

# THE LEDGER INDEPENDENT

Vol. 40, No. 520 24 pages, 75¢

www.maysville-online.com

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2008

Inch by inch

## Bridge's restoration nears completion

By WENDY MITCHELL  
Staff Writer

MOUNT OLIVET — There were no monster cranes or dozens of crew members at the settling in of Johnson Creek Covered Bridge Thursday, just three men, four jacks and scads of time.

Everything about the Johnson Creek Covered Bridge restoration project has been about time. First proposed in 1995, and begun in 2007, the \$1 million project is inching closer to completion every day.

On Thursday, despite a drizzle of moisture which became a driving rain by 10 a.m., Arnold Graton, Don Walker and Ron Gallagher persevered at carefully measuring and adjusting the massive structure as they prepared to lower the main frame of the 131 foot long bridge onto its new permanent foundation of wood and concrete.

"We want the arch to begin to take the weight first so it disbursts (weight) as the rest of it begins to touch," said Graton as he adjusted chinking and measured the spaces between the arch beams, cribbing pile and foundation.

Down a little, up a notch or two, down a little again; the process was not to be hurried, by man or mother nature.

Seemingly oblivious to the weather, water dripping from his hair, Graton and his crew of two continued to do whatever was necessary to safely ease the bridge down from the blocks holding it up.

For a while, Walker and Gallagher synchronized lifting the bridge with their portable jacks then reversed the process at Graton's instruction.

Occasionally Gallagher was sent to the

See BRIDGE on Page A2

Down a little, up a notch or two, down a little again; the process was not to be hurried, by man or mother nature.

### VIDEO



For video coverage of this story, go to [www.maysville-online.com](http://www.maysville-online.com).

## WEATHER

### BRIDGE

From Page A1

portable table saw to shave a fraction off a piece of wood so it could replace another in the cribbing pile.

"It takes time," Graton said.

Estimating a few hours to complete the process, the bridge was within five inches of the foundation by 10:30 a.m.

As rains continued, the crew paused to take a break and allow Mother Nature rain time before continuing work.

Even through the rain, details of the original bridge structure were plain to see. The massive arches still contain a large portion of the original wood and on them the markings of man in the form of initials and a few names. Only rotted or damaged pieces were replaced, Graton said.

"We did find my grandfather's name carved on a piece which was too rotted to leave on the bridge but I saved it," said Buffalo Trace Covered Bridge Commission Chairman Steve Donovan.

More of the 13 remaining covered bridges in Kentucky are in need of restoration, officials said.

Graton is looking forward to possibly working on the Cabin Creek



Terry Prather/Staff

A member of the Johnson Creek Bridge restoration team inspects the exposed skeleton of the bridge

Covered Bridge in Lewis County. He took a look at it earlier in the week.

"If there was an emergency, it is that one," Graton said.

Robertson County and the Buffalo Trace area is beginning to grow on Graton, who also restored the Goddard-White Covered Bridge in Fleming County.

"I really like working around here; everyone is so friendly and helpful," Graton said.

Cabin Creek Covered Bridge is next on the Buffalo Trace Covered Bridge Commission wish list, said

Donovan, during his stop to observe the bridge lowering process Thursday.

Kentucky Heritage Council coordinator for the project Patrick Kennedy also took time to observe the process and talked to Graton and Donovan about the Johnson Creek Covered Bridge project and the needs of the Cabin Creek Covered Bridge.

When it is no longer needed in Robertson County, Graton's steel skeletal truss system in use at Johnson Creek bridge may be put into the Cabin Creek bridge to sta-

bilize it until restoration there can begin, officials said.

Those visiting Johnson Creek Covered Bridge in the next few days may hear some creaking and crackling sounds, but those are part of the normal settling process, Graton said.

Once settled in place, the roofing, flooring and siding will be put on the bridge, he said.

Contact Wendy Mitchell at [wendy.mitchell@lee.net](mailto:wendy.mitchell@lee.net) or call 606-564-9091, ext. 276.

For more area news, go to [www.maysville-online.com](http://www.maysville-online.com).