

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

FINAL

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Patoka Bridges Historic District
other names/site number Pike County Bridge #246, Pike County Bridge #81

2. Location

street & number CR 300W at Patoka River South Fork, including Bridges #246 and #81 not for publication
city or town Oakland City vicinity
state Indiana code IN county Pike code 125 zip code 47660

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
[Signature] 2.3.05
Signature of certifying official/Title Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
 entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object
- landscape

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 0 | 0 | buildings |
| 0 | 0 | sites |
| 3 | 0 | structures |
| 0 | 0 | objects |
| 3 | 0 | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: Road-Related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: Road-Related (vehicular)

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Pratt through truss

OTHER: Camelback through

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls METAL: Cast Iron

METAL: Steel

roof

other CONCRETE

ASPHALT

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION _____

ENGINEERING _____

SOCIAL HISTORY _____

ETHNIC HERITAGE: black _____

Period of Significance

1851-1936 _____

Significant Dates

1884 _____

1924 _____

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation

N/A _____

Architect/Builder

Wrought Iron Bridge Company (Bridge #246) _____

Unknown (Bridge #81) _____

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Commissioners' Archives, Pike and Gibson Counties

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 5

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 470370 4248000 3 Zone Easting Northing

2 4 Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Edith Sarra
organization N/A date 08-01-2004
street & number 1816 Concord Road telephone 812/ 829-0451
city or town Gosport state IN zip code 47433

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Pike County Commissioners; Gibson County Commissioners
street & number Courthouse, 801 Main St; 225 N. Hart St telephone 812/ 354-8448; 812/
city or town Petersburg; Princeton state IN zip code 47567; 47670

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District

Pike Co., IN

Section number 7 Page 1

Narrative Description

The property here designated as the Patoka Bridges Historic District is located along Pike County Road 300W, approximately eleven miles south of Petersburg in Pike County, just east of S. R. 57, and immediately north of the Gibson County line. It encompasses a small, concentrated network of nineteenth and early twentieth century structures that illustrate a sequence of transportation related interventions in the Patoka River Bottoms. The property features three contributing structures: two metal bridges and a section of roadway that dates to the first quarter of the 19th century. The late nineteenth century wrought iron bridge (PHOTO 1) that spans the Patoka River South Fork was historically connected to Dongola, a now vanished Wabash and Erie Canal port town. One quarter of a mile north of it, an early twentieth century metal bridge (PHOTO 2) crosses a section of the Patoka River "New Channel," locally known as Houchins Ditch (PHOTO 3), a large drainage ditch created in the early 1920s in an effort at wetlands reclamation and flood control. The two bridges are linked by the old state road or Pike County Road 300W (PHOTO 4), which runs north-south between the two. CR 300W served as the main highway between Petersburg and Evansville throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. As soon as the state highway commission incorporated the old state road into its twentieth-century system in 1936, it decided to reroute S.R. 57 across the Patoka Bottoms and leave the existing iron and steel spans in county hands.

The area immediately flanking the property on the east bears traces of an important network of water-related transportation interventions at this same crossing of the Patoka Bottoms. The massive, raised earthen embankments, towpath, and prism of the Wabash and Erie Canal's Patoka valley section lie to the immediate east/northeast of CR 300W between the two bridges, while the site of the Canal's Patoka River aqueduct lies approximately 200 feet due east of the iron Dongola bridge. Though these remnants of the Wabash and Erie Canal are not included in this nomination, they comprise a historically significant part of the setting of the Patoka Bridges Historic District.

The setting is remarkably unspoiled and intensely rural, embodying a corner of southwestern Indiana that has been bypassed by time. There are no non-contributing structures within the district or even within its immediate vicinity. The roadway itself has undergone no significant improvement since 1924, and the bridges also show little or no signs of major alteration since their construction in 1884 and 1924 respectively.

The surrounding landscape also appears little changed. The narrow road weaves across densely forested wetlands, and the bridges span quiet, undisturbed waterways teeming with migrating waterfowl in the early spring and late fall. At times of heavy rain, much of the land between the two bridges and north of them, along the southern and eastern edges of the Ropp farm, sits beneath flood waters. The uplands to the immediate north are occupied by farmland. To the immediate south, a handful of modest homes cluster around what was once Main Street in the now vanished village of Dongola. This largely corresponds to what the surroundings looked like throughout most of its history since the nineteenth century.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 7 Page 2

Narrative Description

The decade following 1850 provides one exception. The construction and brief heyday of the Wabash and Erie Canal and the village of Dongola brought an unusual number of people into the area. From 1851-1853, rows of shanties for boarding immigrant Irish canal laborers lined the banks of the Patoka River at Dongola. "Drinking dens" or "doggerys"—sometimes located on barges banked at Dongola—clogged the lazy waterway.¹ The right of way plans for the southern divisions of the Canal required a hundred foot wide swath of deforested land surrounding the Canal for its entire length, so the Patoka Bottoms north of Dongola were clear cut at that time. Trees were felled and massive amounts of earth dug and moved to create the twelve to thirty foot high embankments for the raised bed of the Canal through the bottoms. Today, the Canal embankment still rises approximately 25 to 30 feet above the floor of the bottoms and is roughly 55 feet wide. The imprint of the original canal prism and towpath continue to be visible on the top surface of the embankment although trees have grown up in the prism and it is no longer watered (PHOTOS 5 & 6).

There are no visible remains of the Patoka River aqueduct, its timber abutments, and its guard gates, but a more thorough inspection of the site may reveal remains that this writer has been unable to detect.² Cheryl Munson, professional archaeologist at Indiana University, has suggested it is likely that the area surrounding the Canal embankments could qualify as archaeologically significant sites, given the time it took to construct the Canal through the bottoms, the higher than average number of laborers brought into the area for those years, and the reports of a high density of boarding shanties for canal laborers along the banks of the Patoka at Dongola.³

The Old State Road (CR 300W)

The old state road, a narrow, north-south roadway that crosses the Patoka River South Fork on the Pike-Gibson County line, is the oldest of the three structures included in this nomination. A survey of *Pike County Commissioners Reports (1817 -1826)* suggests that construction on the road began as early as 1825, but it is difficult to pinpoint exact dates.⁴ In both the 1876 *Atlas of Indiana* and the 1881 *Map of Pike and Gibson Counties*, the roadbed follows the same trajectory that it does today. It is a gravel road that has been surfaced with asphalt which has deteriorated in some places to simply tarred gravel. The section of the road between the two bridges averages 14.5 feet in width-- not much wider than the timber deck of the iron Dongola bridge. At basically a lane and a half, the width reflects the road's original intended use by horse-drawn vehicles.

The road winds its way from south to north across the Patoka Bottoms, an area subject to annual flooding in late winter and spring. Between the two bridges, thick stands of sycamore, cottonwood, and swamp oak crowd up to the narrow road shoulder and form an overarching canopy (PHOTO 7). Dimly through the trees and dense understory to the east can be seen the embankments of the Wabash and Erie Canal, which angles across this section of the bottoms on a northeast to southwest diagonal, crossing the Patoka River South Fork into the site of the village of Dongola about 200

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 7 Page 3

Narrative Description

feet east of Pike Co. Bridge #246. As the road nears the low ground on either side of Pike Co. Bridge #81, the roadbed is built up as a causeway with culverts that allow the passage of flood waters from east to west. (PHOTO 8). During the spring, much of the land on either side of the road north of Bridge #81 takes on the aspect of a wide, shallow lake. The Ropp bottoms, just west of the road and north of Houchins Ditch, provide a temporary home for thousands of migrating "dabbler" ducks, species who thrive on bodies of water too shallow for deep diving species⁵ (PHOTOS 9 & 10).

