

Santa Cruz Sentinel

II Family Interest Section

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FELTON BRIDGE, the last of the redwood spans and the tallest covered bridge in the nation, was saved by Felton citizens who protested the replacement of their old bridge with a concrete one. The state highway depart-

ment moved it a half mile to the north. This happened in 1938 and is said to be the first western example of the custom of preserving a by-passed bridge. Built in 1892, it is

Spanning The Years

Sometimes it takes a stranger to point up the importance of something right in your own back yard.

Kramer A. Adams has done just this in his illustrated "Covered Bridges of the West," published by Howell-North of Berkeley.

Santa Cruz area residents long have been aware of their covered bridges and through the farsightedness of groups and individuals are keeping them in a state of repair. But what is perhaps news—as Adams points out in his book—is that of all the thousands of covered bridges built in California during the pioneer days, only 11 remain with three of them in our own Santa Cruz county. Oregon and Washington are much more fortunate—28 are listed for one Oregon county alone—but Adams notes that there are fewer than 120 covered bridges remaining between British Columbia and central California. (There are none south of Santa Cruz.)

In one chapter, "Roofs Over the River," the author discusses why the bridges are covered, listing every known reason from "to keep horses from shying at the sight of boats in the river below" to the tongue-in-cheek theory that the spans were built to

resemble barns so farm animals would feel more at home and not stampede as they were driven across them. The most logical, of course, is that the roofs protect the wooden trusses from the weather and increase the life of the spans at least three times.

He even traces their history, noting that covered bridges of a sort were known in China as long as 2000 years ago and that the first covered span to be identified was built over the Euphrates River in Babylon around 780 B.C.

Adams has used a colored photograph of the Paradise Park bridge on the book's dust jacket with the same picture reproduced inside along with photographs of the Felton and DeLaveaga park bridges.

Despite the fast pace of today's freeways, the covered bridge has not been discarded completely, he reports. Just two years ago the nation's newest highway covered bridge was built in a timbered valley at Milo, Ore. When the original covered bridge had to come down the people of the community compromised and housed the new span of naked steel in wood.

