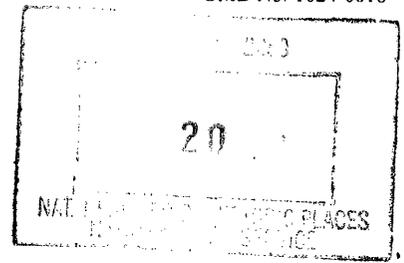


**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**



428

**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 any 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

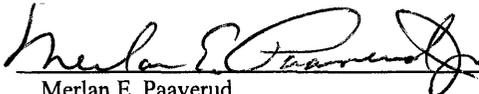
historic name Knife River Bridge near Stanton
other names/site number 32ME1332

2. Location

street & number Unnamed county road 4 mi. W. & 1 mi. N. of Stanton N/A not for publication
city or town Stanton vicinity
state North Dakota code ND county Mercer code 057 zip code 58571

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official/Title  3-14-01
Merlan E. Paaverud Date
State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

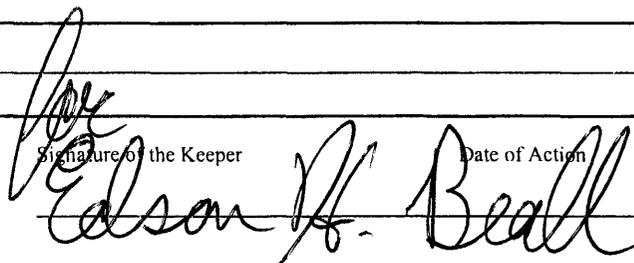
Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

 4/25/01
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Knife River Bridge near Stanton
Name of Property

Mercer, North Dakota
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

Category of Property

Number of Resources within Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing Noncontributing

private

building(s)

0 0 buildings

public-local

district

0 0 sites

public-State

site

1 0 structures

public-Federal

structure

0 0 objects

object

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

Historic Roadway Bridges of North Dakota

0

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)

other: Pratt through truss

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls _____

roof _____

other Steel

Narrative Description

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

Knife River Bridge near Stanton
Name of Property

Mercer, North Dakota
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 a 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.

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:

Mercer County Courthouse, Stanton

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION

ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

Circa 1898 to 1951

Significant Dates

Circa 1898

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Builder: Dibley & Robinson

Knife River Bridge near Stanton

Name of Property

Mercer, North Dakota

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	14	313470	5244215	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		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 Richard O. Sorenson / Mercer County Land Use Administrator

organization Mercer County date December 19, 2000

street & number Courthouse, P. O. Box 39 telephone (701)745-3695

city or town Stanton state ND zip code 58571

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Mercer County c/o County Auditor

street & number Courthouse; P. O. Box 39 telephone (701)745-3292

city or town Stanton state ND zip code 58571

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

KNIFE RIVER BRIDGE NEAR STANTON, MERCER COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Knife River Bridge is documented by Mercer County Commission minutes to have been built in 1898. It is located on an unnamed and low maintenance county road in rural Mercer County, North Dakota. The site is located approximately four (4) miles west and one (1) mile north of Stanton. The bridge lies on a north-south axis, on the north portion of a section line common to Sections 4 and 5, Township 144 North, Range 85 West. The bridge is still in service at its original site. Its use is now limited because nearby newer upstream and downstream bridges, located on paved roads, carry wider and heavier loads. The surrounding land is in rural agricultural use consisting of cultivated land and pastures. Scattered farm and non-farm residences and related buildings are located in the vicinity. The bridge crosses the Knife River, which is a major tributary of the Missouri River.

The bridge built by Dibley and Robinson Company, a 19th-century bridge fabricator, is a pin-connected Pratt through truss, with a steel superstructure. The Pratt design, patented by Thomas and Caleb Pratt in 1844, saw widespread use nationally and in North Dakota during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This design featured relatively short, vertical members acting in compression and longer diagonal members acting in tension. By the late 1800s, metal trusses were typically "pin-connected;" that is, held together by large metal pins at the points where truss members met. Such structures were easily assembled in the field with only minimal on-site equipment. By 1900, the technology of riveting structural steel in the field had advanced to the point where pinned connections could be replaced with riveted, or "rigid," connections.

