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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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Big Blue River Bridge
other name/site number NEHBS Number BU00-84

2. Location

street & number township road over Big Blue River N/A not for publication
city, town 1.0 mile southeast of Surprise X vicinity
state NE county Butler code 023 zip code 68667

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Butler County	Number of Resources within Property	
Category of Property	structure	Contributing	Noncontributing
		0	0 buildings
		0	0 sites
		1	0 structures
		0	0 objects
		1	0 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Highway Bridges in Nebraska, 1870-1942

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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.

Rob Pusehen Roy DSHPD 5/6/92
Signature of certifying official Date

Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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:)

entered in the
National Register

Delores Zuer 6/29/92
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Function (enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related

Current Function (enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

OTHER /pin-connected Pratt truss leg bedstead

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A
walls N/A
roof N/A
other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located a mile southeast of Surprise, the Big Blue River Bridge spans the Big Blue River in a rural Butler County setting that has changed little since the structure's period of significance. Other than maintenance-related repairs, the bridge remains essentially unaltered as it continues to carry vehicular traffic. The Big Blue River Bridge today retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. A description of the structure follows:

span number:	1	construction date:	1897-98
span length:	40.0'	construction cost:	\$500.00
total length:	66.0'	current condition:	good
roadway wdt.:	15.9'	alterations:	none

superstructure: steel, 3-panel, pin-connected Pratt truss leg bedstead with I-beam approach spans

substructure: steel bedstead legs; concrete abutments and wingwalls

floor/decking: timber deck over I-beam stringers

other features: upper chord: paired channels with cover plate and lacing; lower chord: two angles with batten plates; vertical: two pair of angles riveted with lacing; diagonal: square eyerods; counter: eyerod with turnbuckle; floor beam: I-beam, U-bolted to lower chord pin at vertical; lateral bracing: round rod with threaded ends; guard rail: 2 channels; builder's plate on bridge: **Canton Bridge Company, Canton Ohio**

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

	statewide
Applicable National Register Criteria	C
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)	N/A
Areas of Significance	Engineering
Period of Significance	1897-98 (The period of significance is derived from the original construction date.)
Significant Dates	1897-98
Cultural Affiliation	N/A
Significant Person	N/A
Architect/Builder (Designer)	Canton Bridge Company, Canton OH
(Fabricator)	Jones and Laughlin Steel Company, Pittsburgh PA
(Builder)	Canton Bridge Company, Canton OH

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations and areas of significance noted above.

Located a mile from the small town of Surprise, this small-scale bridge consists of a single-span pinned Pratt bedstead, flanked on each end by a single steel stringer approach. According to county records, on December 14, 1897, the Butler County Supervisors awarded a \$500.00 contract to the Canton Bridge Company for an iron (actually steel) bridge over the Blue River near Surprise. Using components rolled in Pittsburgh by Jones and Laughlin, the Ohio-based bridge contractor evidently erected this bedstead early the next year.

Though never as popular as the pony truss, the truss leg bedstead was a standard bridge type marketed in the late 19th and early 20th century by such midwestern firms as the Canton Bridge Company. The structure acts as a rigid frame, with its endposts extended below the truss itself to form the supports. This was both the strength and the weakness of the bedstead. The combined super- and substructure reduced erection costs somewhat, but they were prey to flood and collision damage and suffered from inherent structural weakness relating to compression stress in the lower chords. Between about 1896, when they were first built in Nebraska, and the first decade of the 20th century, a number of bedsteads were built in the state. Through attrition, however, all but a dozen have since been demolished. (Of these, half employ pinned Pratt configurations.) The Big Blue River Bridge is technologically significant as one of the oldest documentable examples in Nebraska of this peculiar structural type.

For further contextual information regarding bridge building in Nebraska, registration requirements, and property types, see related multiple property listing "Highway Bridges in Nebraska, 1870 - 1942."

9. Major Bibliographical References

Nebraska Department of Roads, Structure Inventory and Appraisal: Structure Number C001200905; Proceeding from the Butler County Supervisors, 14 December 1897, located at the Butler County Courthouse, David City; field inventory by Lon Johnson, 18 July 1989.

___ See continuation sheet

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:

State historic preservation office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other (specify repository:)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre
Cadastral Reference S14, T13N, R1E
USGS Quadrangle Surprise (7.5 Minute Series, 1966)
UTM References zone 14 easting 643510 northing 4551150

___ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is a rectangular shaped parcel measuring 66 feet by 17.9 feet, which is centered on the UTM point listed above. Included within this rectangular parcel are the bridge's superstructure, substructure, floor system, and approach spans.

___ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated structure includes the bridge's superstructure, substructure, floor system, any approach spans and the property on which they rest. These boundaries encompass, but do not exceed, all of the property that has been historically associated with this bridge.

___ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Clayton B. Fraser, Principal	date	30 June 1991
organization	Fraserdesign and Hess, Roise and Company	telephone	303-669-7969
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