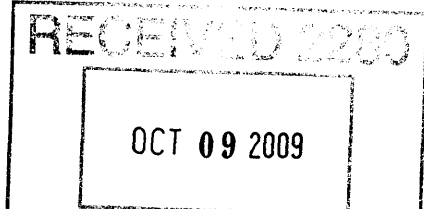


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

951



NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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 Hull, Cordell, Bridge

other names/site number NA

2. Location

street & number Cordell Hull Bridge Street (Old State Route 25) over the Cumberland River NA  not for publication

city or town Carthage NA  vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county Smith code 159 zip code 37030

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 for 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.)

E. Patrick Nighth, Jr.  
Signature of certifying official/Title

October 5, 2009  
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission  
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 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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

11.20.09

Hull, Cordell, Bridge  
Name of Property

Smith County, Tennessee  
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 count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: road-related (vehicular)

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: road-related (vehicular)

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: continuous 3-span Parker Truss

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE  
walls NA  
roof NA  
other STEEL

**Narrative Description**

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

**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 N/A**

(Mark "x" in all 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)

ENGINEERING  
 TRANSPORTATION  
 POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

**Period of Significance**

Circa 1934-1959

**Significant Dates**

1934-1936

**Significant Person**

(complete if Criterion B is marked)  
NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Vincennes Steel Corporation (fabricator/builder)  
Tennessee Department of Highways and Public Works (designer/engineer)

**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): N/A**

- 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:  
Tennessee Department of Transportation

Hull, Cordell, Bridge  
Name of Property

Smith County, Tennessee  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre Gordonsville 322 NW & Carthage 321 SW

#### UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>593753</u>	<u>4011900</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>16</u>	<u>594120</u>	<u>4012169</u>

3	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

4	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>
---	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

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 Sue Maggart-Petty  
organization Smith County Historian date May 2009  
street & number 608 Jackson Avenue telephone 615/735-0200  
city or town Carthage state TN zip code 37030

#### 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 Tennessee Department of Transportation, c/o Commissioner Gerald Nicely  
street & number 505 Deaderick, James K. Polk Building, Suite 700 telephone 615/741-2428  
city or town Nashville state TN zip code 37243

**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 listing. 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 20303.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Hull, Cordell, Bridge  
Smith County, Tennessee

## Description

### Summary Paragraph

The Cordell Hull Bridge spans the Cumberland River at Carthage, Smith County, Tennessee, connecting State Route 25/Main Street, Carthage, with State Route 24/US 70N. The bridge terminates at State Route 24/US 70 N at a towering limestone bluff that was excavated for the road. Constructed 1934-1936, the bridge is composed of six riveted deck trusses and five deck girder approach spans. The design of the bridge is somewhat atypical of bridge designs because of the variations in the truss designs. The Cordell Hull Bridge was repaired in 1993 and it currently is closed.

### Narrative Description<sup>1</sup>

A wide range of structural possibilities is possible in designing a bridge. There are, however, four main factors most commonly used in describing a bridge: span (simple, continuous, cantilever); material (stone, concrete, metal, etc.); placement of the travel surface in relation to the structure (deck, pony, through); and form (beam, arch, truss). A truss is the structural form which is used in the same way as a beam or a girder but is more flexible in determining width and length.<sup>2</sup> The Cordell Hull Bridge is a continuous span composed of different types of metal through and deck trusses.

