

1404

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Androscoggin Swinging Bridge

other names/site number Androscoggin Pedestrian Swinging Bridge

2. Location

street & number Spanning the Androscoggin River between Topsham and Brunswick, Maine N/A not for publication

city or town Brunswick and Topsham N/A vicinity

state Maine code ME county Cumberland & Sagadahoc code 005 & 023 zip code 04011

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

E. S. [Signature] 11/26/03  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
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 certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  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] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 11/14/04

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

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

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION / Pedestrian-related \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION / Pedestrian-related \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other : Suspension Bridge \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete \_\_\_\_\_

walls \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

roof \_\_\_\_\_

other Deck: Wood \_\_\_\_\_

Steel \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

ANDROSCOGGIN SWINGING BRIDGE

CUMBERLAND AND SAGADAHOC COUNTIES, MAINE

Section number 7 Page 2

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## DESCRIPTION

The Androscoggin Swinging Bridge is a pedestrian link between the town of Topsham in Sagadahoc County and the Town of Brunswick in Cumberland County, Maine. Originally built in 1892 by John A. Roebling's Sons Co. of New Jersey, the steel and wood structure on concrete abutments is currently one of five bridges that connect the two towns over the Androscoggin River in the urban area. (Two additional bridges cross the River in connection with US Route 95 on the outskirts of town). This broad and fast river flows generally west to east at this location; less than a quarter mile upstream is a combination train and vehicular bridge built by the Maine Central Railroad (1860), while just a bit further down stream is the steel arch Frank J. Wood Bridge. A second, or lower, rail road bridge spans the river to the east of the Wood bridge, while several miles down stream a new concrete bridge (2000) serves traffic from the east ends of the towns. In Brunswick, the Androscoggin Swinging Bridge terminates just shy of where the present Route 1 (formerly Mill Street) skirts through the edge of the town. Mixed commercial and residential neighborhoods lie to the south and west of Route 1, while 500 yards to the east is the large brick Cabot Mill, which now houses several stores and restaurants. On the Topsham side, the Swinging Bridge lands at the edge of a residential neighborhood consisting of late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century single and multi-family homes. The banks of the river are lined with granite ledges, sandy beaches and mixed hard and softwood trees and shrubs. On the south bank a log boom fastened to the ledge parallels the river and passes under the Swinging bridge.

The Swinging Bridge consists of two steel towers on concrete abutments and a wooden deck suspended on rods hung from cables between the towers. The span between the towers is approximately 332 feet, while the total span between the anchorages is 520 feet. Each tower is 30' 6" high. It is built in an A-frame design, of vertical channel steel, which join at the top to form a saddle over which the main and secondary suspension cables pass. Each A-frame is cross braced internally and two sets of three steel chords connect the opposing steel frames, which in turn are also extensively cross braced. The resulting pattern of 'X's form the only ornamentation on the towers. (Holt, Tanner & Associates, Inc., p.1-3).

The main suspension cables are sunk into anchor vaults and then attached to ledge at both ends of the structure. Measuring 1 7/8" in diameter, the cables are comprised of seven wires with seven strands each. Suspension rods with turnbuckles drop vertically from the two main cables. Steel floor beams are suspended from the rods, and support the timber stringers and wooden decking that make up the six foot wide walkway of the bridge. A 3'6" high railing sits on vertical posts which are attached to the ends of the beams every six feet along the bridge. A chain link safety fence is attached to the railing and posts. In addition to the main cable, secondary cables support each end of the deck, while a pair of side-sway cables connect the top of the towers to ledges up- and down-stream from the bridge. With the exception of a splice on the south main cable, the main suspension cable is in fair condition; however several of the secondary cables are loose.

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In March of 1936 an extreme flood severely damaged the Androscoggin River Swinging Bridge; the original deck, railings and wooden safety fence were destroyed. However the towers stood, and over the next two years the structure was rebuilt by Works Progress Administration crews utilizing the original cables and towers. Since 1954 the structure has undergone periodic maintenance and limited replacement of suspension rods, decking and the side-sway cables.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
removed from its original location.
a birthplace or a grave.
a cemetery.
a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
a commemorative property.
less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Engineering
Industry
Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1892 - 1953

Significant Dates

1892
C. 1913 - 1916
1936

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

John A. Roebling Sons' Co.

