

W.P.A. BRIDGE 233  
On Leaday-Hill Road (Elm Creek Road)  
at intersection of Bull Hollow Branch  
Voss vicinity  
Coleman County  
Texas

HAER No. TX-17

HAER  
TEX  
42-VOS.V  
14-

PHOTOGRAHS

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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HAER  
TEX  
42-VOS.V  
14-

## Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) Bridge 233

HAER No. TX-17

**Location:** Located on Leaday-Hill (Elm Creek Road at intersection with Bull Hollow Branch, .2 miles northeast of Colorado River, Voss vicinity, Coleman County, Texas

UTM: 14.438000.3489000  
Quad: Leaday

**Date of Construction:** circa 1936-1941

**Present Owner:** Permanent easement was granted to the Colorado River Municipal Water District in 1986

**Present Use:** Vehicular and pedestrian bridge over Bull Hollow Branch, a creek which is one of the tributaries of the Colorado River

**Significance:** The bridge was one of a series of small stone and concrete bridges constructed as W. P. A. projects along a road across the Red Wire Pasture on the Day-miller Ranch. This ranch road was improved to accommodate vehicular traffic, namely school buses, at a time when the numerous schools on this and the adjoining ranches were being consolidated.

**Historian:** Gus Hamblett  
Texas A&M University

October 1989

**I. HISTORY**

**A. An Overview of Historical Context**

For the general historical overview which places the property in the context of the development of cattle ranching at the confluence of the Colorado and Concho rivers, see HABS No. TX-3350.

**B. The Site in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries**

The bridge is located on the Day-Miller Ranch, on a road which cuts through the pastureland from the townsite of Leaday on the west to the community of Hill about six miles to the east. The land itself was patented to the school commissioners of Fort Bend County in 1848 and sold by them to William H. Day in 1878.<sup>1</sup> This was part of a very large tract of Coleman County lands which would comprise Day's ranch, a total of many thousands of acres which stretched from Grape Creek to the north, Elm Creek to the east, bordering on the west and south to the Colorado River. The site is on a portion of the ranch which Day fenced and which became known as the Red Wire Pasture. This portion of the ranch passed to the Miller family in 1907 and henceforth has been known as the Day-Miller Ranch.<sup>2</sup> During a period from 1904 to shortly after World War I, the ranch was subdivided into tenant farms; but when the tenant system failed, the farms were reintegrated into the ranch, and a configuration of land use and property ownership was resumed comparable to the period when William Day first began to fence the open range. The Day-Miller Ranch has remained in the ownership of Miller heirs.

For a more comprehensive history of the Day Ranch and vicinity and for biographical information on William and Mabel Day and the Miller family, see HABS No. TX-3351, Mabel Doss Day Lea House; HABS No. TX-3362, Leaday Townsite; HABS No. TX-3363, Day-Padgitt Ranch Tenant House; and HAER No. TX-15, Silo.

**C. The Depression**

The Depression had its first real impact in Coleman County during the drought year of 1930.<sup>3</sup> Two Coleman City banks failed in 1931; that year some Federal farm relief was appropriated through agricultural loans. Beginning in 1932, various government agencies made Coleman allocations to pay the unemployed for labor on projects, including school repairs, city street and county road improvements, city water system extensions, dam constructions, construction of canneries in Coleman and Santa Anna, lunchrooms for the county schools, and a National Youth Administration project which included the construction of an auditorium-museum in the Texas Ranger Park at Santa Anna. Relief projects occupied many Coleman County residents for a decade, from 1932 to 1942.

The W. P. A. construction projects which most affected the vicinity of the confluence were related to the consolidation of the schools and the transport of the students along new or improved ranch roads. As part of the various relief programs, the Mozelle school district, located three miles east of Leaday, was granted funds toward the construction of a high school building, and

the schools on the Day-Padgitt and Day-Miller ranches were consolidated with Mozelle in the 1936-1937 school year.<sup>4</sup> Children who heretofore had walked to the numerous little schools which had been dotted across the ranches were now driven in school buses across new roads or old ranch roads improved with a series of new bridges. In 1937, a total of one hundred miles of Coleman County farm-to-market roads were constructed or improved, including the Leaday-Hill Road, known locally as the Elm Creek Road, which runs across the Red Wire Pasture on the Day-Miller Ranch.<sup>5</sup> It was during this period that the road improvements included the construction of a series of excellent new bridges along this road, including the bridge under discussion.<sup>6</sup>

The progress of federally-sponsored road and bridge projects in Coleman County were sporadically recorded with photography in the period 1936-1941. An exceptionally clear photograph of one of the Elm Creek Road bridges under construction exists.<sup>7</sup>

For related material regarding the consolidation of the schools and a discussion of the dynamite storage shed used during the construction of the bridges, see HABS No. TX-3353, Leaday School, and HABS No. TX-3360, W. P. A. Dynamite Storage Facility. See also HAER No. TX-20: Leaday Cross. Other Elm Creek Road bridges included in this survey are HAER Nos. TX-18 and TX-18.

