United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 97001451 Date Listed: 11/24/97

Lewis and Clark Bridge | McCone | MT
Property Name | County | State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action: 11/24/97

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Amended Items in Nomination:

Significance:
Insufficient documentation is provided to establish the significance of the bridge in the area of Commerce under Criterion A. [There is little or no information discussing the *specific* contributions of the bridge to the economic and commercial development of the state or region. No facts, figures, anecdotes, or discussions are provided to reveal how the bridge affected commercial development. Potential importance is alluded to in the planning stages, but the significant contributions are not defined for the actual period after construction. "Commerce" is dropped as an area of significance under Criterion A.]

This information was confirmed with L. Johnson of the MT SHPO.

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED OCT 24 1997 NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1451

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Lewis and Clark Bridge

other name/site number: Wolf Point Bridge; Missouri River Bridge; Site No. 24RV438

2. Location

street & number: Montana Highway 13

not for publication:
vicinity: X

city/town: Wolf Point

state: Montana code: MT county: Roosevelt code: 085 zip code: 59201
McCone 055 59215

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets _ does not meet the National Register Criteria. ~~I recommend that this~~ property be considered significant _ nationally X statewide _ locally.

[signature] 10-14-97
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency or bureau (_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register
_ see continuation sheet
_ determined eligible for the National Register
_ see continuation sheet
_ determined not eligible for the National Register
_ see continuation sheet
_ removed from the National Register
_ see continuation sheet _ other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper: [signature]
Date of Action: 11/24/97

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: public-State

Category of Property: structure

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
___	___	building(s)
___	___	sites
1	___	structures
___	___	objects
1	___	TOTAL

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Transportation: road related (bridge)

Current Functions:

Transportation: road related (bridge)

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Other: Pennsylvania through truss

Materials:

foundation: concrete
walls: steel
roof: n/a
other:

Narrative Description

The Lewis & Clark Bridge is a steel three-span riveted Pennsylvania through truss structure with two steel stringer approach spans. The foundation is composed of four reinforced concrete piers with steel caissons. The superstructure consists of two 275-foot steel truss spans, a 400-foot steel truss span, a 53-foot riveted steel steel stringer approach span on the north, and a 69-foot riveted steel stringer approach span on the south. The approach spans rest on reinforced concrete abutments. Overall, the bridge is 1,074 feet long with a deck width of 20 feet, and an "out-to-out" width of 21 feet. The 400-foot main channel span provides a vertical clearance of 38 feet from low steel to maximum high water. The bridge has a 14-foot 10-inch vertical clearance on the deck.

Substructure

The Lewis & Clark Bridge rests on four reinforced concrete piers (see following descriptions) and two reinforced concrete "hammerhead"-style abutments. The north abutment rests on a timber piling foundation, while the south abutment rests "upon tough clay overlying the sandstone and [Bearpaw] shale in the bluff on the south bank." Both abutments are 43.6 feet in height and rest on concrete pier footings that are 6 by 7 feet. The abutments are 26.4 feet across and about 16 feet across at the base. Both abutments consist of two columns tied together by a 2-foot wide concrete tie beam.

Pier 1 consists of a double column that rests on a riveted steel caisson filled with concrete. The total length of both columns is 108 feet. The caisson is 80 feet high and 9 feet wide. The columns are tied together by a 6- by 13.5-foot concrete tie beam about 74 feet above the base of the foundation. Twin reinforced concrete columns surmount the caissons. The columns are 28 feet tall and taper from 6 feet at the base to 5 feet in width at the top. The columns are tied by a 7.6- by 21.6-foot reinforced concrete tie beam. The caissons are 13.5 feet apart, while the columns are 18 feet apart.

Pier 2 is 112.3 feet tall, with an elevation width of 58 feet and an end width of 17 feet on the foundation and 13 feet on the reinforced concrete ice break. The caisson is 24 feet in height and the ice break is 65 feet tall. The twin reinforced concrete columns are 23.3 feet in height, while the column caps are 8.6 feet in diameter. The columns are 11.4 feet at the base and taper to 6.6 feet at the cap; the columns are 13.8 feet apart. The pier penetrates 66.5 feet below the low water level.

Pier 3 consists of a steel and reinforced concrete structure. It is 112.4 feet in height and 13 feet wide. The steel caisson foundation is 24 feet high and 60 feet wide. The caisson transitions into a 59.1- by 35.9-foot reinforced concrete ice break; the angle slope on the ice break is 3:12 inches. The caisson/ice break foundation is surmounted by twin reinforced concrete columns that are 29.3 feet tall and spaced 13 feet apart. The columns are 10 feet in diameter at the base and taper to 7 feet in diameter at the capitol. The caps of the columns are 8.6 feet in diameter. A steel ladder is attached to the upstream side of the pier. The pier penetrates 60.5 feet below the low water level.

