NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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historic name Bridgeport Hill – Hydro Route 66 Segment

other names/site number _____

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2. Location

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street & number State Route 66 from Hydro east to Spur U.S. 281 not for publication N/A
city or town Hydro, Bridgeport, Geary vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Canadian, Caddo code 017,015 zip code 73048

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Bob Blackburn 1-20-04

Signature of certifying official Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

√ entered in the National Register Edson W. Beall 3/3/04

___ See continuation sheet.

____ determined eligible for the National Register

___ See continuation sheet.

____ determined not eligible for the National Register

____ removed from the National Register

____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

___ private
_x_ public-local
_x_ public-State
___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

___ building(s)
_x_ district
___ site
___ structure
___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
11	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
11	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: TRANSPORTATION Sub: road-related (vehicular)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: TRANSPORTATION Sub: road-related (vehicular)

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
Other: Roadway
Other: Bridge (I-Beam, Warren Pony Truss, Camelback Pony Truss, Warren with Vertical Pony Truss)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
foundation concrete
roof
walls
other steel

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

_x_ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

_____ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

_x_ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

_____ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

_____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

_____ B removed from its original location.

_____ C a birthplace or a grave.

_____ D a cemetery.

_____ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

_____ F a commemorative property.

_____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation
Engineering
_____
_____

Period of Significance 1926-1954

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8. Statement of Significance (Continued)

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Significant Dates 1926, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Kansas City Bridge Company and other firms including Whitson & Kirby and Nims & Frost

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)
_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_ previously listed in the National Register
_ previously determined eligible by the National Register
_ designated a National Historic Landmark
_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data
_x_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
_x_ Other
Name of repository: Oklahoma Department of Transportation

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 167.4 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	__	_____	_____	3	__	_____	_____
2	__	_____	_____	4	__	_____	_____

x See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By

==========

name/title Michael Cassity

organization Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office date September 23, 2003

street & number 304 W. Albuquerque telephone 918 451-8378

city or town Broken Arrow state OK zip code 74011

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Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:
Continuation Sheets
Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Oklahoma Department of Transportation

street & number 200 Northeast 21st Street telephone 405 521-3651

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73105-3204

name Canadian County Board of County Commissioners

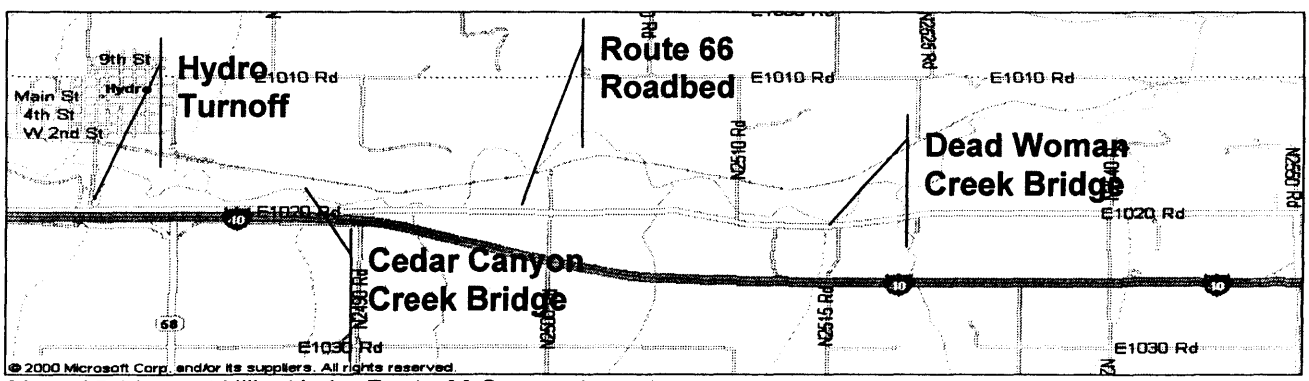
street & number 201 N. Choctaw telephone 405 262-1070

