1094

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Williams Street Bridge

other name/site number: 24LC0128

2. Location

street & number: Williams St. crossing Ten Mile Creek, north of the Williams St. and Broadwater Ave. intersection not for publication: na

city/town: Helena vicinity: X

state: Montana code: MT county: Lewis & Clark code: 049 zip code: 59601

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/SHPO — October 16, 2006

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

✓ entered in the National Register — Edson H. Beall — 11.29.06
__ 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):

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: Pratt pony truss

Materials:

foundation: Stone (granite)
walls: na
roof: na
other: Steel/Iron/Wood

Narrative Description

The Williams Street Bridge is located in the Helena Valley of southwestern Montana. The City of Helena and the site of the Williams Street Bridge are situated in Belt sedimentary rock that was deposited 1.5 billion to 800 million years ago. The adjacent Helena Valley is composed of tertiary basin fill, while the Boulder batholith rises above the valley floor to the south of the bridge. The batholith formed approximately 75 million years ago and is bordered in the Helena area by deposits of dolomite and limestone. Helena is near the northern end of the intermountain seismic belt, a series of seismically active faults that extends southward through Yellowstone National Park to the Wasatch Range near Salt Lake City.[1] The Williams Street Bridge is located near the northern foot of the Boulder Mountains about one mile west of Helena. The Scratch Gravel Hills and the Big Belt Mountains are visible to the north of the bridge. The bridge crosses Ten Mile Creek, which originates in the Boulder Mountains about ten miles to the southwest and flows northwesterly, bisecting the Helena Valley, before emptying into Lake Helena about eight miles northeast of the bridge. The creek is bordered by cottonwoods, willows, and other riparian vegetation. The Helena Valley is situated in a roughly bowl-shaped depression between three mountain ranges. The picturesque valley, which is extensively developed, is a mixture of small agricultural operations increasingly encroached upon by residential subdivision radiating north from Helena. The mountains south of the bridge were the scene of extensive hard rock mining operations beginning in 1865 and continuing until about 1948. The Williams Street Bridge provides access between U.S. Highway 12, Fort Harrison, and small residential subdivisions located northwest of Helena.

The Williams Street Bridge is a steel single-span, pin-connected Pratt pony truss structure. The structure rests on granite block abutments with extended granite-block wingwalls running parallel to the creek on the south. The bridge is 67-feet long and 36.5-feet wide with a roadway width of 26.8-feet. The asphalt-paved deck of the bridge is flanked by two five-foot sidewalks delineated by decorative cast iron handrails, newel posts, and lattice-type panels. The sidewalks feature plank decking, placed perpendicular to the span of the bridge.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A & C	Areas of Significance:	ENGINEERING; TRANSPORTATION
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	n/a	Period(s) of Significance:	1894-1956
Significant Person(s):	n/a	Significant Dates:	1894-1895
Cultural Affiliation:	n/a	Architect/Builder:	King Bridge Company

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Williams Street Bridge is an excellent example of a single-span pin-connected Pratt pony truss bridge. The bridge was built in 1894-1895 shortly after the opening of the nearby Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium resort and about the time the U.S. Army began construction of Fort Harrison about one mile north of the bridge. The bridge is located within a residential subdivision that was established in 1889 in conjunction with the resort. The Williams Street Bridge provided access to a portion of the Broadwater property, the residential subdivision, and the fort. It also facilitated access from the Helena Street Railway trolley to the Kessler Brewery and the Central Park. It was also constructed when Lewis and Clark County was improving its infrastructure system during the depths of the Panic of 1893. The bridge is also significant as the oldest pin-connected Pratt pony truss bridge remaining in Montana and because it is a good example of that design. Pin-connected Pratt truss bridges were the most common type of bridge built in Montana from 1892 until the Montana Highway Commission standardized a new riveted design type in 1915. Funded by the counties and built by private bridge construction companies, Pratt trusses were easy to assemble, relatively inexpensive, and reliable, functioning as wagon bridges to facilitate traffic, in this case, on an old farm-to-market road. The bridge also retains some structural features that are unique and not included on other bridges still extant in Montana. This includes substantial granite abutments and wing walls likely obtained from the nearby Kain Granite Company's quarries on Ten Mile Creek, ornate steel hand rail panels on the sidewalks and on the southeast quadrant along Ten Mile Creek, and decorative iron newel posts.[2] The Williams Street Bridge is an exemplary example of a pin-connected Pratt pony truss bridge. The ornamentation was likely included on the bridge because of its proximity to the Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium, a planned upscale residential subdivision, and its association as an approach to Fort Harrison. For these reasons, it its eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C.

Historical Information

In July 1862, John White and several other prospectors discovered gold on Grasshopper Creek about 150 miles southwest of the Williams Street Bridge. The mining camp of Bannack appeared almost overnight as hundreds of miners from the diggings in Idaho poured into southwest Montana to exploit the new strike. From Bannack, prospectors fanned out across the region in search of richer bonanzas. In May 1863, they discovered a particularly productive strike on Alder Gulch. Within a just a few months, a rumored 10,000 miners worked the gulch's gravels and patronized businesses in Virginia City, Nevada City, Adobe Town and other camps lining the gulch. Although fabulously rich, the best claims had been taken by the beginning of 1864. In the cyclical process that characterized the gold rush era, prospectors once again took to the hills looking for new and richer gold strikes.[3]

In late July, 1864, four prospectors, mistakenly called the "Four Georgians," discovered extraordinarily rich placers on Last Chance Gulch about 100 miles north of Alder Gulch. The discovery generated a rush to the new diggings. By late 1864, hundreds of miners worked the winding gulch and a mining camp was built to the south of the mines and on the benches above both sides of the gulch. In October 1864, the miners and business owners met and christened the new camp "Helena" at a meeting of the Miners Court.[4]