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other
Name of repository:

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CUMBERLAND AND SAGADAHOC COUNTIES, MAINE

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Androscoggin Swinging Bridge is one of three pedestrian swinging bridges in Maine. Built in 1892 by John A. Roebling's Sons Co. the bridge was intended to provide a way for mill workers in Topsham, who lived in the new housing development *Topsham Heights*, to reach the Cabot Mill in Brunswick, as well as to access the commercial district which lined Mill Street on the Brunswick side of the river. Over the years, the bridge has also accommodated Catholic French Canadians wishing to attend church in Brunswick, as well as children attending the city's public and parochial schools. The Androscoggin Swinging Bridge is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, in recognition of its significance within an industrial and community development context, and under Criterion C, as an example of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century suspension bridge by a very well known bridge company.

The following is taken largely from "A History of the Androscoggin River Pedestrian 'Swinging' Bridge" report prepared by the History Subcommittee of the Androscoggin Pedestrian "Swinging" Bridge Committee of Brunswick and Topsham, written in August 2002.

"The Androscoggin River Pedestrian "Swinging" Bridge is one of three remaining pedestrian suspension bridges in the State of Maine.<sup>1</sup> It spans the Androscoggin River, a river with a long industrial history, and connects the towns of Brunswick and Topsham and Cumberland and Sagadahoc Counties. The Great Falls at Brunswick and the head tidewater below the falls were natural sources of power, and the towns of Brunswick (on the south side of the river) and Topsham (on the north side) grew up around the mills that clustered there. Although the textile industry began in Brunswick in 1809, the formation of Cabot Manufacturing Company in 1857 signaled major changes in town. Cabot Manufacturing expanded throughout the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a corresponding influx of largely French-Canadian workers. The Company built tenement houses to accommodate many of its workers, but by the late 1880s the company had run out of reasonably-priced land on the Brunswick side of the river. It was no longer expanding housing opportunities, even though there was still a need.

Frank P. Weatherill, Amos O. Reed, George A. Stover, and Charles E. Hacker, doing business as Topsham Land Company, decided to fill that need by developing the land across the river in Topsham Heights. They conceived of a foot bridge which would allow much better access to Cabot cotton mill. This was similar to the Skowhegan bridge which was also built to provide convenient access to a developer's house lots. Although there were already two bridges across the Androscoggin, the new bridge would be much more direct and was felt to be safer since pedestrians wouldn't have to share the bridge with other traffic. At the time, the developers thought it would add enough value to their lots for it to be a worthwhile investment. In 1906 one of the

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<sup>1</sup>The other two existing bridges are in Skowhegan and Waterville (NR 73000132)

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developers testified that the investment had not been a profitable one.

The developers conferred with a representative of John A. Roebling Sons' Co. on November 5, 1891. This was the company that had been the primary builder of the Brooklyn Bridge. It may have been Skowhegan's experience that persuaded the developers to choose a company with an impeccable reputation - when the Skowhegan bridge collapsed in 1888, they discovered that the cables, instead of being solid as promised, had a center of hemp."

Certainly, the John A. Roebling Sons' Company's 1891 catalog promised a quality product. The following is an excerpt from their advertisement for 'Iron and Steel Suspension Bridges'.

"WE are prepared to make contracts for Iron and Steel Suspension bridges, or to furnish plans and specifications for them, at a reasonable cost, and also competent engineers to superintend the construction of bridges which are not contracted for.

The cables, stays and suspenders in our design of bridges are made of galvanized steel wire rope - a form possessing the greatest strength for a given amount of material.

All the wire work in these bridges is made in our own manufactory, especially for the purpose, and none but the finest qualities of material are used.

Suspension Bridges are coming more and more into use, especially for spans of one hundred feet and over. They possess greater architectural beauty, and also are more economical, than any other class of bridge.