city or town El Reno state OK zip code 73036-0000

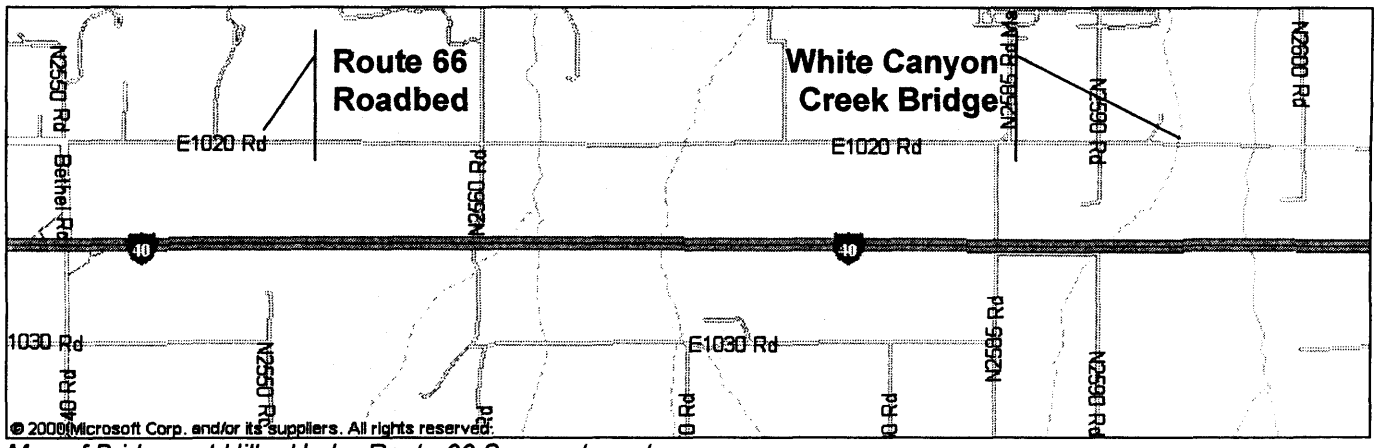
Description

SUMMARY

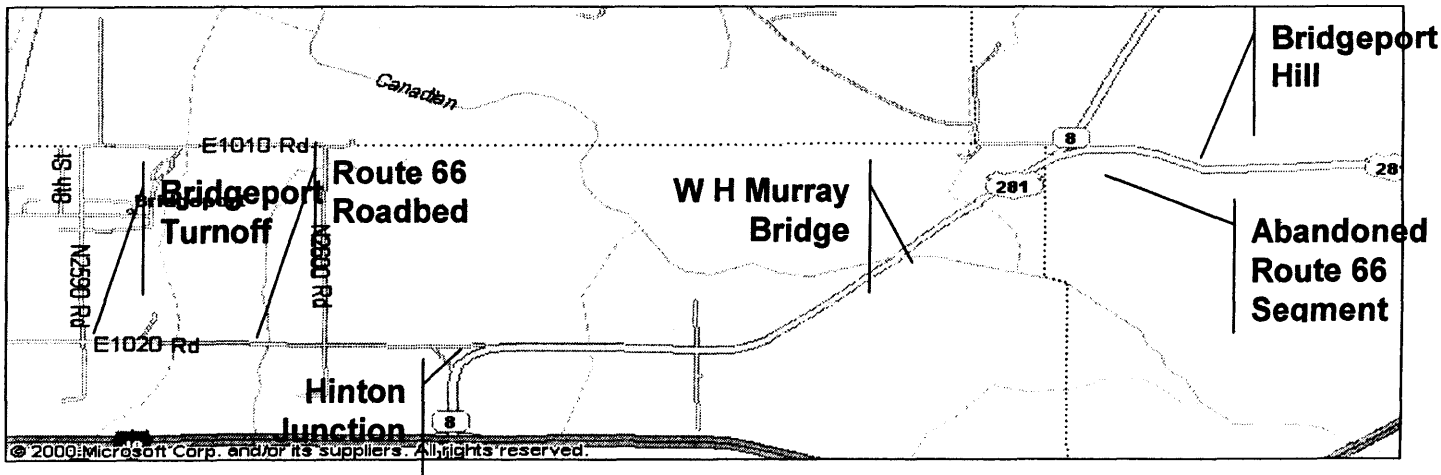
Except for a few curves near either end, the El Reno - Hydro Route 66 Cutoff is largely an almost straight section of road that stretches 17.7 miles between Hydro on the west and the U.S. 281 Spur on the east, generally running parallel to modern Interstate 40. The road on the east is high atop Bridgeport Hill and then descends into the valley of the South Canadian River, which it crosses on a long and memorable bridge before rising again to resume its westward course. The highway crosses a vast, high table of land, but rises and falls with the many north-south streams intersecting it before the nominated segment reaches its western terminus at the intersection immediately south of the town of Hydro. The resource, a linear district, thus includes the roadbed itself and a variety of bridges over streams and gullies of sometimes great depth. In contrast with other sections of Route 66, this section is distinctive since it begins what one route chronicler termed " 'short grass' range country, the first indication of the vast Texas plains to come," where the trees become sparser, the countryside more open, and the sky more expansive the farther west the traveler goes. Historically, the section of road was lined with gasoline stations, tourist courts, and cafés close to the pavement. Once a busy thoroughfare for national traffic and commerce, this segment of road now carries mainly local traffic for the communities of Geary, Hinton, Bridgeport, and Hydro.



Map of Bridgeport Hill – Hydro Route 66 Segment, west



Map of Bridgeport Hill – Hydro Route 66 Segment, center



Map of Bridgeport Hill – Hydro Route 66 Segment, east

Feature 1. Roadbed (Canadian and Caddo Counties)

This roadbed is an integral element of Route 66 as it crossed western Oklahoma. Throughout its 17.7-mile distance the road was paved in Portland Concrete in 1931-1934, but the segment from Bridgeport west to Hydro formed a part of Route 66 before it was paved, beginning in 1926 when Route 66 was first designated. The segment of the roadbed east from the road to the town of Bridgeport represents the cutoff that shortened the distance on the original Route 66 between El Reno and Bridgeport and was brought into service in 1933 and 1934 when it was paved. The concrete surface remains intact, although scattered patches of asphalt have been applied in normal maintenance. The road is twenty feet wide throughout and follows the section lines for most of its course. With the exception of one major jog between Bridgeport Hill and the William H. Murray Bridge, where the road turns to the southwest, and some gentle meandering to the south near the western terminus where the road comes close to the river, the highway is straight as an arrow. Although some sections may have had a graded shoulder, the road generally lacks defining features beyond the edge of the pavement. In fact, on the sections where the terrain is steep and hilly the road has defining curbs, and those curbs are interrupted at appropriate points with lip gutters to allow water to leave the roadway. The right of way extends 39 feet on either side of the centerline of the highway.

While considered a single resource, the roadbed consists of four distinct segments. The **first** segment, constructed in 1932, includes the portion from the eastern terminus to a point at the bottom of Bridgeport Hill where the road intersects with the modern highway to Geary. The **second** segment, east of the William H. Murray Bridge, also constructed in 1932, is a short piece of abandoned roadway between the bridge and the Bridgeport Hill segment. About one tenth of a mile long, this section is gently curved, and is bypassed by the modern road to the north. The **third** segment begins near the east end of the Murray Bridge and extends westward to the turnoff to the north that services the village of Bridgeport. Constructed in the two years after 1932, this part of the Route 66 was opened to traffic in 1934. The **fourth** segment spans the distance from the Bridgeport turnoff to the turnoff to the town of Hydro. Route 66 followed this route beginning in 1926 and was paved in 1931 and 1933. Some of the bridges in this segment were constructed prior to the roadbed, along the previous dirt and improved dirt road; those bridges are distinct features identified and described below.

The roadway is still in use with one exception. That segment of about one half mile (identified above as the **second** segment) is contributing while the modern section, in use and adjacent to it on the north at the Y intersection with modern Route 281, is not contributing.

With the exception noted, the roadbed is a contributing feature. The other features are directly associated with the roadbed.

Feature 2. Double Box Culvert. (Canadian County)

This culvert at the bottom of Bridgeport Hill, one mile west of the eastern terminus of the road segment, is made of concrete and built to standard design specifications of the Oklahoma Highway Department. It is defined by curbs on each side—not guard rails. The drain is twenty-three feet long and thirty-six feet wide. Constructed at the same time as the road (1932), the culvert is an integral part of the roadbed and allows a small drainage to pass beneath the road. Because it lacks guardrails, the drain may even go unnoticed by the traveler along the road. Two large open rectangular boxes made of concrete extend completely from one side of the road to the other to provide a channel for the stream to follow. Concrete abutments extend to the north and south diagonally to anchor the structure and prevent erosion.

The Double Box Drain is a contributing feature.

Feature 3. William H. Murray Bridge ("The Pony Bridge") (Canadian and Caddo Counties)
Bridge #09020000X

The William H. Murray Bridge, also known locally as The Pony Bridge because of the truss system it uses, is one of the most prominent road features on Route 66 in Oklahoma because of the enormous length of the bridge. About three-fourths of a mile long, the bridge is made of thirty-eight spans with Warren pony trusses, each a hundred feet long. In addition to being the longest bridge on Route 66 in Oklahoma, it is also the second longest extant bridge in the state. While the normal road width is twenty feet, the bridge roadway widens slightly to twenty-five feet. The bridge was constructed in 1932-1933 and put into use in 1934 when the road to the west was completed. The approaches to each end of the bridge are protected with four sections of concrete guardrails. Plaques commemorating the construction of the bridge, and the public and private officials responsible, are located on concrete panels adjacent to the guardrails. The plaques also honor the company responsible for its construction: the Kansas City Bridge Company.

