

CORVALLIS, BENTON COUNTY, OREGON BUILDING AND STRUCTURE INVENTORY FORM

CORVALLIS PRESERVATION SOCIETY, INC.
CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY 1983-1984

INVENTORY NO: 782B
ROLL/EXP: 25F/18,19,20

Form Prepared By:

NAME: J. Sanders Chapman

DATE: 7-24-84

identification

BUILDING ADDRESS: Foot of Van Buren Street
Corvallis-Lebanon
Highway 210

COMMON NAME: Van Buren Street Bridge
HISTORIC NAME:

BUILDING TYPE/USE: Automobile, wagon, pedestrian bridge

Legal Description
ADDITION:

MAP NO:

BLOCK/TAX LOT NO:

LOT NO(S):

NAME: State of Oregon

Current Owner
ADDRESS:

CITY: STATE:

ZIP CODE: PHONE:

data

CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1912-1913

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNATION:

Steel swing-span truss bridge

a. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND FEATURES

b. HISTORIC PHOTO/SOURCE LOCATION

1. 1912 Bridge plans, contract #131, Coast Bridge Co; at Oregon Dept. of Transportation, Salem. (see continuation sheet)

c. FORMER USE OF LAND

d. FORMER USE(S) OF PRESENT BUILDING

SANBORN MAP REPRESENTATION: 1927

status

- ☐ NATIONAL REGISTER
☐ STATEWIDE INVENTORY
☐ 1982 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
☐ 1979 WOMANS CLUB SURVEY
☒ Engineering Antiquities Inventory

significance

- ☐ NO
☐ YES
☒ POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT
 (see continuation sheets)

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ARCHITECT: Coast Bridge Company

BUILDER: Andrew J. Porter

e. physical description

The 708 foot long bridge spanning the Willamette River at the foot of Van Buren Street is a three span steel bridge consisting of one steel through truss swing span, a 171 foot steel through truss (secondary span), a 57 foot steel pony truss at the east end, and nine 19-foot timber spans at the west end, which replaced the original west end 57 foot steel pony truss. The swing span truss is of Pratt configuration; the large through truss is a Parker; and the pony truss is a Warren, with polyginal upper chords. The individual truss members are connected together with steel pins.

The spans rest upon cement piers and drawrest. The piers were repaired in 1940. The original capacity of the bridge

(see continuation sheet)

photograph

INVENTORY NO:

782B

ADDRESS:

Foot of Van Buren
Highway 210

ELEVATION:

VIEW TO:

Northeast



PERIOD: The Automobile Era

THEME: 6a, 8e

f. historical background

The bridge across the Willamette River at Van Buren Street was contracted for construction in 1912 and completed in 1913. The plans for the bridge were drawn by a Portland engineer from the Coast Bridge Company. The Coast Bridge Company was in operation c. 1910-1917, and acted as a "broker" for regional bridge building. (The Coast Bridge Company files are currently in possession of the Oregon Department of Transportation, Highway division, Salem)

(see continuation sheet)

continuation sheet

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B. Historic Photo/Source Location:

2. 1913 view, Benton County Historical Museum.
3. 1917 view, OSU Archives

E. Physical Description:

was 24 tons on two axles (10 foot centers), or 100 pounds per square foot on the floor and sidewalk. The width of the bridge is 29 feet, with an 18.5 foot roadway (one travel lane), a 7 foot wide sidewalk on the south side, and 15 feet vertical clearance.

When operable, the draw span swung to clear 102 feet on either side. It was designed to pivot around a central pier. The mechanism to operate the swing span was removed in the 1950's, and the span remains fixed in place.

In 1983, cracks were noticed in one end of a horizontal beam that caps a wooden crib supporting the bridge's western approach. The problem resulted from deterioration of the wood. The timbers had been in place since 1962, replacing the original steel pony truss. Steel I-beam pilings and a steel beam corrected the problem.

