NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 1024-0018
720

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Toston Bridge

other name/site number: 24BW814

2. Location

street & number: Spanning the Missouri River, on abandoned segment of old US Highway 287, at Toston

not for publication: na
vicinity: na

city/town: Toston

state: Montana code: MT county: Broadwater code: 007 zip code: 59643

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.

Mark F. Baumler/State Historic Preservation Officer 29 April, 2005
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency or bureau

(__ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

X entered in the National Register
__ see continuation sheet
__ determined eligible for the National Register
__ see continuation sheet
__ determined not eligible for the National Register
__ see continuation sheet
__ removed from the National Register
__ see continuation sheet
__ other (explain):

Edson Beall 7/20/05

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public-local

Category of Property: Structure

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

Name of related multiple property listing: na

Number of Resources within Property	
Contributing	Noncontributing
0	0 building(s)
0	0 sites
1	0 structures
0	0 objects
1	0 TOTAL

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular)=Bridge

Current Functions:

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular)=Bridge

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

OTHER: Warren through truss

Materials:

foundation: Concrete
walls: n/a
roof: n/a
other: Steel/Wood

Narrative Description

The Toston Bridge is located in the broad upper Missouri River valley of southwestern Montana. The community of Toston is situated in 2½ million year-old tertiary basin fill, while the Lombard Thrust Fault rises above the valley floor to the east.[1] Toston is also picturesquely located central to three major ranges of the Rocky Mountains: the Elkhorns to the west, the Big Belts to the north and the Bridger Range to the south. The rolling valley is broken by numerous drainages with only a few carrying water on a seasonal basis. The most significant is Crow Creek, which empties into the Missouri River about three miles north of Toston. The bridge crosses the Missouri River about thirty miles north of the confluence of the Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin rivers. The river flows in a northerly direction, flowing into the Canyon Ferry Reservoir about eleven miles north of the bridge. The river is bordered by significant stands of cottonwoods and various kinds of shrubs. The gently rolling terrain is now utilized for wheat production and cattle grazing. Agriculture in this section of the upper Missouri Valley is also dependent on irrigation. Indeed, the Big Springs Ditch bisects Toston just a short distance east of the bridge. The mountains to the west, north and south were the scenes of extensive mining operations beginning in the 1860s. The valley is also bisected by U.S. Highway 287. The Toston Bridge once functioned as a component of that highway, but was bypassed in 1955 by the existing roadway alignment.

The Toston Bridge is a steel, three-span riveted Warren through truss resting on reinforced concrete abutments and two reinforced concrete piers. The bridge is 525-feet long consisting of three 175-foot truss spans. Each span is composed of ten panels each 17-feet 6-inches-in length. The trusses are 15-feet deep at their highest point. The bridge is 16-feet wide with a roadway width of 15-feet. The superstructures of the truss spans are comprised as follows: the lower chords are laced channel sections with batten plates. The upper chords are continuous steel plates riveted atop two channel sections with lacing bars riveted along the bottom flanges. The diagonal and vertical members are laced channel sections with batten plates. The verticals and diagonal members are riveted to the chords with gusset plates at the panel points. The upper bracing is composed of laced angle sections sway braces and angle section top

[1] David Alt and Donald W. Hyndman, *Roadside Geology of Montana*, (Missoula: Mountain Press, 1991), 292, 293.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A and C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Significant Person(s): n/a

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Areas of Significance: ENGINEERING; TRANSPORTATION

Period(s) of Significance: 1919 - 1955

Significant Dates: 1919, 1920

Architect/Builder: Charles A. Kyle/Security Bridge Company

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Toston Bridge is an excellent example of a multi-span riveted steel Warren through truss bridge. The bridge was built from standardized designs developed by the Montana State Highway Commission (SHC) in 1915 and adapted specifically for this site. The SHC adopted the Warren truss design because of its strength in relatively short river crossings (less than 200-feet), its durability as a vehicular structure, and because of it was also inexpensive to fabricate and construct. The Warren through trusses were the standard truss bridge designed and built by the Montana SHC from 1915 to 1941. The Toston Bridge is exemplary of the design and representative of the SHC's bridge-building programs from 1915 to 1941. The bridge is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A because its association with the Commission's first great bridge-building boom from 1915 to 1926 and because it is indicative of the way bridges were built in the Treasure State during that period. They were designed (adapted) by the SHC, which also advertised and awarded the bridge contracts and supervised the construction of the structures. The state and counties shared in the costs of constructing the bridge. The bridge was also an important component of the State's program to improve important Federal Aid highways in the 1910s and 1920s. The bridge was also associated with the agricultural development of the upper Missouri River valley as it provided access to the Northern Pacific Railway station at Toston for farmers and ranchers living on the west side of the Missouri. The Toston Bridge was also an important meeting place for Toston's youth in the 1920s and 1930s and figures prominently in the community's appearance as it dominates Toston's business district.