## II. THE BRIDGE

### A. Description

This bridge is a small stone and concrete structure spanning Bull Hollow Branch, a creek which is a tributary of the Colorado River. The width of the bridge is approximately thirty feet and its total length is approximately forty feet. The height of the road-slab above the creek bed is approximately four feet.

There are three piers to support the bridge's span; they and the abutments are arranged in parallel but diagonal alignments from the main road axis, to follow the natural direction of the creek flow at this point. The piers are equally spaced and placed at points to create ten-foot spans for the roadway slab. The piers and sloping abutments were constructed of the local limestone quarried on the site. The stone is carefully dressed, rough-cut in a sort of light rustication, with deep V-joints, and laid in a regular ashlar pattern. The roadway slab is seven inches thick, with small stone parapets acting as guardrails, rising approximately two feet above the roadway slab. The parapets are interrupted with small concrete capping elements which rise above the piers and at either end of the bridge at the points above the abutment edges.

### B. Present Condition and Future of the Site

The bridge is in excellent condition.

In 1979, the Texas Water Commission granted permission to the Colorado River Municipal Water District, an entity based in Big Spring, to construct a large dam on the Colorado River. The site chosen was a location several miles downstream from Leaday, sixteen miles below the confluence of the Colorado and Concho rivers. Early in the planning stages, a program was developed to address environmental concerns, including the impact of the proposed floor area on prehistoric and historic cultural resources. In 1980-1981, a survey of historic cultural resources was conducted by Freeman and Freeman, under contract to Espey, Huston and Associates, a firm of Austin environmental consultants. Subsequently, a number of other studies and amplifications of previous studies have been conducted. In early 1988, an Albuquerque, New Mexico, firm of environmental scientists, Mariah Associates, Inc., began further assessment of the area of the flood plain, including various archaeological investigations and assessments. Mariah has also acted in the role of coordinator of related projects, including his project: the recording of nineteen endangered historic sites in the confluence area for the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record. The sites were selected from a list compiled under the guidance of the Texas Historical Commission.

Construction was finished on the dam in the late summer of 1989. Called the Stacy Dam and Reservoir, the project will inundate approximately 19,200 acres, and the threat of inundation of the bridge is possible in the near future.

#### IV. FOOTNOTES

1. Reference is to Coleman County Courthouse, Deed Record, vol. B, 572 and 573; Fort Bend School Lands to William H. Day, April 9, 1878.
2. Ibid., vol. 64, 7-11; Willie Mabel Day Padgitt to Jo Zach Miller, October 1, 1907.
3. For a discussion of the various Coleman County relief organizations during this period, see Glynn Mitchell's essay, "The Depression," published in Coleman County Historical Commission, vol I, 77-80.
4. For a discussion of the early schools in the Leaday vicinity, see Ralph Terry's essay, "Leaday Schools," published in Coleman County Historical Commission, A History of Coleman County and Its People, vol I., (San Angelo, Texas: Anchor Publishing Company, 1985), 152.
5. Mitchell, 78.
6. A thorough search was made in all records kept at the Coleman County Courthouse for further information regarding the actual construction of the bridges, particularly in the Commissioners' Minutes and the Contracts volumes for the entire period of 1936-1941, but nothing directly associated with the bridge projects were found.
7. Mitchell, 79. The bridge shown in the photographs is of the same general type, but with two spanning piers.

