

Town Creek Truss-Leg Bedstead Bridge
Spanning Town Creek at County Route 82
Van Wert vicinity
Van Wert County
Ohio

HAER No. OH-51

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Town Creek Truss-Leg Bedstead Bridge

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Location: 3.9 miles south of Van Wert, County Route 82 over
Town Creek, Pleasant Township, Van Wert County.

UTM Coordinates: 16/7011200/4520750

Date of
Construction: 1894

Present Owner: County of Van Wert
Board of Commissioners
Van Wert County Courthouse
Van Wert, Ohio

Present Use: Vehicular traffic

Significance: This bridge serves as an example of the truss-leg
bedstead design and the work of Cincinnati's
Brackett Bridge Company. It is listed as a
"selected bridge" in the Ohio Department of
Transportation's bridge inventory evaluation and
historic plan and is scheduled for replacement,
pending federal aid, by 1991.

Report
prepared by: Randall S. Gooden
Project Historic
Ohio Historic Bridge Recording Project
Summer 1986

The Town Creek Truss-Leg Bedstead Bridge typifies the truss-leg bedstead design. In this truss type, the diagonals and bottom chord are in tension and the verticals and top chord are in compression as in a Pratt truss, but this type has no inclined end posts. This single-span bridge carries a one-lane road and has a load limit of seven tons. It has a clear span of 44 feet, and the length of the floor is 47 feet. The road width is 14 feet, and the overall width is 16 feet. A 12 inch latticed type railing flanks each side of the deck. No approach slabs exist at the bridge, and the deck of the structure rests 9.9 feet above the stream bed. The iron superstructure has pin connections and consists of three panels measuring 15 feet 4 inches in length. Two 12 foot by 5 foot I-beams support the deck and are connected to the truss by "U" bolts measuring 1 1/4 inch in diameter. Seven 6 foot by 3 1/2 foot I-beams serve as stringers and are spaced at 27 inches. They are welded to the floor beams. The flooring consists of five inches of concrete and a 3 inch bituminous wearing surface. Concrete abutments were replaced the original stone abutments in 1925. The bridge seats measure 12 feet by 16 feet, and the concrete foundations measure 8 feet long, resting at a 45 degree angle.¹

The Town Creek Truss-Leg Bedstead Bridge was included as part of a contract between the Van Wert Board of Commissioners and Brackett Bridge

Company for the construction of four bridges. That contract, dated February 16, 1894, stipulated that the Town Creek Bridge would cost \$575.² During that time, the county government had a great interest in improving transportation routes in answer to increasing demands from farms and new industries for improved roads, particularly to gain access to newly constructed railroads. Indeed, the Cincinnati, Jackson & Mackinaw Railroad Company specifically petitioned the county commissioners for improvements in the Town Creek area.³

Companies such as Brackett Bridge Company did much to improve transportation routes in Ohio counties during a period when economic expansion in the state resulted in increased calls for better transportation facilities for the conduct of commerce. Brackett Bridge Company originated as Lomas Blacksmith Shop in Cincinnati in the late 1860s. By 1878, the company produced tools and hardware as William Lomas and Company. It began manufacturing bridges in 1887 as Lomas Forge and Bridge Works with Thomas Morris as president, Francis E. Morris as vice-president, A. R. Morris as secretary, and F. J. Brackett as superintendant and engineer. The name changed to Brackett Bridge Company in 1890 when Brackett gained controlling interest in the company, but the new owner retained the same officers. The history of Brackett Bridge Company ended with the anti-trust suits against bridge

pool members in the early 1900s. (See "Forder" Pratt Through Truss Bridge, HAER OH-42). Yet, the company's rapid rise illustrates the story of many bridge companies that began as blacksmith shops, evolved into farm machinery or boiler or tool makers, and became prominent as bridge manufacturers.⁴

The role of the well-known Brackett Bridge Company and the use of the truss-leg bedstead design in the history of the Town Creek Bridge deserve attention. This "selected bridge" serves as an example of a bridge that was built to handle heavier commercial transportation loads and is being replaced to meet heavier modern traffic loads.

NOTES

1 Ohio, County of Van Wert, Office of the County Engineer,
Report on Pleasant 08201 (31 July 1969), Bridge Files.

2 Ohio, County of Van Wert, Board of Commissioners,
Commissioners Journal (1894), 10:105.

3 Ibid. (1895), 10:209.

4 Brackett Bridge Co., Bridge Files, Historic Preservation
Office, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

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Columbus, Ohio. Ohio Historical Society. Historic Preservation Office.
Bridge Files. Brackett Bridge Co.

Ohio, County of Van Wert. Board of Commissioners. Commissioners Journal
(1894-1895), vol. 10.

Ohio, County of Van Wert. Office of the County Engineer. Report on
Pleasant 08201 (31 July 1969). Bridge Files.