CHICAGO RIVER BASCULE BRIDGE,  
WEST CORTLAND STREET (west Clybourne Place Bridge)  
Cortland Street crossing North Branch of  
the Chicago River  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
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INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

CHICAGO RIVER BASCULE BRIDGE, HAER No. IL-138
WEST CORTLAND STREET (West Clybourn Place Bridge)
Cortland Street crossing North Branch of the Chicago River
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

Jet Lowe, Photographer, 1987

IL-138-1 VIEW OF EASTERN BRIDGE PORTAL, LOOKING WEST

IL-138-2 VIEW OF WESTERN BRIDGE PORTAL, LOOKING EAST

IL-138-3 VIEW OF WESTERN BRIDGE PORTAL FROM NORTH SIDE OF BRIDGE, LOOKING SOUTHEAST

IL-138-4 DETAIL OF BUILDER'S PLATES: "1901, CARTER H. HARRISON, COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC WORKS, MAYOR F.W. BLOCK, JOHN ERICSON, CITY ENGINEER"; "FITZSIMONS AND CONNELL CO. SUBSTRUCTURE"; "AMERICAN BRIDGE COMPANY, LASSIG PLANT, CONTRACTOR FOR SUPERSTRUCTURE"

IL-138-5 VIEW OF BRIDGETENDER'S HOUSE, LOOKING EAST

IL-138-6 DETAIL OF LIFTING MACHINERY HOUSED UNDER THE APPROACH ROADWAY; 38 HORSEPOWER ELECTRIC MOTOR IN RIGHT-CENTER, RACK AND PINION GEAR TO THE LEFT

IL-138-7 DETAIL OF LIFTING MACHINERY HOUSED UNDER THE APPROACH ROADWAY; 38 HORSEPOWER ELECTRIC MOTOR IN LEFT-CENTER, RACK AND PINION GEAR TO THE RIGHT

IL-138-8 DETAIL OF LIFTING MACHINERY HOUSED UNDER THE APPROACH ROADWAY, SHOWING SHAFT WHEEL EQUIPPED WITH HANDBRAKE THAT IS OPERATED FROM THE BRIDGETENDER'S HOUSE
ADDENDUM TO:
CHICAGO RIVER BASCULE BRIDGE, WEST CORTLAND STREET
(West Clybourn Place Bridge)
Chicago Bridges Recording Project
Spanning North Branch of Chicago River at West Cortland Street
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240
HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

ADDENDUM TO
CHICAGO RIVER BASCULE BRIDGE, WEST
CORTLAND STREET BRIDGE
Spanning N. Branch Chicago R. at W.
Cortland St.
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

IL-138 -1 to IL-138-8 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress in 1996.


IL-138-9
LOOKING SOUTHWEST, CORTLAND STREET BRIDGE.
Location: West Cortland Street crossing North Branch of the Chicago River  
Chicago, Cook County, Illinois

Date of Construction: 1901

Builders: Fitzsimons and Connell Company (Substructure); American Bridge Company, Lassig Plant (Superstructure).

Engineer: John Ericson, City Engineer

Present Owner: City of Chicago.

Present Use: Highway Bridge.

Significance: Designated a landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Cortland Street Bridge is a double-leaf bascule span that became in the early twentieth century the standard for movable bridges designed by the city engineer of Chicago. The Cortland Street bridge was the first of this type and featured electric motors that drove pinion gears which engaged a rack attached to the end of each truss. Counterweights on the shore sides of the bridge counterbalanced the roadway and superstructure that spanned the river and thus little power was required to raise or lower the bridge. When raised, each leaf assumed a nearly vertical position providing a wide clearance for vessels plying the river. City engineers designed the machinery so that the bridge could open within one minute during calm weather and under three minutes during windy conditions. (See Daniel L. Schodek, Landmarks in American Civil Engineering [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987], 146-48.)


Project Information: This photographic documentation project of the bascule bridges crossing the Chicago River was carried out by Jet Lowe, HAER staff photographer, in 1987 and followed on the heels of an inventory of historic engineering and industrial sites in the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. HAER historian Gray Fitzsimons was project manager for this undertaking.