Unlike Virginia City and Bannack, Helena was strategically located near the Mullan Military Road that connected the heads of navigation on the Missouri and Columbia rivers. It was also located very near two already established mining camps: Montana City and Silver City. The richness of the mines in the Helena area contributed to the establishment of new roads to Virginia City, Bannack, Butte, the Gallatin Valley, and, after December 1864, Confederate Gulch. Helena's central location on territory's transportation network, its proximity to good agricultural land in the adjacent Prickly Pear Valley and to other mining districts made it the preeminent settlement in Montana Territory by the early 1870s. In recognition of its ascendancy in Montana, the 1874 territorial legislature designated Helena the territorial capital and relocated it from Virginia City, whose fortunes had been on the decline for several years.[5]

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 one

UTM References:	**Zone**	**Easting**	**Northing**	
A	12	416736	5161651	(NAD 27 Montana Prime Meridian)

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): SW¼ NE¼ SE¼ of Section 22, T10N, R4W

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the Williams Street Bridge is a rectangle 150 x 62 feet, centered on the midpoint of the bridge deck, UTM 416736E 5161651N in Zone 12, NAD27. The rectangle encompasses the bridge, its approaches on both sides of Ten Mile Creek, and granite wing walls, and iron handrail on the south side of the bridge.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries for the Williams Street Bridge are drawn to encompass the span, its immediate approaches, the stone abutments and backwalls, the iron fencing, and the portion of Ten Mile Creek spanned by the bridge.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jon Axline/Historian
organization: Montana Department of Transportation
date: December 2005
street & number: 2701 Prospect Avenue
telephone: (406) 444-6258
city or town: Helena
state: MT
zip code: 59620-1001

Property Owner

name/title: Lewis & Clark County
street & number: 316 North Park
telephone: 406-447-8304
city or town: Helena
state: MT
zip code: 59624-1724

Substructure

The bridge rests on stone abutments comprised of rough-faced granite blocks set in a vaguely random pattern. The bridge also has extended masonry wingwalls.

Abutment No. 1 (north) is comprised of rough-faced cut granite blocks set in a random pattern. The abutment is about 5-feet in height and 36.5-feet wide. The top of the abutment is set with a granite block sill that is extended. At some point within the last thirty years (probably around 1981), a concrete wall extension was installed by Lewis and Clark County to raise the height of the bridge's deck to facilitate the passage of water below the structure. The concrete extension is approximately 3-feet in height. The bridge ends, however, rest on top of the granite abutments instead of on the seat constructed for it in 1894. A tapered granite wing wall extends to the northwest off the west end of the abutment.

Abutment No. 2 (south) is also comprised of rough-faced granite blocks set in a random pattern. The abutment is 8-feet in height and 36.5-feet wide. It has a square opening (seat) upon which the bridge's deck was originally supported. Like the north abutment a concrete wall extension has been installed to raise the height of the deck over the water below the structure. The abutment also has an extended concrete sill. The abutment's wing wall is extended about 24-feet along the south bank of the Ten Mile Creek. The wall is about 8-feet in height at the abutment and tapers to about 5-feet at the eastern terminus of the wing wall.

Superstructure

The Williams Street Bridge is a single-span pin-connected Pratt pony truss structure. It is 67-feet long and 36.5-feet wide with a roadway width of 26.8-feet. Two five-foot sidewalks are attached to the sides of the bridge. The structure consists of four 16.75-foot panels. The trusses are 10-feet deep.

The lower chords of the superstructure are forged steel eyebars. The inclined endposts and upper chords are continuous steel plates riveted to the top flanges of two channel sections with lacing riveted to the bottom flanges of the channels. The vertical members consist of paired angle sections with lacing and batten plates. The diagonals are forged eyebars and eyebars with turnbuckles. Modern steel W-beam type guardrails have been bolted to verticals on the insides of the trusses adjacent to the roadway. Nineteen lines of 6 x 12 timber stringers support the timber deck, which is overlain with asphalt. The stringers, in turn, are supported by three triangular-shaped riveted steel I-beam floor beams. Forged steel eyebars with turnbuckles and angle sections function as bottom lateral braces. The floor beams are extended to support sidewalks flanking the bridge on the outside of the trusses. The timber walkway is supported by timber stringers. Decorative iron steel lattices function as guardrails for pedestrians on the bridge. The lattice is angled off the end of the sidewalk on the southeast approach and parallels Ten Mile Creek. The lattice panels are anchored to decorative iron Victorian-style newel posts with ornamental vertical grooves and Patera-type floral motifs at the tops and bottoms of the posts. The ornamental headpieces of two of the three newel posts have been removed. The panels exhibit arch and star motifs made from iron straps. Specifically, the upper registers of the lattice feature neo-Gothic inspired overlapping lancet arches, while the lower part is a lattice of notched straps forming eight-sided stars, a Hispano-Moresque motif.

Integrity

There have been two modifications made to the bridge that have somewhat changed its historic appearance. Shortly after the 1981 floods in the Helena Valley, Lewis and Clark County installed concrete spacers on top of the granite seats of the abutments. The spacers were intended to mitigate future flood events on Ten Mile Creek by providing a larger opening through which the water could flow. The ends of the bridge's superstructure now rest on top of the granite block abutments rather than on the seats for which it was intended. There is no significant change in the appearance of the bridge and the spacers are only noticeable from under the structure. The second modification made to the bridge was the addition of the steel W-beam guardrails that are bolted to the trusses adjacent to the roadway. The guardrails do not significantly detract from the overall appearance of the bridge and are removable. There is little variation between pin-connected Pratt pony truss bridges built in Montana between 1894 and 1915. This bridge, however, is distinguished by the presence of the decorative cast iron fence and newel posts delineating the sidewalks. Although the finials on two of the newel posts have been removed over the years, the third is still present and provides a record of how they appeared. Unlike other Pratt pony trusses in Montana, which are purely functional, the presence of the cast iron fence provides a sense of Victorian

elegance to this bridge. It is likely the fencing was included in the design in 1894 because of its proximity to the Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium site and its use as an access to the Seymer Park Addition, Fort Harrison and Broadwater resort. The extensive granite block abutments and wingwalls also contribute to the overall feeling of sophistication the bridge still exhibits. Although the Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium were-removed from the adjacent grounds in 1976, the landscaping and a few features on the grounds of the resort are intact and still enhances the setting of the Williams Street Bridge. The setting is enhanced also by the adjacent George Seymer House (24LC1810), Alphonse Gray Place (24LC1819), and Fellows/Broxson Place (24LC1821), all of which were constructed within ten years of the completion of the bridge.

