LEGAL DESC.: The nomination includes the bridge itself and area extending 30' to the ends and sides of each abutment, in T108N,R27W, Section 35, SW¼SE¼SW¼.

DESCRIPTION:
The Kern Bridge is located on the boundary between Mankato and South Bend Townships, approximately two miles south of the city of Mankato. The bridge is on a gravel township road and connects the east and west banks of the LeSueur River.

The structure is a single-span bowstring arch through truss, with a total length of 189 feet. The top (arched) cord is a broad unit of four individual side components riveted together into a hollow beam. The bottom (tie) and top cords rest on stone piers. The thirteen verticals consist of alternating lattice girders and double connected rods, and support a 20-foot wide wooden deck. Latticed lateral bracing is located between the four central latticed verticals, and double rods are used as laterals between the five central double-rod verticals. Diagonal bracing is utilized on both the vertical and the lateral members. A cable has been strung across the verticals to act as a rail.

The crossing was adjacent to the John Kern property, and the bridge first became known by that name. In subsequent years, the structure has also been known as the Yaeger Bridge after a later landowner. It has also been referred to as the Red Jacket Bridge, but this name now correctly refers to another bridge approximately one-half mile downstream.

SIGNIFICANCE:
The Kern Bridge is significant as the only example of a bowstring through truss bridge in Minnesota, and as the oldest known roadway bridge in use in the state. Patented by Squire Whipple, a well known engineer, the bowstring arch truss type was utilized nationally between 1840 and the late nineteenth century, and is characterized by "a tied arch with the diagonals serving as bracing and the verticals supporting the deck". Unique as an example of the type in Minnesota, the Kern Bridge may also be unusual on a larger scale; its 189-foot length exceeds the standard lengths of 70'-175'. The bridge was built by the Wrought Iron Bridge Company of Canton, Ohio; the stone piers were constructed by a John Mahowald. The bridge has been and continues to be an important link between the east and west banks of the LeSueur River in the hilly and wooded area south of Mankato.

Kern Bridge  
Mankato/South Bend Townships  
Blue Earth County, MN


*Kerns Bridge*. Unpublished article in files of Blue Earth County Highway Department, 1973. (Copy in Minnesota SHPO files.)