The Knife River Bridge is a steel, six-panel, pin-connected Pratt through truss with steel stringer span each end. Design details of the bridge's substructure and superstructure are outlined below:

Substructure: south: I-beam abutment, wood plank backwall; north: tubular piers at main span

Superstructure:

upper chords: two channel sections with continuous cover plate along the upper flanges and batten plates along the lower flanges

lower chords: paired punched eyebars

verticals: two channel sections with lacing bars; paired, looped square rods at hips

diagonals: paired punched eyebars

counters: looped round rods

laterals: (bottom): round rods

portal: paired angle sections

sway bracing: two pairs angle section with lacing bars

moveable end: plate

floor systems: I-beam stringers; I-beam floor beams hung from the verticals with U-bolts

decking: single-layer plank with driving surface and wood curbs

railing: cable

steelmaker's marks: none

length: 101 feet

width: 21 feet overall; curb to curb interior clearance 17.9 feet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

KNIFE RIVER BRIDGE NEAR STANTON, MERCER COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA

The bridge superstructure is in its original location. Superstructure steel components are original.

The bridge was damaged by high water and ice flows in spring, 1997. The south abutment was washed out and the bridge was closed to traffic. At that time, a decision needed to be made to repair the bridge and reopen it to public use or demolish it and clean up the site. The costs of each alternative were weighed.

Adolph Miller was a county commission at that time. He and local residents fought to save the bridge from demolition. Eventually the county commission moved to commit the board to renovating the bridge using a combination of funds from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), North Dakota Department of Transportation, and Mercer County. The cost of abutment repair and raising the structure was approximately \$122,000. Another \$4,300 was spent by Mercer County to paint the steel components back to the original color which was a rusty red. The bridge was reopened for public use in 1998.

The repairs consisted of:

1. Lifting off the superstructure from its abutments.
2. Replacing the south abutment.
3. Adding two (2) feet to the north abutment to raise the entire structure two (2) feet to protect it from future high water and ice flow damage.
4. The wood deck and running boards were replaced with wood in-kind dimensional planking material.
5. All steel was repainted the original color.

W. Jeffrey Kinney prepared a North Dakota Cultural Resources Survey dated June 6, 1998. This survey, which was done after the 1997 flood-related damage was repaired, lists the bridge integrity as being "excellent".

Mercer County owns the Knife River Bridge and road right-of-way leading to it. The bridge carries the state numerical designation 29-135-16.0.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

KNIFE RIVER BRIDGE NEAR STANTON, MERCER COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Under the current bridge criteria outlined in the survey report, Historic Bridges in North Dakota (May, 1992) by Renewable Technologies Incorporated (RTI) of Butte, MT and Hess Roise and Company, Minneapolis, MN, the Knife River Bridge near Stanton is significant under Criteria A and C in the National Register of Historic Places. The Knife River Bridge is a "Pratt through truss steel bridge" built by Dibley and Robinson, a 19th -century bridge fabricator (Criterion A2). The Dibley and Robinson Company was the predecessor of the Fargo Bridge and Iron Company. Both were North Dakota-based bridge builders that constructed bridges in North Dakota prior to 1926.

Information on the early history of the Knife River Bridge is taken from minutes of five (5) Mercer County Commission meetings. Minutes from the meeting held on August 13, 1898, state that construction contract for the Knife River Bridge was awarded to Dibley and Robinson Company. This company submitted the low bid in the amount of \$2,996.00. A total of four (4) bids were opened at that meeting ranging from the low bid, to the high bid in the amount of \$3,461.25.