In 1924, the roadbed in the vicinity of Houchins Ditch was raised above the level of the great flood of 1913 and the culverts mentioned above were installed. Because the state highway commission bypassed this section of the old state road when it built S.R. 57 in 1936, the old stretch through the bottoms retains with high integrity the characteristics of a rural wagon road common before the onset of automobility.

Pike Co. Bridge #246 (The Iron Dongola Bridge)

Pike County Bridge #246, locally known as the "iron Dongola bridge" or the "County Line bridge" has changed very little since the Wrought Iron Bridge Company completed the bridge's superstructure in 1884. The bridge occupies the site of the "old Dongola bridge," an earlier timber bridge whose history intersected dramatically with that of the Underground Railroad during the 1850s (see Section 8: Argument for Significance, and photograph of "old Dongola Bridge" in Cockrum, *Underground Railroad*, p. 32). Spanning the Patoka River South Fork at the southernmost edge of the Patoka Bridges Historic District, Bridge #246 still carries traffic on the old state road across the river into the former village of Dongola.

Pike Co. Bridge #246 is a pinned, Pratt variation through-truss wrought and cast iron bridge of outstanding structural integrity (PHOTO 11).⁶ It is seated on cut-stone abutments that have been encased in concrete (PHOTO 12). The south abutment sits against the rising bank of the Gibson County shore (see PHOTO 1), while the north abutment (PHOTO 13) joins the level, built-up causeway that carries the roadbed of CR 300W across the Patoka Bottoms to Pike County Bridge #81, located a quarter of a mile north.

The bridge's graceful, wrought and cast iron superstructure extends 120 feet in clear span and 124 feet in full structural length (PHOTO 14). The end-posts and top-chord members are fabricated from a pair of 7 x 2 inch channels, cover plate, and battens riveted together. The top-chord/end-post connections carry cast iron caps (PHOTO 15). The lower chord (PHOTO 16) consists of a pair of eyebars increasing in size from the ends toward midspan from 1.25 x 1.25 inches, through 2.5 x 1 inches, to 3 x 1 inches. These dimensional changes occur across the entire nine panel length of the lower chords, not within each panel. The truss depth is 17 feet from outside to outside. The web divides each truss into nine panels. From hip to center-span, the verticals consist of a pair of square eyebars; an I fabricated from a pair of T beams riveted together with a plate; a rolled I-beam of 6 x 3 inches; a rolled I-beam of 5 x 3 inches. From outer to inner, the diagonals consist of a pair of square eyebars decreasing in diameter by .125 inch from 1.375 inch.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 7 Page 4

Narrative Description

Variable-depth, plate-girder floor beams are U-bolted to the lower pins and braced with 1-inch square laterals. The narrow width of the truss-panels reinforces the probability that these floor beams originally supported timber stringers. Now they carry five runs of interior rolled I-beams plus a run on each side of channels as stringers. The stringers support a timber deck (PHOTO 17). Decorative plates with a starburst design finish the outer ends of the floor beams (PHOTO 18). The trusses are braced above the floor system with latticed and braced portal struts. A pair of laced Ts supply each interior strut. Square adjustable rods, three quarters of an inch in diameter, provide the upper lateral braces.

The bridge trusses are lined with the original laced rails (PHOTO 19), and the portals carry cast iron cresting above and towards the center (see PHOTO 11). The timber deck has a 13.66 foot wide roadway—designed originally for horse and wagon traffic. Posted with a load limit of 9 tons, the bridge continues to support motorized vehicular traffic to this day.

A nameplate adorning the portal at each end of the bridge reads: “Wrought Iron Bridge Co., Canton, O / Builders. / Patented November 21st, 1876” (PHOTO 20). Besides identifying the prominent maker of the bridge, the nameplate signals the use of an advancement in bridge design invented by David Hammond, Henry G. Morse, and Job Abbott in 1876.⁷ The improvement concerns the double-intersection system of counter-bracing used in selected parts of the truss web. From around mid-span, a single adjustable round rod, usually of .75 inch diameter, extends across two panels. The counters for the center panels do not reach beyond a single panel’s borders. Hammond, Morse, and Abbot used double-intersecting counters to “stiffen” the selected posts or verticals “near their centers” where they would be most vulnerable to twisting or bending. The posts selected for this treatment were those generally regarded as under the greatest strain in Pratt trusses. In the name of economy of materials, the Wrought Iron Bridge Company’s designers and fabricators wanted to add metal only where necessary to secure specified carrying capacity with a particular factor of safety.

Major repairs were made to the bridge in 1910 when Alonzo W. Kinman won a \$3,660 contract which included flooring and I-beams. The job probably included shifting from timber to metal stringers, replacing the timber deck, and possibly, encasing the cut stone abutments in concrete.⁸

Today, the bridge is intact and fully functional. There is one small area on the northeast section of the timber deck where, according to local gossip, an abandoned couch was set on fire in the late 1990s. The damage was repaired by patching the burned area with treated lumber. Otherwise, while the superstructure is rusted in places, in need of paint, and at times wreathed with Virginia creeper and trumpet vines, the whole structure is remarkably sound and intact.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 7 Page 5

Narrative Description

Pike Co. Bridge #81 (The Steel Bridge at Houchins Ditch)

Pike County bridge #81 spans the Patoka River "New Channel," or Houchins Ditch, which runs east to west, intersecting with the old state road a quarter mile north of the iron Dongola bridge (PHOTO 21). Houchins Ditch is approximately 100 feet wide at this intersection and runs a perfectly straight course through the Patoka Bridges property, banked by earthen berms and surrounded by a heavy, over-arching growth of wetland hardwoods to both east and west. When the leaves are off the trees, S. R. 57 and its 1936 concrete highway bridge are visible about 600 feet to the east of the steel bridge (PHOTO 22). The prospect westward is of wetland hardwood forest as far as the eye can see (see PHOTO 3).

The bridge is a camelback through-truss, fabricated entirely of steel in 1924, its construction necessitated by the completion of Houchins Ditch in March of that year.⁹ Unlike Bridge #246, Bridge #81 was specifically designed to carry motor vehicles. The county raised the adjacent roadway above the high water line of the 1913 flood and seated the new bridge well up on concrete abutments.¹⁰ At 145 feet long (141 feet clear span) and 17 feet wide (out to out), Bridge #81 is significantly larger than Bridge #246. With members made of steel rather than of wrought and cast iron, it is also much heavier. The width of its roadway is 16 feet; its flooring is made of concrete.

While the through-trusses of the camelback (Bridge #81) and those of the iron Dongola span (Bridge #246) are all from the same Pratt family lineage, the paternity may not be obvious to the casual viewer who might focus largely on the polygonal top chord and end-posts of the new bridge and draw in the mind's eye an immediate contrast with the parallel chords of the iron bridge's trusses. The more one lengthens the Pratt—and Bridge #81 is about 17% longer than Bridge #246—the greater the distance there should be between the top and bottom chords, especially towards mid-span where the stresses are greatest, for safe and efficient carrying. The camelback secures the appropriate distance between parallel chords over mid-span (31 feet over the two center panels) and then reduces that distance towards the ends of the span (about 21 feet at the end-post/top chord connection). The sloping of the top chord into the end-posts reduces the amount of metal used in the truss members, shaving the structure's dead weight and holding down the fabricator's bill for steel. Otherwise, the camelback's trussing follows the basic Pratt configuration.

