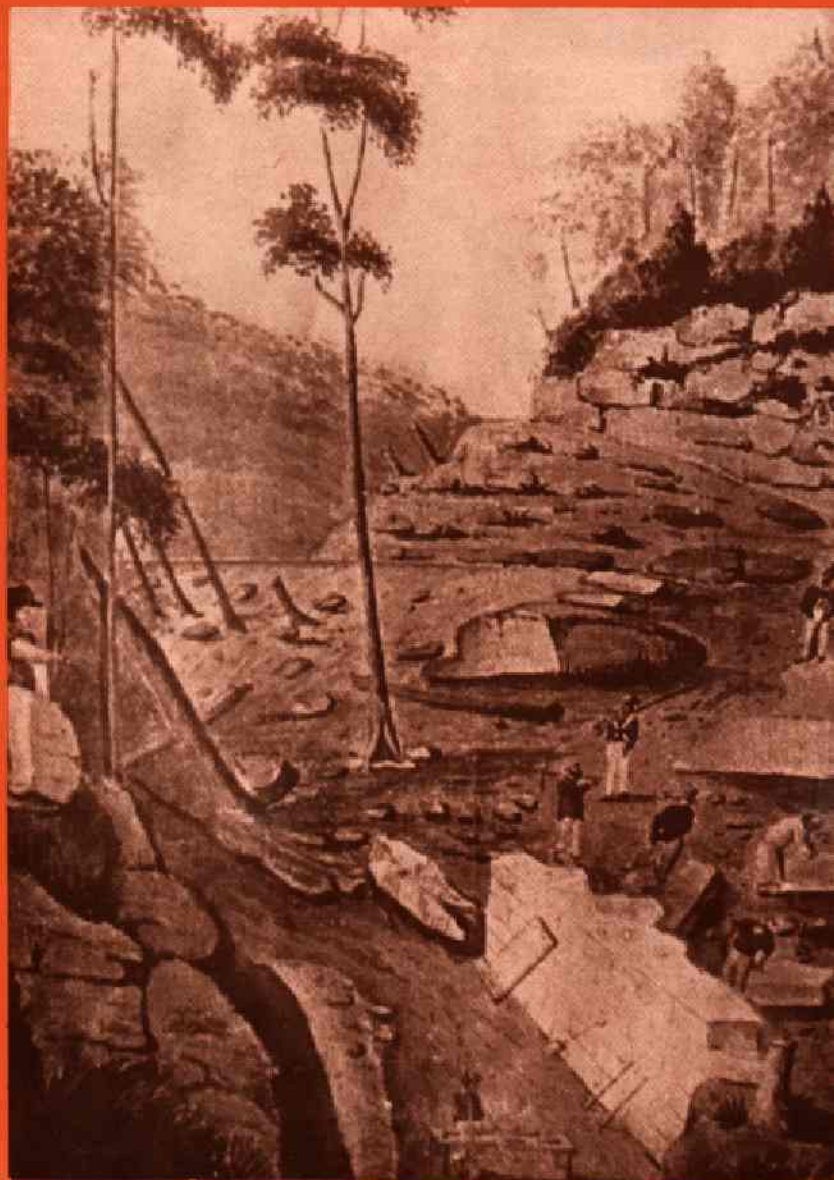




1832. The Building of Lennox Bridge,
Lapstone Hill, by Prison
Labour.



carry local and some long distance traffic. After World War II the great demand for goods, such as cement, brought many heavy trucks on to the roads, and some of these, to save time, reverted to Mitchells Pass. This weakened the Bridge, and some 20 years ago the Blue Mountains City Council was forced to close the Bridge to traffic in an attempt to preserve it.

Later the Council commenced restoration work, the idea being to build a concrete bridge within the stone structure, this to carry the weight of the traffic. Much work was done with the money then available. Lately the State Government has made further funds available to the Department of Public Works to continue the work.

It is the intention to restore the bridge externally to the original. As an example of changes which had been made, with the many years of use the roadway had been resurfaced from time to time, thus raising the levels of the road. For safety reasons it had then been decided to erect an arris rail on top of the stone side walls. A recently published newspaper photograph shows that prior to the erection of this rail there had been a stone coping on the walls, which

seemingly disappeared when the rail was erected. It is hoped now to restore the coping.

Lennox Bridge, standing in our own district, is the oldest existing bridge on the Australian mainland. Its preservation is a worthy memorial to its designer and builder, David Lennox, and those who laboured with him.



Australian Mainland's Oldest Bridge

With the recent injection of State Government funds the restoration of Lennox Bridge is now ensured.

Upon completion the bridge will become more accessible and therefore an interesting tourist attraction in the Penrith area.