F. Historical Background:

The company delivered the fabricated steel structural material to the construction site, ready for erection. The contract for the sub-structure was let to Beebe and Stevenson (piers, rests, etc.). The Corvallis Lumber Company provided lumber to be used in the bridge. Hardware was supplied by J. R. and Smith and Co.; the gates, by Buxton and Sons; and bolts, hinges, etc., by J. T. Phillips, all local suppliers. When finished, the bridge was expected to provide sufficient capacity for inter-urban, passenger and express traffic. (A ferry had operated in the bridge locality since the 1850's.) The Oregon Electric was expected to build their own bridge.

Funds for building the Van Buren Street bridge were not to exceed \$60,000. Most of the funds came from Benton County, though Linn County contributed \$500. Today, the State of Oregon has ownership of the bridge.

Sources Consulted:

1. Norman, James, Cultural Research Assistant, Environmental Section, Department of Transportation Highway Division, Letter of Information, July 17, 1984.
2. Oregon Department of Transportation Engineering Antiquities Inventory, Historic Bridge Survey Schedule, April, 1981, and April 1983 (Structure #2728).

(see continuation sheet #2)

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continuation sheet #2

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Sources Consulted:

3. The Daily Gazette-Times, "Bridge to Be Built at Once", January 26, 1912, Front page, Corvallis, Oregon.
4. The Daily Gazette-Times, "Facts About Cost New Bridge", June 20, 1913, Front Page, Corvallis, Oregon.
5. Corvallis Gazette-Times, "Cracked Beam Under Van Buren Bridge", article by Pat Kight, Corvallis, Oregon.
6. Corvallis Gazette-Times "Bridge Getting Beam", July 12, 1983, Corvallis, Oregon.

G. Significance:

"Until around 1915, Truss bridges were constructed with pin connections, where the individual truss members were connected together with steel pins or bolts. After that time, riveted gusset plates, which formed a rigid joint, were used (The earliest riveted truss in Oregon's highway system dates from 1909). So the Van Buren Street Bridge is also an example of the rare and obsolete pin-connected truss technology."

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g. significance

INVENTORY NO: 782B

(The following quote is from James Norman, Cultural Resource Assistant at the Oregon Department of Transportation.)

"The Van Buren Street bridge is unique for two reasons-- it is the oldest swing span bridge in Oregon, and the only remaining pin-connected moveable-span truss bridge in the State. The swing span moveable bridge technology was very common until around the turn of the century when the advent of the quicker and more efficient vertical-lift and bascule technologies rendered it obsolete. No swing span bridges have been built in Oregon since 1936 and only three structures remain in Oregon's highway system (Van Buren Street, The Coquille River Bridge at Coquille, and the Umpqua River Bridge at Reedsport). Therefore, the Van Buren Street Bridge is important as a representative of this obsolete moveable bridge technology." (see continuation sheet #2)

h. context

The west end approach of the Van Buren Street Bridge is located just north of downtown Corvallis. The bridge is one-way, spanning the Willamette River, leaving Corvallis to Linn County on the Corvallis-Lebanon Highway 210. The bridge is located at a historic water-route dating from the 1850's.

i. condition

Fair

CURRENT ZONING:

West end approach:
Willamette River Greenway

THREATS TO PROPERTY:

j. recommendations

City of Corvallis and State Highway personnel note the bridge has a maintenance, but no safety problem. The state's six-year highway improvement plan notes that the replacement of the bridge is in the "Projects considered, but not included" category. The replacement cost would be considerably high; however, it is also noted that replacement hinges on progress toward a proposed Corvallis highway bypass. The bypass's first phase would include a new bridge south of the downtown area that could reduce the number of vehicles using the Van Buren Bridge. Thus, stress on the bridge would be lessened.

The Oregon Department of Transportation Engineering Antiquities Inventory, Historic Bridges Survey, lists the bridge as possibly eligible for the National Register. The Corvallis Cultural Resource Survey upholds this evaluation.