Still an awesome bridge when encountered by the modern traveler, it was even more so in the 1930s when the nation's traveling public crossed the continent on Route 66. The reason for its vast length, of course, is the wide flood plain of the South Canadian River. Concrete piers rise from that sandy stretch to support the junction of the separate spans, with each pier consisting of two columns joined by a concrete panel. The trusses themselves are characteristic Warren Pony trusses. Each one has the W pattern of diagonal braces connecting with the upper chord at each of its five angles, further braced by vertical steel members rising from the lower chord and intersecting the upper chord at each of the five angles, and with an X brace in the center. With such attention to the detail of each truss, the strength and endurance of the bridge is immediately apparent. In fact, the standard reference on bridges in Oklahoma refers to this bridge as "a powerful demonstration of the strength and versatility of the standard-design camelback pony" configuration. That description holds for each span of the bridge. When multiplied times thirty-eight, the power, the strength, and the sheer force of this structure become obvious.

The deck of the bridge is concrete with asphalt applied on the surface, and the concrete curbs on either side still reveal the original materials of the bridge. Two steel guardrails run the full length of the bridge on each side and concrete post and rail guardrails extend the bridge beyond the abutments at each end. Those concrete guardrails terminate at their extremes with panels that support the bronze plaques.

Paradoxically, the profoundly long bridge (where as some would suggest, one can see the curvature of the earth) emphasizes the narrowness of the ribbon of roadway that crosses it, and calls to mind the tunnels of other parts of the nation; and the repetitiveness of the pony camelback trusses can inure the driver to elaborate engineering components that become as common as guardrails. Yet the bridge William H. Murray Bridge, at 3,944 feet was a marvel not only in western Oklahoma but also in engineering. Few who crossed it dismissed the thirty-eight spans as just one more bridge.

In excellent condition, the bridge stands out visually to the most casual observer because of its length and also for its color, a clean yellow paint protecting the steel trusses.

The William H. Murray Bridge is a contributing feature and is independently eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Feature 4. I-Beam Bridge / Overpass over Unnamed Creek. (Caddo County)

This bridge, situated four miles west of the eastern terminus and one-half mile east of Hinton Junction, bears close examination. Twin I-beams stretch its full length of 378 feet with a series of metal-expansion-seamed concrete slabs resting on the I-beams. Standard concrete guardrails line the outside edges of the roadway on the bridge. In addition to its substantial length, the bridge is also quite high above the gully that it crosses. Paired concrete piers support the bridge at each end, but in the center portions steel towers rise more than fifty feet from their anchors below. Originally a railroad (the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad) passed beneath the bridge on the east side, between the concrete piers, making the structure also an overpass. The bridge / overpass was constructed in 1934 at the same time as the road. Contractor was Nims and Frost and this was Project NRH 164.

This bridge is a contributing feature.

Feature 5. I-Beam Bridge over Unnamed Creek. (Caddo County)

Located about three-fourths of a mile west of Hinton Junction, this modest bridge is a concrete structure with guardrails that rests on six I-beams. The I-beams are supported by concrete piers that are connected from north to

south by concrete panels. The guardrails are made of precast rails placed into the poured concrete posts. The roadway on the bridge, constructed in 1934 like the roadway it connects, is made of concrete, although traces of asphalt patching are evident at both ends where the bridge connects to the road.

This bridge is a contributing feature.

Feature 6. I-Beam Bridge over Unnamed Creek. (Caddo County)

At twenty-five feet across, this bridge, like several others, is wider than the roadbed, testimony to its construction after the road itself. Located 2.7 miles west of Hinton Junction, this is on the 1926 alignment. Constructed in 1935, the four spans of concrete slabs with concrete guardrails rest on seven I-beams that themselves are supported by three sets of concrete piers that are joined crosswise at top and bottom by horizontal concrete rails, thus forming a window-like frame in their interiors. The abutments on each end of the bridge are concrete with backwalls that spread back at a diagonal to provide reinforcement for the bank. The bridge is one hundred seventy-five feet long. Immediately west of the bridge, on the north side of the road, is a modern drain that is not part of this feature and is noncontributing.

This bridge is a contributing feature.

Feature 7. White Canyon Creek Bridge. (Caddo County)

This bridge, one hundred seventy-five feet long with an internal width of twenty-five feet on the concrete deck, is one of the bridges built along this alignment in 1930. The structure and appearance of the White Canyon Creek Bridge is essentially the same as the bridge to its east (Feature 6), except that the piers on the White Canyon Creek Bridge are much taller, about forty feet from ground level to the bridge; the piers themselves are of the same design.

This bridge is a contributing feature.

Feature 8. Dead Woman Creek Bridge (Caddo County)
Bridge #08E1020N2520001

This bridge is a single span camelback pony truss eighty-seven feet long and is six and a half miles west of the Bridgeport turnoff. Built in 1930, the bridge has the distinctive configuration of this popular design, with its five-angle curving upper chord and the X braces in the center. A steel lattice guardrail is located on each side and extends beyond the angular chord, although the east end of the north rail has been damaged and removed (and, in fact, is still

lying in the grass nearby). The deck is concrete and rests on concrete abutments with wingbacks at either end. This bridge was constructed by Whitson & Kirby as one of the series of bridges included in Project No. SAP 604J. This has sometimes been confused with another bridge, #08E1050N252005 in the state survey of highway bridges, which is a much shorter, one lane Warren with Verticals bridge constructed in 1920, located three miles south in Caddo County. Although the bridges cross the same Dead Woman Creek drainage, the dimensions, designs, and identification numbers of the structures readily distinguish them.

The Bridge over Dead Woman Creek is a contributing feature.

Feature 9. I-Beam Bridge on unnamed Creek. (Caddo County)

Located 3.7 miles east of the Hydro turnoff—the western terminus of the road segment—this is a short I-beam bridge, constructed in 1930. The guardrail is made of concrete posts and rails and the bridge deck, a concrete slab, rests on the abutments.

This bridge is a contributing feature.

Feature 10. Cedar Canyon Creek Bridge. (Caddo County)
Bridge #08E1020N2490003

Located 1.8 miles east of Hydro town turnoff, this is a Warren with Verticals Pony Truss bridge, seventy-eight feet long. As with other steel bridges along the 1926 alignment, this bridge has a metal guardrail that extends beyond the angled ends of each set of trusses and a concrete deck. Consisting of a single span, the ends of the concrete slab are supported by the wingback abutments without piers.

The Cedar Canyon Creek Bridge is a contributing feature.

Feature 11. I-Beam Bridge on Unnamed Creek. (Caddo County)

This bridge, located 1.3 miles east of Hydro turnoff, is an I-beam structure. Similar to other I-beam bridges in most respects, the piers supporting this short bridge are distinctive; the two piers each consist of four individual vertical

elements supporting a concrete cross member. The concrete guardrails and posts have been damaged on the west extremes, on both the north and south rails.