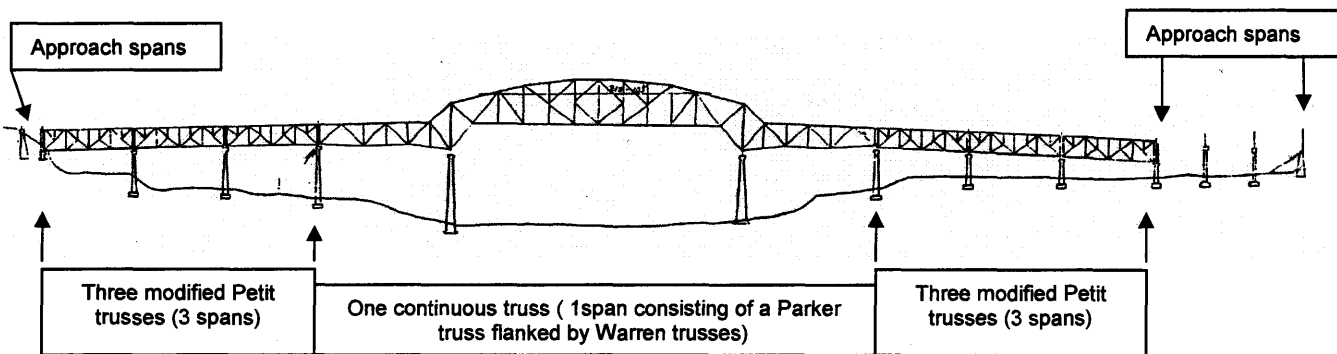


Figure 1. Cordell Hull Bridge. Courtesy of Tennessee Department of Transportation

<sup>1</sup> The description of the Cordell Hull Bridge is taken from *Tennessee's Survey Report for Historic Bridges*. The schematic images of bridges and general definitions are from *Bridge Basics – A Spotter's Guide to Bridge Design*. <http://pghbridges.com>. Accessed 12 June 2009.

<sup>2</sup> <http://pghbridges.com>. Bridge Basics. Accessed 12 June 2009.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2 Hull, Cordell, Bridge  
Smith County, Tennessee

Designed by the Tennessee Department of Highways and Public Works<sup>3</sup>, the structure was erected by the Vincennes Bridge Company of Vincennes, Indiana, beginning in 1934. The bridge has an overall length of 1,412 feet. The curb-to-curb width (driving surface) is 24 feet and out-to-out width (edge of the bridge) is 27.3 feet. The substructure is concrete and bridge piers have a scored pattern. There are five concrete approach spans. The US Engineers' office called for the bridge to have a 318 foot high span allowing a clearance space for navigation of 40 feet at the high water mark of 1926.<sup>4</sup>

The central span of the three-span continuous truss is a 318-foot Parker-K through truss. In a continuous span bridge, the spans are hinged and the multiple spans function as one span. Through trusses are those where the traffic goes through the truss, which is braced above and below the deck or road surface. (See figure 2.)

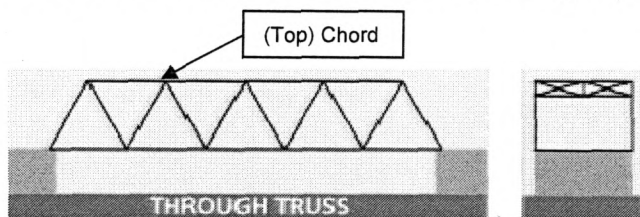


Figure 2. Typical Through Truss.

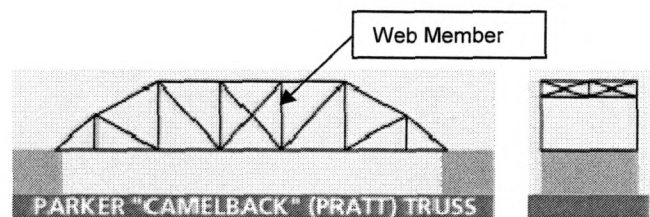


Figure 3. Parker-K Truss.

The Parker-K truss is a variant of the Pratt truss and can be longer than a Pratt. A K truss is a further variation. The distinctive arrangement of members, which form a "K" in each panel, gave the truss its name. The arrangement of members allowed tall verticals which increased the truss's overall height and thus its length while breaking the height of the vertical which allowed it to be stiffer and to resist stresses more efficiently. However, K trusses were rarely built because the number of members and stress distribution posed engineering and construction issues as well as being expensive. This hybrid Parker-K was the state highway department's attempt to use the advantages of a K truss while eliminating some of its disadvantages. In a Pratt truss, the diagonal web members form a "V". Pratt trusses were first designed in 1844 by Thomas and Caleb Pratt. They are a very common truss type. Charles Parker modified the form by having (inclined) top chords that are not always parallel to the bottom chords. The truss type is also called camelback. (See figure 3.) This type of truss is more complex to build because the web members vary in size but it results in a lighter structure that retains its strength. It can be longer than a Pratt truss.

