

Uncle Sam Bridge  
County Route 385, spanning Catskill Creek  
Catskill  
Greene County  
New York

HAER No. NY-172

HAER  
NY  
20-CATS  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

UNCLE SAM BRIDGE  
HAER No. NY-172

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NY,  
20-CATS,  
1-

Location: County Route 385 spanning Catskill Creek in the center of the Village of Catskill, Greene County, New York. Bridge connects West Main Street with Water Street.

UTM: N 4674300  
E 593500  
New York State Quad: Hudson South

Date of Construction: Bridge specifications adopted February 1, 1926. Construction began January 2, 1928 and was completed June 7, 1930. The bridge contract was declared complete on July 16, 1930.

Style: Four span steel bridge consisting of three low truss fixed spans and one single leaf bascule (now fixed) span.

Engineer/  
Builder: Built under contract SH [State Highway]5716. Designed by the State of New York, Department of Public Works, Division of Highways. Specifications and plans approved by H. O. Schermerhorn, Engineer of Bridges and Grade Crossings and Arthur W. Brandt, Commissioner, Division of Highways. The John Johnson Construction Company built the bridge under the supervision of engineer G. D. Neer.

Present Owner: New York State Department of Transportation.

Present Use and Condition: Bridge carries vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Bridge substructure is in good condition. Concrete deck is deteriorated at the curb line and surface spalls have exposed steel reinforcement. Some of the fixed-span bottom chord plates have holes in them and some webs display a loss of section, as do sidewalk brackets and beams. Above-deck truss members are in good condition. In the bascule span, interior stringers lack paint and are corroded. I-beam sleepers display "severe deterioration," with some "large holes" in web sections. According to a 1986 inspection by the New York State Department of Transportation, the trusses and floor beams of the bascule span are both in good condition. Serious corrosion damage. The upper half and top flange of the I-beam stringers also exhibit serious corrosion.

- Significance:** Catskill Creek was once navigable upstream from this crossing and required the construction of a bascule bridge. Although this bridge does not possess engineering significance, it is unusual to see a bascule bridge on a small stream this far up the Hudson River. The maintenance of a bascule bridge over Catskill Creek until the 1950's testifies to the commercial and industrial use of the creek in the years before the bridge was fixed in the closed position.
- Materials of Construction:** Three low truss spans have steel floorbeams supporting a reinforced concrete slab deck. Floorbeams extend past trusses to support cantilevered concrete sidewalks and steel handrails. Bascule span has two, 76 foot long, low truss longitudinal girders formed by four 19 foot long panels. Steel floor beams support twelve, 15 inch high longitudinal I-beam stringers and an open grate steel deck. Bascule span has a wood deck sidewalk. Trunnion shaft and concrete block counterweight are elevated on a steel "A" frame structure above roadway and set 9 feet 6 inches back from face of abutment. Trunnion rack is formed from segmental cast gears with hobbled teeth and has a radius of 12 feet 9 inches.
- Dimensions:** Total length of bridge between abutments is 314 feet 6 inches. Each low truss fixed span is 77 feet 6 inches. The single leaf bascule span is 76 feet. Bridge has an out-to-out width of 49 feet, a curb-to-curb width of 30 feet, and a 5 foot wide sidewalk cantilevered on the outside of each truss. Total bridge deck area is 15,600 square feet. Pier and abutment footings are reinforced concrete 7 feet 6 inches wide and laid on a rock surface. Piers are reinforced concrete with a limestone facade and a width of 6 feet 6 inches at the footing and 5 feet at the top. Piers rise 18 feet 3.5 inches above the footings. Each low truss span has eight panels measuring 9 feet 8 inches long and 8 feet 10 inches high. Each low truss span has nine 30 inch high floorbeams. The floorbeams extend past the trusses to support the cantilevered sidewalks. The bascule span originally opened to an angle of 80 degrees. Roadway has a vertical clearance of 15 feet 2 inches below the elevated counterweight of bascule span.

Significant Ex-  
terior Features:

Abutments and piers are concrete with limestone facade. A 10 feet by 13 feet [interior dimensions] operators cabin is located on the south side of the bascule bridge abutment. The operators cabin has a 3 foot 6 inch high reinforced concrete base, hollow tile walls with exterior stucco, and a Boston hip style slate roof.

Major Alterations  
and Additions:

Single leaf bascule span fixed in the closed position sometime after the last major alterations in 1957. Wood block deck in this span replaced by an open grate steel deck. The overhead counterweight of the bascule span originally carried 1 foot 4 inch high lettering. The east elevation read:

TO ALBANY  
THE ADIRONDACKS  
MONTREAL

The west elevation displayed:

TO NEW YORK  
PALISADES PARK  
NEW JERSEY

Additional  
Information:

Built to replace an earlier center pier swing span on the same alignment. Bridge carries Route 385 over Catskill Creek and provides the only direct link between the east and west sides of the Village of Catskill. Carries a roadway 30 feet wide between curbs. Roadway is level grade. The bridge has been posted for a load limit of fifteen tons.

Bascule span originally operated by two General Electric 25 horsepower motors with 560 rpm at full load. Each motor had a solenoid brake.

Project  
Information:

The documentation of the Uncle Sam Bridge was prepared by the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), National Park Service, during the summer of 1987 for the New York State Historic Bridges Recording Project. This project was sponsored by the New York State Department of Transportation and under the supervision of Eric DeLony, Chief & Principal Architect, HAER. This report was written by Andrew Cole and Charles Scott. When citing this report, please credit the Historic American Engineering Society and the authors.

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New York State Department of Transportation Bridge Identification Number 1047360  
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