



# the CABIN LOG

Special Edition

Baker Cabin Historical Society, "To create and perpetuate a property of interest and historical value, for community use"

January 2023

## Bridging the Clackamas River

In the beginning there was no bridge at all. Early Oregon Trail pioneers first came to the area now known as Carver because the land was fertile, farmable, and represented a new beginning for thousands of families starting a new life in the West.

Horace Baker and his wife Jane Hattan Baker were among the first overland travelers to settle in the area. A stonemason by trade, Baker settled in 1846 on the land surrounding a rock hillside adjacent to the river and started his quarrying business.

By 1872, he had established a slackline ferry at the river crossing where the water runs deep and the flow was relatively benign. This secondary business was a sideline for additional income.

The north landing was just below the Mumpower home. On the south landing, the ferry tied up to a large iron ring in a rock at the foot of the hill where the boat ramp is now. When the river rose to the level of the rock, Baker wouldn't cross the river.

When the ferry was swept away in the floods of 1882, it was time for a more reliable crossing. The following year, the first span across the Clackamas River was built. In the ensuing years, travelers and local residents alike cemented the importance of a crossing at this strategic location. Communities on both sides of the river continued to prosper.

The first bridge was a wooden covered bridge, which served the area until it was replaced in the 1930s by a steel truss bridge. A separate railroad bridge also crossed this same stretch of the river for a time—and was instrumental in bringing the name "Carver" to this corner of Oregon..

The steel auto bridge lasted into the next century. Many local people remember this structure, which was replaced in 2015 by a modern concrete span that serves traffic needs today.

In every era, the bridges of the Clackamas River provided a vital connecting link.

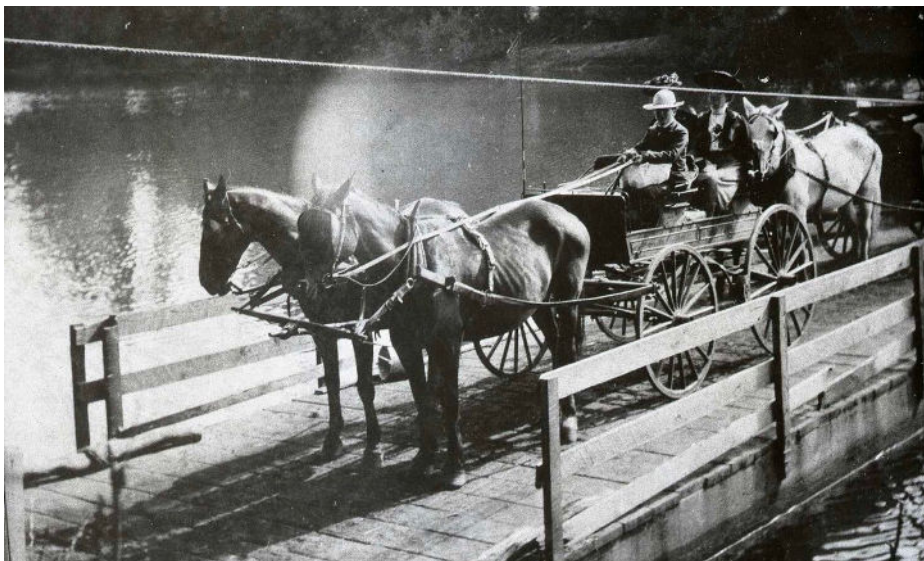


Photo: Clackamas County Historical Society

### **Baker's Ferry**

*This 1881 photo shows the ferry and a wagon travelling on the Bakers Ferry across the Clackamas River. A slackline is a rope suspended across a distance and fixed at either end. The ferry was essentially a platform pulled across by hand.*

*Ferries were important to early Oregon commerce, and were located on many Oregon waterways. They allowed people to cross bodies of water to transport goods, move people, and communicate with other communities until permanent bridges could be built.*



1908 Baker Bridge

Clackamas County Historical Society

### Baker's Bridge

After the ferry washed out in 1882, a meeting was called by the county to see what should be done toward building a bridge across the river. People came from all over the county and had a picnic as the issue was discussed.

In the summer and fall of 1883 a wooden covered bridge was built in the Smith Truss style. Mr. Paquet of Oregon City was the builder. At 230 feet, it was the longest covered bridge in the county at that time.

Horace Baker had died in 1882, and the covered bridge was called Bakers Bridge in his memory. It once had a big sign at each end cautioning users to "walk your horses." This scenic bridge stood until 1930, when it was dismantled to make way for a more modern steel structure.