The Parker-K truss is flanked by 144.5-foot Warren deck trusses. In a deck truss, the traffic travels on top of the truss and the structure is below the deck. (See figure 4.) Warren trusses have been around since 1848 and are made up of equilateral triangles, which can be further divided.

<sup>3</sup> The department name changed over the years and in 1923 became the Tennessee Department of Highways and Public Works. In 1972, it became the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

<sup>4</sup> *Carthage Courier*, "Hearing for Bridge," Vol. XXI, p. 1, 21 June 1934.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3 Hull, Cordell, Bridge  
Smith County, Tennessee

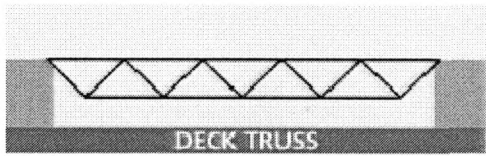


Figure 4. Typical Deck Truss.

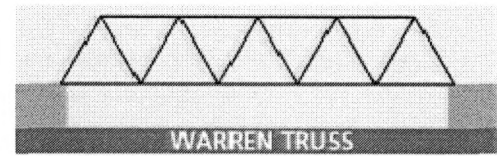
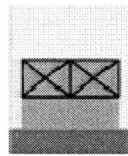


Figure 5. Typical Warren Truss.

Flanking the Warren deck trusses are six – three on each side – deck trusses that are Warren trusses with vertical end posts. The end posts are the last diagonal or vertical member at the end of a truss. In the Cordell Hull Bridge, the end posts are arranged in another variation of the Pratt truss called Petit. Petits contain panels subdivided by subdiagonals (or subties) that run from the mid-point of the main diagonals either down to the bottom chord or up to the top chord.

The *Carthage Courier* of August 9, 1934, reported that core drilling or making of “soundings” as required by the federal Government was begun by Diamond Drilling Company in July 1934. Holes were drilled 30 feet in the rock to ensure a safe foundation. Drilling was done on both sides of the river and some out in the river. The ninety holes drilled represented a depth of sounding of over 2,500 feet or about one-half mile.

When work on the bridge was completed, Chief Engineer R. B. Culbertson released figures of materials used for construction: cement 31,283 bags; re-enforcing steel 521,108 lbs.; structural steel 1,492,478 lbs.; gravel 8,665,391 lbs.; sand 5,849,921 lbs. Actual cost of construction was reported as \$199,083.39.<sup>5</sup> On May 14, 1936, the new bridge across the Cumberland at Carthage was opened to traffic. One observer commented: “The new bridge is simply a delight and it is thought that just about every automobile owner in the county has driven across and enjoyed the pleasure.”<sup>6</sup>

The Cordell Hull Bridge was rehabilitated several times. In 1961, three spans were widened. New navigation lights were added and truss spans were modified to increase vertical clearance. Floor beams and gusset plates were replaced and concrete features were repaired in 1992. In 1992-1993, new end posts and guardrails were added to the north end of the bridge. In 1997, stringer panels and ends were replaced. These changes are minor and do not impact the overall integrity of the bridge.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Carthage Courier*, “Great Day for Carthage, Smith County,” Vol. XXIII, p. 1, 21 May 1936.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> TransSystems/Lichtenstein, “Inspection Report, Cordell Hull Bridge,” 20 November 2008. Report in the possession of the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4 Hull, Cordell, Bridge  
Smith County, Tennessee

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## Statement of Significance

### Summary Paragraph

The Cordell Hull Bridge, located fifty miles east of Nashville at Carthage (2006 pop. 2251), Smith County, Tennessee, and approximately five miles directly north of US Interstate 40, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C for its local significance in transportation, politics and government, and engineering. The bridge provides transportation between the two geographical divisions of Smith County, separated by the meandering of the Cumberland River. Areas north of the river were granted easier access to major traffic routes, and southern residents could more easily come into Carthage, the county seat. The unique bridge serves as a reminder of benefits brought to most towns and communities in Tennessee as a result of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs. The continuous through and deck truss design, with six simple deck trusses, is representative of the type of bridge engineering that was prevalent among state highway departments in the 1920s and 1930s. Although extensive repairs were made in 1992-1993 to the Cordell Hull Bridge, the basic engineering techniques of the structure retain their integrity.

