



An American Tour: *9*



Lake Havasu City's *London Bridge*

There has been a bridge across the River Thames in London for nearly 2,000 years. The first "London Bridge" was built by the Romans in 43 A.D. The next record of a bridge was 984 when a report was recorded of a witch taken to the London Bridge and drowned while her son escaped. This bridge was built out of wood. In 1176, the first stone bridge was built under the direction of Peter Colechurch. It was common in those days for men of the cloth to design buildings as they were taught the art of building arch structures out of stone in the Monastic Orders.

Completed in 1209, this new London Bridge took 33 years to build and lasted more than 600 years. It had a road 20 feet wide and 300 yards long. It was supported by 20 arches which curved to a Gothic-style point. There was a wooden drawbridge on the bridge to let ships in and keep invaders out. People and merchants began building houses and shops on the well-built stone bridge. It was soon completely covered with buildings. In 1212, a disaster occurred when a crowd of people were trapped on the London Bridge between two fires. Many were burned to death. Fire again struck the Bridge in 1623. Soon the merchants began moving, as the bridge was getting dilapidated. By 1657, all the houses were pulled down. The bridge was widened and partly rebuilt with a wide center arch. In 1831, another New London Bridge was opened. In 1821, it was decided to build a new bridge. The bridge was built 100 feet west of the old bridge. The River Thames narrows to 900 feet at this point. William IV and Queen Adelaide opened the New London Bridge and the old one was demolished.

In 1962, it was discovered that the London Bridge was "falling down," sinking into the Thames because it was not adequate for the increase in traffic. The City of London decided to put the 130-year old bridge up for auction, and construct a new one in its place. Robert P. McCulloch, founder of Lake Havasu City, AZ, submitted the winning bid for \$2,460,000 in 1968. McCulloch spent another \$7 million to move the London Bridge to Lake Havasu City which took a total of three years. The bridge was shipped by boat 10,000 miles to Long Beach, California. From there, it was trucked to Lake Havasu City where it was stored in seven-acre fenced storage compound. On September 23, 1968, the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Gilbert Inglefield, laid the corner stone. Robert Beresford, a civil engineer from Nottingham, England was in charge of the reconstruction of the London Bridge in Lake Havasu City. Reconstructing the London

Bridge in Lake Havasu City was done in the same manner as the Egyptians built pyramids. The reconstructed London Bridge was dedicated in Lake Havasu City on October 10, 1971, with many British and Arizona officials participating in this event that drew 50,000 spectators. [<http://www.golakehasu.com/londonbridge.html>]