Minutes from the Mercer County Commission meeting held on January 4, 1899, read that the bridge built over the Knife River by Dibley and Robinson was accepted. The minutes from the commission meeting held on March 7, 1899, read that final payment in the amount of \$1,300.00 was made to Dibley and Robinson Company from the road and bridge fund. The Knife River Bridge was built prior to 1926 with a documented builder and documented date (Criterion A 5). This Pratt through truss bridge was documented to have been built in 1898 by Dibley and Robinson Company.

The minutes from the commission meeting held on January 13, 1899, read that two bids were received for filling approaches to the Knife River Bridge. The low bid in the amount of \$170.00 from Christ Oster Jr. was accepted to install the approaches to the new bridge. Minutes from that meeting also read "Approaches to be filled in with assorted stone and topped with dirt to have the same in passable condition by the 1st of April". The minutes from the commission meeting held on July 10, 1899, read that final payment was made to Christ Oster Jr. for approach work.

According to a publication History of Mercer County - 1882 TO 1960 by C. B. Heinemeyer and Mrs. Ben Janssen, Christ Oster, Jr. came to Mercer County with his parents on April 20, 1888, from Russia. They came by train to New Salem. There they bought a team of oxen and wagon by which they came north to Mercer County. Christ Oster, Jr. married, raised a family and lived the remainder of his life in Mercer County. He passed away in 1959.

There is nothing in the commission minutes regarding the date the new Knife River Bridge was opened for public use. However, from the information provided by commission meeting minutes, the following conclusions can reasonably be assumed.

1. Construction of the bridge started sometime after August 13, 1898, the date of the bid award to Dibley and Robinson. The bridge was finished during the year 1898, since it was accepted by the County Commission at a meeting on January 4, 1899.
2. The bridge and approaches were separate contracts. When the bid for the approaches was accepted on January 13, 1899, the Commission intended to have the approaches ready for use by April 1, 1899. The new bridge was very likely opened for public use sometime between April 1, 1899 and July 10, 1899, the date that final payment was made for the approach work.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

KNIFE RIVER BRIDGE NEAR STANTON, MERCER COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA

The Knife River Bridge, a Pratt through truss bridge, is documented to have been built in 1898 by Dibley and Robinson Company. Steel bridges of the Pratt through truss design built prior to 1900 are rare (Criterion C 1).

A multiple property listing titled Historic Roadway Bridges of North Dakota prepared by Historian Mark Hufstetler and dated December 10, 1996, provides information related to the Knife River Bridge and its builder as follows:

“With only occasional exceptions, out-of-state bridge contractors thoroughly dominated the construction of North Dakota’s major nineteenth-century highway bridges. By the late 1890s, however, a small nucleus of in-state bridge construction firms had developed; they were later joined by a number of other North Dakota individuals and companies. Two of these bridge businesses expanded and prospered throughout the early twentieth century and beyond, providing an unusually strong local influence in the construction patterns of North Dakota’s highway bridges.

The most successful of the North Dakota bridge firms was the Fargo Bridge and Iron Company. As was often true for regional bridge-building companies, Fargo Bridge and Iron began as the dream of an ambitious agent of another bridge company. In this case, the agent was Francis E. Dibley (1860-1910), a Milwaukee native who served as the Fargo representative of the Wisconsin Bridge and Iron Company beginning in 1889. In 1898, Dibley and W. H. Robinson, of Mayville formed the bridge-building partnership of Dibley and Robinson, and actively began soliciting county bridge contracts throughout eastern North Dakota. By 1901, Dibley and Robinson had completed several bridge projects in at least four North Dakota counties. Only one of Dibley and Robinson’s vehicular bridges is known to survive – a pin-connected Pratt through truss constructed by the firm in 1900 near Blanchard in Traill County.”