Pier 4 is structurally similar to Pier 1. The pier consists of two caissons surmounted by two concrete columns. The caissons are riveted steel filled with concrete. They are 80 feet in height by 9 feet in width. The caissons are 14.8 feet apart and tied with a 6-foot wide reinforced concrete tie beam. The twin reinforced concrete columns are 23 feet high and 6.9 feet in diameter at the base, tapering to 6 feet in diameter at the capitol. They are tied together by an 8 foot wide reinforced concrete tie beam. The total height of the pier is 103.9 feet.

The piers encompass 12,150 linear feet of foundation pilings and 176,520 pounds (88.2 tons) of reinforcing steel. In addition, the builders used old railroad rails to further strengthen the piers.

Superstructure

The superstructure of the Lewis & Clark Bridge consists of two 275-foot and one 400-foot riveted Pennsylvania through truss spans. The 275-foot spans have 11 panels each, while the 400-foot span consists of 16 panels. The upper and lower chords, hip verticals, and diagonals are riveted steel I-beam plate girders with riveted batten plates at each of the splice joints. The hip verticals and subdividing diagonals are laced channel sections with tie plates. The top lateral bracings are also laced channel sections with tie plates. The inclined endposts are riveted plate girder I-beams. There are two panels on each of the six portals of the structure; they are also laced channel sections. The truss floor beams are riveted plate girder I-beams. There are riveted gusset plates at each of the panel divisions. Web members and sway bracing throughout the structure are cast steel rods with gusset plates at each of the intersecting points. There are four bearing plates on top of each of the piers; the bearing plates, in turn, support cast steel rocker shoes that support the superstructure of the bridge. The deck is supported by four lines of riveted plate girder I-beams. The deck consists of seventy-five 25- by 21-foot poured-in-place reinforced concrete slabs flanked by 10-inch concrete curbs. Riveted angle-iron beams compose the guardrails. The rails are riveted to the lower chords by knee braces with tie plates.

The north approach span is a 52.9-foot steel stringer structure. The approach span consists of four lines of riveted steel plate girder I-beams with floor beams and sway braces riveted to the inside flanges of the I-beams. The structure has a poured-in-place reinforced concrete slab deck flanked by two-rail reinforced concrete guardrails with flared endposts. The south approach span is 63.3 feet long and also consists of four lines of riveted steel plate girder I-beams with angle-iron sway braces and floor beams riveted to the I-beams. The reinforced concrete slab deck is flanked by two 2-rail concrete guardrails.

The narrative description of the Lewis and Clark Bridge is from the Historic American Engineering Record documentation prepared by Jon Axline of the Montana Department of Transportation (Wolf Point Bridge HAER No. 96).

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A and C

Areas of Significance: Transportation, Engineering, Commerce

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1930 - 1947

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1930

Cultural Affiliation: na

Architect/Builder: Montana Highway Commission/ Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron Company

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Lewis and Clark Bridge is historically significant for its association with the development of transportation networks in Montana. When completed, it provided access to the Great Northern Railway at Wolf Point for those farmers and ranchers who were relatively isolated on the south side of the Missouri River. The completion of the Lewis and Clark Bridge was a major event for the people of northeastern Montana, one that was recognized and celebrated by the area's inhabitants. It was the result of many years active lobbying that eventually included Montana's U.S. Congressional delegation. The Wolf Point Bridge is the finest remaining example of a riveted Pennsylvania through truss in Montana. Completed in 1930, the five-span bridge is the most massive in the state, and includes the longest through truss span ever built in Montana.

Historical background and significance

Before the completion of the Wolf Point Bridge in 1930, residents of northeastern Montana had no reliable or safe way to cross the Missouri River at Wolf Point. (In fact, there was no vehicular bridge across the Missouri between Fort Benton, Montana and Williston, North Dakota, a distance of about 350 miles.) Instead, residents relied on inadequate ferries, and for a time, a pontoon bridge. During the winter months, farmers and ranchers on the south side of the river were forced to cross the ice. High water in the spring and early summer rendered the river uncrossable. After the deaths of two McCone County teenagers in February 1926, the Wolf Point Commercial Club, led by County Commissioner William L. Young, launched a successful campaign to convince the Montana Highway Commission to construct a bridge near the community. The result was the largest steel truss bridge that the Commission ever constructed. The structure was an object of intense civic pride to not only Wolf Point, but also to the tiny ranching and farming communities in the region. When dedicated on July 9, 1930, the *Wolf Point Herald* called the bridge "a memorial to those whose lives have been lost in the Missouri and a monument to those whose co-operation . . . made possible its erection."[1]

The upper Missouri River played a pivotal role in the development of Montana beginning in the early nineteenth century. On May 5, 1805, the Lewis and Clark Expedition passed upriver by the site of the future Wolf Point Bridge. In addition to describing the topography, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark wrote of vast herds of bison as well as deer, elk, prairie dogs, and wolves. By the 1830s, the river had become a well-traveled route for fur trappers and traders seeking their fortunes further upriver.[2]

Long the territory of the Assiniboine Indians, the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 officially established this section of the upper Missouri north of the river as their domain. They were later joined by remnants of the Dakota Sioux, who fled west after the 1862 Minnesota Uprising. The U.S. Government informally established the reservation in 1871 and designated a small trading post, Fort Peck, as the agency. By

[1] *Wolf Point Herald*, 18 February 1926 and 11 July 1930.

