CHICAGO RIVER BASCULE BRIDGE,
WASHINGTON STREET
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
West Washington Street crossing the Chicago River
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-38

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

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Index to Photographs

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NOTE: Photograph taken by Jet Lowe, HAER photographer, 1987

IL-38-1 VIEW AT NIGHT OF WASHINGTON STREET BRIDGE WITH RAISED SPAN

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# HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

## CHICAGO RIVER BASCULE BRIDGE, WASHINGTON STREET
## I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor

HAER No. IL-38

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| Location: | I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor<br>Washington Street crossing the Chicago River (South Branch) Chicago, Cook County, Illinois<br><br>UTM: 16 E.447060 N.4636800<br>Quad: Chicago Loop |
| Date of Construction: | 1913 |
| Designing Engineer: | Bureau of Engineering, Chicago Department of Public Works |
| 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. |
| 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: | Charles Scott, Frances Alexander, and John Nicolay, 1986; Gray Fitzsimons, 1987, Carolyn Brucken, 1992. |

The Washington Street Bridge was built during Chicago's "Improvement Period" of bridge building when the city became increasingly conscious of both mechanical innovations and the aesthetic appearance of its bridges. Following a bond issue in 1911, five double-leaf bascule bridges and a single-leaf bascule bridge were built in Chicago in rapid succession. Of the city's many double-leaf bascule spans, the Washington Street Bridge is one of the most ornate. It is a single-deck, double-leaf, trunnion bascule bridge. The bridge has a clear span of 170'-6" and measures 197'-4" between trunnions. The superstructure contains a riveted steel pony truss and has a width of 57'-4". The two bridge tenders' houses have been greatly altered. The houses contain a single one-over-one-light window and have been recently sided with wooden panels. Each house contains a hipped roof covered with tin. To the west, a riveted Warren through truss span carries Washington Street over the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad; this span measures approximately 80'-0" in length and 40'-0" in width.

**SOURCES:**

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Chicago Department of Public Works, Chicago Public Works: A History (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973).

"The Chicago Type of Bascule Bridge," Engineering Record, v. 42 (July 21, 1900): 50-52

"The Lift or Bascule Type of Movable Bridges," Engineering Record, v. 42 (July 28, 1900): 73.

J. A. L. Waddell, Bridge Engineering (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1925).