Form NO. 10-300
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME
HISTORIC
Fort Sumner Railroad Bridge

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER Located two miles northwest of Fort Sumner, over the Pecos River, north of Highway 60

CITY. TOWN Fort Sumner
STATE New Mexico

CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY DISTRICT
BUILDING(S) PRIVATE X
STRUCTURE BOTH
OBJECT PUBLIC ACQUISITION

STATUS OCCUPIED
UNOCCUPIED
WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
YES: RESTRICTED
YES: UNRESTRICTED

PRESENT USE
AGRICULTURE
COMMERCIAL
EDUCATIONAL
ENTERTAINMENT
GOVERNMENT
INDUSTRIAL
MILITARY
MUSEUM
PARK
PRIVATE RESIDENCE
RELIGIOUS
SCIENTIFIC
TRANSPORTATION
OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY
NAME Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad
STREET & NUMBER 80 East Jackson Blvd.
CITY. TOWN Chicago
STATE Illinois

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. De Baca County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER

CITY. TOWN Fort Sumner
STATE New Mexico

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties
DATE December 9, 1977

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Historic Preservation Program
CITY. TOWN Santa Fe
STATE New Mexico
The railroad bridge spanning the Pecos River at Fort Sumner is of standard plate-girder design common to the bridge plans adopted by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway at the turn of the century. The structure consists of fifteen one hundred foot Class AA Deck Plate Girders supported by fourteen concrete piers. At its maximum height the bridge measures seventy-seven feet in height. The length of the structure is approximately 1500 feet. The bridge is anchored by two concrete winged abutments, and the piers are jutted on the north base to prevent the collection of debris on the river bed.

The class A Plate Girder Span, the longest in the four classified divisions in this bridge design, were the lowest in cost. The depth provided for the least weight possible under the specifications. Each girder is composed of a web plate, four flange angles, and six cover plates. The top and bottom laterals are single angles riveted to connection plates equipped with plates at the intersections. The one hundred foot girder span holds a maximum flange stress of 130,200 pounds dead load and 344,700 pounds live load.

This standard plate girder bridge is equipped with ballasted floors and the girders are topped by a course of creosoted timber. The timbers measure ten inches in depth and the decking is fourteen feet wide. Walks were placed on each side of the bridge which measure two feet in clear width outside of the ballast deck. The walks are protected by three feet high angle iron hand railings.

Construction of the plate girder over the Pecos River was preceded by the building of a pile and trestle bridge which permitted the laying of track to expedite further westward construction. This structure also served as falsework for the erection of the steel superstructure.

In order to maintain good alignment and a grade suitable for heavy traffic, the gradation work was expensive at the approaches to the crossing of the Pecos River.

Though in constant use for more than seventy years, the Fort Sumner Railroad Bridge stands in very good condition at the present time.
The development of modern Fort Sumner was a direct outgrowth of two important technological advances made in the area at the turn of the century -- the initiation of an irrigation system and the arrival of the railroad.

The foot plate girder bridge built by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway at Fort Sumner proved to be the pivotal project in the railroad's legacy to the community. The bridge is the best preserved construction of this design in the State of New Mexico.

Before the arrival of the Santa Fe (1905-06), the only permanent inhabitants in the area lived in an adobe shanty town located near the old fort. However, following the onset of widespread irrigation and the coming of the railroad, the former community (Sunnyside) was all but abandoned in favor of permanent settlements west of the fort.

The bridge at Fort Sumner was one of the principal engineering works along the renown Belen Cutoff, a route devised by the Santa Fe to circumvent the difficult grading operations required to connect the main Kansas lines with the railroad west of the Rocky Mountains. With the acquisition of the Pecos Valley and Northeastern Railway and the later extension to Amarillo, Texas, a large section of the alternate route was already realized. The only remaining distance was a gap of approximately two hundred miles in eastern New Mexico.