From the above information one can reach the following conclusions:

1. Since Dibley and Robinson went into business in 1898 and the construction contract for the Knife River Bridge was awarded in July of that same year, this bridge was one of the first bridges constructed by that firm and one of the first bridges constructed in North Dakota by an in-state company.
2. Since only one of Dibley and Robinson’s vehicular bridges was previously known to survive, a 1900 bridge located near Blanchard, this would make the Knife River Bridge built in 1898, the oldest known surviving bridge in North Dakota which was built by that firm. It would also make the Knife River Bridge, a pin-connected Pratt through truss, the oldest known surviving bridge of its type in North Dakota.

Types of bridges with documented dates of construction as the oldest in North Dakota have statewide significance (Criterion C6).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 5

KNIFE RIVER BRIDGE NEAR STANTON, MERCER COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA

Testimony of local residents relating to early history of the Knife River Bridge indicates that it was the first bridge in Mercer County. Freda Stephens is 89 years old and has lived in the Stanton area all her life. In written documentation she remembers: "On several occasions seeing Indian Wagon Trains using the bridge during their travels." She recalled, "when the Northern Pacific Railroad put their branch line into service from Mandan to Killdeer in 1914. Stanton was served by this new branch line and soon after a new elevator was built in town. This elevator and rail service allowed area farmers to sell their grain in Stanton rather than hauling it to the main railroad line at New Salem."

The site for the first bridge constructed in Mercer County was within a mile of the Thomas homestead. Descendants of the Thomas family still reside on this farmstead. Ben Thomas, a third generation descendant, lived on the homestead all his life. In written testimony Ben states, "his family farmed and raised livestock on both sides of the Knife River." As a result, they used the bridge on a regular basis as far back as he can remember. He also remembers, "area farmers and Native Americans using the bridge to haul produce and supplies to Stanton and points south. I don't know what we would have done without the bridge."

Adolph Miller is 79 years old and has lived in the Stanton area all his life. He served 28 years on the Mercer County Commission. Mr. Miller has certified in writing, "on numerous occasions, I remember persons older than me, saying the old bridge west of Stanton was the first bridge built in Mercer County."

According to History of Mercer County - 1882 TO 1960, "During the years 1887 and 1888 several other covered wagon trains had come from the southeastern part of the territory; so that, by the time we had gained our statehood in 1889, we find some thirty German families settled north of Knife River."

From ice out in the spring though early fall, the Knife River channel typically contains flowing water. Other than water craft, the Knife River Bridge was the only means that the early settlers and native population had available to them to transport produce and materials back and forth to Stanton and points south. Stanton was an important steamboat port on the Missouri River. The closest railroad point was New Salem.

The Knife River Bridge is located at its original site. The road leading to the bridge from the north is still an unimproved trail. Today one can drive across this bridge and this unimproved road leading in a northerly direction approximately one (1) mile to connect with a graded and graveled county road. This unimproved public trail winds through trees and over sandhills in the same manner that it did over 100 years ago. In some places along this route, trees and brush are so close to the narrow driving surface, that a vehicle will brush against branches. During this drive, it is easy for one to get the feeling that for a short time they have turned the clock back to a time when early settlers and native people used horses and wagons for transportation over this same bridge and unimproved road.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

KNIFE RIVER BRIDGE NEAR STANTON, MERCER COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA

BIBLIOGRAHMY:

Johnson, Lon, et.al. "Historic Bridges in North Dakota." Bismarck, ND: North Dakota Department of Transportation, 1992.

Heinemeyer, et.al. "History of Mercer County, North Dakota." Hazen, ND: Hazen Star, Circa 1960.

Geo. A. Ogle & Co. "Standard Atlas – Mercer County, North Dakota." Chicago, IL, 1918.

Kinney, W. Jeff. "North Dakota Cultural Resources Survey – Site Number 32ME1332." Bismarck, ND: North Dakota Heritage Center, June 11, 1998.

Mercer County Commission: Meeting Minutes Book 2, pp. 1, 20, 25, 27, 29, 31, 32.

Miller, Adolph. "Letter of Testimony." Stanton, ND: December 14, 2000.