Although Helena continued to grow throughout the 1870s, the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railway in June 1883 and the Montana Central Railway in 1887 caused a building boom in the territorial capital. The boom was characterized by the greatest period of growth in the city's young history. The influx of newcomers to the city drawn by the economic boom and commercial expansion, resulted in the expansion of the city's residential areas to the east and northwest of the original Last Chance Gulch mining camp. The railroad rivalry between the Northern Pacific and the Montana Central also extended outside the city limits and impacted the residential and commercial development around the fringes of the city and in the mountains beyond.

In 1864, John Caplice discovered exceptional gold, silver, and lead deposits on Red and Lee mountains about seventeen miles southwest of Helena. Although some lode mining began in the late 1860s, it was not until railroad financier James J. Hill formed the Red Mountain Consolidated Mining Company in the early 1880s that extensive development began in the district's mines. A mining camp called Rimini grew up adjacent to the mine near the head of Ten Mile Creek about fifteen miles west of the Williams Street Bridge in the early 1880s. By 1890, it had a population of 282 persons and boasted a vibrant commercial district that included a hotel, saloons, and other assorted businesses. The mines were big producers until 1893 when a nationwide economic depression closed many of the mines in the district. In the late 1880s, though, both the Northern Pacific Railway and the Montana Central Railway were anxious to construct branch lines to the booming mining camp. Unfortunately, the narrow confines of the upper Ten Mile Creek valley made the presence of two railroads problematic and an intense competition between the railroads soon ensued.[6]

Helena entrepreneur Charles Broadwater was the president of the Montana Central Railroad. His survey crews were the first to establish the Right-of-Way and construct a portion of the grade toward Rimini. When the Northern Pacific attempted to do the same, Broadwater was able to stop them through court-ordered injunctions. Eventually, the Northern Pacific was able to nullify the injunctions and won the race to Rimini. The Northern Pacific began operations on its Helena & Red Mountain Railway in December 1886. The Montana Central and Northern Pacific branch lines closely paralleled each other through the Ten Mile Creek canyon a few miles west of Helena. The Helena & Red Mountain branch line remained in operation until declining revenues from the mines forced the abandonment of the line in 1925.[7]

Although Broadwater may have lost his battle with the Northern Pacific Railway, he clearly recognized an opportunity in the natural hot springs west of Helena. Soon after the debacle between the Northern Pacific and Montana Central concluded, Broadwater purchased Ferdinand Wassweiler's financially-troubled Hot Springs Hotel located about three miles west of Helena along Ten Mile Creek. Broadwater reconstructed the resort and operated it until 1889. Mainly, he wanted access to the thermal hot springs because of its economic potential as medicinal baths. From 1884 to 1888, Broadwater acquired land east of the old Hot Springs Hotel. In September 1888, he broke ground on a new resort complex that would eventually include an elegant hotel in the Queen-Anne style and enormous Moorish-style natatorium building. Both would be fed by the thermal springs at Wassweiler's old hotel, piped two miles from its former location. He hired the Helena architectural firm of Wallace, Thornburgh and Appleton to design and construct the hotel, while he commissioned Helena architects John C. Paulson and Noah J. McConnell to design the Moorish-style piscine. The buildings would be situated on beautifully landscaped grounds, with a "velvety lawn dotted with flower beds and fountains, intersected with walks and drives and over in places with mighty trees." Electric lights illuminated the walkways while orchestras or military bands nightly serenaded the strollers. The Broadwater Hotel opened to tremendous fanfare in on 27 August 1889:

> Yesterday was a proud, gala day for Helena. It witnessed not only the opening of the fair but what is more to the purpose of a live community, a hotel that would do credit to any city of a hundred thousand inhabitants . . . To say that this hotel supplies a "long-felt want" is mild. That want has been painfully and almost fatally felt for some of our pet ambitions . . . . A spot that but a few months ago was an arid waste and tangled wilderness has been transformed to a paradise through the munificent enterprise of one of our citizens, whose name and service have a monument that will never fade away.

The natatorium opened in 1890 and was the largest enclosed swimming pool in the world when completed. Both the hotel and natatorium utilized the water from the thermal springs to heat the swimming pool, baths, showers, and the rooms. The complex also included a dormitory building, livery stables, outbuildings, and a twelve-foot deep lake on the north side of the property called Lake Wilder after Colonel Broadwater's daughter. For three years, the resort was the social center of Helena. Broadwater's death in 1892, however, initiated a very long decline for the resort.[8]

Even before the Broadwater Hotel was completed, it caused a flurry of real estate speculation in the vicinity of the site of the Williams Street Bridge. George Seymer platted the Seymer Park Addition on the northeast side of the Broadwater property in June 1889. That was followed by Catherine Goodell's Hotel Park Addition on the west side of the Broadwater property and across the road from it on the south in August 1889. The Hotel Park Addition #2 encompassed the land east of the hotel and natatorium in June 1890. All three additions capitalized on the expected success of the Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium and its park-like setting. Helena builder and self-taught architect George Appleton had also set his sights on the western fringes of Helena in the general area of the Broadwater Hotel. Other speculators, such as Porter, Muth & Cox and Hubert Reed, sold lots in area subdivisions hoping to make a quick profit at the tail end of the building boom that Helena had enjoyed since the early 1880s. Appleton based his business on customizing mail order house plans. The larger building lots on the west side allowed for larger and more expensive homes. Although most of the Appleton houses are located further to the east, he did extend his influence into the Seymer Park Addition adjacent to the Williams Street Bridge. The Panic of 1893, however, caused the collapse of the building boom and many recently platted subdivisions, including the Seymer Park Addition, remained largely undeveloped until the post-World War II period.[9]

