

EAST CASS STREET BRIDGE  
East Cass Street, spanning the  
Kalamazoo River  
Albion  
Calhoun County  
Michigan

HAER No. MI-69

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MICH  
13-ALB  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
Northeast Region  
Philadelphia Support Office  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

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EAST CASS STREET BRIDGE

HAER No. MI-69

Location: East Cass Street, spanning the Kalamazoo River, Albion, Calhoun County Michigan.

UTM: 16.685400.4679250  
Quad: Lawrence, Michigan

Date of Construction: 1896

Engineer and Contractor: Keepers and Thatcher

Subcontractor: Robert Dunn and Company

Present Owner: City of Albion

Present Use: Vehicular Traffic

Significance: The East Cass Street Bridge is a rare example of a stone arch highway bridge, a type seldom used in Michigan because of the availability of cheap timber. The structure is also uncommon because it has three spans. The East Cass Street Bridge is the only bridge to survive the disastrous flood of 1908 which resulted from the destruction of the dams upstream at Homer, Michigan.

Project Information: This documentation was undertaken in April, 1993, in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement by the Michigan Department of Transportation as a mitigative measure prior to the replacement of the bridge.

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Calhoun County was formed in 1829 and named in honor of John Calhoun, a senator from South Carolina. On October 16, 1830, the first entry of land at Albion was made at the State Land Office in Monroe by Ephraim Harrison. The first permanent settlers were Tenney Peabody and his family at what was known as the "Forks of Kalamazoo River". In 1835 Jesse Crowell settled at the "Forks" and was officially responsible for changing the name to Albion. Mrs. Peabody chose the name in honor of the City in New York from which Mr. Crowell hailed. In 1856, Albion was incorporated as a Village. The hydraulic power available attracted business men and subsequently, a tide of population was created.

The East Cass Street Bridge was built in 1896 and is located in the central downtown area of the City of Albion. The bridge lies along an east-west axis and carries two lanes of traffic across the Kalamazoo River which flows in a northwesterly direction. The structure was designed and built by Keepers and Thatcher with Robert Dunn and Company as subcontractors responsible for the stone masonry work. The structure was constructed under the administration of Mayor Samuel Dickie. The bridge was built at a cost of \$9,148.44. This cost was mostly covered by an existing fund and the City did not issue a bond or significantly increase taxes.

The significance of this bridge is that it is a rare example of a stone arch highway bridge, a type which is seldom used in Michigan because of the availability of cheap timber. Also, the East Cass Street Bridge was the only bridge to survive the disastrous flood of 1908 which resulted from the destruction of the dams upstream of the Kalamazoo River in Homer, Michigan,

A request was made to Mr. William Rieger, Director Department of Public Works, City of Albion, for any as-built or construction plans for the East Cass Street Bridge. Mr. Rieger was also asked if it was possible if the City of Albion was not the original owner. He indicated that the City of Albion had no as-built or construction plans and that the City had always been the owner of the bridge. Therefore, it was determined that no as-built or construction plans for the East Cass Street Bridge exist today.

The East Cass Street Bridge is a three span arch structure of reinforced concrete with stone facia work. The underneath of the arches measure 28'-6" from outside to outside of the masonry work. The distance between the vertical faces of the piers and abutments measures 48'-1", 47'-8" and 48'-0" for the arches from West to East. The overall structure length is 143'-9". The roadway curb to curb distance is 24'-3". There is a 4'-11" sidewalk along the North edge of the bridge which was added around 1930. The sidewalk is reinforced concrete supported by the arch masonry on the South and steel channels on the North. There are guardrails on the exterior edges of the bridge. The guardrails are of lapped metal bars with posts for vertical support.

There is an alley bridge which is attached to the west arch at its south side. This structure carries alley and municipal parking lot traffic onto the main bridge. The alley bridge was built in two parts. The original construction (built in the 1930's) was for two lane alley traffic with an approximate width of 17 feet. The second part was a widening by 14 feet of the north span and was constructed in 1954.

References

Michigan's Highway Bridges: History and Assessment by Charles K. Hyde, Department of History, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

The Albion Recorder, Saturday, January 9, 1897  
Source: Albion Historical Society, Albion, Michigan

The Albion Recorder, Saturday, September 12, 1896  
Source: Albion Historical Society, Albion, Michigan