Between 1900 and 1902 a number of railroads, including the Santa Fe Central and the Rock Island, were engaged in active construction in New Mexico, with Albuquerque as one of the potential objectives. Officials of the A.T. & S.F. determined that a crossing at Abo Pass, about twenty-five miles southeast of Belen, would provide the best passage point to the mountains east of the Rio Grande, given the position of the company's existing lines. In mid-1906 a rail line was extended between Texico and Belen. When the project was completed it included 279 miles of track, 249 of which joined Belen and Texico.
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Brief History of Fort Sumner." Court Records, De Baca County, n.d. (Available at De Baca County Courthouse, Fort Sumner, New Mexico)

"The Eastern Railway of New Mexico." Santa Fe Employee's Magazine, Vol. I, No. 6 (May, 1907), 180-96. (Available at Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University)

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4 acres

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
A 13 568080 3815990
B 13 566570 3814900
C 13 566570 3814900
D 13 566570 3814900

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for Fort Sumner Railroad Bridge begins at the eastern end of the embankment construction (UTM reference 13/568080/3815990) and extends to the break in embankment construction across the river (UTM reference: 13/566570/3814900). The boundary includes 30 feet on either side of the track.

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

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
William L. Cumiford, Project Manager

ORGANIZATION
History of Engineering Program

STREET & NUMBER
Box 4089 Texas Tech University

CITY OR TOWN
Lubbock

STATE
Texas

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL X

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

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 1-25-79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 3-19-79
Fort Sumner was one of the towns that developed rapidly after the arrival of the railroad. Prior to the construction of the bridge in 1906, the "town" of Sunny-side consisted of only several saloons, three restaurants and a number of tents. Even though Vaughn became the division point on the route, Fort Sumner continued to flourish following the arrival of the railroad.

The Eastern Railway of New Mexico (Belen Cutoff) is noteworthy not only because it linked the east and west lines of the Rio Grande by a direct, low grade freight line, suitable for heavy transcontinental traffic, but it was also one of the first major construction projects undertaken by the A.T. & S.F. after the company went into receivership at the turn of the century.

The Fort Sumner Railroad Bridge is the most impressive existing structure on the Belen Cutoff route, and is the premier historic engineering feature in De Baca County.

"Santa Fe Splinters." Correspondence Regarding Railroad Development on Microfilm, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Vol. XXIV, 1902. (Available at Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University)

"Santa Fe Splinters." Correspondence Regarding Railroad Development on Microfilm, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Vol. XXVII, 1905-06. (Available at Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University)

Shinkle, James D. *Fort Sumner and the Bosque Redondo Indian Reservation*. Roswell: Hall-Poobbaugh Press, Inc., 1965, p. 85. (Available at Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University)

"Short-Span Railway Bridge Standards." *Engineering Record*, Vol. XLIII, No. 24 (June 15, 1901), 569-70. (Available at Library, Texas Tech University)


"Standard Short-Span Bridges on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway." *Engineering Record*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 20 (November 14, 1903), 598-600. (Available at Library, Texas Tech University)

Stanley, F. E.V. *Sumner - Major-General, United States Army*. Borger, TX: Jim Hess Printers, 1968, pp. 338-39. (Available at Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University)

Interview with Mrs. J.K. Barfield, Librarian, Fort Sumner, June 22, 1977. (Interview notes on file at History of Engineering Program, Texas Tech University)

Interview with Mr. Bob Parsons, Jr., local historian, Fort Sumner, June 22, 1977. (Interview notes on file at History of Engineering Program, Texas Tech University)

Interview with Mr. Jake West, Soil Conservation Service, Fort Sumner, June 22, 1977. (Interview notes on file at History of Engineering Program, Texas Tech University)

Telephone interview with Mr. Leslie Armstrong, Soil Conservation Service, Fort Sumner, June 17, 1977. (Interview notes on file at History of Engineering Program, Texas Tech University)