This bridge is a contributing feature.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The 17.7 mile segment of road that formed part of Route 66 from the east incline of Bridgeport Hill to Hydro, Oklahoma, is a historic district significant within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma." Constructed in the years 1930-1934 as part of Federal Aid Project 204, the western portion of this road (from the Bridgeport turnoff west) had been designated part of Route 66 in 1926 and the eastern segment (from the Bridgeport turnoff east) became Route 66 when it was constructed 1932-1934 as part of Federal Aid Project and N. R. H. Project 164. Both parts of this segment of Route 66 served the nation and the local communities in that capacity until 1962 at which date a new alignment of Route 66 bypassed this older road. Because of this association, the road and its associated features qualify under that multiple property nomination. The road and features are significant under Criterion A because they represent the property type, "Roadbeds" and "Bridges" in the area of significance of Transportation. These features are addressed in the "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma" Multiple Property Nomination. This segment of road and specific contributing resources also are significant under Criterion C in the same Multiple Property Nomination in the area of significance Engineering which requires that a feature must be a good example of a distinct road type or style in its design, materials, workmanship, association, feeling, setting, and location as it once appeared as part of Route 66 in Oklahoma because they represent a distinct period, style, and type of construction.

Historical Significance

In 1926, when Route 66 was first designated, virtually all of the roads across western Oklahoma were dirt and some were graded; very few were paved. The main road across the area was the old Postal Road, also known as State Highway 3, an indirect but serviceable trail that went from Fort Smith, Arkansas to Oklahoma City and then to Yukon, El Reno, Calumet, Geary, Bridgeport, Hydro, Weatherford, Clinton, Foss, Canute, Elk City, Sayre, Erick and Texola. The Postal Road in this area became Route 66 in 1926 with the inception of the new highway designation. The condition of that road can be seen in a 1927 report in the statewide newspaper: "Paved through Oklahoma City to Yukon in Canadian County; from El Reno, Calumet, Geary, Bridgeport, Weatherford, Clinton, Elk City, Sayre, Erick, Texola and west to Amarillo well-maintained dirt road."[1] Route 66 may have been a national highway officially, but its path was local in its orientation, in the speed that it permitted, and in the volume of traffic it encouraged.

[1] *Daily Oklahoman*, November 6, 1927.

In fact, the path that it took between El Reno and Hydro was anything but direct and required miles of travel to places that were not exactly on a direct route. Driving west from El Reno, the traveler would turn north about five miles to the small town of Calumet, from there turn northwest to Geary, about twelve miles away, and then go back south winding about nine miles to the toll bridge over the South Canadian River at Bridgeport, before resuming a more direct course west to Hydro and Weatherford. This circumlocutious route probably met the needs of the communities along its path who welcomed the road and hoped that the new highway would bring traffic to their business districts. So thirsty were these roads for the traffic that in the town of Geary the town's Businessmen's Club built a free campground as an enticement to get travelers to spend the night. In addition to the free camp, Geary native and Oklahoma historian Kent Ruth recalled, "Everybody had to work on the road," and if businesspeople could not work, they hired high schoolers to take their place.[2] At Bridgeport, a town that had been thriving and growing since the turn of the century, a town that could support multiple newspapers and banks, business swelled as traffic increased through the town. The Key Bridge, a suspension bridge constructed by a private firm in 1925 and which charged twenty-five cents per automobile to cross, was the only reliable way to cross the South Canadian River for a distance of fifty miles. Between 1926 and 1930, traffic over the Key Bridge climbed from 428 vehicles per day to 1072.[3] The volume of traffic can be better appreciated once it is realized that in 1931 and 1932, seventy-five percent of the state's roads had traffic counts under 1000.[4]

At the same time, the state of Oklahoma embarked upon an ambitious program of road improvements throughout the state and by 1933 could proclaim that "The phenominal [sic] progress that we have made along this line during the past twelve months, shattering all previous records for such period of time, has reduced the mileage of unimproved earth roads to less than 1,500 miles."[5] (In 1926, more than two thousand miles of roads in the state system were unimproved dirt roads.) The object, in fact, was to pave Route 66 in particular across the state, a goal that was reached only in 1937. In the course of the highway improvement project, however, the road's alignment was also being altered to shorten the route, to eliminate sharp curves (the road had usually followed section lines, thus turning 90 degrees at the corners), to eliminate toll bridges, and to reduce railroad crossings. This was the program of change that hit the area between El Reno and Hydro in the early 1930s.

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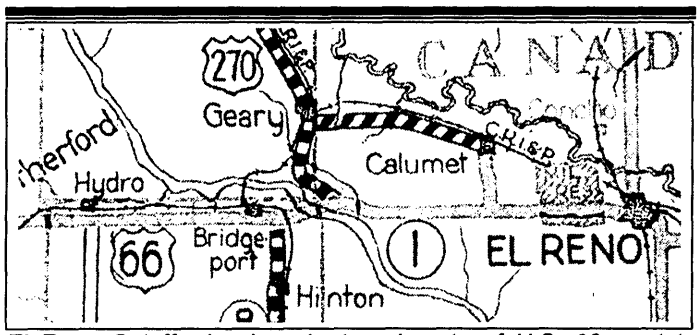
[2] Kent Ruth, quoted in Quinta Scott and Susan C. Kelly, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 28.

[3] Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1929-1930 Inclusive*, (Oklahoma City, 1931), 165-166.

[4] Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1931-1932 Inclusive*, (Oklahoma City, 1933), 24.

[5] Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1931-1932 Inclusive*, 26.

A series of revisions seemed to augur well for the communities and the traveling public alike—at least initially. The first change was for the state to secure an injunction requiring the owners to operate the bridge without toll in 1929, but after litigation, the bridge resumed charging travelers to cross, but reduced the toll to fifty cents. The state then purchased the Key Bridge in 1930, and thereby made the bridge publicly owned and free, an important objective of the highway department.[6] Toll bridges had been such an obstacle to the free flow of traffic and commerce that in 1928 a legislature was elected openly committed to free bridges and to acquiring those private operations that charged travelers to cross. The Highway Department noted that the subsequent bills "passed almost unanimously."[7] The second change was to begin plans for an alternate route that would reduce the distance the travelers on Route 66 would have to drive between El Reno and Bridgeport. The first consideration in this plan was a new bridge across the South Canadian River. As the 1932 report of the state highway commission bluntly stated, "In planning the El Reno cut-off the controlling factor was the construction of the bridge." The South Canadian River, the report noted, "requires the longest bridges and presents the greatest difficulties in bridge construction of any river in Oklahoma. It has had few highway bridges built over it, and it constitutes a major impediment to free travel between the North and South sections of the State. In locating the cut-off the principal consideration was the reduction in length and the improvement of the alignment in the highway between El Reno and Bridgeport."[8]



