

The bridge overhang was too much for the tug to be fastened to the bridge barge so the barge is repositioned to allow a materials barge to be placed between the tug and the bridge barge.



Part of Minnesota's Historic Rock Island Swing Bridge Removed

For more than a century, the Rock Island Swing Bridge, alternately known as the JAR Bridge, the Newport Bridge and the Saint Paul Park Bridge in Iver Grove Heights, Minnesota, played a unique role in the history of the region, as well as the Mississippi River.

That history came to an end earlier this year, however, when **Veit USA**, a demolition and excavation contractor based in Rogers MN, was awarded a contract to demolish the bridge, which had been closed for a number of years. IASM member **Swift Housemovers and Heavy Equipment** of Big Lake, MN was a subcontractor on the project.

Built in 1895 by the Pittsburgh Bridge Company and owned by the Rock Island Railroad Company, the 1,661-foot long bridge had a split-level design that accommodated both rail and automobile traffic. Plus, a 442-foot section

near the middle of the bridge was designed to swing open to accommodate boat and barge traffic.

In addition to its multiple names and unique design, the bridge was one of the state's only toll bridges throughout its history and among the only privately-owned for autos. When the Rock Island Railroad Company went bankrupt in 1980, local entrepreneurs Joan and Alfred Roman bought the bridge, thus the name JAR Bridge. As the state of Minnesota had no provisions for a private ownership of a river bridge, a special law was passed to allow the bridge to be operated by a private concern.

The bridge also was known as an escape route by 1920s gangster John Dillinger.

By **ROBERT SWIFT** and **JACK E. BRYMER, SR.**, Contributing Editor

In 1999 however, the bridge failed inspection and was closed to automobile traffic. It had been closed to rail traffic since 1980. The owner could not afford the repairs and stopped paying the taxes, resulting in ownership of the bridge reverting to Washington County.

On October 25, 2008, the National Park Service hosted an "Open Bridge" event to gauge the public interest in saving it. The turnout was higher than expected. However, a month after the tour a 200-foot section of the bridge collapsed....

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Bridge section being raised off footing to be moved downstream.

Barge being positioned under a bridge section.

