

COVERED WOODEN BRIDGE
NEAR HOMER, ILLINOIS (2½ miles N.)

Champaign Co.

HABS NO. 25-19

HABS

ILL,

10-HOM.V,

1-

Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
CENTRAL ILLINOIS DISTRICT NO. 25

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
EDGAR E. LUNDEEN, DISTRICT OFFICER
BLOOMINGTON ILLINOIS

HAES
ILL,
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Covered Wooden Bridge, near Homer, Illinois
CHAMPAIGN Co.

by Edgar E. Lundeen, Bloomington, Ill. May 1934

"In no one thing have been more noteworthy the changes which work the transition from the condition of savagery which covered the whole county 80 years since, than in the roads of the county.

The earliest comers found paths and traces leading across the country which in a measure aided them in finding the shortest cuts from timber grove to timber grove, but such were not of human origin. Before even the Indians came to hunt the wild animals, these animals in search of water or pasturage, made their traces or paths, always choosing the best lines of travel.

The earliest comers in this country found already made, a road before them much travelled by wagons and teams which led from the east, entering the county near where the eastern line crosses the main branch of the Salt Fork, about two miles north east of the village of Homer, from which place it meandered to the northwest.....

At the crossing of the Salt Fork on this road was erected about 1836, the first bridge which spanned one of the streams of the county. It was afterward carried away by the high water of the creek."

The second bridge, the subject of this historical sketch, was a covered wooden structure and was apparently constructed on this same trail and in the same location. It was of long span and of the cross braced truss construction with heavy timbers. In recent years it was re-inforced with iron rods and beams.

Having been selected as a fitting subject to be recorded under the Historic American Buildings Survey, a squad of architects and draftsmen were dispatched on March 10, 1934 to gather the necessary data. On the evening of April 5, the bridge collapsed and fell into the river.

It would seem justly fitting and proper to quote herewith from a letter received from Mr. Ralph Varney who was in charge of the measuring:

"I am enclosing a newspaper clipping telling of the end of the covered bridge near Homer, less than a month after we measured it. It makes my hair stand on end when I think of how we galloped across that bridge, stamping vigorously to keep warm, and what might have happened as a result of that vibration. It had quite a snow load at that time too. It must have come very close to being our "Bridge of San Luis Rey".

It is not true that the bridge sagged. It was perfectly straight when we measured it, and looked sound. There were no badly rotted timbers. I went over to examine it today,

and took a picture of it as it is now, all in a heap in the river bed. I thought at first it might have been caused by settlement of the piers due to the thaw, but they stand just as they were. Even now the breaks in the timbers look clean fibred. I believe it is a good example of the "fatigue of materials". It was built mostly of poplar, which is not a very tough material, and I think it just got tired after standing there for close to a century, and just crumpled up. No doubt it thought that after all it had been measured, and was to go down to posterity in the archives of Washington, so its life's work was done."

Later investigation showed that one of the main supporting members which rested upon the stone pier and was buried under earth, had rotted considerably. This member gave way causing the complete collapse of the bridge.

Reference: Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois
and History of Champaign County
Vol. 11 - pp. 660 - 662

Letter of Mr. Ralph Varney to E. E.
Lundeen, dated 4/8/34

W. E. Lundeen

Bloomington, Illinois

COVERED WOODEN BRIDGE
NEAR HOMER, ILLINOIS

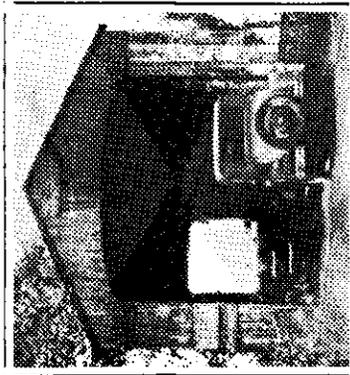
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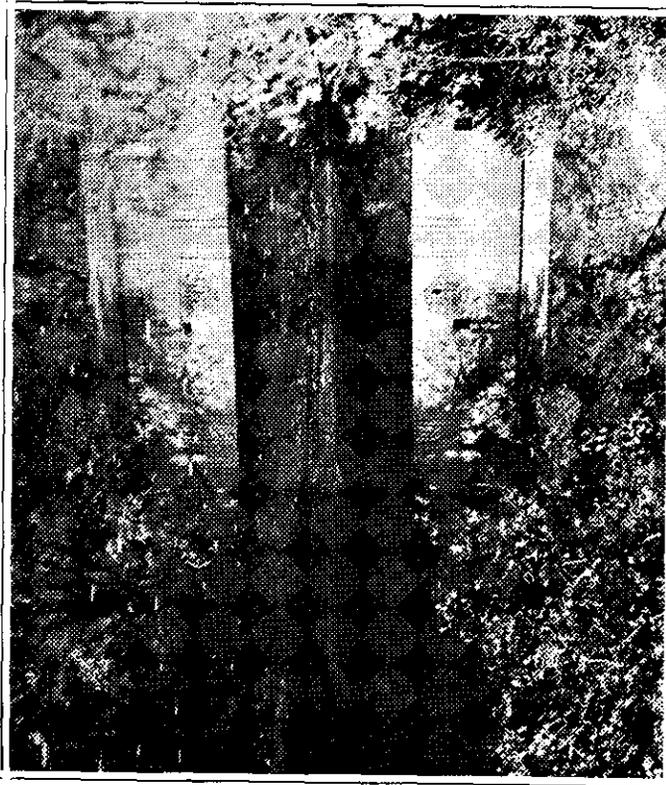


HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NEWS-GAZETTE-CHAMPAIGN ILL PHOTOGRAPHER - ABOUT 1925

END ELEVATION

COVERED WOODEN BRIDGE
NEAR HOMER, ILLINOIS.

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NEWS-GAZETTE-CHAMPAIGN ILL.-PHOTOGRAPHER-ABOUT 1925

SIDE ELEVATION