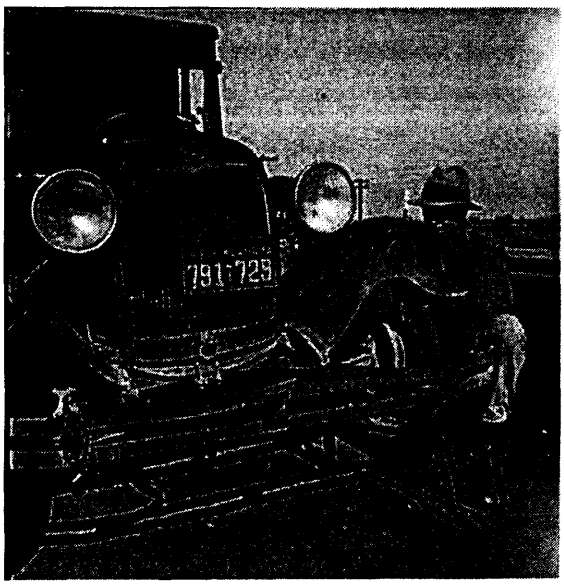
El Reno Cutoff, showing shortened route of U.S. 66 west to Bridgeport in 1934. Dashed roads are unpaved. Courtesy Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

The result was thus two-fold in terms of construction: a huge bridge, and a shortened route that would be paved. Between 1932 and 1934 an intensive program began to build a new road between a point west of El Reno where Route 66 turned to the north to go to Calumet, and Bridgeport, or at least to a point directly south of the town of Bridgeport. As part of this effort, the state also began construction of the new bridge across the South Canadian River, in the words of the State Highway Commission, "The most pretentious bridge engineering project every

[6] Joseph B. Thoburn, "The Roads of the Fore-Runners," *Biennial Report of State Highway Commission, 1925 to 1926 Inclusive* (Oklahoma City, 1927), 85.

[7] Thoburn, "The Roads of the Fore-Runners," 85.

[8] Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1931-1932 Inclusive*, 49.



Migrant worker from Oklahoma repairing tire on California highway. Dorothea Lange photo, Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

undertaken by the Oklahoma Highway Commission."[9] The contract for the bridge was let in 1932 and construction began soon afterwards. In the meantime, road construction proceeded at breakneck speed. High atop Bridgeport Hill, east of the new bridge, the state purchased right-of-way from at least one farm family in June 1932 to permit the new road to pass through; bids were opened for the route on July 14; that section of the road, terminating just east of the new bridge under construction, opened for traffic in November of the same year.[10] Because of construction delays due to weather and litigation west of the bridge, however, the remaining segment of the road between the river and Bridgeport did not open until 1934.[11] A temporary route carried traffic from the west end of the new section north of the river to Bridgeport to continue crossing on the Key Bridge until the road south of the river was completed.

Thus in 1934 when the bridge and the entire new section of road opened between Bridgeport and the turn-off to Calumet, a new alignment for Route 66 joined the older alignment west of Bridgeport. That older alignment, however, also was being improved. In 1931 and 1933 the road west of Bridgeport was paved for the first time with Portland Concrete. The construction of bridges on this section both preceded and followed the construction of the roadway itself. A few bridges were built in 1930 and one as late as 1935. In this way a series of new bridges, a stretch of new road, an improvement of old road, and the elimination of a railroad crossing marked the achievement of this section of road.

[9] Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1931-1932 Inclusive*, 49.

[10] El Reno *Daily Tribune*, July 14, 21,29, August 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 29, September 11, October 7, 13, November 21, 1932.

[11] Anderson, Kathy, Jim Ross, and Gary Ray Howell, Oklahoma Route 66 Association, *Oklahoma Route 66 Roadbed Documentation Project (1926-1970): A Survey of Roadbed and Integral Structures* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma SHPO, 2002), 25.

The occasion for the opening of the new road was memorable for the residents of the area. Leon Little, who had operated a service station and café south of the Key Bridge, moved his operation to the new Route 66. He recalled that

> The new bridge across the Canadian River, 3 miles East of Bridgeport, was dedicated in July 1934. Sam Hawks of Clinton, was chairman of the highway commission. He, the governor and a lot of politicians and prominent people made it quite an occasion. On this day, we opened a new station and café at a point ½ mile west of the new bridge.[12]

Mr. Little's opening of the station on the day the road opened was symbolic of the changes to come. In the roughly three decades following the opening of the new bridges and pavement, the highway generally transformed the area it traversed. The volume of traffic swelled, with part of the number of vehicles representing the migration of Oklahomans to California. Not only did large numbers of those migrants pass on this section of Route 66 (and Caddo County itself was one of the four largest contributors to the flow of migration) but the movie version of John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* included scenes filmed along this part of the road.

Postcard view of Frazier's Café, at Leon Little Gas Station,1½ mile east of Bridgeport on Route 66, about 1948.

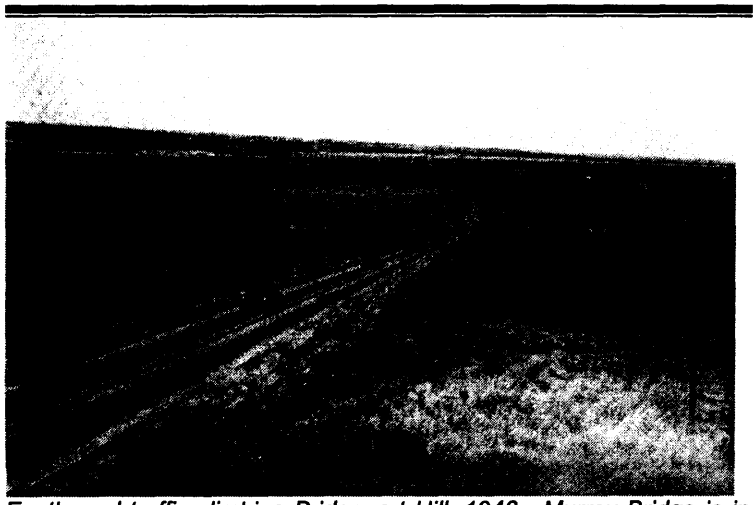
In response to this surge in traffic, service stations, garages, diners, and motels sprang up alongside the roadway in significant numbers. The Highway Department road construction plans, based upon surveys of the area, showed only a few commercial businesses along the road in 1929 and 1930, and of course they were located on the older section west of Bridgeport. In 1946 Jack D. Rittenhouse listed seven tourist courts, ten gas stations, three cafés, and two public picnic areas along this nominated stretch of road and it is clear that he undercounted those facilities.[13]

[12] Leon Little, "These Were my Kicks on Route 66," in Oklahoma Route 66 Association, *Memories on Route 66* (Bethany, Oklahoma: Oklahoma Route 66 Association, 1991), 46.

[13] Jack D. Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66* (Los Angeles: privately published, 1946; reprint, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989, 2000), 57-58.

Moreover, during the postwar travel boom, the number of gas stations, garages, cafés, and motels dramatically increased. Hinton Junction became a major hub of tourist/traveler-oriented services.

