

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received **MAR 30 1984**  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic Vista Avenue Viaduct

and/or common Vista Avenue Bridge

## 2. Location

street & number SW Vista Avenue crossing of U. S. Highway 26 N/A for publication

city, town Portland N/A vicinity of First Congressional District

state Oregon code 41 county Multnomah code 051

## 3. Classification

| Category                                      | Ownership                                  | Status  | Present Use  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public | <u>N/A</u> occupied                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> building(s)          | <input type="checkbox"/> private           | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied                   | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial                |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both              | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress             | <input type="checkbox"/> educational               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site                 | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                  | <b>Accessible</b>                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object               | <u>N/A</u> in process                      | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted              | <input type="checkbox"/> government                |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial                |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> no                           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation |
|   |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> other:                    |

## 4. Owner of Property

name City of Portland

street & number 1220 SW Fifth Avenue

city, town Portland N/A vicinity of Oregon state 097204

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Multnomah County Courthouse

street & number 1021 SW Fourth Avenue

city, town Portland state Oregon 97204

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Resource Inventory  
City of Portland has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1981-83  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Portland Bureau of Planning

city, town Portland state Oregon 97204

## 7. Description

|  |                                       |   |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Condition</b>                         |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                              | <b>Check one</b>                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent       | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> altered              | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>    N/A    </u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair            | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   |  |

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Vista Avenue Viaduct was designed in 1926 by Fred Fowler, a 1912 graduate of the University of Oregon who started as a draftsman for the City of Portland and became City Bridge Engineer in 1921. Parker and Banfield were the contractors for the bridge construction, having been awarded the contract for a \$170,000 bid. The structure currently retains most of its integrity.

The Vista Avenue Viaduct links one of Portland's most prestigious residential areas to the city center, spanning a deep canyon between two hillsides. The setting provides a magnificent, unobstructed view of downtown Portland and majestic Mt. Hood to the east. The westerly view is of Portland's Washington Park and the old Canyon Lane Highway.

The viaduct, or bridge was constructed at the instigation of the Portland Heights residents who sought an aesthetically pleasing structure that was unlike any other in the immediate urban area. An improvement resolution was introduced to the Portland City Council on April 23, 1924, on account of the dangerous condition of the existing bridge and as a response to a petition from the local property owners.

The Vista Avenue Viaduct is typical of popular arched bridges erected during the 1920s and 1930s. It can be compared to the famous Arroyo Seco Bridge in Pasadena, California, and the Dog Creek Bridge in Redding, California. Although showing signs of wear from almost 60 years of use, the Vista Avenue Viaduct is structurally and aesthetically sound.

The bridge is a reinforced, poured in place, concrete structure 489 feet long between abutments. The main span is a deck arch between paired columns 260 feet on centers. The two large arch beams have a spring line dimension of 248 feet and support the deck on smaller paired columns 20 feet 8 inches on center for a total of 12 interior spans. Between the abutments and the main columns the deck is supported 31 feet on centers by three double paired columns on the south and two on the north making four and three spans respectively. Each double column is supported by a single footing except the four main columns whereas the two at each end share large common footings. Each double column is connected at the top by a transom beam with a curved bottom. The double columns in turn are connected by transverse beams that support the longitudinal deck beams. All supports are detailed to resemble Classical columns, with stylized bases and capitals: a treatment which is echoed in the upper deck balustrade. This Classical feeling is enhanced by the use of arched openings between the massive piers and vertical supports and results in an elegant composition that accentuates but does not mask the engineering accomplishment.

(continued)

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet VISTA AVENUE VIADUCT

Item number 7

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The deck consists of a 37 foot wide roadway flanked by 6 foot sidewalks with ornamental railings for a total overall width of 50 feet. The railing is capped with a balustrade of precast stone surmounted by seven precast stone light posts on each side, five on the railing and one in each end entry. The light posts are topped with octagonal bronze lantern fixtures. Originally, each side also had four 20 foot high trolley wire poles of hollow spun concrete, but these have been removed. The balustrades on each side are divided at the main piers by projecting refuge bays. The bays have precast stone seats with the backs, which form the outside railing, topped by pentangular bronze spikes.

The four corner entries have curved sidewalk entrances with precast stone perimeter seats and poured-in-place concrete planters. Each corner has one of the precast stone light posts as well as one intricate precast illuminated pylon with cut copper grille and orange tinted glass.

