

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Nebraska</b>
COUNTY: <b>Morrill</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE <b>NOV 8 1974</b>

1. NAME

COMMON: **Site**  
**Camp Clarke Bridge (~~25 MO 68~~)**

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: **W of**  
**Three miles west of Bridgeport**

CITY OR TOWN: **Bridgeport vicinity** CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: **Third District**

STATE: **Nebraska** CODE: **31** COUNTY: **Morrill** CODE: **123**

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: **Carl Lindgren**

STREET AND NUMBER: **922 "P" Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Bridgeport** STATE: **Nebraska** CODE: **31**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: **Jimmie J. Mills, County Clerk**

STREET AND NUMBER: **Morrill County Courthouse**

CITY OR TOWN: **Bridgeport** STATE: **Nebraska** CODE: **31**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

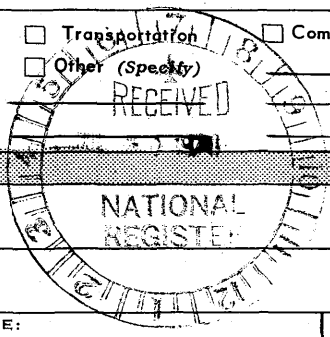
TITLE OF SURVEY: **Historic Preservation in Nebraska**

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: **Nebraska State Historical Society**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1500 "R" Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Lincoln** STATE: **Nebraska** CODE: **31**



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7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The site of Camp Clarke bridge was located nine miles east of Chimney Rock and about three miles west of present-day Bridgeport.

The actual bridge at Camp Clarke was a massive structure over two thousand feet in length. The bridge contained sixty-one trusses and pilings which were deeply set into the soft bottom of the North Platte River. The piles were secured locally. These were cut in the hills southwest of the construction location.

Several buildings were constructed. A hotel, store, saloon, and corral were situated on the south side of the Platte River. A small military blockhouse and blacksmith shop were located on the north side of the river.

Henry T. Clarke, a veteran freighter and bridge builder constructed enduring structures. In the early 1900's Clarke bragged that the bridge was still in use.

In about 1913 several of the buildings were still extant. But through the years the buildings were razed. Now only a few of the piles are visible, and water no longer flows under this bridge. The North Platte River flows along the northern end of the bridge.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |                                        |                                       |                                                  |                                       |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1875-1880**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |                                                    |                                                 |                                                    |                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal                | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture               | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture              | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian       | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                   | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |                                                    | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation              |                                                 |                                                    | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Two years before his eventful meeting with the Sioux at the Little Big Horn George Armstrong Custer's Black Hills expedition once again brought the cry of "Gold Fever" to the United States.

With Sidney, Nebraska being a railroad town and the distances between Cheyenne and North Platte being too great from the Black Hills, it only seemed natural that Sidney Barracks would become a boom town.

During 1874 and 1875 Custer was the main community. After the early strike was over the miners began to "work" the northern hills near Deadwood Gulch in 1876.

Almost every town wanted to open a road to the Black Hills. Sidney on the main line of the Union Pacific was actually closest to the miners and materials could be sent by rail from Omaha and Chicago. Sidney and Cheyenne had a number of freighters who were supplying the Indian agencies and the Army. These freighters, aware of quick profits, were willing to extend their operations into the "Hills".

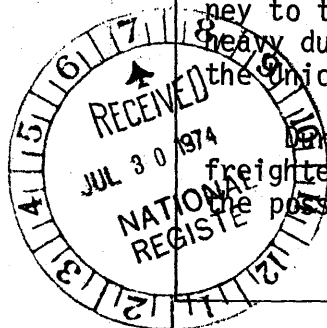
In 1873 the Oglala were moved from their reservation on the North Platte River to the White River near Crawford in northwest Nebraska. This agency was called Red Cloud Agency and one year later in 1874 the Army established Fort Robinson. Numerous freighters from Sidney and Cheyenne supplied this agency and military post.

The main problem on the Sidney-Red Cloud Agency-Black Hills Trail was fording the North Platte River. The North Platte even during dry weather was troublesome. But during high water the river was impassable.