[2] Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806,*(New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1904), vol. I, part II, 369-374; vol. II, part I, 3-6; Merrill G. Burlingame, *The Montana Frontier* (Helena: State Publishing Company, 1942), 58-61; Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, Rev. ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 56.

1877, the government relocated the reservation's agency to Poplar and established a sub-agency at Wolf Point, a former Hudson's Bay Company trading post, in 1879.[3]

Local folklore states that Wolf Point received its name from an unknown steamboat captain who observed large numbers of wolf hides stacked next to the river. Because of the proximity of large stands of cottonwood trees, the reservation's agent constructed a sawmill at the site in 1879. By 1882, Wolf Point had obtained a post office. Five years later, in 1887, the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railroad (later the Great Northern Railway) constructed its line about a mile north of the sub-agency complex. The U.S. Government officially recognized the reservation in 1888 and established 50-acre demonstration farms at Poplar and Wolf Point.[4]

Although located near a transcontinental railroad and in close proximity to the river, Wolf Point did not significantly expand until the second decade of the twentieth century. Two factors contributed to its growth: the 1909 Enlarged Homestead Act, and the opening of the Fort Peck Reservation to non-Indian settlement in 1908 and again in 1914. What had hitherto been a relatively unimportant backwater was, within less than a decade, transformed into one of the most important trade and transportation centers of northeastern Montana.

The Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 opened approximately four million acres of public land to farm production in Montana. Between 1910 and 1918, nearly 400,000 people flooded into the state and settled on 320-acre plots. The huge increase in Montana's population during the period literally changed the character of the state. In response to the demands placed on the existing county governments by the influx of homesteaders, a frenzied period of "county splitting" occurred to provide services and political representation to the inhabitants of the eastern portion of the state. For example, when founded in 1879, Wolf Point was located in Dawson County. In 1893, it became a part of Valley county; twenty years later, in 1913, it was incorporated into Sheridan County. Six years after that, in 1919, it was designated the county seat of the newly formed Roosevelt County.[5]

The 1887 Dawes Act was an attempt by the U.S. Government to "civilize" Native Americans by allotting reservation land to them for agricultural purposes. The land remaining after the general allotment was then made available for non-Indian settlement. The Fort Peck Reservation was surveyed and the allotments made in 1908 and again in 1914. The second allotment coincided with the Montana Homestead Boom and provided the catalyst for the development of the Wolf Point area.[6]

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[3] Malone, Roeder, and Lang, *Montana*, 116, 143; "Fort Peck Reservation," *Denton Recorder*, 30 October 1933; Roberta Carkeek Cheney, *Names on the Face of Montana; The Story of Montana's Place Names* (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Co., 1991), 102-103, 213; Leota Hoye, ed., *Roosevelt County's "Treasured Years"* (Wolf Point, Montana: Roosevelt Bicentennial Committee, 1976), 35-38.

[4] Hoye, *Roosevelt County*, 35-38; "Fort Peck Reservation"; Malone, Roeder, and Lang, Montana, 143; Cheney, *Names on the Face of Montana*, 244; *Golden Jubilee, 1915-1965: A Brief History of the Development and Progress of Wolf Point, Montana* (Wolf Point: Golden Jubilee History Committee, 1965), 9, 13-15; Donald B. Robertson, *Encyclopedia of Western Railroad History*, vol. II, (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1991), 303.

[5] Malone, Roeder and Lang, *Montana*, 238, 249-252; Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Montana High, Wide and Handsome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 168-169; Cheney, *Names on the Face of Montana*, 69, 230, 245, 277.

[6] Malone, Roeder and Lang, *Montana*, 144; *Golden Jubilee, 1915-1965*, 10; Norman Rolf, *Fort Peck Caravan: A Study of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation* (Wolf Point: The Montana Human Relations Committee, 1954), 2; Reverend William H. Ketcham, *Conditions on the Flathead and Fort Peck Indian Reservations* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1915), 84; *Denton Recorder*, 30 October 1933.

Within weeks of the second allotment, entrepreneurs platted a 160-acre townsite about one mile north of the Wolf Point sub-agency. By early 1915, the revitalized community included 340 residents and was on its way to becoming an important economic and transportation center in the region. The town's new businessmen formed the Wolf Point Commercial Club in 1915, shortly after Wolf Point incorporated. By 1917, the Great Northern Railway designated Wolf Point a Division Point on the railroad. Within a year, the population of the community increased to 1,846 individuals and nearly doubled that to 3,451 people in 1920. Despite the new-found prosperity of the town and its important position on the Great Northern's mainline, Wolf Point did not have dependable access to the homesteads and ranches located south of the Missouri River in McCone County.[7]

