

This is Rosie Starr. Ed Wesley made a visit to our Jeffersonville studios in January of 2020. Our conversation led to talking about his sentiments and historic knowledge of the Skinners Falls Bridge. This single-lane bridge spans the Delaware River, connecting Cochection, New York to Milanville, Pennsylvania, just above Skinner's Falls. For structural and safety reasons, this bridge is currently closed to traffic. Plans are underway to decide the fate of this 20th century piece of history built in 1902.

Having lived in Milanville, Pennsylvania for 30 years, Ed came to appreciate the beauty of the Upper Delaware River. Let's listen to some of his archived story as he shares his sentiments and knowledge of the historic Skinners Falls Bridge. One of the pleasures of canoeing under the Milanville Bridge was to canoe through Skinners Falls which is a really nice shelf of rocks that makes a beautiful rapids there and everybody knows Skinners Falls. That's why the bridge is called the Skinners Falls Bridge, but the company that built it, Milton Skinners Company, was called the Milanville Bridge Company, and it was known as the Milanville Bridge, you know, for a long, long time.

The Milanville Historic District consists of, there are about 21 structures, including the bridge, four houses that had been owned by the Skinner family, which first came here in the 1750s, the former one-room school, a church, and of these 20 or 21 structures, 14 of them were so important that they were then and are still now listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. In just a small compass, you have an area of houses and structures like that and a beautiful bridge. So that's the Milanville Historic District. Anyway, the bridge company was chartered. Work on the bridge began in 1901. It was finished a year later, and it's been there ever since, built by the American Bridge Company, which itself has quite a history. It was founded by the great financier J.P. Morgan in 1900, and a year later incorporated in Andrew Carnegie's U.S. Steel Corporation, known as the American Bridge Company. They went on to build some of the really great structures and great bridges in the world. For example, with a steel fabricating plant that Carnegie built downriver from Pittsburgh, supplying the steel, they built the Empire State Building. And in recent years, the most famous bridge the American Bridge Company built is the Verrazano Narrows Bridge down in New York. Anyone has seen that. It's one of the wonders of the world. They built beautiful bridges all over the United States and around the world. They became known for that. And it may very well be that our little Milanville Bridge was the first bridge that this famous American bridge company ever built. And it seems to me that historically that would have some great value. If I found a sketch that Pablo Picasso, the artist made when he was five years old, I bet it would sell for thousands of dollars today. Well it is the fact that our Milanville Bridge is like one of those very early sketches that a great artist would make, and a tremendous amount of artistry went into that bridge. The trusses, particularly in different light regimes during the day, the way they reflect light, are just amazing. I think it's the most beautiful bridge that I've ever used regularly. I wish my feelings were shared by others who just take it for granted. But this bridge is also on the National Register of Historic Places, the National Register of Historic Bridges. Pennsylvania put it on the National Register so it has renown in the state and renown nationally. In the whole 75 miles of the Upper Delaware River, I think one of the most beautiful riverscapes and landscapes is right at the Milanville Bridge, above and below it. It's really a beautiful, beautiful area. Tourists should be flocking to see it, particularly in autumn. When the colors change in autumn, it's just unspeakably beautiful. If I were a great painter, I'd want to paint that area and I'd want to paint the bridge.

The superintendent informed us at a meeting on December 4th. Regional office has changed its tune on the Milanville Bridge that is very important, I guess in a category they call outstandingly remarkable or whatever you will. And so now, if PennDOT wants a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers or from the Federal Highway Administration to demolish this bridge and build another one, that has to be approved by the Park Service. And the position of the Park Service right now is, this bridge has such outstanding qualities, historically and scenically, that it must be preserved, which is a very different story so I would say when things start simmering the best thing to do if you value the bridge would be to support the park service. That was the late Ed Wesley speaking to us in 2020 from the WJFF studios with support on the importance of preserving the historic Skinners Falls bridge.

In the years that followed, our community worked actively in communication with PennDOT, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. We respectfully submitted comments to meet their deadlines. Fast forward to 2025. On Sunday, January 12, members of our Delaware River Valley community gathered inside the Union Building in Narrowsburg, New York, a large red brick structure that was once a Sullivan County School. The Delaware Hall was buzzing with folks sharing music, poetry, and sentiments in celebration of the Skinners Falls Bridge that stands in Milanville, Pennsylvania. The event was designed and produced by Cynthia Nash and Kathy Geary, and available to you on the WJFF Radio Catskill Facebook page.