The characteristics of the metal used in the camelback bridge (steel) differed from that of iron, and the price of rolled sections had dropped enough over time to allow for the economical use in the 1920s of heavier members with greater stiffness and carrying capacity.¹¹ Other features of the camelback showcase advances in Pratt through-truss design and materials since the nineteenth century.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 7 Page 6

Narrative Description

The connections between and form of members distinguish the two spans. Bridge #246 is pinned; Bridge #81 is bolted together. Bridge #246 relied on a lot of eyebars and adjustable truss-web members; Bridge #81 had none of these (except for lateral braces). Like Bridge #246, the top-chord and end-post members of Bridge #81 consisted of a pair of channels, cover plate, and battens riveted together. But for its lower-chord, the Bridge #81 relied on a pair of angles riveted together with battens rather than eyebars (PHOTO 23). The variety of verticals was reduced and the sizing more standardized in Bridge #81 from a pair of angles riveted together with battens at the hips to a pair of laced channels for intermediate posts. The diagonals were also simplified, in each case to a pair of angles riveted together with battens. The multiple-intersecting counter-braces of the older Bridge #246 were replaced in the two center panels of the new bridge (#81) with single-panel braces of a pair of light angles riveted together with battens.

The floor system of Bridge #81 also reflects the changing times. First, the floor-beams are rolled I's riveted to plates then bolted to the verticals and gussets above the lower-chord, not fabricated girders U-bolted to pins. Bridge #81 carries adjustable round-rod lower lateral braces. Second, the trusses of Bridge #81 are divided into eight panels each at 18 feet wide, while Bridge #246 has nine panels at 13.5 feet each. Bridge #246 accommodated timber stringers—later replaced with rolled steel I-beams. With wider panels built into its design, Bridge #81 presumed and more efficiently used rolled steel stringers from the start. Third, instead of a timber riding surface, Bridge #81 carried a concrete floor especially fit for automotive traffic (PHOTO 24).

The camelback's trusses (#81) are more substantially braced than the earlier Pratt's (#246). The portals carry braced latticed struts. The interior struts are each made from a pair of laced angles, and knee-braces of angles help to stiffen the trusses as the chords grow further apart (PHOTO 25). A pair of channels line the trusses as guard-rails. Bridge #81 fully retains its integrity. Indeed, it shows no signs of alterations or repairs since its construction. Even the concrete riding surface may be original.

Endnotes

¹ Cockrum, *Pioneer History*, p. 585. See also, Stormont, *History of Gibson County*, pp. 96-98.

² The Patoka aqueduct was an open trunk line, constructed entirely of wood, with five spans: two that were 36 feet in length on either end, abutting a middle span 50 feet in length. Two piers made from wooden cribs filled with stone supported the middle span midstream; the other spans were supported by "strong framed bents" resting on the banks. The aqueduct was 194 feet in length, its end spans resting on wooden abutments sunk six feet into the earth on either bank of the river. *Annual Report of the Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal*, 1850, pp. 176-77.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 7 Page 7

- ³ Cheryl Munson, personal communication, 4 August 2003: "There are some potential archaeological resources of significance, especially at Dongola. Short-term occupations provide the best material time-capsule of life and times, and no other work station of the 1850s is known to me in southern Indiana."
- ⁴ *Pike County, Indiana Commissioners' Reports*, Book A. Typed and indexed by June Hale, 1986, p. 64. Barret Memorial Library, Petersburg, Indiana. Original books in Pike County Courthouse, Petersburg.
- ⁵ William McCoy, Director, Patoka National Wildlife Refuge, interview, 6/20/03.
- ⁶ The following description is based on James Cooper's site inspections of Pike County Bridge #246 and his subsequent unpublished history of Pike County Bridges #246 and #81, "Crossing Patoka Bottoms," pp. 5-6. (Cooper's history of the bridges is appended to this document).
- ⁷ See "Improvement in Truss-Bridges," and drawing of the patent appended to Cooper, "Crossing Patoka Bottoms."
- ⁸ Gibson County, "Commissioners Record," Y, p. 123; Pike County, "Commissioners Record," T, pp. 372-378. In 1891 the two counties gave the Pittsburgh Bridge Company a contract for \$2,075 for work on a structure on "the county line." If this concerned Pike County Bridge #246, then it, rather than the 1910 contract, might have been for replacing timber with steel stringers. Pike County, "Commissioners Record," P, p. 61. There was a small repair to Pike County Bridge #246 in 1924. Downey Coleman of Gibson County won a contract for \$320. Pike County, "Commissioners Record," Y, pp. 203-208.
- ⁹ Cooper, *Iron Monuments*, p. 174.
- ¹⁰ Description of Pike County Bridge #81 is based on James Cooper's site inspections of the bridge, and his "Crossing Patoka Bottoms," pp. 9-11. See also Indiana State Highway Commission, Survey Books, "Bridge #970," p. 19.
- ¹¹ Cooper, *Restoring Historic Metal-Truss Bridges*, pp. 21-32, pp. 39-46.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 8 Page 8

Statement of Significance

The Patoka Bridges Historic District meets National Register criteria A and C in the themes of transportation, engineering, social history, and ethnic heritage. The early nineteenth century state road, its well-preserved surroundings, and two metal bridges represent patterns of transportation which characterized the Wabash Lowlands of southwestern Indiana from the middle of the nineteenth century into the early twentieth. The two bridges also embody two distinct stages in Pratt through truss bridge design and fabrication, and each of the two represents a historic bridge type which is rapidly disappearing from the state.

The period of significance (1851-1936) encompasses the pre-Civil War decade during which construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal's Petersburg to Evansville division prompted the platting of the nearby village of Dongola at this crossing of the Patoka River. Written records attest to the high concentration of Irish canal laborers' camps in the vicinity, as well as the importance of the state road crossing of the Patoka as a stage on the Little Pigeon Creek corridor of the Underground Railroad during the 1850s. The possibility that an adjacent area may yield archaeologically significant remains related to the Wabash and Erie Canal is high, but for the purposes of this application, no spade testing was conducted. For this reason, Criterion D is not applicable at this time.

The Old State Road

The old state road meets National Register Criterion A in the themes of transportation, social history, and ethnic heritage. The road was crucial to the early development of the area and to patterns of traffic, both commercial and contraband (slaves fleeing via the Underground Railroad). Settlers in the Wabash Lowlands arrived overland, via the "old Buffalo trace" from Louisville to Vincennes, settling first along the White River, then pushing south toward the Patoka. The first white settler in Pike County was Woolsey Pride at White Oak Springs in 1800.¹ The earliest dates of white settlement in the Patoka Bottoms (what is now southern Logan township) began about a decade later, with the earliest, the Loveless family, settling in 1811.² With construction beginning perhaps as early as 1825, the road served the earliest farm to market, and farm to mill traffic needs in the communities of southern Pike and northeastern Gibson Counties.

Commercial activity immediately along this section of the road got its first (and last) major boost with the construction of the Petersburg to Evansville sections of the Wabash and Erie Canal in 1851-53. An early covered timber bridge that carried the road across the Patoka on the county line (where Pike Co. Bridge #246 now stands) helped determine the location of Dongola as a port town at the intersection of the old state road, the Patoka River, and the Wabash and Erie Canal. Anticipating the continued commercial success of the Canal, local farmer-entrepreneurs Willard Carpenter and Quaker Issac Steele (a.k.a. Issac Street) platted the town of Dongola along the old state road on the south bank of the Patoka River in 1851.³

The Quaker-founded village of Dongola harbored an especially active and well-documented enclave of Anti-Slavery League members and sympathizers. James Cockrum, the Oakland City abolitionist, farmer-entrepreneur, and two-time Representative to the Indiana Legislature, owned a packing and shipping house for pork and tobacco on the Wabash and Erie Canal at Dongola.⁴ Cockrum was an important local member of the "Executive Committee" of the Anti-

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 8 Page 9

Statement of Significance

Slavery League, a secret network that sprang to life in opposition to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, and the abolitionist sentiments fanned by new fugitive slave laws.⁵ The old state road and its Patoka River bridge in turn determined the path of fugitive slaves following the Little Pigeon Creek corridor of the Underground Railroad north to the Petersburg area and beyond. Using maps from 1852, 1876, 1881, 1994 and landmarks noted in Cockrum's *History of the Underground Railroad*, the Pike County Historical Society and Pike County Freedom Trails Committee have constructed maps of the probable route of the Underground Railroad between Cockrum's barn in present day Oakland City and Posey's coal bank three miles north of Petersburg.⁶ The use of the 1852 map of the area is key for determining the role played by the section of the old state road under consideration here for listing as part of the Patoka Bridges Historic District. As the anecdotes in Cockrum's history further illustrate, the state road crossing of the bottoms just north of the old Dongola bridge was crucial to wagon transport of escaping slaves across eastern Gibson and southern Pike Counties.

Topography played a major role in the concentration of Anti-Slavery League activity on this section of the old state road. The sloughs that surrounded the Patoka River made the state road and the old Dongola bridge almost impossible to avoid when escaping slaves were being conveyed by wagon. The only possible alternative route through the wetlands—the towpath of the Wabash and Erie Canal—could not afford safe passage for fugitives except under the cover of moonless dark, due to its hundred feet of deforested right-of-way.⁷ The state road crossing of the bottoms lay almost midway between two documented stations on the Little Pigeon Creek corridor of the Underground Railroad. Ira Caswell's farm in Warrick County was the first point of contact for slaves fleeing across the Ohio River to a point above the mouth of Little Pigeon Creek. From Caswell's farm they were guided to a barn on James Cockrum's farm in what is now Oakland City, Gibson County.⁸ The third "station" on this route was a coal bank owned by Dr. John Posey outside of Petersburg in Pike County.⁹

Of these sites, the Cockrum barn no longer stands, the Caswell farm has no surviving landmarks, and the Posey coalbank and any buildings on Posey's farm are no longer discernible. The old state road segment appears to be the only site that remains relatively intact.

As the detailed reports in Cockrum's *History of the Underground Railroad* demonstrate, the section of the old state road which still spans the bottoms between the two current bridges, the old Dongola bridge, and a low-lying thicket just south of Dongola known as "the Hazel rough" provided the settings for numerous recorded altercations among escaping slaves, slave hunters, and local members of the Anti-Slavery League who were involved at times not only in aiding ex-slaves on the path to freedom, but also in administering their own brand of justice to slave hunters.¹⁰ An anecdote from Cockrum's history that specifically references the section of the road proposed here as part of the Patoka Bridges Historic District concerns an incident from the "early fall of 1853" when William Cockrum, George Hill, and Ira Caswell conveyed eight escaping slaves (five men and three women) by wagon across the Patoka at the old Dongola bridge via the "Evansville and Petersburg road" (a.k.a. the old state road).¹¹ While the Hazel rough and the old

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 8 Page 10

Statement of Significance

Dongola bridge have long since vanished, the old state road across the bottoms north of the Patoka still embodies one of the paths taken by escaping slaves through southwestern Indiana during the 1850s.

Commercially, throughout the 1850s, this particular section of the old state road across the Patoka Bottoms served as an unusually busy nexus for canal boat, river flatboat, and farm wagon traffic. After the failure of the Canal and the end of the Civil War, the old state road continued to serve the transportation needs of local farmers. New bridges were constructed to carry it across the Patoka and Houchins Ditch in 1884 and 1924 respectively. Although the town of Dongola dwindled out of existence during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, farms continued to prosper in the bottoms and during the decade surrounding World War I, strip mining came to play an increasingly significant part in the local economy. Through it all, the road continued its role as one of the main farm to market routes for two counties. Indeed, with the construction of Houchins Ditch in 1924 the roadbed was raised and "improved" with graveling and tarring. But the completion of S. R. 57 in the 1930s turned this section of the old state road into a local byway. Thus it has retained with unusual integrity the look and feel of an early twentieth century low-volume rural road.

Pike County Bridge #246

Pike County Bridge #246 meets National Register criterion A in the area of transportation and C for its engineering. In the area of transportation, the bridge provided passage across the Patoka River for horse and wagon traffic and later, motorized vehicles on the old state road, linking Petersburg to Oakland City and ultimately Evansville. Its survival makes concrete a particular late nineteenth century stage in the continuing evolution of transportation systems in the Patoka Bottoms area, replacing the timber bridge that had served the mid nineteenth century needs of Dongola and its Wabash and Erie Canal commerce. In the area of engineering, the bridge is an outstanding representative of Pratt-truss highway bridge design in the 1870s and 1880s. The Wrought Iron Bridge Company which made its superstructure was one of the most important American bridge fabricators of the time. Additionally, the bridge includes a rare patented design element which can be seen in only one other surviving bridge in Indiana. The number of extant Hoosier bridges with cast-iron elements is also very limited.¹²

The history of Pike County Bridge #246 began in March 1881, when Gibson County residents successfully petitioned their county commissioners to initiate construction of a new bridge to replace the timber bridge at Dongola.¹³ By this time, Dongola had ceased to entertain commercial hopes, but Ferdinand Knier was still operating a sawmill in the village, and the old state road remained the only significant farm-to-market road between Oakland City and Petersburg. Gibson County took the lead in planning and contracting, and agreed to pay 75% of the bridge's estimated cost of \$7,000.¹⁴ Clearly, the bridge was understood as serving the immediate needs of taxpayers in the Dongola area.

Alexander H. Polk, Gibson County surveyor, was jointly appointed by Gibson and Pike County commissioners in 1881 to gather estimates, bids, specifications, and to superintend construction of the bridge. Work initially progressed very

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 8 Page 11

Statement of Significance

slowly. The bridge's cut stone substructure was not completed until the fall of 1883.¹⁵ In the summer of 1884, Polk engaged Solomon Godman and William Winslow of the Wrought Iron Bridge Company (Canton, Ohio) as contractors for the bridge's wrought iron superstructure and masonry abutments. By August 1884, the iron superstructure and masonry abutments were complete, though "the earth work [was still] in course of construction."¹⁶

The decision to erect a wrought iron bridge instead of another timber one bespeaks the continued importance of the state road passage across the Patoka River. As James Cooper notes, the use of timber bridges for highway crossings did not peak in Indiana until 1880, with the turning point in the transition from timber to iron not coming until sometime in the late 1880s.¹⁷

Pike County Bridge #246 is an important representative work of engineering. The nameplate decorating both of the bridge's portals identifies the bridge as the product of the Wrought Iron Bridge Company, one of the most prolific and influential American bridge fabricators of the late nineteenth century. It also calls attention to a patent that represents a specific improvement in truss-bridge design invented by David Hammond, Henry G. Morse, and Job Abbott in 1876. (See Section 7: Narrative Description, for detail on the patented improvement)¹⁸

Pike County Bridge #246 retains a high degree of integrity. The trusses have all their original members, including the decorative portal struts, cresting, and laced railings. The original cut-stone substructure remains, though it has been encased in concrete. The timber stringers under the floor of the superstructure have been replaced by rolled steel beams, but this has had almost no visual impact and has served to strengthen the structure. The timber deck has, of course, been periodically replaced, but always with timber. The bridge was included in the Indiana Historic Bridge Committee Pool in 1987.¹⁹

Pike County Bridge #81

Pike County Bridge #81 meets National Register criterion A in the area of transportation, and criterion C for its engineering. In the area of transportation, the bridge provides safe passage across Houchins Ditch, and has enabled the continued use of the old state road across Patoka Bottoms into the twenty-first century. In the area of engineering, the steel bridge represents an excellent example of camelback through-truss design, a variation on the Pratt through-truss type which allows for greater load-bearing capacity over a wider open span.

