

The Iron Bridge

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Onsdag d. 12. september 2018 kl. 15-17

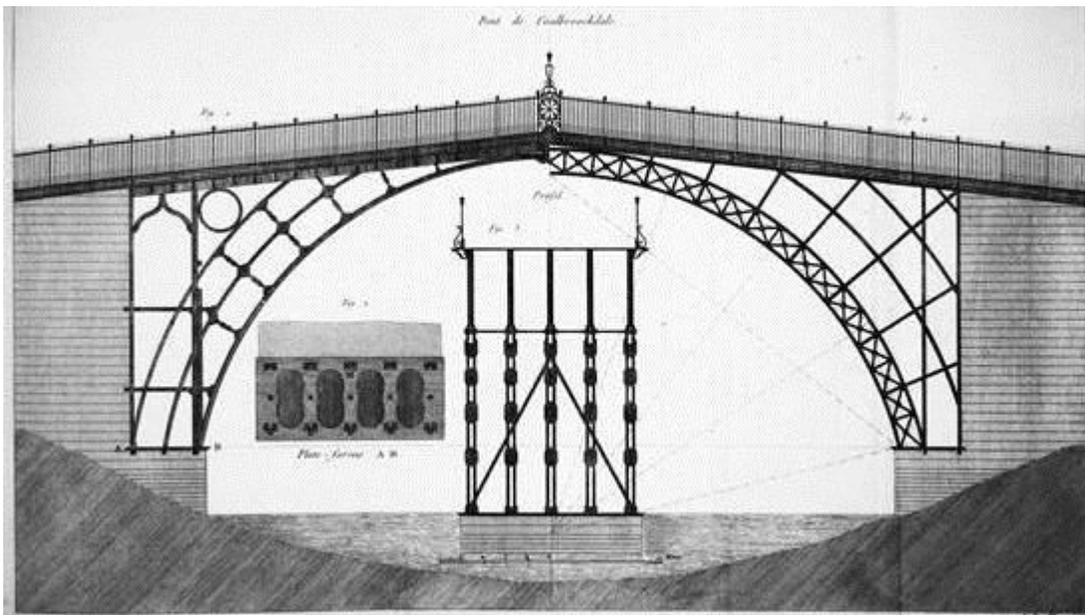
Arr. HITEK og Vejhistorisk Selskab

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The earliest cast iron bridges imitated those in timber or stone, because there was no established idea of what an iron bridge should be like, and most of them were simple arches. But over the next century wrought iron, and then steel, became important bridge-building materials. The arch bridge was joined by the suspension bridge, the box girder, the parallel-chorded girder, and even more elaborate forms. And bridges fabricated in Europe were sent across the world to places like Latin America, Japan, and India. Exported bridges faced special problems - the cost and difficulty of transporting the components, the lack of skilled labour at the site, and unexpected foundation problems and hydrological conditions. These prefabricated bridges will be the main focus of the presentation.

