Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

PH0695297

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
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DATE ENTERED AUG 13 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC: Overseas Highway and Railway Bridges
#1 Long Key Bridge #2 Knight Key Bridge
#3 Old Bahia Honda Bridge

AND/OR COMMON: #2 Sevenmile Bridge

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: #1-U.S. Highway 1 between Long Key and Conch Key
#2-U.S. Highway 1 between Knight Key and Little Duck Key
#3-U.S. Highway 1 between Bahia Honda Key and Spanish Harbor Key
__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: N/A __ VICINITY OF
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 15

STATE: Florida CODE: 12 COUNTY: Monroe CODE: 087

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	X PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
__BUILDING(S)	__PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
X STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	__YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	X TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: Florida Department of Transportation ✓

STREET & NUMBER: Burns Building

CITY, TOWN: Tallahassee __ VICINITY OF
STATE: Florida 32304

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET & NUMBER:

CITY, TOWN: Key West
STATE: Florida

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE:

DATE:

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

CITY, TOWN:
STATE:

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	X UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
X GOOD	__RUINS	__ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

#1 Long Key Bridge:

The Long Key Bridge, ninety-five miles southwest of Miami, connects Long Key with Conch Key. The original bridge was 10,500 feet long, consisting of 180 concrete arches. In 1938, forty-two arches were added, bringing the total length of the bridge to 11,950 feet. To carry highway traffic, the bridge was converted by cantilevering steel I-beams from both sides of the thirteen foot wide arch structure to support a concrete slab roadway. A curb was placed along the roadway and a guardrail installed. The bridge has not since been significantly changed.

#2 Knight Key Bridge:

The Knight Key Bridge, 110 miles from Miami, connects Knight Key, Pidgeon Key and Conch Key. The bridge is 35,700 feet long or 6.7 miles. The bridge consists of 335 deck girder spans, 9,000 feet of concrete arch viaduct, similar to the Long Key Bridge, and a single 253 foot through truss swing span. The bridge was modified in a manner similar to the Long Key Bridge---except for the swing span which was cut through its length, widened with new members and replaced.

#3 Old Bahia Honda Bridge:

The Old Bahia Honda Bridge, 120 miles from Miami, connects Bahia Honda Key with Spanish Harbor Key. The bridge is 5,050 feet in length and consists of twenty-seven through truss spans and nine deck plate girder spans. The number and size of the spans were too great to allow them to be cut in the manner of the span at Knight Key. The beams carrying the roadway were therefore welded to the tops of the spans. A curb and guardrails were provided as before. The plate girder spans were elevated to the new gradient.

See Continuation Sheet

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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RAILROAD CONSTRUCTION

The three viaducts spanned the widest gaps of water between the Florida Keys on the railroad route chosen by Flagler's engineers. Long Key Bridge was built of arched concrete spans, each eighty feet long. The footings for these arches were made by constructing coffer dams which were anchored to the sea bed. Concrete was poured into the forms over wood pilings which had been driven into place inside the forms. The arches themselves were poured later.

Knight's Key Bridge, approximately seven miles long, consists of five miles of deck plate steel girders, each eighty feet in span. These rest on unreinforced concrete piers. Two miles of the bridge is of the same arch construction as the Long Key Bridge. The road bed was twenty-nine feet above the surface of the water at mean low tide.

The Bahia Honda Bridge was originally 5,056 feet long. Most of its spans are of the through truss type. There are twenty-seven spans of this type: thirteen spans 128 feet, thirteen spans 186, and one span 247 feet. Originally there were nine concrete arch spans, each eighty feet. All of the through truss spans, except the longest, are variations of the standard Pratt truss type. The longest of the spans crossing the channel between Bahia Honda Key and Spanish Harbor Key is a camelback bridge.[1] All of the through truss appear to be constructed of standardized steel members.

The below water construction of all arches and piers was the same. The engineers determined that the supports had to rest upon solid rock and be immovably anchored to it. Once the location of a pier had been determined, a wood coffer dam was floated into place by tenders. As soon as it rested on the bottom, the mud covering the coral rock in the channel was pumped out but the water level was not reduced. Holes were drilled into the rock to receive twenty-four wood piles for each pier. Concrete made of Alsen cement mixed with sand and gravel was then pumped into the coffer dam. This formed a solid and compact union with the underlying rock. The first layer of concrete was poured to a height below ordinary low-tide level, and the piles sawed off, also beneath low-tide level. A mold for the pier was then set in place within the coffer dam. More concrete was then poured, this time to a height just above the tide level. The remainder of the pier

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or arch was built on this base.

