

CLARENDON MULTIPLE RESOURCE AREA  
MONROE COUNTY

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Survey Number CL-58

Owner Arkansas Highway Department

Property Name Highway 79 Bridge

Address 9500 New Benton Highway

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City Clarendon, AR

Significant Date/s 1930

#### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Highway 79 Bridge over the White River in Clarendon was designed by Ira G. Hedrick working for the Austin Bridge Company of Texas. The 720 Foot steel bridge has reinforced concrete flooring for the two lane highway and has an elevation of 233.9 feet. The steel bridge is a double span warren truss with verticals based on four concrete piers. There are 160 feet between the first and second and between the third and fourth piers. The second and third piers are 400 feet apart. On either side of the steel bridge are massive concrete approaches with 14 x 14 inch square concrete pilings 50 feet long. The approach on the east side covers three blocks, while the approach on the west side is interconnected with dirt fills that span "Old River" and Roc Roe Bayou and is about three miles long.

The entire project cost one and a half million dollars, and was originally a toll bridge to help pay for the cost. Electric lamps once lined the concrete approach on the east side, but they have since been removed.

The nominated portion of the project includes the 720 foot steel bridge over the river and the concrete approach on the east side covering three blocks or approximately 1056 feet. Both of these sections are located in the city limits of Clarendon.

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The highway bridge over the White River in Clarendon was an impressive engineering project, as well as a vital contribution to the growth of not only Clarendon and Monroe County, but also much of Eastern Arkansas. Constructed between 1930 and 1931, the bridge was built by the Austin Bridge Company with a sublet to Williamson and Williamson Bridge Construction. Ford and McCrae were consulting engineers, and Charles Davis was the master mechanic. The steel bridge was originally equipped with electric lights on lamp posts along the side of the bridge. These were later removed.

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The dedication service on June 11, 1931 was a tremendous spectacle, complete with a parade with bands and floats from Brinkley, Stuttgart, Helena, Marianna, Roe, Holly Grove, and Little Rock. Notables present included Justin Matthews of North Little Rock representing the State Highway Commission, Arkansas Governor Harvey Parnell, Harvey C. Couch of Arkansas Power and Light, and officials from the Cotton Belt and Missouri-Pacific Railroads. Originally it was a toll bridge to help pay the 1.5 million dollar cost. It remains one of the most important transportation links between much of Eastern Arkansas and the rest of the state. It was designed by Ira G. Hedric, and the over six hundred workers were supervised by S. A. Pinson and Charles Malone.

Verbal Boundary Description: SE 1/4 of NW 1/4 Section 22, Township 1 North Range 3 West. Beginning with the concrete approach on Highway 79 approximately 1056 feet east of the White River to the end of the steel bridge 720 feet across the White River at its west end.

Acreage: less than one

Quadrangle Name: Clarendon, Ark.

Quadrangle Scale: 1:24000

UTM References:

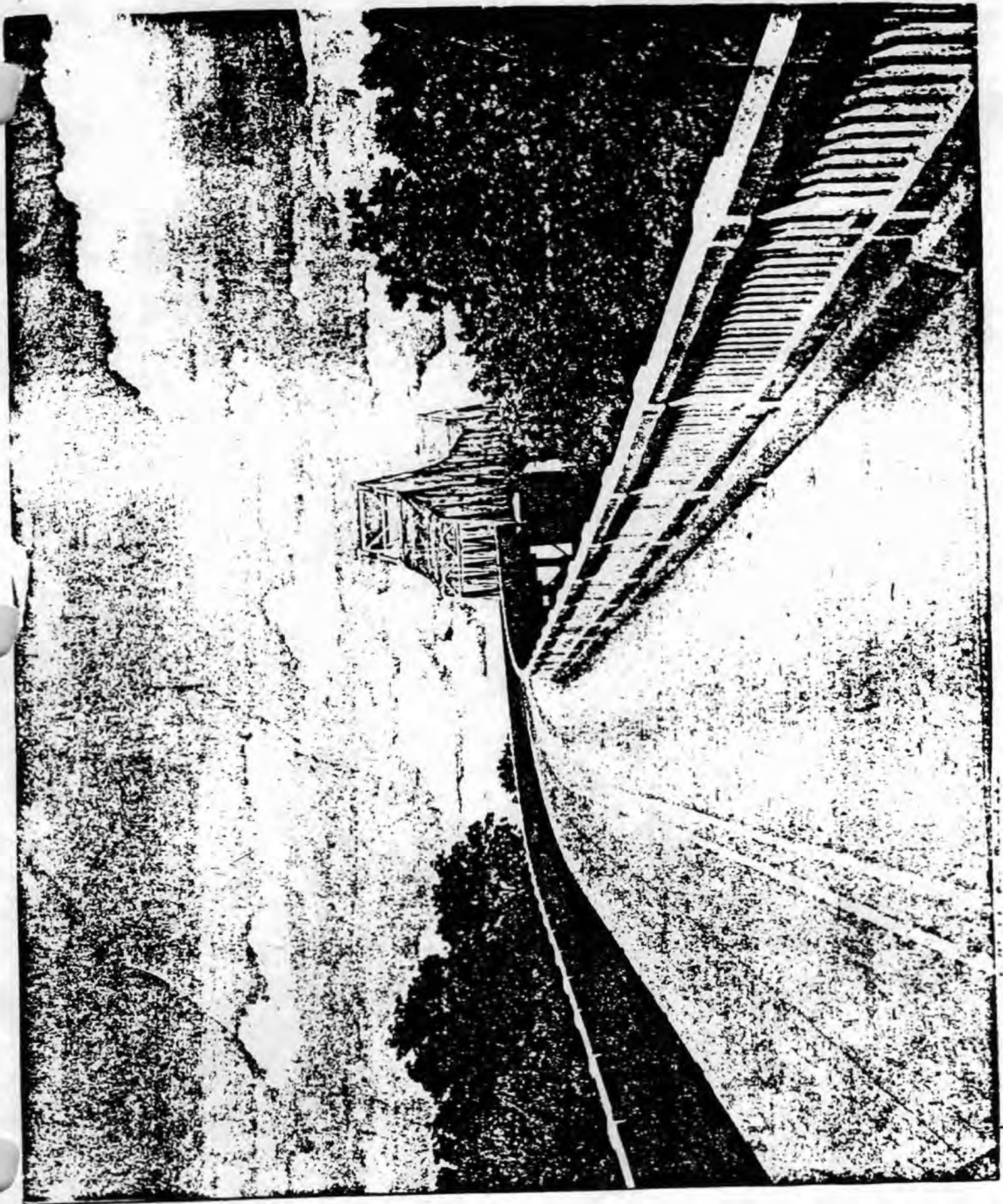
Zone: 15

A) Easting: 654180 Northing: 3839620

B) Easting: 654700 Northing: 3839620



Cl-58 Highway 79 Bridge  
HISTORIC RESOURCES OF CLARENDON  
Jeff Lewellen, photographer  
Negatives at AHPP  
Viewed from the Northeast



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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Highway 79 Bridge Boundary Increase and Additional Documentation

Other names/site number: Site #MO0058

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Clarendon MRA

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: U.S. 79 over the White River

City or town: Clarendon State: Arkansas County: Monroe

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

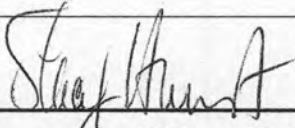
I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

 <hr/> <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b> <u>Arkansas Historic Preservation Program</u> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	<u>7-13-15</u> <hr/> <b>Date</b>
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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<hr/> <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<hr/> <b>Date</b>
<hr/> <b>Title :</b>	<hr/> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
<u>1</u>	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

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)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/Warren Truss

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STEEL, CONCRETE

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

When the Highway 79 Bridge was listed in the National Register on November 1, 1984, the nomination only encompassed the east approach and the steel truss over the White River since those parts of the bridge were located within the city limits of Clarendon. However, the west approach, which is currently almost 1.5 miles of reinforced concrete spans and fill, was not included. Since the entire bridge was built as one project by the Arkansas State Highway Commission (now the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department), this boundary increase seeks to amend the nomination to include the west approach. In addition, it seeks to include a much more detailed history of the bridge and its construction.

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### Narrative Description

The west approach of the Highway 79 Bridge is currently approximately 8,000 feet long, which consists of approximately 2,000 feet of fill and 6,000 feet of bridge structure. (The original project encompassed approximately 9,000 feet more of west approach on fill and bridge structures, but the westernmost portion has been removed as part of the current project to replace the bridge.)



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The concrete bridges are steel stringer bridges with a 24-foot-wide concrete deck and 14-inch square concrete pilings that extend an average of 50 feet into the ground. The spans also have decorative concrete guardrails with concrete bases and caps and square spindles. In addition, the guardrails also have evenly-spaced piers that are slightly taller and deeper than the guardrails and have recessed rectangular panels.

The fill sections consist of built-up sections of earth that allow the road to be above the surrounding river bottoms.

The original sections of the west approach that remain have not been altered since they were completed in 1931. They retain the original piers and guardrails, and even appear to retain their original concrete road surface. The setting of the west approach also reflects the setting that existed in the 1930s, consisting of river bottoms to the west of the White River.

## 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.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery

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- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ENGINEERING  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1930-1931  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1930-1931  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Austin Bridge Company, Builder  
Ira G. Hedrick, Designer  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Highway 79 Bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in on November 1, 1984, under Criterion C for its engineering significance. It was nominated to the National Register under the Clarendon Multiple Resource Area. The Highway 79 Bridge is an excellent example of a double cantilever span in Arkansas, and is one of three that were built in the state. The other two bridges were built at Newport and Augusta (since demolished and replaced).

The additional documentation is intended to present a more complete history of the bridge, its construction, and its importance to the Clarendon area. The boundary increase seeks to include as part of the nomination the bridge's western approach, which was built at the same time as part of the same Arkansas State Highway Commission job. The west approach was not included originally since it was located outside the Clarendon city limits.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

#### **HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY**

The area around Clarendon was initially settled in the first part of the 1800s when Dedrick Pike arrived about 1816. Other settlers soon followed into the area including John A. William, N. T. Harvick, Alfred Mullens, Henry C. Toms, Samuel Martin and Colonel James Harris. The town's location on the White River made it an attractive location to settle. Samuel Martin opened the first store in the community, and also established a ferry across the river about 1836.<sup>1</sup>

In 1819 a post office was established at the site of Clarendon, and it was called "Mouth of the Cache." By 1838, the town had changed its name to Roe Rock or Rockroe, and had become the eastern terminus of a stagecoach line from Little Rock. Passengers transferred to steamboats on the White River at Clarendon to continue their journeys.<sup>2</sup>

Colonel James Harris was also notable in the development of Clarendon, having it surveyed and laid out in 1857, the same year that it was designated the Monroe County seat of government. Although the Civil War decimated the community so that "not a building was left, and at the close of that struggle, the site was completely covered with weeds," it was soon rebuilt after the War.<sup>3</sup>

By the late nineteenth-century, Clarendon boasted a population "of 800 to 1,000," and Goodspeed noted that the community contained:

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<sup>1</sup> *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890, pp. 509 and 512.

<sup>2</sup> West, Elliott. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1987 reprint of 1941 publication, pp. 342-343.

<sup>3</sup> *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890, pp. 512-513.

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...fourteen general stores, three groceries, two drug stores, a meat market, an undertaking shop, two blacksmith and wagon shops, an extensive feed and farm implement store, where wagons are also kept for sale, two cotton gins, a grist-mill and machine shop, a large stave factory, ...a lumber yard, three hotels and a hotel kept by and for colored folks, several boarding houses, three churches (Methodist, Presbyterian, and Cumberland Presbyterian) for the whites, and two churches (Methodist and Baptist) for the blacks, a very large frame school-house for the white people, and a comfortable one for the colored people. In addition to the foregoing, there are the county buildings, railroad depots, express and telegraph offices and several other important places of business.

Interestingly, even though Clarendon was the county seat, and also had the extensive commercial activity noted by the late 1800s, the town was not incorporated.<sup>4</sup>

Discussions for constructing a bridge across the White River at Clarendon began in the 1920s. By 1926, as part of plans to improve Highway 3 (the current U.S. 79), Harry E. Bovay was given a franchise to build a bridge near Clarendon. Bovay was already involved in constructing other bridges in the region, but, for some reason, the bridge was never built. Furthermore, Bovay seemed to no longer be involved in any project to build a bridge across the river at Clarendon.<sup>5</sup>

By the late 1920s, there was apparently still no concrete decision on where a bridge was going to be built, although plans to construct a bridge were still moving forward. On November 21, 1929, an article in the *Monroe County Sun* reported:

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, we called the Highway Department and asked them for a definite statement as to the status of the bridge across the river here.

Mr. Christian, the chief engineer said the question of consolidating with the Cotton Belt railway was still under consideration, and that a definite decision would be reached within the next thirty days.

If the Cotton Belt-Highway bridge did not materialize, he said the highway department would proceed with construction of an independent bridge at a site already selected at a point a few miles below the present railway bridge.

<sup>4</sup> *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890, p. 513.

<sup>5</sup> Steen, Kathryn, and Corinne Smith. "Historic American Engineering Record, Clarendon Bridge, HAER No. AR-49." Arkansas Historic Bridge Recording Project, 1988. In the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, p. 3.

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The thirty days have almost elapsed, and we hope soon to have some definite information to announce.<sup>6</sup>

When Bovay was involved in the potential project to build a bridge at Clarendon, he had planned on a site four miles downstream from Clarendon. However, constructing a bridge at Clarendon would be more convenient to the town's residents, although it would necessitate the building of the western approach over Roc Roe Bayou and twice over an old river bed. However, in March 1930 a decision was made to cross the river at Clarendon, even given the length of western approach that would be needed.<sup>7</sup> This decision was further reported in June 1930 when *The Brinkley Argus* noted that "Justin Matthews of the Highway Commission spoke and gave assurance of the building of a bridge across [the] White River at or near Clarendon, with contract to be let June 1. He said the bridge would be built north of the Cotton Belt Bridge at Clarendon and that 2 miles of concrete approach would be necessary for the bridge."<sup>8</sup>

The construction of the bridge at Clarendon was most welcome news for Monroe County, especially during the beginning of the Depression years. One article noted that "Never in the history of Monroe County has there been such a prodigious building program as is now going on by the State Highway Department."<sup>9</sup> Another article, on the other hand, was a little more colorful in its reporting, noting:

For those who have had the blues over the bad crop prospects in Monroe County and the low price of cotton, the Argus would jar the gloom bugs away by reminding you that the State Highway Department will spend during the next twelve months as much, if not more than the entire cotton crop will amount to right here in Monroe County and the enormous sum of money is to be spent in the Holly Grove, Clarendon and Brinkley-Wheatley territory, and not in one section alone.

...

The million and a half dollar contract on the Clarendon bridge, the other road work south of Holly Grove together with the several other contracts already let on the Broadway of America brings the actual amount that is sure to be spent this year in this county alone up to more than all of the cotton crop that will be raised in Monroe County this year.

The actual work is in progress and contractors are pouring in their machinery, teams, etc., getting into the swing.

...

<sup>6</sup> "Still No News on Highway Bridge." *Monroe County Sun*. 21 November 1929, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Steen, Kathryn, and Corinne Smith. "Historic American Engineering Record, Clarendon Bridge, HAER No. AR-49." Arkansas Historic Bridge Recording Project, 1988. In the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> "Clarendon Bridge Now Assured Them." *The Brinkley Argus*. 6 March 1930, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> "Highway Big Doings Millions of Dollars." *The Brinkley Argus*. 12 June 1930, p. 1.

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This is the most unusual year in Monroe County's history.  
Come on, ring the joy bells.<sup>10</sup>

The bids for the bridge were received in May 1930 and a total of ten bids were received for the project. The contract was ultimately awarded to the Austin Bridge Company of Dallas, Texas, whose bid of \$1,532,572.50 was the lowest bid for the job, State Job No. 199. The State Highway Commissions biennial report noted that the job would have a working time of 400 calendar days.<sup>11</sup>

Although the Austin Bridge Company was awarded the contract for the construction of the Clarendon bridge, part of the construction was sublet to the Raymond Concrete Pile Company of Chicago. The Raymond Concrete Pile Company became locally famous for driving the needed pre-cast concrete pilings in a record amount of time. They drove all of the pilings in a record fifty-nine days, and they were able to accomplish the phenomenal speed due to the use of the only steam Whirley derrick built south of the Mason-Dixon line, and also because of the drought conditions that caused the river's level to be much lower than normal. Of course, the fact that Charles E. Malone, the pile-driving foreman, was getting married in late September may have also contributed to the speed.<sup>12</sup>

Since the Clarendon bridge was initially a toll bridge, the project also included the construction of a three-story tollkeeper's house at the base of the east approach. Cars traveling in each direction paid tolls, and the tolls were collected from an island in between the two travel lanes. Two men, one each from Clarendon and Brinkley, were chosen to be the custodians of the bridge, which was reported in *The Brinkley Argus*. The paper noted that "News was current in Brinkley this morning that J. E. Pinkley of Clarendon and a prominent Brinkley citizen had been selected as custodians in charge of the Clarendon Bridge."<sup>13</sup>

Although three died during the construction of the bridge – two from falling from the bridge and one drowning while working on a pier – the bridge was an economic blessing for Clarendon. Bridge workers made 25-30 cents an hour, truck drivers could haul more freight as a result of the construction work, and anyone who had an apartment or room for rent could easily find a tenant.

<sup>10</sup> "Greatest Year in County's History – Millions of Dollars to be Spent Here." *The Brinkley Argus*. 19 June 1930, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Steen, Kathryn, and Corinne Smith. "Historic American Engineering Record, Clarendon Bridge, HAER No. AR-49." Arkansas Historic Bridge Recording Project, 1988. In the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, p. 4 and Arkansas State Highway Commission. *Ninth Biennial Report of the Arkansas State Highway Commission*. Russellville, AR: Russellville Printing Company, 1930, pp. 198-199.

<sup>12</sup> Steen, Kathryn, and Corinne Smith. "Historic American Engineering Record, Clarendon Bridge, HAER No. AR-49." Arkansas Historic Bridge Recording Project, 1988. In the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, pp. 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Steen, Kathryn, and Corinne Smith. "Historic American Engineering Record, Clarendon Bridge, HAER No. AR-49." Arkansas Historic Bridge Recording Project, 1988. In the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, p. 5, and "Clarendon Man One of Big Bridge Custodians." *The Brinkley Argus*. 4 June 1931, p. 1.

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The bridge provided many more opportunities than the drought-stricken farms in the county at the time.<sup>14</sup>

However, the hard work of all involved in the bridge's construction ultimately paid off. Although 400 calendar days was the estimated time needed to complete the bridge, "the entire structure, under the direction of engineer S. A. Pinson, was completed and presented to the Highway Department April 23, 1931, with the construction process taking less than a year." With the construction of the bridge completed, the only thing left to do was plan a celebration for the bridge's opening.<sup>15</sup>

Not only would the opening of the bridge necessitate a big celebration, but it seemed that planning for the big day also needed celebrating. It was reported that:

Clarendon put on a big banquet Monday night and invited her neighbors and friends, representative citizens from Pine Bluff, Camden, Jonesboro, Little Rock, Helena, Marianna, Forrest City, Hickory Ridge, Blackton, Roe, Monroe, Holly Grove and Brinkley. They were invited to join Clarendon in laying plans for the opening of the great White River Highway 3 bridge which is to come about June 11th.

The C. of C. Sec'y. J. E. Pinkley was in charge of the banquet which was served at the New South Inn at 7 o'clock Monday night. A splendid dinner was served and at 8 o'clock a program of music began lasting another hour after which Mr. J. T. Bateman introduced the guests of the evening and welcomed them.

The tentative program suggested an opening day of the great million and a half [dollar] Bridge, includes an Air Circus, Coronation of a Queen following a Parade of Floats, a big dance on the bridge, Speed boat races, etc. ...<sup>16</sup>

The committee that was to oversee all of the arrangements for the bridge's opening celebrations was put under the city of Clarendon's charge. By doing that, the funds that were collected through the sale of concessions licenses helped to defray the costs of the celebrations. Due to the number of visitors and cars expected, many of Clarendon's streets were closed for the festivities. However, it was reported, "several large vacant lots will be used for parking spaces and each will be in charge of an attendant officer. The cars will be parked in an orderly manner, that will

<sup>14</sup> Steen, Kathryn, and Corinne Smith. "Historic American Engineering Record, Clarendon Bridge, HAER No. AR-49." Arkansas Historic Bridge Recording Project, 1988. In the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Steen, Kathryn, and Corinne Smith. "Historic American Engineering Record, Clarendon Bridge, HAER No. AR-49." Arkansas Historic Bridge Recording Project, 1988. In the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, pp. 5-6.

<sup>16</sup> "Clarendon Plans for the Big Day June 11." *The Brinkley Argus*. 25 March 1931, p. 1.

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permit free entry and leaving at all times, and a small fee will be charged those who park on these lots.”<sup>17</sup>

Although the planning of the celebration of the opening of the bridge began in March, by May it was noted that “work on the gigantic day’s program is progressing smoothly, and indications now are that the entire day will be filled with entertainment and excitement.” In addition, “contracts have been let to a Memphis firm for the decoration of the queen and maids’ floats, and for the decorations of the streets and the bridge.”<sup>18</sup>

By the end of May, the program was finalized and announced in the *Monroe County Citizen*. As the newspaper reported on May 28, 1931:

The program for the day is full and consists of the following events:

10:00 a. m. Floats and parade assemble in units of towns taking part.

10:30 a. m. Coronation of Queen and Dedication Address at the County Fair building, by Dwight H. Blackwood. (The Queen and Maids of Honor will all be on the platform with the speaker.)

11:30 a.m. Parade starts for the Bridge, led by the National Guard Band of Marianna.

11:45 a. m. Queen and Maids’ Floats stop in center of the bridge for christening ceremony.

12:15 to 2 p. m. Ball game, Clarendon vs. Helena.

1:00 p. m. Parade returns and disbands for luncheon.

2:00 p. m. Addresses by speakers at the Fair building.

3:30 p. m. Air Circus, by the 14 planes of the State Aeronautical Department.

3:30 p. m. Delayed parachute jump by Buddy Rhodes.

3:30 p. m. Boat Races on the White River.

5:00 p. m. Swimming races in White River to conclude with a high dive of 75 feet from the driveway of the new bridge into White River by A. Roberts, stunt man of Cairo, Ill.

