

Pigg River
Covered Bridge



WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION OF VIRGINIA
HISTORICAL INVENTORY

195

COUNTY: Pittsylvania

CLASS: Bridge

Photograph

SEE DOCUMENT NO. 195

Pigg's River

BRIDGE OVER PIGG RIVER AT LOU'S ISLAND

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1. SUBJECT:

Covered Bridge Over Rigg River, at Lou's Island.

2. LOCATION:

Go west 10 miles from Gretna, Virginia, on Route #40, thence south (left) .3 mile on Route #750, to covered bridge.

3. DATES:

1768, first bridge built.

1879, second bridge built.

4. OWNERS:

Jacob Stover, 1768, first bridge.

Pittsylvania County, 1879, second bridge.

5. DESCRIPTION:

Scattered through this part of the state which has long been loved for its surpassing beauty, a few pioneer covered bridges still linger on. Ever since the first settlers played jack-straws with their logs and builded themselves log cabins in the mountains, many of the old bridges have been doing duty across Virginia streams.

Court records attest that in 1768 Jacob Stover was given permission to build a bridge over Rigg River at this point. Permission also was given him to erect a water grist mill nearby (judgment book 1, page 75), only the ruins of which now remain. The original bridge was washed away in the flood of 1877. Minutes of the Board of Supervisors of Pittsylvania County for June 26, 1879, record the following:

"The board doth allow J. W. Witt and Company the sum of \$2800.00 for building Lou's Island bridge. The County making abutments and fills at a cost of \$259.00. The bridge is still used and maintained by Pittsylvania County, being on a secondary road".

6. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

In 1745, Brunswick County included all of the western part of the present County of Pittsylvania. It then became a part of Lunenburg County, and it was from this date on that the settlement of this section became active. The governing powers having taken note of the slow development of this section, and in order to encourage settlement, enacted an act permitting settlers to be exempt from payment of all levies for ten years, provided the persons so settling upon these lands support their own

poor and make and maintain their own bridges, without any charge upon the rest of the parish. While the wandering aliens from Pennsylvania and New Jersey had largely contributed the first settlers of the county's western lands, with the formation of Lunenburg, we find more settlers from Lide Water.

In 1741, John Pigg, of Amelia County, entered for four hundred acres on the north side of the south fork of Staunton River. The south fork had not been named at this time and took its name from John Pigg, becoming Pigg River.

In the list of land and tithes taken in Pittsylvania county in 1767, mention is made of Jacob Stover, who in 1768 was given permission to build a bridge over Pigg River. He had first settled in the Valley of Virginia, where he had acquired large bodies of land. While a vast acreage had been acquired in that section by deed from the Colony, there had been no actual settlement. The first pioneer to come in person to take up land and make his home on it was Jacob Stover, in 1732.

His holdings in the Valley consisted of two tracts, each of which embraced five thousand acres, and he obtained his title not by human head-right, which the law required, but by submitting the names of his horses, cows, oxen and dogs.

History of the Stover family is traced back to the German Province of Hess, and on coming to America, they first settled in Pennsylvania.

There is an interesting tradition as to how the bridge came to have the name "Lou's Island". Deed books as far back as 1812, in naming boundary lines, make mention of Lou's Island Road, often written "Looisland", and Loe's Island. However, it has been learned from reliable sources that Lou's Island is the correct name, being referred to as such on account of a young lady, a relative of the Howard family, by the name of Louise (or Lou) having been drowned while fording the river here on horseback. Her body washed ashore on the small island in the river near the bridge.

In relating this, an old resident of this section, also related an unusual method of catching fish in this ford many years ago. According to his story, a friend of his, carrying an old muzzle loading shot gun, loaded with powder and wadding only, would ride a horse into the ford of the river. For some reason, the fish would become attracted by the legs of the horse and gather around in great numbers, while another man would stand in the water nearby,

with bags, the man on horseback would discharge the gun into the water's edge above the fish and immediately, from the shock of the explosion, the fish would turn on their sides and drift on top of the water. As many as a dozen fish, red horse suckers, weighing three or four pounds, had been picked up after a single discharge of the gun. Quickly, upon being put into the bags which the man standing in the water had ready, the fish came to life. (This is a really true fish story).

7. ARR:

Photograph

8. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

Informant: Mr. Brickham, Chatham, Va., R. F. D.

Court Records of Pittsylvania County, Clerk's Office, at Chatham, Virginia.

History of Pittsylvania County, by Lucie Carter Clements, Chatham, Virginia.

History of Virginia, by Philip Alexander Bruce, published by American Historical Society, 1924, Vol. 1, page 318.