The arches were not constructed sequentially, but alternately. These were made of concrete, poured into molds which were attached to the piers. The concrete was allowed to harden in the arch rings for four weeks. The missing arches were then constructed and joined to their neighbor.

This technique of bridge construction does not appear to have been used anywhere in Florida but the Keys.[2] Construction of the railway line commenced southward from Homestead, Florida in the summer of 1905, and in December, 1907, the rails had reached Knight's Key, eighty-three miles below Homestead. A temporary dock for ferry traffic between Knight's Key and Little Duck Key was opened on February 6, 1908.

Construction on the Knight's Key Bridge began in 1909 and was completed in 1912. Work on the bridge was interrupted by two severe hurricanes, one in September, 1909, and the other in September, 1910. During the latter storm five deck-plate girder spans were destroyed.[3]

The construction dates on the Bahia Honda Bridge are approximately the same as for the Knight's Key Bridge. Information about the design and manufacture of the through-truss spans of this bridge are not available. This is also the case with the deck-plate girder spans which comprise portions of the bridges.

The quantities of materials required in the construction of the bridges was immense. The work involved the assembling, transporting, and distribution of 38,000,000 pounds of structural steel, 461,000 cubic yards of concrete, 800,000 barrels of cement, 96,000 tons of fill rock, 78,000 tons of gravel, 300,000 cubic yards of native coralline rock, and 70,000 pine piles.[4]

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION 1935-1938

The Bahia Honda Bridge presented the greatest engineering problem in converting the bridges for vehicular traffic. The trestle rose sixty-five feet in the air, and the engineers carefully studied its ability to bear the additional weight before deciding to build the concrete slab on the tops of the trusses.

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To graduate the climb and descent the engineers removed the steel girders from the concrete piers of the deck-plate girder approaches and placed steel towers between them to increase their height. New approach spans were added and the height of the fill increased as it approached the bridge. This lessened the steepness of the ascent and descent.[5]

The steel beams used for the conversion of the railroad bridges for highway use were treated to protect them from deterioration by salt water. The beams were first coated with asphalt, then covered with a fabricate. This procedure was repeated three times.[6]

Conversion of the bridges varied depending on the type of construction. On the concrete bridges, slots were cut into the abutments and steel beams of twenty-five or more feet, depending on the existing width of the bridge, were placed into them. A layer of concrete was then placed on the bridge, encasing the steel beams into a solid concrete foundation. Between the beams, which were approximately ten feet apart, wooden forms were built for the concrete slabs forming the widened roadway. Before the new concrete was poured into the forms, the overhanging beams were reinforced, and the concrete then poured into the form slabs ten inches thick.

On the steel bridges, one and a quarter inch steel blocks were molded into girders and the new beams then placed across the bridge and welded to the blocks. The making of the concrete slabs then proceeded in the manner described above.

Each bridge was given a curbing nine inches high and twenty inches wide. The width of the roadway from curb to curb was twenty feet, the standard at that time for Florida highways.[7]

Construction of the Overseas Highway was formally completed in 1944 by the Florida State Road Department with the cooperation of the Federal Public Roads Administration. After the 1935 Labor Day hurricane, plans immediately began to take shape to use the roadbed and bridges abandoned by the railroad. In 1936 the Overseas Road and Toll Bridge Commission, which had been created for this purpose, bought the 122 miles of right of way from Florida City to Key West.

The Overseas Highway replaced a road, bridge, and ferry link

(See Continuation Sheet)

with the mainland built by Monroe County between 1923 and 1928. The old route consisted of forty miles of highway from Key West to No Name Key and sixty miles of highway from Florida City to Lower Matecumbe Key. This was connected to the other road by forty miles of ferriage.

The Overseas Road and Toll Bridge improved thirty-two miles of old railroad bed as a toll highway - 14.8 miles from Lower Matecumbe Key to Grassy Key and 17.3 miles from Key Vaca to Big Pine Key. This included the modifications to the Knight's Key Bridge which were carried out between 1936 and 1937. The conversion of all three bridges was completed by March 29, 1938.[8]

The outbreak of World War II made necessary the enlargement and improvement of the naval and military bases in Key West. The Overseas Highway had to be further improved to accomodate military traffic. The old highway route was completely abandoned because it was easier to follow the railway bed. The route provided a better alignment and a shortened trip from Florida City to Key West by seventeen miles. The completed Overseas route was opened on May 16, 1944.[9]

(See Continuation Sheet)

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[1]George M. Chapin, Key West Extension of the Florida East Coast Railway, Official Souvenir. (St. Augustine, Fl.: The Record Company, 1912), p. 15.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Carlton J. Corliss, "Building the Overseas Railway to Key West," Tequesta, XIII (1953), p. 8.

