

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

**NRIS Reference Number: 97000735**

**Date Listed: 7/15/97**

**Rio Puerco Bridge  
Property Name**

**Bernalillo  
County**

**NM  
State**

Historic Highway Bridges of NM  
**Multiple Name**

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**This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.**

*Beth Boland*  
**Signature of the Keeper**

*7/27/97*  
**Date of Action**

=====  
**Amended Items in Nomination:**

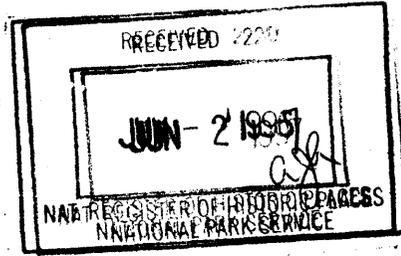
Although the historic context in the cover documentation covers a period extending until 1965, the period of significance for this bridge is its date of construction. The period of significance is 1933. This was confirmed by Mary Ann Anders of the NM SHPO.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Rio Puerco Bridge  
other names/site number NMSHTD # 2530

2. Location

street & number 40 yds. N of I-40, 8.9 M. W of I-40 W. Exit at Albuquerque not for publication  
city or town Albuquerque  vicinity  
state New Mexico code NM county Bernalillo code 001 zip code 87121

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
Lynn Sebastian SHPO 5-28-97  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Beth Boland Date of Action 7/15/97

Rio Puerco Bridge  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, NM.  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

Highway Bridge Construction in NM

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

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: road-related

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: road-related

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Parker through truss

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls steel

roof \_\_\_\_\_

other asphalt

**Narrative Description**

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

Rio Puerco Bridge  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, NM  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

transportation

engineering

**Period of Significance**

1933-1965

**Significant Dates**

1933

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rio Puerco Bridge

Bernalillo, NM

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 113 3229110 3878280
Zone Easting Northing
2

3 Zone Easting Northing
4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

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

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name
street & number telephone
city or town state zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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Rio Puerco Bridge on Old Route 66  
Bernalillo County, NM

Description

The Rio Puerco Bridge, located on a former alignment of U.S. 66 and paralleling I-40 approximately nine miles west of the I-40 exit at West Central Avenue in Albuquerque, is a one-span steel structure fabricated by the Kansas City Structural Steel Company and constructed by F.D. Shufflebarger in 1933. The substructure consists of two concrete piers and massive concrete abutments set on timber pilings.

The bridge employs a Parker through truss design flanked by two concrete approaches. The span measures 250 feet in length, and each of the approaches measures 40 feet. The span consists of 10 panels measuring 25 feet in length and each with its top chord at a different angle, shaping the polygonal top chord characteristic of Parker truss design bridges. All of the steel truss members are riveted to the top and bottom chords. The deck consists of concrete with an asphalt surface and rests on steel stringers. The bridge is 330 feet in length and the deck is 20 feet wide. Molded metal guardrails have been added to protect the truss members. In 1957 the truss was remodeled when the lowest portal struts were removed and lighter struts were inserted above to create a higher clearance.

Despite these alterations, the bridge retains a high degree of integrity of setting, design, materials, workmanship and association.

Statement of Significance

Serving local traffic as a frontage road for I-40 across the Rio Puerco, the former U.S. 66 bridge across the Rio Puerco is significant for its long association with highway transportation in New Mexico dating to the early 1930s. The longest single-span Parker through truss design bridge in New Mexico, it is also significant for embodying the design, materials and methods of construction associated with that bridge sub-type.

When federal highways first received a systematic numbering in 1926, many of the roads included in the system in the western states were simply local roads spliced together to create a makeshift network of federal highways. Only in the late 1920s and

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
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Bernalillo County, NM

## Statement of Significance (continued)

1930s did engineers have the resources to plan and construct more efficient, safer alignments. In New Mexico, the original alignment of U.S. 66 used local roads, following an circuitous alignment west of the Rio Grande. In the late 1920s, Albuquerque boosters advocated straightening the alignment, shifting it to run due west from the city. In order to achieve this goal, they succeeded in building a bridge across the Rio Grande at Old Town (1931) but still required a bridge at the Rio Puerco. After several years of lobbying the State Highway Commission, by the early 1930s they succeeded in their petition to have the so-called Laguna Cutoff placed on the federal road system and, thus, have projects improving the cutoff become eligible for federal matching funds. The Rio Puerco Bridge was included in federal funding in 1933 as part of the Roosevelt Administration's effort to use emergency monies for highway construction. Funded under E-FAP-178-A, the bridge was completed within the year, opening the Laguna Cutoff for transcontinental traffic. In 1937, the alignment officially became U.S. 66.

Although the waterflow in the Rio Puerco is often minimal, the river is capable of torrential flooding, a fact underscored by its severely eroded floodplain and river banks. In the early decades of the twentieth century prior to efforts at stabilizing degraded rangelands within the river's drainage area, the river posed a major challenge to highway engineers, earning the reputation of being an "outlaw" river capable of "cloudburst" flooding that threatened bridges and roads. In the fall of 1929, the river inflicted its worst damage, washing away several bridges, including the bridge several miles downstream that then served U.S. 66. As a result, engineers determined to construct bridges that would withstand future floods.

The selection of the Parker through truss design at what, four years later, would become the U.S. 66 crossing reflected the highway department's partiality to that design in many of its major projects of the late 1920s and 1930s. In order to compensate for the eroding floodplain and its unstable river banks susceptible to scouring during flooding, engineers designed a bridge employing unusually massive abutments built on deeply driven pilings. They then constructed a single 250-foot span capable of clearing the entire floodplain of the river. The BPR

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Rio Puerco Bridge on Old Route 66  
Bernalillo County, NM

Statement of Significance (continued)

considered the bridge the longest single-span Parker through truss bridge in the Southwest. With its heavy steel members, the bridge appeared especially suited to handle the increasingly traffic flow along what was becoming a major east-west highway.

The setting of the bridge over the deep, eroded course of the Rio Puerco conveys a strong feeling of how truss bridges appeared along New Mexican highways prior to World War II. The polygonal upper chords of its superstructure appear in marked relief to the newer twin steel beam bridges of I-40 which parallel it. When the section of the interstate at Rio Puerco was completed in the 1960s, the bridge and the former Route 66 alignment to the east became a part of the frontage road. That road section, including the bridge, treated as an element of the highway property, has been nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as an addition to the multiple property submission, "The Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 through New Mexico."

Bibliography

"Long Steel Truss Bridge Being constructed in New Mexico."  
New Mexico, Vol. 11, No. 5 (May, 1933), p. 40.

Macy, G.D., State Highway Engineer, "New Mexico's Recovery Road Program." New Mexico, Vol 11, No. 7 (July, 1933), pp. 14-15, 44.

New Mexico State Highway Department. "Bridge Department Structure Report, Bridge No. 2530," April 1, 1940.

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is a rectangular parcel measuring approximately 330 x 21 feet.

Boundary Justification

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