

Occoquan Captured by Winning Artists

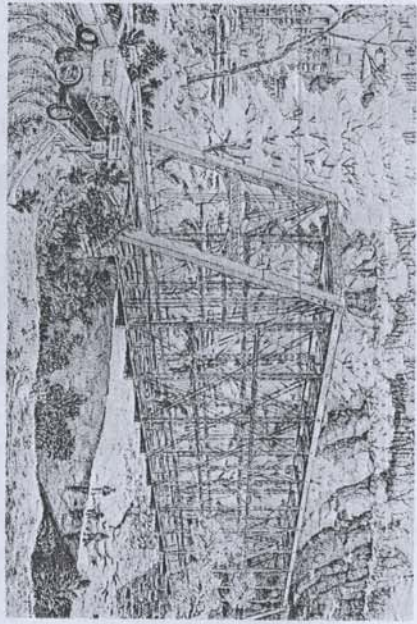
Editor's Note: This is the first article in a four-part series on the Town of Occoquan which will observe its centennial next year.

By Ann Holiday

Fishermen quietly whiling away the time on the banks of the Occoquan River are a perennial part of the flavor of the Town of Occoquan, captured by two artists whose sketches represent the town's annual and the nation's Bicentennial celebrations.

Dave Cabitto of Dale City included the fishermen under the old Pratt truss bridge in his sketch of the landmark which was washed away last year by Hurricane Agnes. Betha Owen of Alexandria depicted the Mill House, the new bridge and a family heading for the water with fishing poles and picnic hamper.

The five sketches are



"BRIDGE" BY DAVE CABITTO
 FOR THE VERY BEST IN
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expected to go on sale next week at selected Occoquan shops to raise funds for the celebration of the town's first 100 years in 1974 and the nation's first 200 years in 1976.

The town was thriving before the American Revolution, with advantage of its location between the Tidewater and Piedmont regions of Virginia. Four mills, a cotton mill and an iron foundry were operating in the 1780's.

The Mill House, as sketched by Mrs. Owen, now serves as a museum open to the public. Occoquan Inc. It was the remains of the miller and is all that remains of the town's early commercial activities.

Part of the stone structure of the grist mill remained in a recognizable form until the river, swollen and churned by the waters of Agnes, tore out the remaining stone and uncovered the bearings and main shaft of

the water wheel. This machinery is now on display inside the museum.

Cabitto's sketch features the old iron bridge, one of the few examples of its type of bridge construction left in the United States before it was washed away in the flood.

An article in the newsletter of the Pioneer America Society, prepared by Joyce Wilkinson, called the bridge a "rare and excellent example of the iron truss bridges which were built in this country from 1840 until the turn of the century, when steel replaced iron as the most practical material for bridge construction."

The date of construction was 1878, according to metal plates on each end of the bridge. Cabitto's sketch, based on a watercolor he saw while on the bridge, was still done when the bridge was still under construction.

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It was built by King Iron and Bridge Mfg. Co. of Cleveland, Ohio, one of the most renowned bridge building companies in America at that time, according to Mrs. Wilkinson. The design of the bridge is based on the Pratt truss bridge, first patented in 1844.

The iron truss bridge, according to Mrs. Wilkinson, "indicated the era of scientific bridge design for these bridges were constructed on the basis of mathematical knowledge, while their predecessors, the wooden bridge, was built more or less by 'rule of thumb' with no quantitative information or stress being available."

The parts were joined by bolts and rivets, brought to the site and then assembled as a child would assemble a bridge using a Erector set. Mrs. Wilkinson wrote: Occoquan example was 209 feet long, about the longest span possible for the early design.

Such bridges were easily constructed and economically maintained, and helped bring about the expansion of the nation's early road network.

Historic groups and Occoquan residents wanted to preserve the bridge, but the State Highway Department had other ideas. These ideas included removing the old one-lane bridge and replacing it with a downstream with a four-lane concrete span which would cut off Poplar Lane, a row of newer homes within the town limits, including those of the mayor, town treasurer and one of the members of the town planning commission at that time.

The town, with backing from groups and individuals such as Historic Occoquan and Mrs. Wilkinson, persuaded the highway men to revise the plans, lowering the bridge and leaving access open to Poplar Lane.

