



Photo 5-64. Columbus Drive Swing Bridge, Hillsborough County (No. 105504)

Columbus Drive Swing Bridge

Hillsborough County

FDOT #105504, 8HI6672

The 1926 Columbus Drive Swing Bridge carries Columbus Drive (formerly known as Michigan Avenue) over the Hillsborough River. This bridge was designed by consulting engineer Norman S. Sprague, and the steel truss swing span was built by the Mt. Vernon Bridge Company.

This 12-span bridge measures 470 feet long and 55 feet wide. The 164-foot long movable span of this swing bridge features a pony truss placed at three-quarters level with the deck.

This truss deepens at the pivot point,

which is a feature that seems particular to this bridge and no other in Florida. The swing span rests on a rim-bearing pivot, located on the west side of the Hillsborough River channel, resulting in a configuration known as a bob-tail swing span. The main span is flanked by 11 reinforced concrete tee-beam approach spans. The Columbus Drive Bridge features Neoclassical Revival-style urn-shaped balusters. An unembellished wood frame tender station is located at the northeastern corner of the bridge.

Built as a neighborhood bridge between two communities that were just getting established in the mid-1920s, the Columbus Drive Swing Bridge connected upper West Tampa and western Tampa Heights along what was then known as Michigan Avenue. The bridge was a catalyst to the simultaneous development of the historic communities. It was completed at a cost of \$420,000 on January 20, 1927. The bridge was designed by Norman S. Sprague of Pittsburgh, a consultant, and approved by R.D. Martin, the City of Tampa engineer. The majority of the bridge was constructed by Roberts Supply Company, Contractors, of Lima, Ohio. The fabricator of the steel truss swing span was Mt. Vernon Bridge Company of Mt. Vernon, Ohio. This bridge is one of two bridges by this company in Florida. The other bridge is FDOT #720022, which is the vertical lift US-1/Main Street Bridge over the St. Johns River in Duval County. The contractor was Roberts Supply Company of Lima, Ohio. The Columbus Drive Swing Bridge was developed as a joint project between the City of Tampa, the Tampa Developers Corporation and the Florida Interurban Rapid Transit Railway Company.

The Columbus Drive Swing Bridge, rehabilitated in 2012, retains its historic physical integrity. It is one of 10 remaining swing bridges in the state and one of three bob-tailed swing bridges. Additionally, it may be the only swing bridge in Florida featuring a pony truss both below and above the deck. This bridge was determined NRHP-eligible by the SHPO in 2005. It is eligible under Criterion A in the areas of Transportation and Community Planning and Development and under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as a rare example of a bob-tailed swing bridge.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Hinder, Kimberly, West Columbus Drive Bridge, National Register of Historic Places Register Form, 2005.