CHICAGO AND ALTON RAILROAD BRIDGE
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
Crossing South Fork of Chicago River
(South Branch)
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-104

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
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# HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

## CHICAGO AND ALTON RAILROAD BRIDGE
## I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor

HAER No. IL-104

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| Location: | I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor<br>Crossing the South Fork of the South Branch of the Chicago River, east of Ashland Avenue, north of I-55<br>Chicago, Cook County, Illinois<br><br>UTM: 16 E.444840 N.4632000<br>Quad: Englewood |
| Date of Construction: | 1906 |
| Designer: | William M. Hughes |
| Builder: | Substructure: Kelly & Atkinson Company<br>Superstructure: American Bridge Company |
| Present Owner: | Unknown |
| Present Use: | Railroad Bridge |
| Significance: | The Chicago & Alton Railroad bridge was the first Page bascule erected for railroad use. Patented by John W. Page, a Chicago engineer, the Page bascule was not as extensively built as other patented systems such as the Strauss-Trunion bascule. This Chicago & Alton bridge may be the only one of its kind in existence. |
| Project Information: | The Illinois and Michigan Canal was designated a National Heritage Corridor in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER embarked on an extensive inventory and documentation project of the 100 mile-long corridor. Field work for this project was concluded in 1988. Final editing of the documentation was completed in 1992. |
| Historians: | Gray Fitzsimons, Frances Alexander, and John Nicolay, 1986; Carolyn Brucken, 1992. |

Located near Chicago's stockyards, this Chicago & Alton Railroad bridge crosses the South Fork of the Chicago River's South Branch. The bridge was constructed in 1906 and replaced an 1880s "bob-tailed" swing span. This 1906 span was the first use of a Page bascule for a railroad bridge. William M. Hughes designed the span. Hughes worked on a number of bridge projects, including the Ashland Avenue Bridge (1902), with the Chicago firm of Page and Shnable. The Page bascule, patented by John W. Page, contained the counterweight in the approach span, which pivoted with the bascule span when raised for river traffic. It was not as widely used for bascule spans as other patented systems such as the Strauss-Trunion bascule. This Chicago & Alton bridge may be the only one of its kind in existence. The American Bridge Company of New York fabricated the steel for the superstructure, and the Kelly & Atkinson Company of Chicago served as contractors for the substructure.

The main span of this bridge is a single-leaf, Page bascule; the superstructure is a riveted steel Warren through truss, 150'-0" in length. The approach span is a riveted steel plate girder, 64'-0" in length. The bridge rests on concrete abutments. One nameplate reads: "BUILT 1906 BY THE CHICAGO AND ALTON RY. CO.; G.H. KIMBALL CHIEF ENGINEER; W.M. HUGHES CONSULTING ENG'R; PAGE & SHNABLE PATENTEES." A second nameplate proclaims: "American Bridge Co. of N.Y. (1906)." The bridge tender's cabin is located along the north approach. The cabin is a one-story brick building, measuring approximately 20' x 15', with a hipped roof and chimney. Casement windows provide the interior with natural light. The bridge is currently maintained by the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad.

**SOURCES:**

"The Ashland Avenue Bascule Bridge, Chicago," Engineering Record, v. 43 (April 27, 1901): 392-94.

"Bids for a Bascule Bridge for the Chicago & Alton R.R.," Engineering News, v. 52 (November 3, 1904): 405-406.

"The Elevation of the Chicago and Alton Bridge at Bridgeport, Chicago," Railway Age, (January 23, 1903): 122-125.

"Page Type of Bascule Bridge: Chicago, Ill.," Engineering News, v. 58 (July 18, 1907): 57-58.

J. A. L. Waddell, Bridge Engineering, v. 1 (New York: John Wiley