

Local planners have been discussing the feasibility of recycling the old north roadway of the Harahan Bridge as a bicycle/pedestrian way which would link park sites in Memphis with the proposed new regional park in Crittenden County.

Involved in this study are officials from the Memphis and Shelby County Planning Commission, Department of Transportation, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, and Mississippi-Arkansas-Tennessee Council of Governments. Ann Bowen, the MATCOG area planner coordinating the project, says the bikeway may take four years to get the necessary planning, funding, and construction. But there is no time like the present to consider the possibilities.

The Harahan Bridge was built in 1916 for \$4 million; its design put the double-rail traffic inside the trusses and a fourteen-foot-wide lane for wagons and motor traffic along each side of the bridge. For many years motorists from Arkansas had to drive two miles from the levee over an often-flooded roadway, then up a steep wooden viaduct that shook and rattled. The bridge was free, but the privately-built viaduct exacted a toll of 25¢ per auto. After years of bickering among four governmental authorities about its financing, a concrete viaduct was completed in 1930. The Memphis-Arkansas Bridge was completed in 1949, but Harahan motor traffic continued until 1951; the planking from the roadways was removed and stored for use during some civil emergency.

In 1967 Rudolph Jones proposed that the bridge be restored for motor traffic, but a feasibility study showed that it would cost too much money and time for the two extra lanes of traffic gained. In 1971 L. H. (Pop) Poppenheimer proposed that the bridge be converted into a walking and cycling path with small shops on the west end.

Partly in response to the Downtown

center city

VOLUME III, NUMBER 3
FEBRUARY 6, 1976

Pedaling across the Harahan

DAVID BOWMAN

Council's 1975 sponsorship of "RIDE ON!", a weekful of events celebrating the bicycle as a means of urban transportation, and partly in response to a general awareness by planners that all modes of transportation need to be considered, some \$204,000 have been tentatively budgeted for bikeways in Memphis' capital improvements bud-

get for 1976-1980. If these bikeways are successful, real momentum would be given to the Harahan proposal. The only serious problem, as usual, is money. A preliminary estimate from the Memphis Department of Public Works has suggested that a new roadway, fencing, painting, and approaches would cost a million dollars.

From where I stand...

Which is REAL?

ROY P. HARROVER

I read your [David Bowman's] commentary on the river museum in the Center City newsletter [Vol.III, No. 2]. It was well written, thoughtful, and worthy of a reply.

The river museum will cover the broad themes common to all parts of the lower Mississippi valley. It will not attempt to "wrap Memphis up." The Memphis Pink Palace Museum will do this (and more), so much of your criticism was misdirected.

"Who needs a real steamboat when you can get a simulated steamboat?" The obvious answer to this sarcasm is that no one needs a simulated steamboat if he can get a real steamboat. Unfortunately, there are no surviving examples of Nineteenth Century Mississippi Packets. None. Anywhere. But people still are interested in this type of boat and the life-styles which it housed. Available plans, photographs, and a wealth of technical data can lead to the first accurate reproduction of such a boat, enclosing "real" surviving furnishings, artifacts and fittings. Such a total environment can destroy myths and reveal facts long obscured by romantic Pablum regarding the "Old South."

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Federal money could be available. The U.S. Department of Transportation, for example, has just made available about \$6 million for bikeways, and Memphis might be eligible for about \$60,000 to \$600,000 if selected for the program. The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation may provide funding if the regional park proposed for the area between the Harahan Bridge approach and Mound City is developed by Crittenden County and the State of Arkansas.

There might also be some local money available. The Harahan proposal seems to agree completely with the objectives of the \$30 million in capital improvements authorized by the City Council for downtown and riverfront redevelopment. But it is unlikely that any action will be taken unless cyclists, hikers, park-lovers and others provide the moral support and long-term enthusiasm for getting things together.

If you're curious about the Harahan roadway, you can go to the dead-end on Virginia Avenue, by the WREG-TV studios, then walk up the old approach and around the fence by the railroad ties. Some sense of the magnificent view from the bridge can be gained by looking over the roofs of the Church on the River towards the downtown skyline.