[4]Florida Department of Transportation, The Florida Keys Bridge Replacement Program, Recommended Historical Sites, (supplemental report prepared by the Bureau of Planning, Division of Planning and Programming), p. 4.

[5]Miami Herald, May 16, 1937.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Bayard Kendrick, Florida Trails to Turnpikes 1914-1964. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1964), pp. 139-145.

[9]Ibid., p. 146.

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[1]Miami Herald, May 16, 1937.

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION	
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE	
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE	
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER	
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	X TRANSPORTATION	
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		__INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES #1-1906
#2 & #3-1909

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The three bridges spanning the major water channels along U.S. Highway No. 1, which connects the island of Key West and other major islands in the Florida Keys chain with the mainland of Florida, are among the few significant surviving elements of the Key West Extension of the Florida East Coast Railway and the original alignment of the Overseas Highway which replaced the railroad after it was abandoned in 1935. These bridges alone represent more than eleven per cent of the 120 mile route between Key West and the mainland. The original railroad bridges were of conventional designs, but the circumstances of their construction, e.g., the remote geographic location requiring extraordinary planning in the marshalling of labor and supplies and the often hazardous working conditions, plus the techniques required to convert the bridge to use by automotive vehicles, represent significant engineering accomplishments.

Only two of the bridges still carry traffic. The Bahia Honda Bridge was by-passed in 1969. The Knight Key and Long Key bridges are still maintained as highway structures.

Construction of the Key West Extension of the Florida East Coast Railway began in 1905 under the direction of Henry Morrison Flagler, owner and president of the line, who wanted to establish a southern terminus with a port facility suitably located for shipping on the Gulf of Mexico and through the Panama Canal, then under construction.[1] Though an island located nearly 100 miles from the southern tip of Florida, Key West offered a major city and a good harbor. Building a railroad to Key West had been advocated as early as 1835.[2] The expense and the number of bridges required made such a project seem impractical at that time.

The Florida East Coast Railway, which finally united the island with the mainland, was begun in 1885 when Flagler bought a short-line railroad connecting Jacksonville and St. Augustine, Florida,[3] a distance of thirty-six miles. By 1904, the line had reached Homestead, a town just south of Miami. Construction began in 1905 with the railhead being established at a new settlement, Florida

(See continuation sheet)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brown, Jefferson B. Key West: The Old and the New. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1973 (facimile of the 1912 edition).

(Continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY N/A Structure only

UTM REFERENCES See continuation sheet

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A			
B			
C			
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

N/A Structure only

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE W. Carl Shiver, Historic Sites Specialist

ORGANIZATION Florida Division of Archives, History and Records Management

DATE 10/5/78

STREET & NUMBER Department of State, The Capitol

TELEPHONE (904) 487-2333

CITY OR TOWN Tallahassee

STATE Florida 32304

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X STATE ____ LOCAL ____

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

DATE 11/5/79

TITLE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 8-13-79

~~DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION~~ ~~KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL~~

ATTEST:

DATE 8/13/79

~~KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER~~

GPO 888-445

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The Overseas Highway and Railway Bridges

City, a few miles south of Homestead. Work on the line was delayed by hurricanes in the years 1906, 1909, and 1910. The line was opened for regular traffic in January 1912.[4]

The first of the bridges constructed was the 10,500 foot Long Key Bridge. Work began in 1906 and was completed in the latter part of 1907.[5] The bridge is approximately ninety-five miles south of Miami. Work on the 6.7 mile Knight Key Bridge (commonly called the Sevenmile Bridge) began in 1909 and lasted until 1912.[6] This bridge is fifteen miles southwest of the one at Long Key. Five miles further is the Old Bahia Honda bridge, also constructed 1909-1912.