The area encompassing the Williams Street Bridge was dominated physically, economically, and socially by the Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium from 1889 to 1941. The west side was also the site of an important Helena industrial and recreational area as well. Nick Kessler built a brewery along Ten Mile Creek in 1886; it is located about one mile northeast of the bridge. Kessler arrived in Helena in 1865 and had operated a brewery in the city ever since. In addition to his brewery, the complex also included a brickyard, bottling plant, and, during the winter months, an ice rink. James, Thomas and William Mills established the State Nursery and Seed Company just to the west of the Broadwater Hotel in 1888. The company's greenhouses were heated by the same thermal springs that served the hotel and natatorium. The State Nursery and Broadwater Hotel were economically connected also in that the resort's grounds were landscaped by the nursery as its first major project. By 1906, State Nursery had expanded and shipped flowers and seeds to both coasts and to the Midwest.[10]

Concurrent with the opening of the Broadwater Hotel in August 1889, a group of Helena's "leading citizens" calling themselves the Helena Athletic Club constructed a ball field and track immediately north of Wilder Lake. It was followed by a rod and gun club located adjacent to the athletic club's grounds. The recreational opportunities offered by the wooded area was not lost on Joseph and Frank Mares, who converted their meat packing operation one mile northeast of the Williams Street Bridge into one of Helena's finest amusement attractions. Central Park included a large dance pavilion, zoo, amusement park, and baseball field. Like the Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium, Central Park also included landscaped grounds, fountains, electrically-lighted "bridal" paths, and an orchestra or military band to entertain the guests during the evening hours.[11]

A trolley line served all of the businesses and parks on Helena's west side. The Helena Hot Springs and Smelter Railway began operations to the Broadwater Hotel via Kessler Brewery in 1889. It was based at the Northern Pacific Railway depot and consisted of a steam-powered intra-urban railway. By 1891, it had been supplanted by the electric trolleys of the Helena Street Railway Company. Unlike the older company's cars, which spewed a noxious concoction of steam, soot, and burning embers, the electric trolleys were silent and efficient, making the trip from town to the Broadwater Hotel in twenty minutes. The trolley route followed Front Avenue on the border of the Seymer Park and Hotel Park #2 additions just off the south approach to the Williams Street Bridge.[12]

In 1892, Broadwater and Senator Thomas Carter successfully petitioned the U.S. Congress to establish a military post near Helena. Named at first for himself, President Benjamin Harrison authorized the establishment of the fort in May 1892 and renamed the post in honor of his grandfather, William Henry Harrison. It was not until 1894, however, that the federal government let the first contracts for the construction of buildings at the post. The establishment of Fort Harrison in 1894, lead directly to the completion of the Williams Street Bridge in March 1895. The bridge provided access between the Hot Springs Avenue and the Hotel Park Addition #2 and the Seymer Park Addition. It also facilitated the transportation of goods and services to and from Fort Harrison. Because of the picturesque neighborhood and the Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium, the bridge was considerably more ornate than usual for this type of bridge, including decorative steel lattice work, ornate newel posts, and, possibly, finials at the connection of the endposts and top chords. The bridge, coupled with the Broadwater complex and the adjacent Seymer Residence (24LC1810) lent an air of Victorian charm to the neighborhood.[13]

The fortunes of the resort were never economically solid after Charles Broadwater's death in May 1892. From 1892 to 1945, the site

had a series of owners, none of which had the same vested interest in the property as did Broadwater. The once elegant hotel suffered through a series of extended closings with only the dining room and adjacent rooms kept open to serve as a dance hall and casino. The hotel eventually acquired a somewhat seedy appearance that was worsened by the addition of neon lights in the 1930s. The hotel may have even have functioned as a Speak Easy during Prohibition. The complex's location outside the Helena city limits and near Fort Harrison served it well during its long decline in the 20th century. The natatorium, however, remained open and was a popular swimming spot for local residents.[14]

The Williams Street Bridge area was directly associated with the Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium for much of its existence. The two residential subdivisions that encompass it were platted in 1889 shortly before the resort opened. It was likely the intention of the men to attract large upscale residences to the subdivisions based on the advantages offered by the natatorium, surrounding industries and recreational areas, and the streetcar line that served them. Although the Broadwater Hotel complex is long gone, the Williams Street Bridge continues to carry traffic between Helena, Fort Harrison, and the many new subdivisions that have been established north of the bridge. The neighborhood in which the bridge is situated has, however, changed very little. The Broadwater Hotel grounds have been preserved (the hotel was demolished in 1975) and the residences built during the resort's peak still exist adjacent to the bridge.

The Williams Street Bridge

On 10 August 1894, an advertisement appeared in the *Helena Daily Independent* requesting proposals to construct two bridges in the vicinity of Helena, Montana. Both would cross Ten Mile Creek. One would be located on Monroe Avenue (now North Montana Avenue) and the other on Williams Street near the Broadwater Hotel. The advertisement for the Williams Street Bridge specified that it would be "one-span, sixty-five feet center-to-center of abutments, roadway twenty-four feet clear, two sidewalks each five-feet clear with an iron handrail." The project included the installation of 140 cubic yards of stone masonry for the abutments.[15]

The commissioners opened bids from seventeen individuals and companies for the project on 10 September 1894. Of those bidders, not all bid on the entire package or on both bridge projects. Indeed, six firms only bid on the masonry work and grading the approaches to the new bridges. Ten bridge contracting companies bid on the bridges. The bids ranged from a high of $3,900 offered for both bridges from the Toledo Bridge Company, to a low of $1,958 proposed by Farnsworth & Blodgett. Other companies that bid on the project were O.E. Peppard of Missoula, the George E. King Bridge Company, Wrought Iron Bridge Company, Youngstown Bridge Company, Milwaukee Bridge & Jail Works, the Gillette-Herzog Manufacturing Company and the King Bridge Company of Cleveland, Ohio.[16]