The Arkansas end is even more interesting. At the west end of the Memphis-Arkansas Bridge, the first turning to the right is the old Harahan viaduct which dog-legs under the Frisco Bridge and turns the corner under a rusty sign pointing the way to the DACUS FISHING CAMP. There you are suddenly back in the 1930's.

Once upon a time bridges were built to accommodate all kinds of traffic. The Brooklyn Bridge was designed for a large volume of pedestrian travel, and several mayors of New York used to walk to City Hall across it every day. In San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge has a wide sidewalk for walkers and cyclists, and the Ben Franklin Bridge in Philadelphia

was recently restored to carry non-motorized traffic. But the Memphis-Arkansas Bridge has only a four-foot sidewalk and pedestrians are stopped whenever they appear, for fear that they are about to jump off, while the new I-40 bridge has no sidewalk at all.

Glenn Rowland, transportation planner for the Planning Commission, says the Harahan project is still at the information-gathering stage. This means that your ideas and encouragement could be of real value if you send them in right now.

Reverse print by GDM: Harahan Bridge



CENTER STAGE

Tobacco Rd.- just another dead end

PAT WATERS

Thursday, January 21, Tobacco Road opened at Playhouse on the Square under the direction of Thomas Cooke. The production's set was superbly designed by Greg Peeples — what could be more representative of rural Georgia than dirt and a shack so familiar in its decrepitude as to be a cliché.

Opening night had a few lapses in memory and lagging responses to cues — nothing out of the ordinary for a first night. Geeter Lester, a randy old red neck who could not get around to planting for 7 years, was expertly played by Joe Woodward. Ann Hughes was wonderfully ecstatic whether thumping her Bible or trying to thump young Dude Lester. The supporting roles were more than adequately played, especially Edgar Lehr's confused Henry Peabody.

However this is a case of a cast being better than its play. It is a wretched play. When its adaptation

from Erskine Caldwell's novel opened on Broadway in 1933, the play was raunchy enough to put off critics and to draw audiences (it played for 7 1/2 years). Times have changed. The play is not old enough for historical revival and too badly written for current interest. An irretrievably garbled plot cannot be saved by its populism nor by its attempts at naturalism. This is no tragedy because there is no pacing, no building of admiration or emotional involvement from which the audience can move. There is no place for the Lesters to fall — they are already there. Comedy is present in the play — in the contorted, the grotesque. But the mordancy of the humor is not relieved by intelligence. (The audience laughs at Ellie May's harelip.) If the Lesters were intelligent, they would not be caught dead on Tobacco Road. Unfortunately for them and the play, they are not and are.

Real or REAL (Harrover)

Comparing Disney's animals is a cheap shot which misses. You caught a note of Disney in something you read or heard about this museum, assumed that nothing in Memphis could be done in good taste, and expressed the typical Pavlovian reaction against cutesy romanticism: Donald Duck vs. a duck in a zoo, Audubon's ducks, the Peabody ducks, Ibsen's *Wild Duck*, duck a l'orange, a handcrafted decoy, a stuffed duck, a wild duck in nature. Which is more "real"? Would you eliminate all the rest, or would you send all the profits they make to Ducks Unlimited? In us, all these images interact and are inseparable, the "real" is no more real than the man-made simulations.

You enjoy "real" experiences. I agree. Have you tried to take a child into a saloon to hear jazz? (I didn't succeed.) Or a recording studio? (I barely succeeded.) You dislike simulations. Books are simulations, and photographs, and drawings, and paintings. A library wraps these "up in one convenient stop-and-shop package". So does a museum. Why damn the modern museum because it also can add film and sound and artifacts to simulate an environment which is inaccessible or lost forever? Dull and unchanging? — So is a library. Do you never reread books, or replay records, or reexamine paintings and artifacts? The knowledge gained in a museum is invaluable to the appreciation of the "real thing."

I am only capable of "personal eloquence" when I am absolutely certain that a project will add to the vigor of this city. A vigorous Memphis means that my firm may survive. My sophomoric eloquence was barely sufficient to cause the airport to be built as I had designed it, and when it was finished I shut up and let it speak for itself. Up to that point it could not have been publicly scrutinized because it existed only in my mind and on many drawings incomprehensible to the layman. Had I not been persistently noisy, it would have surely crumbled under the criticism it was then receiving from two consecutive administrations. The beauty would have been gone and no one would have missed it. And some taxpayers would have been relieved. Money would have been saved. Would Memphis be richer?

Women & Money

"Women and Money," a financial management series for women and men, began Thursday, February 5 at the American Red Cross Building. All of the remaining four sessions will meet at 7:30 p.m. The series is being co-sponsored by the Credit Counseling Service of Memphis and the Women's Resources Center.

"Credit discrimination" will be the subject on February 12; Alayne Barry Adams, attorney, will be one of the speakers. Mary Robinson of J. C. Bradford & Sons will speak on investments on February 19. The remaining topics will be "house buying" on February 16 and "retirement planning" on March 4.

Participants can attend any or all sessions. The series is open to the public. A small fee will be charged. For more information call the Women's Resources Center at 272-1481.

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DOWNTOWN ACTIVITIES

Showtime on the Mall (every Thursday)

- February 5—Memphis Ballet Company—lecture & demonstration—National Bank of Commerce Plaza 12—12:15 p.m.*
- February 12—Memphis University School—Male Chorus—NBC Plaza — 11:45—12:15 p.m.*
- February 19 — Circuit Playhouse — excerpts from "Hot'l Baltimore" & "The Sea Horse" — NBC Plaza — 12—12:30 p.m.*
- February 26—Memphis Heart Association—Free Blood Clinic & film—NBC's Commerce Square Plaza— 11—2:00 p.m.*

FILM

Center Film Society

- February 13—"All the King's Men"
- February 20—"Treasure of Sierra Madre"—UT Student Activity Center Auditorium — 7:30 p.m.

Brooks Gallery

- February 15—"Macbeth" (Welles) — 2:30 p.m.*

LECTURES—REVIEWS—DIALOGUE

Values and Ethics Lectures

- February 10 — "The Ethics of Genetic Control"—Joseph Fletcher, Ph.D., Professor of Medical Ethics, U. of Virginia—UT Interfaith Center—12—1 p.m.*

American Issues Forum

- February 10—"Black Private Enterprise in the Market Place"—First National Bank Auditorium—12:15 p.m.*
- February 12—"Black..."—Cossitt-Goodwyn Libraries—12:15 p.m.*

MUSIC

Metropolitan Opera Auditions

- February 7—South Hall—12—4 p.m.*
- February 8—South Hall—2—5 p.m.*

Gino Vannelli

- February 12—South Hall — 8 p.m.

Barry Tuckwell

- February 14—South Hall — 8 p.m.
- February 15—South Hall — 3 p.m.

Children's Concert

- February 16—Memphis Orchestral Society—South Hall—12:30 p.m.

DANCE

Royal Winnipeg Ballet

- February 17—Auditorium South Hall—8:30 p.m.

THEATRE

Mark Twain Tonight

- February 10—Hal Holbrook—Auditorium South Hall—8:00 p.m.

Circuit Playhouse

- February 12—March 14—"The Sea Horse"—Friday, Saturday & Sunday—8:30 p.m.

Playhouse on the Square

- Through February 22—"Tobacco Road"—Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, & Sundays at 8 p.m.—Saturdays at 6:30 p.m. & 10 p.m.

King Cotton Hotel (Lobby)

- February 27—March 20—"Hot'l Baltimore"—Circuit Playhouse production—Nightly, except Mondays, at 8 p.m.—Saturday matinees at 2 p.m.

*Free

166 Poplar
Memphis, Tenn. 38103

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city

Published biweekly by
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Gerald D. Murley, Jr., EDITOR
Printed by Leonard's Business Service

Second-class
postage paid at
Memphis, Tennessee

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