

Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex, Steel Bridge  
5101 Minnehaha Avenue South  
Minneapolis  
Hennepin County  
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-74-N

HABS  
MINN,  
27-MINAP,  
19-N-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

ADDENDUM  
FOUR

HABS  
MINN,  
27-MINAP,  
19-N-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MINNESOTA VETERANS' HOME COMPLEX,  
STEEL BRIDGE

HABS No. MN-74N<sup>74-N</sup>

Location: 5101 Minnehaha Avenue South, Minneapolis,  
Hennepin County, Minnesota

USGS St. Paul West Quadrangle, Universal  
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 15;  
483960:4973380; 484140:4972680; 483640:4973140

Present Owner: State of Minnesota.

Present Occupant: Minnesota Veterans' Home.

Present Use: Pedestrian Bridge.

Significance: The Minnesota Veterans' Home Steel Bridge was the only structure connecting this peninsula to Minnehaha Park. This Steel Bridge is one of the most significant structures on the site today because of its usages. It has been recently closed to motorists, but is still open to pedestrians. It's linked to the gradual development of reinforced concrete bridges in Minneapolis. It was built in 1908.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of Erection: 1908.
2. Architect: Bayne and Hewett.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners:  
1908. Minnesota Soldiers' Home.  
1975. The Minnesota Legislature, under Chapter 61 transferred responsibility of the Home to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.
4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: The 1908 Steel Bridge was built by the Bayne and Hewett Company.
5. Original Plans and Construction: Not available.
6. Alterations and Additions: The only evidence of alterations found was in the lighting. The lighting poles on it have been changed but there are no other physical alterations to the structure.

B. Historical Context:

Franklin Steele hired Ard Godfrey in 1847, a millwright from Maine to build a sawmill at St. Anthony Falls. This undertaking was very successful and because of this, in 1852, Ard Godfrey had a claim made out to him by Captain Monroe of Fort Snelling which included the present site of the Soldiers' Home complex. He had a mill and a house built in about late 1853 at the mouth of the Minnehaha Creek. Ard Godfrey started to improve this mill, he built a port at the mouth of the Creek and the Mississippi River. This served as a landing for the boats coming in through the Mississippi River to St. Anthony Falls. This was later known as Godfrey Point in 1866. Ard Godfrey owned the vast majority of the land in this area and between 1871 and 1883, he began to sell the land in small plots. In 1883, the Minnesota Parks Commission was formed and what makes up the present day Soldiers' Home was acquired.

In 1887, when Minnesota began to look into the problems facing its veterans, an agreement was reached by the Legislature that a Home should be provided for these veterans. The construction was authorized by the Legislature. This was to provide a shelter for veterans and their immediate families. This present site was then selected. The home is located on a peninsula surrounded by the Mississippi River on the east and Minnehaha Creek on the west side in Minneapolis. Work actually started in 1888. A smaller wooden pedestrian bridge was built at this time also to connect the homes to Minneapolis mainland (Minnehaha Creek). It was not until 1908 that the new Steel Bridge was built to ease traffic on the old wooden bridge and at the same time allowed automobiles access to the peninsula.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The Steel Bridge was constructed with steel, as the name suggests, with concrete poured on the floor. It has steel railings on each side. The Bridge presents an imposing gate facade when approached from Minnehaha Park, a product of early 20th Century industrial architecture. It has light poles attached to the railings (five on each side).
2. Condition of the Fabric: The steel unfortunately was declared structurally unusable by motorists about one year ago. It is still being used by pedestrians. Signs of rust could be seen on the exposed steel, especially the railings. The concrete on the floor, most had worn away and cracks could be found almost everywhere.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The Steel Bridge is located between Minnehaha Park and the old Minnesota Soldiers' Home. The bridge is about four yards wide and 100 yards long.
2. Foundations: Reinforced concrete footing was used with large steel.
3. Structural System, Framing: Steel is inserted into the concrete foundation and concrete is poured on the floor.
4. Plaque on the Gate Wall: A steel plaque is located on the right-hand side of the gate wall approaching the bridge from Minnehaha Park with the inscription:

Designed and built by Bayne and Hewett.  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 1908  
W.S. Hewett A.Y. Bayne A.L. Hewett  
Metal fabricated by the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery  
Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota

C. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The Steel Bridge was built to connect Minnehaha Park/Minnehaha Avenue to the Minnesota Veterans' Home. The main entrance faces west and the old Minnehaha Depot.
2. Other buildings in the complex:
  - a. Domiciliary Building No. 1 (1888).
  - b. Domiciliary Building No. 2 (1888).
  - c. Domiciliary Building No. 4 (1891).
  - d. Domiciliary Building No. 5 (1891).
  - e. Domiciliary Building No. 6 (1905).
  - f. Main Dining Hall No. 7 (1902).
  - g. Domiciliary Building No. 9 (1936).
  - h. Administration Building No. 10 (1892).
  - i. Storage Building (1921).

- j. Laundry No. 13 (1891).
- k. Power House No. 14 (1937).
- l. Paint Shop and Garage (1899).
- m. Ten-stall Garage (1925).
- n. Carpenter Shop No. 12 (1950).
- o. Infirmary-Clinic No. 16 (1973).
- p. Residential Care No. 17 (1977).
- q. Chapel Auditorium No. 15 (1962).

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Photographs: Several photographs showing general views of the Steel Bridge were found in the audio-visual collection of the Minnesota Historical Society. Other photographs were found in the History Collection at Minneapolis Public Library.
- B. Maps: A series of maps beginning with 1912 and ending with 1949 show explicitly the details of this Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex at different points in time.
- C. Building permits/historical articles: I was unable to recover any building permit concerning this Bridge. Historical articles appear at the Minneapolis Public Library.
- D. Bibliography:
  - 1. Books:
    - Bezatz, Barbara and Alan K. Lathrop. Drafting a House History. Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1979.
    - Bullock, Orin. The Restoration Manual. Norwalk, Connecticut: Silvermine Publishers, 1966.
    - Fitch, James. Historic Preservations: Cultural Management of the Built World. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982.
    - History of Hennepin County. Warner. North Star Publishing, 1881.

2. Publications:

Ellsworth, Linda. The History of House, How to Trace It.  
Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local  
History, 1976, Technical Leaflet No. 89.

History Procedures Manual. Historic American Buildings Survey.  
Washington: National Parks Service, 1983.

Green, Russell R. Minnesota Veterans' Home. Minnesota  
Historical Society, UB 384. M6G73.

3. Miscellaneous:

Minneapolis Historical Society Audio-Visual Library-Photograph  
Collection.

Minneapolis History Collection, Minneapolis Public Library.

- E. Original Architectural Drawings: Architectural drawings for the original building were not found. However, plans for remodeling drawn by Jacobson & Jacobson Architects were in the boiler house. These plans were undated and looking at the plans closely, the remodeling was never carried out.

Prepared by:  
Felix Okotete  
University of Minnesota  
April, 1988

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was prepared as a class project for Architecture 5143, Historical Building Research and Documentation, a class offered in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The class project was prepared under the direction of Professor Foster W. Dunwiddie in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Historical data was compiled by Felix -O- Okotete, University of Minnesota, April, 1988.

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Omaha, NE 68102