

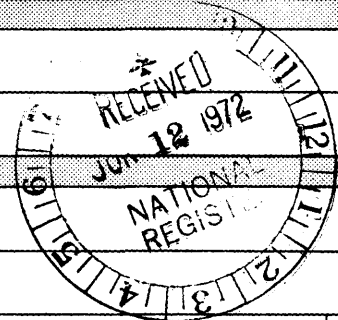
1/20/77

PH0020931

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

| | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| STATE: Alabama | |
| COUNTY: Marengo | |
| FOR NRS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER 14 SEP 1972 | DATE |



1. NAME

COMMON:
Half-Chance Bridge

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Section 32, T16N, R4E

CITY OR TOWN:
Near Dayton

STATE: Alabama CODE: 01 COUNTY: Marengo CODE: 091

3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY (Check One) | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC |
|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both | Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered | <input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate) | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Park after restoration</u> |
| | | | Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No |

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Marengo County

STREET AND NUMBER:
County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN: Linden STATE: Alabama CODE: 01

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Marengo County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Linden STATE: Alabama CODE: 01

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Alabama

COUNTY: Marengo

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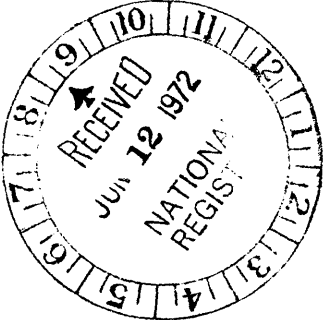
7. DESCRIPTION

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One) | | | | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Good | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins | <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed |
| | (Check One) | | | (Check One) | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Altered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered | | <input type="checkbox"/> Moved | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Half-Chance Bridge is a single span wrought iron arch on Marengo County Road 39 near Dayton. The main arch span of the bridge is 100 feet while the overall length including approaches is 217 feet. The bridge is 12 feet wide and the roadbed is twenty-eight feet above the waters of the Chickasaw Bogue Creek. The wooden plant roadbed is suspended from the overhead arches by seven iron tension rods in a bowstring type pattern on each side. Three iron crossbeams support the arches at and near their vertex. The abutments supporting the arches each consist of two thirty inch steel columns. The approaches consist of a wooden roadbed over an iron pony truss.

The bridge is located in a scenic rustic setting surrounded by large hardwood trees and slightly rolling hills. After restoration, Half-Chance Bridge will become the focal point of a historic-recreational facility.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Half-Chance Bridge, the oldest iron bridge in Alabama, is a significant transportation and engineering landmark. It is one of the Lower South's few remaining examples of a bridge design style which prevailed in the 1860-1890 period. The Half-Chance Bridge was built before 1880 by the King Iron Bridge Manufacturing Company of Cleveland, Ohio with angles made in Trenton, New Jersey.

This landmark is located in Marengo County which is a part of the Black Belt section of Alabama. This rich belt of dark soil which forms a ribbon across the center of the state was the heart of the "Cotton Kingdom" when this crop was the principal source of wealth in the South. The region around the confluence of the Tombigbee and Black Warrior rivers in Marengo County has been historically known as the "Canebreak" and is an area of unusually rich and lush river bottomland. The town of Linden, one of the terminal points of the Half-Chance Road, was settled by some of the French Napoleonic exiles who had originally established the short-lived Vine and Olive colony at Demopolis in 1817. Linden was first called Hohenlinden after one of Napoleon's victories. The county itself is named for his great Italian victory over the Austrians. The leader of the Vine and Olive colony was General Count Charles Lefebvre Desnonettes who had been Napoleon's aide-de-camp at Marengo and who had rode with the general during the bitter retreat from Moscow. The French attempted to cultivate grapes and olives at Demopolis, however, the climate was unsuitable and the noblemen were not experienced at common labor. The colony failed and many of the exiles returned to France but they left a lasting legacy of culture and gentility to the county.

