

Photo of the Month

The Old Highway 12 Bridge



The 1904 Highway 12 bridge once spanned the White River. Today a 1963 bridge has taken its place. (Neg. #N009159)

Before Beaver Lake, the White River twisted and turned its way through Benton County. At the end of the 19th century, those living just a few miles east of Rogers, but on the other side of the White River, traveled all the way to Eureka Springs to shop because the river was so hard to cross.

By 1903 the decision was made to span the river. An Eden's Bluff location upstream was preferred by some, including "Coin" Harvey, whose Monte Ne resort would no doubt benefit. However, a Rogers committee determined that bridge-building would be easier at Porter's Bluff and that the site would appease the greatest number of taxpayers. Property owners near the bridge site donated property for the right-of-way.



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The steel-span bridge, completed for \$12,000 in 1904, about the time of this photo, was nearly 400 feet long and stood at center about 80 feet above the river. The *Rogers Democrat* (October 28, 1903) reported, "With no piers in the river there will be no danger from driftwood during high water, which is a very important consideration in the White River during the spring overflows."

By 1962 the White River valley was awaiting flooding by Beaver Lake, being created by the construction of Beaver Dam. A taller, longer, concrete-and-steel bridge was built to span the lake at a cost of \$806,000. Unlike its 1904 counterpart, the new bridge featured concrete piers, the tallest towering 165 feet above the valley. When the bridge opened to traffic in August 1963, both bridges crossed the White River at Porter's Bluff for a short time.

After 59 years of service, having given crossing to thousands upon thousands of pedestrians, carriages, and cars, the 1904 bridge was loaded with 75 pounds of dynamite around its supports. On August 26,

1963, the bridge was blasted and collapsed into the river; the remains were sold as scrap iron.

Crossing the Highway 12 bridge today, one can see sailboats and fishing boats, water skiers and jet skis. But the spirit of the White River valley and the people, homes, and farms that once resided there, still live on in memories and photographs.