In 1911, John Pipal established a ferry at Wolf Point to carry wagons and automobiles across the river. The newly created Commercial Club formed the Wolf Point Bridge and Improvement Company in 1915 to provide a more reliable method of crossing the river. Through subscriptions, the organization was able to raise $5,000 for the construction of a pontoon toll bridge just south of Wolf Point. The bridge opened in 1915, was washed out twice in 1916, and finally closed in 1917. Thereafter, people once again had to rely on a small river ferry or, during the winter months, make the hazardous crossing over the ice. For indefinite periods in the spring and early summer, high water forced the ferry to cease operations. By the mid-1920s, the citizens of both Roosevelt and McCone counties began agitating for a dependable and permanent Missouri River crossing.[8]

A double drowning provided the catalyst for Wolf Point's and McCone County's campaign for construction of the Wolf Point Bridge. Late in the evening of February 11, 1926, McCone County teenagers James and Rolla Cusker drowned when their car plunged through an air hole in the Missouri River ice, while returning home from a basketball game. The tragedy galvanized the Wolf Point Commercial Club, headed by William L. Young and R.J. Moore, into actively lobbying the Montana Highway Commission to construct a bridge.[9]

On October 19, 1926, Young, Moore, and McCone County Commissioner Thomas Horsford met with the Highway Commission and presented petitions, maps, and "other information" to support their request for a bridge. They stated that the bridge was "urgently needed to handle the agricultural production between Wolf Point and Circle now inadequately served by a toll ferry." The Commission unanimously adopted a resolution to build the structure as soon as "funds can be secured for the work."[10]

Less than two months later, in early December 1926, Montana Representative Scott Leavitt introduced U.S. House Resolution 13067 in Congress to provide for the construction of a bridge over the Missouri River at or near Wolf Point. On December 22, North Dakota Representative Olger Burtness of the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce endorsed the bill and forwarded it onto the Senate Committee on Commerce. Committee member David Stewart of Iowa presented the bill to the Senate, where it passed with no dissenting votes on January 11, 1927. President Calvin Coolidge signed the bill into law three days later.[11]

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[7] Hoye, *Roosevelt County*, 820-822; United States Census Records, 1910, 1920; Golden Jubilee, 1915-1965, 43-44.

[8] Hoye, *Roosevelt County*, 43, 94; *Wolf Point Herald*, 11 July 1930.

[9] *Wolf Point Herald*, 18 February 1926.

[10] *Wolf Point Herald,* 21 and 28 October 1926, 11 July 1930; Montana Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, vol. 3, 68, 73-74.

[11] Congressional Record, LXVIII, November 10, 1926-January 26, 1927 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1927), 962, 1414, 1883; *Wolf Point Herald*, 23 December 1926 and 14 January 1927.

On October 26, 1927, the Commercial Club hosted a conference in Wolf Point to discuss the proposed bridge with the Montana Highway Commission. The meeting was also attended by State Highway Engineer Ralph D. Rader, Secretary of State William Powers, U.S. Senator Burton K. Wheeler, and representatives from the Great Northern Railroad and communities in northeastern Montana. Again, the need for a bridge was reiterated by William Young and the Commercial Club. The McCone County Commissioner spoke at length of the economic benefits of the bridge to the residents of his county and lamented the "toll of lives taken by the Missouri."[12]

On December 23, 1927, the Montana Highway Commission scheduled the bridge project for construction in 1929. By early 1928, the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) and the Commission's Bridge Department had selected a site approximately four miles southeast of Wolf Point for the proposed bridge. Located south of the Great Northern Railway siding at Macon, the river at this point is narrow and constricted by sandstone rimrocks on the south. The Assiniboine Indians called the site "Crow Ford" because their rivals, the Crow Indians, reputedly crossed the river there to steal horses. The Great Northern Railway established Macon around 1914 as a siding and "flag stop for passengers." By 1928, the site included a grain elevator and a ferry.[13]

At a conference held in Helena in late May 1927, the Highway Commission, Montana Secretary of State William Powers, Wolf Point pharmacist and banker Alfred Huxsol, and William Young met to resolve financing of the proposed bridge. Because a portion of the structure would be located within the boundaries of the Fort Peck Reservation, the north half of the bridge was eligible for 100 percent federal funding. The McCone County portion of the bridge, however, would need to be financed through the regular federal matching fund process. By December 1927, the Roosevelt and McCone County Commissioners and the Great Northern Railway had secured $30,000 in bonds to ensure construction of the bridge.[14]

Known as the "Macon Bridge" to the Montana Highway Commission, the proposed construction site caused numerous problems for the bridge designers. Bureau of Public Road's District Engineer W.H. Lynch originally envisioned the structure as a continuous span through truss or a cantilever bridge. The Commission's chief engineer, however, supported a Pennsylvania through truss design because it was the most economical design and also negated the necessity for deep foundations. Although the Montana Highway Commission's design was eventually chosen, the BPR continuously made changes in the design--even after construction had already commenced. The BPR conditionally approved the Commission's bridge plans on March 29, 1929. Concurrently with the bridge project, the BPR also authorized the construction of a three mile segment of roadway between U.S. Highway 2 and the bridge.[15]

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[12] *Wolf Point Herald*, 28 October 1926, 15 July 1927, and 11 July 1930.

