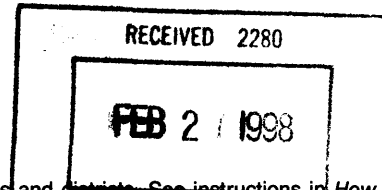


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 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 Levert - St. John Bridge

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number O'Neal Boudreaux Rd. near La. Hwy. 347 N/A  not for publication

city or town St. Martinville  vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county St. Martin code 099 zip code 70582

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.)

*Terri Hobdy* February 13, 1998  
Signature of certifying official/Title Terri Hobdy, Date  
LA SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism  
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 commenting 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:)

*Robert W. Beall* Signature of the Keeper  
3/26/98 Date of Action

Levert - St. John Bridge  
Name of Property

St. Martin Parish, LA  
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	
_____	_____	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 / rail-related  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Transportation / road-related  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

Other: Warren through truss swing span  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation wood  
walls N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof N/A  
other steel  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Levert-St. John Bridge, St. Martin Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 1

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The Levert-St. John Bridge is a single-lane vehicular bridge which crosses Bayou Teche at O'Neal Boudreaux Road between the small rural communities of Levert and St. John, near St. Martinville. All available evidence points to an 1895 construction date for the bridge and a 1900 date for its erection in the present location. The bridge's historic appearance is clearly evident, as it has undergone only one major alteration--an asphalt overlay which allowed the change of the bridge's use from rail to vehicular traffic. The wooden pilings on which the bridge trusses rest have been replaced over the years through routine maintenance. The swing-span bridge is a two-span riveted Warren through truss with verticals.

The Levert-St. John bridge was erected at the request of J.B. Levert, the owner of St. John Plantation, located on the bayou's east bank just south of the bridge. A January 1908 contract indicates that in 1900 Levert asked the Morgan's Louisiana & Texas Railroad & Steamship Company to extend their tracks across Bayou Teche for his "convenience and benefit"--to service his sugar refinery operation which was located on the bank of the bayou. An earlier agreement with the rail company had allowed tracks to be constructed on Levert's plantation property for the benefit of the railroad.

Levert purchased and erected the bridge crossing the bayou and the rail company then laid the tracks, providing materials and labor. According to Levert's contract with the rail company, the bridge was erected in 1900; a plate which forms part of the portal bracing indicates a presumable construction date of 1895.

Levert's plantation and sugar operation, the Levert-St. John Company, was founded in 1880 and became a strong player in the local economy. Levert himself served as president of the Louisiana Sugar Exchange in the 1880s and was recognized in 1892 as "one of the prominent and leading men of the new South."

The bridge is 264 feet long and 14.7 feet wide, allowing for only one lane of traffic. It is composed of two Warren trusses and a center component of generally rectangular shape, which allows for operation of the "swing-span" aspect of the bridge; as wedges are removed from the four corners of the bridge, the bridge can rise from its original level and swing open, allowing the passage of water traffic. In its open position, the bridge allows unlimited vertical clearance and approximately 50 feet of horizontal clearance. Due to increasing difficulty in opening the span, however, the bridge has been opened only two times in the past ten years.

CONTINUED

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Leverst-St. John Bridge, St. Martin Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 2

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According to one source, the asphalt overlay of the bridge apparently occurred in the late 1950s, when the sugar mill ceased utilizing the railroad as a means of cane transportation. The St. John Mill may have been the last sugar mill to use rail transport.

Each of the bridge's two Warren trusses are composed of four panels which exhibit a pattern of diagonal and vertical bracing. The smaller vertical members are solid pieces, while the diagonal members are reinforced with single bar lacing. The center component is also reinforced with single bar lacing, as are the top lateral braces of the Warren trusses. The bridge features inclined end posts, which are more common than vertical end posts in the Warren truss design.

**Assessment of Integrity:** Alterations to the Leverst-St. John Bridge have been limited to an asphalt overlay of the bridge to modify its usage. As the oldest known bridge in Louisiana, as well as the only known bridge of its type in the state, the Leverst-St. John Bridge retains sufficient integrity and significance to warrant candidacy for the National Register.

**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 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**

1895, 1900

**Significant Dates**

1895, 1900

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**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:

Levert - St. John Bridge  
Name of Property

St. Martin Parish, LA  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less than one acre

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 0 |  
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 National Register staff  
organization Division of Historic Preservation date November 1997  
street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone 504-342-8160  
city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

### 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 St. Martin Parish Police Jury  
street & number P. O. Box 9 telephone 318-394-3711  
city or town St. Martinville state LA zip code 70582

**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.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Levert-St. John Bridge, St. Martin Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

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The Levert-St. John Bridge is of state significance in the area of engineering as the only known surviving example of a recognized historic bridge type. It is also significant in terms of state transportation history because it is the oldest known bridge in the state, according to the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development.

The Levert-St. John Bridge is the only known Warren truss swing-span bridge in the state according to the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, which is evidence of its significance to the field of engineering in the state. Warren truss bridges utilizing riveted construction and vertical members became an adopted standard for the railroad industry in the early 1900s and represent the most common form of Warren truss. The simple design, which originally featured only equilateral triangles in the web, was developed by British engineers and patented in 1848 (the truss is named for engineer James Warren). Although the Warren truss was used in the design of railroad bridges more than road bridges, it was nevertheless also embraced for its efficiency, since this design required less steel than one of primarily vertical posts. However, vertical members may be added to provide further bracing for the Warren's triangular web system, as is the case with the Levert-St. John Bridge. The truss design is also noted for its use of diagonal members which withstand both tensile and compressive forces. This historic design's simplicity and success has allowed it to continue to be used by engineers in modern bridge design.

