

Clark Bridge Marks 30 Years Since Opening

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - Thirty years ago on Jan. 5, 1994, Clark Bridge opened to the public.

Also known as the Super Bridge, this bridge made history as the first of its kind in the U. S. It is a steel-framed cable-stayed bridge, which means most of the weight is supported by the cables, and pylon provides additional support. The design of the double cables was more cost-effective and provided more support, but it was so unique that Clark Bridge was the subject of a [NOVA documentary called “Super Bridge”](#) in 1997.

Clark Bridge is 108 feet wide and replaced the old Clark Bridge, which was only 20 feet wide. It is maintained by the Illinois Department of Transportation and moves U.S. Route 67 across the river between Illinois and Missouri.

Alton Mayor David Goins said the 30th anniversary of the Clark Bridge on Friday, Jan. 5, 2024, is a special date.

"It is a very important day and it was when the bridge was first opened," he said. "When the bridge was erected it brought national attention in a documentary series and it has continued to create national attention over the years. It took a lot of hard effort on the part of those who raised funds and worked on the bridge."

The late Jack Jacoby was one of the leaders of the fundraising effort to build the bridge. Jacoby and Jack Helmkamp and many others were heavily involved in that process. The riverfront plan took several years and Jacoby and Helmkamp were keys to being sure the Clark Bridge became a reality, among both of their many civic contributions to the region.

Jacoby and Helmkamp were asked by the nine mayors representing the River Bend area communities to co-chair the dedication ceremonies and celebrations of the new replacement Clark Bridge. The Clark Bridge dedication day is one of the most celebrated moments in Alton's long history.

Mayor Goins was a member of the Alton Police Force in 1993 and was one of the leaders of the D.A.R.E. program for his team. He vividly remembers the construction process. What stood out to Mayor Goins was how the old bridge structure had to be taken down to build the new one because it was quite an intricate process.

"It was also amazing to me all the underwater work with pillars and foundation of the bridge before actually building on top," he said.

Today, Mayor Goins said he believes the Clark Bridge rates as one of the most recognizable features of Alton.

"People take the Clark Bridge to and from Missouri," he said. "There is so much rich history involved in the Clark Bridge and what it has meant to Alton."

The bridge has undergone routine maintenance since its construction, but no major changes have been made in the 30 years since the bridge opened.

In the below video you can experience the old Clark Bridge days before it closed and the new bridge opened. The bridge video has been viewed thousands of times on Riverbender.com from people from all over the world.

Video Submitted by Eric Wendel

[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)