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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Little Nemaha River Bridge  
other name/site number NEHBS Number OT00-89

2. Location

street & number county road over the Little Nemaha River N/A not for publication  
city, town 1.8 miles northwest of Dunbar X vicinity  
state NE county Otoe code 131 zip code 68346

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Otoe County	Number of Resources within Property	
Category of Property	structure	Contributing	Noncontributing
		0	0 buildings
		0	0 sites
		1	0 structures
		0	0 objects
		1	0 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Highway Bridges in Nebraska, 1870-1942

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.

*Bob Hirschman*  
Signature of certifying official  
Nebraska State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5/6/92  
Date

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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:)

*Melvin Byers*  
Entered in the National Register  
6/29/92

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Function (enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related

Current Function (enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/not in use

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

OTHER /bowstring pony arch-truss

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation	N/A
walls	N/A
roof	N/A
other	N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located 1.8 miles northwest of Dunbar, the Little Nemaha River Bridge spans the Little Nemaha River in a rural Otoe County setting. Now closed to vehicular traffic, the Little Nemaha River Bridge today retains a high degree of integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. A description of the structure follows:

span number:	1	construction date:	1874
span length:	70.0'	construction cost:	\$4445 (three iron spans)
total length:	95.0'	current condition:	good
roadway wdt.:	16.0'	alterations:	moved

superstructure: wrought iron, 6-panel, bowstring pony arch-truss with steel stringer approach span  
substructure: steel pile bent abutments and pier  
floor/decking: timber decking over steel stringers  
other features: upper chord: four plates riveted to form box beam; lower chord: rods continuous through panel points; vertical: 2 star irons with threaded ends; diagonal: round bars with threaded ends; lateral bracing: round bars with threaded ends; floor beam: I-beam; guardrail: missing; builder's plate: PATD.BY MILLER JUNE 7. 1870 BUCKEYE BRIDGE WORKS CLEVELAND O.; star iron outrider with S curve at alternating panel points.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

	statewide
Applicable National Register Criteria	C
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)	B
Areas of Significance	Engineering
Period of Significance	1874 (The period of significance is derived from the original construction date.)
Significant Dates	1874
Cultural Affiliation	N/A
Significant Person	N/A
Architect/Builder (Designer)	Buckeye Bridge Works, Cleveland OH
(Fabricator)	Buckeye Bridge Works, Cleveland OH
(Builder)	Buckeye Bridge Works, Cleveland OH

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State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations and areas of significance noted above.

Located about two miles northwest of Dunbar, this small-scale bowstring spans the Little Nemaha River on a vacated section of county road. The structure consists of a six-panel bowstring arch-truss, flanked by steel stringer approach spans and supported by steel pile bents. Otoe County acquired this iron span from the Buckeye Bridge Company as part of a multiple-bridge purchase in 1874. That June the county supervisors received competitive proposals for three iron spans to replace earlier bridges washed out by spring flooding. One span would be located south of Syracuse, one over Russell Creek, and the third over Muddy Creek. The supervisors contracted with Buckeye for the superstructures (based on the design patented in 1870 by M. Miller, one of the firm's proprietors; total cost for the three: \$4445) and with a local contractor named McCampbell to build the substructures for \$114. Three weeks later the supervisors ordered a fourth span from Buckeye, using the same design as the previous three, to be located over Spring Creek near Dunbar. The Little Nemaha River Bridge has been moved to this location, but it is not known from which of these four original sites it came. Today the bridge and the section of county road it carries have been bypassed by another, newer nearby span. The timber deck is in deteriorating condition, but the iron stringers appear to be original, and the iron span itself remains well-preserved.

Reportedly incorporated in 1872 by Miller and Jamieson, the Buckeye Bridge Company was a small operator compared with its giant neighbor, the King Iron Bridge Company. Nevertheless, this early bridge erector marketed its patented bowstring arch-truss design - with its distinctive box beam arch configuration - throughout the Midwest. Buckeye did not build extensively in Nebraska, in fact, this medium-span pony truss is apparently the only remaining span in the state fabricated by the Cleveland-based firm. Although once moved and now abandoned, this bridge is technologically significant as one of the last remaining examples in Nebraska of what was once a mainstay structural type in the 1870s, 1880s and early 1890s: the bowstring arch-truss. The oldest vehicular span identified in Nebraska, it is therefore one of the most important. The bridge, moreover, has functioned in place at its current site for more than 50 years, and has developed a sense of time and place.

Because this bridge has been moved since its period of significance, Criteria Consideration B has been applied. Significant under Criterion C for its engineering value, the structure still retains the essential technological features that make it a good representative example of its type, period and method of construction.

For further contextual information regarding bridge building in Nebraska, registration requirements, and property types, see related multiple property listing "Highway Bridges in Nebraska, 1870 - 1942."

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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Nebraska Department of Roads, Structure Inventory and Appraisal: Structure Number C006631625; builder's plate; Proceedings of the Otoe County Commissioners, on file in the Otoe County Courthouse, Nebraska City, Nebraska, refer to the following entries in book 1: 2 November 1869, (page 436); 12 February 1870, (page 475); 1 March 1870, (page 480-481); 4 April 1870, (page 489); 3 May 1870, (page 495); 3 December 1870, (page 540); field inspection by Clayton Fraser, 14 November 1989.

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet

**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 (specify repository):

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property    less than one acre  
Cadastral Reference    S11, T8N, R12E  
USGS Quadrangle        Dunbar (7.5 Minute Series, 1966)  
UTM References         zone 14    easting 749730    northing 4507520

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is a rectangular shaped parcel measuring 95 feet by 18 feet, which is centered on the UTM point listed above. Included within this rectangular parcel are the bridge's superstructure, substructure, floor system, and approach spans.

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated structure includes the bridge's superstructure, substructure, floor system, any approach spans and the property on which they rest. These boundaries encompass, but do not exceed, all of the property that has been historically associated with this bridge.

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title	Clayton B. Fraser, Principal	date	30 June 1991
organization	Fraserdesign and Hess, Roise and Company	telephone	303-669-7969
street & number	1269 Cleveland Avenue	state	Colorado
city or town	Loveland	zip code	80537

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