

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Captain Creek Bridge

other names/site number Bridge #4124 0157X

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2. Location

=====

street & number 100 yards west of intersection of Hickory Street with State Highway 66B not for publication N/A
city or town Wellston vicinity x
state Oklahoma code OK county _____ code 081 zip code 74881

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

MAR 03 '04

**SIGN
HERE**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Handwritten Signature]

1-20-04

Signature of certifying official

Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register _____

___ See continuation sheet.

___ determined eligible for the _____

National Register

___ See continuation sheet.

___ determined not eligible for the _____

National Register

___ removed from the National Register _____

___ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

=====
5. Classification
=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma"

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: TRANSPORTATION Sub: road-related (vehicular)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: TRANSPORTATION Sub: road-related (vehicular)

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

 Bridge (Camelback Pony Truss)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

roof

walls steel

other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====

8. Statement of Significance

=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance 1933

=====

8. Statement of Significance (Continued)

=====

Significant Dates 1933

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Sampley, D.C. builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository:

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	674534E	3951424N	3		
2				4		

N/A See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Michael Cassity, Ph. D.

organization Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office date December 2, 2003

street & number 304 W. Albuquerque telephone 918 451-8378

city or town Broken Arrow state OK zip code 74011

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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Oklahoma Department of Transportation

street & number 200 Northeast 21st Street telephone 405 521-3651

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73105-3204

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 9

Captain Creek Bridge
name of property
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
county and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma,"
multiple property listing

Description

As the main street in Wellston, known in modern times as Historic Route 66, and also known as State Highway 66B, leaves the town in a westerly direction, the road curves to the southwest toward open pastureland and one tenth of a mile after the turn crosses a tributary known as Captain Creek. Constructed in 1933 as part of the loop that connects the town of Wellston to the east-west alignment of Route 66 that passes to the south of the town, the bridge on the highway at that point is known as Captain Creek Bridge. This is a camelback pony truss bridge made of steel on concrete piers, with a single pony span but augmented with a substantial deck that connects to the abutments. From abutment to abutment, the bridge is 225 feet long, and the camelback pony span segment is one hundred feet in length. The bridge deck is made of concrete, now covered with asphalt, twenty-two feet wide and thus two feet wider than the adjacent highway.

The design of the bridge conforms to contemporary Oklahoma Highway Department plans and includes the reliable and powerful camelback pony truss system. That design incorporated the standard pattern of five angles in the upper chord, diagonal trusses on the ends, and X brace in the center, and vertical steel posts at each angle. On the bridge deck, concrete curbs line the roadway beneath a steel guardrail that extends not only beyond the camelback truss to line the remainder of the bridge deck, but also beyond the abutments at both ends; this guardrail may have been added to the bridge after construction. A shorter guardrail that lines only the central camelback truss section of the bridge is made of a lattice of steel diagonals. The deck and truss rest on long I-beams that are supported from the streambed by two piers (paired columns linked with an integral concrete panel) and abutments at the ends. These support features are parallel to each other, but at a sharp angle to the highway on the north side for westbound traffic rather than the common configuration of being perpendicular to the roadway.

The Captain Creek Bridge is an impressive structure, built to bear a substantial volume of anticipated traffic on Route 66 as the traveling public veered slightly off an otherwise straight east-west course to pass through the town of Wellston, and in this way hints at its larger historical significance. It retains excellent integrity of structure, materials, workmanship, location, appearance, feeling, and association.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 10

Captain Creek Bridge
name of property
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
county and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma."
multiple property listing

Significance

Summary

The bridge over Captain Creek is significant within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma." Constructed in 1933 as an integral element of the Route 66 loop through Wellston, this road experienced a brief, but powerfully significant relationship with Route 66 in Oklahoma. Because of this association, the bridge qualifies under that multiple property nomination. The bridge is significant under Criterion A because it represents the property type, "Road Bridges on Route 66" in the area of significance of Transportation.

The Captain Creek Bridge west of Wellston, Oklahoma, emerged initially as an effort of the local community to have a paved section of Route 66 pass through their town and then converged with the a program to see that the new Route 66 in Oklahoma was paved throughout. The initial routing of the highway in 1926 took it through the town of Wellston, but the road was at that time unpaved. After a series of delays over six years, the state finally paved the section that connected Wellston with other points on the road and built this bridge, in 1933, but in the process found itself at odds with alternatively the townspeople and the United States Bureau of Public Roads since the federal agency required the state to follow a shorter route that bypassed the community. Two road sections were thus built to meet the conflicting demands, but ultimately the federal government prevailed and the new Route 66 alignment passed about a mile to the south of the town, thus also leaving behind this road and bridge. Still an active and usable bridge, the structure retained its association with Route 66 only a short while, but in that fleeting moment its association laid bare the process of historical change reshaping the Oklahoma social and political landscape.

