1. SITE I.D. NO

HAER INVENTORY

Historic American Engineering Record
Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

2. INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION: Bridges, Trestles, and Aqueducts 7603
TRUSS: Steel
State Designation Number: 433/1

3. PRIORITY: 1

5. DATE: 1929

4. DANGER OF DEMOLITION? (SPECIFY THREAT) ☐ YES ☐ NO ☒ UNKNOWN

6. GOVT SOURCE OF THREAT: OWNER ADMIN

7. OWNER/ADMIN: State Department of Transportation

8. NAME(S) OF STRUCTURE: Longview Bridge

9. OWNER'S ADDRESS: Highway Administration Building
Olympia, Washington 98504

10. STATE COUNTY: WA 015 COUNTY NAME: Cowlitz CITY/VICINITY: Longview CONG. DIST.: 03

STATE COUNTY: COUNTY NAME: CITY/VICINITY: CONG. DIST.:

11. SITE ADDRESS (STREET & NO.)
Crossing: Columbia River

12. EXISTING SURVEYS ☐ NR ☐ NHL ☐ HABS ☐ HAER—I ☐ HAER ☐ NPS ☐ CL6
☐ CONF ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL ☐ OTHER

13. SPECIAL FEATURES (DESCRIBE BELOW)
☐ INTERIOR INTACT ☐ EXTERIOR INTACT ☐ ENVIRONS INTACT

14. UTM ZONE 10 EASTING 503650 NORTHING 5106420 SIGN
SCALE ☒ 1:24 ☐ 1:62.5 ☐ OTHER
QUAD NAME: Rainier, Oregon-Washington

UTM ZONE 10 EASTING 502670 NORTHING 5104880 SIGN
SCALE ☐ 1:24 ☐ 1:62.5 ☐ OTHER
QUAD NAME:

15. CONDITION 70 ☐ EXCELLENT 71 ☐ GOOD 72 ☐ FAIR 73 ☐ DETERIORATED 74 ☐ RUINS 75 ☐ UNEXPOSED 76 ☐ ALTERED 82 ☐ DESTROYED 85 ☐ DEMOLISHED

16. INVENTORIED BY: Lisa Soderberg
AFFILIATION: HAER/Washington State Bridge Inventory
DATE:

17. DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND HISTORY, INCLUDING CONSTRUCTION DATE(S), HISTORICAL DATE(S), PHYSICAL DIMENSIONS, MATERIALS, EXTANT EQUIPMENT, AND IMPORTANT BUILDERS, ENGINEERS, ETC.

The Longview Bridge, built in 1927, replaced a ferry system across the Columbia River, and formed an important connecting link in the Pacific Highway extending from Vancouver, B.C. to Tia Juana, Mexico. From the beginning, the construction of the steel cantilever bridge was plagued with delays, and battles between vested interests. In the hopes that a bridge across the Columbia, downstream from Portland, would encourage Washingtonians to spend their hard earned dollars in Oregon business communities, the Oregon Highway Commission was authorized to recommend a location for the bridge. However, when the commission recommended the placement of the bridge at the newly founded town of Longview, the people of Oregon, and the Portland Chamber of Commerce, felt threatened by the possibility that the bridge would aid the economic interests of Washington at the cost of the Willamette-Columbia port area. The people of Oregon now envisioned the bridge as a potential detriment to the State's commerce, and attempted to drop the plan.

(CONT OVER)

18. ORIGINAL USE: vehicular
PRESENT USE: Vehicular
ADAPTIVE USE:

19. REFERENCES—HISTORICAL REFERENCES, PERSONAL CONTACTS, AND/OR OTHER

State Department of Transportation Bridge Files.
John M. McClelland, Jr., Longview The Remarkable Beginnings of a Modern Western City, (Portland, 1949), pp. 121-127.
"Longview Bridge Nears Completion." The Sunday Oregonian, 2 Feb. 1930.
"Longview-Rainier Interstate Toll Bridge Completed," Western Construction News, 10 March 1930.

(CONT OVER)

20. URBAN AREA 50,000 POP. OR MORE? ☐ YES ☒ NO

21. HCRS REGION: NW

22. PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY ☐ YES, LIMITED ☒ YES, UNLIMITED ☐ NO ☐ UNKNOWN

23. EDITOR
INDEXER

24. LOCATED IN AN HISTORIC DISTRICT? ☐ YES ☒ NO NAME DISTRICT I.D. NO

Description (continued)

After efforts to build the bridge jointly by the states of Washington and Oregon failed, private interests in Longview were approached to promote the enterprise. In February, 1925, W.D. Comer, a Seattle building and loan association president, and Wesley Vandercook, chief engineer of the Long-Bell Lumber Co., were granted a franchise. Subsequently, the private company, the Columbia River-Longview Company, was formed. However, the franchise required that the state highway departments of Oregon and Washington approve the plans. Although the plans were approved by the State of Washington, they were not approved by the State of Oregon. In addition, the Oregon Legislature passed a bill which prevented the highway department from approving the plans until they were first approved by the Port of Portland. The Port of Portland argued that the proposed design would impede river traffic, because the clearance would not allow ships to pass underneath the bridge. The franchise expired before these design problems were resolved.

