

Bog Hollow Bridge (Bridge #1594)
Spanning the Housatonic River
on Connecticut State Route 341
Kent
Litchfield County
Connecticut

HAER No. CT-33

HAER
CONN,
3-KENT,
7-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
Mid-Atlantic Region
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

HAER
CONN,
3-KENT,
7-

Bog Hollow Bridge
(Bridge #1594)

HAER No. CT-33

Location: Spanning the Housatonic River on Connecticut State Route 341, in Kent, Litchfield County, Connecticut

UTM: 18.626300.4620340
Quad: Kent, Connecticut

Date of Construction: 1923

Present Owner: State of Connecticut Department of Transportation

Significance: The Route 341 Bridge is a single span Parker truss bridge, supported by two concrete abutments. The Parker truss is a variation of the Pratt truss, one of the most popular steel truss types of late nineteenth-early twentieth century America.

Project Information: This document was undertaken in October 1987 in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement by the Connecticut Department of Transportation as a mitigating measure prior to replacement of the bridge superstructure.

Researcher: Keith Hall
Transportation Planner
Bureau of Planning
Connecticut Department of Transportation
Wethersfield, Connecticut

January 1988

A. PHYSICAL HISTORY

Bridge #1594 carries Route #341 over the Housatonic River in Kent, Connecticut. The bridge is a single span steel riveted through truss, built in 1923. Some bridge records give the date as 1926 and no bridge plate was located, but many Kent residents remember the old two span iron bridge which was washed away in 1922 and the new bridge which was constructed in 1923 (Bianchi 1987, personal communication). The present steel truss bridge contains nine 24-foot panels, making a total span of 216 feet. Between the guardrails, the bridge is 23 feet 6 inches; the maximum height is 37 feet at midspan and 18 feet at the portal openings. The top and bottom chords are fabricated box sections, but all other truss members are paired angles connected with riveted abutments. The two most popular steel truss types used in this country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the Warren and Pratt trusses, along with variations of these. The Parker is one of the more popular variations of the Pratt truss, similar to the Pratt in having vertical members in compression and diagonal members in tension, but differing in the shape of the top chord. In the Parker, the top chord is arched, which gives a stronger bridge than the Pratt without increasing the amount of material. It also made it possible to construct longer spans, since the Pratt trusses, using pinned or riveted connections, are usually no more than 150 feet, while Parkers are built to span distances up to 200 feet (Comp 1977). One of the drawbacks of the Parker design was that it used different sized girders, which increased the original cost of the bridge. In many cases, however, the increase in length more than compensated for the additional cost. No records identifying the fabricating company were found, but it is highly probable that the structure was built by the Berlin Construction Company in Berlin, Connecticut. This company built most of the trusses located in this state. The file for Bridge #1594 contained little information about early repairs or modifications to the bridge, but we do know that a pedestrian walkway was added to the south side of the bridge in the early 1960s, supports for the sidewalk being cantilevered out from the lower bridge chord. Bridge records also show that the bridge was completely repainted in 1951 by a New York firm.

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

History of the Crossing

The town of Kent was originally part of the Western Lands owned by the Colony of Connecticut. In 1738, these lands were sold at auction and settled soon after, being incorporated as a town in 1739. The discovery and mining of iron ore in the area, even before the town was formally organized, was certainly an impetus for rapid settlement, it being recorded that a "20 rod road to the Iron pots" was voted in September 1738 (Hopson 1976:40). The width of the road itself - 20 rods being 330 feet - gives some indication of its importance. At this time, the only road south from Kent along the Housatonic River was on the west side of the river, along what is now Schaghticoke Road.

Originally called Bonney's Bridge, it was later renamed Fuller's Bridge, after Abraham Fuller, who owned the property where Kent School is now located. This bridge was only one of several bridges or ferries crossing the Housatonic in Kent, but all of them had been built by individuals for a specific purpose; one by Joseph Lavell to develop land he owned, one by Joseph Pratt to service the gristmill he operated on the east side of the river. At some time prior to 1783, Fuller's Bridge, connecting the Macedonia Valley Road to the Litchfield Road (now Route 341), became known as the "Grate Bridge". The bridge must have needed replacement at this time because General Assembly granted the town of Kent permission to hold a lottery and the town set up a committee "to lay out the money on said bridge that shall be raised by said lottery or so much as it is necessary to complete said bridge" (Hopson 1976:43). As with all the Housatonic River bridges, ice jams and spring floods washed them away periodically and the "Grate Bridge" was replaced several times before the present bridge was built in 1923. After the two span iron bridge was washed away in 1922, the townspeople built a small swinging bridge for pedestrian traffic until the present bridge was constructed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bianchi, Helen
1987 Personal Interview, Kent Town Hall.
- Comp, T. Allan and Donald C. Jackson
1977 Bridge Truss Types: A Guide to Dating and Identifying.
American Association for State and Local History,
Technical Leaflet 95, Nashville.
- Crofut, Florence S. M.
1937 Guide to the History and the Historic Sites of Connecticut.
Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Davis, Ann Soper, ed.
1976 Kent 1776 - A Connecticut Town Two Centuries Ago, Kent
Bicentennial Commission.
- Hopson, Emily M.
1976 Kent's Cross-Country Roads and Housatonic Bridges. In
Davis 1976, pp. 40-44.
- Lewis, J. W. & Co.
1881 History of Litchfield County, Connecticut. J. W. Lewis,
Philadelphia
- Roth, Matthew
1981 Connecticut: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and
Industrial Sites. Society for Industrial Archaeology.

Manuscript files of ConnDOT Bridge Section and Connecticut Archaeological Survey.