The County Commissioners incorrectly stated on 11 September that the King Bridge Company's bid was "lowest and best offered" for the Williams Street Bridge. The King company was the most prolific bridge-builder in Lewis & Clark County from around 1892 until 1902. That the commissioners awarded the company the contract despite the fact that it was not the lowest bid, suggests that the county commissioners and the company were involved in a pool arrangement whereby the King company got all the major bridge contracts in the county. The commissioners awarded the contract to the King Bridge Company for its bid of $2,341.50, which included the installation of handrails on both structures. Helena contractor Hugh Kirkendall got the contract to build the masonry abutments and grade the approaches to both bridges on 12 September.[17]

The Seymer Park Addition and Williams Street had been platted in June 1889 and lots sold since 1890. It was not until September 1894 that the County incorporated the street into the county road system. On 13 September, the Commissioners instructed the County Surveyor to

> [S]urvey . . . the new county road as laid out from the site of [the] bridge over Ten Mile near the Broadwater Hotel to its connection with the old Greenhorn Road surveyed for the purpose of making plans and specifications for grading same and putting it in shape for travel.

There is no record in the County Commissioners Journals as to who petitioned for the road improvements or for the bridge. It is likely, however, that it had much to do with the construction of nearby Fort Harrison, which began in 1894. The Helena Electric Railway even went as far as to ask the commissioners for right-of-way on Williams Street for an intra-urban trolley line that would serve the Broadwater Hotel, Kessler Brewery and the fort.[18]

Work on the Williams Street Bridge proceeded smoothly from late September until its completion on 8 March 1895. The County Commissioners authorized payment of $2,498.50 to the King Bridge Company on 14 March. When completed, the bridge provided direct access from Hot Springs Avenue (the county road to McDonald and Priest passes and thence to Elliston and Avon) and to Fort Harrison. It also opened up the Seymer Park Addition to the Broadwater Hotel resort complex. The bridge's importance to the post and Helena was reflected in the Commissioners Journals when it often made reference to the road as "Fort Harrison Boulevard" instead of its official designation as Williams Street.[19]

Although not stated in the County records, the bridge's proximity to the Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium complex likely compelled the commissioners to request the King Bridge Company to include decorative elements on the design of the bridge. The resort's natatorium was located just to the southwest of the bridge and one of the primary access routes into the complex was also located just off the southwest abutment to the structure. Undoubtedly, the resort's owners were aware that the bridge would be important to carriage traffic between the Broadwater, Fort Harrison, and Central Park. Consequently, the King Bridge Company designed the bridge to compliment the resort complex. It is not apparent from the historic record if the bridge originally included finials on the top chords at the portals, but the steel strap latticing on the "walls" protecting the bridge's sidewalks, the crossed neo-Gothic arches and Hispano-Moresque eight-sided stars, complemented the architectural design of the adjacent natatorium. Consequently, the bridge accentuated the natatorium's design and further enhanced the structures and the neighborhood.

The King Bridge Company

Formed by self-taught bridge engineer Zenas King in Cleveland, Ohio in 1858, the King Bridge Company was one of the most prolific bridge builders in the United States by the end of the 19th century. Like many of his contemporaries in the early 19th century, King was a trained carpenter who later put his expertise to practical use as a bridge builder. Zenas went to work as a salesman for Cincinnati bridge builder Thomas Moseley in 1857 before establishing his own company, the King Iron Bridge & Manufacturing Company, in Cleveland the following year. King specialized in the construction of iron bowstring arch bridges, for which he obtained a patent in 1861. A shrewd businessman, he also hired sales agents all over the eastern United States, including Iowa, Missouri and Texas to sell the company's products. After the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869, he tried to break into the bridge-building business west of the Mississippi River. To that end, he established fabrication factories in Kansas and a field office in Des Moines by the mid-1870s. By 1882, King claimed to have constructed 5,000 bridges – mostly in the New England and Mid-Atlantic states.[20]

By the 1880s, competition between the bridge construction companies was intense throughout the United States as the railroads and local governments sought to improve their infrastructures. Like their counterparts in the railroad and steel industries, the bridge companies were compelled to form pool arrangements whereby certain firms would, in a sense, monopolize the industry in specific areas in the states. The pool participants would contribute thirteen percent of their profits on a specific project into the pool "which would then distribute the accumulated sums to the participants based on the size of the company." Although never entirely legal, this was a method companies used in a highly competitive market to ensure work and maximize profits. Although the county governments often conspired with the bridge companies, they did not always receive a good bridge in the bargain. In at least two instances, bridges constructed by the King Iron Bridge & Manufacturing Company suffered catastrophic failures. Zenas King and six other companies formed a successful bridge pool in 1883. Bridge pooling was certainly a common practice in Montana beginning in the 1890s. Still, there is no evidence that the King company was a participant in the practice in the state. Other companies active at that time, such as William S. Hewett of Minneapolis, the Billings-based Security Bridge Company and O.E. Peppard of Missoula, were inarguably involved in bridge pooling during this period.[21]

Just prior to his death in October 1892, Zenas finally broke into the Montana bridge market with the construction of two bridges in Madison County. Both were pin-connected Pratt through trusses. One (24BE1564) crossed the Beaverhead River at Twin Bridges and other Blaine Springs Creek (24MA780) south of Ennis. With Zenas's death, his son, James, took over control of the firm and renamed it the King Bridge Company. Under James's leadership, the company finally became a prolific bridge builder in the western United States. Evidence suggests that while the company frequently bid on county bridge projects, it was not often successful because of the state's pre-existing bridge pool agreements.[22]

