

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: 90000090

Date Listed: 2/12/90

Forsyth Bridge
Property Name

Rosebud
County

MT
State

Forsyth MPS
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.

Patrick Andrews
Signature of the Keeper

2/12/90
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Classification: Under Number of Resources within Property, 1 contributing building should be changed to 1 contributing structure.

This information was confirmed with Pat Bick of the Montana SHPO by telephone.

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

90

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

JAN 02 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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 "NA" 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: FORSYTH BRIDGE
other names/site number: YELLOWSTONE RIVER BRIDGE

2. Location

street & number: north end of 3rd Avenue not for publication
city, town: Forsyth vicinity
state: Montana code: MT county: Rosebud code: 087 zip code: 59327

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public - local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public - State	<input type="checkbox"/> site		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public - Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure		structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		objects
		1	Total
Name of related multiple property listing:		Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register	
HISTORIC RESOURCES OF FORSYTH, MONTANA		0	

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 See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official Maureen Sharp Date 12-21-89

State or federal agency and bureau MT SHPO

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or federal agency and bureau _____

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crossed the primary river channel, while the two northern spans crossed a low-lying area which historically was flooded only during spring runoff. Modern flood-control measures and increased irrigation have nearly eliminated the flooding of this area, and a heavy growth of cottonwood trees and bushes is beginning to appear here. The bridge's northern terminus was within a few feet of the tracks of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (constructed locally 1907-08, abandoned 1980). The railroad's Forsyth depot was directly across the tracks from the bridge. From the railroad crossing, an unpaved roadway (now closed) ascended a small coulee to the top of the nearby bluffs, and continued westward to the towns of Vananda, Ingomar, Melstone and Roundup.

Of the original bridge's three spans, only the southernmost ~~span remains~~ in place in 1989. The two northern spans were dismantled and scrapped after the bridge's official abandonment, although all the original tubular concrete piers remain in place. The decking and stringers have been removed from the surviving span and bridge approaches have been removed. The span is a pin-connected Pennsylvania through truss approximately 16 feet wide and 200 feet long (close inspection and measurement were impossible due to the lack of access). Bridge members are of riveted, laced steel; larger members are channel sections while smaller members are angle sections. The ornate, surviving portal strut features the date "1905" centered over the opening.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register criteria: A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Transportation	1905-1939	1905

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

n/a

Architect/Builder

W.S. Hewett and Co.,
Minneapolis

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

Forsyth's Yellowstone River Bridge meets criterion "a" for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The bridge is historically significant as the first bridge structure linking the northern and southern sections of Rosebud County. Prior to its erection, area residents depended on irregular ferry service or seasonal river fords; the nearest Yellowstone River Bridge was at Miles City, Montana, some forty-five miles downstream. This lack of a transportation infrastructure inhibited growth in northern Rosebud County. The locally-perceived need for such a bridge was a major factor in area efforts to carve an independent Rosebud County from the western portion of Custer County. When this county division was accomplished, this bridge was an early project of Rosebud County's commissioners.

Historical Significance

Historically, most economic activity in Rosebud County's Yellowstone River valley has been south of the river, and most transportation routes have also followed the river's south bank, including the Northern Pacific Railroad. Most agricultural and townsite development was also south of the river and along the railroad line. However, agricultural and ranching operations had developed in the Hammond and Cold Spring areas north of the river by 1877, and a means of crossing the river locally became an economic necessity. River fords were located and utilized in the early years, and by the early 1890's a privately operated ferry crossed the Yellowstone River at Forsyth: the so-called "Forsyth Ferry," operated by Anton Gunderson.

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Even at that time, local sentiment strongly favored erection of a bridge in the Forsyth area, and the 1901 creation of Rosebud County increased the likelihood of construction. (Newspaper articles "boosting" the county's creation often mentioned the need for a Forsyth bridge as a reason for creating the county.) By late 1904 the county's resources were sufficient to undertake the project, and a call for bids was issued. A contract to erect the new bridge, at a cost of \$53,200.00, was awarded to W. S. Hewett and Company of Minneapolis.