Built in 1902, the Skinners Falls Bridge in Milanville is listed on the U .S. Register of Historic Places. Like anything else that's over a hundred years of age, it's in need of maintenance and repair, but the Skinners Falls Bridge is in danger of being torn down and not replaced. There are so many people that want this bridge to remain part of our Milanville community. Because it has unique architectural and structural ornamentation, the Skinners Falls Bridge represents historic value to the Delaware River Valley and the Milanville Historic District. I spoke with many participants who expressed their cherished sentiments. Let's begin with Barbara Arrindell, Director of DCS, Damascus Citizens for Sustainability. She'll share information and initiatives about preserving the Skinners Falls Bridge in Milanville, Pennsylvania. Barbara refers to PennDOT, which is the Pennsylvania Department of transportation.

Hi I'm Barbara Arrindell, director of Damascus Citizens for Sustainability and we're here in the Union which is a beautiful facility and great stuff going on. Thankfully to Kathy and Brendan Wyden who have made this all happen so the Union is fabulous. The Skinners Falls Bridge has sort of an execution warrant on it via the Governor of Pennsylvania and PENNDOT. PENNDOT, I believe, fed him inaccurate information, telling him that the Bridge was about to fall down because of movement of the New York Abutment. And in actual fact, we went through an 83 -page inspection report, that's the latest one from AECOM, PENNDOT's contractor, and that report shows that there's no change in the cracks and in the movement and in the position of the abutment. No change for most of the measurements they made for over a year. Some measurements, no change for two or three years. Not all the measurements are made every year. So the idea that there's an emergency is totally false, made up, and inaccurate. But the governor was responding, I believe, to what Pendant told him. And we have to convince him to reconsider, which I'm hopeful he will, I'm also hopeful that the Agency for Historic Preservation will also not concur on this execution warrant. This I understand is a procedure that PennDOT has used all over Pennsylvania. That's according to Nathan Holt, who's the director of bridges .org and he knows bridges all over Pennsylvania. So no, the bridge is not going to be destroyed if we can help make that a reality.

And it can be restored to its original capacity and purpose of transporting people, small cars, small trucks across the river. There's a heavy bridge five miles in each direction for larger vehicles. We're asking for contributions to support our legal efforts. DCS can be reached online, [Damascuscitizens.org](http://Damascuscitizens.org), and just look for the donate button. And Barbara, that's a very concise overview bringing us to 2025. I appreciate that. On a personal level, what are your sentiments? Would you like the Skinners Falls Bridge in Milanville to be preserved? How do you feel about that? Of course I want it preserved. It can be restored. Every entity that has looked at it has said it can be restored, including Pendant's own contractor. Why are we waiting until something terrible happens? No. No. I mean, it's a structure in a river that Pendant has not done maintenance on for close to 20 years. I've also read a good portion of this inspection report and previous ones. It's in our comment. If you look at our website, It's the first post that comes up, and PennDOT's contractor says, "Do this within six months." And PennDOT comes behind and says, "Nah, we can wait. Nah, we can wait." And they have done nothing, nothing for years and years and years, even though it's been ordered by their own contractor and they have funding to do it. Instead, they want to blow it up, literally, with explosives. Blow it up. And I am totally against that. I want it preserved. Thank you so much for sharing your knowledge and sentiments. Barbara Arrindell, you've do so much for the Damascus Citizens for Sustainability in our community. Thank you for sharing this. You're welcome. You're welcome. The website, [DamascusCitizensforSustainability.org](http://DamascusCitizensforSustainability.org) has more information on the initiatives to save the Skinners Falls Bridge. Their offices are located in Narrowsburg, inside the Union Building, 7 Erie Avenue, and at the DCS Community Hub, 25 Main Street.

Here are community members Steven Scarff and Jeff Dexter. My name is Steven Scarff. I'm a resident of Narrowsburg. And we had a raffle drawing for a wooden artwork by Jeff Dexter. It's an American flag with the image of the Skinners Falls Bridge and the inscription Skinners Falls Bridge, 1902 -2024. Hopefully it will be staying up a lot longer than that. I was the lucky drawer of the number, but I have no place to put this in my house and I feel that the DCS could use this more than I could. So I'm donating it to them, letting them do whatever they wish. They can display it for educational purposes. They can sell it or auction it off to raise funds for the preservation of the bridge. I think it's more important that I help them out and just keep this on the hang on the wall or gathering dust somewhere. That's very generous of you. Do you have any personal inspiration about the bridge an experience you'd like to share? I hate to see something that has been standing there for so long and considered a historic landmark end up being destroyed just because of some bureaucratic paperwork or the opinions of some politicians. I And also the problem is we have three jurisdictions concerning this bridge on one side is Pennsylvania, on the other side is New York, and the river going down is from the National Park Service. So it's such a complex situation. But I really would like to see it restored and kept up for historical purposes. I mean, it's a part of our history, and I hate to see history being destroyed. That was Stephen Scarff, the recipient of the wooden flag.

