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CHESTER McNALL

Watching Waterford

Bloomsburg bridge worth preserving

The Waterford and Townsend Historical Society have had an abiding interest in preserving and restoring the stone bridge buried under old highway 24 at Bloomsburg.

The bridge, built more than 100 years ago, has withstood the ravages of time remarkably well and, in fact, is all that remains of the plank road which once linked Simcoe to Waterford. It had been built to follow an Indian trail that had been used by countless generations of natives.

The bridge itself is unassuming. It's small as bridges go and is nearly buried from sight by the shoulder of the road. Because of its sturdiness and the craftsmanship which went into its construction, it remains an historical link with our past and a tribute to the Scottish stonemasons who built it.

Its form is an arch, perfectly formed and held in place by the vital keystone. No mortar or cement was used in its construction and there is no indication that any such material was ever used to repair or maintain it.

One story has it that, when the present road was being built, because of the bridge's sturdy construction, it was decided that it would be simpler to build over it than to try to have it removed.

The plank road of which the bridge was a part, was conceived by Alfred Bowlby and James Hooker in 1853. The two men owned a grist mill and saw mill in Waterford and in all likelihood, saw the road as a means of providing easier access to the village and thereby increasing their business. A plank road was their choice because such a road

was considered better than gravel and because the planking was relatively inexpensive and easy to obtain.

When completed, the road began about a mile north of Waterford and on to Simcoe. The road, along with six necessary bridges, cost \$16,900.

A toll booth was established at Bloomsburg with another at Simcoe and the rate was two cents per mile with special rates for those driving livestock.

The stone bridge at Bloomsburg is a part of our heritage. For that reason, the Waterford-Townsend Historical Society would like to preserve it and do some necessary restoration.

The bridge has been designated as having historical and architectural significance by

the City of Nanticoke which means that grants are available but that all such grants must be matched by local contributions.

The Society, along with the restoration work, would like to build a cairn near by with a plaque which would note the bridge's designation as an historical site. A further plan is to eventually establish a small park so that people may stop to get a closer and more leisurely view of this unique arch.

The local goal for the project is \$1,000. Fund raising will begin with a garage sale on Sept. 21 and 22 and cash donations will be accepted at the Toronto Dominion Bank in Waterford.

Our heritage is worth preserving. The stone bridge at Bloomsburg is an important part of it.