[13] Even after the Macon site had been chosen by the Highway Commission, there were several petitions submitted by local ranchers and farmers to build the bridge west of Wolf Point near Oswego, approximately 18 miles upstream. The proposed site was disqualified because of cost and inaccessibility. Hoye, *Roosevelt County*, 103; *Wolf Point Herald*, 29 March 1929 and 11 July 1930; Montana Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, vol. 3, 238-239, 288.

[14] Tom Stout, *Montana: Its Story and Biography*, vol. 3 (Chicago: The American Historical Society, 1921), 778-779; Montana Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, vol. 3, 157-158, 242-243.

[15] Beginning in the early 1920s, Wolf Point was located on the Powder River Trail that connected Buffalo, Wyoming with Regina, Saskatchewan. The highway roughly paralleled Montana Highway 13 to the east. Access to Wolf Point from the south was by river ferries at Wolf Point and Macon. The roadway was not included on Montana's federal aid system until 1934. *Wolf Point Herald*, 11 July 1930; Rand McNally Auto Trails Map (1923); Orville M. Quick, "lets Build a Road! The Construction of the Circle-Wolf Point Highway" (Circle, Montana: McCone County Museum, 1982, n.p.; W.H. Lynch, BPR District Engineer, to Ralph D. Rader, State Highway Engineer, 5 May

The Montana Highway Commission submitted the preliminary bridge design to the U.S. Secretary of War for approval on July 23, 1928. Since the Corps of Engineers (COE) classified the Missouri River as a navigable waterway, they first rejected the design because it did not estimate the high water level of the river. Consequently, the Commission made the changes specified by the COE, which approved the plans after holding a public hearing in Kansas City of September 5, 1928.[16]

With the preliminary design approved by the COE, the Commission advertised the project for bids on October 2, 1928. The contract specified the construction of a 1074-foot bridge at an estimated cost of $487,023.10. The contract also delineated the amount of material that was needed to construct the massive bridge. In early December, however, the BPR stipulated the first in a series of design changes that nearly postponed the contract letting. In order to keep the project on schedule, the Montana Highway Commission notified all bidders of the change and pushed back the completion date from December 1, 1929 to July 1, 1930. Four bids were initially received by the Highway Commission for the project. It, however, rejected all bids as being significantly over the amount estimated by their engineer to construct the bridge. The Commission readvertised the project and received one bid for it. The Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron Company (MVBIC) won the contract after submitting a bid nearly $23,000 below the cost projected by the Commission.[17]

Based in Leavenworth, Kansas, the MVBIC had been active bridge builders in Montana since 1897. Unlike nearly all the contractors operating in the state, the company was the only firm that included its own fabricating plant, which sometimes allowed it to underbid local contractors. Prior to the Lewis and Clark Bridge, the firm had constructed a large steel truss structure across the Missouri at Williston, North Dakota and several bridges in Mexico, one of which was blown up by rebels shortly after it was completed. The MVBIC was authorized to proceed with the project on February 15, 1929.[18]

The first of the MVBIC's construction crew arrived at the site of the proposed bridge on March 11, 1929. The company's resident engineer, John Fraser, told the *Wolf Point Herald* that he expected a crew of 125 to 175 men. Although the MVBIC imported skilled workers from Kansas, Fraser anticipated hiring most of the unskilled labor from the Wolf Point area. Within a week after arriving at the site, the company began construction of the spur line from the Great Northern Railway tracks at Macon, south to the construction site. The spur did not require significant grading and the rails were installed by mid-April. The cement, aggregate,

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1928 and 29 March 1929; Bridge Construction File No. FAP 253-A, Montana Department of Transportation, Helena, Montana.

[16] The hearing was attended by Roosevelt County Commissioner William L. Young and State Highway Engineer Ralph Rader. "Application for Approval of Plans of a Bridge to Cross Navigable Waters of the Untied States," Montana Highway Commission, 23 July 1928; Major O.R. young, Corps of Engineers, to Mark S. Hopkins, MHC Bridge Engineer, 3 August 1928; Ralph Rader to Hopkins, 4 October 1928; Hopkins to Rader, 5 September 1928; Montana Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, vol. 3, 102-103.

[17] State Highway Commission of Montana Contract, Federal Aid Project No. 253-A, Unit 2, 19 December 1929; Ralph D. Rader to Bidders, 10 December 1928; Contract, State Highway Commission of Montana and Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron Company, Leavenworth, Kansas, 19 December 1928; *Wolf Point Herald*, 15 March 1929; Montana Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, vol. 3, 144.

