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CHICAGO RIVER BASCULE BRIDGE,  
JACKSON BOULEVARD  
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HAER No. IL-55

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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- NOTE: Photographs taken by Jet Lowe, photographer, 1987
- IL-55-1 GENERAL VIEW OF THE BRIDGE FROM ADAMS STREET BRIDGE,  
LOOKING SOUTH.
- IL-55-2 GENERAL VIEW OF BRIDGE, LOOKING NORTH.
- IL-55-3 VIEW OF BRIDGE, LOOKING NORTH.
- IL-55-4 VIEW FROM DECK OF BRIDGE, LOOKING EAST TOWARDS  
INTERSECTION OF WACKER STREET AND JACKSON BOULEVARD.
- IL-55-5 DETAIL OF BRIDGE TOWER.
- IL-55-6 DETAIL OF BRIDGE TOWER WITH NAMEPLATE SHOWING VARIOUS  
PATENTS.

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**Location:** I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor  
Jackson Boulevard crossing the Chicago  
River (South Branch)  
Chicago, Cook County, Illinois

UTM: 16 E.447080 N.4636220  
Quad: Chicago Loop

**Date of Construction:** 1916

**Consulting Engineers:** Strauss Bascule Bridge Company

**Builder:** Substructure: Great Lakes Dredge and  
Dock Company  
Superstructure: Strobel Steel  
Construction Company

**Present Owner:** City of Chicago

**Present Use:** Vehicular Bridge

**Significance:** The development of the Chicago trunnion  
bascule bridge occurred during the first  
three decades of the twentieth century.  
Despite the controversy over patent  
infringement -- Joseph E. Strauss  
charged the City of Chicago engineers  
with infringing on his patented Strauss-  
Trunion bascule bridge -- the Chicago  
bascule received great acclaim within  
the civil engineering profession. The  
Jackson Boulevard Bridge was completed  
according to this design.

**Project Information:** The Illinois and Michigan Canal was  
designated a National Heritage Corridor  
in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER  
embarked on an extensive inventory and  
documentation project of the 100-mile  
length of the corridor. Final editing  
and photographic documentation was  
completed in 1992.

**Historians:** Charles Scott, Frances Alexander, and  
John Nicolay, 1986.

The design of this bridge was the result of close cooperation between city engineers and the Chicago Plan Commission. Calling attention to the placement of the truss work below the deck and the use of curved bottom chords, the Commission noted that this arrangement "gives a fine open appearance to the bridge." The Strauss Bascule Bridge Company of Chicago was the consulting engineering firm for the designing and planning of the Jackson Boulevard Bridge. The substructure was built by the Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company, and the bridge was erected by the Strobel Steel Construction Company. Steel for the structure was fabricated by the Mount Vernon Steel Company (Mount Vernon, Ohio). This bridge replaced a 280' long through-truss, center-pier, swing span built in 1888.

The Jackson Boulevard Bridge is a single-deck, double-leaf, Strauss trunnion bascule bridge. The bridge measures 202'-4" from center to center of the trunnions and has a clear span of 173'-6". Superstructure is a steel pony truss with riveted gusset-plate connections. Width measures 64'-0". Reinforced concrete abutments house the lifting machinery and counterweights. On each side of lift span is a bridge tender's house in the Beaux-Arts style. The bridge tenders' houses, rising above lightly scored concrete pylons, are identical in design; each contains a pebble aggregate veneer and octagonal plan. A band of single-light windows and ornamental molding extend below a decorative cornice line. Each bridge tender's house is topped by a mansard-like, metal roof.

**SOURCES:**

"Failure of a Derrick on Bridge Erection," Engineering News, v. 74 (September 9, 1915): 511-512.

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"Progress on the Jackson St. Bascule Bridge, Chicago," Engineering News, v. 74 (July 22, 1915): 186.

"Rapid Rebuilding of Steel Viaduct in a Busy Chicago Street," Engineering News-Record, v. 92 (April 10, 1924): 621.

"Strengthening Truss Bridge Over Tracks at Chicago," Engineering News-Record, v. 89 (October 12, 1922): 621-623.

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"Chicago Settles with Strauss for Infringing Bridge Patent,"  
Engineering News-Record, v. 85 (December 9, 1920), 1158-59.

"Cutting Down Old Swing-Span Bridge with Blowpipes," Engineering  
Record, v. 69 (June 27, 1914): 725-726.

"Substructure for the Jackson Street Bridge over the Chicago  
River," Engineering News, v. 73 (March 18, 1915): 550-552.