



Bergen County, Where America Begins

1889 Swing Bridge at New Bridge Researched and written by Kevin Wright

Attracted to their greater durability and ease of maintenance, the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders began about 1885 to install iron swing bridges as part of a program to facilitate inland navigation, which the slow operation and low clearances of wooden draw-bridges had long impeded. Accordingly, on August 6, 1888, they awarded a contract to replace the New Bridge to the King Iron Bridge & Manufacturing Company of Cleveland, Ohio, for \$3,990; the contract for substructural masonry was awarded to Joseph Westervelt Stagg of Highwood for \$3,994. Contractor Stagg removed the old wooden draw-bridge in the last week of August and completed construction of the sandstone abutments and center pier by November. Because of delays by the bridge company, he also installed a temporary foot-bridge to accommodate pedestrians. The King Iron Bridge Company installed the extant truss swing bridge in January and the completed work was opened to the public on **February 2, 1889**. It occupies the same location as the wooden bridge of Revolutionary fame.

New Bridge is a Pratt-type, low or “pony” truss, rim-bearing highway swing bridge, fabricated by the King Iron Bridge & Manufacturing Company of Cleveland, Ohio, using truss members manufactured by the Phoenix Iron Company of Philadelphia. A pedestrian walkway was added to the north side of the span in 1911. The Bridgeweld Company of Washington, D. C. reconditioned the bridge in 1936. It was superseded by a fixed concrete-and-steel roadway bridge, located 300 feet to the north, in 1956. The old bridge was listed on the New Jersey and National Register in 1989 as the oldest extant highway swing-bridge in New Jersey. It is one of the oldest bridges in Bergen County. Open for pedestrian traffic.



Photo of bridge shortly after it opened in February, 1889. BCHS collections.



Earliest known illustration of a draw bridge over the Hackensack River. c. 1836, drawn by a 12 year old boy. BCHS collections.

The swing bridge replaced this type of bridge.

The Historic Bridges of Bergen County by Richard Grubb and Associates, 2008, has the **wrong date (1895, see below)** for the swing bridge at New Bridge. We wonder how this could be, the research was completed by the BCHS and put the National Register in 1989. We have not reviewed other info in this tax payer funded document. Note: we received no response from Grubb when asked that the date in document be corrected. It is available as a reference document on the web.

The document fails to make any mention of the significant location of the swing bridge in the American Revolution.

<http://www.richardgrubb.com/Masonry%20and%20Metal%20Brochure.pdf>

**WRONG DATE FOR THIS BRIDGE, PUBLISHED IN
"The Historic Bridges of Bergen County" by Richard Grubb & Associates, 2008**



**New Bridge
over the Hackensack River
New Bridge Landing
River Edge Borough
Built 1895**

This bridge is known as "New Bridge," a name given to this crossing of the Hackensack River in the eighteenth century to distinguish it from "Old Bridge," located upstream. Built in 1895, the existing bridge is the most recent of several movable spans constructed at this location. The bridge is an iron Pratt truss with a rim-bearing swing mechanism. The bridge rests on a turntable atop a pier at the center of the river.

(12)

The turntable's swing mechanism, although no longer functional, is intact and is comprised of gears and spaced wheels. The King Bridge Company of Cleveland built this structure.

Although it no longer carries vehicular traffic over the Hackensack River, New Bridge is significant as the oldest highway swing bridge still standing in New Jersey. The structure is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.