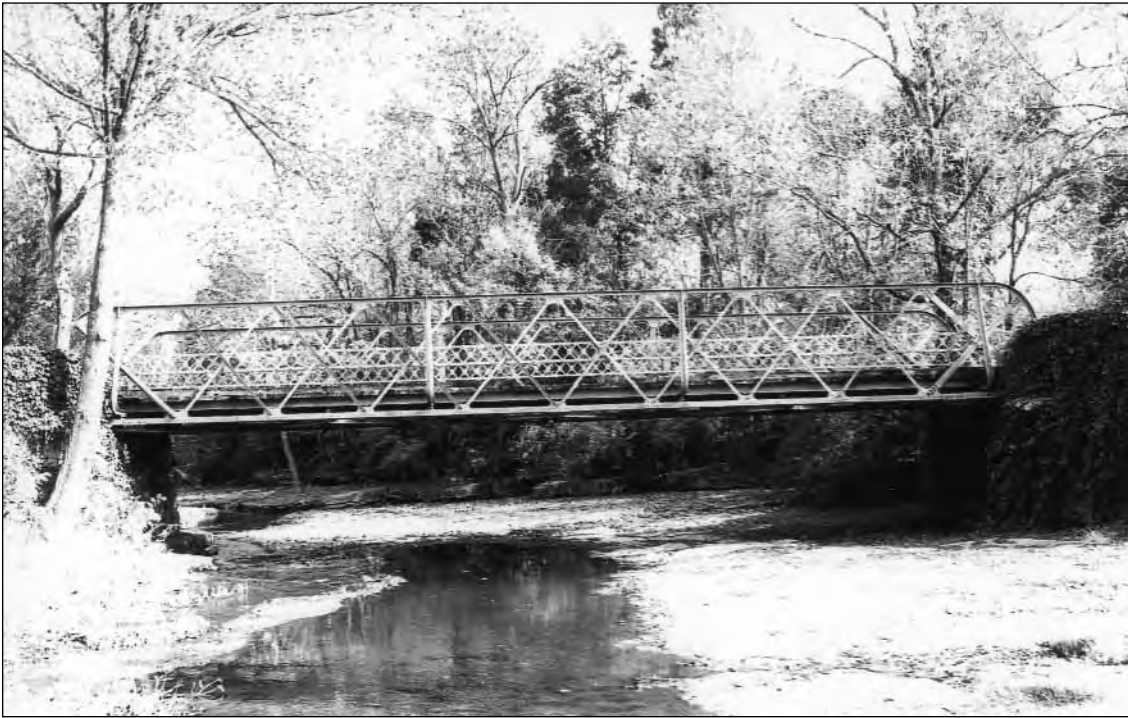
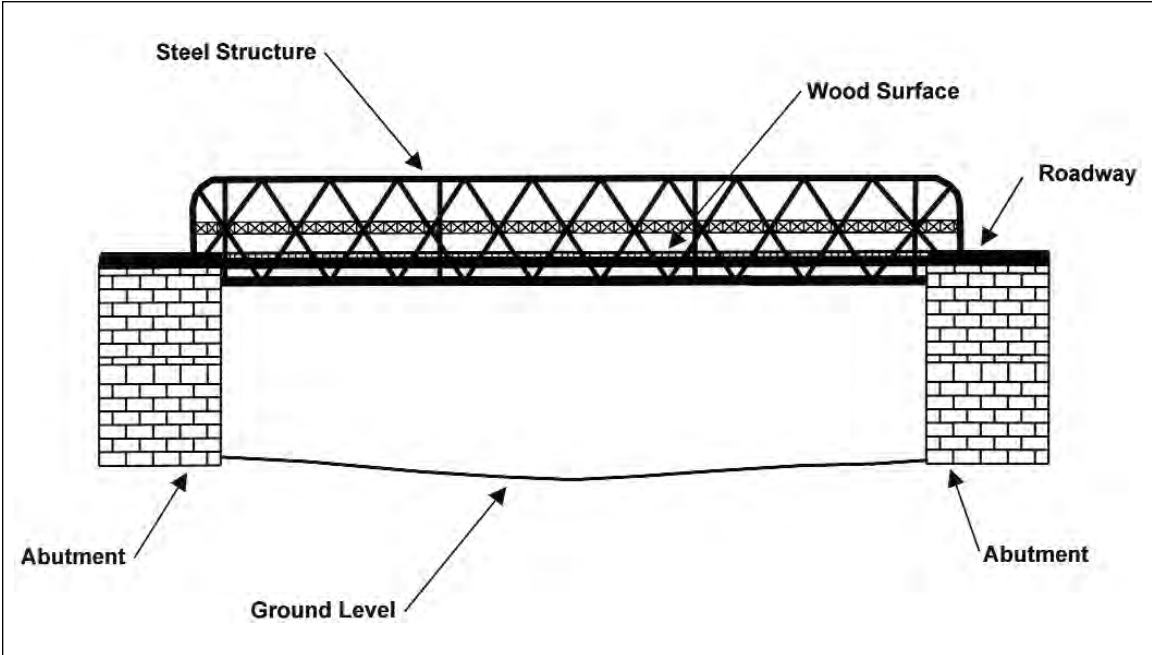