PRLC New Magazine is indebted to Mr Tom Morony of the Springwood Historical Society for the following article concerning Lennox Bridge.

LENNOX BRIDGE

A quarter of a century passed between the first settlement in Sydney and the first crossing of the Blue Mountains. That feat achieved, within a further two years a road had been built to Bathurst.

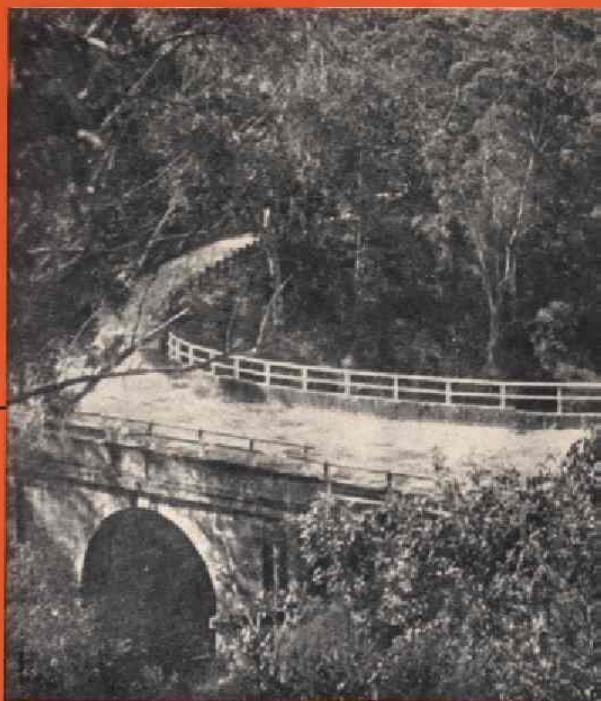
The first road, built by William Cox, was truly built in a hurry and within a few years attempts were being made to find a better ascent of the mountains. By 1824 a road was opened, probably by William Lawson, which is still in use today (known as Old Bathurst Road), but the zig-zags made it a difficult track for the teamsters. This led the Surveyor-General, Thomas Mitchell to survey yet another route, still known today as Mitchell's Pass.

This road was commenced in 1832, and Mitchell who desired a bridge across a deep gully, was in search of a stonemason to construct a solid, permanent bridge.

As good fortune would have it, Mitchell met David Lennox by chance, as Lennox was building a dwarf stone wall in front of the present Parliament House in Macquarie St, Sydney. Recognising his skill, Mitchell employed Lennox, giving him the title of Sub-Inspector of Roads (1832) and later Superintendent of Bridges (1833).

Lennox was born in Scotland in 1788, and became a stonemason. However, economic pressure in England caused him to migrate to Australia. Lennox was already an experienced bridge builder, having worked under the great Thomas Telford, but on reaching our shores could only find work in building a stone wall.

Mitchell's first job for Lennox was to design the bridge on his Lapstone Hill road, and without delay he set to work. His design was unusual and demonstrated his great skill. The bridge was to be horseshoe shaped on one side, and straight on the other; it was also to be an arch. We become amazed when we consider the geometry involved; an arch with one curved side and one straight.



The building becomes even more amazing when it is considered that he had been given 20 assigned convicts, none of whom was skilled, to carry out the work. Consequently his second task was to train and inspire these men.

His third task was to gain the material. Luckily suitable stone was available nearby; it was recorded that he obtained the stone about 30 metres upstream. The spot may still be seen where this stone was drilled and quarried.

The building of this road and bridge proceeded with the men housed in Emu Plains (on a spot near the present Anglican Church). Two travellers, whose journals have been preserved, mention the work. They were: first, James Backhouse, a Quaker missionary, who wrote in 1835: 'After breakfasting at a respectable inn, we proceeded to the station of the Stockade Ironed-gang, on Emu Plains. The huts, in which they are lodged, are but temporary structures, and the gang, which was large, is now reduced to seventy. The Superintendent, a young man from Inverness-shire, accompanied us to the gang, with whom we had a religious interview. They have been employed in cutting a new road, up the Lapstone Hill, the ascent of the Blue Mountains, and are now completing it with a bridge, across a deep gully.'

The second to mention the road was Charles Darwin, the famous naturalist, who wrote in 1836: '... Having crossed a low piece of ground on the opposite side, we reached the slope of the Blue Mountains. The ascent is not steep, the road having been cut with much care on the side of a sandstone cliff.'

The Lennox Bridge as it became known survived unharmed and unshaken for over 100 years, carrying all road traffic to the West. In 1926 the present Highway was opened, but Lennox Bridge continued to