

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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AUG 9 1978

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
 INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

 SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
 TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS
**NAME**

HISTORIC

Fort Snelling--Mendota Bridge

AND/OR COMMON

Mendota Bridge

**LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

State Trunk Highway 55 at  
Minnesota River

CITY, TOWN

Mendota Heights VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First and Third

STATE

Minnesota

CODE

22

COUNTY

Dakota

CODE

037 4 55

**CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY** DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT**OWNERSHIP** PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION** IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS**N/A  OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE** YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO**PRESENT USE** AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER:**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Minnesota Department of Transportation

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Transportation Building, John Ireland Blvd.

CITY, TOWN

St. Paul VICINITY OF

STATE

Minnesota

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Dakota County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Hastings

STATE

Minnesota

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Donald R. Torbert, Significant Architecture in the History  
of Minnesota

DATE

1969

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Minneapolis Urban Design Study - Minneapolis Planning Commission

CITY, TOWN

Minneapolis

STATE

Minnesota

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED (reconditioned)	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED    DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Mendota Bridge is located at the Minnesota River crossing of State Trunk Highway 55, 0.5 miles southeast of the junction of State Trunk Highway 5 and 1.7 miles above the river's mouth. The bridge joins Dakota County with Hennepin County at the municipality of Mendota Heights (Dakota County) supplying direct access to the Twin Cities for the residents of Scott, Dakota, and Rice counties, although this function has now been partially negated by the construction of the Mississippi River bridge of Interstate Highway 35E.

According to the Minnesota Department of Transportation - Structure Inventory Sheet, it is a steel-reinforced continuous arch concrete bridge consisting of 13 spans in the main unit and 6 spans in the approach units for a total length of 4119 feet and a maximum span length of 304 feet. The 13 main unit spans rest on 12 piers 304 feet apart, anchored 70 feet beneath the bed of the river. The navigable vertical clearance is 220 feet. The deck width (out-out) is 60.8 feet with a roadway width of over 48 feet, carrying four lanes of traffic. There are 5.5 foot sidewalks along each side of the roadway. In American Building Carl Condit has described the Mendota Bridge as being "divided into twelve (sic) spans of paired parabolic ribs." (p. 255) It was built in 1926, reconditioned in 1968, and retains virtually total structural integrity, including piers, arches, spandrels, deck, and railings.

\* It should be noted that some piers of this bridge, along with the west approach, are within the boundary of the Fort Snelling Historic District but the bridge is neither included nor mentioned in the nomination.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1925-26

BUILDER/ARCHITECT- Walter Hall Wheeler and  
Engineers C.A.P. Turner

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Mendota Bridge is nationally significant for its superb design and for the fact that at the time of construction it was the longest continuous concrete arch bridge in the world. It is one of the most prominent of the Twin Cities' nationally renowned concrete arch bridges of the 1920s.

Two prominent American bridge authorities, Carl Condit and David Plowden, have recognized the significance of the Twin Cities' concrete arch bridges and the Mendota bridge in particular. As Plowden points out, "the first really sophisticated American program of concrete highway bridge construction evolved around Minnesota's Twin Cities." This happened, says Condit, because here "the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers offered the engineers numerous opportunities to try their ingenuity."

The bridge was built in 1925-26 to replace an antiquated ferry which since the mid-nineteenth century had provided the only Minnesota River crossing between Fort Snelling in Hennepin County and Mendota in Dakota County. It was constructed after the plans of Minneapolis engineer Walter H. Wheeler and nationally prominent engineer C.A.P. Turner Company Associates, and was officially opened on November 8, 1926, amidst great fanfare. A parade and two huge caravans of an estimated 15,000 automobiles met at the middle of the bridge where the governor untied formal golden ropes. The occasion was marked by a telegram from President Calvin Coolidge acknowledging the bridge's dedication to the "Gopher Gunners" of the 151st Field Artillery who died in World War I.

The \$1,870,000 structure, Plowden states, "is usually considered to be the most sophisticated design for a concrete arch built in the 1920s," apart from some of the West Coast bridges. Condit writes that "the whole complex of ribs, spandrel posts, and long deck has a finely articulated quality that has seldom been matched in American bridge design."

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Condit, Carl W. American Building. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968 p.255.  
 Minneapolis Board of Education. Bridges of Minneapolis and the State of Minnesota  
 (mimeograph), Social Studies Bulletin No. 56. Work Projects Administration Project  
 165-I-285 (3), April, 1942, pp.8-9.  
 Minnesota Department of Transportation. Structure Inventory Sheet, Bridge No. 4190,  
 1 & 2, September 23, 1977.  
 Plowden, David. Bridges: The Spans of North America. New York: Viking Press, 1974, p.299

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5.75 acres (surface area of bridge; no approaches in  
 UTM REFERENCES nomination)

A	1,5	48,550,0	4,97,064,0	B	1,5	48,650,0	4,96,986,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,5	48,648,0	4,96,982,0	D	1,5	48,548,0	4,97,058,0

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is the bridge structure, as located between the termini of the bridge railings at the two approaches, as shown on the accompanying U.S.G.S. map.

### LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Minnesota	22	Dakota	037
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Minnesota	22	Hennepin	053

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert M. Frame III, Research Historian, State Historic Preservation Office

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Minnesota Historical Society

May 12, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Fort Snelling, Building

612-726-1171

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

St. Paul

Minnesota

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL \_\_\_\_\_

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Russell W. Fridley*

TITLE

Russell W. Fridley

DATE

5/2/78

State Historic Preservation Officer

### FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Charles A. King*

DATE

12-1-78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*Queen Franklin*

DATE

11-20-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

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**Note: These changes apply to  
Fort Snelling-Mendota Bridge in  
Dakota County, Minnesota.**

**REFERENCE NUMBER:** 78001534

**STATE:** MINNESOTA

**COUNTY:** Dakota

**RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC):**

**CITY:** Mendota Heights

**VICINITY OF:**

**ADDRESS:** Mn. Hwy. 55 over Mississippi River

**CERTIFICATION DATE:**

**REMOVED DATE:**

**COMMENTS:**

*Nina M. Archabal*

**Nina M. Archabal  
State Historic Preservation Officer**

**JUN 17 1988**

**Date**