Miller, Henry, et.al. "Letter of Testimony." Stanton, ND: September 28, 2000.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 7

KNIFE RIVER BRIDGE NEAR STANTON, MERCER COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Knife River Bridge is located on an unnamed county road 4 miles west and 1 mile north of Stanton. It is on the north portion of a section line common to Sections 4 and 5, Township 144 North, Range 85 West. The boundary consists of a rectangle, measuring 101 feet in length in a north-south direction and 21 feet in width in an east-west direction, with both measurements centered on the bridge superstructure. The interior roadway width curb to curb is 17.9 feet.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the Knife River Bridge includes the area historically associated with the bridge.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page 8

September 28, 2000

North Dakota State Historical Society
Capitol Grounds
Bismarck, ND

RE: Old Knife River Bridge
West of Stanton, ND

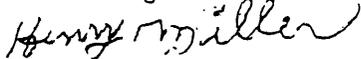
To Whom It May Concern:

This is the recollections of myself and my older brother Henry, regarding the above referenced bridge. Our family farm was north and west of the "Old Knife River Bridge". Henry Miller was born in 1916. Adolph Miller was born in 1921.

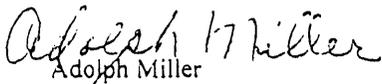
We can remember when Dad and other neighboring farmers talked about hauling their agricultural products south to New Salem and Glen Ullin. This was done by horse drawn wagons. The only way to cross the Knife River was by the bridge located approximately 3 miles west of Stanton. At New Salem area farmers could sell their grain for cash. At Glen Ullin they could get wheat ground into flour which was used for their winters food supply. Bran, which is the wheat kennels outer covering, was a leftover product from the flour. Farmers brought this bran back on the return trip to use as livestock feed.

We can remember Dad talking about the early days before the railroad was extended into Mercer County from Mandan. The railroad did not come into our area until 1914. The old bridge was in use for many years before the early farmers could ship their products by rail.

We feel the "Old Stanton Bridge" was an important part of Mercer County's early settlers. We highly recommend that this bridge be included on the National Register of Historic Places. It is probably the last prominent thing left in the area from the early settling. As of today, this bridge is still at its original location and still in use.



Henry Miller
Longtime Stanton Area Resident



Adolph Miller
Longtime Stanton Area Resident
28 years on Mercer County Commission

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page 9

December 14, 2000

North Dakota Heritage Center
612 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505-0830

RE: Historical Bridge Crossing Knife River
3 Miles West of Stanton, Mercer County, North Dakota

Dear Ms. Schliesman:

I would like to forward testimony that I received from the below listed persons regarding the above referenced bridge.

FROM STANTON RESIDENT FREDA STEPHENS - PHONE NO. 745-3224

Freda is 89 years old and has lived in the Stanton area all her life. She told me that as a small child she could remember the bridge used by early farmers to haul grain to market and supplies back home. She also remembered on several occasions seeing Indian Wagon Trains using the bridge during their travels. She recalled when the Northern Pacific Railroad put their branch line into service from Mandan to Killdeer in 1914. Stanton was served by this new branch line and soon after a new elevator was built in town. This elevator and rail service allowed area farmers to sell their grain in Stanton rather than hauling it to the main railroad line at New Salem. The bridge continued to be used by all farmers north and west of Stanton up to the present time.

FROM RURAL STANTON RESIDENT BEN THOMAS - PHONE NO. 748-2976

The Thomas family homesteaded near the Knife River. The site for the first bridge, constructed in Mercer County, was within a mile of the Thomas homestead. The Thomas family still resides on this homestead. Ben Thomas said that his family farmed and raised livestock on both sides of the Knife River. As a result, they used the bridge on a regular basis as far back as he can remember. He also remembers area farmers and Native Americans using the bridge to haul produce and supplies to Stanton and points south. Ben said, "I don't know what we would have done without this bridge".


Adolph Miller
P.O. Box 205
Stanton, ND 58571
Home Phone 701-745-3574