

Nebeker Lane Bridge  
County Road 25801  
Spanning the Sevier River  
1/2 mile northwest of Annabella  
Sevier County  
Utah

HAER No. UT-87

HAER  
UTAH  
21-ANNA.V,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
National Park Service  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
NEBEKER LANE BRIDGE

HAER  
UTAH  
21-ANNA.V,  
1-

I. INTRODUCTION

**Location:** Spanning the Sevier River on Nebeker Lane (County Road 25801), one half mile northwest of Annabella, Sevier County, Utah

**Quad:** Annabella, Utah 7.5 min scale

**UTM:** 12/406880mE 4285580mN

**Date of Construction:** ca. 1935

**Present Owner:** Sevier County  
Richfield, Utah

**Present Use:** Vehicular and pedestrian bridge to be replaced by a new vehicular and pedestrian bridge. Project date of removal is fall 1996.

**Significance:** The Nebeker Lane Bridge is a timber stringer type, with cut stone abutments and wingwalls.

**Historian:** Loma Billat, JBR Environmental Consultants, Inc.,  
May 1996

## II. HISTORY

### A. NEED FOR THE BRIDGE

The town of Annabella is located in the valley between the Pavant Range and the Sevier Plateau in Sevier County, Utah. It is approximately two miles south-southeast of the town of Richfield. The Sevier River runs through the valley.

Annabella was settled by Mormon pioneers in 1871. It was originally called Omni Point due to its location at the point of the mountain two miles from Omni, now Richfield<sup>1</sup>. The community was based on agriculture. Chief industries included production of eggs, poultry, sheep and wool. Also, livestock grazing, milk-production, and sugar beet crops were other employment venues<sup>2</sup>. During these early years, there were no stores from which to buy goods and people had to produce their own clothing and food<sup>3</sup>. Road building during that time was financed by poll tax and donations. The first county bridge between Annabella and Richfield was constructed in 1885<sup>4</sup>. This facilitated access to other communities for trade. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad was built on the opposite side of the river in 1896<sup>5</sup>. Bridges were an essential part of

the transportation and distribution of agricultural products to the railroad system.

As previously mentioned Annabella has always been an agricultural community. In 1945 more than 65,000 turkeys were raised here. In addition to agriculture, other industries were formulated in the small community. From the early 1900s through the 1940s several small retail stores, a millinery shop, and a cafe were in operation in Annabella for a number of years<sup>6</sup>. The addition of the smaller county bridges in the area likely aided in the transport and distribution of a variety of agricultural products and other goods to the railroad.

#### B. CONSTRUCTION CHRONOLOGY

In the early years, territorial and county roads were financed through poll taxes and tolls. Poll taxes required one day of labor or \$1.50 per year from all able-bodied males of a certain age. In 1862, the poll tax law in Utah was changed to two days labor per year or \$1.50 per day in lieu of that<sup>7</sup>. Tolls were instituted to pay for maintenance on wagon roads and keep the necessary structures over streams passable. Knowlton acknowledged "this type of financing {was} very satisfactory for short sections of highway which involve primarily bridges, tunnels, or ferries."<sup>8</sup>

With no bridge across the Sevier River, the town of Annabella was somewhat isolated in the early years. In the spring of 1883, the river flooded and residents had to go all the way to Prattville to cross the river, or cross in a boat at Mr. Kelley's Ferry<sup>9</sup>. Finally in 1885, the county provided material and the citizens of Annabella built their first bridge across the Sevier River<sup>10</sup>. The second county bridge for the town was built in 1887<sup>11</sup>.

Railroad transportation was available in the area in 1896 when the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad was constructed through the valley. This reduced the need for road maintenance between many towns. As a result of the increased utilization of the railroad system, the funding provided by the state for inter-community roads was greatly reduced. Therefore, rural community road maintenance became strictly a county and/or city concern<sup>12</sup>.

The State Road Commission was created in 1909. At that time, Sevier County roads were maintained mostly by the county. Only three small segments of state road were present in Sevier County. In 1912, the Bridge Department of the State Road Commission requested bids and awarded contracts for several small bridges in Sevier County<sup>13</sup>.

The economy of Sevier County began and continues to be based on agriculture. In a census of economic activities for 1930, fifty percent of the population was employed in agriculture. Rural roads are an integral part of the agricultural community providing links between the farm fields, settlements, and distribution lines.

In the early to mid-1930s, federal work relief programs provided the labor for numerous engineering projects across the nation. Although unsubstantiated, it is within the realm of possibilities that this bridge was a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) or Works Progress Administration (WPA) project. The suggestion that it could have been a CCC or WPA project was made by Mr. Gaylen Rappeleye, Sevier County Road Supervisor. There is no primary source for this suggestion. There was one CCC camp in the Richfield area from October 1933 through March 1934. Although no specific building projects were described for the Aurora area, bridges were one of the main types of structures built and maintained by the CCC<sup>14</sup>. The estimated construction date for the Nebeker Lane Bridge is 1935 which falls well within the CCC and WPA activity periods<sup>15</sup>.