Jeff Dexter. I live across the river from here and it beats like Pennsylvania, Damascus Township. The etching or the engraving I put in that flag comes from Ed Wesley photograph because he did a photo pamphlet essay of the bridge taken from different angles different seasons over a period of time. So that pamphlet has quite a few pictures and this is the one I picked from him's work to show the bridge. Okay so let's describe the construction of this artwork. It is made from 13 strips of wood which represent the stripes so they're inch and a half by three feet. That's the way all flags are made so the stars, you can buy the stencils for three or four different size flags. They last a long time. It's the stars on it and then I

engrave it. I have never made a plane flag. There's over 30 of them. They all have a dedication to something. This one, I just went poking through things and I have Ed Wesley's documents and at the time he told me that that he gave it to me said someday you will help save the Mount Little Bridge with this so he kind of knew I think I'm sitting there always wondering what he meant by this but once I started working on this I go Ed you sly dog you knew exactly what you were doing. What is there on here that's particular to this that Ed would have said that to you? Well, this is the trusses here and this comes off his photograph and So are the peers the two peers are from this angle. That's New York State side on this side punch van this side Now one of the things they talk about and I can't duplicate it on this size is The amount of work that is not Structural they did little I call metal works on top which for artistic purposes And you see they duplicate over and over again So there's some things on this bridge that are artistic in nature, and that's one of them right there And it's got the center pier the wood planks the river goes underneath it and the banks and stone piers. Those are the various elements of the bridge. What type of wood did you use? This is white pine. So I don't have to paint any white on these. It shows up because these are slightly charred, which deals with the history of the flag being the battle flag in American Revolution. The stars on the other hand, they're engraved. They are not painted, that's the white pine shown through. This white pine here is slightly charred. It doesn't show up as white as the stars do, plus the stars are got that dark blue around them and they pop out just as well as if I painted them. I want to add for the listener that white pine historically here are the trees that grew in the Cushtunk, Milanville area. And going further down the River, you got the small little community called Mast Hope. It was so named because they located a very large white pine that they thought could be the main mast for the American shipped US Constitution and that's where Mast Hope gets his name from. So the white pine back here were probably two or three hundred years old. They grow nice and straight and tall and they're very useful for shipbuilding. So the different communities up and down the coast are Building ships that no other country can match. So they build the great clipper ships. They build the great warships so you've got this going on in Philadelphia They're doing the same thing and along the Hudson in the Mohawk. They're sending rafts down of huge pieces of white pine that will be used for shipping and they would do it up in Connecticut and Massachusetts all along the coast. The big white pines are moving to the ship building yards. That was Jeff Dexter, the artist of the wooden flag. The donated wooden flag is on display in the DCS storefront 25 Main Street, Narrowsburg, New York.

Here are community members, Aaron Feely -Nahem, Tom Candela, and Peter Van Slyke. - My name is Aaron Feely -Nahem. We live on Skinner Falls. We're a little A -frame up on the top of the hill. And that bridge was very important. When we bought our house 25 years ago now, it was very important to have the community on both sides of the bridge. Some of our best friends and the places we would go and buy our peaches in the Milanville store were very important in our daily life. One of the reasons we chose to live on Skinner Falls was the fact that we had the river right at our doorstep, we would walk across or drive our car, and after they had even closed it down in no longer allowed vehicles, we would take our bikes and we'd be able to go down River Road and visit our friends. It's been a terrible experience to be divided. And then the bridge is so special within the community where the birds are singing, you know, and flying the water underneath and living underneath the bridge and you have the eagles watching the river, watching them hunt and fish. And I mean, it's the biggest part of our community is the love of both sides around that bridge. That's Skinner Falls. Love it. We have to save it. So I remember asking a politician, Delgado, when he was right under, "What's going on?" And you know,

it's PennDOT. So they're telling us New York has no say. It's crazy that New York has no say. It's the Skinner Falls Bridge. Skinner Falls. Thank you Rosie.