In the area of transportation, Pike County Bridge #81 is closely linked to the changes provoked by the emergence of automobile traffic in the Wabash Lowlands during the early twentieth century. Because it was built to span Houchins Ditch, the bridge is also intimately bound up with the controversies associated with the introduction of mechanized ditching in the Patoka River valley. Houchins Ditch was completed in 1924 over the vehement protestations of many local landowners. Its impact since then on the Patoka Bottoms --both the natural environment and its social history and built environment--has been mixed. A brief digression on the history of Houchins Ditch illuminates the social-historical links between the construction of Bridge #81, the waterway it spans, and the surrounding community's

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 8 Page 12

Statement of Significance

ambivalence about the transitions engendered by the automobile and other mechanized "improvements" on existing means of transportation and agriculture.

Houchins Ditch remains Pike County's most ambitious public effort at artificial drainage. It is also one of its greatest failures. Beginning in the 1910s and continuing into the mid 1940s, individual farmers (notably Gustaf Ropp and his heirs, whose levees still lie within sight of Bridge #81), the Civilian Conservation Corps, and in this case, a county-backed group of entrepreneurs (the Houchins' Ditch Association), initiated levee construction and dredging operations aimed at flood control, drainage, and reclamation of Patoka bottom lands for crop fields. With the notable exception of the Ropp farm levees, most of these efforts fell far short of their goals. Houchins Ditch was perhaps one of the most monumental examples of such failures. Meant to drain and bypass the many oxbows and meanders of the original Patoka River (now called Patoka River South Fork), the Ditch did not achieve its intended effect of permanently altering the flow of water through the bottoms. The original channel remains watered to this day.

The invention of the steam dredge mechanized ditching in the second half of the nineteenth century. This made an immediate and major impact on the reclamation of wetlands in northern Indiana, and as early as 1884, Gibson County historians were writing in glowing terms of the "advantages of tile draining" as a method of draining for agricultural purposes the "many small and several large, ponds and lakes in the county, some of which cover several hundred acres each."²⁰ But change came slowly to southwestern Indiana. It was not until 1911 that local efforts were organized to attempt systematic dredging of the Patoka River through Monroe township, Pike County²¹

In 1915, emboldened by the apparent success of their neighbors in Monroe township, Devore C. Houchins (Pike County) and Samuel Morrison (Gibson County surveyor) petitioned the county commissioners to initiate a ditching operation designed to create a new, perfectly straight channel for the Patoka River from Winslow in Patoka township, Pike County, through Wheeling, in Gibson County, and as far west as the Wabash River. Although in the end, the operation never proceeded any farther west than Wheeling, the new channel would entirely bypass 36 miles of lazy meanders and oxbows in the Patoka's old channel, shortening the distance between the two villages to 17 miles. The idea was to allow high water a means of flushing rapidly through the bottoms, shifting the course of the river entirely, and thus draining the old channel and reclaiming an estimated 100,000 acres of flood plain for crop fields. The estimated cost of the project was \$500,000. Local farmers who would stand to benefit from the drainage would be assessed according to the benefits the drainage project was expected to bring them.²²

The plans provoked an enormous outcry among local landowners. Nine hundred "remonstrators" appeared on the courthouse square in Princeton, the Gibson County seat, to protest the ditching, stalling further plans for a couple of years. But pro-drainage sentiment was the stronger force in the 1920s, especially in Pike County where the relative success of the Patoka River South Fork dredging was still recent.²³ Digging began in 1920, with two dredges operating simultaneously—one moving westward from Winslow, the other east from a point south of Wheeling in Gibson County. Spoils were sidecast from the dredges, creating earthen berms on both sides of the channel that were expected to keep high water in check even during spring floods.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 8 Page 13

Statement of Significance

By the time the two dredges met in mid course, just to the north of Dongola, the fatal miscalculations of the project had become evident. The dredge moving west (towards the Wabash) had dug a deeper channel than the eastbound dredge. The reverse fall and slack water conditions this created were exacerbated by the bowl-shaped topography of the floodplain in this section of the Patoka bottoms.²⁴ Instead of draining 100,000 acres, only 5,000 acres were reclaimed, at the cost of financial ruin to an untold number of small farm owners who lost their bottom lands due to "delinquent ditch assessments."²⁵

The history of Pike County Bridge #81 begins with the completion of Houchins Ditch. Like Houchins Ditch, the proposed construction of a new bridge across the Patoka Bottoms provoked controversy in the community. A spirited debate raged for several weeks in March 1924 via letters to the editors of the Petersburg newspapers. Local voices for progress ("Good Roads" movement boosters who advocated bypassing the old state road entirely) countered those who preferred that the county build the new bridge on the existing bed of the old state road. The outcome of the debate was conservative in nature: Pike County constructed Bridge #81 on the existing old state road. The letters to the editor, as well as certain details of the bridge itself reflect the community's slow, reluctant transition toward the automobile era.

The "Good Roads" boosters were concerned that the existing state road was unsuitable for automobile traffic. Though it might require a higher initial investment of capital, they proposed that the county take advantage of the extensive embankments of the old Wabash and Erie Canal through the bottoms, using the raised bed and towpath of the Canal as a roadbed. This would position the new bridge at a point east of the old state road, eliminate the need to climb the numerous hills between Petersburg and Oakland City, and provide travelers with a roadbed known to sit high and dry above the annual floods of the Patoka Bottoms.²⁶

The "Good Roads" advocates were defeated by a more fiscally conservative group of letter-writing taxpayers one of whom noted the county was still staggering under the unpaid debt created by Houchins Ditch.²⁷ When this latter group won the day, the concept of a road built on the Wabash and Erie Canal embankments through the Patoka Bottoms was tabled until the planning of S. R. 57 in the 1930s.

When the Pike County council was called into emergency session on March 25-26, 1924, appropriations for a bridge at Houchins Ditch were made as part of a package of some thirty proposed structures. At an estimated cost of \$11,988, the bridge was the largest structure of the thirty, accounting for 20% of the appropriations package. A month later, Lawrence J. Utley of Mount Vernon, Indiana won the contract for construction of the bridge with "the lowest and best bid" of \$10,969. Bridge historian James Cooper speculates that Utley sublet the fabrication of the bridge's metal trusses to the International Steel and Iron Company of Evansville.²⁸

Like Pike County Bridge #246, Bridge #81 documents a distinct stage in the evolution of road-related transportation systems in the Patoka Bottoms. The same conservative attitude toward "progress" that stalled the "Good Roads" boosters is also reflected in some of the structural details of the bridge itself. The choice of a steel truss bridge design

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 8 Page 14

Statement of Significance

in 1924 was a conservative one. As James Cooper notes, reinforced concrete had already begun to win a significant number of highway bridge contracts as early as 1905.²⁹ By the mid 1920s, steel truss bridges were beginning to be regarded as things of the past. If the choice of wrought iron for the Dongola span had been slightly ahead of the curve in 1881, the choice of steel for the sister bridge forty years later suggests an overall decline in the means and aspirations of southern Pike County.

