

ROCKVILLE BRIDGE

Good Day everyone---it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

When you were a youngster, I suppose one of the pictures in your geography book was of the Rockville Bridge in Harrisburg, and it was probably called--as it is--the largest stone arch bridge in the world. It was in all the geography books. If you have travelled Central Pennsylvania at all, I'm sure that you have passed this stone beauty many times. It is still the champ in its field, one of the many fine bridges in Pennsylvania, the latest being the Emlenton Bridge that carries the Keystone Shortway over the Allegheny River. The function of the Rockville Bridge is to carry trains across the Susquehanna River at a point where two mountains, one on each side of the Susquehanna, come down to the water's edge. The natural beauty of the area is in all seasons breathtaking, and the bridge has become the subject of countless paintings, photos, engravings, post-cards, and of course, geography books. The bridge is almost three-fourths of a mile in length, actually, 3789 feet, and it contains 47 stone arches, each seventy feet long and fifty feet wide. It contains four railroad tracks--the main line of American traffic east and west. The first bridge in the area was begun in 1847, shortly after the iron-horse began its chug-chugging to conquer a continent. It was designed with only six arches--a wooden bridge. It was almost completed when a toronado hit down the river in March 1849 and the bridge was virtually destroyed. But it opened to train traffic in 1850 and remained in use until replaced by a steel bridge in 1874. Then it was decided to build the intricate Rockville Stone Arch bridge--and it was intricate. The construction was done in two parts--from the east and west--and the last keystone in the last arch was set on September 19, 1901. Six months later it was opened to traffic and the famed, "Atlantic Express",

a long passenger train, filled to capacity, rolled over it. The train was greeted by a multitude of sightseers, who had gathered on the Dauphin County side to marvel at it, and their cheers echoed between the converging Blue Mountains. Even today, one marvels at its beauty and the use to which it has been put. To sit along the road-side and watch a freight rumble across it--so long that it uses the entire length of the brown-stone arched beauty, is to be thrilled by it. Children love to watch the progress of the world of wheels--and nothing in Pennsylvania--perhaps with the exception of the Horse-Shoe curve on the same line--had advanced progress further. The Rockville Bridge, along the Susquehanna above Harrisburg, helped in the development of this nation and does so still today--the longest stone-arch bridge in the world--and a scenic beauty of Pennsylvania.

**This** is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.