### Background

The majestic Cumberland River – an integral part of Smith County's heritage - flows southwesterly from Kentucky past the Cordell Hull Bridge continuing across Middle Tennessee before turning northward again into Kentucky and draining into the Ohio River. Native Americans roamed its banks for thousands of years; then came the long hunters, the pioneers, and the river men. By 1799 mass migrations from the original colonial states contributed to a population explosion in the areas east of the early settlements around Fort Nashborough. A petition signed by the early settlers was submitted to the state legislature "begging leave to state the hardships of attending courts and other 'Public Meetings' at a distance of sixty or seventy miles."<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, on October 26, 1799, the new county of Smith was created. The boundaries encompassed territory on both the north and south sides of the Cumberland River. Following a heated election fueled by a generous supply of whiskey furnished by his supporters, Col. William Walton whose land lay on the north side at his ferry, was victorious over candidates of other sections of the county. The new town, to be called Carthage, was laid out in 1805 on a knoll overlooking the Cumberland and became the focal point of the county. The river served as the "highway" for both trade and travel. Farmers shipped and received goods from distant markets by way of flat boats, keel boats, and rafts. Farm products that were transported consisted of tobacco, cotton, pelts, corn whiskey; among exotic goods received at the Carthage port were "brown sugar, molasses, coffee, and a thousand tropical smells to the square inch."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Sue W. Maggart and Nina R. Sutton, ed., *Smith County History*, Curtis Media Corp., Dallas, TX, 1986, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 12-13.



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5 Hull, Cordell, Bridge  
Smith County, Tennessee

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Transportation across the river at Carthage was imperative for citizens residing in the southern portion of the county. Their attendance was demanded at militia drills, court proceedings, and business transactions. When the railroad rumbled into southern Smith County in the late 1880s, a spur line was constructed to the south bank of the river. Passengers and merchants in Carthage and areas to the north had to cross the river to gain access to the improved method of transportation. Competition was fierce among the three ferries – lower, middle, and upper - that were licensed for crossing the river. One ferryman obviously expected to get an edge on the other two ferries with the following ad he placed in the local paper: “The fine Von-Tromp race horses are being kept at my ferry opposite Carthage – any mare in need of breeding may be ferried for free.”<sup>10</sup>

By 1902 Smith County court members were tentatively investigating the necessity and cost of building a bridge across the river at Carthage. However, a roll call vote resulted in 12 for and 28 against the measure.<sup>11</sup> In 1903 the proposition of building a bridge was submitted to popular vote: results 50 for, 1473 against the measure.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, after much wrangling between county and city officials, a private organization, Williams-Myer Bridge Company, was formed in 1906 and construction began on a bridge to cross the Cumberland River at Carthage to be operated as a toll bridge.<sup>13</sup> The bridge was ultimately purchased in 1927 by the Tennessee State Highway Department and Smith County and opened to the public as a free bridge.<sup>14</sup> A “picnic” was held on the courthouse lawn in celebration of the event.

An important change in the bridge building industry occurred with the Federal Aid Act of 1916. Until that time, many bridges were built by private companies. The Federal Aid Act required oversight in order for states to receive funding for bridges and, as a result, by 1917 every state had a highway department.<sup>15</sup> By the 1920s, state highway departments were doing more design and oversight of bridges than individual companies.

## The New Deal

By the early 1930s Smith countians were actively seeking the means to fund a new bridge over the Cumberland River to replace an antiquated toll bridge that had served the county since 1908.

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> “*Smith County Minute Book*, July Term, 1902, p. 67.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, July Term, 1903, p. 246.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 11, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 14, January Term, 1927, pp. 489-491.

<sup>15</sup> Carver, 158.