Dangers from ice and floods are modified by the absence, or small number, of piers.

When constructed on our system and under our supervision, they give satisfaction in every respect, and in no case has one been known to fall." (Hoyle, Tanner & Assoc, Inc, *Appendix 8*).

The Androscoggin Swinging Bridge was an example whereby the bridge was constructed under the Roebling system, and under their supervision, utilizing local contractors. Shortly after the bridge construction started, the following report identified the key players in this project.

"The new suspension bridge at Brunswick for the Topsham Land Company will have a span of 342 feet. The contractors are the John A. Roebling Sons Company of Trenton, N.J., and the work will be under the direction of Mr. Farrington, their representative. The work will be pushed along as fast as possible, as Mr. Farrington has to go to Australia to supervise the erection of a bridge there. The piers are built under the supervision of Brad Cobb, and T.W. Given has charge of the carpentry work." (Industrial Journal, May 27, 1892).

According to the 1892/3 Cumberland County Directory, Hiram B. Cobb of Brunswick was identified as stone contractor, and the Maine Register listed the stone mason firm of Sedgley and Cobb. T.W. Given was a Brunswick based contractor and builder. To enable the bridge to span the river from the land

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owned by the Topsham Land Company to the Brunswick side of the river, the agents got an easement from Cabot Manufacturing in March of 1892. At the same time that the bridge was under construction, the Land Company was selling lots and constructing houses on their side of the bridge.

“By early August, the stringers were across and temporary planking allowed passengers to cross. The *Brunswick Telegraph* reported in September 15, 1892, that “the suspension bridge is completed and is as substantial a piece of work as one would wish to see. There is no vibration, even when a number are crossing it at the same time.” By October 20, the bridge was being painted. Construction costs totalled about \$2000.

Apparently the bridge weathered the floods of 1901 and 1902, which took out the Waterville and Skowhegan pedestrian bridges, both subsequently rebuilt. That didn't mean that the Brunswick-Topsham bridge was without its own problems. The developers had never promised to maintain the bridge, and had always intended that when it became a “common convenience and necessity” it would be accepted as a public highway. By 1906, they had spent about \$500 in necessary repairs, but they weren't really interested in investing any more. An additional \$200 was raised by subscription to make repairs, which included new sills.

### *Transfer of the bridge to the towns*

In September 1906, the Municipal Officers of the Town of Topsham petitioned the Commissioners of Cumberland and Sagadahoc Counties to declare the bridge a public highway. The petition was opposed by the municipal officers of Brunswick. Apparently Brunswick, which felt it didn't get as much benefit from the bridge, was worried it would have to pay more than its fair share for upkeep. The Commissioners of both Counties met in Topsham, viewed the bridge, and held a hearing. Testimony was held on both sides.

#### In favor:

- Several businessmen of both towns testified that they thought it was an asset to the towns, making life better for both workers and businessmen.
- The pastor of the Catholic church testified that 68 Catholic families lived in Topsham, and along with boarders, totaled about 375 people. The only Catholic church was in Brunswick, so they used the bridge all the time to attend Parochial School and attend Mass. He reminded the towns that the existence of the Parochial School saved the towns \$6000-\$7000 /year.

#### Against:

- It was mainly members of the Brunswick Board of Selectmen who spoke against accepting the bridge, saying they didn't know anyone who needed to use the bridge and didn't want



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to pay to maintain it.

After considering the evidence, the petition was granted and the bridge became a public highway.

Work was done on the bridge in the 1913-1916 period... Topsham appropriated \$300 at its 1913 Town Meeting for "repairing the Suspension Bridge" and the 1916 Topsham Annual report says that the town paid "the final payment [of \$284.60] on the suspension bridge" to Megquier & Jones. The company (still in existence in South Portland) is a steel fabrication company which specialized in sectional iron work.

## *1936 Flood*

The 1936 flood destroyed many bridges in Brunswick and Topsham. It took out the pedestrian bridge span, which was probably original. The many existing photographs of the flood show the towers still standing, and they do not appear to have been damaged. The WPA helped replace the span, apparently using the original cables. The piers that the tower stand on were resurfaced with concrete but are not believed to have had major changes.

