

Smith-McGee Bridge
Savannah River, State Highway 181
Hartwell vicinity
Hart County
Georgia

HAER No. GA-39

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

SMITH-McGEE BRIDGE
HAER GA-39

Location: Across the Savannah River between Anderson County, South Carolina, and Hart County, Georgia, S.C. and Ga. Route 181. Hartwell, GA vic.

UTM: 17.335190.3799375
Quad: Hartwell Dam

Date of Construction: 1922

Present Owner: Georgia DOT, Atlanta, Georgia
South Carolina DOT, Columbia, South Carolina

Present Use: Vehicular bridge

Significance: The Smith-McGee Bridge is a three-span, pin-connected Camelback through truss bridge with approach ramps. It was built in 1922 as a toll bridge across the Savannah River. It was acquired in 1926 by Georgia and South Carolina and operates as a non-toll bridge. The bridge is a well-preserved example of a Camelback Truss and exhibits important features of the American System of pin connections.

Historian: John P. Johnson, September 1980

SMITH-McGEE BRIDGE

In 1921, J. J. Smith and J. E. McGee of Starr, South Carolina, secured permission from the War Department to erect a toll bridge near the site of Hailey's Ferry on the Savannah River between Anderson County, South Carolina, and Hart County, Georgia. Smith and McGee contracted the Atlantic Bridge Company of Roanoke, Virginia, and the bridge was opened to the public on December 1, 1922. The steel bridge is 1,020' in length and cost approximately \$50,000. The Smith-McGee Bridge was the second toll bridge across the river above Augusta, Georgia.¹

The first toll bridge was built in 1917 at the site of Brown's Ferry, 8 miles north from the Hailey's Ferry site. It was owned by A. N. Alford of Hartwell, Georgia, the successful promoter of a crossing for the Bankhead or National Highway. Alford purchased the Smith-McGee Bridge in July 1924 and continued to operate it as a toll bridge. It was acquired in 1926 by the States of Georgia and South Carolina and soon after operated as a free bridge.²

The present structure is a three-span, pin-connected Camelback through truss bridge, with approach ramps. The approach ramps have 73' steel spans. The bridge is supported on reinforced concrete piers founded on bedrock in the Savannah River. The three steel spans are each 178' long and have riveted plated channel top chords and laced riveted channel vertical compression members. The longitudinal and diagonal tension members are steel eye-bars, pin-jointed in the distinctive manner typical of American light-weight steel construction. Floor beams are of plated riveted channels, struts are of riveted angles, and other bracing consists of steel rods. The bridge is a well-preserved and good example of a Camelback truss system.

Today the Smith-McGee Bridge is the most direct route from Anderson, South Carolina to Elberton, Georgia. Because of the asphalt road deck's poor condition, the load limit is rated at three tons. Its future is uncertain.

1. Elberton Star, March 22, 1922; Hartwell Sun, December 1, 1922.
2. Hartwell Sun, July 11, 1924; July 23, 1926.