[18] In addition to the Lewis and Clark Bridge, the company also constructed a bridge over Little Prickly Pear Creek near Helena in 1893 and the Pacific Street Bridge in East Helena (now demolished) in 1897. The Lewis and Clark Bridge was the last bridge constructed in Montana by the company. Frederic L. Quivik, *Historic Bridges of Montana* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1982), 40; *Wolf Point Herald*, 15 March 1929 and 11 July 1930; Undated Memorandum, Montana Highway Commission.

and structural and reinforcing steel was shipped to Macon on the Great Northern and off-loaded and transported to the construction site by the MVBIC. The company's construction machinery began to arrive at Macon shortly after the completion of the spur.[19]

The MVBIC established a construction camp on the north side of the river adjacent to the proposed bridge site. The complex included workshops, offices, a dining hall, and a bunkhouse. A powerhouse provided electricity to the construction site as well as the numerous "cottages" built by workers to house their families. The electricity was produced by a steam engine. During the summer months, the rich river bottom was distinguished by flourishing gardens planted by the workers and their families.[20]

The company constructed a timber concrete mixing plant on the north side of the Missouri. An inclined conveyor belt carried the cement from a storage shed to a hopper over the mixer. There, the cement was mixed with gravel aggregate obtained from a source near Chinook. The concrete was then dumped into a bucket mounted on a flat car; the bucket was capable of holding thirty cubic feet of concrete. A gasoline-powered locomotive conveyed the rail cars along a narrow gauge rail line over the river on a timber trestle work bridge. Both the construction camp and concrete mixing plant were removed by the company by early July 1930.[21]

The MVBIC work crews began construction of the bridge's concrete substructure in late March 1929. Because of the depth of the river and the shale bedrock below the river bed, the company used steel caissons to excavate the foundations for two of the piers. Approximately nine feet in diameter, the caissons accommodated a crew of nine men each, who worked under 22 pounds of compressed air. Two diesel engines with compressors supplied air for the workers in the caisson, while a gasoline-powered engine compressor provided air for the tools. Because of the arduous conditions, the gangs could work only three hours at a time before being relieved by a fresh crew. The caissons, moreover, were prone to becoming "friction bound" as the excavations progressed. To remedy the problem, company engineer Glen Fraser and Highway Commission resident engineer Pat Hegdal directed that weights be placed on the tops of the tubes in addition to the foundation material.[22]

Work on the foundations steadily progressed throughout the spring, summer, and fall of 1929. The work crews excavated approximately 7,030 cubic yards of river silt, coarse gravel, and in one instance, a layer of buried tree snags. By September 1929, the south abutment and the first of the four piers had been completed. The remaining three piers were completed by November 15. Before then, however, MVBIC workers were conveying sightseers across the work bridge to the south side of the river.[23]

For 18 months in 1929 and 1930, the Lewis and Clark Bridge construction site was the most popular tourist attraction in northeastern Montana. In early June, the *Wolf Point Herald* stated that the "bridge site has become a mecca for motorists and picnic parties." Indeed, on October 6, 1929, the site was visited by 500 people from the Wolf Point area. Visitors included families, state and Great Northern Railway officials and, in one case, "about a dozen cars of members of the Hinsdale society . . .

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[19] *Wolf Point Herald*, 15 and 29 March, 5 and 12 April 1929.

[20] *Wolf Point Herald*, 6 June and 2 August 1929; 11 July 1930; Mark S., Missouri River Bridge, Montana," *Western Construction News*, 5, no. 1 (January 10, 1930), 18.

[21] Hopkins, "Missouri River Bridge," 17-18; *Wolf Point Herald*, 29 March 1929 and 11 July 1930.

[22] *Wolf Point Herald*, 2 August 1929; Hopkins, "Missouri River bridge," 17-18.

[23] *Wolf Point Herald*, 2 August, 20 September, 11 October 1929 and 11 July 1930; Hopkins, "Missouri River Bridge," 17.

." The Wolf Point Commercial Club advertised the bridge as a picnic spot by capitalizing on the community's pride in the partly-completed structure.[24]

With the most difficult portion of the bridge completed, MVBIC crews began the task of constructing the bridge's superstructure on November 13, 1929. Commission engineer P.M. Hegdal told the *Wolf Point Herald*, "From now on . . . we will erect, rivet and swing the trusses into place." The work was accomplished with four stationary hoists and one erection hoist mounted on a rail car that traversed the work bridge. The MVBIC fabricated the structural steel at its Leavenworth factory. From there it was transported to the construction site in 19 shipments by the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad between September 4, 1929 and January 29, 1930. The 1,150 tons of structural steel was off-loaded at Macon and moved to the construction site by a locomotive borrowed from the Great Northern Railway. The erection of the two 275-foot steel trusses was completed on January 10, 1930; the massive 400-foot span was completed by mid-February 1930. The company employed around 100 workers to construct the three truss spans and the two steel girder approach spans.[25]

With the superstructure completed, work crews began laying the reinforcing steel for the deck on May 12, 1930. Approximately 600 cubic yards of concrete were used for the deck of the 1,074-foot bridge. By May 25, the deck had cured sufficiently to allow automobile use of the bridge. Wolf Point resident Earl Chamberlain was the first to cross the bridge by automobile. Within days, the bridge was regularly used by "southsiders" for access to Wolf Point and the railroad station. By June 22, a Wolf Point businessman counted 220 vehicles on the bridge during two 10 hour periods. Although the bridge was already opened for traffic, the city of Wolf Point and, indeed, northeastern Montana enthusiastically firmed up their plans for the bridge's dedication on July 9.[26]

Planning for the dedication festivities of the bridge began in early 1930. The Bridge Day Committee was headed by First State Bank Cashier Fred Rathert. On May 2, the *Wolf Point Herald* printed an advertisement stating that

> Making a success of Bridge Day . . . is Wolf Point's next big job. An early start and snappy team work will put it over. A fitting celebration is both a duty and an opportunity.