As the volume of traffic climbed, the impact was not evenly felt, however, nor always benign. The rush of traffic no longer passed through Calumet, Geary, and Bridgeport. Those towns suffered accordingly. Although Geary and Calumet both had connecting highways intersecting in and near their communities, and were thus able to survive, albeit at a disadvantage compared to their neighboring towns on the road, Bridgeport declined rapidly. The once busy Key Bridge had been generally abandoned, used only for local traffic, and then was damaged by fire in 1946 and sold for salvage in 1952. Bridgeport, as noted by Route 66 chronicler Jim Ross, "is today considered a genuine Oklahoma ghost town." As Ross observes, this was once "the county's premiere town until the proliferation of motor cars caused its demise."[14] One history of the town of Bridgeport notes that "Bridgeport became an isolated town in 1934 when U.S. Highway 66 was opened to the public. . . . The swinging Key Bridge was sold but years before that the town had already lots its bank. Later the large three story hotel was torn down and the material sold. In 1944, the high school was transferred to Hinton and still later the grade children were included in the transfer. In 1945, the large brick gymnasium of which Bridgeport was so proud was sold to the highest bidder who wrecked the building and hauled it away."[15] Just as the traffic on Route 66 could nourish commerce when it came into an area, so too could it starve that commerce when it left.



Eastbound traffic climbing Bridgeport Hill, 1946. Murray Bridge is in distant background. Courtesy Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

That reduction in traffic and in the commerce that depended on it in due time came to this stretch of road itself. As traffic continued to grow on Route 66 during the 1950s, plans were drawn to accommodate the expanding numbers of the traveling public, again by widening the road, reducing the curves and turns, eliminating dangerous intersections, and generally making it possible for travelers to increase their speed and reduce their stops. The

[14] Jim Ross, *Oklahoma Route 66* (Arcadia, Oklahoma: Ghost Town Press, 2001), 144, 150.

[15] Hinton Quest Club, "History of Bridgeport, Oklahoma," Oklahoma Historical Society Files, Oklahoma City.

specific road that would make this possible was part of the new system inaugurated with the 1956 Interstate Highway Act. Interstate 40 would be built parallel to Route 66 in western Oklahoma, often right by its side.

The new interstate highway would, of course, be a four-lane, divided highway. The Turner Turnpike (1953) and the Will Rogers Turnpike (1957) in eastern Oklahoma had already supplanted Route 66 in that part of the state, and by the early 1960s the free interstate highway was being built in the west, following the same route, connecting the same towns, as Route 66. Business people along this segment of Route 66 in western Oklahoma watched construction of Interstate 40 with grave apprehension. The larger towns were able to negotiate a business loop to save some of their merchants, but the multitude of small businesses—the same mom and pop stores and stations that the road had attracted in the 1930s and after World War II—along the road outside the towns could not even grasp that hope. They had to close their doors when the traffic shifted to the new road. Leon Little and his wife Ann, with their operation near Hinton Junction, for example, watched the progress of the roads in the east and then in the west with trepidation. Little explained to road historian Quinta Scott that he saw the turnpike in eastern Oklahoma as "the tip of the iceberg" and that "We were up at that old station until 1961. They didn't move the traffic till 1962, but we knew this was coming, of course, and so I came down to Hinton and took the postmaster job, and Ann managed the business out there until the traffic moved in 1962. And, of course, the day the traffic moved, well that was it."[16] Just as the Littles had opened their business on the day the traffic started to flow, they also closed it on the day the traffic went away in 1962.

The association of this road and its related features with Route 66 is clear and makes the road and features eligible for the National Register under Criterion A because they represent the property type, "Roadbeds" and "Bridges" in the area of significance of Transportation within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma."

Engineering Significance

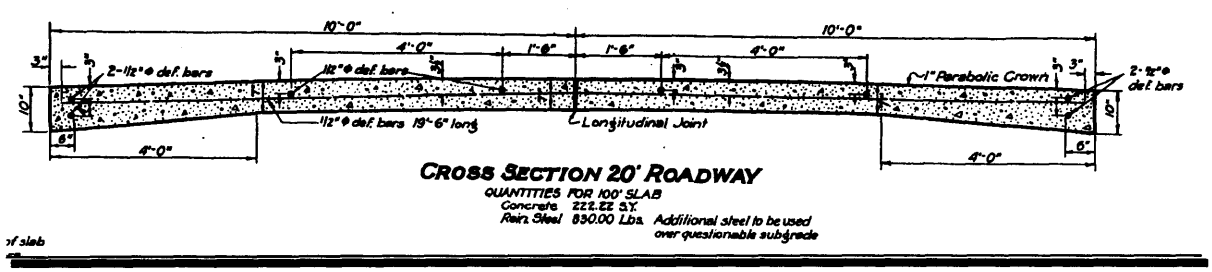
The Bridgeport Hill – Hydro Route 66 Segment is also significant under Criterion C within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma," because the roadbed and some of its associated features represent a distinct period, style, and type of construction. Eligibility under Criterion C requires that each roadbed segment and road bridge must be a good example of a distinct type or style in its design, materials, workmanship, association, feeling, setting, and location as it once appeared as part of Route 66 in Oklahoma. This segment of road and its contributing resources clearly meet that requirement also.

[16] Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 182.

Despite its powerful force modernizing the transportation infrastructure of rural Oklahoma at the beginning of the 1930s, the physical remnants of Route 66 now appear antiquated and dated because of their construction methods. Both the roadbed and one of the bridges on the road meet the requirements of Criterion C.

Roadbed.

The width of the road, at twenty feet, represented a new standard for the state and indicated the amount of traffic the highway department anticipated using the road. Only a few years earlier, the standard width had been eighteen feet. Moreover, the configuration of the concrete pavement also reflected the distinctive style and type of construction, with a parabolic crown to facilitate water runoff in flat terrain. While the portions of the road that traversed relatively flat terrain had a flat edge that merged with the shoulder, the pavement on any substantial grade had lip curbs.

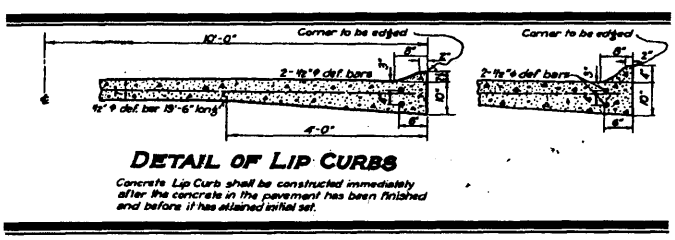


CROSS SECTION 20' ROADWAY

QUANTITIES FOR 100' SLAB
Concrete 222.22 S.Y.
Rein. Steel 850.00 Lbs. Additional steel to be used over questionable subgrade

of slab

These curbs, not separate features but integrated into the pavement when poured, sloped upward from the pavement instead of being at a 90 degree angle. The intention of the curbs was to retain the precipitation on the roadbed so that it would not wash away the shoulder. Essentially turning the pavement into a conduit for running water during rainy weather, the remedy was to install gutters periodically into the lip curb so that the water would drain from the roadbed through concrete subterranean channels that carried the water into the borrow ditch. These features—concrete roadbed, lip curbs, and gutters—remain on the nominated roadway.