### C. LOCATION

The bridge spans the Sevier River along Nebeker Lane (County Road 25801). It is about one-half mile west of the town of Annabella in Sevier County (Figure 1). It provides access to the town of Richfield (northwest), the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, and the town of Elsinore (southwest) which are all on the other side of the Sevier River.

## III. THE BRIDGE

### A. DESCRIPTION

The Nebeker Lane Bridge was built around 1935, an estimate provided by the UDOT structure inventory and appraisal sheet, and the Utah Historic Bridge Inventory record<sup>16</sup>. It spans the Sevier River and measures 36 feet 6 inches long (in one span) by 17 feet wide. The abutments and wingwalls are constructed of irregularly cut sandstone blocks and mortar which is unusual for timber bridge construction. Usually the abutments are constructed of earth with wood backwalls and pilings<sup>17</sup>. Some of the mortar appears to have been retouched over the years. It is at least six courses high with additional courses submerged in the river. The wingwalls are stepped at their widest point. Stringers were used to connect the abutments and make-up the superstructure of the bridge. There are nine stringers across the 17 foot width. Each stringer measures

12 inches by 16 inches indicating the bridge was constructed post-1930<sup>18</sup>. The wood deck is laid upon the stringer base. The bridge has two wooden double-rail guardrails flanking either side of it. The guardrail consists of posts with dimensioned lumber rails bolted to them. The posts are bolted to the outer stringers. Some of the end posts are rough hewn logs. The wood deck of the bridge is covered with dirt.

Timber was an ideal construction material for numerous reasons. Wood is an abundant and renewable resource which is relatively easy to procure. Initial cost and maintenance are lower than that of other, less accessible materials (i.e. steel). Further, a timber bridge can be constructed in any weather and is not damaged by continuous freeze and thaw,<sup>19</sup> an important consideration in Utah. Little skilled labor is necessary to construct a timber bridge. The use of cut stone for the abutments was for many of the same reasons; abundance, accessibility, weather resistance, and cost.

#### B. MODIFICATIONS

The bridge deck planks and timber stringers have been replaced periodically which is a normal and required part of maintenance<sup>20</sup>. The construction materials and techniques used in this maintenance have been consistent with the original bridge design and workmanship. The cut stone

abutments and wingwalls have not been replaced and date to original construction.

C. OWNERSHIP AND FUTURE

The Nebeker Lane Bridge was built, owned, and continues to be maintained by the County of Sevier. Recent study of the bridge indicated limitations in handling projected traffic volumes and loads in the years ahead. It was deemed necessary to replace the bridge in order to handle forthcoming use.

IV. FOOTNOTES

1. Van Cott, John W., Utah Place Names, p. 9.
2. Warnock, Ivan L., Thru the Years, p. 90.
3. Warnock, Ivan L., Thru the Years, p. 88.
4. Warnock, Ivan L., Thru the Years, p. 88.
5. Warnock, Ivan L., Thru the Years, p. 116.
6. Warnock, Ivan L., Thru the Years, p. 90.
7. Knowlton, Ezra C., History of Highway Development in Utah, p. 21.
8. Knowlton, Ezra C., History of Highway Development in Utah, p. 23.
9. The Richfield Reaper, 19 September 1935.
10. The Richfield Reaper, 19 September 1935.
11. Warnock, Ivan L., Thru the Years, p. 89.
12. Knowlton, Ezra C., History of Highway Development in Utah, p. 78.
13. Knowlton, Ezra C., History of Highway Development in Utah, p. 153-155.
14. Baldrige, Kenneth W., Nine Years of Achievement: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Utah, p. 378.
15. Poll, Richard D., Utah's History, p. 487-488.
16. FraserDesign, Utah Historic Bridge Inventory.
17. Axline, Jon, Monuments Above the Water: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860-1956, p. 27.
18. Axline, Jon, Monuments Above the Water: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860-1956, p. 27.
19. Ou, Fong L. and Clyde Weller, An Overview of Timber Bridges, p. 1.

