exclude the air from between them they adhere with a pressure which experiment has shown to exceed thirty pounds to the square inch. Twenty or more pieces may be thus wiped together and supported horizontally by merely holding the last one, which means that the accuracy of their various surfaces is almost absolute.

Finishing one surface or two surfaces to a very close limit by lapping—rubbing together with a fine abrasive between—is a comparatively simple matter. But achieving such perfect parallelism as is shown by these remarkable gauges is quite another thing, a secret quite well worth knowing.

The peculiarity about this mysteriously powerful adhesion of the sea arate pieces is that the feel of the built up gauge thus formed is exactly the same as that of a single piece of metal, and this holds for any combination, the number of pieces forming it not affecting the sensation in the slightest. Any skilled mechanic will understand instinctively the meaning of this and his testimony to the accuracy of the gauges.

For instance, a one inch gauge may be built up of pieces representing 0.54-0.2+0.05+1.150+0.1 inch, and the resulting piece will be one inch absolute, or any one of several other combinations may be made to represent an inch, and blindfolded the most expert mechanic could not detect any difference between the manner in which this composite inch gauge and the one piece inch gauge fitted in a snap gauge of the same size. It would be an easy matter to confuse the two in handling.

Mr. Johannsson, the backwoods inventor who discovered what thousands of the most expert mechanics in machine building centers have vainly sought for half a century, limits his output to a few hundred sets of gauges a year whether purely from inclination or because of mechanical difficulties in production is as much a secret as the process itself and one that he will doubtless take with him when he dies.

Burden Bearers in Mexico.

Strong backed laboring men take the place of mowing vans in Mexico. There are huge flat trucks with four handles into which things are piled and lugged along the city streets. On moving day the household furniture may be seen paraded in full gaze of the curious from street to street to the new destination. These men are called cargadores and combine the usefulness of messenger boy and the porter of the old world. The great burly borne thus by the strength of a single carrier are amazing. A piano will be carried along by two men on one of the strong trucks.

A Generous Empress.

It is said that one morning at breakfast a general related to the emperor the misfortunes of a brother officer, who, "because he had not 15,000 francs, must be dishonored." While the emperor questioned further particulars Eugene flew to her room and, returning with a package of banknotes, said, "Take them, general, and never tell me his name." And his name the generous empress never knew.

Thirteen at Dinner.

Thirteen at dinner is an old Norse myth. It was deemed unlucky because Loki, god of mischief, once intruded, making thirteen guests, and Baldr, the brilliant god, was slain at the institution of Loki, who prevailed upon Hodur, a strong but blind god, to throw Mistel, the mistletoe, at Baldr, perforating the latter and letting out his divine soul.

Men of culture are the true apostles of equality.—Matthew Arnold.