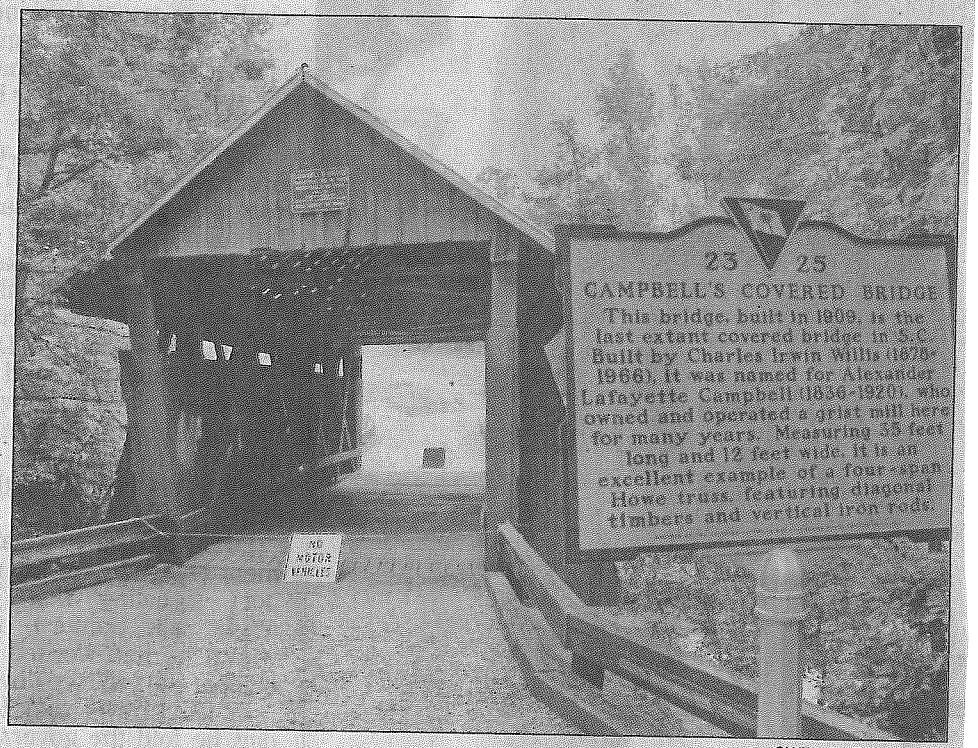
Historic covered bridge gets TLC

Century-old span, old mill park being restored

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OWEN RILEY JR. / Staff

Built in 1909, Campbell's Covered Bridge in northern Greenville County will have its roof redone and the area around it turned into a park.

Walking beneath its steep arched roof, timbers crisscrossing overhead, it's possible to see a century's worth of declarations of love — the bold initials and crooked hearts that are carved into the wood beams of Campbell's Covered Bridge in northern Greenville County.

Located off State 414, the span is the last remaining covered bridge in South Carolina. The Greenville County Recreation District is taking note of the bridge's age and rarity by restoring its roof and creating a park with a $94,000 project that's expected to be complete by mid-October.

Paul Ellis, recreation planning director, said the site will have historical markers, a parking lot and picnic tables overlooking Beaverdam Creek.

The bridge will be anchored by two meadows, one next to the road and the other on a hillside, Ellis said.

He added that while the bridge is in good shape because of upkeep and renovations over the past 40 years, its roof has rusty panels that need to be restored.

Measuring 35 feet long and 12 feet wide, Campbell's Covered Bridge was built in 1909 after a torrential summer rainstorm the previous year washed out nearly every bridge in Greenville County, Ellis said.

A roof was added to the bridge to protect the wood floor from water damage.

Once complete, the bridge will be a "piece of the historical site pie that by itself is maybe not that significant, but when you add it to other sites like Poinsett Bridge and Hagood House, you end up with a nice little collection of history in northern Greenville County," Ellis said.

As work progresses on the bridge, the recreation district will begin breaking ground at the Pelham Mill site off State 14 in Greer, where the first textile mill in Greenville County was built in 1820.

Centered on a stonework dam built in the 19th century, the park will feature walking trails, overlooks of the Enoree River and a 3.5-acre dog park near the entrance of the site, where a large grassy knoll that's shaded by several large oak trees now stands.

The recreation district will work in partnership with Renewable Water Resources (formerly Western Carolina Sewer Authority) and the Greenville County Historic Preservation Commission to finish the estimated $200,000 project by its fall opening date, Ellis said.

Greenville County Council recently allotted $100,000 in hospitality tax money for the project, $12,000 of which has been spent to restore the 11 windows of the mill office building, which served as the Pelham post office from the 1930s until 1996.

The 990-square-foot structure will have a new roof installed, and the interior will be modernized to be used for private rentals and meetings, said Rick Owens, a member of the Historic Preservation Commission.

Dan Powell, coordinator of Keep Greenville County Beautiful, said the project could soon receive a $10,000 beautification grant from Keep America Beautiful.

The money would be used to plant trees and native plants at the site, Powell said.