The towns of Dayton at the northeast end of Half-Chance Road was primarily a settlement of wealthy planters. Many fine antebellum structures survive there.

Iron bridges date back only to 1779 when Abraham Darby and John Wilkinson constructed a cast iron bridge over the river Severn at Coalbrookdale, England utilizing a design by Thomas Farnells Pritchard. The first wrought iron bridge was not erected until 1808 when Bruyere constructed a footbridge over the river Crou at St. Denis, France. The first heavy weight bearing wrought iron bridge constructed was a railroad bridge in Switzerland built in 1853.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Reeves, Jesse S., The Napoleonic Exiles in America, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965.

Smith, H. S., The World's Great Bridges, New York, Harper and Row, 1965.

Smith, Winston, Days of Exile, Tuscaloosa, W. B. Drake and Son, 1967.

Steinman, D. B. and Watson, S.R., Bridges and Their Builders, New York, G. P. Putman's Sons, 1941

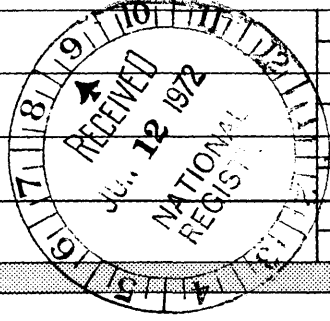
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY | | | O R | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|---|-----------|---------|
| CORNER | LATITUDE | LONGITUDE | | LATITUDE | LONGITUDE | |
| | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds | | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds |
| NW | ° ' " | ° ' " | | 32° | 18' | 41" |
| NE | ° ' " | ° ' " | | 87° | 41' | 58" |
| SE | ° ' " | ° ' " | | | | |
| SW | ° ' " | ° ' " | | | | |

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **Less than 1**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|--------|------|--------|------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **W. Warner Floyd**

ORGANIZATION: **Alabama Historical Commission** DATE: **May 26, 1972**

STREET AND NUMBER: **305 South Lawrence Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Montgomery** STATE: **Alabama** CODE: **01**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name <u>Milo B. Howard Jr.</u></p> <p>Title <u>SLO</u></p> <p>Date <u>May 26, 1972</u></p> | <p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Roberton Utley</u> Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date <u>9/14/72</u></p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date <u>9/13/72</u></p> |
|--|--|

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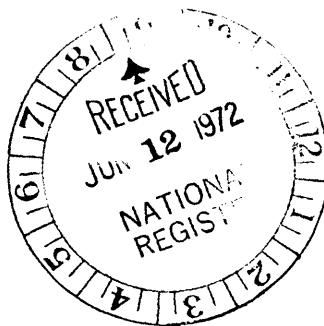
SIGNIFICANCE

The first cast iron arch bridge in America was constructed at Brownsville, Pennsylvania in 1836 over Dunlap Creek. This 80' span was designed by Captain Richard Delafield of the U. S. Corps of Engineers.

Timber was the primary American bridge construction material until 1860. Between 1860 and 1880 many cast and wrought iron bridges were built including the Half-Chance Bridge in Marengo, County, Alabama. After 1880 most bridges were made of steel and still later, concrete. Most of the iron bridges were replaced or by-passed. The Half-Chance Bridge is one of the few surviving iron bridges in Alabama. It served nobly for many decades as an important link of the transportation system of Marengo County connecting cotton plantations and timberlands with market-places via road, river, and rail.

The bridge, spanning Chickasaw Bogue derives its name from the community called Half-Chance.

The Alabama Historical Commission will restore this transportation landmark, in cooperation with the American Society of Civil Engineers, (Alabama Section.)



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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Smith, Winston, A Brief History of Marengo County, published in Marengo County Courthouse Dedication Book, 1968.

Summersell, C. G. Alabama, Montgomery, Viewpoint Publications, 1970.

Tyrell, H. G., History of Bridge Engineering, Chicago, G. B. Williams Co., 1911.