6:30 p. m. Luncheon, rest, change costumes for Queen’s Ball.

9:00 p. m. Queen’s Ball at the County Fair Building. Dance music by Sam Lazerov’s Silver Slipper orchestra, of Memphis.

12:00 p. m. Midnight; the Queen and Maids of Honor to lead the Grand March.

2:00 a. m. Good Night.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> “Bridge Committee Given Full Charge.” *Monroe County Sun*. 14 May 1931, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> “Bridge Committee Given Full Charge.” *Monroe County Sun*. 14 May 1931, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> “Bridge Celebration at Clarendon June 11 to be Big Affair.” *Monroe County Sun*. 28 May 1931, pp. 1 and 4.



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The citizens of Clarendon were ecstatic to have the bridge finally opened and have all of the excitement and visitors in their community. The June 11, 1931, issue of the *Monroe County Sun* printed a greeting from the mayor which read:

Welcome, Visitors!

We wish to welcome each of you to our City today, to help us celebrate the opening of the new Million and a Half Dollar State Highway Bridge across White River at Clarendon.

We appreciate your presence, and it is our sincere desire that each one of you may go away feeling that the day has been well spent, and with a desire to return again to visit within our city.

The City is open to you. Make yourself at home and enjoy the day to the fullest.

Cordially Yours,  
A. J. Gannon, Mayor<sup>20</sup>

The paper also praised the workers who helped to build the bridge, not only for their work on the bridge, but also for their morals and their contributions to the Clarendon community. It reported:

The personnel of all the contractors field forces was composed of gentlemen of the highest type, and the workmen were also orderly and well-behaved in most instances, so much so in fact that the "rough crowd" that some of our citizens at first expected on a job of this size, failed to materialize, and the job was finished with perfect harmony existing between the men and our citizens.

The major contracting firms contributed to our Chamber of Commerce during the time the work was going on here, and helped just as do our everyday citizens, and we desire to make this public acknowledgement of this fair minded part played by them. Materially, the payrolls of the bridge men helped us through one of the most trying times in the history of the country, and we would be glad to have them back with us for another year or more.<sup>21</sup>

Although the bridge's large celebration occurred on June 11, 1931, the bridge had been open to traffic (without tolls) prior to the date. *The Brinkley Argus* reported that they "Drove down to the big Bridge and it is a marvelous mechanical creation of steel and concrete. Hundreds of Brinkleyites having been driving down and over it on the past several days of free inspection and everyone of them wonder at its magnificence."<sup>22</sup> As the HAER report for the bridge noted, "the

<sup>20</sup> Various articles. *The Monroe County Sun*. 11 June 1931, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> "Records Smashed On This Bridge Job." *The Monroe County Sun*. 11 June 1931, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> "Clarendon's Gala Day; Brinkley Closes to Go." *The Brinkley Argus*. 11 June 1931, p. 1.

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sheer size of the Clarendon Bridge is its most notable feature” and it surely would have been a sight to behold for those who visited Clarendon to see it.<sup>23</sup>

The citizens of Clarendon had put a lot of work into the festivities that helped to celebrate the completion and opening of the great bridge over the White River, but all of the hard work paid off. As *The Brinkley Argus* reported:

The thousands of people from all over Arkansas who flocked to Clarendon on Thursday, June 11<sup>th</sup> were all a unit in pronouncing the affair and day a glorious success.

The great bridge in all of its magnificent proportions, paid those who went to see it, and then the speaking, crowning of the queen, and stunt attractions were all the Clarendon people had promised it should be.

The address of U. S. Senator Joe T. Robinson was the crowning piece of the day, tho’ Gov. Brough and Gov. Parnell also added to the day’s attractions with speeches.

Judge R. F. Milwee served as Master of Ceremonies and introduced the speakers and did a fine job of it.

The crowd that thronged every nook and corner of Clarendon was variously estimated at from 10,000 to 25,000. They were scattered in every direction. ...

The crowning of the beautiful Queen, Miss Elizabeth Bateman, of Clarendon was a charming feature, and two pretty Monroe County girls, Miss Rose Kathrine Milwee of Brinkley, and Miss Gertie Mayo of Holly Grove, officiated in a prominent way in Miss Elizabeth’s coronation.

The golden bottle of sparkling Clarendon champagne, pure water, was provided for the queen to break on the bridge christening, by Mrs. S. A. Parks, one of Clarendon’s pioneer ladies, 86 years old.