William S. Hewett (1864-1951) was one of early twentieth-century Montana's most prolific bridge builders. Hewett began his bridge-building career in 1887 as an employee of his uncle, and in 1897 established his own firm, the W. S. Hewett Bridge Company, which completed numerous projects in the northern plains region. In 1906 Hewett co-founded the Security Bridge Company, which moved to Billings in 1911. He left Security Bridge soon after and moved to Chicago in 1922, constructing pioneering projects using pre-stressed concrete. In somewhat over two decades of business in the state, Hewett and Security Bridge were responsible for the erection of over 40 Montana bridges.

Hewett's crews began work on the new bridge late in 1904, and the spring of 1905 saw work progressing in earnest. The structure was largely complete by late June, and it was decided to stage the bridge's formal ribbon-cutting as a part of Forsyth's annual Fourth of July celebration. The new bridge, decked in banners and flags, was officially opened that morning. The Rea brothers, owners of the huge Cold Springs ranch north of town, drove the first buggy across, and an eager crowd of Forsythians quickly followed on foot.

The bridge's importance was increased by the 1907-08 construction of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad ("the Milwaukee Road") along the north side of the river. The Milwaukee's presence caused a substantial increase in settlement north of the river, as the railroad heavily promoted the area's homestead potential. By the late 1910's a series of small town's were established along the Milwaukee's line and a rudimentary county road connected them with Forsyth. This route soon became known as the "Electric Highway" (after the electric locomotives used on the Milwaukee's western stretches). The Electric Highway began in Forsyth, crossed the Yellowstone River Bridge, and proceeded westerly to Vananda, Ingomar, and Sumatra in northern Rosebud County. The route then continued westward, linking Roundup, Ryegate, Harlowton, White Sulphur Springs and Helena.

Although the Electric Highway was significantly shorter than the competing Yellowstone Trail (U.S. Route 10), it remained a largely unimproved road and attracted little through traffic. Local residents were the road's primary users; most of the road's Rosebud County traffic consisted of rural residents traveling to Forsyth on business or shopping excursions. Pavement began to appear on the Electric Highway by the 1930's, although the Rosebud County segment was the last

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to be improved. When it was finally paved in the 1950's (as State Route 6), Forsyth's Yellowstone River Bridge became a relative bottleneck. State highway funds were received to construct a new concrete bridge several hundred yards upstream. The new span, completed in 1958, crossed both the river and paralleling railroad tracks and included substantial new route alignment both north and south of the span.

The old span was closed after the new bridge's completion. Soon after, county crews removed its decking for re-use on other county-owned bridges. In 1960 the bridge superstructure was sold for scrap to local residents Joseph W. Smith and Robert Shrimplin for \$1,000.00. For an unknown reason, Smith and Shrimplin removed only the bridge's two northerly spans. The third span remains in place today; county officials profess uncertainty about its legal ownership.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre.

UTM References

A	<u>113</u>	<u>36196210</u>	<u>511247610</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary begins at a point on the Forsyth Yellowstone River dike approximately 60 feet north of the northwest corner of Lot 12, Block 10, Original Townsite of Forsyth. It follows the dike southwesterly for 100 feet, then runs northwesterly (paralleling the bridge structure for 200 feet. It then continues northeasterly for 100 feet and southeasterly for 200 feet to the point of beginning.

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Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the significant surviving portion of the bridge and the land immediately surrounding it. It excludes areas where the bridge superstructure has been removed.

See Continuation Sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mark A. Hufstetler

organization _____ date November 1, 1989

street & number 610 Dell Place, #10 telephone (406) 587-9518

city or town Bozeman state Montana zip code 59715

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Major Bibliographical References:

Dietchler, Karen. Forsyth: 100 Years. Forsyth, Montana: Forsyth Independent, [n.d].

Forsyth Independent, September 22, 1960.

Forsyth Times, July 20, 1905.

Historic American Engineering Record: Inventory forms for Yellowstone River Bridges, 1979-80.

Quivik, Frederic L. Historic Bridges in Montana. Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1982.

Rosebud County News, July 6, 1905.