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Smith County, Tennessee

Traffic was said to be heavier on this old bridge than on any other across the Cumberland above Nashville.<sup>16</sup>

Replacement of the old bridge that was originally built for horse and buggy traffic was a matter of serious concern in the early 1930s. However, Tennessee and Smith County, along with the remainder of the country, was in the midst of the Great Depression, and funding for a bridge was not available. Thousands saw their savings disappear overnight as banks across the state failed. Unemployment in the private sector began to rise quickly, reaching an estimated 25 to 30 percent. All segments of the economy were in steep decline; 578 businesses failed in 1932 alone, and farm products declined from \$313 million in 1929 to a mere \$132 million in 1932.<sup>17</sup>

The country was ready for a change from the Republican administration, and at the Democratic Convention in Chicago in 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt was nominated by the party for president of the United States. In his acceptance speech, Roosevelt stated "I pledge myself to a new deal for the American people." As outlined by the newly elected president in 1933, the New Deal was to be an organized form of self-help for all classes and groups and sections of the country.<sup>18</sup>

Organized in 1933 under Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act, the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (PWA) placed emphasis on various projects such as road construction, bridges, dams, and housing developments. The goals of the PWA were primarily to put people to work to stimulate the depressed construction industry. Tennessee was allocated almost \$9.5 million in federal funds in June 1933. Many of the specified projects, especially roads and bridges were linked to improving farm markets and access to markets. Certainly, a new bridge over the Cumberland River at Carthage satisfied this criterion because trucks heavily laden with farm products could not safely cross the old toll bridge that was never built to accommodate vehicles of this size and weight.<sup>19</sup>

From the federal allocation to Tennessee, Smith County was granted funds for repair work on State Route 24 to Wilson County and for Carthage city streets. County and city officials, citing the desperate situation of the bridge over the Cumberland River in Smith County, requested that the funds be applied to that purpose rather than road repair. The federal authorities were adamant in their determination that the money be used as appropriated. Former Carthage resident, Secretary of State (1933-1944) Cordell Hull, was aware of the critical situation, and, along with the support of Governor Hill McAlister, intervened to have the funds diverted for construction of a new bridge. Of the estimated cost of \$200,000, \$150,000 was to come from the federal funds and the remainder from the state. At the April Term, 1934, the Smith County Court finally got moving and appropriated \$6,500 for purchase of a right-of-way.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Carthage Courier*, "Smith County Court Makes Appropriation for Bridge," Vol. XXI., p. 1, 5 April 1934.

<sup>17</sup> Carroll Van West, *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape*, The University of Tennessee Press/Knoxville, 2001, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Evan Cornog and Richard Whelan, *Hats in the Ring*, Random House, Inc., NY, NY, 2000, p. 212.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid* 18, p. 151.

<sup>20</sup> *Carthage Courier*, "Purchase of Right-of-Way for Bridge," Vol. XXI, p. 1, 5 Apr 1934.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7 Hull, Cordell, Bridge  
Smith County, Tennessee

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The Tennessee Department of Highways and Public Works designed the bridge. The National Re-Employment Service gave notice that a registration for employment on the bridge would be held at the courthouse in Carthage on November 14 and 15, 1934. Seventy-five per cent of the employees were to be from Smith County; land owners and employed people were told not to register.<sup>21</sup>

## Cordell Hull Bridge

The survey for the new bridge to be constructed across the Cumberland River at Carthage was completed in the latter part of 1933. The approach on the Carthage side as selected by the court-appointed committee was located at the old Benton McMillan (former governor of Tennessee) home on South Main Street, and the opposite approach was at the highest point of State Route 24 under the bluff. It passed over the Carthage Depot (since moved to the forks of State Route 24 and Gordonsville Highway [State Route 53]). The bridge was two-tenths of a mile above the old toll structure.

