

Covered Bridges 10-11-87 Restored bridge receives a raucous welcome

By RICHARD EMANUEL

Sentinel Staff Writer

FELTON — The newly restored Felton covered bridge was the scene of boisterous celebration Saturday as a pair of plaques were dedicated honoring the bridge's recent addition to state and national historic registers.

About 100 members of E Clampus Vitus fraternal organization were joined by about 40 others including County Supervisor Joe Cucchiara in marking the occasion.

The organization's exuberant members were decked out in traditional red-and-black outfits, including a brass band playing bright, sometimes ragged, renditions of such familiar songs as "Roll Out the Barrel" and "London Bridge is Falling Down."

Cucchiara formally accepted the plaques on behalf of the county. The plaques were purchased by E Clampus Vitus and mounted on a stone monument.

"It's a great project," said Cucchiara, who presented the two area chapters of E Clampus Vitus with proclamations of appreciation from the county Board of Supervisors.

The 140-foot-long wooden bridge, which spans the San Lorenzo River off Graham Hill Road, was finished in 1893. It is believed to be the tallest covered bridge in the United States.

For 45 years, the bridge provided the only access to Felton over the San Lorenzo River, until the modern concrete bridge serving Graham Hill Road was built in 1937.

The bridge continued to be popular with pedestrians

and equestrians, and has appeared in many period films.

Eventually, it fell into disuse and disrepair, and the winter storms of 1982-83 nearly finished the destruction.

Now, the bridge has been restored at a cost of \$360,000, with meticulous concern for historical ac-

curacy under the guidance of architect Jeff Oberdorfer.

Restoration funds were provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which paid for river bank stabilization, and by the state Office of Historical Preservation and the county parks fund.