The measure continued to attempt to have the new design plan scrapped, but the city, falling through to at least maintain the old bridge for historic interest, Occoquan people argued that the new bridge

The debate ended shortly after 9 a.m. Thursday, June 22, 1972. Surges of water pounding against the bridge's wooden flooring and iron beams at last proved too much. Rivers began popping and the bridge finally folded up and tore loose, according to one witness.

Parts of the bridge were later pulled out of the water, but the historic plates were never found.

Without the old, rattling one-lane bridge, Occoquan was no longer on a main route from Fairfax to Prince William. The quarry seen across the river in both sketches had to send a car seven miles to the post office in Occoquan to pick up its mail.

A month later, the new bridge began a certainly when one span of Route 1, weakened by the flood waters, sagged and fell, with tumbling into the river.

Since the flood, Occoquan had been asking for a temporary span to link the tow with Fairfax County. The demise of the Route 1 bridge brought about the construction of their temporary truss bridge sketched by Mrs. Owen, for use while the new bridge was under construction.

The round piers were poured, the bridge was brought upstream by barge, used in another temporary situation, and put in place, and a new deck and railing were constructed on the site. The new bridge is no wider and every bit as noisy as the old one. It is cursed by those who must negotiate the sharp angle on the Occoquan side, and it is hoped by many that it will

Members of the band have performed in various cities and accumulated a number of trophies and medals for their excellence in performing. This past summer band members took a three-week tour of Scotland and exchanged some piping with the native Scottish pipers.

Band members represent over 11 different schools in Monticemy and Prince George's Counties in Maryland.

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Manassas Group Needs Accompanist

The Manassas Choral Society is in need of a piano accompanist to serve as

The benefit concert, conducted by Karl Hatch, opens this year's season of performances by the Arlington Symphony.

Belgium Violinist To Perform Oct. 7

One of Belgium's most renowned violinists, Marcel Deodot, will be the guest artist at the Arlington Symphony's benefit concert Oct. 7 at 3 pm.

The Journal Messenger

Whether or not the temporary bridge will be made permanent is still under discussion, but most friends of Occoquan hope they will be glad to take another look at this. Fugate continued.

Friday, Sept. 21, 1973 13-A

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The town, with backing from groups and individuals such as Historic Occoquan and Mrs. Williams, met to revise the highway plan to restore the high-voltage bridge and planning access open to Poplar Lane.

Pressure continued to attempt to have the new bridge plan scrapped completely, or if falling this, to at least maintain the old bridge for historic interest. Occoquan people argued that the new bridge would cut off the town and cause noise and pollution. The highway department maintained the bridge was necessary and the old bridge was not adequate for the traffic between Occoquan and Fairfax County.

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Band members represent over 11 different schools in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland.

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Manassas Group Needs Accompanist

The Manassas Choral Society is in need of a piano accompanist to serve as rehearsal accompanist and assistant director.

Interested persons should prepare a written resume of their experiences and call the director, James H. Westerhouse, at 398-1097, to arrange for a personal audition.

Belgium Violinist To Perform Oct. 7

One of Belgium's most renowned violinists, Marcel Debot, will be the guest artist at the Arlington Symphony's benefit concert Oct. 7 at 3 p.m. in the Keatore Junior High School.

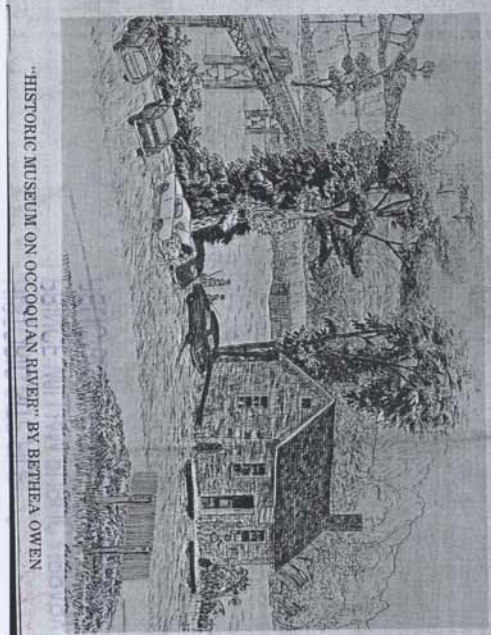
The benefit concert, conducted by Karl Rudis, opens this year's season of performances by the Arlington Symphony.

Featured work on the program will be Khachaturian's Violin Concerto, presented in this area for the first time.

For ticket information call the Arlington Symphony Performing Arts at 398-2101 weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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