Core drilling, necessary for a bridge of this length, was completed in July 1934. Not only the state's highway department but also two federal agencies – US Bureau of Public Roads and the US War Department – participated in the work. A special act of Congress for construction of a bridge over a navigable stream was required. The next step was the preparation of tentative plans by the Department of Highways and Public Works to be submitted and approved by the US Bureau of Public Roads. Next, a formal hearing by the US War Department gave any interested parties the opportunity to object to the building project. No serious objections were received.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, the highway department was set to go forward to award a contract. The Vincennes Steel (Bridge) Corporation of Vincennes, Indiana, was selected to do the work. The company was established in 1898 by Frank L. and John P. Oliphant and Jacob Riddle. Initially, the company made structural steel for bridges and until the 1920s primarily worked on small I-beam span bridges or pony truss bridges. The Vincennes Bridge Company worked mainly in Illinois and Indiana but had worked in twenty-seven states. Although generally still called the Vincennes Bridge Company, the name was changed in 1932 to Vincennes Steel Corporation. In addition to the Cordell Hull Bridge, there are at least eight other bridges in Tennessee that the company built.<sup>23</sup>

Actual construction began on December 4, 1934, when sixteen men began moving equipment onto the site and building a track for a pile-driving machine. Once the equipment was in place, work went forward quickly in spite of cold winds, sleet, and snow. Probably not officially approved by the state engineers, a large conveying cable was constructed across the river. The innovative

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, "Job Registration to be Held," Vol. XXII, p. 1, 8 Nov 1934.

<sup>22</sup> *Carthage Courier*, "Drilling for Carthage Bridge," Vol. XXI, p. 1, 12 July 1934

<sup>23</sup> Carver, p. 214-215.

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 8 Hull, Cordell, Bridge  
Smith County, Tennessee

contraption, one observer noted, resembled the old water telegraph system which was operated by a wire being strung from the residence upon the hill to a spring in the hollow and the water bucket being caused to travel to and from the spring on the wire.<sup>24</sup>

Local residents were in awe as massive amounts of steel and concrete rose above the Cumberland. A writer to the *Carthage Courier* expressed the opinion of many: "No, the bridge is not as large as the Brooklyn Bridge that has a center span of 1595 feet, but the work is just as hazardous. Workers have to crawl over the steel work like squirrels hopping from limb to limb in the treetop." One man lost his life when a piece of timber fell several feet, striking him on the side, causing internal injuries.<sup>25</sup>

In August 1935, by Special Act of the State Legislature, House Bill No. 81, sponsored by Representative I. D. Beasley of Carthage, the bridge was named in honor of Cordell Hull.<sup>26</sup> Hull was a former Carthage attorney, judge, congressman, and senator. Hull's influence helped secure funding for the bridge through federal appropriations instigated by Roosevelt's New Deal programs.

The Veteran's Memorial Bridge, constructed one-half mile upstream from the Cordell Hull Bridge, opened to traffic July 24, 1991. Federal regulations stipulate that when federal funds are used to construct a replacement bridge, the older structure needs to be removed from public service as a vehicular road. Interested citizens and local officials began holding "save the bridge" meetings as early as 1988 and deemed the bridge worthy of saving. In 1992 a special federal appropriation was secured for repairs by Senator Al Gore. A contract was let to Mid-South Construction Company, Inc., of Livingston, Tennessee, that included concrete and deck repairs, sand blasting, painting and rail repair.<sup>27</sup> The bridge was closed in October 1992 and reopened in September 1993. "Bathed in a new coat of meadow green, blending naturally with the scenic Cumberland River and towering hills to the south, the bridge was resplendent with its 'new look,' yet maintaining the integrity of its original construction."<sup>28</sup>

Despite the extensive repairs of 1992-1993, Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) Chief Engineer Paul Degges, after careful inspection in December 2007, declared the bridge unsafe for traffic. The inspection revealed problems in 128 joints. Repairs would include but are not limited to joint repair and a new deck. The necessary funds needed have yet to be appropriated. Consequently, the Cordell Hull Bridge is presently closed. TDOT Commissioner Gerald F. Nicely and Engineer Degges are in agreement with local officials that the bridge is worthy of rehabilitation.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Carthage Courier*, "Bridge Building," Vol. II, p. 1, 16 May 1935.

<sup>25</sup> *Carthage Courier*, "Work Progressing Nicely on Bridge," Vol. XXIII, p. 1, 5 Dec 1935.

<sup>26</sup> *Carthage Courier*, "Bridge Named in Honor of Cordell Hull," Vol. XXII, p. 1, 8 August 1935.

