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**Delaware County recycles historic bridge**

*Pratt truss structure now crosses Red Clay Creek in Delaware*

Dressed as a 19<sup>th</sup> century merchant, Richard Frunzi presented a check for \$1 to Delaware County Council, in full payment for a 128-year-old bridge that now stands in Delaware.

The historic bridge that once connected traffic to the Wawa train station in Chester Heights now takes visitors across Red Clay Creek to the historic Greenbank Mill and Philips Farm in Wilmington, Del.

County Council was only too happy to “recycle” the 1880’s pin-connected Pratt pony-truss bridge that spanned the Chester Creek at Station Road. The westward growth of Delaware County’s population necessitates that SEPTA renovate the Chester Heights station to extend the R3 Elwyn line to Wawa.

Rather than demolish the bridge, Delaware County in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation’s “Bridge Marketing Program,” gave the Pratt pony-truss bridge to Greenbank Mill, an all-volunteer living-history museum.

Greenbank Mill’s bridge was destroyed during Tropical Storm Henri in 2003.

“Locating a historically appropriate bridge was a huge undertaking for our organization,” said Frunzi, the volunteer bridge coordinator for Greenbank Mill. His wife, Megan, is a member of the Greenbank board of directors.

“Since 2003, when Storm Henri swept away our bridge, we have been working with representatives from various government agencies to replace the bridge,” he said.

The Greenbank folks learned about the Delaware County bridge through PennDOT's bridge marketing program. Using funds from a public assistance grant from the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA), they dismantled, relocated and reassembled the bridge.

The wrought iron parts were sand-blasted, acid-treated, primed and painted. Then Frunzi and another volunteer put the bridge back together.

"It's great to see this adaptive reuse of a beautiful historic bridge," said Council Vice-Chair Christine Fizzano Cannon. "Because of Pennsylvania's transportation history, many historic bridges exist across the state. It makes sense to look for ways to reuse these beautiful structures and Council is happy that this bridge could be restored and rebuilt at Greenbank Mill."

A dedication ceremony for the "new/old" bridge was held April 10 and was attended by Dennis J. Carey, director of Public Works for Delaware County. At the event, Patrick Harshbarger, who researches the history of bridges in the Delaware Valley, spoke on the importance of saving bridges.

At the May 4 County Council meeting, Frunzi presented Council with \$1 payment for the bridge, and also displayed photographs of the bridge in its new home.

"Like our mills and other historic structures, bridges have a legacy too," Frunzi said.

The Pratt truss was originally patented by Thomas and Caleb Pratt in 1844. In its earliest form, the Pratt truss was a combination wood and iron truss, but the Pratt truss survived the transition to metal.

In an effort to preserve historic bridges, PennDOT created a "Bridge Marketing Program" that can be found on the PennDOT Web site at [www.dot.state.pa.us](http://www.dot.state.pa.us).

**Caption: New use, new location for old bridge**

Dressed in 19<sup>th</sup> century clothing, Greenbank Mill representatives, from left, Regina Albert and Richard Frunzi showed photos of their "recycled" historic bridge to Delaware County Council Vice-Chair Christine Fizzano Cannon. A 128-year-old Pratt pony-truss bridge that once crossed Chester Creek at the Wawa train station in Chester Heights now crosses the Red Clay Creek at historic Greenbank Mill, a living-history museum in Wilmington, Del.