...  
It was a day that will live long in the lives of our people, and *The Argus* congratulates our splendid Clarendon neighbors for their happy success.<sup>24</sup>

After the celebrations were over and the bridge was open for regular traffic, the Clarendon bridge remained a toll bridge until 1938. By that point, earning revenue was no longer one of the bridge’s objectives. Furthermore, 1937 Federal legislation allowed Arkansas to get reimbursement from the Federal Bureau of Public Roads for half the cost of certain bridges, as

<sup>23</sup> Steen, Kathryn, and Corinne Smith. “Historic American Engineering Record, Clarendon Bridge, HAER No. AR-49.” Arkansas Historic Bridge Recording Project, 1988. In the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> “Clarendon’s Big Bridge Celebration Was a Grand Success in Every Way.” *The Brinkley Argus*. 18 June 1931, p. 1.

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long as the state would remove the tolls. As a result, after a special session had been called on April 1, 1938, all state-owned bridges became toll free. Since 1938, the Clarendon bridge has been toll free and has remained an important crossing of the White River in East Arkansas.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY**

The Highway 79 Bridge was listed on the National Register under Criterion C for its engineering significance. Although the main span of the bridge and the east approach are important for their design and engineering that allowed the White River to be spanned, the west approach was just as important in its engineering and in its integral part in the bridge's original design. The west approach, at over two miles long, was also an engineering feat that allowed the highway to span two crossings of the old river along with Roc Roe Bayou. The importance in the construction of the west approach was even noted at the time of its construction. The Raymond Concrete Pile Company became locally famous for driving the needed pre-cast concrete pilings in a record amount of time. They drove all of the pilings in a record fifty-nine days, and they were able to accomplish the phenomenal speed due to the use of the only steam Whirley derrick built south of the Mason-Dixon line.

The Highway 79 Bridge, including the west approach, was constructed as one project, State Job No. 199, by the Arkansas State Highway Commission in 1930 and 1931. As a result, it only makes sense that the west approach should be included as part of the listed property. The west approach also meets Criterion C for its engineering significance, especially in the larger context of the entire bridge.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)  
Arkansas State Highway Commission. *Ninth Biennial Report of the Arkansas State Highway Commission*. Russellville, AR: Russellville Printing Company, 1930.

“Beauty Reigns at Clarendon’s Bridge Carnival.” *The Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee)*. 12 June 1931, p. 1.

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“Bridge Celebration at Clarendon June 11 to be Big Affair.” *Monroe County Sun*. 28 May 1931, pp. 1 and 4.

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“Clarendon Plans for the Big Day June 11.” *The Brinkley Argus*. 25 March 1931, p. 1.

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“Still No News on Highway Bridge.” *Monroe County Sun*. 21 November 1929, p. 1.

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“United States Senator Joe T. Robinson to Speak at Clarendon’s Great Bridge Celebration.” *The Brinkley Argus*. 4 June 1931, p. 1.

Various articles. *The Monroe County Sun*. 11 June 1931, p. 1.

West, Elliott. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1987 reprint of 1941 publication.

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** MO0058

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### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 12 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

#### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 | Easting: 654124 | Northing: 3839824 |
| 2. Zone: 15 | Easting: 653553 | Northing: 3839659 |
| 3. Zone: 15 | Easting: 653108 | Northing: 3838856 |
| 4. Zone: 15 | Easting: 652272 | Northing: 3838330 |

#### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Beginning at UTM 15/654124/3839824 at the eastern end of the main span of the Highway 79 Bridge, the boundary follows U.S. 79 to UTM point 15/652272/3838330 at the western end of the western bridge structure of the west approach. The boundary extends 13 feet on each side of the highway centerline.

#### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This boundary contains the remaining western approach to the Highway 79 Bridge.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator  
organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program  
street & number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500  
city or town: Little Rock state: AR zip code: 72201  
e-mail: ralph@arkansasheritage.org  
telephone: (501) 324-9787  
date: June 6, 2015

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Highway 79 Bridge

City or Vicinity: Clarendon

County: Monroe State: Arkansas

Photographer: Ralph S. Wilcox

Date Photographed: June 5, 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 12 . View of the east approach, looking west.

2 of 12 . View of the main span, looking west.

3 of 12 . View of the eastern bridge span of the west approach at the west end of the main span, looking southwest.

4 of 12 . View of the fill portion of the west approach, looking southwest.

5 of 12 . View of the western bridge span of the west approach, looking southwest.

6 of 12 . View of the western end of the western bridge span of the west approach, looking northeast.

7 of 12 . Guardrail detail on the western bridge span of the west approach, looking southeast.

8 of 12 . View of the western end of the western bridge span of the west approach, looking northeast.

9 of 12 . Guardrail detail on the eastern bridge span of the west approach, looking northeast.



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10 of 12. View of the plaque the east approach, looking southwest.

