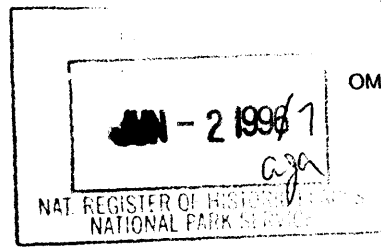


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



733

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 Rio Grande Gorge Bridge

other names/site number NMSHTD # 6462

2. Location

street & number U.S. 64, 8 M. W of Jct. with NM 522 not for publication

city or town Taos vicinity

state New Mexico code NM county Taos code 055 zip code 87571

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.)

Ly Sebastian SHPO 5-28-97
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of 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 the 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:)

for Signature of the Keeper *Ma J. M. [Signature]* Date of Action 7/15/97

Rio Grande Gorge Bridge
Name of Property

Taos, NM
County and State

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	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

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

Highway Bridge Construction in NM

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation; road-related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: road-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Steel deck truss

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls

roof

other concrete

Narrative Description

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

Rio Grande Gorge Bridge

Taos, NM

Name of Property

County and State

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.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C 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.
D 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:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

transportation

engineering

Period of Significance

1965

Significant Dates

1965

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Charles E. Reed

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Rio Grande Gorge Bridge
Name of Property

Taos, NM
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	3	4	3	4	4	0	0	4	0	3	6	8	2	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

3

Zone	Easting				Northing									

4

Zone	Easting				Northing									

 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 David Kammer, Ph.D.
organization contract historian date Dec., 1996
street & number 521 Aliso Dr. NE telephone (505) 266-0586
city or town Albuquerque state NM zip code 87108

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 Projects (1024-0018) Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

Rio Grande Gorge Bridge
Taos County, NM

Description

The Rio Grande Gorge Bridge, located on U.S. 64 approximately ten miles northwest of Taos, was built in 1965. It was designed by the Bridge Design Section of the New Mexico State Highway Department, fabricated by the American Bridge Company and built by J.H. Ryan and Son, Inc. of Albuquerque.

The substructure of the bridge consists of two U-type reinforced concrete abutments on spread footings and two piers, each consisting of reinforced concrete columns extending approximately 80 feet above ground line and set on spread footings. Two smaller reinforced concrete piers are located at the outside ends of the approach spans.

The bridge employs a continuous steel truss design with three spans. The central span measures 600 feet in length, and the two approach spans each measure 300 feet in length. Two steel I-beam approach spans, each measuring approximately 36 feet, flank the trussed approach spans. The total length of the bridge is 1,272 feet and the width of the bridge is approximately 36 feet.

The truss members are box steel beams and are spaced at intervals of 32 feet center to center. The trusses are 100 feet deep at the main piers, 20 feet deep at the midspan, and approximately 14 feet at the approach ends.

The deck of the three truss spans consists of a lightweight concrete-filled steel grid floor; the deck of the two 36-foot approaches consists of cast-in-place concrete. The 36-foot deck width includes a 28-foot roadway with two lanes and a concrete curb and two four-foot sidewalks flanking the roadway. At its midpoint, the roadway stands 650 feet above the Rio Grande. Steel balustrades line the sidewalks. 4'x15' observation decks located above the piers and at midpoint punctuate both sidewalks.

The bridge retains a high degree of integrity of setting, design, materials, workmanship and association.

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 2

Rio Grande Gorge Bridge
Taos County, NM

Statement of Significance

Located on U.S. 64, the principal east-west highway extending across northern New Mexico, the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge near Taos is an indispensable link in the region's transportation system. The structure is significant for its association with highway transportation dating to its completion in 1965. The largest steel deck truss bridge in New Mexico and one of the highest rated bridges in the 1987 bridge survey despite its relatively recent date of construction, it is also significant for embodying the design, materials and methods of construction associated with the continuous steel deck bridge sub-type.

Although the Rio Grande Valley had sustained agricultural settlement and provided a corridor for north-south travel dating to prehistoric times, the narrow gorge through which the river passed above the Espanola Valley had proven impenetrable. Moreover, with the exception of the John Dunn Bridge located at the bottom of a narrow road with steep grades, the gorge posed a barrier to east-west travel for a length of more than 100 miles from Embudo to north of the Colorado border. In the post-war years, northern New Mexican leaders began advocating a span across the gorge that would link the Four Corners region to northeastern New Mexico through an extension of U.S. 64 which then stopped at Santa Fe. The need for the bridge became an election issue in the early 1960s, and when Jack M. Campbell was elected governor in 1962, he resolved to construct the bridge, issuing state bonds to finance the project.

The Bridge Design Section of the New Mexico State Highway Department under Charles E. Reed, Bridge Engineer, designed the bridge, and Peter H. Bray served as project engineer. Two of the engineers' major concerns were developing a design that would be sufficiently strong to carry the loads associated with shipping along a federal highway and one that could withstand the high winds that swept down the gorge, sometimes achieving a velocity of 90 mph. Before work began, engineers decided to change the deck from an open grid to a lightweight concrete-filled grid because of objections raised by local sheep herders who worried about moving their flocks of sheep across the bridge and because of a concern that tourist might feel uneasy peering through the deck. In July, 1963 the project got under way with the American

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 3

Rio Grande Gorge Bridge
Taos County, NM

Statement of Significance (continued)

Bridge Company fabricating the steel members, and J.H. Ryan and Sons, Inc. of Albuquerque contracting to construct the bridge.

The construction process began with the building of the concrete abutments and approaches. Highline towers were then erected, permitting the shipping of materials from one side to the other. Then the concrete piers were installed, permitting workers to build outward in two directions from each of the two pier towers, much as two enormous brackets being cantilevered into space. When the ends of the brackets were joined, the deck truss was complete and the deck was constructed. The bridge was completed in September, 1965 at a cost of \$2.15 million. The completion of the bridge and the highway to the west resulted in the extension of U.S. 64 from North Carolina in the east to Shiprock in the west and provided northern New Mexico with its first latitudinal highway.

The precipice of the Rio Grande Gorge, 650 feet below the bridge, and the 13,000-foot Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the east provide a spectacular setting for the bridge. The sharp contrast between this natural setting and the clean vertical and arched lines of the steel structure are particularly striking from the observation point located in the park to the west of the bridge. Commenting on the bridge when it received the First Place Prize for Long Span Bridges in 1966 awarded by the American Institute of Steel Construction, the jurors noted its "well balanced symmetry," the harmony of its truss ties with the "opposing stratification of the steep walls of the chasm," and its ideal fit into the gorge "in an aesthetic and pleasing manner." The property is considered eligible under Criterion Consideration G for its exceptional importance as a bridge whose history is closely associated with a critical chapter of transportation history in New Mexico and because of the uniqueness of its design sub-type in the state.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9,10 Page 4

Rio Grande Gorge Bridge
Taos County, NM

Bibliography

New Mexico State Highway Department. "Bridge Inventory Record,
Bridge No. 6462," July 5, 1963.

"New Rio Grande Bridge at Taos Historic Event for San Juan Co."
San Juan County Pageant of Progress, Vol 3, No. 3 (October,
1965), pp. 4-6.

"Prize Bridge of 1966." New York: American Institute of Steel
Construction.

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is a polygonal parcel measuring approximately
1,272 x 36 feet and including six 4 x 15 cantilevered observation
decks.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the substructure and superstructure
which comprise the historic bridge.