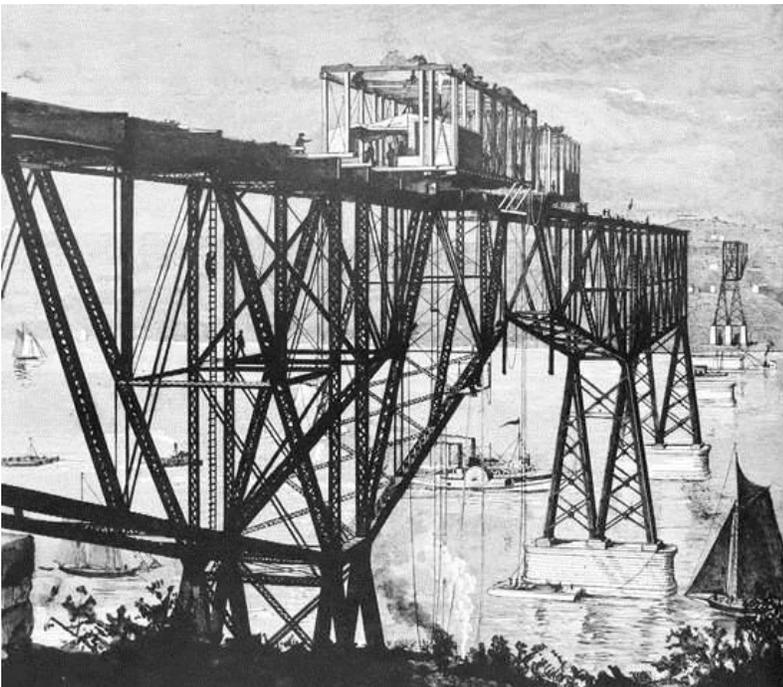


The Coalbrookdale Bridge, England, as built in 1776-9, and as it should have been according to Rondelet

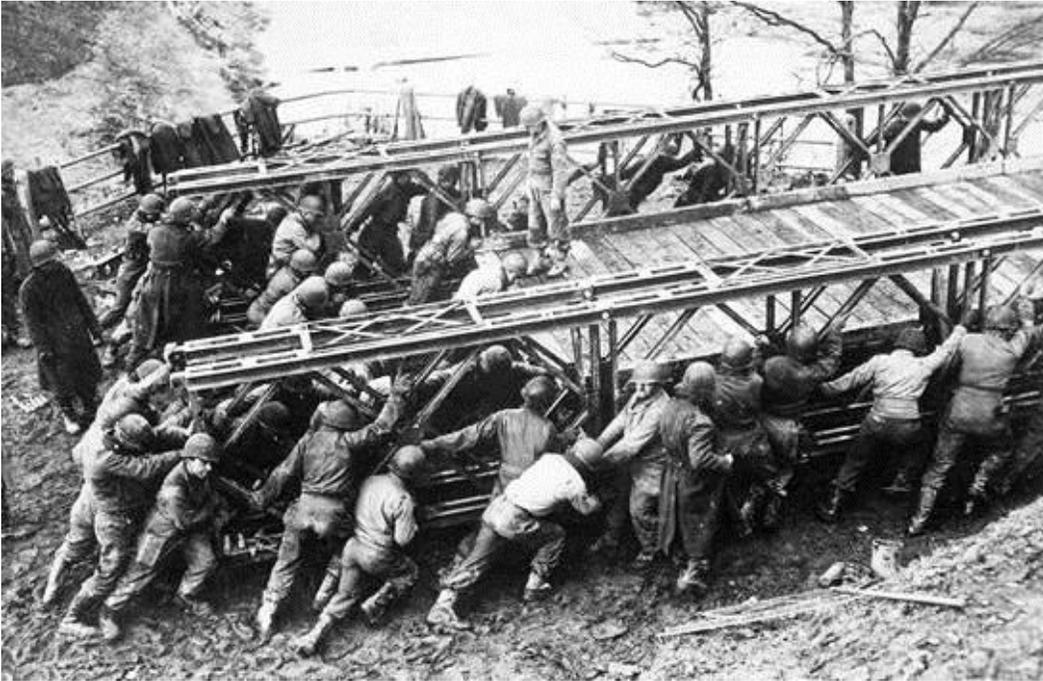
Jean-Baptiste Rondelet, *Traité Théorique et Pratique de l'Art de Bâtir* (author, 6 vols, Paris 1812-17), vol I, pl clxxv.



The 'Rainbow Bridge' (Pont des Messageries Maritimes or Pont de Khanh-Hoi), Ho Chi Minh City by les Établissements Eiffel, 1882, underside: Miles Lewis.



Poughkeepsie Bridge over the Hudson, New York, by Charles Macdonald and A B Paine, 1886-8. Completion of one of the main spans: *Scientific American*, 4 February 1888, no page.



US troops launching a Bailey bridge across a gap by hand, United States National Archives and Records Administration



Miles Lewis is an architectural historian specialising in the cultural history of building technology. He is an Emeritus Professor in the Faculty of Architecture, Building & Planning at the University of Melbourne; editor and principal author of *Architectura* (London and New York 2008); author of numerous other publications; an honorary life member of the Comité International d'Architecture Vernaculaire, and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

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