The bridge's significance also must be assessed within the overall history of bridge construction in Louisiana. The use of bridges as the principal form of traversing waterways came to the state comparatively late. In fact, very few bridges existed in Louisiana until 1924, when the Louisiana Department of Highways began to replace ferry services. Prior to that time, Louisiana's waterways were crossed principally by boat. Sixteen bridges known to have been constructed prior to 1920 still exist; of these, only the Levert-St. John Bridge was built prior to 1910. Clearly, the fact that the construction of this bridge pre-dates that of all of Louisiana's historic bridges by at least 10 years sets it apart in its significance to the history of bridge construction in Louisiana.

Recent local efforts have prevented the removal and replacement of the Levert-St. John Bridge, prompting the Department of Transportation and Development to modify the plan through the construction of a new bridge slightly more than one-half mile upstream from the current bridge. The current bridge will be closed to vehicular traffic and opened for pedestrian use only; the responsibility of the bridge's maintenance has been transferred to the St. Martin Parish Police Jury, with the St. Martin Historic District Commission acting as an oversight authority for the bridge's preservation.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Levert-St. John Bridge, St. Martin Parish, LA

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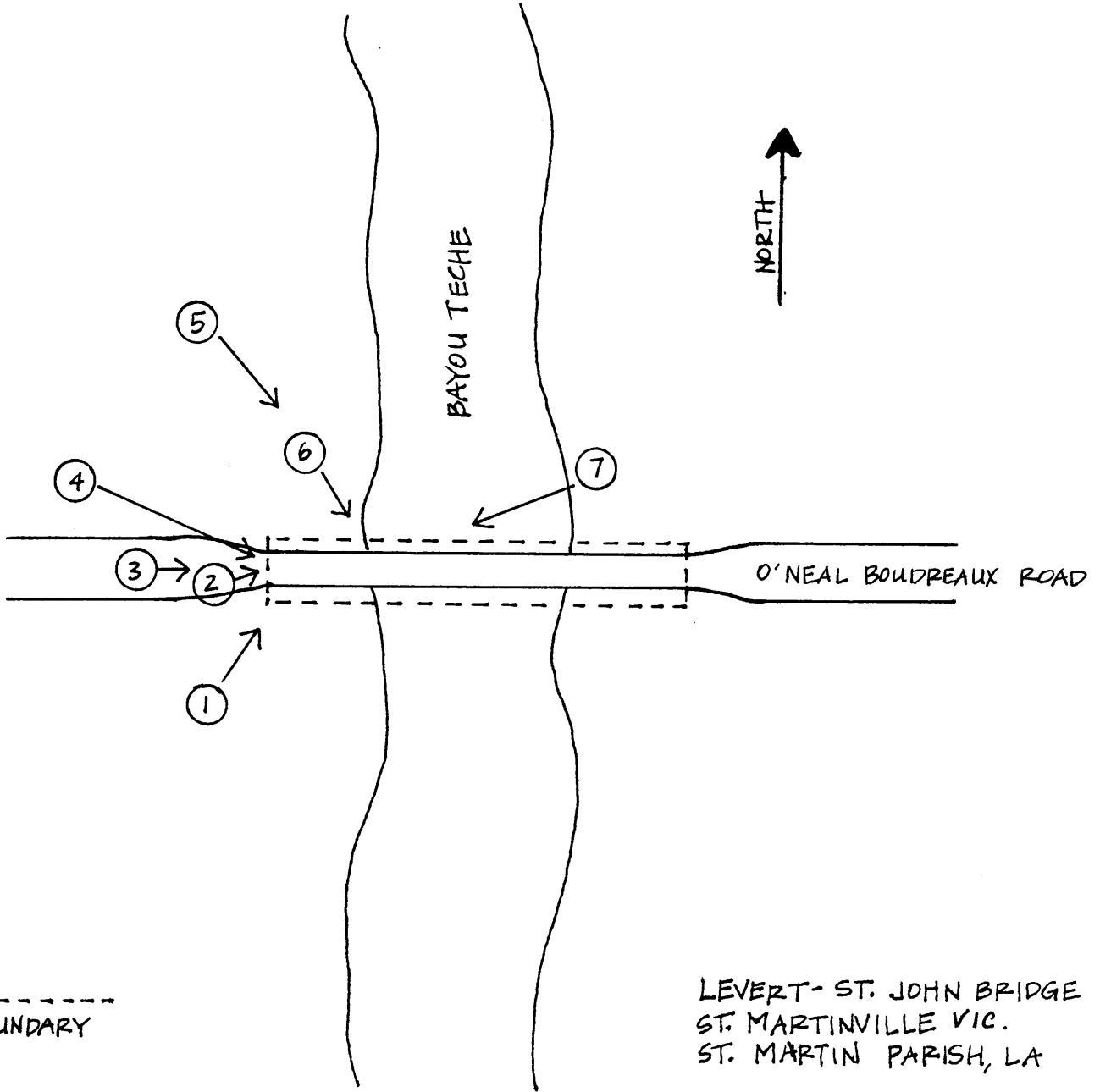
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Weitzman, David. *Traces of the Past: A Field Guide to Industrial Archaeology*. New York: Scribner, 1980.

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Boundary Description: Please refer to enclosed sketch map.

Justification: Boundaries were chosen to discretely encompass the nominated bridge.





LEVERT-ST. JOHN BRIDGE  
ST. MARTINVILLE VIC.  
ST. MARTIN PARISH, LA

1" = 100'