The company was, however, successful in Lewis & Clark County, obtaining the contract to build the Dearborn River High Bridge (24LC130) in 1897 and the Elk Creek, Smith Creek, and Flat Creek bridges in the northern part of the county in 1901. The company

also constructed bridges across the Jefferson River in Madison County in 1897, the Madison River (24MA779) in 1898 and the Musselshell River in 1900 (24GV145). There are, undoubtedly, more King-built bridges in Montana that have not, as yet, been identified. But as the pooling agreements solidified after the turn-of-the-twentieth century, the King Bridge Company was increasingly edged out of the Montana market in favor of the Minnesota and Montana based companies. The Minnesota companies had direct access to the state over the Northern Pacific and Great Northern railroads. They also had active field offices in the state, while the King Bridge Company did not. There also appears to have been a definite swing in favor of the Montana-based firms, specifically the Security Bridge Company and O. E. Peppard. Although these firms were able to construct relatively modest steel truss bridges, the major river crossings were beyond their abilities and the counties relied more on firms based in the Midwest. The King Bridge Company, unfortunately, did not build any "Bragging Bridges" in Montana other than the Dearborn River High Bridge.[23]

With the inclusion of markets in the western United States, the King Bridge Company increased its bridge shop output from 18,000 to 30,000 tons per year between 1894 and 1903. It was the largest bridge company based in Ohio and was, nationally, second only to the Pennsylvania-based American Bridge Company. During the first decade of the 20th century, the federal government aggressively sought to break up the bridge pools through enforcement of the 1890 Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Because the pool agreements, however, were not formal pacts, but were more "gentlemen" agreements, the government had a difficult time eliminating something that was advantageous to the industry and to the county governments. Consequently, other means were sought to break the power of the pools. The Good Roads movement and the U.S. Department of Agriculture tried to remedy the situation by promoting modern, scientifically engineered bridges and the creation of state highway departments to oversee road and bridge construction in the states. Standardized and efficient bridges that would best serve the public good were an important part of the Progressive reform movement of the early 20th century. Through legislation beginning in 1903 and culminated in the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916, the federal government sought to end the "good old boy" system by giving the state and federal governments control of road and bridge construction.[24]

The availability of federal funds through the 1913 Post Office Appropriation Act probably induced the state legislature to create the Montana Highway Commission in March 1913. The Commission created a state bridge department in 1915, whose primary responsibility was to develop standardized bridge designs and oversee the bidding and construction process in the counties. This development spelled the doom of the bridge construction companies in Montana. Instead of highly individualized structures built, essentially, by non-professional engineers, the state's infrastructure was increasingly dominated by standardized riveted Warren through or pony truss bridges. The loss of previously lucrative markets is likely what caused the King Bridge Company to branch out into the construction of prefabricated steel building frames rather than concentrating only on bridges. By 1923, declining revenues caused the King Bridge Company to go out of business.[25]

Engineering Significance

From 1888 to 1915, the Montana counties constructed hundreds of pony and through truss bridges throughout the state. All of the structures were assembled with the use of pin connections, which greatly simplified the construction of substantial bridges in the state and caused a boom in the development of Montana's infrastructure. Pin-connections best represented the science of practical bridge engineering not only in Montana but throughout the United States. Pin-connections allowed the prefabrication of bridge structural components in eastern steel fabrication plants and their shipment to construction sites on railroads. Bridge construction companies could easily reassemble the components on site, which provided an efficient and economical method of constructing reliable bridges for counties and communities. Because of its proximity to the old Broadwater Hotel & Natatorium complex, the Williams Street Bridge includes some structural details not common to truss bridges built in Montana. This includes substantial native granite abutments and wingwalls and ornamental handrails and newel posts. Evidence suggests that the bridge may also have sported decorative finials on the upper chords at the time of its construction. The abutments, wing walls, and the decorative elements were included to enhance the adjacent resort and residential subdivision as well as augmenting the approach to Fort Harrison. The Pratt truss configuration of the design was common to bridges built in Montana between 1894 and the 1915. Indeed, the Williams Street Bridge is the oldest pin-connected Pratt pony truss bridge in Montana.

Conclusion

Clearly, the Williams Street Bridge is eligible under Criterion A because of its association with the first great period of county-sponsored bridge building in Montana in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its construction coincides with the expansion and

improvement of Montana's road system in the wake of the development of practical and affordable steel bridges by bridge engineers in the last decade of the 19th century. It is associated with the establishment of the nearby Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium resort and the creation of residential subdivisions near it. The bridge was also important to the development of the Fort Harrison military post about a mile north of the structure. It is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as an excellent example of an intact pin-connected Pratt pony truss structure. The counties commonly used Pratt trusses in the last decade of the 19th century and first fifteen years of the 20th century because of their ease of construction and were relatively inexpensive. This bridge includes ornamental details (decorative handrails, newel posts, abutments, and wingwalls) that are unique to Montana bridges. The Williams Street Bridge is, moreover, the oldest pin-connected Pratt pony truss bridge remaining in Montana.

Endnotes

1. David Alt and Donald W. Hyndman, *Roadside Geology of Montana*, (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1991), 6, 13, 200-201, 271.

2. The origin of the stone used for the bridge's abutments and wing walls is not specified in the County Commissioner Journals. It is, however, similar in appearance and texture to the granite used for the entry arch and receiving vault at Forestvale Cemetery (24LC132) and the Kain Granite Company Building in Helena. Kain's quarry was located on Ten Mile Creek about four miles west of the Williams Street Bridge. For information about the Kain Granite Company see Jon Axline's "Quarried Stone for a Sense of Wealth and Stability," in *More From the Quarries of Last Chance Gulch*, Volume 1 (Helena: Independent Record, 1995), 135-139.

3. Merrill G. Burlingame, *The Montana Frontier*, (Helena: State Publishing, 1942), 84, 87; Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, Rev. ed. (Seattle: University of Washington, 1991), 64-65, 67.

4. Muriel Sibell Wolle, *Montana Pay Dirt*, (Athens, OH: Sage Books, 1963), 78.

5. Burlingame, *The Montana Frontier*, 387; Wolle, *Montana Pay Dirt*, 82.

6. Wolle, *Montana Pay Dirt*, 117-118; U.S. Census Records 1890; Vivian A. Paladin, ed., *Valleys of the Prickly Pear*, (Helena: Little Red Schoolhouse, Inc., 1988), 121-123; Bill Taylor and Jan Taylor, *Rails to Gold and Silver: Lines to Montana's Mining Camps – Volume 1, 1883 – 1887*, (Missoula: Pictorial Histories. 1999), 46-50; Roberta Carkeek Cheney, *Names on the Face of Montana: The Story of Montana's Place Names*, (Missoula: Mountain Press, 1990), 225.