When built, the viaduct carried the double track Council Crest street car line. The steel rails were ASCE 7040 section, weighing 70 lbs. to the yard, and resting on steel ties from the Carnegie Steel Company, listed in the catalog as section M24, being 3" in height and weighing 9.5 lbs. to the foot. After the street car line was abandoned, the tracks were paved over with asphalt.

## 8. Significance

| Period                                    | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric      | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning     | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499        | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic    | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation           | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> science                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599        | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture            | <input type="checkbox"/> economics              | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699        | <input type="checkbox"/> architecture           | <input type="checkbox"/> education              | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> social/<br>humanitarian   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799        | <input type="checkbox"/> art                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899        | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce               | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900– | <input type="checkbox"/> communications         | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)           |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   |  |

**Specific dates** 1926 **Builder/Architect** Fred Fowler, City Bridge Engineer

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Parker and Banfield, Contractors

The Vista Avenue Viaduct is significant to the city of Portland as a delicately engineered inter-city structure which has played a vital part in the city's transportation network. It is located three blocks southeast of Washington Park, Portland's largest public park, which houses the Metro Zoo, the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry and the Western Forestry Center. The Vista Avenue Viaduct is an integral part of the scenic drive that connects Southwest Portland to important educational and recreational attractions. The bridge is the subject of many photographs because of its prime location overlooking the city and mountains in the distance. Vista Bridge is, quite literally, a direct link between one of the city's social and residential enclaves and the industrial and the commercial core area that generates Portland's economic base.

Many descendents of the original viaduct proponents still live in the neighborhood. A fiftieth anniversary party was held for the structure in 1976 to commemorate the service that the bridge has given to the Portland Heights community over the years. The event was sponsored by the Vista Street Bridge Club, which had been meeting weekly in the bridge's shadow at the Portland Garden Club (located N. end) for approximately 35 years.

The Vista Avenue Viaduct replaced the Ford Street Bridge, which had been designed to carry street cars and foot traffic. The Ford Street Bridge was dismantled and relocated to outer Southwest Portland where it is still in use as the Terwilliger overpass, straddling the Interstate Freeway (I-5). The total cost to erect Vista Bridge in 1926 was \$197,000.32. In order to finance a bridge that met the aesthetic and architectural standards of the residents, the citizenry raised approximately half the money. The City paid one-quarter, and the Portland Electric Power Company (owner of the Ford bridge) paid the remaining quarter. Funds were collected from Portland Heights residents by means of a special taxing district.

Over the years, the bridge has received only structural maintenance work. In January, 1982, the local neighborhood associations brought to City Council the need to renovate the bridge. The neighborhood groups pointed out the historical value of the bridge, and the City resolved to assume continued responsibility for surface maintenance as well. The most tangible evidence of the latter will be the restoration/replacement of the bridge's lamp posts.

In Spring 1983, the Vista Bridge Light Brigade was formed as a sub-group of the concerned neighborhood associations in order to bring the bridge to public attention and regain the primary public support that precipitated its creation. To this end, over 250 local citizens have joined the Vista Bridge Light Brigade and are actively seeking support for the conservation of decorative features which are the distinguishing features of the bridge.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

The History of Council Crest Park and Its Surrounding Areas, Paxton, Katherine, unpub.

Southwest Hills Residential League Inventory - Oregon Historical Society

Inventory data sheet, Portland Historic Resource Inventory, City of Portland, Portland City Engineer Records

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Portland, Oregon-Washington

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The Vista Avenue Viaduct is located on SW Vista Avenue in the City of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. It provides the crossing over the Sunset Highway canyon (U.S. Highway 26). The nominated area is the full width of road right-of-way from the distance between abutments and 20 feet additional at either end, containing in all approximately 31,740 sq.

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state None code county code

state None code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cramer, Hulse and Associates

organization Vista Bridge Light Brigade date September 1, 1983

street & number 208 SW First Avenue, Suite 240 telephone 503/225-1135

city or town Portland state Oregon 97204

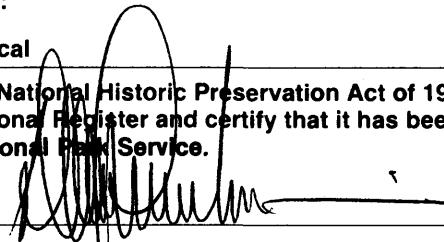
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

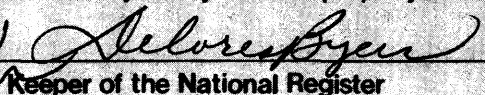


title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date March 28, 1984

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

  
Keeper of the National Register date 4/26/84

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration