

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Maxwell Street Bridge
other names/site number Site #AR0356

2. Location

street & number Maxwell Street, east of Jefferson Street not for publication
city or town DeWitt vicinity
state Arkansas code AR county Arkansas code 001 zip code 72042

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets
does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional
comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Maxwell Street Bridge
Name of Property

Arkansas County, Arkansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls N/A

roof N/A
other CONCRETE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B.** removed from its original location.
- C.** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

LOCAL

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ENGINEERING

TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

c. 1910-1961

Significant Dates

c. 1910

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

Maxwell Street Bridge
Name of Property

Arkansas County, Arkansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 653046 3796389 3 _____
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

2 _____ 4 _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Garrett Wright
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date _____
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone _____
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Summary

The Maxwell Street Bridge spans a small creek on the northern edge of DeWitt in Arkansas County, Arkansas. The bridge was built c.1910 as part of an effort to develop roads in the DeWitt area, one of the county seats of Arkansas County. The single-span bridge is constructed of reinforced concrete and has a decorative concrete guardrail.

Elaboration

The Maxwell Street Bridge spans a small creek on the northern edge of DeWitt in Arkansas County, Arkansas. The route of Maxwell Street runs east from Jackson Street until it intersects with Whitehead Drive/Highway 1. Historically, Maxwell Street was the furthest north east-west street in DeWitt, and served as a shortcut between Arkansas Highway 1 and what is now Arkansas Highway 130 (formerly Highway B-6 and Highway 30). The area of the bridge is surrounded by scattered homes and a small area of woods.

The bridge was built c.1910. The single-span bridge is constructed of reinforced concrete and has a decorative concrete guardrail. The bridge was built as part of an effort to develop roads in the area of DeWitt, one of the county seats of Arkansas County.

Maxwell Street Bridge

The Maxwell Street Bridge is a single-span bridge that is 20 feet long and 30 feet wide. The span of the bridge is constructed out of reinforced concrete. In addition, each end of the bridge is supported by reinforced concrete abutments with diagonal, reinforced-concrete wingwalls to the north and south of the bridge. The bridge currently has an asphalt travel surface.

The guardrails of the bridge are also made out of reinforced concrete. The entire span of the bridge is comprised of one panel. Each panel has two incised rectangles on the side. The guardrails are also topped off by projecting caps.

Integrity

The Maxwell Street Bridge retains great integrity and is unaltered from the time of its construction in c.1910. Some graffiti has been written on the northern façade of the north guardrail, but the bridge still exhibits its original construction and still possesses its original decorative characteristics.

The setting around the bridge also reflects its period of significance. DeWitt remains a small town as it was during the 1910s when the bridge was built. The bridge is still open to vehicular traffic.

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Summary

The Maxwell Street Bridge is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** with **local significance** for its association with the development of highway infrastructure in DeWitt and Arkansas County during the 1910s. The Maxwell Street Bridge, which was built c.1910, was part of early efforts to develop a road network in the area of DeWitt, one of the county seats of Arkansas County. It illustrates the importance of providing good infrastructure for automobiles, something that was sometimes difficult in the swampy areas of Eastern Arkansas. Maxwell Street historically served as a shortcut across the north side of DeWitt between Arkansas Highway 1 and the current Arkansas Highway 130 (formerly Highway B-6 and Highway 30). The bridge continues to be used as part of Maxwell Street today.

The Maxwell Street Bridge is also being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C** with **local significance** as a good example of early twentieth-century bridge-building technology. The Maxwell Street Bridge illustrates early reinforced concrete bridge design. The decorative detailing and delicate proportions illustrate the small amount of traffic that the bridge needed to handle along with the limited knowledge of concrete bridge construction available at that time.

Elaboration

European settlement of Arkansas County did not occur until the early nineteenth century. Henri de Tonti established the first trading post in Arkansas at Arkansas Post in 1686.¹ Soon thereafter, French settlers began moving into Arkansas Post and the surrounding region, including land that would eventually become DeWitt.² DeWitt was incorporated into Arkansas County on January 26, 1876. Thanks to the construction of a rail line connecting it to Stuttgart and beyond in the 1880s, DeWitt and its surrounding area began to experience exponential growth. In 1850, the population of DeWitt and surrounding towns was 3,245; in 1889, the population had grown to 11,640.³ With an increasing population came the need to develop more sophisticated transportation networks. In the early 1900s, with the rising popularity of the automobile, this need became more apparent and was acted upon by the people of DeWitt.

Most Arkansas roads prior to statehood were old trails made by Native Americans or hunters. These routes simply followed “the path of least resistance” and avoided harsh terrain. As more permanent settlements were created in Arkansas, transportation developed. More people meant more carts and wagons traveling throughout the state. To accommodate such development, roads needed to be made much wider than the old trails. The federal government and military supported the creation of wider roads, but for their own reasons. Better quality roads would lead to a more fluid transportation and communication network between the eastern centers of commerce and government and the western trading and military posts. Most states,

¹ Kathleen Duval, “Arkansas Post,” *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, available online at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=3>. Accessed June 28, 2010.

² *Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas* (St. Louis: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890), 634-5.

³ Goodspeed, 636.

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including Arkansas, could not provide the labor necessary to construct such roads. Thus, the government used the military to build many “military” roads across the country.⁴

The first road built by Arkansas themselves and not the military was known as John Pyeatt’s Road. This road actually connected to Arkansas County. In 1807, John Pyeatt and his neighbors constructed a road from Cadron to Arkansas Post, passing through Crystal Hill. The road was completed by 1836 (meaning trees had been cleared and ditches had been dug). Despite its completion, however, the road could only be used by horses and light wagons in good weather.⁵

Thanks to pressure from bicyclists and the few automobile owners in the state, the National League for Good Roads was founded in 1892. The Office of Public Road Inquiry was also established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The *Arkansas Gazette* firmly supported this good roads movement and, in 1896, Governor James P. Clarke responded to such widespread support by holding the first Good Roads Convention in Little Rock. At this convention, a ten-man committee was appointed to “act on all matters relating to the good roads movement.”⁶ Perhaps caught up in the spirit of infrastructural reform, the citizens of DeWitt created the “Five Thousand Booster Club” in order to “upbuild” their city and advertise its resources abroad.⁷ The construction of the Maxwell Street Bridge may have been a part of this “upbuilding.”

Problems arose when it came to the actual funding of road and bridge construction, however. City dwellers wanted those in the rural parts of the state to pay for the roads and bridges because they thought the state’s farmers would benefit the most. Ninety-five percent of Arkansas’s population was rural at the time, though, and such ideas were quickly rejected.⁸

The funding situation was clarified in 1899 with the passing of Act 200, which stated that once a county had approved a public road tax, the county court hired one county resident to be the road commissioner. The road commissioner was in charge of dividing the county into several different road districts. Bridges and roads would then be placed in one of two classes. First class roads and bridges were those running centrally through the county and used the most. All other public roads and bridges fell into the second class. First class roads and bridges were constructed before those of the second class and were built and maintained by the county itself. Second class transportation networks were the responsibility of their respective road district’s

⁴ *Arkansas State Highway Commission and Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Office: 1913-1992*, 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁷ J.Y. Henderson, *A Historical Review of Arkansas County* (Publisher unknown, 1968), 34.

⁸ *Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department*, 11.

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overseer. Both kinds of roads were constructed by prisoners.⁹ Due to its location, the Maxwell Street Bridge would have most likely been considered second class.

In the early twentieth century, the Arkansas Highway Department began developing standard bridge plans to be followed across the state. These plans incorporated the need for stronger bridges to carry heavier loads. The *Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of State Lands, Highways and Improvements* stated:

In order to have bridges and structures designed and built to meet present and future traffic and to comply with the Federal aid requirements, it has been necessary during the past two years to revise some of the old standard plans and to make many new plans.

Loads have increased to such an extent that the bridges and culverts upon all main roads must be designed to carry safely a load not less than that of a 10-ton truck, and in many cases a 15-ton truck, together with the impact caused by these heavy loads moving rapidly over the structures.¹⁰

However, most of these new plans called for metal truss bridges. No standard plans for concrete bridges were in development during the 1910s, when the Maxwell Street Bridge was being constructed.¹¹ A plan prepared by the highway department for reinforced concrete culverts finally appeared in the mid-1920s. This plan was used in 1923 and 1924 to construct a total of fifteen culverts across the state—two with eight-foot spans, three with ten-foot spans, and ten with twenty-foot spans.¹² The ten twenty-foot span culverts would have been fairly similar to the Maxwell Street Bridge. Given the fact that the state highway department did not produce standard plans for concrete structures until the mid-1920s illustrates the fact that the North Jackson Street Bridge represents an early example of reinforced-concrete bridge design.

The Maxwell Street Bridge is a good example of Arkansas concrete bridge building in the 1910s. Reinforced concrete bridges became popular mostly for financial reasons. Construction of such bridges used locally available materials such as sand, gravel, and cement. They could also be built by relatively unskilled laborers (such as the prisoners who most likely constructed the Maxwell Street Bridge). Because of the easy materials and labors, construction funds could be kept in the local economy rather than sent to companies in another state or region.¹³

Like many other bridges in the state, the Maxwell Street Bridge has decorative guardrails. The guardrails were also constructed using fairly delicate proportions, which displays the small amount of traffic that the

⁹ Ibid., 11-13.

¹⁰ *Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of State Lands, Highways and Improvements* (publisher unknown, c.1920), 131.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *Fifth Biennial Report of the Department of State Lands, Highways, and Improvements* (publisher unknown, c.1920), 53.

¹³ Donald C. Jackson, *Great American Bridges and Dams* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1988), 37-8.

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bridge was built to handle. Despite the delicate guardrails, the deck is very thick, which reflects early bridge designers' belief that more material led to more strength. This incorrect belief would continue to be used in Arkansas until the late 1920s.

The Maxwell Street Bridge represented an important link in the transportation network of DeWitt and Arkansas County. The 1933 Sanborn map for DeWitt, the first one that shows the north side of the city, indicates that Maxwell Street was the northernmost street that connected Arkansas Highway 1 (formerly Highway B-1) with Arkansas Highway 30 (formerly Highway B-6 and now Arkansas Highway 130). As a result, motorists could use Maxwell Street as an early "bypass" of downtown DeWitt to get from one highway to the other. Even today, Maxwell Street remains an important street in DeWitt, linking Highway 1 on the east side of town with Highway 130 and the DeWitt Middle School on the west side of town. The bridge still remains an excellent and rare example of early reinforced concrete bridge-building technology in the DeWitt area.¹⁴

The Maxwell Street Bridge is somewhat unique in its construction, as it was most likely built before concrete bridges became widely used in Arkansas. The bridge still remains an excellent and rare example of early reinforced concrete bridge-building technology in Arkansas County and may be one of the state's earliest examples of reinforced concrete bridge construction.

Statement of Significance

The Maxwell Street Bridge is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** with **local significance** for its association with the development of highway infrastructure in DeWitt and Arkansas County during the 1910s. The Maxwell Street Bridge, which was built c.1910, was part of early efforts to develop a road network in the area of DeWitt, one of the county seats of Arkansas County. It illustrates the importance of providing good infrastructure for automobiles, something that was sometimes difficult in the swampy areas of Eastern Arkansas. Maxwell Street historically served as a shortcut across the north side of DeWitt between Arkansas Highway 1 and the current Arkansas Highway 130 (formerly Highway B-6 and Highway 30). The bridge continues to be used as part of Maxwell Street today.

The Maxwell Street Bridge is also being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C** with **local significance** as a good example of early twentieth-century bridge-building technology. The Maxwell Street Bridge illustrates early reinforced concrete bridge design. The decorative detailing and delicate proportions illustrate the small amount of traffic that the bridge needed to handle along with the limited knowledge of concrete bridge construction available at that time.

¹⁴ Scoggin, Robert. Telephone conversation with Ralph S. Wilcox. 16 March 2011.

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Bibliography

Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department. *Arkansas State Highway Commission and Arkansas State Transportation Office: 1913-1992*. Little Rock: Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, 1992.

Duval, Kathleen. "Arkansas Post." *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*. Available online at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=3>. Accessed June 28, 2010.

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Henderson, J.Y. *A Historical Review of Arkansas County*. Publisher unknown, 1968.

Jackson, Donald C. *Great American Bridges and Dams*. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1988.

Sanborn Map Company. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for DeWitt, 1913, 1919, and 1933.

Scoggin, Robert. Telephone conversation with Ralph S. Wilcox. 16 March 2011.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point in the center of Maxwell Street 20 feet west of the west end of the Maxwell Street Bridge, the boundary includes the area within 20 feet of each side of the centerline of Maxwell Street to an ending point 20 feet east of the east end of the Maxwell Street Bridge.

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes the Maxwell Street Bridge and its immediate setting.