11 of 12. View of the main span, looking southwest.

12 of 12. View of the main span, looking northwest.

**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 listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

# Highway 79 Bridge Boundary Increase Monroe County, Arkansas

↑ North

East end of Highway 79 Bridge Boundary Increase

Photo 3

Photo 9

Photo 4

Photo 5

Previously listed portion of the Highway 79 Bridge

Photo 11

Photo 2

Photo 10

Photo 1

Photo 12

Photos 6-8

West end of Highway 79 Bridge Boundary Increase

2134 ft

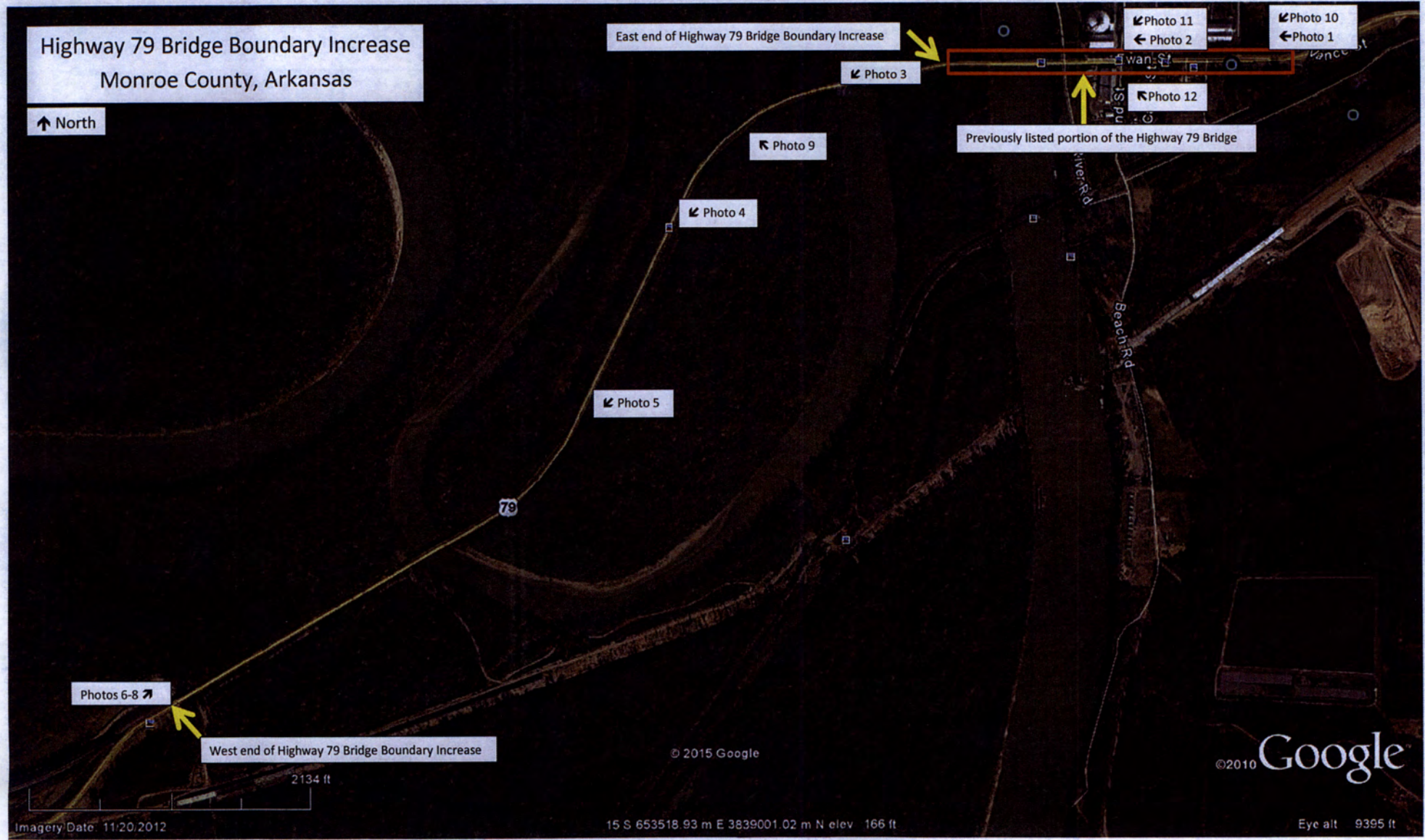
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15 S 653518.93 m E 3839001.02 m N elev 166 ft

Eye alt 9395 ft

Imagery Date: 11/20/2012





WEIGHT  
LIMIT  
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RIVER

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11-10



















A.S.  
285

1908  
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