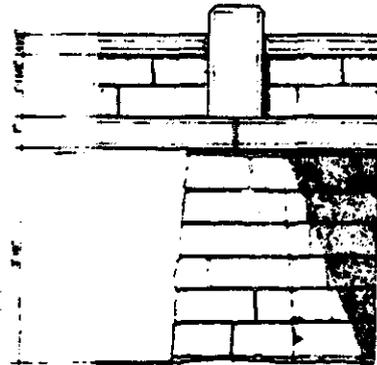
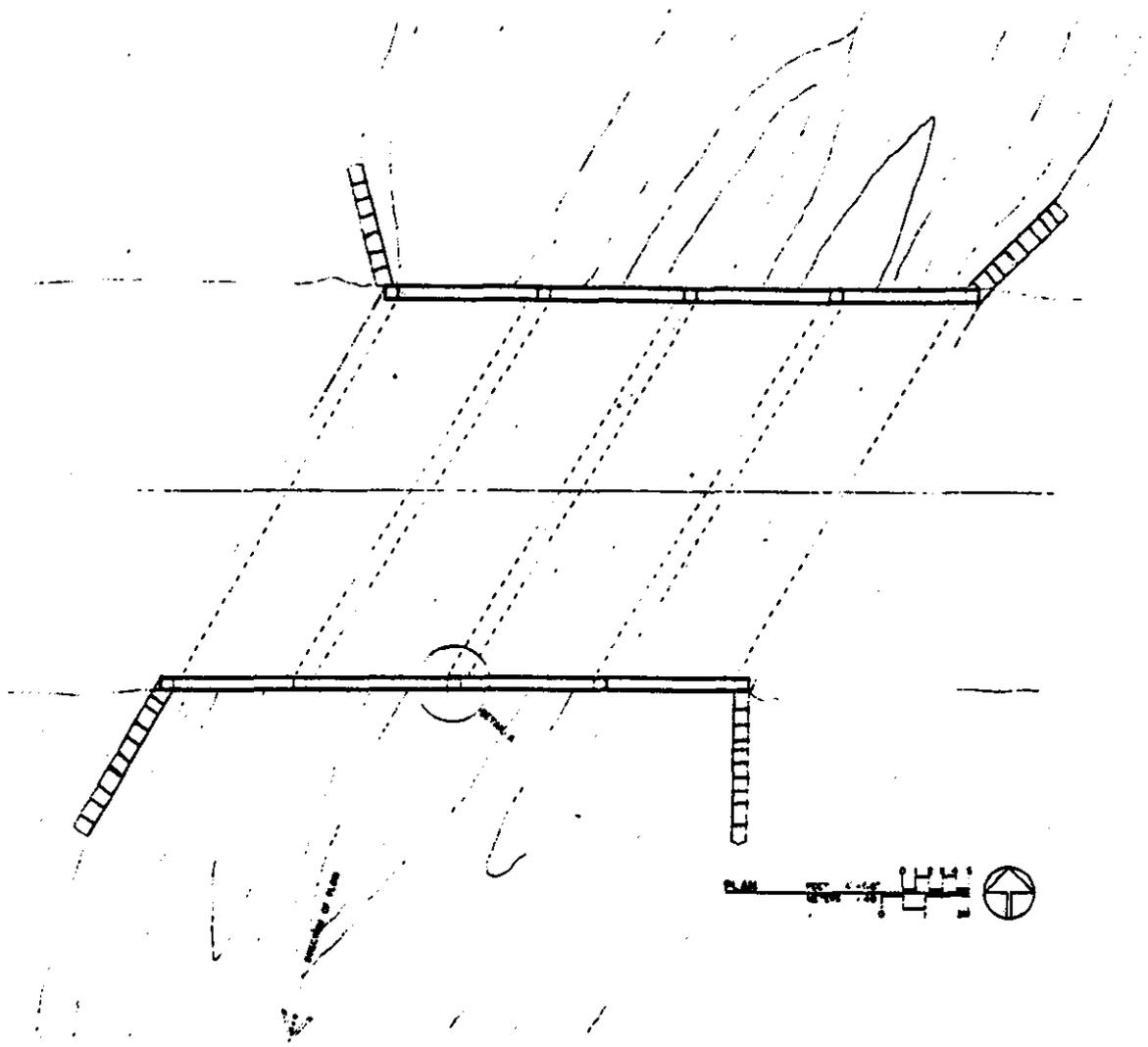
**IV. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

Sketch plan and detail.

**V. PROJECT INFORMATION**

This project was sponsored by Mariah Associates, Inc., archaeologists; recorded under the direction of Greg Kendrick, HABS regional coordinator, Denver. The project was completed during the summer of 1989 at the project field office at Houston and College Station, Texas. Project supervisor was Graham B. Luhn, A.I.A., architect; project architectural historian was Gus Hamblett, Texas A&M University; intern architects were Debbie Fernandez and Paul Neidinger; student architects were Brian Dougan, Robert Holton, Janna Johnson, Wayne Jones, and Pat Sparks, Texas A&M University; project photographer was Paul neidinger, photographic processing by Laura McFarlane.

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DETAIL - A

1968 VICINITY

WPA BRIDGE 233  
 CALHOUN COUNTY

1948

1957