<sup>27</sup> *Carthage Courier*, "Bridge Repairs Settled with Contract Proposal," Vol. 80, No. 31, p. 1, 30 July 1993.

<sup>28</sup> *Carthage Courier*, "Bridge Reopens with New Look after Repairs," Vol 80, No. 85, p.1, 2 September 1993.

<sup>29</sup> Minutes of Meeting: Smith County, Carthage, South Carthage and TDOT officials, 6 February 2008.

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## Verbal boundary description and justification

The Cordell Hull Bridge is located in Carthage, Smith County, Tennessee, at the termination of State Route 25/Main Street. The bridge spans the Cumberland River and connects with State Route 24/US Highway 70N. U S Interstate 40 is located approximately 5 miles south of the bridge. The nominated boundaries include the length and width of the bridge, concrete substructure, and concrete approach spans. This boundary includes all of the historic resource.

0  266 ft 



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## **Photographs**

Photos by:\* Martha Carver, TDOT  
Date: March 2008  
Digital image: Tennessee Historical Commission

\*Photos 17 and 18 by Sue Maggart-Petty, May 2009  
Photo 21 by George Hornel, TDOT

Bridge, view to southwest  
1 of 21

Bridge, view to west  
2 of 21

Deck truss, view to northwest  
3 of 21

Deck truss detail, view to northwest  
4 of 21

Detail of bents, view to northwest  
5 of 21

Bridge, oblique view to northwest  
6 of 21

Deck truss detail, view to northwest  
7 of 21

Deck truss detail, view to west  
8 of 21

Rail and deck truss details, view to north  
9 of 21

Deck truss, view to north  
10 of 21

East end of bridge, view to northwest  
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Deck truss, view to northwest  
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Oblique view to northwest  
13 of 21

Bridge, view through to east  
14 of 21

Bridge, view through to east  
15 of 21

Truss details, view to northeast  
16 of 21

Bridge, view to northeast  
17 of 21

Bridge, view to southwest  
18 of 21

Bridge elevation, view to northeast  
19 of 21

Bridge elevation, view to northeast  
20 of 21

Overhead view of bridge  
21 of 21

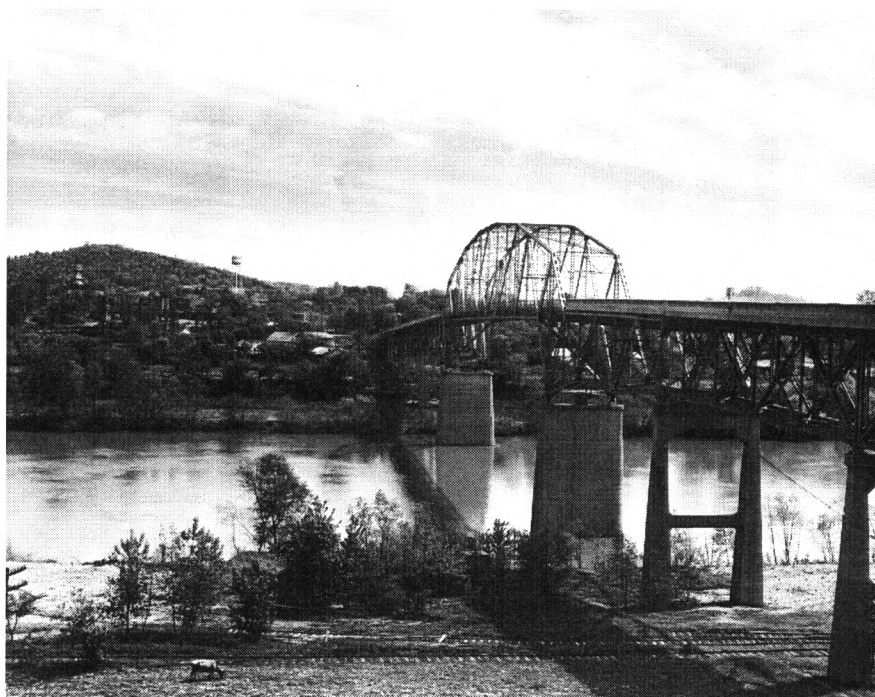


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Figure 6. Two views of Cordell Hull Bridge taken on April 27, 1941. Dept. of Conservation Photograph Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives, <http://tnsos.org/tsla/imagesearch/>, accessed 10 July 2009.