Peter Van Slyke. So I'm a civil engineer and I work on bridges. I've been on about the 12 bridges around the Selma County area and I work as a resident engineer and inspector on bridge construction and heavy highway. Okay, so you have experience with these bridges that cross the Delaware River. That's correct. Some of them across Delaware and some across other rivers as well. Are you familiar with the architectural or the structural aspects of the Skinners Falls Bridge? I only know that it's a truss bridge and then it's on natural stone, abutments and pier well do you have any personal experience or any kind of personal sentiments that you have about the skinner's falls bridge I'm very opinionated about it because I've looked at it but not up in detail I think it'd be nice to replace it with a similar trust bridge. I think removing the members and categorize them is ridiculous because it adds a huge amount of expense to it Whereas you could just categorize the members and buy new ones instead of having 120 year old ones. And the removal would be a fraction of the cost of removing them member by member. If you replace the entire superstructure, then you would have to rehab the abutments and the pier, which I would think could be done. They would just have to go down through the upper rocks and rehab them as best they could and repoint them or maybe put a concrete cap on them. I don't know, it would have to be studied in detail, but those have been my impressions for a long time on this bridge. Obviously they spent almost \$4 million studying it. I hope they do something. - Now you said you had experience with the other crossings, the other bridge crossings. I'm familiar with the Cochection crossing, and then Pond Eddy has a crossing. Are you familiar with those? On the Pond Eddy, I know it was debated a lot because there's not that many homes on the other side. I'm not familiar with the process that went into planning or anything like that. Are you familiar with the Kellum Stalker Bridge? Not really. I know when it was worked on, but I'm just not. Because we get sort of isolated and pigeonholed into our particular projects. I'm on one in Eulan now, which is a four million dollar job. It's not quite done yet. So Eulan is 25 minutes from where we're standing here now. Well describe that bridge. The Eulan Bridge fell under an unusual rule that's come up where they're planning for storms that are theoretical that are a lot bigger than a hundred -year storm. So they're called one -half of a probable maximum flood storm which is huge. So the original bridge in Eulan was 40 feet long and the new one is a hundred feet long to accommodate a bigger flood. So the dam there had a bridge over it. So to replace one you had to replace the other. So we did replace the dam with a hundred foot long dam and then replaced the bridge above it pretty much in record time and we did all that this last summer. They're just smaller details that still need to be done. Let's talk about the Cochection Bridge and the Skinners Falls Bridge. Can you actually compare them for age and structure and character? I know visually they're different. Cochection Bridge to me is extremely functional. You have a walkway for pedestrians. It doesn't have the architectural sentimental beauty that Skinner's Falls has, but because it's so functional and practical and the work it's done quickly, it's very appealing to me, but give me your comparative expression. Well, I don't think that the Skinner's Falls Bridge is designed to carry the load and the traffic that the Cochection Bridge does, so it would not require such a massive structure. Beyond that, to make a comparison, it's probably better for somebody that's studied them more in detail. I will say that when you have natural stone abutments like Skinner's Falls, the natural materials last longer. Let's compare it to the Brooklyn Bridge, which was built around 1888, I think, and it's still in very good condition. And that's with natural stone, abutments and piers and all that. So that's a big plus for the Skinner's Falls Bridge, is that hopefully the pier and the abutments, if the top parts are rehabbed, they'd be very functional and it

would save the cost of replacing those substructures, mainly replacing the superstructure, which is a deck and the trusses. I really appreciate what you have to say if there's anything else you'd like to add I'm just sentimental like Ed Wesley about this bridge it's the feeling I have when I'm on the bridge or used to be able to go on the bridge the river is undulating underneath the bridge there's birds flying in all the trusses and you're looking at a scene as if you were in a courier and I's painting by Fanny Palmer. It's romantic ideas that I have about this bridge, sentimental. I love the wood that your feet walk over and when you used to be able to drive a car the planks would be pinging. We can have both with this bridge and we have had both. It was functional and it's aesthetic and we wouldn't have that again, but if it's trying to demolish it, then it won't be there in the future. For me, all politics aside, I think this bridge represents a greatness in America. And when people say make America great, I want to keep America great. This is an example of American greatness. It's in history. It's functional. It's beautiful. It was made in America by American parts. Every aspect of this bridge is the things you're proud about in America. So I'm going to stick to that. If they just replace it in a common sense way, the way I think I've described, that it would go pretty smoothly and probably everybody would be satisfied but if they go to all stuck on whatever rules are coming up with or whatever problems they see about rules and all that sort of thing then the wheels will just keep spinning and nothing will get done so I hope it gets replaced. Thank you. Offering what you have and over here we have your buddy Tom. Well this is Tom I'd just like to ask Pete, what do you think about the demolition method that they plan on actually using explosives and how that would, if you might think that might affect the river itself and transportation and the folks coming on the river to enjoy the river. Are they going to have to close sections of the river in order to do that? There was a meeting maybe a couple months ago about all that and I didn't recall them saying anything about explosives so hearing that today was for a first. They were talking about putting a causeway halfway across the river so it would be like a shoal going across so it would change the river traffic some. I don't know with explosives they're gonna have to get the stuff out of the river they came up with three or four different plans and as usual who owned the adjacent land and all that became an important considerations so I don't know about explosives because they have to make sure there are no river hazards and stuff. The Pete and I belong to an organization called the National Canoe Safety Patrol and we work as volunteers rescuing people on the river during the season and we use skimmers all the time. That's one of our main hotspots where we have a lot of rescues And so I would be concerned about if they start to demolish this bridge and I would imagine they're going to do it Springtime summer how that's going to affect the community as well as people coming into our community who enjoy The river and enjoy canoeing and kayaking and tubing in that area because Skinner's Falls is a big a big draw So that's what I think there's a lot lot of uncertainty about that and no answers, you know we have no answers and to hear today for the first time for me too that they plan to use explosives it's like wait a minute where where's the rubble going to go in the water you know how's that going to affect the environment the fish and that sort of thing so I guess it's all up in the air right now we just have to wait and see well I appreciate your practical comments on this. Do you have any sentiments about the Skinner's Falls Bridge? You have experience playing around it? I do. I live right up the road from it. I mean literally not even a mile up the road from Skinner's on the Pennsylvania side and it's a beautiful bridge. I used to love the sound of your car going over it on those wooden planks. It just It reminds me I'm home, you know, as I'm crossing it. Oh, I'm home now because you hear that. And I used it all the time to get to work in Callicoon or to travel back to New Jersey when I went that way. So there's a lot of nostalgia for me. Now I'm only in the area 21, 23 years, something like that. So I don't have as much of the emotional attachment to it, but I still have, you know, it's our bridge, you know? I still feel like it's