The width of the steel bridge's roadway is also telling. Although the clear width of the roadway had grown from 13.66 feet in Bridge #246 to 16 feet in Bridge #81, the accomodation of motor vehicles in the latter was still not generous for the time. At 16 feet, the roadway of the new bridge was serviceable but substandard for two-way, motor-vehicular traffic which included trucks and busses in the mid-1920s. While the new bridge generally accommodated motor vehicles, the county implicitly treated this as a low-volume road. Yet, the design elements introduced into Bridge #81 were quite different from those of the nearby iron Bridge #246 and underlined some of the significant changes that had occurred over half a century in materials, fabrication, and vehicular traffic.

The steel through-trusses of the camelback (#81) especially underline some of the distance that metal bridge design and fabrication had come in the four decades since Bridge #246 had been built. Polygonation of the upper chord had become typical and span-length extended accordingly. Members were heavier, more uniform, made increasingly from standard steel-mill sections, and connected with bolts rather than pins. Of the long-dozen of camelback spans left in Indiana, Bridge #81 is one of only four with bolted connections.

Like Pike County Bridge #246, Bridge #81 also retains its integrity. The trusses have all their original members intact. Indeed, even the concrete deck may be original. The latticed portals offer a modest decorative element to the bridge. The bridge has undergone no major repairs since 1924, and still appears remarkably sound.

Summary

The Patoka Bridges Historic District meets National Register criteria A and C in the themes of transportation, social history, ethnic heritage, and engineering. The historical structures concentrated at this crossing of the Patoka River record a history of local responses to changing transportation needs from the Canal period up into the twentieth century. The two bridges carry one of the early farm-to-market state roads between Petersburg through Hosmer/Glezen, Littles, Dongola, and Oakland City to Evansville. The state road crossing of the Patoka here was followed in order by an aqueduct carrying the Wabash and Erie Canal nearby, then the Indianapolis and Evansville railroad, and finally by the Indiana State Highway #57. The road and the two bridges document a particularly rich and varied history of part of a major north-south thoroughfare from the early mid-nineteenth into the mid-twentieth centuries.

The two bridges are both historically significant embodiments of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Pratt lineage highway bridge design and each is a classic of its kind. Pike County Bridge #246 is possibly the more

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 8 Page 15

Statement of Significance

significant of the two in terms of engineering. It is one of only a few surviving bridges in Indiana constructed of wrought and cast iron members, and is one of only two that employs the patented design element touted by its nameplate and owned by the Wrought Iron Bridge Company—one of the leading bridge fabricators of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Pike County Bridge #81 is an outstanding example of camelback through-truss design, and is one of only thirteen left in Indiana. Its bolted connections place it in a group of only four other Indiana camelback spans. In addition to their significance as representatives of two distinct stages of Pratt-lineage engineering, both bridges retain high degrees of structural integrity, while their close proximity to one another and their continuous usage evoke the peculiar sense of a place that has conserved its several overlapping layers of historical change and continuity.

The Patoka Bridges Historic District is significant as a whole because it documents an intact, interrelated sequence of transportation interventions peculiar to a kind of rural environment prevalent in the river bottoms throughout the Wabash Lowlands: a meandering river whose wide floodplain created unusual challenges to transportation, and lush, fertile wetlands that both promised and thwarted agricultural success. Yet the challenges presented by these wetlands have also served to protect the integrity of their built environment. Dramatic changes have been limited. The slow, fitful course transportation methods have followed in this area is well documented by the remaining structures themselves, all of them with the exception of the adjacent Canal, in continuous use since their construction.

The integrity of the property is all the more valuable given that so many of the historic structures in surrounding sections of southern Pike and eastern Gibson Counties have utterly vanished or else been irrevocably altered by the extensive strip mining operations that have played so large a role in the twentieth century economic development of these counties. Today, the sense of an older, multi-layered history of human adaptation to the river bottoms still pervades the district, strikingly unadulterated by late twentieth century developments.

Endnotes

¹ Goodspeed, *History of Pike and Dubois Counties*, p. 251.

² The several county histories (see Bibliography) and my own survey of early deed records for Logan township agree that the majority of initial settlers in the Patoka bottoms came from North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia (i.e., the southern upland cultural hearth). Their ethnic background was predominantly Scotch-Irish, with significant influx in the mid and late nineteenth century of settlers of German descent. The Ropp (a.k.a. Rapp) family was part of the mid-century wave of German immigrants.

³ Stormont, *History of Gibson County*, p. 303.

⁴ Stormont, *History of Gibson County*, p. 95. Cockrum's barn in Oakland was a "station" on the Little Pigeon Creek corridor of the Underground Railroad. See Cockrum, *History of the Underground Railroad*, p. 71, for description and location.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 8 Page 16

Statement of Significance

⁵ James' son William Cockrum wrote a history of the Underground Railroad in the Gibson County area and mentions by name other locals who aided his father and the Anti-Slavery League in specific efforts to liberate slaves fleeing along the state road from Dongola northward. Among them were Willard Carpenter and Issac Street (a.k.a. Steele), the original proprietors of Dongola. Cockrum, *Pioneer History*, p. 586, and Cockrum, *History of the Underground Railroad*, p. 129. The latter source contains an extended story about Carpenter's and Street's collusion to aid five fugitive slaves, pp. 128-152. For more on Street's Underground Railroad activities, see also pp. 42-43 and 204-05; on Aunt Rachel Street, pp. 132-38. Issac Street's store was fitted with a cellar where escaping slaves were sometimes hidden. It was on the north side of the Canal at Dongola, about forty feet from the towpath.

⁶ "Pike County's Involvement in the Underground Railroad Movement and the John Wesley Posey Family," included in Mills et al., eds., *Report to Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology Concerning Underground Railroad Activity in Southwestern Indiana*, p. 10-11..

⁷ Cockrum's history contains only one account of slaves passing through southwestern Indiana by means of the Wabash and Erie Canal towpath (the story of John and Pete Munday, fugitive slaves from Webster County, Kentucky). These men had been instructed in Evansville to travel only at night, and to get off the towpath should anyone approach. They were intercepted by a freed African-American agent of the Anti-Slavery League north of White River and steered away from the towpath entirely, as that route was considered too risky. *History of the Underground Railroad*, pp. 226-229.

⁸ The Cockrum farm was located in what is now the campus of Oakland City University. Though the barn no longer exists, the Cockrum house has been restored. It currently houses the university's Alumni Affairs office. Mills et al., *A Report Concerning Underground Railroad Activity in Southwestern Indiana*, p. 3, locates the site of Cockrum's barn at what is currently 411 W. Oak Street in Oakland City.

⁹ Mills et al., pp. 4-22, gives detailed information on Ira Caswell's farm and maps indicating the location of the Posey coal bank.

