

GULF, MOBILE & OHIO RAILROAD BRIDGE

HAER No. AL-12

Birmingham Industrial District

Spans Black Warrior River between Northport & Tuscaloosa

Tuscaloosa

Tuscaloosa County

Alabama

HAER
ALA
63-TUSLO,
27-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service

Department of the Interior

P.O. Box 37127

Washington, DC 20013-7127

ADDENDUM TO
GULF, MOBILE & OHIO
RAILROAD BRIDGE
Birmingham Industrial District
Spans Black Warrior River
between Northport & Tuscaloosa
Tuscaloosa
Tuscaloosa County
Alabama

HAER NO. AL-12

HAER
ALA
63-TUSLO,
27-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

HAER
ALA
63-TUSLO,
27-

ADDENDUM TO
GULF, MOBILE & OHIO RAILROAD BRIDGE
(Illinois Central Gulf Railroad Trestle Bridge)

HAER No. AL-12

Location: Spans the Black Warrior River between Tuscaloosa and Northport, Tuscaloosa County, Alabama. On the Tuscaloosa side, the trestle is accessed from River Road. On the Northport side, the trestle is located in a floodplain area accessed from Main Street.

Ownership: Mid-South Corporation, Jackson, Mississippi

Date of Construction: 1896-1899, 1924

Dimensions: Approximately 1-1/2 miles long

Condition: The trestle bridge is in active use. Well maintained, it has been stressed with steel trussing on the Northport side, but otherwise appears to be in excellent condition.

Threats: Due to its age and the wooden construction materials used, the trestle may be threatened by replacement.

Builder/Architect/Engineer: Original Contractors: Dunn, Leland & Brothers, engineers; Hanover Construction Co.; George M. Quigley & Co., trestling and grading; Watkins & Hardaway, Birmingham (Capt. R. A. Hardaway and B. H. Hardaway), masonry; 1924 Contractor: American Bridge Co.

Description: This curved wooden trestle bridge with steel center span stretches across the Warrior River between Tuscaloosa and Northport, serving as the western boundary of the commercial portion of the Northport National Register Historic District. After crossing the Warrior River on a series of concrete reinforced sandstone piers, the trestle bridge --a two deck truss with a through truss-- passes through a city park and just west of the site of Alabama's second Capitol, now Capitol Park, headed to the M. & O. Shop and Yard, and points beyond.

Significance: This structure represents the railroads in the District and the vital part they played in opening up mining areas, moving raw materials to processing plants and finished goods to markets.

Project Information: This report is based on written documentation donated by the Birmingham Historical Society, reformatted to HABS/HAER guidelines.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Chartered in 1848 to link Mobile to the Ohio River, the Mobile and Ohio Railroad was not completed through Tuscaloosa until the late 1890s. Its completion coincided with the construction of the original series of locks and dams that opened the Warrior River for commercial navigation north of Tuscaloosa. Upon completion of the mainline of the M. & O. from Mobile to St. Louis, the railroad extended spurs into the Cahaba and Warrior Coal fields, contributing significantly to industrialization at Holt, Kellerman and Brookwood along the Warrior River, and linking the entire Birmingham District to markets in the midwest and the south. The American Bridge Co. replaced the original steel spans across the Warrior with the current span in 1924.

Sources Consulted

- Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad Collection, Archives, University of South Alabama, Mobile (Collection includes some business records and photographs, 434-3800.)
- Dunn Construction Company Collections, Birmingham.
- Ben Hardaway, Hardaway Construction Company, Columbus, Georgia.
(His grandfather Col. Robert A. Hardaway served as U of A's first full time professor of engineering appointed 1882. Hardaway Hall as the school of engineering is named for him.)
- Interview with Jim Parker, author Alabama State Highway Department Bridge Inventory, 1/6/92
- Interview with Jerry Weeks, Engineering Department, Mid South Corporation, Jackson, Mississippi, 1/6/92 (This department, responsible for bridge maintenance, may have engineering drawings of the bridge).
- Interview with Betsy Haslip, Tuscaloosa Preservation Society, 12/27/91
- Interview with Marvin Harper, 1/17/92
- Willis, Kenneth D., The Harnessing of the Black Warrior River, City of Tuscaloosa, 1989.
- The Tuscaloosa Times, February 12, 1896, June 3, 1896
- Site Visits, summer and fall 1991, January 17, 1992
- Clinton, Matthew, Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Its Early Days, 1816-1865, 1958, pp. 102-103