The Toston Bridge is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C because it is an intact example of the type of standardized riveted Warren through truss that the State Highway Commission built in Montana from 1915 to 1941. The SHC built Warren trusses at river crossings less than 1,000-feet in width. The design was particularly adaptable to different crossing conditions and was easy to build and were affordable both the State and the county governments. There have been structural modifications to the bridge and vehicular collisions have not significantly damaged any important structural components. The bridge retains its historic appearance and configuration with all of its original structural components and features intact. The bridge, moreover, still functions as the most direct access across the Missouri River to Toston.

Historical Information

The Lewis & Clark Expedition passed through the Toston area on its way upriver on July 24, 1805. William Clark, who was traveling overland along an Indian trail, discovered a horse, that was "fat and verry [sic] wild" near the river. The following day, on July 25th, Meriwether Lewis wrote, "We passed a large Crk. today in the plain country . . . it is composed of five streams which unite in the plain at no great distance from the river and have their sources in the Mts. This stream we called Gass's Creek [now Crow Creek] after Sergt. Patric [sic] Gass. . . ." Lewis also noted the presence of two rapids, "the worst we have seen since we passed on entering the rocky Mountain" and limestone outcrops near the river.[2]

Euro-American activity in the Toston area was somewhat limited after Lewis & Clark's visit in 1805. The valley was part of the territory claimed by the Blackfeet Indians, who jealously guarded it from non-Indian intrusions. Indeed, the Blackfeet ambushed John Colter and killed his partner, John Potts, at the Headwaters just thirty miles south of the future site of Toston in 1808. Blackfeet and Grizzly bears forced the abandonment of the Missouri Fur Company's Three Forks Post at the Headwaters in 1810. Thereafter, fur trappers passed through the area only in large groups (brigades) to provide protection from the Blackfeet. The Small Pox epidemics of the 1830s devastated the Blackfeet and opened the upper Missouri River country somewhat for white exploitation.[3]

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[2] Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Definitive Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, Volume 4 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1987), 425, 426-427.
[3] Merrill G. Burlingame, *The Montana Frontier*, (Helena: State Publishing, 1942); Newton Carl Abbott, *Montana In the Making*, (Billings: Gazette Printing, 1964), 87-88.

9. Major Bibliographic References

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:
X State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than 1

UTM References:	**Zone**	**Easting**	**Northing**	
	12	465818	5113030	(NAD 27)

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): NE¼ SW¼ of Section 23, T5N, R2E

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the Toston Bridge is a rectangle 772 x 25 feet. The rectangle encompasses the bridge and its approaches on both sides of the Missouri River for a distance of 120-feet off each end of the bridge. The boundary is centered on the bridge, at UTM Point 465818E, 5113030N, Zone 12, NAD 27. See attached site map.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries for the Toston Bridge are drawn to encompass the three spans of the bridge, its immediate approaches and that portion of the Missouri River spanned by the bridge. The width is increased beyond the measurements of the structure to include the piers and abutments.

11. Form Prepared By

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organization: Montana Dept. of Transportation
date: November 2004
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telephone: 406-444-6258
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state: MT
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Property Owner

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city or town: Townsend
state: MT
zip code: 59644-2397

lateral bracing. There are nine steel I-beam floor beams on each span; each floor beam is twelve inches deep. Angle section braces are located at all six truss portals of the bridge. A bronze dedication plate is riveted to the top of the west portal. It reads "1920 SECURITY BRIDGE COMPANY." The floor beams support seven lines of 12 inch-by-5-inch steel I-beam stringers. The timber deck is flanked by the original lattice-type steel guardrails anchored to decorative iron endposts at the portals, installed during rehabilitation of the bridge in the summer of 2003.

The substructure of the bridge is composed of two solid, columnar-type reinforced concrete piers. The piers are 30 -by-9 feet with steel fenders on the upstream sides. The superstructure is connected to the piers by cast steel rocker bearings. The bridge ends rest on reinforced concrete abutments with concrete wing walls extended twelve-feet at 45° angles.

Integrity

Other than the periodic replacement of the timber deck, there have been no changes to the Toston Bridge since its construction in 1919-1920. The bridge is the standard riveted steel Warren through truss design developed by Montana State Highway Commission bridge engineers in 1915. This particular design was adapted and utilized for Warren through truss bridges, including the Toston Bridge, from 1915 to 1941. All of the structural components and features common to the design are present on the Toston Bridge and are unchanged. The bridge retains its distinctive truss configuration, lattice-type steel guardrails, and the timber deck. There have been only a few vehicular collisions to the bridge and none have significantly altered the structural components. Toston's population has remained fairly stable at around 100 people. Consequently, the setting of the bridge site has not significantly changed since 1955 when the existing U.S. Highway 287 roadway, railroad overpass, and new Missouri River bridge were constructed by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). The surrounding area is still used for agricultural purposes and the Missouri River is still defined by cottonwoods and other riverine shrubs. The Toston Bridge retains all its essential elements of design, workmanship, and materials. It appears and functions as it did in 1920 as an important crossing of the Missouri River in southwestern Montana.

In July 1862, John White and five others discovered gold on Grasshopper Creek in southwest Montana. The resulting stampede to the placers brought the first significant non-Indian presence in Montana. The Grasshopper Creek mines were, however, not exceptionally rich and the number of miners in the district soon exceeded the amount of paying gravel available to them. Consequently, prospectors fanned out across the region in search of new bonanzas. In May 1863, several men made a fabulously rich discovery on Alder Gulch, 75 miles east of Bannack. The Alder Gulch stampede brought maybe 10,000 men and women into the narrow 10-mile-long gulch within just a few months. The diggings resulted in the establishment of Virginia and Nevada cities. The gulch, however, was not conducive to agriculture, which was needed to provide food and supplies to the miners. Soon after the Alder Gulch gold strike, the overabundance of prospectors, freighters, and hangers-on spilled over into the Madison and Gallatin valleys. Men who were unable to find paying gold claims in Alder Gulch learned that even more money could be made providing supplies to the miners and others in the mining camps. As a result, the Gallatin Valley became an important agricultural area during the early 1860s. The discovery of gold on Last Chance Gulch(Helena) in 1864 added to the importance of the valley because of its central location.[4]

The proximity of Last Chance and Confederate gulches along with hard rock mines on the upper reaches of Prickly Pear Creek and the Hot Springs District tempted prospectors to investigate the Elkhorn Mountains for gold-bearing gravel and quartz lodes. Sometime between 1862 and 1866, James Waters discovered placer gold near the headwaters of Crow Creek. In 1866, John Keating opened a hard rock mine near Waters' discovery. His mines, The Keating, along with the nearby East Pacific claim, were the centerpieces of the district, producing an estimated $3 million by 1904. The rush of miners and associated personnel in 1866, compelled rancher Reuben Rader to donate a portion of his land for use as a townsite. Named Radersburg, it flourished in the late 1860s and 1870s when quartz mining began in earnest in the district. Radersburg profited not only from the hard rock mines, but also from placer mines near Crow Creek, and the surrounding farms and ranches. By 1871, Radersburg boasted of a school, a vibrant commercial district, and a "first-class" hotel made of hewn logs called the Freemont. One writer described Radersburg's boom days: "lawsuits, horseracing, pugilistic encounters, and gambling of every description, life is manifesting itself in quite a lively manner." The high content of refractory sulphide ores in the mines made the extraction of it unprofitable by 1878. Consequently, the mines began to shut down, causing a sharp, but temporary, downturn in Radersburg's fortunes. The arrival of the Northern Pacific Railway in the Missouri Valley in 1883 and the construction of a smelter complex at Toston, nine miles to the east, in 1885 reinvigorated Radersburg's economy. By the late 1920s, however, the mines had largely played out and mining was no longer profitable. Radersburg became dependent, like Toston, on the surrounding farms and ranches.[5]

In 1871, emigrant Thomas Toston established a ranch in the southwest quarter of Section 23, Township 5 North, Range 2 East, encompassing the site of the Toston Bridge. Born in 1820 in Bergen, Norway, Toston immigrated to the United States in 1843 and worked his way west, arriving in Montana in 1864. He worked as a timber cutter in Virginia City, before drifting to Helena in 1865, where he built log cabins for the miners. Toston moved on to Confederate Gulch in 1866 and relocated to Jefferson City in 1867. By 1871, he had settled in the Missouri River valley about nine miles from Radersburg. Because Section 23 was included in the Northern Pacific Railway's seventeen million acre land grant in Montana, Toston could not formally file a preemption homestead claim on the 80-acre ranch he had occupied for thirteen years. In February 1884, he bought the property from the Northern Pacific for an undisclosed sum. By the time of the purchase, the property already included many improvements, including a "residence and farm buildings" and a river ferry at the site where a bridge would be built by Meagher County about 1895. The Toston Ferry was the first such facility below the junction of the Three Forks.[6]

Toston's ferry was strategically located in the "heart of the mining district where coal, lime, and iron ore are within easy wagon distance." It was also located at the junction of the road between Helena and Bozeman and the road to the new hard rock mining camp

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[4] Burlingame, *Montana Frontier*, 85, 87-88, 90-91; Michael Malone, Richard Roeder, and William Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, Rev. ed., (Seattle: University of Washington, 1991), 65, 67, 233, General Land Office Map, 1868.

[5] Muriel Sibell Wolle, *Montana Pay Dirt*, (Athens, Ohio: Sage, 1963), 131-133.