## *1936 - present*

Over the last half-century, Topsham and Brunswick have shared the cost of maintaining the bridge. Most of the work that has been done has been general maintenance, although there have been several points when fairly substantial work was done. Work is known to have been done in 1954, 1959, 1973 and 1993.

The closing of the Verny Corporation (successor to Cabot Manufacturing) mill in 1955 meant the end of the use for which the bridge was originally built. But even before the mill closed, the bridge had developed a purpose beyond that of servicing mill employees. It was used in the 30s, 40s and 50s by Topsham high school students, who needed to cross the river to go to Brunswick High School, and by Catholic students who attended St. John's Parochial School. It was used by residents who shopped in Brunswick

Today, the bridge serves a tangible reminder of an industrial past, and of the relationship between employers, employees and private enterprise. It has the practical purpose of shortening shopping trips for many Topsham residents. It now stands poised to become an important piece of a framework of recreational and leisure activities - biking, walking, and viewing the river - that the original bridge users would have marveled at."

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The preservation of the Androscoggin Swinging Bridge is currently the focus of a joint committee sponsored by the Towns of Topsham and Brunswick. In the spring of 2003 the Androscoggin Pedestrian "Swinging" Bridge Committee of Brunswick and Topsham received a Transportation Enhancement Grant from the Maine Department of Transportation to aid in repairing the bridge. Although the bridge is currently posted for 20 pedestrians, it is still used daily by pedestrians and bicyclists who commute between Topsham and Brunswick for work, school or shopping.

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ANDROSCOGGIN SWINGING BRIDGE

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibber, Joyce K. Brunswick and Topsham. *The Old Photographs Series*. (Augusta, Maine: Alan Sutton), 1994.

"Building Notes." *The Industrial Journal*, No. 648. (May 27, 1892), p. 8.

"Building Notes." *The Industrial Journal*, No. 664. (September 16, 1892), p. 8.

General Directory of the Towns in Cumberland County. (Boston, Mass: Union Publishing Company), 1892.

History Subcommittee of the Androscoggin Pedestrian "Swinging" Bridge Committee of Brunswick and Topsham. "A History of the Androscoggin River Pedestrian 'Swinging' Bridge." August 2002. Report on file at Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta, Maine.

Hoyle, Tanner & Associates, Inc. "Androscoggin Pedestrian Bridge." [Topsham, Maine: Hoyle, Tanner & Associates, Inc.]. February 2000. Report on file at Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta, Maine.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property < 1/4 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

UTM grid with Zone, Easting, and Northing values for four quadrants.

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.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title CHRISTI A. MITCHELL, ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

organization MAINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION date 19 May 2003

street & number 55 CAPITOL STREET, STATION 65 telephone (207) 287-2132

city or town AUGUSTA state ME zip code 04333 -0065

Additional Documentation

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)

Property Owner

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

name

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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ANDROSCOGGIN SWINGING BRIDGE

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### **VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The nominated property includes the entire 520' span of the Androscoggin Swinging Bridge, its abutments, and the approaches, including the cable vaults, located on the north and south sides of the Androscoggin River in Topsham and Brunswick Maine.

### **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The above described boundary includes all the land and the passage across the Androscoggin River that is historical associated with the superstructure and substructure of the nominated property.

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ANDROSCOGGIN SWINGING BRIDGE