¹⁰ See for example, "Jerry Sullivan's Raid at the Old Dongola Bridge," "An Attempt to Catch Runaway Negroes Which Ended in a Desperate Battle with Wild Hogs," and "Job Turner's Work," in Cockrum, *History of the Underground Railroad*, pp. 29-43, and pp. 262-64. The Hazel rough was just south of the Wabash and Erie Canal, opposite Dongola in the Southwest quarter of Section 12, and the Northeast quarter of Section 13, Columbia township, Gibson County; the bottoms of Buck Creek were a short distance to its west. The Hazel rough provided a convenient place for escaping slaves to hide. Close to the Dongola bridge and the state road, yet thickly covered with hazel brush, it was regarded as a waste land where hogs were allowed to graze unattended until roundup time in the late fall.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 8 Page 17

Statement of Significance

Cockrum, *Pioneer History*, p. 587. See also *Atlas of Gibson and Pike Counties, Indiana* (1881).

¹¹ Cockrum, *History of the Underground Railroad*, pp. 69-74, especially p. 73.

¹² Cooper, "Crossing Patoka Bottoms," p. 11; the other remaining bridge that involves these patented elements is Dearborn County Bridge #22.

¹³ Gibson County, "Commissioners Record," I, p. 278. The immediate predecessor of Pike County Bridge #246 was the timber bridge on the old state road known simply as the "old Dongola bridge." A photograph of it appears in Cockrum's *History of the Underground Railroad*, p. 32.

¹⁴ Gibson County, "Commissioners Record," I:400; Pike County, "Commissioners Record," L: 498-499; "Local Matters," *Princeton Clarion*, 22 September 1881: p. 4 c 2.

¹⁵ Gibson County, "Commissioners Record," J, p. 419; p. 427.

¹⁶ Gibson County, "Commissioners Record," L, p. 78; p. 104; p. 146.

¹⁷ Cooper, *Iron Monuments*, p. 6.

¹⁸ See "Improvement in Truss-Bridges," and drawing of the patent appended to Cooper, "Crossing Patoka Bottoms."

¹⁹ Cooper, *Iron Monuments*, p. 175.

²⁰ Tartt, *History of Gibson County*, p. 36.

²¹ The initiative came from Pike County entrepreneurs, under the impetus of Monroe township residents Charles Washington Luff and W. W. Shy. The dredging operations, completed in 1914 at the cost of \$39,088.88, deepened and widened 14 miles of the South Fork of the Patoka River in Monroe township, well to the south and east of Dongola and Logan township. McClellan, *Pike County History and Families*, p. 46.

²² Pike County Courthouse Records (1915). Petition for Drainage in Pike and Gibson Counties, Case No. 3966. Devore C. Houchins and Others. Petersburg, IN. See also, Taylor, "Ditch, Tile, and Levee," pp. 117-120, for discussion of the legal problems presented by the idea of surplus water as "a common enemy" and the assessment of land-holders for the cost of artificial drainage, especially in southern Pike County.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 8 Page 18

Statement of Significance

²³ "Ditch Case Decided," *Pike County Democrat*, May 28, 1920, p. 1, c. 2.

²⁴ William McCoy, interview, 3/17/03; also, *Patoka River National Wetlands Project Final Environmental Impact Statement*, p. 91.

²⁵ An unsystematic survey of the *Pike County Democrat* for the years 1917-1924 reveals almost weekly notices of lands being sold out from under farmers due to "delinquent ditch assessments." Notices in the *Pike County Democrat* on January 18, 1924, p. 4, c.1 are typical. The heaviest number of sales are of lands affected by Houchins Ditch (24 separate notices), but lands affected by the dredging operations of W. W. Shy in Monroe township are also high (9 notices). See also, Taylor, "Ditch, Tile, and Levee," p. 120.

²⁶ "Good Roads," *The Pike County Democrat*, March 14, 1924, p. 3, c. 1; "A Booster for 'The Canal Road,'" "Canal Road is Defended by 'Booster' Who Thinks Its Construction Would be Economy," and "Another Correspondent Comes to Bat for the Canal Road," *The Petersburg Press*, March 25, 1924, p. 1, c. 2.

²⁷ "Opposed Improvement: Thinks Canal Road Would Be Too Expensive," *The Petersburg Press*, March 21, 1924, p. 1, c. 6.

²⁸ Cooper, "Crossing the Patoka Bottoms: The Dongola Bridges," p. 9.

²⁹ Cooper, *Iron Monuments*, p. 6

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 9 Page 19

Major Bibliographical References

- Annual Report of the Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal.* 1850-56; 1858. Indianapolis: J.P. Chapman, State Printer.
- Atlas of Gibson and Pike Counties, Indiana.* Philadelphia: D. J. Lake & Company, 1881.
- Cockrum, Colonel William. *Pioneer History of Indiana, Including Stories, Incidents and Customs of the Early Settlers.* Oakland City, IN: Press of Oakland City Journal, 1907.
- . *History of the Underground Railroad As It Was Conducted by the Anti-Slavery League.* J.W. Cockrum Printing Company: Oakland City, IN, 1915.
- Cooper, James L. "Crossing Patoka Bottoms: The Dongola Bridges." Unpublished report. Bloomington, IN: March 2003.
- . *Restoring Historic Metal-Truss Bridges: A Handbook for Keeping Faith With Their Makers.* Greencastle, IN, 2001.
- . *Iron Monuments to Distant Posterity: Indiana's Metal Bridges, 1870-1930.* Indianapolis: Pierson Printing, 1987.
- Department of the Interior: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. *Patoka River National Wetlands Project Final Environmental Impact Statement.* 1994.
- Esarey, Logan. *History of Indiana From Its Exploration to 1850.* 1914. Indianapolis: Hoosier Heritage Press, 1970.
- Fatout, Paul. *Indiana Canals.* West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1972.
- Gibson County. "Commissioners Records." I, J, L, Y.
- Gibson County, Indiana Plat Book.* Clayton, OH: Mercury Publishing Company, 2002.
- History of Pike and Dubois Counties, Indiana.* Chicago: Goodspeed Bros., & Company, 1885.
- Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Indiana.* Chicago: Baskin, Forster & Company, 1876.
- Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory. *Gibson County and Warrick County Interim Report.* Indianapolis: Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1984.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 9 Page 20

Major Bibliographical References

Indiana State Highway Commission. *Survey Books*.

McClellan, Ruth Miley, ed. *Pike County History, Bicentennial Edition 1776-1976*. Petersburg, IN: Pike County Historical Society & Pike County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

---. *Our People of Pike County, Indiana*. Evansville, IN: Unigraphic, Inc., 1978.

Mills, Dr. Randy, Mark Coomer, Leslie Conway Coomer, and Sandy McBeth. *Report to Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology Concerning Underground Railroad Activity in Southwestern Indiana*. 2001.

Petersburg Press. March 21, 1924. "Opposed Improvement: Thinks Canal Road Would Be Too Expensive," p. 1, c. 6.

Petersburg Press. March 25, 1924. "A Booster For 'The Canal Road,'" p. 1, c. 2.

Petersburg Press. March 25, 1924. "Canal Road is Defended by 'Booster' Who Thinks Its Construction Would be Economy," p. 1, c. 2.

Petersburg Press. March 25, 1924. "Another Correspondent Comes to Bat for the Canal Road," p. 1, c. 2.

Pike County. "Commissioners Reports." Book A. Typed and indexed by June Hale, 1986. Barret Memorial Library, Petersburg, IN.

Pike County. "Commissioners Reports." Books P, T, Y. Pike County Courthouse, Petersburg, IN.

Pike County. *Land Transfer Books*.

Pike County Circuit Court. "Petition for Drainage in Pike and Gibson Counties, Case No. 3966. Devore C. Houchins and Others." *Pike County Courthouse Records*. 1915. Petersburg, Indiana.