our bridge and it's been gone since actually longer than 2019 right because they would fix it And shut it down and fix it and shut it down again And then finally just shut it down and my opinion is that they never had any intention to fix that bridge Because if they did they wouldn't have spent four million dollars figuring out what to do next They would have taken that four million and started fixing the bridge So my opinion, again, is PennDOT is basically saying or hoping that we kind of forget about it, you know, and all the arguments that we did present at the meetings of how the community needed it, how it was important for EMS and first responders to use that bridge. They were just waiting to say, "See, it's been gone five years. You don't need it." I think their method but we'll see I hope I really hope that people stand up and fight for it and that they prevented from doing it you're actually you're accurate going back to something you said a minute ago in 2016 the bridge was closed and the River Reporter here in town has articles referencing those closures of the bridge so 2019 is not the only time that bridge was closed right they close it and they would make quick repairs I think they replaced some of the planks and then they would you drive by it you know go out use it for a year or so and then suddenly it was closed again and then they just close it completely and again I really think they had no intention of really fixing that bridge they say well they're not a lot of people live here not enough people use it, you know, and I think that was their mentality, it's not worth the money to them, and that's what they've been doing. And they just say, "Let's see if we wait long enough that people will say forget about it, or we can prove that they really don't need it because, guess what, EMS still works. They have to go all the way around to the Narrowsburg Bridge, or they have to go down to Kachecton in order to get to that side or move around, you know, if there's an accident Like when we're on the river, there are times when we have to call EMS, you know, and sometimes it takes a long time to get to us because of the access. So it's unfortunate, but I'm very enthusiastic or I'm feeling good about this meeting and people coming here and seeing everybody really energized about saving the bridge, and I hope it happens. It looks like we're going to have to do a legal, you know, I think that's the that's the way it's gonna have to go. - Plan originally for the demolition was supposed to start this month in January, so maybe meetings like this have given pause to think it over, and like Tom says, pursue the legal route a little bit more. - Well, I thank you both for your comments and your sentiments are echoed by many in this room. You're not alone in your feeling, your thoughts and your facts, so I very much appreciate you sharing your time. Thank you. - Those were community members, Erin Feely -Nahem, Tom Candela, and Peter Van Slyke.

- Okay, I'm Pam DeMann. I live about a mile up the hill from the bridge. And for 22 years, it was our pathway to the closest gas station, post office, pizza, and general store. So we missed that. And for a lot of times it served as a viewing place for visiting friends and neighbors who were canoeing or tubing down the river. But a year and a half ago, it was the starting place for my husband's final journey. My husband and our dog. After his memorial service, the immediate family, children and grandchildren, went to the bridge. And each said a few words, really lovely, and tossed a handful of the ashes off the bridge. It sparkled as it was going down, as it hit the water. Each handful was accompanied by a group of fish swimming along with it. And when everybody had finished, we looked around. There was a woodchuck trying to join us on the bridge. No eagles, but a woodchuck would be more like my husband's personality. Yes, and it was his ashes and his dog's ashes. Yes, it was perfect for us as we were thinking. What would we do with the ashes? Yeah, it was very good.

Oh, Mike Ransey. From Milanville, my wife and I, Tracy, raised our kids swimming underneath the bridge. They all learned to swim there. And it's a special place for us, and the bridge is very special to us,

too. And I'd like to see them restore it. And I think it'll help maintain the quality of the town of Milanville to keep the traffic limited to cars and smaller vehicles not having trucks coming through such a narrow little quaint village. That's my point of view.

