

BATTLE CREEK ENQUIRER

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Crane operator Leo Schnieder and Nels Raynor of Back Ornamental Iron work together Wednesday morning in Marshall to load parts of the Indian Trail Bridge onto a truck. It will be transported to Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., this week.

PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE PARSHALL FOR THE ENQUIRER

Bridge going from Marshall to Purdue

Students will reassemble old structure and use it as training tool

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MARSHALL — A 50-ton bridge, broken down in pieces, was loaded Wednesday for a 200-mile trek to offer some knowledge to engineering students in Indiana.

It took two flatbed trucks, a large crane and hours of loading Wednesday to prepare the Indian Trail Bridge for its journey from the Calhoun County Road Department's storage yard in Marshall to an outdoor training Purdue University facility in West Lafayette, Ind. The bridge, a 52-ton riveted polygonal Warren Truss, will be dusted off and reassembled at the university's Steel Bridge Inspection Training and Engineering, or S-BRITE, Center.

"They'll put it up on posts and engineering students can go on the bridge," said Vern Mesler, a welding instructor at Lansing Community College who has worked with Calhoun County on historical bridge projects. "They'll inspect it, they'll learn about riveting, they'll learn about structure and how to inspect these types of bridges. They're using this as an educational tool."



Jordan Curtis helps Nels Raynor put large pieces of wood under a piece of the Indian Trail Bridge. It will help keep the piece in place as a truck drives it to Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., this week.

The Indian Trail Bridge was built in 1937 for \$33,201 and spanned the Belle River in St. Clair County's China Township near Port Huron. The main span is 88 feet; the length of the structure is 93.8 feet; and the roadway was 24 feet

wide.

It's one of several bridges in the hands of Calhoun County; six are on display for the public to enjoy at

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Bridge

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Historic Bridge Park. The site is now part of the Calhoun County Trailway, which supporters hope to ultimately connect with the Gre Lake-to-Lake Trails.

Mesler said another four that are in good shape remain in the county's storage yard; he's working with other organizations in hopes of having them displayed somewhere.

"The idea is, let's not get rid of what we have," Mesler said. "Let's figure out how we can repair it, rehabilitate it or restore it. And that's what we need to do: teach these young folks — young engineers and young craftsmen — that just because it has a rivet, doesn't mean it's a bad bridge."

Purdue got a good price for the bridge — \$1, as the county isn't allowed to simply give away the property. The bridge will be housed at a site that university officials hope will ultimately cover more than 20 acres. It will include a bridge component gallery, research pads, and a field vehicle used for infrastructure monitoring.

Robert Connor, an associate professor in civil engineering at Purdue and director of S-BRITE, told the Times-Herald in Port Huron that the bridge will be part of its bridge component gallery. It will help the university teach younger students how to fix old bridges like the Indian Trail.

"Old structures like this are, to me, a real treasure to have," Connor said. "I can show pictures and talk all day about corrosion ... but there's nothing better than taking somebody down there and showing it."

Times Herald reporter Bob Gross contributed to this report. Call Jennifer Bowman at 966-0589. Follow her on Twitter: @jenn_bowman