20. Hughes, Charles E. and Asa S. Nielson, A Cultural/Paleontological Resource Inventory of the Proposed Nebeker Lane Bridge Replacement Project over the Sevier River Near Annabella, Sevier County, Utah, p. 5.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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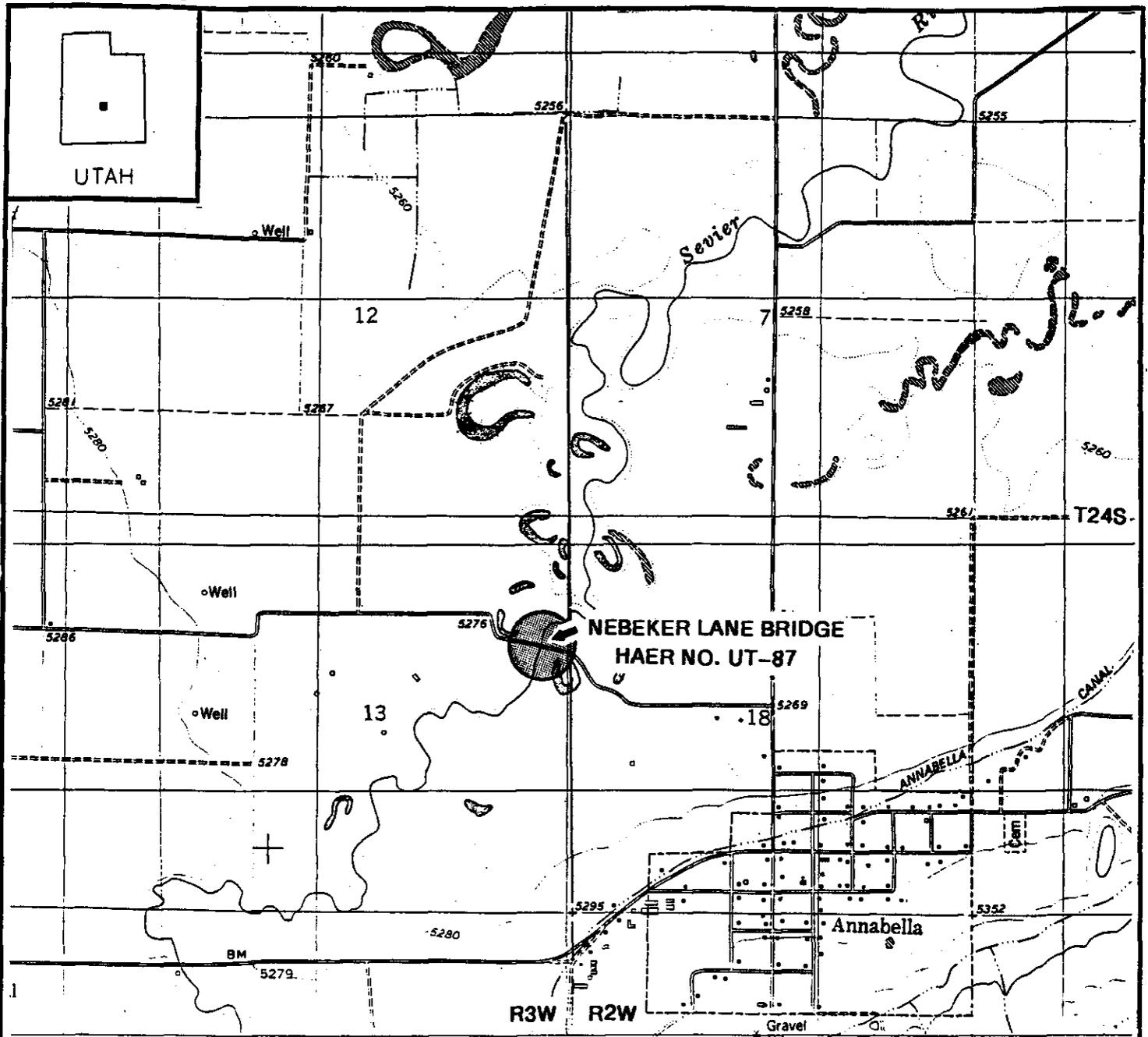
Warnock, Irvin L. (editor), Thru the Years, Springville, Art City Publishing Co., 1947.

B. PERIODICALS

Ou, Fong L., and Clyde Weller, An Overview of Timber Bridges, in Timber Bridges, Transportation Research Record 1053. Washington D.C., Transportation Research Board National Research Council, 1986.

C. NEWSPAPERS

The Richfield Reaper, 19 September 1935.

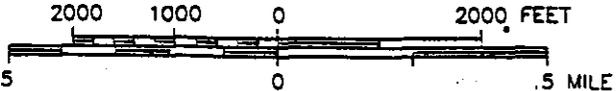


**KEY:**

BASE FROM ANNABELLA, UT 7.5 MIN. QUAD

**NEBEKER LANE BRIDGE  
 SPANNING THE SEVIER RIVER  
 NEAR ANNABELLA, UTAH**

**FIGURE 1  
 BRIDGE LOCATION**



**jbr**  
 environmental consultants, inc.  
 Salt Lake City, Utah Cedar City, Utah Reno, Nevada Elko, Nevada