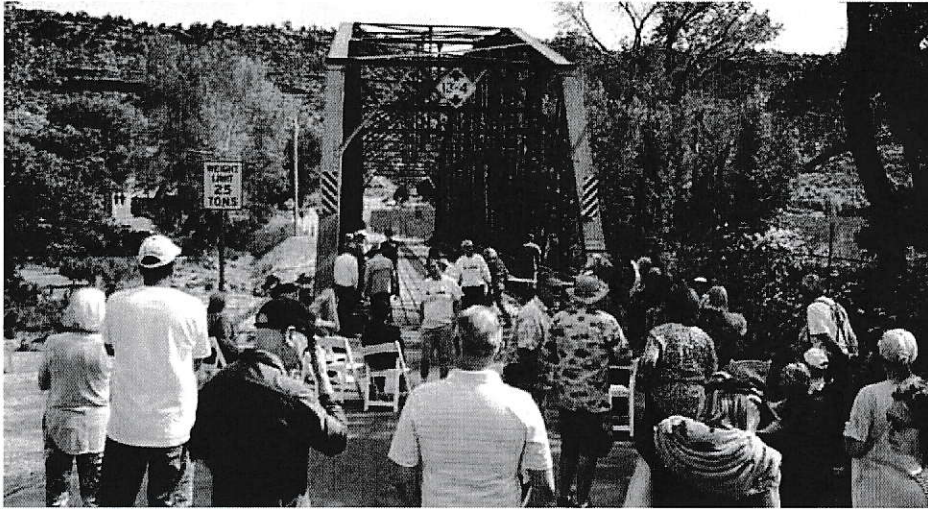


Ribbon Cut on Restored Rockville Bridge

BY KIRK HUFFAKER



On May 3, 2019, Mayor Pam Leach and leaders in the Rockville community cut the ribbon at the historic Rockville Bridge, marking the successful end of a seven-year effort to save the namesake Virgin River crossing.

The Parker Through-truss bridge is the last of its kind in Utah. It was built in 1924 by the National Park Service to provide access for tourists traveling between parks. It is believed to be the only structure outside of park boundaries to be funded by the National Park Service, and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.

Rockville Bridge also holds a significant place in the hearts of town residents and thousands of tourists who visit it every year. Besides its picturesque aesthetic and setting, it has served as backdrop for family photos, music videos, and is the way to get to popular sites like Grafton and Gooseberry Mesa.

What prompted the situation was an engineering study that required UDOT to reduce the load rating of the bridge from 25 tons to 14 tons. The current legal limit for a transportation bridge is 36 tons. Despite the load reduction, the Utah Joint Highway Commission prioritized the bridge for rehabilitation funding, given the strong local advocacy to keep the bridge

functional, and allowed one-and-a-half times the normal amount to flow the project.

The difference between the cost of a new bridge and rehabilitation was required to be raised by the town. A multi-year, multi-pronged strategy was implemented to raise \$170,000. Artists rallied to raise money in summer 2016. The Utah State Legislature, with sponsor Representative Brad Last leading the effort, provided a \$100,000 appropriation. Major contributions

were received from the Simmons Family Foundation, George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation, and National Trust for Historic Preservation. And hundreds of individual smaller donations that flowed in from all over the world were valuable in showing the broad, diverse support for bridge preservation.

It's a tremendous accomplishment by Rockville; one of Utah's smallest (in population) municipalities. But they showed the tremendous creativity and persistence it takes to save a town's most recognized and valued historic landmarks.