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CHICAGO RIVER BASCULE BRIDGE,
JACKSON BOULEVARD
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-55

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
CHICAGO RIVER BASCULE BRIDGE, JACKSON BOULEVARD
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Location: I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor
Jackson Boulevard crossing the Chicago
River (South Branch)
Chicago, Cook County, Illinois

UTM: 16 E.447080 N.4636220
Quad: Chicago Loop

Date of Construction: 1916

Consulting Engineers: Strauss Bascule Bridge Company

Builder: Substructure: Great Lakes Dredge and
Dock Company
Superstructure: Strobel Steel
Construction Company

Present Owner: City of Chicago

Present Use: Vehicular Bridge

Significance: The development of the Chicago trunnion
bascule bridge occurred during the first
three decades of the twentieth century.
Despite the controversy over patent
infringement -- Joseph E. Strauss
charged the City of Chicago engineers
with infringing on his patented Strauss-
Trunion bascule bridge -- the Chicago
bascule received great acclaim within
the civil engineering profession. The
Jackson Boulevard Bridge was completed
according to this design.

Project Information: The Illinois and Michigan Canal was
designated a National Heritage Corridor
in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER
embarked on an extensive inventory and
documentation project of the 100-mile
length of the corridor. Final editing
and photographic documentation was
completed in 1992.

Historians: Charles Scott, Frances Alexander, and
John Nicolay, 1986.

The design of this bridge was the result of close cooperation between city engineers and the Chicago Plan Commission. Calling attention to the placement of the truss work below the deck and the use of curved bottom chords, the Commission noted that this arrangement "gives a fine open appearance to the bridge." The Strauss Bascule Bridge Company of Chicago was the consulting engineering firm for the designing and planning of the Jackson Boulevard Bridge. The substructure was built by the Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company, and the bridge was erected by the Strobel Steel Construction Company. Steel for the structure was fabricated by the Mount Vernon Steel Company (Mount Vernon, Ohio). This bridge replaced a 280' long through-truss, center-pier, swing span built in 1888.

The Jackson Boulevard Bridge is a single-deck, double-leaf, Strauss trunnion bascule bridge. The bridge measures 202'-4" from center to center of the trunnions and has a clear span of 173'-6". Superstructure is a steel pony truss with riveted gusset-plate connections. Width measures 64'-0". Reinforced concrete abutments house the lifting machinery and counterweights. On each side of lift span is a bridge tender's house in the Beaux-Arts style. The bridge tenders' houses, rising above lightly scored concrete pylons, are identical in design; each contains a pebble aggregate veneer and octagonal plan. A band of single-light windows and ornamental molding extend below a decorative cornice line. Each bridge tender's house is topped by a mansard-like, metal roof.

SOURCES:

"Failure of a Derrick on Bridge Erection," Engineering News, v. 74 (September 9, 1915): 511-512.

"Improving the Appearance of Chicago River Bridges," Engineering News, v. 76 (August 10, 1916): 282-283.

"Progress on the Jackson St. Bascule Bridge, Chicago," Engineering News, v. 74 (July 22, 1915): 186.

"Rapid Rebuilding of Steel Viaduct in a Busy Chicago Street," Engineering News-Record, v. 92 (April 10, 1924): 621.

"Strengthening Truss Bridge Over Tracks at Chicago," Engineering News-Record, v. 89 (October 12, 1922): 621-623.

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"Chicago Settles with Strauss for Infringing Bridge Patent,"
Engineering News-Record, v. 85 (December 9, 1920), 1158-59.

"Cutting Down Old Swing-Span Bridge with Blowpipes," Engineering
Record, v. 69 (June 27, 1914): 725-726.

"Substructure for the Jackson Street Bridge over the Chicago
River," Engineering News, v. 73 (March 18, 1915): 550-552.