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Figure 7. Views of Cordell Hull Bridge taken on October 14, 1950. Dept. of Conservation Photograph Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives, <http://tnsos.org/tsla/imagesearch/>, accessed 10 July 2009.

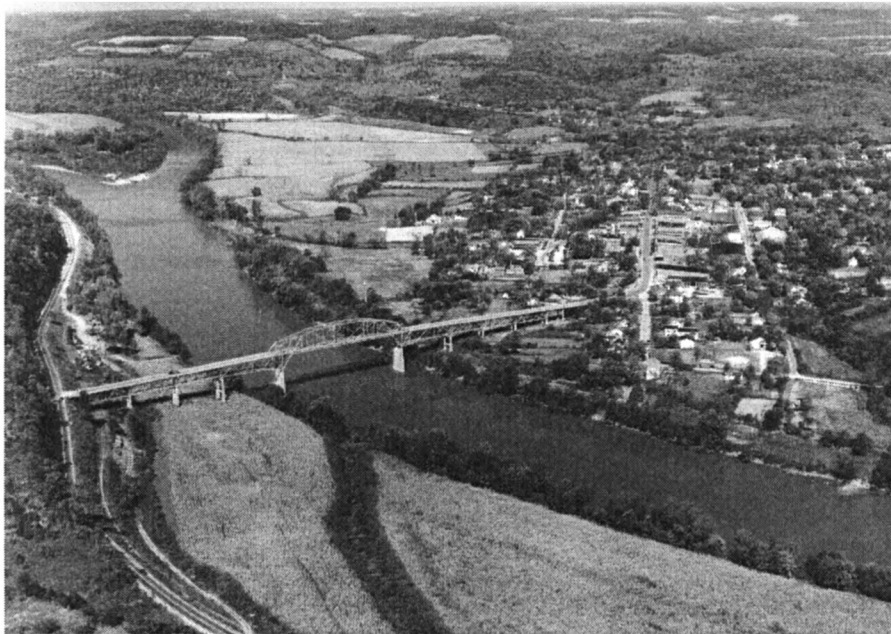


Figure 8. Undated postcard of bridge from the collection of Martha Carver.

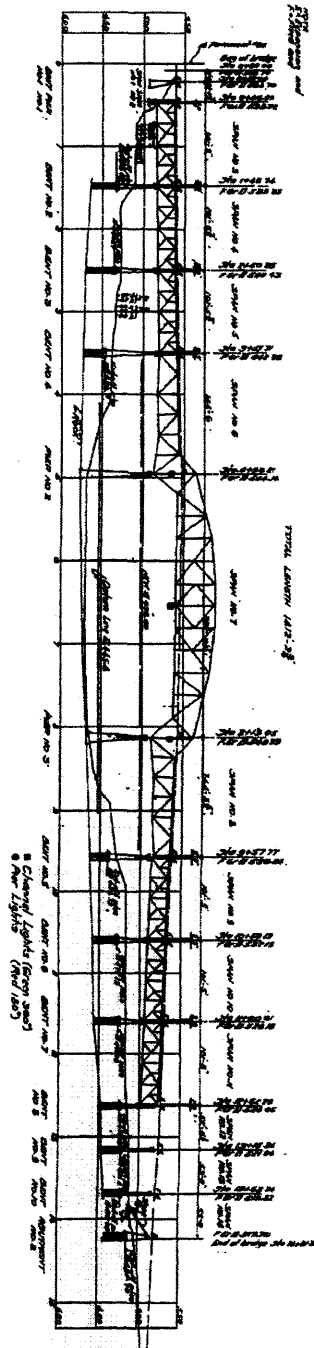


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**GENERAL ELEVATION**



Cordell Hull Bridge

5

TDOT 2008

Figure 9. Cordell Hull Bridge.