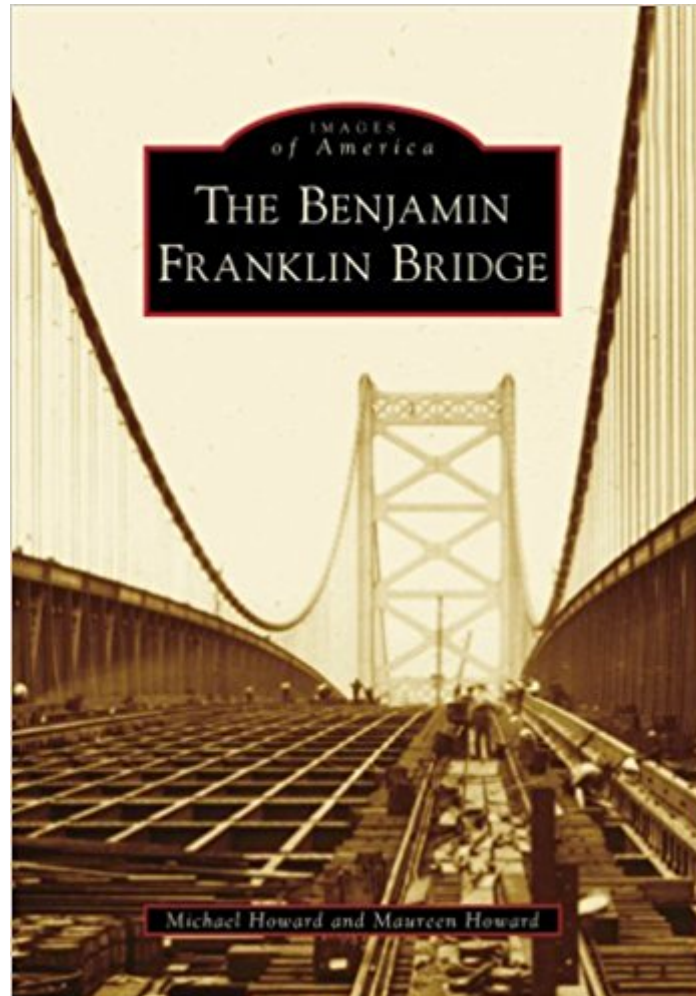




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The Benjamin Franklin Bridge (Images Of America)



Synopsis

The Benjamin Franklin Bridge, originally named the Delaware River Bridge, was constructed to connect the cities of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Camden, New Jersey. For a time after its opening on July 1, 1926, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world, with a main span of 1,750 feet. The Benjamin Franklin Bridge contains many rarely seen images of the bridge's planning and construction, the individuals who helped make the concept of the bridge a reality, and the workers who built it. The bridge has undergone many changes in the decades since its opening, and these vintage photographs trace its evolution, illustrating the bridge's endurance as a symbol of the Philadelphia-Camden metropolitan area.

Book Information

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Photography > Photography & Video > History

Customer Reviews

Title: Book bridges a gap in history of Ben
Author: Lucas K. Murray
Publisher: The Gloucester County Times
Date: 3/23/09
Every day, thousands of motorists speed over what was once the longest steel suspension bridge in the world. Maybe only a handful even consider the work that went into erecting the Ben Franklin Bridge more than 80 years ago. A couple from Camden with strong ties to both the bridge itself and the region have put together a pictorial history of the span from its design phase a century ago to its present-day role as a key to transportation infrastructure between two states. "It was very interesting to go back and see it again as a new thing," author Mary Howard said about researching the latest local edition of Images of America: The Ben Franklin Bridge. "Nowadays, for

all of us it's just part of our world and you take it back and forth to work. You almost forget what an amazing thing it was when it was first built." Howard, an editor in the medical publishing industry and a member of the Camden County Historical Society, put the book together along with her husband, Michael, an engineer for the Delaware River Port Authority. The DRPA oversees the maintenance and operation of the bridge. Michael said the book started after he put together a slideshow of pictures to commemorate the Ben's 80th anniversary. He sifted through hundreds of photos in the DRPA archives to come up with 40 pictures for the show. In this book, more than 200 photos, diagrams and copies of newspaper articles from the bridge's early years are included along with a brief historical account. "We could do a book that's twice the size of this," Michael Howard said, noting he and Maureen had to conform to the guidelines set up by the publisher. "It's a shame • We had all these pics laid out and it was literally like, •"Oh, can we use this?' It's like spring training in baseball when you have to cut down your roster," he added. There are construction shots and pictures of what buildings gave way in both Camden and Philadelphia to allow the massive bridge superstructures to be built. The four large concrete and granite anchorages on both sides of the river aren't just for show. They were to be used as rapid transit station lobbies for passengers to move from elevated rail lines to other modes of transportation like a trolley line that never came to be a reality. For Maureen, the newspaper accounts touting the virtues of the crossing proved to be most interesting for her. "Until it was built you had to get on a boat if you wanted to go to Philadelphia," she said. "I enjoyed having my eyes open in a sense and appreciating what an amazing thing it is." And it came at a time where manual labor was the order of the day. A time when grit, toughness and the best technology available at the time built grand structures that still dot the nation's skylines today. "When we talk with kids about it, they see how computers and big machines are around," Michael said. It wasn't the way back then. It was done by hand and people literally getting into tight areas and digging out dirt." The book is available at local bookstores and at www.arcadiapublishing.com.

Michael Howard is an engineer at the Delaware River Port Authority, the agency that owns and operates the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. He has long held an interest in the bridge's history, and in transportation history as well, and is a member of the West Jersey chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. Maureen Howard, his wife, is an editor in the medical publishing industry and has a strong interest in local history. She is a member of the Camden County Historical Society.

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