In January, 1927, a second franchise was obtained by the Company. Under this second franchise, approval by the two state highway departments was eliminated. However, the franchise carried the stipulation that the design must be approved not only by the Secretary of War, as was the usual procedure, but also by the Secretary of Commerce, and the Secretary of Agriculture. In November, 1927, Congress finally passed a bill which authorized the construction of the bridge by private interests. The permit authorized by the bill, stipulated that there be a clear channel width of 1000'. This necessitated placing the piers 1,125 feet apart rather than 750 feet, stipulated in the original plans. The original plans which specified a clearance of 155', would also be altered to provide a minimum vertical clearance of 185' at the channel pier, 195' at the center of the channel, and 155' at the Longview pier-head line. In order to meet the requirement of the permit that there should be only one pier between the channel and the Longview pier-head line, it was necessary to construct a main-channel span of 1200', and to construct two unusually long anchor arms, of 760'. At the time of its construction, the bridge had the longest cantilever span in the United States. It was agreed that with these modifications, any vessel in existence could pass beneath the bridge, including full rigged clipper ships which were the only vessels that would require a clearance of 195'.

The alterations in the design of the bridge raised the cost of the bridge from $1.5 million to $5.8 million. Mr. Comer and Mr. Vandercook used money from their pockets in order to be able to begin construction on time. Financing was finally arranged through the sale of bonds by J.W. Seligman of New York City, and Bradford, Kimball and Company of San Francisco.

The bridge was designed by the Strauss Engineering Corporation of Chicago, Illinois, and the general contractor was the Bethlehem Steel Company. The steel structure is 3,892' long, and includes two steel beam spans; five riveted Warren deck trusses: two 168' spans, one 84' span, and two spans, which together are 674' long; two anchor arms, each 760' long; two cantilever spans, each 380' long; and one suspended span, 440' long. The superstructure which contains 12,500 tons of carbon and silicon steel was fabricated in part by the Bethlehem Steel Company plant at Steelton, Pennsylvania and in part in the Seattle plant of the Wallace Bridge and Structural Steel Company.

The superstructure was erected by J.H. Pomeroy and Company of Seattle. The deck truss spans, and the anchor arms, were erected on falsework. The two 380' cantilever arms of the main span were erected by a traveler operating on the

REFERENCES (CONTINUED)

Archie Satterffield, "It Now is Toll Free," The Seattle Times, Sunday, 7 November 1965.
"Congress Authorized Columbia and Deleware River Bridges," Engineering News-Record, Vol 98, No. 10, 1927, p. 424
"Longview Bridge Open to Traffic," The Oregonian, 30 March 1930.

ABSTRACT

HAER NO | LC | TECH REPORT | HIST REPORT | CONTEMP PHOTO | HIST PHOTO | CONTEMP DRWG | HIST DRWG | COLOR PLATE | PHOTOGRAM | SW | FILM

Description (continued)

top chords. The 440' suspended span was cantilevered out from both arms, and closed in the center by eight 500-ton hydraulic jacks. The pile driving for the falsework, and the approach spans was contracted to the Hart Construction Company of Longview.

The original approaches were constructed of timber by Lindstrom and Feigenson of Portland. The Washington approach was 2,618' long, and the Oregon approach was 1,754' long. In 1950, the north approach was reconstructed by Guy F. Atkinson Company of Portland. It consists of 23 steel beam spans fabricated by Bethlehem Pacific Coast Steel. The south approach was reconstructed in 1963.

The substructure was constructed by the Pacific Bridge Company of Portland. Pier construction included four major piers - two in the deep waterway, and two at the shore end of the anchor arms; it included five smaller piers on the Oregon side; and four pedestal piers carrying a steel tower on the Washington side.

As President Hoover pressed a golden telegraph key in the eastroom of the White House, a guillotine dropped to cut the yellow cord of daffodils strung across the span, officially opening the bridge to traffic on March 29, 1980 - eighteen months after the general design plans were drawn up. The governors of Washington and Oregon, and the premier of British Columbia attended the ceremony commemorating the bridging of the Columbia River at Longview and Rainier.

Because the bridge was constructed on the eve of the Great Depression, traffic across the toll span did not meet original expectations. Finally in December, 1947, the bridge was purchased by the Washington State Toll Bridge Authority for slightly more than $2 million. The Washington State Department of Highways took over maintenance of the bridge in January 1948. On October 19, 1965, the last of the bridge-building bonds was paid off, and the tolls were removed.

The Longview Bridge is significant as a representative of a long cantilever structure. The long cantilever span, the paucity of piers providing a wide channel, and the unusually high clearance of the bridge are subtle reminders of the political struggles that plagued the construction of the bridge and the unyielding persistence of private initiative in the completion of such a substantial structure. The exaggerated dimensions of the bridge may in part reflect the fears of Oregon and Portland commercial interests. It was stated that "Longview boosters fanned the flame by boasting that the new city would overshadow Portland, just as Portland had Oregon City, and Seattle had Tacoma, and for the same reason - they were closer to the sea lanes." Although the fears and boasts were out of proportion, they do reflect the importance that the people of Washington and Oregon instilled in the construction of the bridge, and its role as a significant transportation link, instrumental to the burgeoning commercial development of the area.

25. Photos and Sketch Map of Location

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