7. Dale B. Robertson, *Encyclopedia of Western Railroad History*, Volume II (Dallas: Taylor Publishing, 1991), 317; Louis Tucker Renz, *The History of the Northern Pacific Railroad*, (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1980), 157; Taylor and Taylor, *Rails to Gold and Silver*, 46-48, 50-56.

8. Paladin, *Valleys of the Prickly Pear*, 126-127, 140-141; Patricia C. Spencer, *Images of America: Helena, Montana.* (Chicago: Arcadia, 2002), 45-46, 58-59; Pat Bik, "Real Estate Frenzy Builds Career for Young Man," in More From the Quarries of Last Chance Gulch. *Helena Independent Record*, 4 July 1996; Helena Board of Trade, *Helena Illustrated: Capital of the State of Montana*, (Minneapolis: Frank L. Thresher, 1890), 64.

9. Plat Records Nos. 794, 801, 784; Bik, "Real Estate Frenzy;" Helena Board of Trade, *Helena Illustrated*, 64.

10. Paladin, *Valleys of the Prickly Pear*, 134, 136-137; *Helena, Montana*, (Helena: Business Men's Association, 1904), np; *Health for You and Pleasant Too*, (Helena: Hot Springs Company, 1906), np.

11. A. W. Lyman, *Helena, Montana: Its Past, Present and Future*, (Helena: Arthur W. Ide and W. D. Rumsey, 1891), 16; Paladin, *Valleys of the Prickly Pear*, 126, 128-132; Jon Axline, et al. *More From the Quarries of Last Chance Gulch*, Volume 2 (Helena: Independent Record, 1995 - 1998), 71-75.

12. Paladin, *Valleys of the Prickly Pear*, 127; Lyman, *Helena, Montana*, 21; Spencer, *Images of America*, 40-42.

13. Paladin, *Valleys of the Prickly Pear*, 133; Ellen Baumler and Dave Shors, *Lost Places, Hidden Treasures: Rare Photographs of Helena, Montana*, (Helena: Far Country Press, 2002), 89; County Commissioners Proceedings, Book 5a; 282, 298.

14. Spencer, *Images of America*, 97-98, 108.

15. County Commissioners Journals: Lewis & Clark County , Book 5a, 102.

16. Ibid, Book 5a, 102-103.

17. Ibid, Book 5a, 128-129, 131.

18. Ibid, Book 5a, 135, 28-29.

19. Ibid, Book 5a, 208, 217, 282, 298.

20. Allan King Sloan, "Discovering Zenas King," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Industrial Archeology, Savannah, Georgia, June, 1999.

21. Sloan, Ibid, 1999; Jon Axline, *Conveniences Sorely Needed: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860 – 1956*, (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 2005), *, **; Fredric L. Quivik, *Historic Bridges in Montana*, (Washington DC: National Park Service, 1982), 33, 38-39, 41, 43.

22. Sloan, "Discovering Zenas King," 1999.

23. The Beaverhead River Bridge was relocated to a site just east of the community of Glen in 1947. It provided a crossing of the Big Hole River until 2000 when it was demolished by the Montana Department of Transportation after an unsuccessful attempt to find a new owner for the structure. Sloan, "Discovering Zenas King," 1999; Axline, *Conveniences Sorely Needed*, ***.

24. Sloan, "Discovering Zenas King," 1999; Axline, *Conveniences Sorely Needed*, ***.

25. Sloan, "Discovering Zenas King," 1999; Axline, *Conveniences Sorely Needed*, ***; Federal Highway Administration, *America's Highways, 1776-1976* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Transportation, 1976), 80-81; M. J. Steere, *History of the Montana State Highway Department, 1913 – 1942* (Helena: State Highway Commission, 1943), 9-11; Quivik, *Historic Bridges*, 43-44; George R. Metlen, *Report of the Montana State Highway Commission, 1915 – 1916*, (Helena: Montana Highway Commission, 1916), 4-8.

