

62-27-3097-73

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NR 9-15-77

RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

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

Old River Bridge

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

River Road and Saline River

CITY, TOWN

Benton

STATE

Arkansas

VICINITY OF

CODE

05

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

COUNTY

Saline

CODE

125

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Saline County

STREET & NUMBER

Saline County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Benton

STATE

Arkansas

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Circuit Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER

Saline County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Benton

STATE

Arkansas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old River Bridge in Saline County spans the Saline River southwest of Benton on the Old Military Road.

The river's width is breached by two separate spans resting on six concrete filled cylindrical columns constructed on iron plate. From these columns spring the iron "flat" trusses of each span.

The trusses' vertical compression members are open webbed columns of riveted channel and plate. The vertical tension members are round iron rods connected with pinned connections. Top and bottom chords of the truss forms are box beams with webbs of channel iron and riveted iron plate flanges.

Each span consists of two truss configurations connected by "I" beams supporting the wooden roadway between.

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1889

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The beginning of the building of bridges implied a fair degree of civilization and intelligence. It sprang from a desire to maintain and extend an orderly way of life with ready communication from place to place. The bridge, specifically, was a symbol of man's conquest of the river. Not only a channel for human migration and commerce, the river was a challenge and barrier to overcome. Bridges, like fire, represented an expansive force of man's conquest of nature.

It is not known when the first bridge was constructed, but at some time in the past, man lowered a log across a stream and built the first bridge. The oldest bridge on record was built in Egypt across the Nile River by Pharaoh Menes of the First Dynasty about 2650 B.C.

It was not until the 18th century that the first iron bridge was constructed. Designed by Thomas Pritchard, this bridge was constructed in 1779 at the village of Coalbrookdale, England. Iron bridges were slow to take hold in popularity. Although they were cheaper to construct than stone bridges, engineers had doubts about the structural safety of iron bridges. In the later part of the 18th century Scotsman Thomas Telford brought about a general adoption of iron bridges through his construction of several sound iron bridges.

The Old River Bridge in Saline County, Arkansas, is a significant historical structure as one of the oldest remaining bridges in the state. Constructed in 1889 at a cost of \$5,000, this iron bridge over the Saline River represents a great deal of the history of the county.

The first recorded settler in Saline County was William Lockhart who came from North Carolina in 1815. After deciding that he did not want to settle his family around Little Rock he roved south along the Missouri Trail (later named "The Military Road"). At the point where the trail crossed the Saline River Lockhart chose to settle. For two years the Lockharts were the only settlers in the entire area. By 1819 a settlement consisting of about ten families had been established at the point where the trail crossed the Saline River. In 1827 Ezra M. Owen established a small settlement west of the Saline River and named

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it Collegeville. Early in 1831 a post office was established at the "crossing of the Saline" with William Lockhart as postmaster. The settlement was officially named "Saline."

The "Old Missouri Trail" became important as the connection between Collegeville and Little Rock and as a main road through the county.

It was made a military road in 1824 and there were constant requests for Congress to appropriate funds to improve it. In the early 1830's all that had been done to change the road from a barely passable trail was cutting of timber for the right of way. The argument was made to Congress that it was the main artery of travel from St. Louis and Memphis southwest into Texas and Mexico, and therefore a national concern. Besides a rough path to follow, the Saline River posed a problem, for during several months of the year it was impossible to ford it. In 1831 the Arkansas Legislature passed a law giving to William Lockhart an exclusive right to construct and operate a toll bridge over the Saline River at the point where it was crossed by the Military Road. The passage rates to be charged were to be fixed by "the proper court." Lockhart was to keep the bridge in good repair for the duration of this twenty year franchise.

The significance of the Military Road is exemplified by an article appearing in the November 30, 1830, Arkansas Gazette reading:

"The road on this side of the Mississippi is full of movers - principally emigrating toward the western counties of this Territory. The throng at the ferry at Memphis, we understand, is sometimes so great that movers are not unfrequently detained a day or two before their turn for crossing over arrives.* * * * The emigrants by this route are principally from Tennessee, Alabama, the Carolinas, and Georgia - and we learn from travelers that the rage for emigration to Arkansas from those States is still increasing.* * * * If the emigration to Arkansas continues at the rate it has for the last year, it will not be many years before our population will entitle us to an honorable admission into the Union without the necessity of "squeezing in", as some are anxious that we should do at the present time.* * * *It is estimated that 1500 souls have crossed at that ferry since last spring, who were destined for Washington county."

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Lockhart was actively involved in making his community important. Through his efforts, within a four month period of time in 1831, a contract had been let for "cutting out and opening the road", the toll bridge franchise and the establishment of a post office on the site.

In 1830 a settlement five miles up the river had been started by Charles Caldwell. Benton, as it came to be known, began to grow and was named the county seat at the formation of Saline County in 1835. This expanded the importance of the Military Road but slowly lead to the decline of settlement in Lockhart's "Saline."