My name is Chris, Chris Forelli. I grew up about three miles away from the Skinners Falls Bridge up River Road and my childhood was filled with memories of going to the bridge with my dad and the rest of my family and either walking the bridge or sometimes we would be driving from Damascus to Narrowsburg and instead of taking 97 down, we would just take River Road, cross over the bridge, maybe do that a couple of times and then continue on our way. So it just filled all of our childhoods with wonderful memories and it's a beautiful landmark for the community and it'll be a shame to lose it so I hope there's a way. Now Chip was your father, he was a photographer, do you remember any photographs that he might have taken? I don't recall any specific photos on the bridge but what I will say is my father passed away in 2022 and one of the last times we actually went out shooting together. We went out to Skinners and we parked in the park service lot by the bridge. We walked back and forth over the bridge in the middle of winter and then we went down to the Rocks at Skinners Falls and we in his style a beautiful black-and-white style of long exposure he shot water flowing over the Rocks at Skinners. I'm not sure we actually haven't developed that film yet But I imagine some of those photos must have the bridge in the background, and we're going to go and find them. At least that's my hope. That's a very, very special memory to me, and the bridge is very involved in that. Thank you so much for sharing that.

Hi, I'm the Reverend Laurie Stewart, and I'm the publisher of The River Reporter. And the one thing that strikes me about this, what's happening with the bridge is just how important it is that people get the information that they need. And I think that it's a very important key. I mean, one of the things that people are wondering about is, you know, why didn't we hear that the bridge was deteriorating before, and then the river reporter, of course, is looking at, you know, the different reports, but access to I access to information that is based on the community needs and accurate information. I'm just so struck with how destructive misinformation is and also information that's coming because it supports an action. And so I think that one of the things that's so important for people is that they stay informed and stay informed by reading reporting or listening to reporting where those journalists are just trying to tell people the information that they need to live more fully and to be actualized and to make good decisions in their communities. Yes, Laurie, I completely agree with you and understand. But I remember when the bridge was closed in 2016, not just 2020. And I said I bet the River Reporter would have documented this. So I went to the archives of the River Reporter and found several articles. And I want to thank you for that because I said I can rely on this information. I believe Isabella Braverman wrote one of the articles. There were several back in 2016 and the subsequent years. So you're correct and thank you for reminding the audience and I'm just so proud to know that for 50 years that you've been giving this community a vehicle for communicating and you continue to go. - Yes, absolutely. You know, and those people who don't subscribe now really is the time, it's really important that we support local media and accurate information. - Thank you so much for your comments and your work. You can view all the January 12th Skinners Falls bridge celebration event performances on the WJFF Radio Catskill Facebook page. More information on the history of Skinners Falls Bridge is available online. TomRue .net /SFBridge.

My name is Annie Stanley. I live in Narrowsburg. I'm Chair of the Tustin –Harris Community Garden and I also have Smokey Bell's Art retreat on the Ten Mile River. The Skinners Falls Bridge, I think this whole issue started with fracking. And I think that I remember they were driving the trucks over the Skinners Falls Bridge, the fracking trucks that were doing the test wells, and there was a bunch of us that were even going to bring our mattresses down there and have a slumber party and stopped the trucks driving over the bridge. At the time, that was the early days when Damascus Systems for Sustainability was being created and there was a whole group of us in town that were fighting fracking. So my theory was that the fracking companies wanted to upgrade the bridges for their trucks and then when they didn't get the contracts and it was banned. They pulled out the money and then PennDOT at the time who might have been pro fracking they were like oh well, you know, you didn't allow fracking happening so we're going to let this bridge go to hell. If there is any substantial damage to that bridge it was caused by the fracking truck. I think the fracking companies should be called responsible for potential damage to the bridge and they should pay for the damage. It's going to be a real shame if they don't fix it.

Cass Collins, I live in Narrowsburg in the flats. Yeah, my most personal connection to the Skinners Falls Bridge is through the play that Cynthia Nash wrote, "Crossings." When I first read that play and I read the first monologue of the old woman and her connection to the bridge, I felt that character inhabit me. And I immediately knew what she was feeling and her description about the water being together with her husband on the bridge together and I love the river's endless flow below us and the sky that looked like it would never be anything but blue and that really spoke to me and I love the surface of the bridge I love the little cupcake steel ornaments of it and of course it's between our state and another state it unites us so beautifully below it people love to play and swim and come together in the warmer months the idea of them blowing it up is like it makes my heart hurt. I feel like it's a knife in the community.

- Jim Stratton. I think personally, a bridge is not just something to go from one end to another. It's a symbolic thing because you have the beauty of having the river, of the beauty of having the land around it and the trees, the ice for that matter, brings everything to a kind of, I don't know, feeling of it's your own backyard. It's a sense that it's part of your home. And when you deny that, when you are not permitted to go from one side of your home to another to some extent something's been taken away from you. I don't want to see that happen.