(#33) 19-NonHighway-9 : Belle Meade Bridge spanning Richland Creek in Belle Meade in southwest Davidson County (Oak Hill Quad, 308 SE).



Significant under Criterion A as contributing element of National Register listed Belle Meade Mansion and under Criterion C as rare surviving example of a Double Intersection Warren (Lattice) pony truss.

This bridge is located on the main entrance drive to Belle Meade Mansion, a National Register listed property. John Harding, in 1807, established a plantation at this site that grew to include several thousand acres and that became recognized as one of the finest thoroughbred farms in the country. The family also sold breeding stock of ponies, cattle, sheep, and goats. The property passed to General William Giles Harding in 1839 who built the present mansion, and then to his daughter Selene and her husband General William Hicks Jackson and then, to their son William Harding Jackson. The family entertained lavishly, and numerous notables visited the property including Presidents Polk, Harrison, Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, and Cleveland.

At the turn of the century, Belle Meade was believed to be the oldest and largest thoroughbred farm in the United States, but it was also in financial trouble. Between 1902 and 1904, the owners sold the property and livestock. Real estate developers purchased much of the property and converted it into an exclusive residential subdivision, Belle Meade Park (see #51, 19 B0983-01.61). Other families owned and used the property as a private residence until 1953 when the State of Tennessee purchased it for use as a house museum. It also serves as state headquarters for the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities. Extant buildings include the family's original log cabin (which may date to 1792 as Dunham's Station), the brick ante-bellum mansion, carriage house, stable, and dairy (Coop 1969; Ellis 1983; Tidwell 1983).

The bridge is located on the main driveway leading to the mansion. The original fabricator and date of erection are unknown. However, an 1894 photograph (Parish 1894) shows a timber stringer bridge at this location, and pre-1903 photographs of Belle Meade (Belle Meade Mansion:P-68, 70) show this bridge and an identical bridge at the old Natchez Trace crossing on the property (which is now probably bridge #34, 83-NonHighway-4). The construction date is estimated to be about 1900. The bridge contains one span, a 53-foot Double Intersection Warren (Lattice) pony truss resting on massive masonry abutments that rise above ground level to form walls flaring outward from the drive. The curb-to-curb width is 12 feet and the out-to-out width is 13.5 feet. The truss is 6.5 feet tall. The composition of the truss is somewhat different from that of highway bridges. Bottom chords, top chords, and end posts are angles paired back to back. The top chords curve downward, without a connection, into vertical end posts, forming a single member. Diagonals are single angles. Four outriggers, formed of angles paired back to back that curve into the bottom chord, provide lateral bracing on the outside of the truss. The railing is composed of angles in a lattice pattern with a diamond shaped boss detail.