In 1889 the Saline County Court appropriated \$5,000 for the construction of an iron bridge over the Saline River at the Military Road Crossing. Constructed in that year, the bridge remained in use until April of 1974 when a truck loaded with concrete blocks severely damaged the floor of the bridge.

The community of Benton recognizes the historical value of the bridge and the site which it occupies and is taking steps to place there a marker with a sketch of the history of the site. Plans are also being made to utilize the bridge as a walkable reminder of the significance of the site.

As one of the oldest standing bridges in Arkansas, and as an area of strong historical significance, the Old River Bridge serves as a local landmark in Saline County.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Benton Courier, Centennial Edition, 1937.
 Benton Courier, April 16, 1974.
 Billings, Henry. Bridges. New York: Viking Press, 1956.
 Demuth, David. Telephone interview, October 28, 1976.
 Goodspeed Publishing Company. Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Central Arkansas. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1890.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 5	5, 3, 6, 0, 7, 0	3, 8, 2, 1, 9, 8, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

[Faint, illegible text describing the boundary]

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Dan Chapel, Architect and Sandra Taylor, Historian	DATE
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program	12-14-76
Suite 500, Continental Building, Main and Markham	TELEPHONE
Little Rock	501-371-2763
	STATE
	Arkansas

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

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 *Anne Bartley*

DATE 12-14-76

State Historic Preservation Officer

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: _____ DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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1 NAME

HISTORIC

Old River Bridge

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

COUNTY

STATE

Benton

Saline

Arkansas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Bob Dunn

DATE OF PHOTO July, 1976

NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

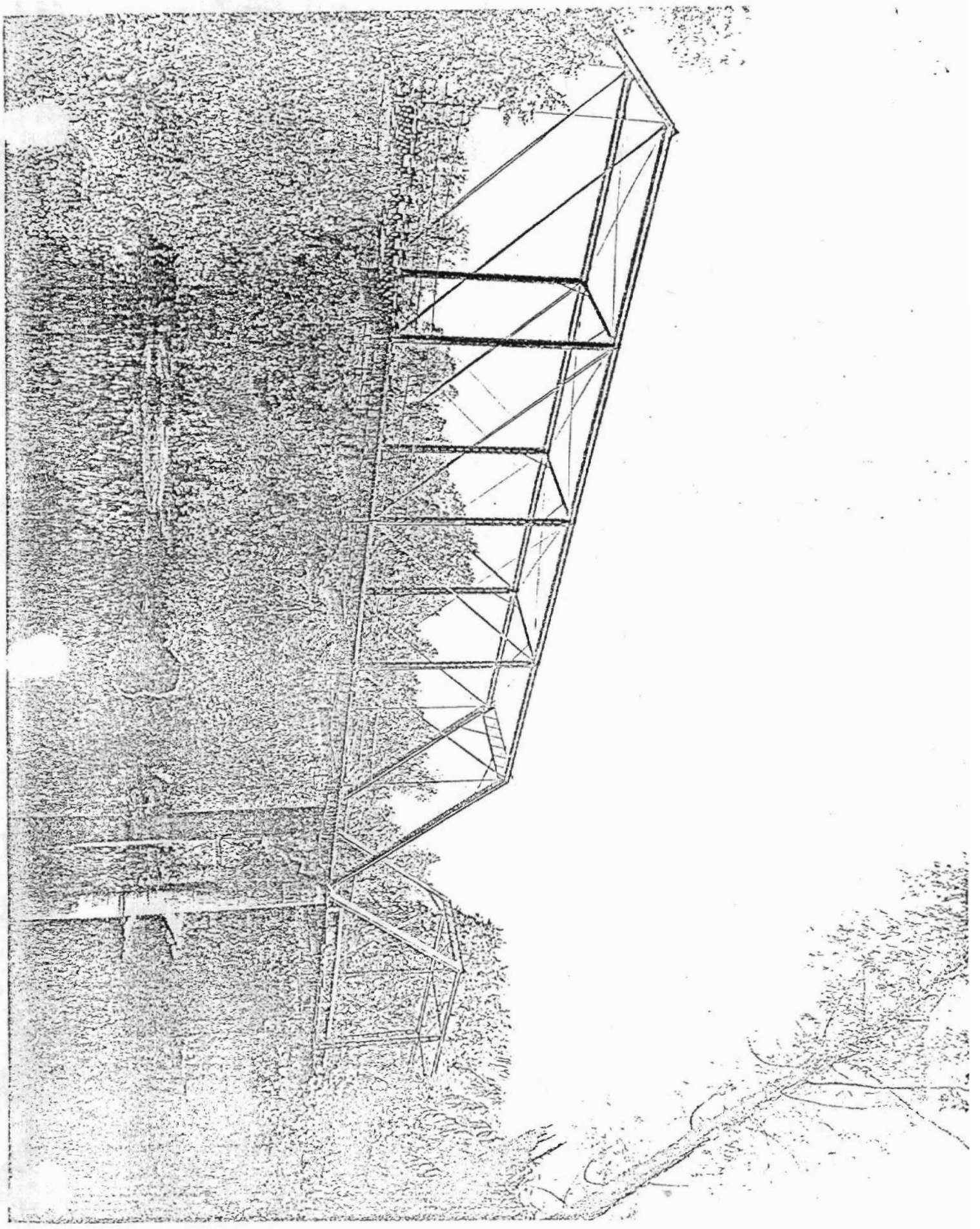
4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

Viewed from the northwest.