Pike County. *Deed Records Grantors Index*.

Pike County. *Deed Records Grantees Index*.

Pike County Democrat. May 28, 1920. "Ditch Case Decided," p. 1, c. 2.

Pike County Democrat. January 18, 1924. "Notice of Sale for Delinquent Ditch Assessments," p. 4, c. 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 9 Page 21

Major Bibliographical References

Pike County Democrat. March 14, 1924. "Good Roads," p. 3, c. 1.

Pike County Historical Society, ed. *Pike County History and Families*. Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Company, 1987.

Pike County Historical Society and Pike County Freedom Trails Committee, eds. *Pike County's Involvement in the Underground Railroad Movement and the John Wesley Posey Family*. Privately printed for Pike County Historical Society, Petersburg, IN, October 2000.

Pike County, Indiana Plat Directory. Great Mid-Western Publishing Company, Inc., 2000.

Pike County, Indiana Plat and Farm Directory. Petersburg, IN: Future Farmers of America of Pike County, 1978.

Pike County, Indiana Register of Stock Marks. Xeroxed and indexed by Clarice June Hale. Evansville, IN: Tri-State Genealogical Society, 1986.

Sarra, Edith. "The Patoka River Bridges and the Wabash and Erie Canal at Dongola, Indiana." Unpublished report. Bloomington, IN: June 2003.

Shaw, Ronald E. *Canals for a Nation: The Canal Era in the United States 1790-1860*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990.

Still, William. *The Underground Railroad*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1872; 1970.

Stormont, Gil R. *History of Gibson County, Indiana*. Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen & Company, Inc., 1914.

Tartt, James T. *History of Gibson County, Indiana*. Edwardsville, IL: 1884.

Taylor, James Woodall. "Ditch, Tile, and Levee: The Significance of Wetlands and Their Drainage for the Wabash Lowlands of Indiana." Ph. D. dissertation, Indiana University. 1955.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number 9 Page 22

Major Bibliographical References

Interviews

Transcripts held by Edith Sarra
1816 Concord Road
Gosport, IN 47433

Harry G. Morrison, Gibson County Surveyor. Interview 2/28/03 by Edith Sarra.

Sandy McBeth, President, Pike County Historical Society. Interview 2/28/03 by Edith Sarra.

William McCoy, Director, Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge. Telephone interview 3/17/03 by Edith Sarra.

William McCoy. Interview 6/20/03 by Edith Sarra and John Smith.

Bob Phillips, Gibson County farmer. Interview 6/20/03 by Edith Sarra and John Smith.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 10 Page 23

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Verbal Boundary Description

This nomination includes Pike County bridges #81 and #246, their superstructures, abutments, underpinnings or other supports, the trusses, and decks. Also, 25' of CR 300W north of Bridge #81 and 25' south of Bridge #246, as well as all of CR 300W between the two bridges including 15' of the road's right of way on either side.

The boundary of the Patoka Bridges Historic District creates a long, narrow rectangle beginning at a point 25' north of Pike County Bridge #81 and paralleling CR300 W to a point 25' south of Pike County Bridge #246. See sketch map.

Boundary Justification

The boundary contains the full extent of all historic resources and their immediate environment without buffer land.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 10 Page 24

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Sketch map of Patoka Bridges Historic District

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number **Photographs** page **25**

* Asterisked information is the same for all photographs.

*1. Patoka Bridges Historic District

*2. Pike County, Indiana

3. Edith Sarra

4. March 2003

*5. kept by Edith Sarra

6. Pike Co. Bridge #246, north portal; camera pointing south from CR 300W.

7. #1

3. Edith Sarra

4. March 2003

6. Pike Co. Bridge #81; south portal; camera pointing north from CR300W.

7. #2

3. John Smith

4. February 2003

6. Houchins Ditch, camera pointing west from Bridge #81

7. #3

3. Edith Sarra

4. March 2003

6. The old state road (CR 300W), camera pointing north from point just north of Bridge #246

7. #4

3. John Smith

4. February 2003

6. Towpath, prism, and berm of the Wabash & Erie Canal; camera pointing s/southeast from center of prism.

7. #5

3. John Smith

4. February 2003

6. Towpath, prism, and berm of Wabash & Erie Canal; camera pointing southwest from towpath.

7. #6

3. John Smith

4. August 2, 2004

6. the old state road; camera pointing south, midway between the two bridges.

7. #7

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number **Photographs** page **26**

3. Edith Sarra

4. March 2003

6. the old state road; camera pointing north, from a point north of Bridge #246

7. #8

3. Edith Sarra

4. March 2003

6. Patoka Bottoms; camera pointing east, from the old state road just north of Bridge #81.

7. #9

3. Edith Sarra

4. March 2003

6. The Ropp Bottoms; camera pointing west, from the old state road just north of Bridge #81
(opposite view/side of the road from Photo 9)

7. #10

3. Edith Sarra

4. January 2003

6. Bridge #246, south portal; camera pointing north from old state road

7. #11

3. John Smith

4. February 2003

6. southern abutment (cut stone encased in concrete) of Bridge #246; camera pointing southeast from kayak in Patoka River.

7. #12

3. John Smith

4. February 2003

6. Bridge #246, showing northern abutment; camera pointing northwest from kayak in Patoka River.

7. #13

3. John Smith

4. February 2003

6. Iron Dongola Bridge, sideshot; camera pointing east from kayak in Patoka River.

7. #14

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number **Photographs** page **27**

3. John Smith
 4. August 2, 2004
 6. Cast iron cap joining endpost and top chord on Bridge #246; camera pointing s/southeast from roadway north of bridge.
 7. #15
-
3. John Smith
 4. August 2, 2004
 6. Eyebars and pinned connections on lower panel points, Bridge #246; camera pointing northeast from west side of bridge.
 7. #16
-
3. John Smith
 4. February 2003
 6. Variable depth, plate girder floor beams and timber deck on Bridge #246; camera pointing northwest (and up) from kayak on east side of bridge.
 7. #17
-
3. John Smith
 4. August 2, 2004
 6. Decorative star-burst endplates on floor beams of Bridge #246; camera pointing northeast from west side of bridge.
 7. #18
-
3. Edith Sarra
 4. March 2003
 6. Laced railing and timber deck of Bridge #246; camera pointing west from deck of bridge.
 7. #19
-
3. John Smith
 4. August 2, 2004
 6. Nameplate and cresting decorating south portal of Bridge #246; camera facing north from old state road
 7. #20

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Section number **Photographs** page **28**

3. John Smith
 4. February 2003
 6. Bridge #81, east view; camera facing west from kayak in Houchins Ditch.
 7. #21
-
3. John Smith
 4. February 2003
 6. Houchins Ditch, with S.R. 57 highway bridge in distance; camera facing east from deck of Bridge #81.
 7. #22
-
3. John Smith
 4. August 2, 2004
 6. Concrete roadway of Bridge #81; camera facing south on deck of bridge.
 7. #23
-
3. John Smith
 4. August 2, 2004
 6. Angles riveted together with battens on lower chord of Bridge #81; camera facing e/southeast from west side of bridge.
 7. #24
-
3. John Smith
 4. August 2, 2004
 6. Endpost and top chord connection, showing knee bracing of trusses on Bridge #81; camera pointing northwest (and up) from deck of bridge.
 7. #25

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 10 Page 2

Patoka Bridges Historic District
Pike Co., IN

Sketch map of Patoka Bridges Historic District