The railroad was not financially successful but remained in service until a hurricane destroyed thirty miles of track on Labor Day 1935. The bridges and the railroad right-of-way were sold to the Overseas Highway and Toll Bridge Commission. Construction of a highway between Key West and Florida City had begun in 1923.[8] At the time of the Labor Day hurricane, however, the major water gaps were not yet bridged. The highway alignment was shifted and plans developed to convert the bridges for vehicular traffic. To creat two traffic lanes, it was necessary to widen the roadbed from thirteen to twenty feet. This was accomplished on the Long Key and Knight Key bridges--except for the single through truss swing span on the Knight Key structure--by welding steel beams to the top girders and bracing them at the sides. The concrete slabs of the new roadway were then placed over the beams and retaining rails placed at the sides of the roadway.[9]

The single through truss swing span of the Knight Key bridge was cut through its length and had additional steel members added to it to increase its width, allowing it to accomodate the roadway. Since the Bahia Honda bridge had twenty-seven through trusses, a similar method of conversion was impractical. The roadway was therefore placed on the tops of the trusses and the approaches altered to accomodate the change in height.[10] The conversion of the bridges was completed in 1938 and the roadway opened to regular traffic in 1944. The bridges have received regular highway maintenance but have not otherwise been significantly altered.

(Continued)

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The Overseas Highway and Railway Bridges

[1]George M. Chapin, Official Souvenir, Key West Extension of the Florida East Coast Railway, (St. Augustine: The Record Company, 1912) p. 6.

[2]Jefferson B. Brown, Key West: The Old and the New (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1973), p. 194 (facsimile reproduction of the 1912 edition).

[3]Chapin, Official Souvenir..., p. 5.

[4]Ibid., p. 6.

[5]Florida Department of Transportation, The Florida Keys Bridge Replacement Program, Recommended Historical Sites, (supplemental report prepared by the Bureau of Planning, Division of Planning and Programming) pp. 13-16.

[6]Ibid., pp. 17-20.

[7]Ibid., pp. 21-25.

[8]Miami Herald, January 24, 1928.

[9]Miami Herald, May 16, 1937; Florida Department of Transportation, Supplemental Report, p. 7.

[10]Florida Department of Transportation, Supplemental Report, p. 24; Miami Herald, May 16, 1937.

Item 10 Page 1

UTM References

#1 Long Key Bridge	A	17	511242 (515-100)	2741409 (2742-970)
	B	17	515212	2743970
#2 Knight Key Bridge	A	17	476848 (880)	2729606
	B	17	487364	2732303
#3 Old Bahia Honda Bridge	A	17	469909 (471-485)	2726515 (540)
	B	17	471485 (469-540)	2726636

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In Florida, the engineering significance of building the Overseas railway and highway lies in the magnitude of the projects rather than their direct application to later road and bridge building construction. There are no other existing examples of Flagler's concrete arch bridges recorded in Florida. The deck-plate girder and through truss systems were employed in various parts of the state to cross rivers and coastal waterways. No comprehensive study of bridge and road building techniques has been made for Florida.

The actual building of the railway extension and the highway had little direct economic impact on Key West. Most of the labor was recruited from locations other than the island.[1] Developments during and after World War II had a much greater impact. The highway made possible the improvement of the naval and military installations. This involved much new construction which reinvigorated the local economy.

While the mainstay of the Key West economy remained the military through the 1950's and early 1960's, tourism became increasingly important after the war. This latter development would not have been possible without the highway which made access to Key West by automobile possible. The growth of tourism and recreation oriented services has continued in Key West despite the gradual phasing out of the military presence which began in the late 1960's.

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Miami Herald. January, 1928; May 16, 1937.

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KEY BRIDGES VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LONG KEY BRIDGE

Begin at northeast end of Long Key Bridge where said bridge meets a point on the southwest of Long Key; travel southwest on said bridge to where it meets a point on the northeast of Conch Key; then return northeast along bridge to the point of beginning.

KNIGHT'S KEY BRIDGE

Begin at northeast end of Knight's Key Bridge at the point where said bridge meets the southwest shore of Knight's Key; then travel southwest to the point where the bridge meets the northeast shore of Little Duck Key; then return northeast along the bridge to the point of beginning.

OLD BAHIA HONDA BRIDGE

Begin at the northeast end of Old Bahia Honda Bridge at the point where said bridge meets the southwest shore of Bahia Honda Key; then travel southwest along the bridge to the point where the bridge meets the northeast shore of Spanish Harbor Key; then return along the bridge to the point of beginning.

Estimated Acreage*:

Long Key: 6.8 (298,750 sq. ft.)

Knight's Key: 20.5 (893.750 sq. ft.)

Old Bahia Honda: 2.9 (126,500 sq. ft.)

Total Acreage: 30.2

*Based on average width (25 ft.) X length of each structure.