[6] Toston was a part of Meagher County until 1897 when the state legislature created Broadwater County from parts of Meagher and Jefferson counties. Commissioners Journal: Broadwater County, Montana, Book 1, Clerk & Recorders Office, Broadwater County Courthouse, Townsend, Montana, 1; Michael A. Leeson, *History of Montana, 1739-1885*, (Chicago: Warner, Beers & Company, 1885), 1297; Montana Land Tract Books, Volume 21; Malone, et al., *Montana*, 173; General Land Office Map 1868.

of Radersburg. By 1881, a small settlement had grown up around the ferry. In 1882, the federal government authorized at post office at the community, which was located in a building on Thomas Toston's ranch. At about the same time the Northern Pacific Railroad reached Toston in May 1883, the Toston Smelting Company planned to construct a smelter a short distance south of the community. The company played a critical role in the early development of the settlement. The company began construction of the smelter in June, 1885 with the first ore processed there in August of that year. Gold and silver ore from Neihart, and the Elkhorn districts were processed at the complex. The smelter processed 25 tons of ore a day and shipped it out on the Northern Pacific Railway. The smelter complex included the smelter, furnace rooms, matte and bullion sheds, and engine, boiler, and store rooms. It also consisted of a blacksmith shop, assay office, general office building, boarding house, and three other residences used as residence by company employees. The company owned a third interest in Toston's ferry, mined coal and quarried lime. The smelter was the center of the new community. In 1887, smelter superintendent William N. Austin recorded the Toston townsite at the Meagher County Courthouse.[7]

By 1888, the community of Toston consisted of a store, billiards hall, saloon, and hotel. The smelter ran 24 hours a day. One historian later reported that "a hundred tons of ore [were] handled daily, the output from the same averages a carload of 20 tons every 24 hours." The smelter company funded a portion of the construction of a bridge across the Missouri River to replace the ferry about 1895. The 5-span combination through truss bridge facilitated the transportation of ore from Radersburg across the river to the Smelter. In March 1899, the Toston smelter merged with the American Smelting and Refining Company in East Helena. Consequently, the old smelter was shut down and much of the equipment relocated to the East Helena complex. Although a severe blow to Toston's economy, the loss of the smelter was compensated by the prosperity of the farms and ranches around the community. The presence of the railroad meant that agricultural products raised in the area would be shipped out from Toston, thereby making it an important rural trading community. The Radersburg mines also continued to ship ore from Toston north to the East Helena facility, also ensuring a small piece of the market for the community. By 1900, Toston's business district consisted of two grocery stores, a post office, at least two saloons, livery stable, hotel, school and a grain elevator. Toston also sported an active commercial club, an Odd Fellows Hall and a jail. Toston's central location between Bozeman and Helena and its proximity to Townsend also ensured a prosperous economy for the people who lived in the area. Indeed, in 1907 the Townsend Star called Toston a "thriving, hustling little burg" surrounded by prosperous ranches and soon, it hoped, to be located on the main line of the Milwaukee Road Railroad. The Radersburg mines shipped 500 tons of ore from the Toston each month and the A. B. Bennett Mercantile Company did $100,000 worth of business each year. Things looked good for Toston in the early 20th century.[8]

By the end of the second decade of the 20th century, the old Toston Bridge had become unsafe and commissioners of Broadwater County began plans to replace it with a new structure. On September 4, 1918, commissioner George W. Myers presented a resolution to "construct a bridge across the Missouri River at Toston" and estimated that it would cost $30,000. The County Commissioners announced that a special bond election would be held on November 5, 1918 to authorize the county to sell the bonds needed for the bridge. Prior to the election, State Highway Commission (SHC) Chief Engineer George R. Metlen met with the county commissioners to go over the plans and specifications of the new bridge. State Bridge Engineer Charles A. Kyle adapted the SHC's standardized steel through truss design to suit the proposed Toston bridge site. On November 5th, 1,027 Broadwater County residents voted in the special bond election. Of those, 62% voted in favor of the bridge bonds. In Toston, 85% of the people who voted supported the bonds for the new structure. On March 3, 1919, the commissioners authorized the County Clerk to advertise for the bonds in the Townsend Star. A little over a month later, in April, the Minnesota Loan and Trust Company purchased the bonds, thus paving the way for the construction of the bridge.[9]

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[7] Grace Holloway, *Broadwater Bygones: A History of Broadwater County*, (Townsend: Broadwater County Historical Society, 1977), 117-118; Roberta Carkeek Cheney, *Names on the Face of Montana: The Story of Montana's Place Names*, (Missoula: Mountain Press, 1990), 268.

[8] Holloway, *Broadwater Bygones*, 120-121, 123; "Toston, New Railroad, New Energy," *Townsend Star*, (10 May 1907); Eleanor H. Marks, "The History of Toston," *Townsend Star*, (12 January 1967).

[9] Commissioners Journal: Broadwater County, Montana, Book 2, 355-358 (September 4, 1918), 361-362 (September 21, 1918), 371 (November 7, 1918), 391-394 (March 3, 1919), 399 (April 8, 1919); [PLANS]; "Proceedings of Commissioners," *Townsend Star* (September 12, 1918); "Notice of Sale of Broadwater County, Montana Bridge Bonds, $30,000," *Townsend Star* (March 6, 1919).