By June 20, Rathert and his committee announced that the bridge dedication celebration would include five bands, several "distinguished speakers," and a daylight fireworks display. Rathert promised that the festivities would be broadcast live by Wolf Point's new radio station, KGCX. Wolf Point native Vera Smith won a contest to lead the planned parade and cut the ribbon officially opening the bridge. A twenty-year-old nurse trainee, the *Wolf Pont Herald* described Smith as having "commingled in her veins the blood of both the Indian and white races. She is a true daughter of the West . . . ." With the completion of the

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[24] *Wolf Point Herald*, 6 June, 20 September, 11 October 1929 and 2 May 1930.

[25] Hopkins, "Missouri River Bridge," 18; *Wolf Point Herald*, 15 November 1929 and 10 January, 18 February, 11 July 1930; Final Report, Robert C. Hunt Company, Engineers, no date.

[26] The Montana Highway Commission stated in their biennial report that the average daily count of traffic utilizing the Wolf Point Bridge was 251 vehicles. *Wolf Point Herald*, 16 May, 6 June, 20 June, 4 July 1930; *Report of the state Highway Commission of Montana for Biennium Ending December 1930* (Helena: State Highway Commission, 1931), 37.

bridge on July 1, the heightened anticipation for the fete was reflected in the increased space given the impending event in the newspaper.[27]

By midday on July 9, between 10,000 and 15,000 spectators thronged around the Lewis and Clark Bridge. The crowd, which included around, 2,500 to 3,000 automobiles, came from as far away as Havre, Montana; Minot, North Dakota; and Regina, Saskatchewan. As American flags fluttered from each of the three through truss spans, four airplanes circled over the new structure and an "Indian village" located on the site of the former construction camp. A little after one p.m., Vera Smith led off the parade from the southern end of the newly christened bridge. In addition to local celebrities, the parade included five bands (including the Blackfoot Indian Boys Band of Browning), and a float from nearby Vida. The float consisted of a miniature representation of the Lewis and Clark Bridge with agricultural scenes placed in each of the spans and "pretty girls showering the crowd with confetti . . . ." The cavalcade also included cowboys, cowgirls, Indians, and various forms of antique and modern transportation. Within 30 minutes the procession had passed over the bridge and the structure officially opened for traffic.[28]

From a platform under the northern span of the bridge, Wolf Point lawyer and mayor H.N. Marron introduced William Young as the Master of Ceremonies for the ensuing events. After making a short speech, Young presented Montana Governor John E. Erickson, who stated that the Lewis and Clark Bridge was much more than merely a bridge "for it represents the triumph of the pioneering spirit which must still prevail in Montana if the commonwealth is to occupy its destined place in the Union." Other speakers included Montana Highway Commission Chairman O.S. Warden; McCone County Commissioner and bridge proponent Thomas Horsford; Saskatchewan's Chief Highway Engineer H.R. McKenzie; Great Norther Railway Company president Ralph Budd; and finally, Representative Scott Leavitt, who recounted the history of the project and, since it was an election year, boasted about his particular role in ensuring the construction of the bridge. At the conclusion of the speeches, the bridge was blessed by elders from the Sioux and Assiniboine tribes. The day's official festivities concluded with a spectacular daylight fireworks display.[29]

The *Wolf Point Herald* proclaimed shortly after the dedication that

> It is doubtful whether since the coming of the Great Northern Railroad in 1887 that northeastern Montana has given itself to a festival where there has been so much sincere rejoicing and which has had such vast significance in the history of our area that aspires to its destined progress.[30]

By 1934, a bridge similar in design to the Lewis and Clark Bridge had been constructed by the State Highway Commission 54 miles downriver at Culbertson. Although it took away some of the economic importance of the structure near Wolf Point, the Lewis and Clark Bridge remained not only the most massive steel through truss structure in the state, but it also has the distinction of being pivotal in the development of the remote northeastern corner of Montana.

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[27] Much of the celebration was paid for through subscriptions garnered from Wolf Point and the surrounding communities. *Wolf Point Herald*, 18 April, 2 May, 6 June, 20 June and 4 July 1930; Stout, *Montana: Its Story and Biography*, vol. 3, 930.