PHOTO NO.

1



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PROPERTY MAP FORM

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1 NAME

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Benton

VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Saline

STATE

Arkansas

3 MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE United States Geological Survey

SCALE 1:24,000

DATE 1944 (photo revised 1970)

4 REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES

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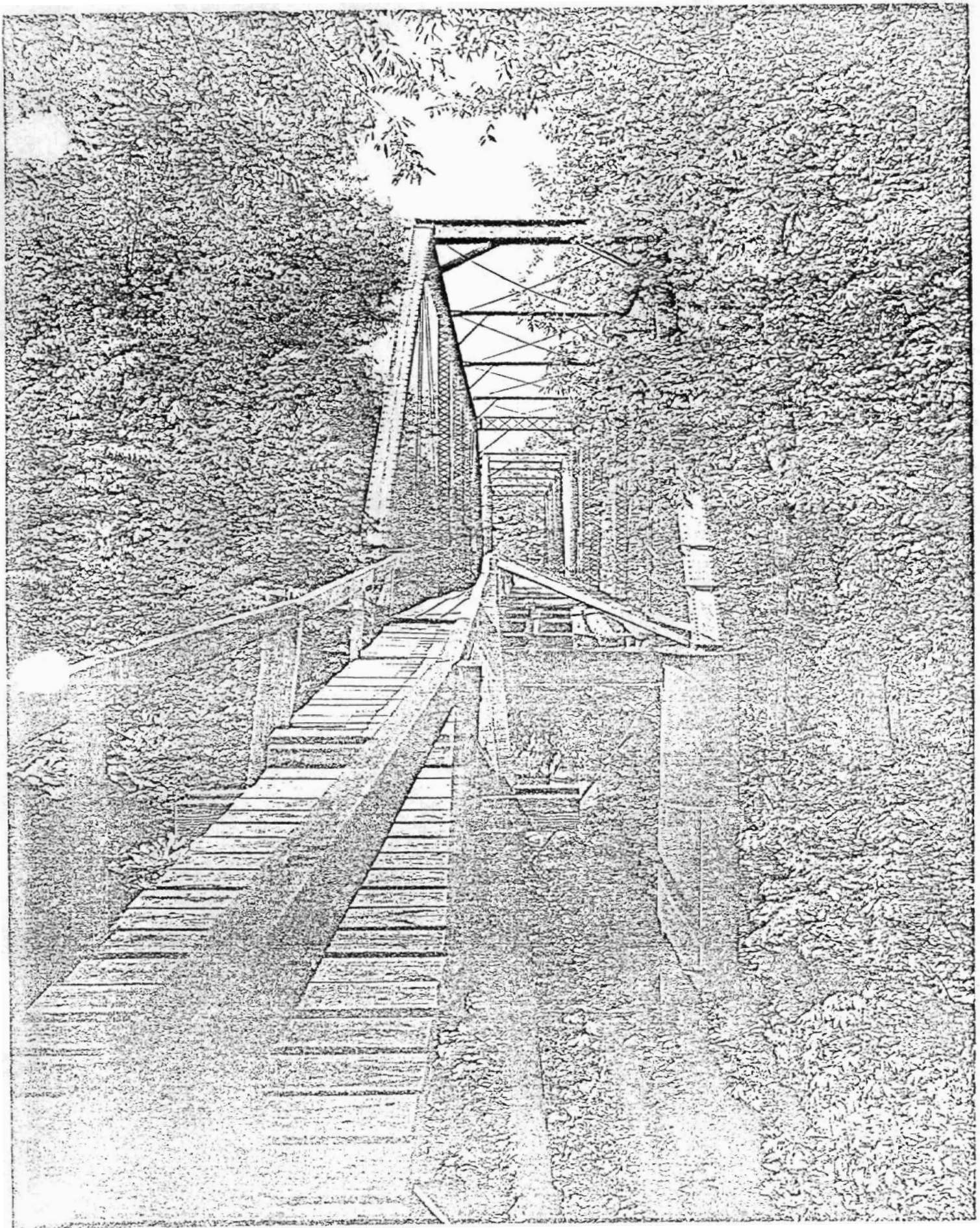
4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

Vertical span support.

PHOTO NO

4




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 **NAME**

HISTORIC Old River Bridge

AND/OR COMMON

 **LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN	<u>X</u> VICINITY OF	COUNTY	STATE
Benton		Saline	Arkansas


 **PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT Bob Dunn DATE OF PHOTO July, 1976

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 **IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT. GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

Viewed from the south. PHOTO NO. 3