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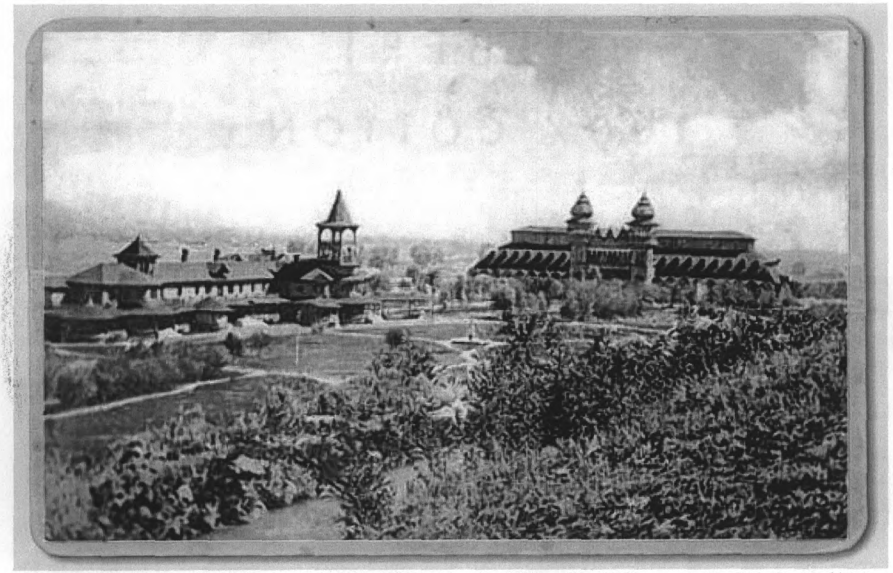
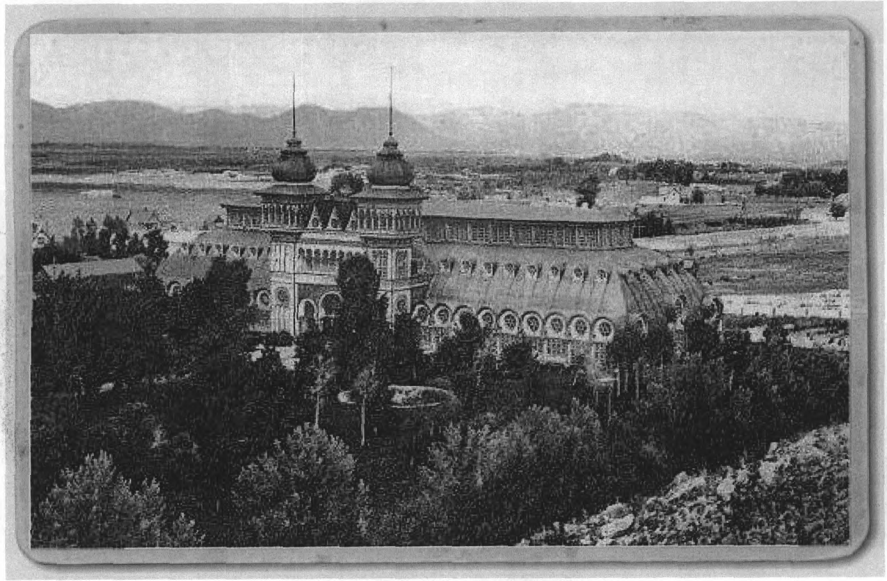
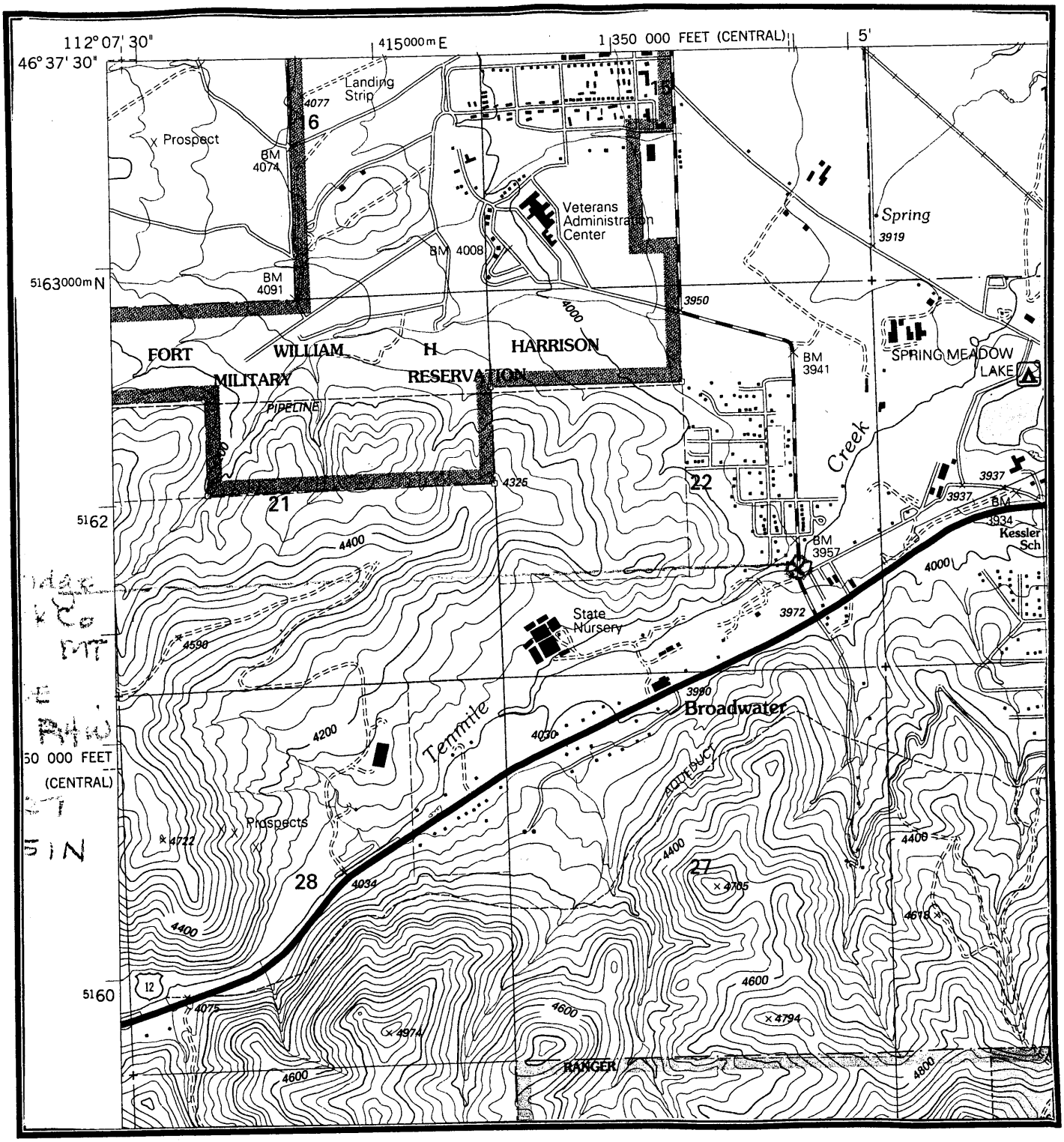


Postcard of the now demolished Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium. The Williams Street Bridge crosses Ten Mile Creek, which is shown at the foreground of this postcard. The bridge was located just to the east (left) of this view.



Postcard of the now demolished Broadwater Natatorium.



Williams Street Bridge
Lewis and Clark County, MT
UTM (NAD 27): Zone 12 416736E 5161651N
SW ¼ NE ¼ SE ¼ of Section 22, T10N, R4W(Montana Prime Meridian)
Helena Quadrangle