### 1914 at Baker Bridge

*Looking north to south. The purpose of building a house over the bridge is to protect the wooden structural members from the weather and reinforce the truss, making the bridge stronger. Uncovered wooden bridges typically have a lifespan of only 20 years because of the effects of rain and sun, but a covered bridge could last more than 100 years.*

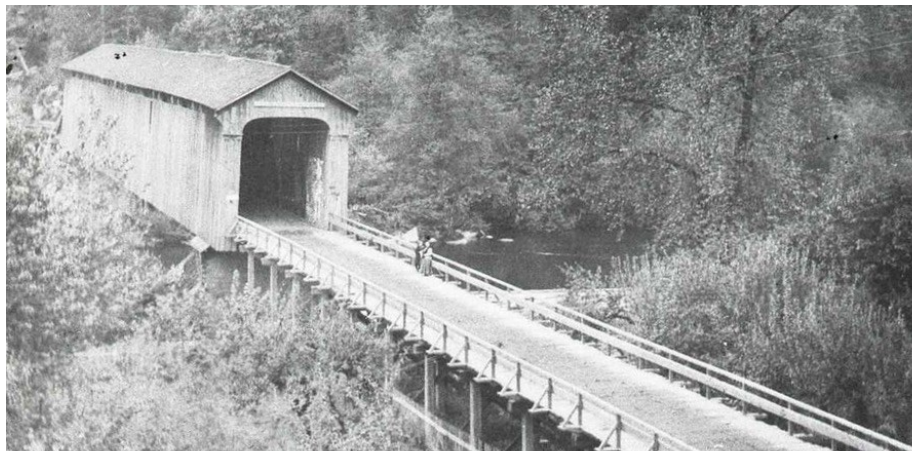


Photo: Clackamas County Historical Society

### 1925 at Baker Bridge

*Looking south to north, the Carver community hall and school house can be seen in the background, on the north side of the river. An additional railroad bridge would soon parallel this bridge, just to the left.*

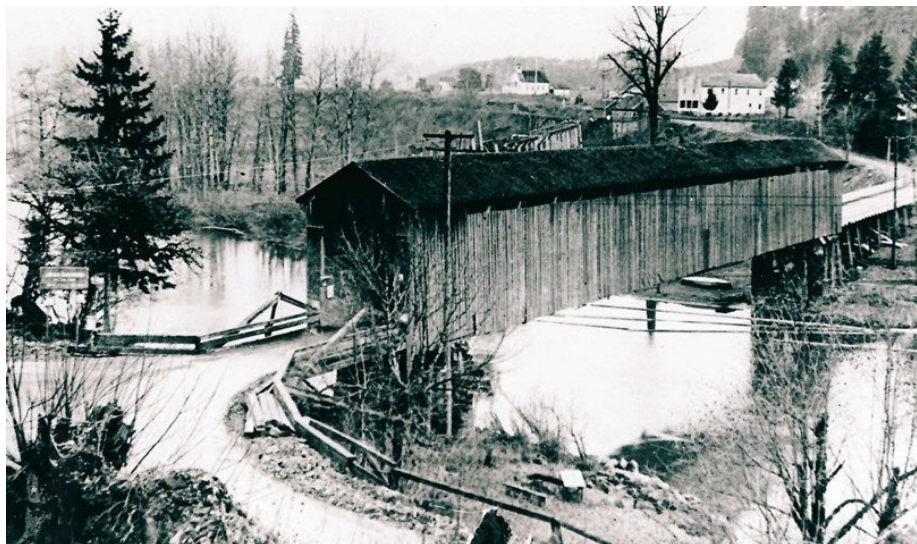


Photo: Oregon Historical Society



Photo: PNW Photoblog

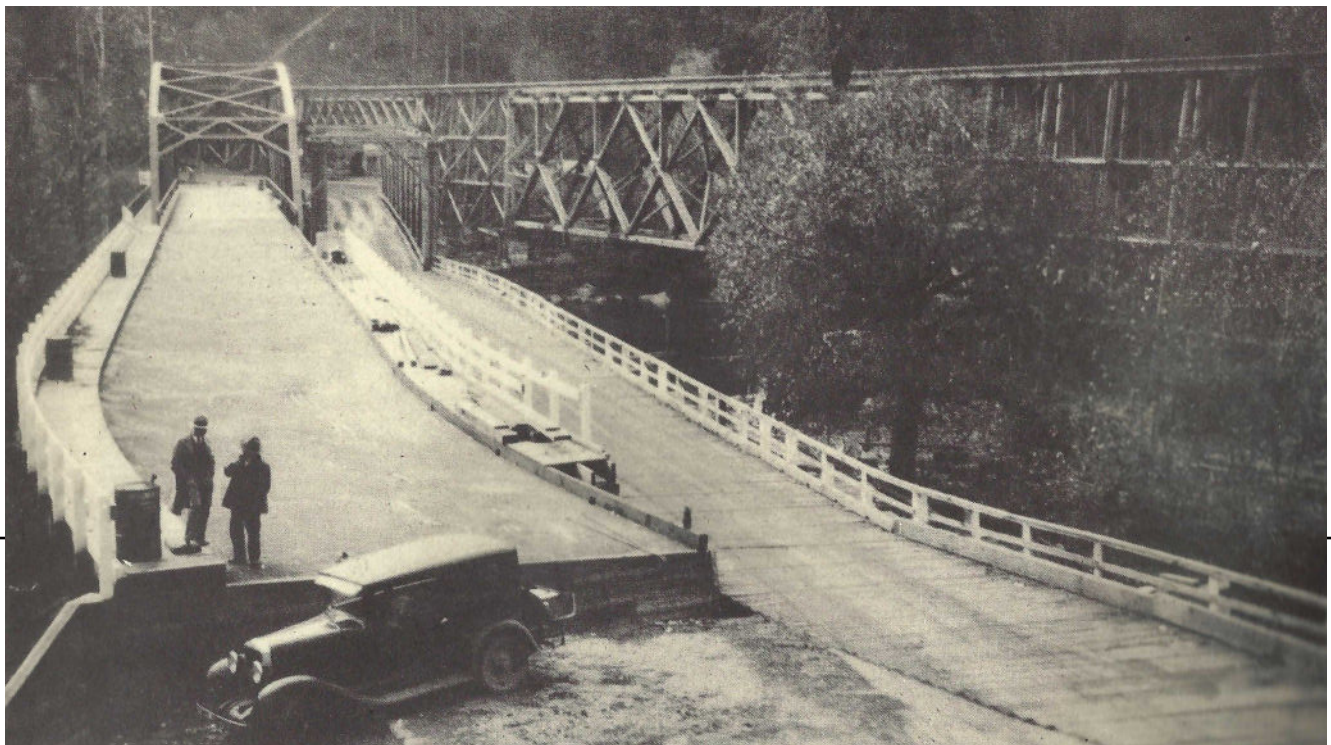


Photo: Oregon State Highway Division / Kenn Lantz Collection

***Baker's Bridge 1929 (top)***

*A railroad trestle was being built by the Clackamas and Eastern Railroad. The upstream covered bridge is to the right in both these photos. The Rock Garden Tavern (opened in 1928) is in the foreground of photo on the left.*

*The view on the right is looking from the Rock Garden Tavern across the river between the railroad trestle and the covered bridge. Carver Park is a picnic and swimming area built in 1928 by Joseph Grant Mumpower. The park was operated in later years by son Verl, who in 1961 converted the park to the Carver Mobile Ranch.*

***Baker's Bridge 1930 (bottom)***

*For a brief time, three bridges crossed the river at Carver: Pictured from R-L: the railroad trestle extending the Carver Line to W. Viola; the 1882 covered "Baker's Bridge" nearing its removal (note the covered part of the bridge is already gone); and the 1930 new steel bridge nearing completion. The automobile bridge retained the name "Baker's Bridge." The railroad bridge was removed at an unknown time. The coming of the railroad sparked a name change for the town and the bridge. Carver is named for Stephen Carver, the superintendent of the railroad.*

### Into the modern era

The famous old covered Bakers Bridge was replaced with a new steel bridge in 1930. The steel bridge was 513 feet long with a 9-panel Parker Through Truss center span. It deteriorated over time,



Photo: Clackamas County Historical Society



Photo: Mediennachweis



Photo © Lyn Topinka 2015

eventually superseded by a design for the next century.

After a couple of false starts with design and utility issues, the newest Carver Bridge was opened in 2015. With modern materials, the latest bridge returns to the simplicity of an open platform that welcomed travelers in the earliest days of the river crossing.

### *Baker's Bridge 1930 to present*

**Top:** This 1934 photograph shows the new steel bridge while the train trestle bridge appeared downstream.

**Middle:** This 2012 photo shows the 1930 steel bridge looking north, shortly before it was demolished. Notice the rusted beam where taller modern trucks had been smacking the bridge header for years, which led to its structural demise.

**Bottom:** The latest-greatest bridge offers open sightlines both upstream and downstream — and accommodates vehicles of any height.