As Broadwater County cemented funding for the project, the State Highway Commission moved forward with the design for the bridge. Although the Bridge Engineer Kyle completed the design in mid-February, 1919, the federal Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) had concerns about the stability of the riverbanks at Toston. Kyle wrote to Senior BPR Highway Engineer C. C. Purcell in late February that "We anticipate very little scour at this site as there appears to be ample waterway and the old bridge has stood for a good many years with apparently no change in the bed of the stream." Once that problem had been solved, the SHC's engineers began negotiations with the Northern Pacific Railway to relocate a portion of its tracks in the vicinity of the Toston depot. Because of World War I regulations, however, the agreement with the railroad had to be negotiated through both the federal Director General of Railroads and the Northern Pacific Railway. Once the proposed changes to the railroad had been agreed to, President Woodrow Wilson had to sign the agreement before it could be implemented by the Northern Pacific. The agreement perpetuated an at-grade railroad crossing just off the east end of the proposed bridge. By the late 1940s, the crossing would become an issue resulting in the complete realignment of the highway in the Toston vicinity.

Broadwater County's original estimate that the new bridge would cost around $30,000 proved shortsighted, when it was revealed to the county commissioners that the actual cost of the bridge would be closer to $71,000. The county and the SHC were able to secure an additional $35,418.07 from the federal government to pay for the bridge. Finally, the State Highway Commission advertised for the "construction of [a] steel bridge 529 feet long on concrete piers and abutments . . . known as the Toston Missouri River Bridge" on July 10, 1919. Although the project was partially funded by Broadwater County, contractors were to submit bids to the State Highway Commission in Helena, which also kept the plans and specifications of the structure on file. This process was developed by the SHC in 1915 and agreed to by most Montana counties to ensure that the bid process was conducted fairly and in the best interests of the counties.[10]

On July 25, 1919, the State Highway Commission in consultation with the Broadwater County Commissioners awarded the bridge contract to the Security Bridge Company of Billings, Montana. The company submitted the low bid for the project of $70,836.15. The SHC engineers estimated that it would take 203 tons of steel to build the bridge, while the abutments and piers would need 449 cubic yards of concrete. Security sub-contracted with the Leavenworth, Kansas-based Missouri Valley Bridge & Iron Company to fabricate the steel components of the truss bridge. The company shipped the steel to Toston via the Missouri Pacific, Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, and Northern Pacific Railway in five shipments between October 30, 1919 and January 22, 1920. It is not known when the Security Bridge Company began work on the bridge, but it had erected the first steel components of the bridge by December 1, 1919.[11]

Coincidentally, U.S. Census workers enumerated Toston in the spring of 1920 when work was proceeding on the bridge. The census revealed that the Security Bridge Company employed eleven men on the project under the direction of Nels Thornes, a recent Norwegian emigrant. He was assisted by timekeeper Preston B. Moss, Jr. the son of a prominent Billings banker. Moss also operated a boarding house that catered only to the bridge workers. Evidence suggests that a few local men were also employed on the project, including Samuel Harris, whose household included his wife and four daughters and long-time Toston resident William B. Lorentz. A native of Pennsylvania, Lorentz immigrated to Montana under the employ of the Northern Pacific in 1884. The railroad appointed him the first station agent for its new Toston depot in 1885. Lorentz remained with the railroad for a few years before he quit and worked a variety of jobs in Toston, including the last superintendent of the Toston Smelter before it closed down in 1899. During the latter part of the 1890s and into the 1900s, Lorentz worked as a building contractor, the foreman of the Montana Railroad bridge crew for its extension from Harlowton to Lewistown, and the bridge inspector for Broadwater County. The Security Company employed Lorentz as the project's carpenter.[12]

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[10] Construction File: Toston Bridge (FAP 30), Montana Department of Highways Bridge Bureau Records, B 7: 1-7 (2004); "Exhibit 'A' Referred to in Contract Between Northern Pacific Ry. Co. and State Highway Commission of Montana, Toston, Mont. (Montana Department of Transportation, Helena); Second Biennial Report State Highway Commission of Montana, 1919-1920, (Helena: State Highway Commission, 1920), 42; State Highway Commission Meeting Minute Books, Book 1, 256 (April 9, 1920); "Notice to Contractors," Townsend Star (July 10, 1919); George R. Metlen, Report of the Montana State Highway Commission for the years 1915-1916, (Helena: State Highway Commission, 1916), 4-8.

[11] State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, Book 1, 204, 205 (July 25, 1919); Construction File: Toston Bridge.