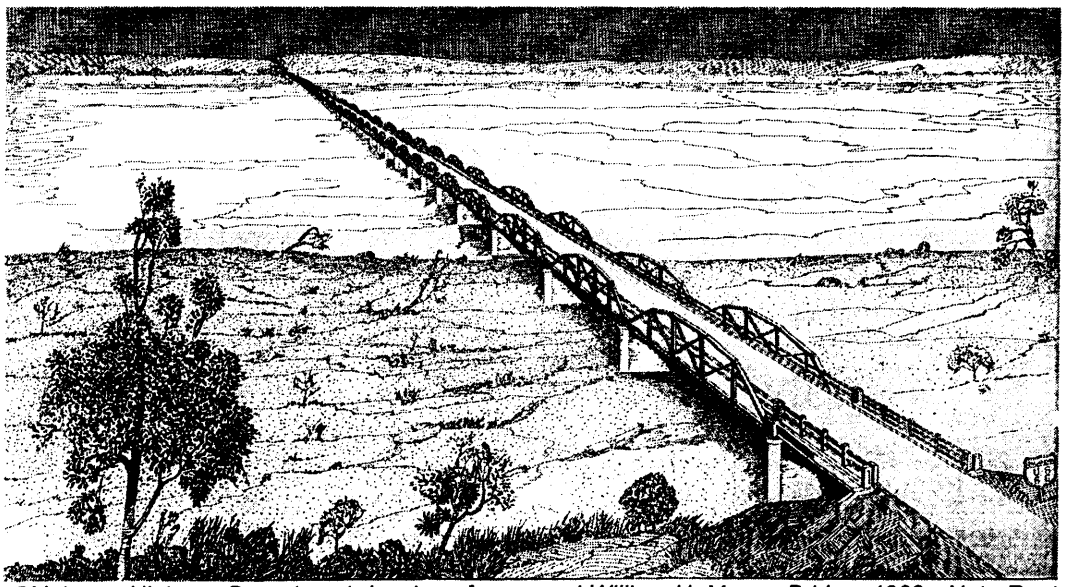


DETAIL OF LIP CURBS

Concrete Lip Curb shall be constructed immediately after the concrete in the pavement has been finished and before it has attained initial set.

William H. Murray Bridge

While all the bridges in this section of Route 66 meet the requirements under Criterion A, one bridge also fulfills the requirements under Criterion C. The William H. Murray Bridge over the South Canadian River is an exceptional feature by any standard. This is, first of all, an excellent example of a camelback pony truss bridge with its characteristic feature of exactly five angles in the upper chord of each span, which, according to the standard reference on Oklahoma's historic bridges, "permitted greater standardization and better predictability on how the structure would behave in service."[17] Indeed that reference uses this particular bridge as "a powerful demonstration of the strength and versatility of the standard-design camelback pony." Secondly, this was an engineering accomplishment in its own right, aside from the particular design of the bridge. The state highway department proudly called it at the time it was under construction, "the most pretentious bridge engineering project ever undertaken by the Oklahoma Highway Commission." It noted, further, that "when completed it will be the longest bridge in Oklahoma, and one of the longest in the entire Southwest." This bridge, moreover, proved to be the defining feature of the route taken by the El Reno Cutoff of Route 66 and provided an efficient, reliable way for travelers to cross the South Canadian River.



Oklahoma Highway Department drawing of proposed William H. Murray Bridge, 1933. Note Route 66 highway sign in lower right corner.

[17] Joseph E. King, *Spans of Time: Oklahoma Historic Highway Bridges* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Department of Transportation, 1993), 42.

The construction of the bridge required a year on site and represented one of the major engineering projects in the state, with around a hundred employees and a cost of $346,000. In fact, the prospects for employment on the bridge project raised the hopes of many in this depression-ridden area, but the company quickly dashed those hopes with its announcement that "much of the work on a job of this type requires skilled labor, and the construction company [the Kansas City Bridge Company] will utilize their own force of bridge specialists in this work."[18] Even so, the construction of the bridge entailed other adjustments locally and the Rock Island railroad had to place a new switch on the line east of Bridgeport to facilitate the unloading of materiel and equipment for the bridge. Local press accounts and official documents relevant to the bridge customarily employed adjectives like "huge," "enormous," and, of course, the Highway Department's standard reference, "The most pretentious bridge engineering project every undertaken by the Oklahoma Highway Commission."[19] It should not be forgotten that when the bridge was completed and dedicated, allowing the opening of new, important segment of Route 66, the William H. Murray Bridge was both an engineering accomplishment in its own right and also a symbol of the triumph of the organization of the resources of society to facilitate a transformation in life not just locally but along the full length of Route 66.

Summary

Because of their direct association with Route 66 during the period of its historic significance, the roadbed of Route 66 between Bridgeport Hill and Hydro and the William H. Murray Bridge over the South Canadian River are significant under Criterion C within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma" as the property types "Roadbeds" and "Road Bridges on Route 66." These features and also the other features indicated in this nomination are also eligible under Criterion A within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma" as the property types "Roadbeds" and "Road Bridges on Route 66."

[18] "Work Orders Issued on 66 Highway Span," El Reno *American*, September 8, 1932.

[19] Oklahoma Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the Years 1931-1932 Inclusive*, 49.

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UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	565548E	3934126N	10	14	557711E	3932510N
2	14	563700E	3933996N	11	14	554919E	3932509N
3	14	563193E	3934179N	12	14	552184E	3932487N
4	14	562995E	3934175N	13	14	545159E	3932542N
5	14	562812E	3934110N	14	14	543799E	3932317N
6	14	562717E	3934057N	15	14	543304E	3933465N
7	14	561761E	3933246N	16	14	540972E	3932465N
8	14	560831E	3932526N	17	14	540057E	3932462N
9	14	559867E	3932499N	18	14	538213E	3932458N