If the freighters in Sidney wanted a bridge they had two choices, one at Fort Laramie and the other at North Platte. Then in 1876 the Sidney to the Black Hills Trail was streamlined with the construction of a heavy duty bridge. This bridge was the brain child of the Omaha merchants, the Union Pacific and Henry T. Clarke.

During the winter of 1875-76 Clarke, a veteran bridge builder, and freighter, was contacted by several businessmen in Omaha to determine the possibility of building a bridge. During the spring of 1876 Clarke

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Lass, William E. From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake: An Account of Overland Freighting. Nebraska State Historical Society Publications. Vol. 26. 1972.

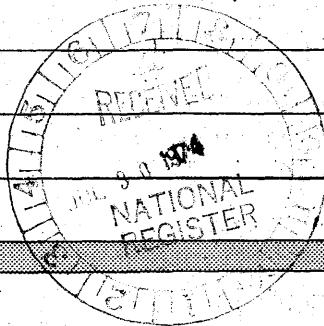
**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	41°	41'	43"	103°	10'	53"			
NE	41°	41'	43"	103°	10'	34"			
SE	41°	41'	05"	103°	10'	34"			
SW	41°	41'	05"	103°	10'	53"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: CA 120 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Ronald L. Kivett, Archeologist

ORGANIZATION: Nebraska State Historical Society DATE: 15 May 1974

STREET AND NUMBER: 1500 "R" Street

CITY OR TOWN: Lincoln STATE: Nebraska CODE: 31

**12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: Morvin D. Knott

Title: Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

Date: July 11, 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

A. R. Montrose  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 11/8/74

ATTEST:

Charles H. Starnes  
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 11-8-74

SEE INSTRUCTIONS  
 NE 13/65 780/4617 360  
 SE 13/65 1810/4616 180  
 SW 13/65 1370/4616 160  
 NW 13/65 1340/4617 350  
 017

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Nebraska	
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8. (cont.)

reported that it was possible but the structure would be nearly one-half mile in length.

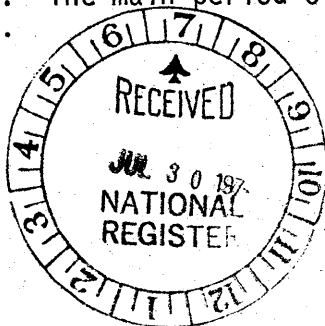
This adventurous undertaking ran into financial problems but Clarke agreed on a set fee and then charged tolls.

The railroads, including the Chicago and Rock Island, were interested in the project from the beginning. They were so interested that construction materials were shipped free from Davenport, Iowa and Moline, Illinois to Sidney. At Sidney the materials were transshipped to the construction site.

Clarke's bridge when completed in June, 1876 was a massive structure two thousand feet in length with a solid six to one truss span. Toll houses were constructed and tolls assessed each outfit. The rates were \$2.00 for each outfit consisting of two animals, a vehicle and a man and 50¢ extra for each additional animal. A single freighter wagon pulled by five yoke of oxen would be charged \$6.00. (Lass 1972: 196)

The Army was extremely anxious for the construction to be completed. It was extremely important for rapid troop movement during the campaign of 1876. Accordingly a troop was stationed at Camp Clarke, a small blockhouse on the northern side of the river. The trail was well protected. Fort Sidney patrolled the southern end of the trail and troops from Fort Robinson patrolled the northern end and the troops at Camp Clarke guarded the Platte.

For about five years after the construction of Clarke's bridge the Sidney Trail was lively. Hundreds of emigrants trekked along it, most of them on the way to the Hills. The trail slowly died because of various reasons, construction of a rail line in South Dakota and the Hills gold boom had died away. The main period of use was 1875-1880. By 1882 the trail was rarely used.



## Acreage Justification

An area large enough to include the approaches to the bridge and the commercial building sites. This area has been chosen to provide adequate protection to the environment of the area.



Camp Clarke Bridge Site

Morrill County, Nebraska

E $\frac{1}{2}$  SE $\frac{1}{4}$

SE $\frac{1}{4}$  NE $\frac{1}{4}$

SEC 22

T 51 W

T 20 N