[12] United States Census Records: Broadwater County, 1920; *Progressive Men of the State of Montana*, (Chicago: A. W. Bowen, 1902): 331-332;

The Security Bridge Company completed the Toston Bridge about July 10, 1920 to little or no fanfare. Five months prior to the completion of the structure, the company won the contract to remove the old bridge. The Security Company was well known for its attention to detail and high quality of the work it performed. However, on August 16, 1920, Chief Engineer John Edy complained about the "very rocky" work done on the approaches to the bridge. He stated that "a small blade in about two hours work could make good approaches and suggest that if the contractor does not propose to do this work in a workmanlike manner which be satisfactory, that we proceed to complete same and bill the contractor." Usually, the primary bridge contractor sub-contracted the work on the approaches to another firm. Evidence suggests that Security followed the usual procedure, but it is not known if it completed the approaches on its own or allowed the SHC to deduct the cost of the earthwork from the contract before it was closed. The new Toston Bridge quickly became an integral part of the town. By the 1920s, "teen age girls would cross it in the evenings for lack of something better to do."[13]

Despite the modern bridge and its strategic location halfway between Helena and Bozeman on U.S. Highway 287, Toston never attained the status that its promoters hoped for. The post-World War I economic depression in Montana forced the Toston State Bank to close in 1924. An earthquake in June 1925 caused some damage to the town's commercial center; it was followed two weeks later by a fire that devastated the heart of the community. By 1927, only 100 people resided in Toston. Its commercial district was concentrated on Missouri Avenue across from Brown Brothers Lumber Company and the railroad depot. The district consisted of the Toston Hotel and Restaurant, the City Garage, a barber, general mercantile, a grocery store/post office, and two elevator complexes. Toston's economy languished during much of the Twenties, but boomed for a short time in 1931 when the State Highway Commission reconstructed the Townsend-Three Forks section of Highway 287. The boom, however, was short-lived as fire destroyed the Brown Brothers business in 1931. By 1939, Toston's population had grown to 200 people; the Montana state guidebook described it as "a farmers town on the river bank, shaded by cottonwoods and surrounded by irrigated bottoms planted with alfalfa and timothy. Cattle graze in the low hills."[14]

Throughout the late 1940s and through the 1950s, the Montana Highway Department endeavored to improve sub-standard roads and replace obsolete bridges. The program included rerouting of old roads with alignments that were dangerous for commercial trucks and the faster automobiles of the day and that included hazardous at-grade railroad crossings. Consequently, Montana is speckled with abandoned segments of road and, in some instances, bypassed communities near the current two-lane highways. The realigned roads necessitated new bridges, which bypassed many older structures, leaving them abandoned in the middle of farmers' fields. They are the physical manifestations of a policy that emerged from a debate that began in 1949 concerning the old Toston Bridge. The Highway Department planned to build a new bridge across the Missouri River at Toston, accompanied by a grade separation over the Northern Pacific Railway tracks at the same place.[15]

The Toston Bridge sparked a debate in the Commission that continued until 1955 when it finally adopted a policy about bypassed and replaced bridges. The debate involved two issues: the cost effectiveness of relocating the structures; and who actually owned them, the state or the counties that may have paid for at least part of them between 1915 and 1926. In 1949, Gallatin County requested the "return to it of an old bridge across the Gallatin River." The Commissioners acquiesced to the request, but they were uncomfortable about their decision.[16]

Eleanor Marks, "The History of Toston: W. B. Lorentz," *Townsend Star*, No Date.

[13] Despite the importance of the new bridge to Toston and Broadwater County, there are no references to the project in the *Townsend Star* after the contract was awarded in July, 1919 until well after the completion of the bridge. Even the "Toston Notes" section of the *Star* never carried any news about the project. Construction File: Toston Bridge; Commissioners Journal: Broadwater County, Book 2, 451 (February 2, 1920), 458 (March 2, 1920); Eleanor Marks, "The Old Home Town," *Townsend Star*, No Date.

[14] Holloway, *Broadwater Bygones*, 125-126; Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Map: Toston, Montana, 1927; *Report of State Highway Commission of Montana for Biennium Ending December 1932*, (Helena: State Highway Commission, 1932), 24; Federal Writers Project, *Montana: A State Guide Books*, (Helena: Department of Agriculture, Labor and Industry, 1939), 218.

[15] Montana Highway Commission, Book 10, 19 (13 July 1951); Ibid, Book 9, 340-341 (30 July 1946).

[16] Ibid, , Book 9, 340-341 (30 July 1946); Ibid, Book 10, 19 (18 January 1950).