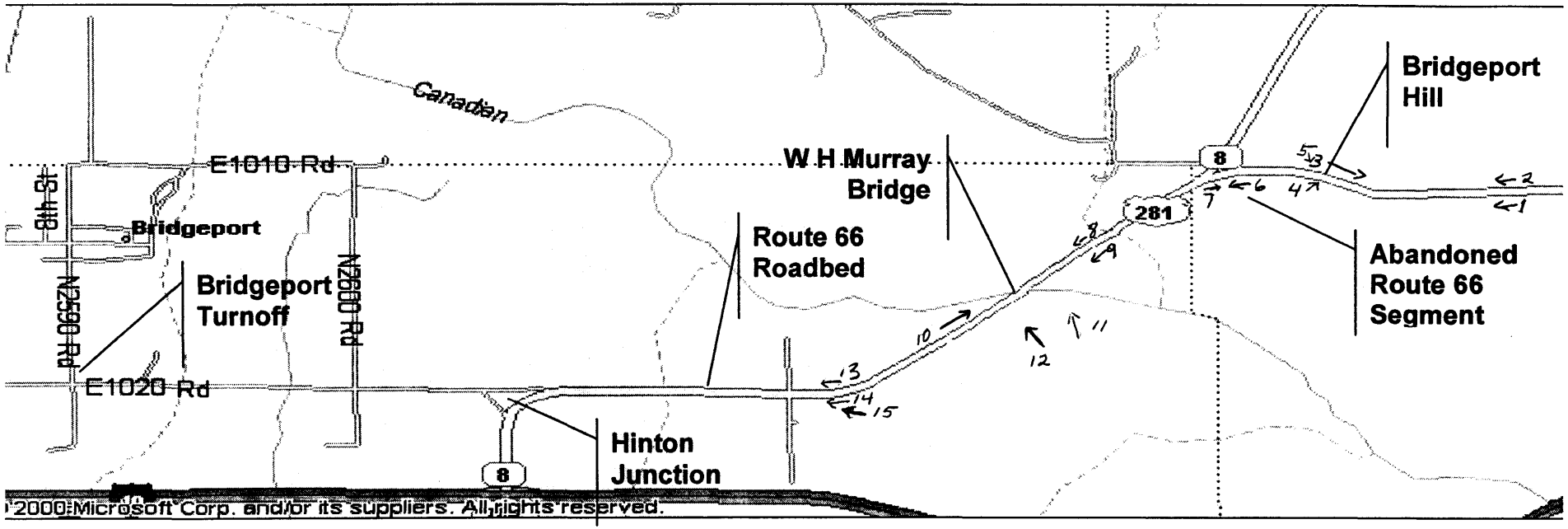
Verbal Boundary Description

This property includes all of the area 39 feet each side of the centerline of the highway from its eastern terminus intersecting with Spur Route 281 to its western terminus 17.7 miles to the west at the turnoff north to Hydro on State Highway 58.

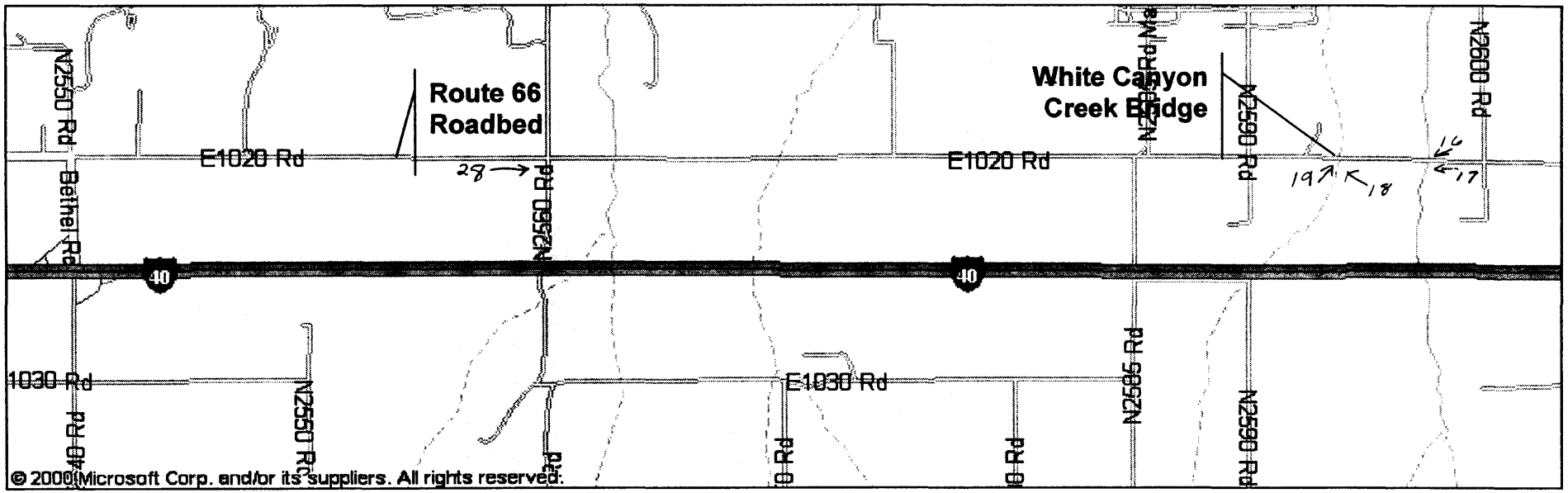
Boundary Justification

This boundary includes the property historically associated with the segment of Route 66 between Bridgeport Hill and the town of Hydro, Oklahoma including the roadbed and features and public right-of-way.

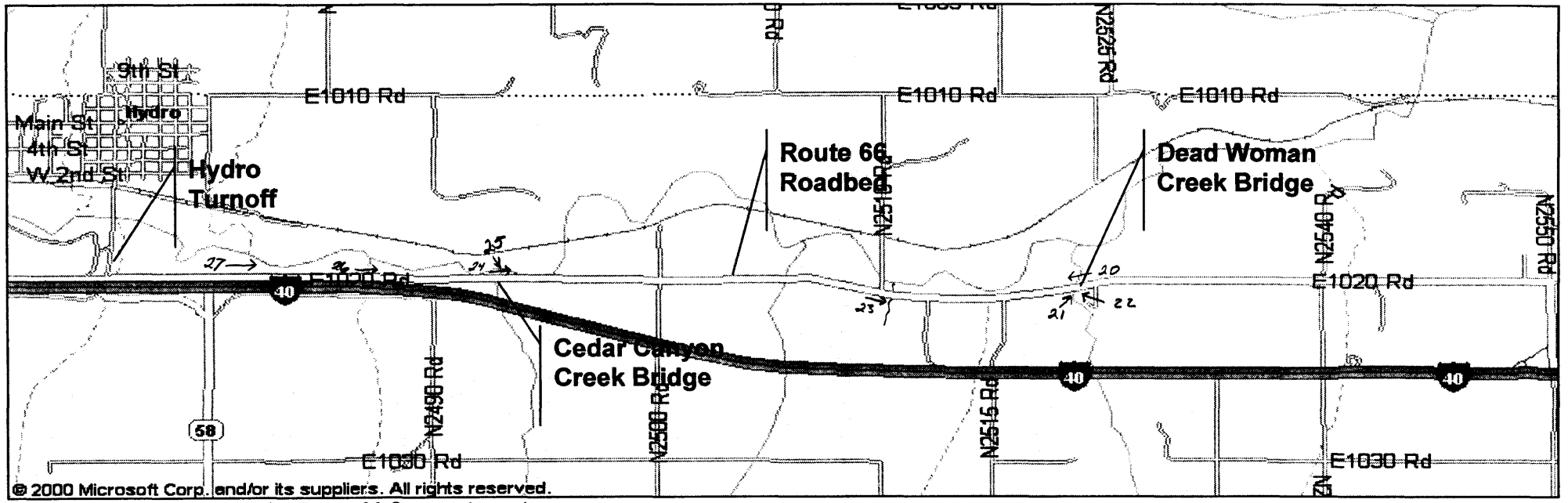
Bridgeport hill – Hydro Route 66 Segment
Photograph Vantage Points



Map of Bridgeport Hill – Hydro Route 66 Segment, east



Map of Bridgeport Hill – Hydro Route 66 Segment, center



Map of Bridgeport Hill – Hydro Route 66 Segment, west