Rogue
ROUGE RIVER BRIDGE
(Depot Street Bridge)
Spanning Rouge River on Depot Street
Rogue River
Jackson County
Oregon

HAER OR-134
OR-134

HAER
OR-134

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
PACIFIC WEST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1111 Jackson Street, Suite 700
Oakland, CA 94607

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

ROGUE RIVER BRIDGE
(DEPOT STREET BRIDGE)
HAER NO. OR-134

Location: Spanning the Rogue River on Depot Street, between Milepoint 8.84 on the Rogue River Highway, and Milepoint 48.82 on Interstate 5, Rogue River, Jackson County, Oregon.

Date of Construction: 1950

Engineer: G. S. Paxson, Oregon State Bridge Engineer

Builders: Virginia Bridge Company and Lindstrom Brothers, Incorporated (Portand)

Present Owner: City of Rogue River

Present Use: Transportation – Highway Bridge

Significance: Completed in 1950, the Rogue River (Depot Street) Bridge is a substantially intact example of the once common steel thru-truss bridges that were built throughout Oregon by the State Highway Department during the mid-20th century. A Parker-type steel thru-truss, the Rogue River structure is one of four steel thru-truss bridges remaining in Jackson County, Oregon.

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Historic Narrative researched and written by George Kramer, on behalf of
The Oregon Department of Transportation, Salem, OR

Date: March, 2003

I. DESCRIPTION

The Rogue River Bridge is located at the extension of Depot Street, south of the downtown commercial core of the City of Rogue River in Jackson County, Oregon in Township 36 South, Range 4 West, at the NE ¼ of the NE ¼ of Section 21. The structure begins at milepost 48.82 of Interstate 5 on the east and extends in a southerly direction across the river to milepost 8.84 of Highway 99.

The bridge, spanning the Rogue River, connects Depot Street after it crosses the main rail line through southern Oregon and passes beneath Interstate 5, to the Rogue River Highway (Oregon State Highway 99). The bridge is a highly visible feature and serves as a visual landmark in the area. It is easily accessible, particularly below the southern approach, which spans a portion of the city-owned John Fleming Memorial rest area and the Coyote Evans Wayside Park. A well-designed circular masonry building with a flat roof that is used as a public restroom is located just to the west of the southern approach.

The Rogue River (Depot Street) Bridge is a 200'-10" long steel truss span extending Depot Street over the Rogue River to State Highway 99 in the City of Rogue River, Oregon. The main span consists of two steel thru-trusses spaced 25' apart with mixed "X" and single diagonal cross bracing. Portals are formed by arched steel members, riveted to the sides with top lateral bracing in a diagonal pattern. In addition to the main span, the structure includes a 33' long concrete approach on the north (towards town) and three concrete approach spans on the south (at Highway 99) measuring a total of 200'. This southern approach consists of two 70' spans and a 60' span at the extreme south. Together, the main steel span and the four concrete approach spans yield a combined overall structure length of 433'-10". Decking support is of steel on the main span and concrete on the approaches, all with concrete asphalt wearing surfaces.

Concrete sidewalks line both sides of the bridge, cantilevered from the understructure on steel at the main span and concrete at the approaches. Rocker connections are located below the sidewalk, connected to the chords with a 5 ½" pin. Side rails on both the approaches and main span are of the typical open steel bar railing common on Oregon State Highway Department designs of the period, with decorative cast concrete posts and modest portal wings. Simple guardrails of plate steel are welded between the trusses along the roadway.

Matching cast bronze plaques identifying the bridge as County No. 286 and recognizing the members of the Jackson County Court and the County Engineer at the time of construction are located at the NW and SE concrete portal wings of the side rail. Painted cast metal plaques reading "Virginia Bridge Company 1950" are located on the face of the top chord at the NW and SE corners of the main span. The entire steel arch superstructure, as well as the steel portions of the substructure, is painted in traditional ODOT green.

According to the inspection records of the Jackson County Roads and Parks Department, little beyond general maintenance and damage repair has occurred to the Rogue River Bridge in the 50

years since its opening. Typical repainting, resurfacing and other activity, as well as alterations required by changes in street lighting and the installation of pipes for water and other infrastructure-related systems, have occurred through the bridge's use. The only identified change or alteration is the installation of several painted steel posts at the southern approach spans, a change that has little or no impact on the overall visual character of the structure. No other alterations were noted or documented.

II. HISTORY

The City of Rogue River was originally settled in the 1850s as the locus of Evans Ferry, which crossed the Rogue River in this general vicinity and provided an important transportation link for miners and packers traveling through the region. Davis "Coyote" Evans operated the ferry and Coyote Evans Wayside, near the ferry crossing at the southwestern end of the Rogue River Bridge, is named in his honor. The City of Rogue River was more formally developed in the 1870s, at least partially the result of local efforts at mining quicksilver (Walling, 1884:380). The post office was established in 1876 and under the direction of early landowner and first postmaster John Woods. "The community, dubbed 'Woodville' after Mr. Woods, was incorporated in 1910. Two years later, voters changed the name to Rogue River (the 'City' was added in recent years), hoping this would allow their town to benefit from advertising being done for the entire county" (O'Harra, 1993:151).