I'm Joanne Brinkerhoff from Milanville and I used to live at the house that was right on the Pennsylvania side of the Skinner's Falls Bridge and The house that I was living in was built by L .J. Hawker, who was one of the people on the bridge plaque, who was the Milanville Bridge Company. So we had all types of memorabilia at the house about the bridge and about the toll house that was there originally. And the bridge was ever present in my life for 25 years we lived in that house. You could see that bridge from your front porch. From my front porch and from my bedroom window, it was ever -present. Sometimes we'd even see people jumping off the bridge to swim, which they weren't supposed to. It's just an amazing vista to look out and the river was constantly changing. You'd have it frozen over in the winter and, you know, running rapids in the summer, but always the bridge, always the bridge there. And we had friends on both sides of the river. Actually, the people that originally owned our house after the Hockers built it were the Lothians who built on the New York side of the river. So we had a commonality there with the house and the bridge and, you know visited back and forth and when I sold that house the Lothians bought it back and now all their grandchildren are living there in that house and so for

them to go back and forth to see their family they have to drive like 10 miles now. The bridge has to stay. My late husband Bob was a real preservation enthusiast he knew everything there was to know about the river and historic preservation and got really, really involved. In fact, there was, at the time, an organization called the Milanville Historic Society that he got our house registered on that. And I always think about how he would feel to know about the bridge today, that he'd be right here with us all, his spirit, to preserve the bridge. When you looked at the bridge or were standing on the bridge you look out and felt like you were in a Courier and Ives painting by Fannie Palmer. And he was a big collector of Courier and Ives paintings and also our very good friend Jim McGinley from Milanville, a prolific and wonderful painter. We have many of his paintings of the bridge. He was very connected to the river and did amazing artwork around the bridge and Milanville and Cocheton in the whole area and he's now gone and... But his work and the work of Ed Wesley they're very vibrant in this community to carry on the wishes of these people that really wanted to preserve this bridge so they might have laid some of the inspirational groundwork but here we are carrying it forward and the music of poison love at the celebrations of the Skinner's Falls version is extremely impressive. Thank you so much Rosie and thanks for for doing all of this and you and and all the people that put this together and the question now is what's the next step? Yeah the next step is to continue to look for legal actions to preserve it. You want to talk about the inspiration of the music that you had for the play? Yeah, well the bridge song, I actually wrote that song because I was angry. I wrote it when they closed the bridge and when I found out it wasn't going to open anytime soon. I just went home and wrote that song like within a couple of hours because I just needed a catharsis. and I didn't think we would ever perform it or that anything would ever come of it. But then when Caroline and Eric approached us and told us that they were producing a play that was written by Cynthia Nash and it was about the bridge, would we be willing to do some original music for it? I pulled out that song and it was just perfect. And I did have a lot of other songs that were bridge related or river related because the river is a constant in my life. That's my inspiration for writing. It's all about the people who live here and where we are and how lucky we are to be here. And so, it's my total inspiration. Thank you, Joanne.

I'm Kathy Geary, and it was really a privilege to host the celebration of Skinner's Falls Bridge here at the Narrowsburg Union on January the 12th, 2025. And I was really astounded by the passion And the depth of expression from the poets, Eric Baylin, Sheila Dugan, and Tracy Goss -Ronce, the Farm Arts Collective, did an incredible, a childhood story, London Bridge is falling down, and they turned it into a very powerful statement. And the music from the crossing, and all the performers that we had, Lucas Rothman was singing, and all the tributes, and then towards the end of the program, after we'd all been celebrating and feeling really good, Tom Rue got up and delivered the hard information, the history of what has been going on with the preservation and maintenance of the bridge. Every other bridge on the river is managed by-- one is managed by the New York Department of Transportation, the next one is PennDOT, Department of Transportation, every other bridge down the river and it's PennDOT's responsibility. And so many facts came out, but the turnout and the incredible experience of having this community sit intently and listen and focus on what was said, it gave me such a sense of activism and of our community come together, it was truly a privilege to be a part of it. Cynthia Nash produced this thing and she was tireless in reaching out to so many different people, and it was a pleasure to host, but I really feel like the majority of the work was really Cynthia Nash. What an amazing woman.

I'm Cynthia Nash, and I'm deeply moved, as always, by our community. How we come together, and particularly in this case, how we've let go of party lines and everything else to stand together for the bridge. There were people from all walks of life here and that was what we wished for and we had amazing performances by our local talent and you know our informed speakers so I'm deeply moved that's how I feel about today and I leave here with hope. What are your sentiments about saving the Skinner's Falls Bridge? I remember the first time I came over the bridge. The bridge saved my life one night. When I had a severe asthma attack I would not have made it to the ER without that bridge being there. But it's integral to my life as trees, as the river. It's powerful presence and it is irreplaceable. It is absolutely irreplaceable. It's an incredible gateway between Sullivan County and Wayne County and if it's preserved it's an opportunity for the two counties to really foster more tourism. I tell people all the time when they see my pictures of Wayne County they say where are you? Are you in Vermont? I say "No, I'm in Wayne County, Pennsylvania, and you can get to it in less than two hours from New York." That's something that the county could do. It could be an exquisite gateway into northeastern Pennsylvania. I'm in Milanville, walking distance to the bridge. When the bridge is active, the lights from the bridge people crossing it shine into my kitchen at night now it's quiet it's silent it's waiting to breathe again but it's hard to still there and the heart of the community is with you thank you for producing this January 12th at the union you did a fabulous job thank you thank you very much it wasn't just me it was a lot of shared energy, as always, around here.

