

Dick's Mill Bridge (Cotton Bridge)
Spanning Moniteau Creek
Village of Cotton
Cooper County
Missouri

HAER No. MO-43

HAER
MO,
27-COT,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
P. O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: The bridge spans Moniteau Creek, approximately 300 feet upstream from historic Dick's Mill, after which it named, in the village of Cotton in southern Cooper County, Missouri

UTM: Zone 15/15.N4285725.E525875
Quad: Clarksburg 7.5 minute series

Date of Construction: 1898

Builder: Springstown Bridge Company

Present Owner: Cooper County
Cooper County Court House
Boonville, Missouri

Present Use: Vehicular traffic bridge, to be replaced by a new vehicular bridge in 1988-1989.

Significance: The Dick's Mill Bridge is one of a rapidly declining number of high through truss steel bridges in Missouri. At present, presumably fewer than 300 Pratt high through truss bridges remain in Missouri. The bridge is integrally tied to historic Dick's Mill and the village of Cotton.

Historians: Tom Gage, Ph.D., Craig Sturdevant, and John Carrel

I. HISTORY

A. Need for the Bridge:

Adolph and Peter Dick, German immigrants, successfully operated a grist mill, constructed by John M. Burris, on the left bank of Moniteau Creek, from 1869 to 1904. The thriving business precipitated a post office, general store, blacksmith, school, and a saw mill which was attached to the mill. The developing village of Dick's Mill, later known as Cotton, flourished until World War II. The following 1891 petition presented to the Cooper County Court sets the stage for the construction of Dick's Mill Bridge:

Dear sirs, your Petitioners Pray your Honorable Body will make an Order For a good and Substantial Iron Bridge across the Moniteau Creek at a Point Near Dicks Mill...For the following Reasons to wit First Because the Creek divides School District No. 1 making it impossible For the Children to attend School Promptly Second Because By the Construction of Said Bridge we can get a daily mail at Dick's Post Office, and Third Because we Need Said Bridge Badly For the General good of This Community and in going to and from mill Considered" (Petition...1891).

B. Construction Chronology

From the few surviving documents and recollections relating to the construction of the bridge at Dick's Mill, a reasonable picture of the event emerged. It is appropriate to mention the state of the early Cooper County Court records. These records are in the form of individual documents rather than books and have not been given sufficient attention for adequate preservation. The court, with the assistance of the Cooper County Historical Society, took the task of salvaging what remained of the records in recent years and have packed them in archival containers in the County Clerk's office. These records have not been cataloged.

The first documenting referring to the construction of the Dick's Mill Bridge is an undated Draft of Authority to the Cooper County Bridge Commissioners.

"...in the matter of the building of five new Bridges in this County The Commissioners of Bridges for the county is hereby directed to enter into Contracts to build one at Dicks Mill over the Moniteau with the Springstown Bridge Company in writing which Contract shall provide the said Bridge shall be built according to plans and specifications now on file..."
(Draft of Authority, n.d.).

In the Commissioners Report for February Term 1893 filed February 6, 1893, the County Survsy W. W. Trent reports on the site selection of each of the five new bridges, giving ths estimates for cost of construction for each bridge. The following is his report on ths Dick's Mill Bridge Sits: "At Dick's Mill I found the best channel and banks that I have seen and there sssms to be mors roads converging there than anywhere else. It is decidedly the best physical location and the estimatsd cost at that point is \$3,500"(Commissioner's Report, 1893). However, it appears that his evaluation was somewhat premature: On August 18, 1898, specifications were filed with the county court for removal of the steel bridge at Dick's Mill to the proposed site at ths Jewett old wooden bridge across Clark's Fork Creek. The task of moving the bridge the 18 miles was given to A. M. Blodgett (Kansas City Bridge Company) for \$423. The move was, however, never carried out and the following month specifications were filed for construction of fills and abutments at the bridge. Results of this are obvious at present at Dick's Mill. The fills that were engineered for the bridge evidently solved the problem which almost ended the history of the Dick's Mill Bridge before it startsd (Specifications 1898a).

A 1968 nswspaper article includes memories of a dance held on the newly constructed bridge in late Octobsr 1898. The date supports the construction chronology as derived from the limited county records reviswed above (Hunt 1968).

II. THE BRIDGE

A. Description

The Dick's Mill Bridgs is a typical period Pratt high through truss with a 15-foot approach span constructed of wood planking over 6-foot I-beams. Ths main span is a 100-foot-long pin connected truss. The inclinsd end posts and top chords are formed of 10-inch plats stsel over latticed 6-inch squars bars. Ths diagonals are of one-half by two-inch syebar paired. The counter bracing and ths top lateral and bottom lateral bracing are of 3/4-inch round bar.

The east end of the main span rests upon a course masonry abutment. The west end of the main span rests upon braced steel piers. The west end approach span rests on a course masonry abutment. Specifications for fills at either end of the bridge are found in the county record as follows:

"Fill west end of bridge, 70 feet long, 30 feet wide at bottom, 14 feet on top, and 10 feet high bridge end with a gradual fall to the other end, which is 70 feet west.

Fill at east end of bridge 34 feet long, 30 feet wide at bottom and 15 feet high at bridge with a gradual fall to the other end which is 343 feet east. A cribwork of good sound straight white oak logs, not less than 8 inches at small end is to be put in at each end of the bridge to hold fill. The sides of the fill must be rip-rapped with good heavy stone to a thickness of one foot" (Specifications, 1898b).

B. Modifications to the Bridge

There are none, aside from normal maintenance.

C. Ownership and Future

The bridge has been owned and maintained by Cooper County since its construction in 1898. The bridge is currently used for minimal vehicular traffic. A new replacement will be built adjacent to the Dick's Mill Bridge which will be allowed to remain at least until the completion of the replacement. Dick's Mill Bridge will subsequently be dismantled.

D. Springstown Bridge Company

The only notation regarding the company awarded the contract to build the Dick's Mill Bridge was the Draft of Authority quoted above. The Springstown Bridge Company was not found in references reviewed for the present study (cf. Darnell, 1984).

III. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cole County Commissioner's Report
1893 Report filed February 6, 1893, by County Surveyor W. W. Trent. Cooper County Clerk Office. Boonville, Missouri.

Darnell, Victor A.

- 1984 "Directory of American Bridge-Building Companies 1840-1900."
Society for Industrial Archaeology Occasional Publication
No. 4. Washington, D. C.

Draft of Authority

- n.d. Draft of Authority to Cooper County Bridge Commissioners.
Cooper County Clerk Office. Boonville, Missouri.

Hunt, Lottie

- 1968 "Bridges, an Important Part of Cotton's Past History."
Booneville Daily News. February 1, 1968.

Petition for County Bridge at or Near Dicks Mill in Moniteau Twp.

- 1891 Filed September 19, 1898 with Frank R. Chambers, County
Clerk. Boonville.

Specifications for Fills at Dicks Mill Bridge

- 1898a Filed September 19, 1898, with N. W. Williams, County Clerk.
Boonville.

Specifications for Removal of Dicks Mill Bridge

- 1898b Filed August 18, 1898, with N. W. Williams, County Clerk.
Boonville.