Evans Ferry, one of three ferry points across the Rogue River established by 1851, was accordingly an important locale in the area's settlement period (Walling, 1884:336). At some point the ferry was reportedly replaced by a rope bridge and in the late 19th century, by a wooden span. With the arrival of the railroad to the region in 1884, the railroad tracks were laid in parallel to the river and a station was built just north of the present bridge, at the head of the aptly named "Depot Street." In 1909 the wooden span was replaced with a new steel truss bridge. This span, with a wooden deck and open braced thru-trusses, was dubbed the Rogue River Bridge and posted notice of a $25 fine for riding or driving faster than a walk across (O'Harra, 1993:151). Incorporated in 1910, the new city grew slowly. In 1915 Rogue River had a population estimated at 500 but by 1920 the census reported just 211 residents, growing to just 286 by 1930. In 1950, when the present bridge was completed and southern Oregon was experiencing exponential growth in many of its cities, Rogue River's population was still only 590 and today the city's population is still less than 2000.

Construction of the present Rogue River (Depot Street) Bridge began with the design of the replacement span by the Oregon State Highway Department in April 1946, a period when the State Highway Department was very active. G.S. Paxson, the State Bridge Engineer, reported in 1947-48 that his office had responsibility for 177 separate structures in the previous biennium (state Highway Commission, 1947-48). The contract for construction of the Rogue River

Bridge, designated by the State as bridge 6970 and by the County as bridge 286, was finalized in October 1948 with the County's acceptance of the proposal by Lindstrom Bros., Inc. of Portland to construct the new span for a cost of $130,950. The Virginia Bridge Works provided the structural steel for the project, marked by a plaque on the north-facing portal. Work on the new span began in summer 1949 and by September 30th 1950 the bridge was complete. "Two 12-Year olds, George Morris and Loyd (sic) Morrow, are claiming the distinction of being the first to cross the new Rogue River Bridge with vehicles –they crossed on bicycles" (MMT, 1-Oct-1951, 12:1). The formal dedication was slated for 2:00 on Friday, October 6, when the paper predicted that "…business will come to a near halt in the community….while townspeople turn out to dedicate the structure they have fought for many months" (MMT, 1-Oct-1951, 12:1).

While construction of the new bridge at Rogue River went smoothly, a considerable debate arose regarding what to call the structure. Locals wanted to call it the "Tailholt Bridge," after the pioneer-era legend of fording the river by holding onto the tail of a horse or mule. The Rogue River Garden Club, apparently finding Tailholt insufficiently dignified, suggested the "Woodville Bridge" after the community's original name while the County Board of Commissioners and County Engineer Paul Rynning wanted to honor early Commissioner Joshua Patterson, a moving force behind the construction of the 1909 span, by calling the new bridge the "Patterson Bridge." The issue was of sufficient notoriety that the local newspaper editor weighed into the controversy. "With all due respect to the sedate county court and the history-minded garden club, we are inclined to go along with the Tailholt advocates" (MMT 2-Oct-1950, 4:2-3). The span remained un-named at its dedication and the city held an election the following month to decide the issue. "Of the 313 votes cast by Rogue River citizens….'Rogue River [bridge]' received the majority of the votes, 192. A total of 21 names was suggested" (MMT, 14-Nov-1950).

With the completion and opening of the new Rogue River Bridge, Jackson County advertised for the removal of the 1909 span, which was located immediatley upstream from the new structure. Lindstrom Brothers were responsible for the removal of this structure, which was sold to Douglas Count for $4000 (Rynning, 22-Sept-1950).

The Rogue River Bridge has retained its original use since its construction, serving as a vital transportation link for the City of Rogue River. The Rogue River Bridge's role in the community has not changed since its construction, and the bridge continues in its historic use.

Truss bridges in Oregon

In Oregon, riveted steel thru truss bridges remained a popular form throughout the 1930s although by the end of that decade G. S. Paxson, State Bridge Engineer, noted a move away from the form toward concrete and other materials whenever possible so as to improve sight distance and reduce potential damage from cars running into bridge members. The Parker Truss

remained popular, however, until the late 1950s and Oregon's preference toward the Parker truss for steel spans is apparent in quantitative analysis of the 64 surviving steel thru truss bridges in the state of Oregon. Of these, 45, or more than 70% are Parker trusses, ranging in date of construction from 1910 to 1962. The adoption of the Parker during the post-WWII period, when Oregon's highway system received a major infusion of Federal monies, is clearly demonstrated in truss bridges remaining that were erected during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Of the twenty-two steel thru-truss bridges remaining in Oregon that were built between 1946 and 1956, twenty, or 90%, are Parkers.

The Rogue River (Depot Street) Bridge is a virtually intact example of the once-common steel thru Parker truss bridge type that was built by the State Highway Department throughout Oregon during the post-WWII period. The structure is the older of the two post-war examples of this influential form in the Rogue River Valley area. The bridge retains very high integrity in virtually all aspects of evaluation and continues to serve as a prominent visual landmark in the City of Rogue River, Oregon.

III. SOURCES

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IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The photographic and historic documentation of the Rogue River (Depot Street) Bridge was undertaken by Oregon Department of Transportation in association with a federally-funded bridge replacement project. The proposed Rogue River (Depot Street) Bridge Replacement Project will result in the demolition of the historic bridge, which is located in the community of Rogue River, in Jackson County, Oregon.

ADDENDUM TO:
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This report is an addendum to the 6-page report previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

Incorrect name: Rouge River Bridge

Incorrect address: Spanning Rouge River on Depot Street

Correct name: Rogue River Bridge

Correct name: Spanning Rogue River on Depot Street

The bridge is located at latitude: 42.431295, longitude: -123.170740. This point was obtained on May 10, 2016, using Google Earth. There is no restriction on its release to the public.

The original survey incorrectly used “Rouge” rather than “Rogue” for the name of the bridge and the address.