♪ A bridge is like a state of mind ♪ ♪ The different worlds connected ♪ ♪ If we go a little slower ♪ ♪ We can make it last ♪ ♪ The way to the future ♪ ♪ Is the bridge from the past ♪ ♪ Isn't it worth saving? Isn't it worth saving? Isn't it worth saving? Save it all from the wrecking ball This bridge is more than cold heart steel From olden days a glory a link to how our hearts can heal and tell a different story dead of building walls but bridges what we like once we burn the future there is no going back Isn't it worth saving? Isn't it worth saving? Isn't it worth saving? Save it all from the wrecking ball This bridge has crossed a great divide of history in the making. A world where future hopes collide and dreams are for the taking. If we change the ♪ The bridge will take us there ♪ ♪ We can save our future ♪ ♪ Or build a bridge to nowhere ♪ ♪ Isn't it worth saving ♪ ♪ Isn't it worth saving ♪ ♪ Isn't it worth saving ♪ ♪ Save it all from the wrecking ball, save it all from the wrecking ball.

Featured is music by Poison Love Band, Milanville community members Joanne Brinkerhoff on guitar, and Dan Brinkerhoff on violin and banjo composed this music inspired by preserving the Skinners Falls bridge You can find poison love band on their Facebook page The donated wooden flag is on display in the DCS storefront 25 Main Street Narrowsburg, New York You can view all the January 12th Skinners Falls Bridge Celebration Event performances on the WJFF Radio Catskill Facebook page. More information on the history of Skinners Falls Bridge is available online, [tomru.net/sfbridge](http://tomru.net/sfbridge) and [Damascus citizens for sustainability .org](http://Damascuscitizensforsustainability.org).

This is Rosie Starr, that's March 19th, the last day of winter. It's Wednesday, about 10 .30 in the morning in Milanville. If you could hear the sound in the distance. It's a construction site on the New York side of the Skinners Falls Bridge that's destined for demolition. I parked at one of my neighbors Sheila Dugan who's in a historic Skinners Falls house and standing at the Skinners Falls Bridge in Milanville, Pennsylvania. I'm standing here with a prominent person who lives in a Skinners Falls house. Her name is Sheila Dugan. Sheila's standing at the gate on the Milanville Bridge on the Pennsylvania side. Sheila,

tell me, I'm standing behind the police tape and you're standing on the other other side. And I'm standing on the other side because this is my bridge. It's my Skinners Falls Bridge. I live in a Skinners Falls house and this is my Skinners Falls Bridge. For 25 years my children walked across it and it was lovely and now nobody can walk across it anymore. And I'm here to stop people from tearing it down. PennDOT, if you're listening, I particularly am addressing PennDOT for wanting to tear down this bridge for no reason, for no reason. It can be fixed, anything can be fixed. Fix it. Fix this bridge and it will go on and will go on. It's March 19th, the last day of winter. Yes, it is. And it's exactly half a year until my 87th birthday. So it's my special day. I honor your commitment to this. But there are police officers here than PennDOT. Yes, there are. And what are they doing? Nothing. They won't do anything. They came to arrest me, apparently, but they're not going to do it if it sounds like because nobody wants this bridge down, nobody does. Everybody wants this bridge to stay up, and so do I. What do you think you can accomplish by standing here like this? Well, what I can accomplish is I can get arrested, number one. Number two, I can prevent self -PennDOT who is over there. I can prevent PennDOT from tearing this bridge down. If they would only fix it, fix it. We need to have it fixed. Okay. We've all tried and you're still trying. We're going to keep in touch. What's your last words? My last words are keep in touch. Thank you Sheila.

The Skinners Falls Bridge was erected on ground that predates the American Revolution in what is called Cushetunk. It was built during the Gilded Age in 1902 by the American Bridge Company from McGee Steel. It is uniquely and beautifully appointed in structural detail. It was recognized by the National Park Service as remarkable in quality and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. It spans the Upper Delaware River in a location of natural beauty. It is truly a stunning jewel in our historic community. When it was open to vehicle traffic, it served the Milanville, Pennsylvania and Cocheton, New York residents and local businesses. The Skinners Falls Bridge represents what is great about America. We love it. We want to keep it. Please pair it and maintain it. This is Rosie Starr.