Although Broadwater County wanted the old Toston Bridge, the highway department had plans for it as a replacement for the PN Ferry across the Missouri River in Fergus County. The residents of Toston, however, didn't want to lose the bridge at all. In June 1949, a delegation of Tostonians appeared before the highway commissioners and objected to the proposed realignment of the highway off their main street. While the proposed realignment and new bridges would remove the last and a very dangerous at-grade railroad crossing on the highway, local residents felt it more important to keep traffic moving through town. In 1950, the Commissioners decided that it would relocate all steel truss bridges replaced on the primary system to the secondary highway system in the county where the bridge was originally located.[17]

In 1954, a delegation from Toston and Bozeman asked the highway commissioners to permit the old Toston Bridge to stay in place rather than remove it. Several months later, the Fergus County Commissioners discussed with the Highway Commission the possibility of purchasing the Toston Bridge and relocating it to a new site in that county. The highway commissioners talked the men out of the proposal as a new bridge would cost about the same as relocating the old one. It was not until the completion of the new overpass at Toston in July 1955 that the highway commissioners finally made a decision to leave the old bridge in place and turn it over to the ownership of Broadwater County.[18]

The Security Bridge Company

Founded by cousins William S. Hewett and Arthur L. Hewett in 1905, the Security Bridge Company was one of over forty bridge construction firms active in Montana during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Born in South Hope, Maine in 1864, William Sherman Hewett went to work in 1887 as a clerk for his bridge-builder uncle, Seth M. Hewett, who also built several bridges in Montana. He received his training in bridge and structural design from his uncle Maurice and a German employee. By 1895, William was the joint proprietor of his uncle Seth's company, while his cousin, Arthur, worked as the firm's traveling agent. In 1897, the cousins formed W. S. Hewett and Company, one of Montana's most active bridge-building companies in Montana until 1906.[19]

The Tongue River Bridge at Miles City was one of the first steel truss bridges built in Montana by the Hewett Company. In 1902, the firm built another Pennsylvania through truss structure across the Yellowstone River at Miles City. The Fort Keogh Bridge provided a valuable connection between Miles City and the farms and ranches north of the river. In 1905, William dissolved the company and, with his cousin Arthur as partner, formed the Security Bridge Company.[20]

The Security Bridge Company was the most prodigious bridge-construction company in the state from 1906 until 1926. Like its predecessor company with its pool agreements, the company was most active in the Yellowstone Valley, Carbon County, and central Montana. The new company's first project was the construction of a single-span pin-connected Pratt through truss across the Stillwater River at Kern's Crossing in Stillwater County in 1907. By 1917, the company had constructed at least sixty truss bridges throughout central and eastern Montana. Most were simple pin-connected Pratt through structures or riveted Warren pony truss structures.[21]

In 1911, the Hewetts relocated the company headquarters from Minneapolis to Billings, Montana and reincorporated with Arthur as president of the firm and fellow Minnesotan William P. Roscoe as vice-president. Even though the creation of the Montana Highway Commission's Bridge Department in 1915 ended the primary role of the bridge construction companies in Montana, the Security Bridge Company continued to build bridges under the auspices of both the Commission and the counties until 1926. Arthur closed the company in 1926 to pursue other interests in Billings. The Security Bridge Company also built waterworks, sewers, concrete irrigation ditch structures and other heavy construction work in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. The company's

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[17] Ibid, Book 10, 391-392 (8 June 1949); Ibid, Book 11, 179-180 (21 September 1950).
[18] Ibid, Book 13, 44, 152, 159-160 (28 September 1954, 28 June 1955, 26 July 1955).
[19] Quivik, *Historic Bridges of Montana*, (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1982), 55.
[20] Quivik, *Historic Bridges*, 41; Fred Quivik, "Montana's Minneapolis Bridge Builders," *IA: The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archeology* 10 (1984), 38, 39, 41, 45, 46; Maurice W. Hewett, "William Sherman Hewett," (Unpublished Manuscript, 1956), 1-2.
[21] Quivik, *Historic Bridges*, 41, 43.

successor, the William P. Roscoe Company, continued to build bridges in the state until his death in 1956.[22]22

Engineering Significance

Beginning in 1915, the Montana State Highway Commission standardized the use of riveted Warren trusses on the state's roads. The Warren truss is easily recognized by the "W" configuration of the diagonal members of the truss. The simplicity and economy of design of the truss made it appealing to American bridge engineers in the early 20th century. The Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company built the first known Warren through truss in Montana across the Beaverhead River in Madison County in 1907. By 1915, portable field riveting machines supplanted the need for pin-connections, making a stronger and more reliable vehicular bridge. The SHC standardized a Warren through truss design in 1915 as part of its effort to provide a reliable, durable, and affordable bridge design to Montana's counties. The first Warren truss built under standardized design crossed the Bitterroot River near Florence in Ravalli County. Built in 1915, it provided the model for other Warren through truss bridges constructed in Montana until 1941. Although the Commission and counties built nearly 150 Warren trusses on the state's primary and secondary highways, the Toston Bridge is one of only a few intact examples of the state-designed trusses remaining in Montana.

