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JEFFERSON STREET, DESPLAINES RIVER BRIDGE
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
Joliet
Will County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-58

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
JEFFERSON STREET, DESPLAINES RIVER BRIDGE
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Location: I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor
Jefferson Street crossing the DesPlaines
River
Joliet, Will County, Illinois

UTM: 16 E.409520 N.4597300
Quad: Joliet

Date of Construction: 1932

Designer: Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge Company

Builder: Mississippi Valley Structural Steel
Company

Present Owner: State of Illinois

Present Use: Vehicular Bridge

Significance: Concurrent with the construction of the
Illinois Waterway, the Jefferson Street
bridge was designed for the City of
Joliet by the Scherzer Rolling Lift
Bridge Company, one of the nation's
preeminent designers of moveable
bridges.

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-
long corridor. Field work for this
project was concluded in 1988. Final
editing of the documentation was
completed in 1992.

Historians: Joseph DeRose and Carolyn Brown, 1986;
Carolyn Brucken, 1992.

Carrying Jefferson Street across the DesPlaines River, this bridge was designed by the Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge Company and constructed in 1932 by the Mississippi Valley Structural Steel Company of Chicago. The cost was about \$160,000. Built in conjunction with the construction of the Illinois Waterway, this bridge was one of several built in Joliet between 1932 and 1935. Joliet's DesPlaines River bridges were an integral part of the master plan developed for the construction of the Illinois Waterway in the 1920s and 1930s. The City of Joliet chose moveable spans of the Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge Company, one of the nation's leading bridge engineering companies. The Jefferson Street Bridge is one of four Scherzer rolling lift bridges in Joliet.

The main span is a double-leaf, Scherzer rolling-lift bridge of steel construction. The bridge is a Pratt-type, although the polygonal upper chord carries tensile and compressive forces. The span is approximately 220' long; lifting machinery consists of four DC electric motors, 50 horsepower each. There are two steel plate-girder approach spans, each measuring 55'-6" in length. The roadway measures 40' in width and contains a steel-grate deck; on each side of the bridge is 13'-wide sidewalk. The bridge has reinforced concrete abutments and piers. A one-story bridge tender's house is located at the southeast pier and measures in plan approximately 20' x 10'. Its exterior concrete walls have been scored to look like stone. Designed in the Beaux-Arts style, the bridge tender's house contains one-over-one-light, double-hung, sash windows with arched windows at the first floor levels on the east and west facades.

SOURCES:

Illinois Department of Transportation, Joliet Office, "General Bridge Information, Jefferson Street Bridge," files.

Lester F. Filson, "From Whence Came a City: the Story of Joliet and Will County, Illinois," unpublished manuscript, 1957, Joliet Public Library.