—Mildred Ann Smith

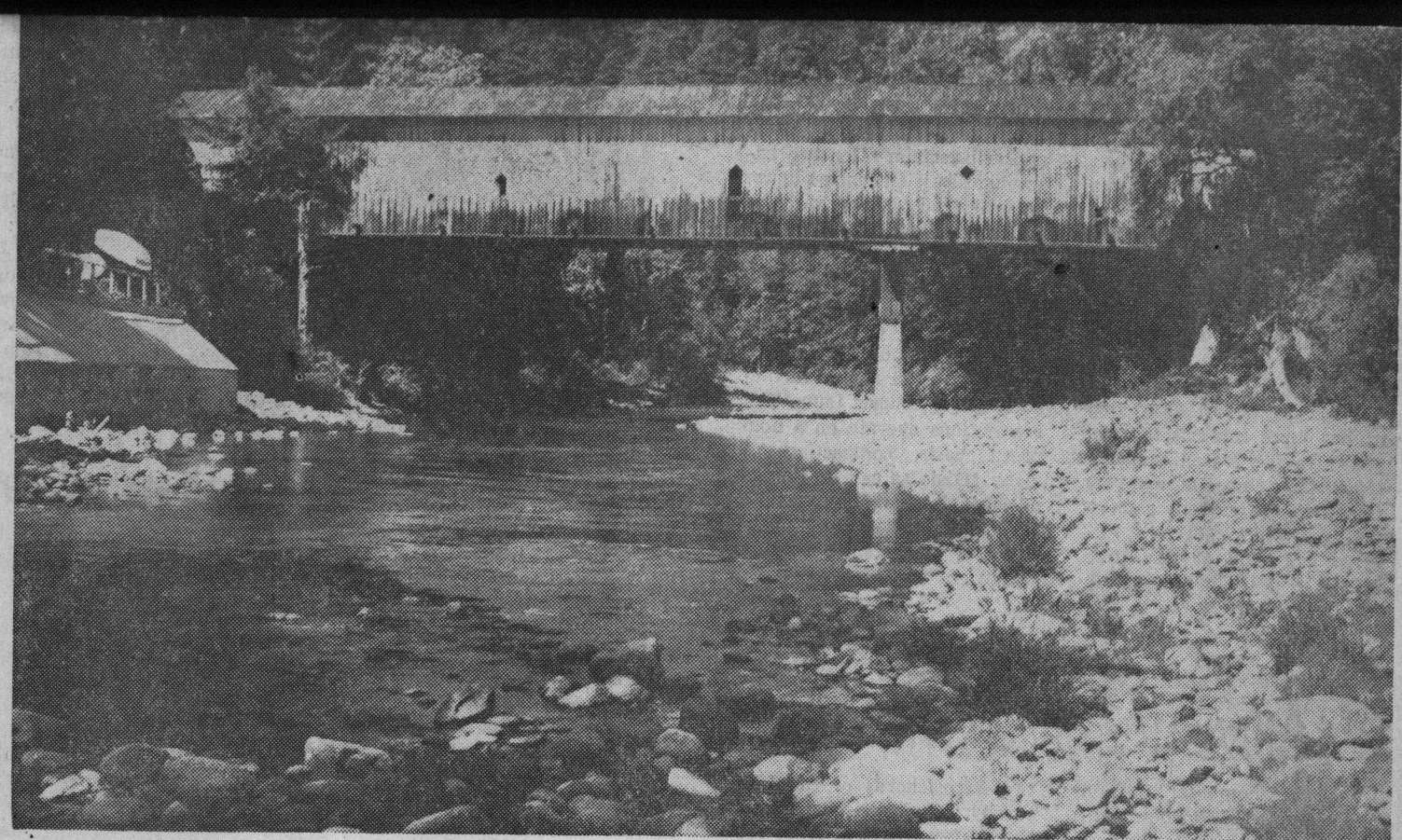


ment obliged by leaving the old bridge and building its which raises funds with an annual pancake breakfast.

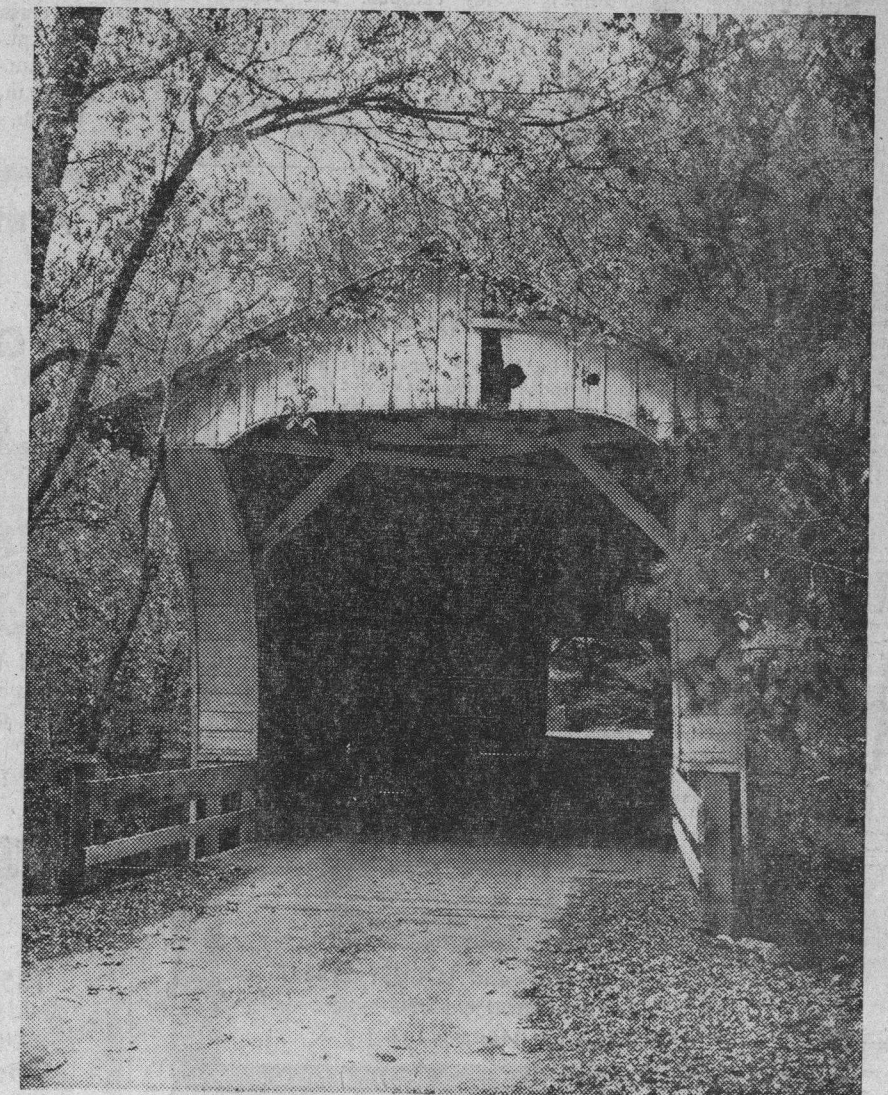
*Here was a refuge from the sudden showers
That swept like moving music, field and wood,
And here cool, tunneling dark when sultry hours
Danced with white feet beyond the bridge's hood . . .
Yet there are soulless men whose hand and brain
Tear down what time will never give again.*

DeLAVEAGA PARK bridge, as it has come to be known locally, was built in 1891 and for 48 years spanned Branciforte creek on Glen Canyon road. Credit for saving the 83-foot bridge goes to former county supervisor

Rose Rostron, who with present supervisor Robert Burton, picked the site in DeLaveaga park in 1939. The bridge is in good repair, according to Parks Director Carl Bengston and is open to foot traffic.



PARADISE PARK bridge over the San Lorenzo river, above and at right, is unique in many ways. It is the only one in the county still in use, its siding contains the only remaining examples of the once-popular diamond windows, and according to Kramer Adams, it is the only western span to be equipped with fire hoses at both ends and one of the three with electric lights. It once bore a narrow-gauge railroad and traffic from the California Powder Works as well as the first pulp mill in the West, but today it serves the residents of the Paradise Park Masonic association. Built in 1872, it was so well constructed that only the roof and floor decking have had to be replaced.



Photos by Vester Dick