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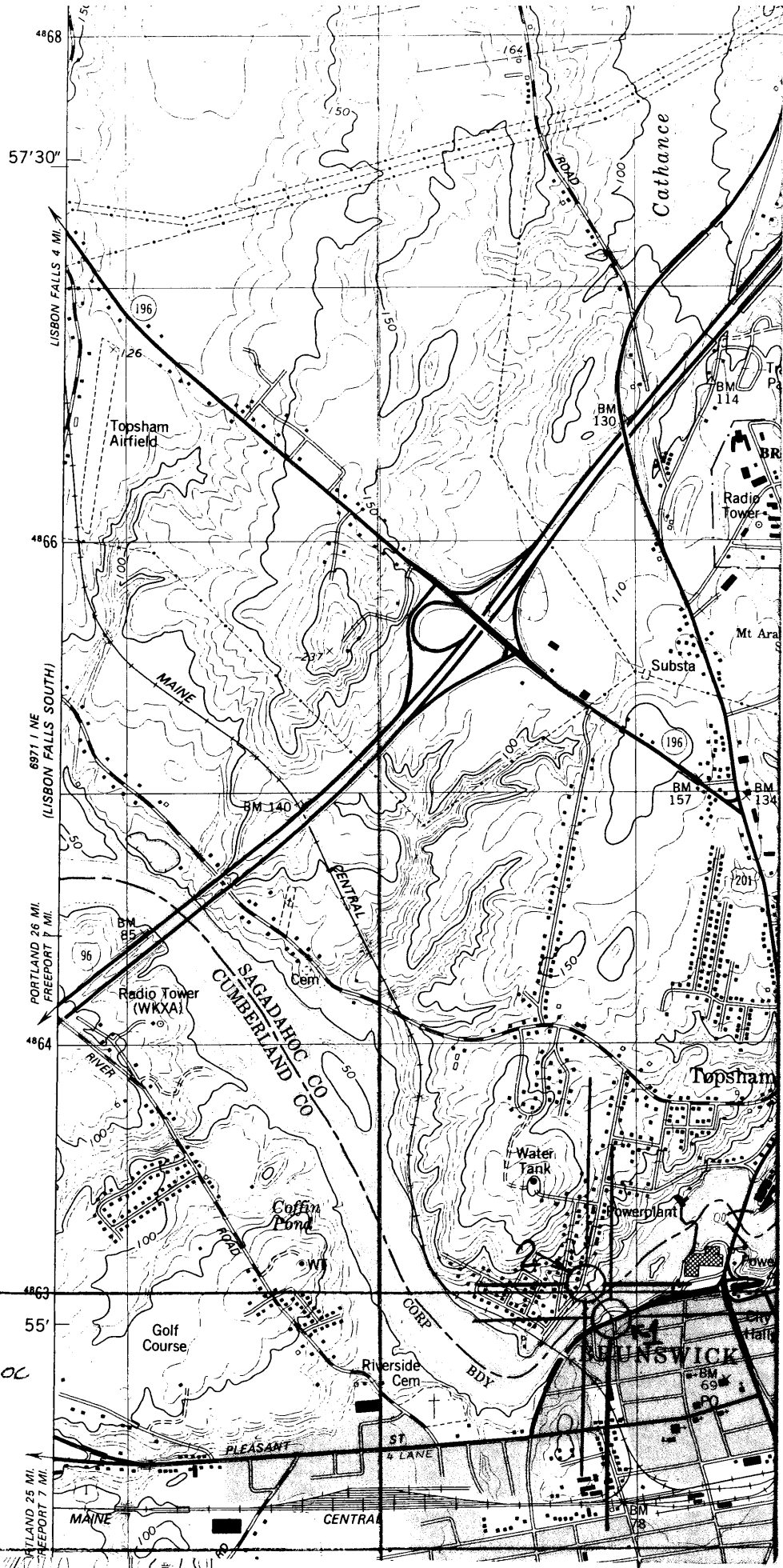
### PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 of 4  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
16 May 2003  
Brunswick approach and south tower; facing northwest.

Photograph 2 of 4  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
16 May 2003  
East elevation, north end of bridge, facing northwest.

Photograph 3 of 4  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
16 May 2003  
Bridge deck and cables; facing north.

Photograph 4 of 4  
Christi A. Mitchell  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
16 May 2003  
East side of span; facing southwest.



ANDROSCOGGIN SWINGING  
BRIDGE

CUMBERLAND AND SAGADAHOC  
COUNTIES, MAINE

- UTM'S:
- 1) 19/421894/4862905
  - 2) 19/421804/4863033

19/421894/4862905