[28] *Wolf Pont Herald*, 7 and 11 July 1930; *Great Falls Tribune*, 10 July 1930; *Golden Jubilee, 1915-1965*, 25-26; Hoye, *Roosevelt County's "Treasured Years,"* 94.

[29] *Great Falls Tribune*, 10 July 1930; *Golden Jubilee, 1915-1965*, 25-26; *Wolf Point Herald*, 11 July 1930.

[30] *Wolf Point Herald*, 11 July 1930.

The historical background of the Lewis and Clark Bridge is from the Historic American Engineering Record documentation prepared by Jon Axline of the Montana Department of Transportation (Wolf Point Bridge HAER No. 96).

Engineering Significance

The Lewis and Clark Bridge is an outstanding example of a 1930s riveted Pennsylvania through truss bridge. The Pennsylvania truss design is an adaptation of the Parker truss, which is itself an adaptation of the Pratt truss. The Pratt truss was patented in 1844, and by 1916, was the most common bridge design in the United States for crossings under 250 feet. The Parker truss added an inclined top chord to the basic Pratt design, and the Pennsylvania introduced sub-struts or sub-ties. The latter modification acted to resist or transmit stresses, respectively. The Pennsylvania truss design economically increased the maximum allowable span of the Pratt truss because the floor system was much lighter.

Montana's 1982 historic bridge survey identified 23 remaining Pennsylvania trusses. Since they were most often used for wide, deep crossings the largest number were located on the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, but they were also found on the Milk, Tongue, and Clark's Fork rivers. Of the 23 Pennsylvania through trusses, 19 are pin-connected, and date from 1897 through 1913. Only four riveted Pennsylvania through trusses were identified, and they bear construction dates from 1914 through 1934. Since 1982, the Montana Department of Transportation has demolished nine of the 23 Pennsylvania truss bridges, including one riveted bridge.

In designing the 400-foot span of the Lewis and Clark Bridge, the Montana Highway Commission bridge engineers exceeded by 90 feet the previously length of any single span in Montana. The Commission constructed three more Pennsylvania through truss bridges between 1930 and 1934, but the 400-foot span remains the longest single, truss span ever constructed in Montana. [31]

[31] C.L. Eckel, "The Development of Simple Truss Types of Bridge Structures in the United States," *Colorado Engineer* 25 (November, 1928), 32; J.A.L. Waddell, *Bridge Engineering* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1916), 469-470; George R. Metlen, *Report of the Montana State Highway Commission for the Years 1915-1916* (Helena: Independent Publishing Company, 1916), 6; Carl W. Condit, *American Building: Materials and Techniques From the Beginning of the Colonial Settlement to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 143; T. Allan Comp, "Bridge Truss Types: A Guide to Dating and Identifying," American Association For State and Local History Technical Leaflet (May, 1977), n.p.; Frederic L. Quivik, *Historic Bridges in Montana* (n.p.: National Park Service, 1982), 71.

9. Major Bibliographic References

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
_X_ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
_X_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _MT-96__

Primary Location of Additional Data:
_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than one

UTM References:	**Zone**	**Easting**	**Northing**
	13	460150	5323680

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): Section 28, T27N, R48E

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundary for the Lewis and Clark Bridge is a rectangle, 1,074 feet by 60 feet. Beginning at a point at the exact center of the beginning of the southern approach span proceed 30 feet northeasterly parallel to the portal of the approach span, thence 1,074 feet northwesterly parallel to the truss spans, thence 60 feet southwesterly along the north edge of the northern approach span, thence 1,074 feet southeasterly, thence 30 feet northeasterly to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries for the Lewis and Clark Bridge are drawn to encompass the five spans of the bridge and that portion of the Missouri River spanned by the bridge. The width is increased beyond the out-to-out measurement of the bridge to include the piers.

11. Form Prepared By

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Photographs

Lewis & Clark Bridge
Wolf Point vic.
Roosevelt and McCone Counties, Montana

Photographer and Negatives: Clint Whitmer
Lewis & Clark Bridge Preservation Fund
P.O. Box 1234
Wolf Point, Montana

All photos taken July 1997, except Photo No. 1 (October 1996)

Photo No. 1 Lewis & Clark Bridge, Aerial View, looking southwest.

Photo No. 2 Lewis & Clark Bridge, Portal of southern Pennsylvania truss span, looking northwest.

Photo No. 3 Lewis & Clark Bridge, Southern and middle Pennsylvania truss spans, looking northwest.

Photo No. 4 Lewis & Clark Bridge, South approach span, looking northwest.

Photo No. 5 Lewis & Clark Bridge, North approach span, looking northeast.

Photo No. 6 Lewis & Clark Bridge, Detail of Pennsylvania truss endpost connection

Photo No. 7 Lewis & Clark Bridge, Detail of approach span floor system, looking northwest.

Photo No. 8 Lewis & Clark Bridge, Detail of southern Pennsylvania truss floor system, looking northwest.

Photo No. 9 Lewis & Clark Bridge, View along piers, looking north-northwest.

Photo No. 10 Lewis & Clark Bridge, View of main channel pier, looking northwest.