Conclusion

Clearly, the Toston Bridge is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. The bridge is eligible under Criterion A because of its association with the first great period of state-sponsored bridge building in Montana in the second and third decades of the 20th century. Its construction coincides with the expansion and improvement of Montana's road system in the wake of the creation of the Montana State Highway Commission in 1913. It is associated with the agricultural development of the upper Missouri River valley and the transition from mining to farming as the lynchpin of the area economy. It is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as an excellent example of an intact multi-span riveted Warren through truss structure. The Warren truss was the standardized bridge designed and built by the SHC from 1915 to 1941. All of the features and structural components associated with this bridge type are intact and unchanged. There have been no alterations or other changes made to this structure since its construction in 1919-1920. It is a representative example of the type of bridges designed and built by the State of Montana in the years before World War II.

[22] Quivik, *Historic Bridges*, 43.

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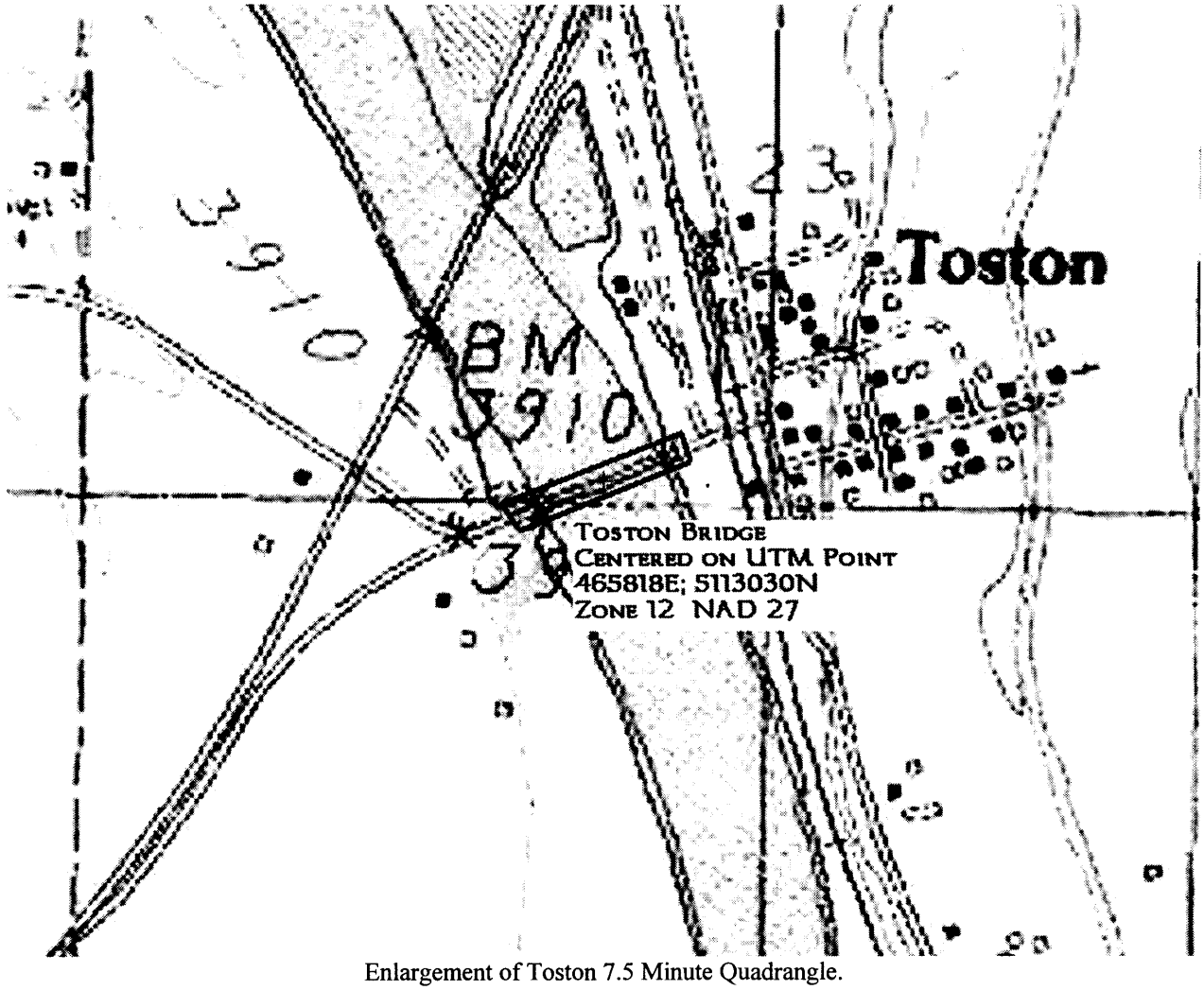
Orthophotoquad – Toston Quadrangle. Aerial Photograph taken September 9, 1995.



Enlargement of Toston 7.5 Minute Quadrangle.

This map (not to scale) illustrates the approximate boundaries of the property, a 772-foot by 25-foot rectangle centered on UTM point 465818E, 5113030N Zone 12, NAD27. The boundary is drawn to include the entire bridge structure, including the approaches.