



Historic Bridge Foundation Facebook Archives

Did You Know...

...That for 50 years Lake Havasu, Arizona, has been home to the old London Bridge? Formerly located over River Thames in London, England, this bridge was relocated and preserved on Oct. 10, 1971 at Lake Havasu.

London Bridge in England is a crossing with a very long history. The first bridge that enjoyed widespread fame was built in 1209 and stood until 1831. This stone arch bridge with numerous very short spans was famous for having many houses and buildings right on the bridge deck over the river. The bridge was the subject of many paintings. Over the course of such a long history, the bridge and its buildings underwent many changes, some as the result of fires which required rebuilding. A major change to the bridge took place in 1759 when two arches were replaced with a larger single arch called the Great Arch, designed to improve navigation. Eventually all buildings were removed from the bridge in 1761.

The next famous London Bridge was built in 1831 to replace the previous bridge. Although famous engineer Thomas Telford proposed what would have been an incredible single span iron arch bridge, his proposal was rejected. Instead, John Rennie's design of a stone arch bridge was accepted. Rennie's Bridge, as it became known, was more traditional in appearance by "modern" standards, with longer stone arch spans than its predecessor, but lacking the striking modernity (for the period) that Telford's design would have offered. By 1896, this bridge was very busy with 900 crossings per hour. The bridge eventually began to suffer from this traffic, with the bridge actually slowly sinking into the river. Although sinking as great as four inches was noted by 1924, it was not until 1968 that the action on a bridge replacement was undertaken. Officially opened in 1973, and displaying the typical architecture (or lack thereof) of the period, the bridge is perhaps the most mundane of all the major River Thames bridges in London. Its simple pre-stressed concrete box girders are a striking contrast to other bridges in the area, which typically display older, more complex, and highly ornamented designs.

Before Rennie's Bridge was replaced, the city sought to offer the bridge for reuse and they engaged in marketing of the historic bridge for relocation and reuse, an unusual practice for the time, and even by today's standards, fairly unusual for such a large bridge. Even more shocking is that the effort was successful, and on top of this, the buyer was not someone in the same country or even the same continent! Robert McCulloch, who was working with C.V. Wood (the designer of Disneyland) to develop and build a new city, Lake Havasu City, in Arizona took note of the bridge and decided to take ownership

and move the bridge to Lake Havasu City. The process involved match marking, dismantling, and shipping 10,276 granite blocks to Long Beach, California, where they were trucked to the job site. Technically, this project was not a complete relocation and restoration. From an engineering standpoint, the bridge seen at Lake Havasu City is a modern reinforced concrete arch bridge with stone facing composed of the stones from Rennie's Bridge. Nevertheless the bridge is a visually accurate representation of Rennie's Bridge and the placement of the stones on the facing is faithful to the original arrangement. As such, it remains a valuable interpretation of London's history here in the United States.

In October of 2021, the bridge celebrates 50 years of life in the United States. Learn more about the celebration at https://www.golakehasasu.com/a/london_bridge_50th_anniversary/



A photo of London Bridge at Lake Havasu.

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Bridge_\(Lake_Havasu_City\)#/media/File:London_Bridge,_Lake_Havasu_City,_Arizona_\(3227888290\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Bridge_(Lake_Havasu_City)#/media/File:London_Bridge,_Lake_Havasu_City,_Arizona_(3227888290).jpg)



A photo of London Bridge at Lake Havasu.



The 1209 Old London Bridge on 1632 oil painting "View of London Bridge" by Claude de Jongh.



An 1832 painting showing the demolition of the 1209 bridge with the newly completed Rennie's Bridge to the left.



Rennie's Bridge as it appeared in London.



Sir John Rennie, builder of Rennie's Bridge in London.



Construction of London's Bridge at Lake Havasu in 1971.