Historical Significance of the Captain Creek Bridge

Features associated with Route 66 are sometimes historically significant because they reveal the pattern of social change associated with the road over the several decades of the highway's existence, but sometimes a briefer association can reveal different dimensions of the road's, and the state's, history with great clarity. In the case of Captain Creek Bridge, the circumstances that led to the construction of the bridge as part of a vital segment of Route 66 and that then caused it to be left behind as Route 66 traffic took an alternate nearby demonstrate the dynamics of change not only in transportation but in society as much as associations elsewhere that lasted longer. Still an active and usable bridge, the structure retained its association with Route 66 only a short while, but its association is the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 11

Captain Creek Bridge
name of property
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
county and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma,"
multiple property listing

more important because it indicated the forces at work to change the road and to leave isolated the people, communities, and businesses who had promoted it, paid for it, and identified with it.

Wellston, Oklahoma typified much of the growth of the young state in the 1910s and 1920s, in the years when the highway system was being formulated, and its experience with the placement of Route 66 caused it to be a focus for similar communities across the state. Like other Oklahoma towns, Wellston was young, founded originally as a trading post in 1884 in the northern part of the Kickapoo Indian reservation in what would become Lincoln County. When the Frisco Railroad was constructed in the area in 1898, the settlement shifted its location a little to be near this important commercial route—an early sign of the importance of transportation to the community.¹ And there, near where Captain Creek emptied into Deep Fork Creek, the town grew and by all accounts thrived. One key element on which the growth of the community depended was, as ever, transportation.

In the 1920s as Oklahoma moved systematically into a period where automobiles replaced horses and buggies, the state launched a program to upgrade its road network with the goal of paving the major thoroughfares. In fact, the state's roads prior to this time did not effectively constitute a system, but were an assortment of roadways, the vast majority unpaved, connecting rural villages to county seats and markets. Various private organizations promoted their own routes and networks of roads in the 1910s and 1920s that they hoped would lead to public sponsorship of the highways. One of the more influential organizations was the Ozark Trails Association which in fact constituted by the mid-1920s a reasonably comprehensive network of roads in the state. As early as 1918 the Ozark Trails passed through Wellston, and that year the group published a road log—a guidebook—indicating where to turn and how to get from one community to the next. The Ozark Trails, like other roads, generally followed the section lines, making for a path composed of alternating north-south and east-west zigzags instead of following the terrain or angling cross country in a shorter route, but in this area the road followed the drainage canal through the county. But the necessity of close directions remained; the road was, of course, unpaved. Thus the 1918 Ozark Trails road log advised travelers to come to "Three corners, brick wall on right, turn left, and go two blocks" to the town of Wellston at which intersection they were directed to the right.² In this way, travelers in their automobiles were certain to pass through the heart of town. The next year, the same organization printed its new guide and featured a description of the town and its facilities—and spirit. By that date, the Ozark Trails announced, the population was 800, the town had a weekly newspaper, two banks, two hotels, and three garages, making it the kind of town tourists would want—and need—to visit in their journeys. The town could proclaim in this advertisement "Tourists welcome. We are boosters for the

¹ Zelma Baber Christy, "Wellston," in Lincoln County Historical Society, *Lincoln County Oklahoma History* (Claremore, Oklahoma: Country Lane Press, 1988), 264-271.

² Ozark Trails Association, *The Ozark Trails: A 1200 Mile Link in a Transcontinental Road from Ocean to Ocean* (Amarillo: Russell & Cockrell, 1918), 46.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 12

Captain Creek Bridge
name of property
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
county and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma,"
multiple property listing

Ozark Trail."³ Moreover, to indicate that this was not an empty slogan, that there were in fact live people there who stood by that commitment to the Ozark Trails and to Wellston's role in the emerging transportation system, the same piece featured a photograph of Jack Thompson, "one of Wellston's Road Boosters." By all appearances, the town and the road seemed made for each other.

The growth of the community continued in the next decade and even the railroad, when it featured the town in issue of its own publication, *The Western*, in 1925 acknowledged the new base of the town's transportation; the magazine ran a photograph of the town's main street lined with cars on the cover, not a graphic of the railroad's own facilities in Wellston. But in 1926 the major change was to come. In that year the new system of federally coordinated (and largely financed) roads in the nation was inaugurated with Route 66, the great diagonal roadway connecting Chicago with Santa Monica was designated. Instead of charting a future course to be built, the system used existing roads and, as Route 66 crossed northeastern Oklahoma connecting Tulsa with Oklahoma City, the Ozark Trails system, already tried and proven, and channeling a significant share of the traffic, provided a path for the new U.S. Highway 66. And thus Route 66 went through Wellston as early as the end of 1926 following the path of the Ozark Trails road.

This was such a welcome development that the county, instead of waiting for the state to pave the new road, as it planned to do across the state (finally succeeding with that goal ten years later), approved a bond issue to pave the road that went through Wellston. To make sure that there was no mistake in where the road would go, five months after Route 66 was created the path of the route was printed on the ballot for all to see when they voted, and they voted for the bonds to pave the road.

At that point, however, in a process that eludes precise explication, the road was not built. A series of delays generated not only tensions but also litigation and would only be resolved six years later. Evidently the route preferred by the people of Wellston and Lincoln County was not the route favored by either the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, then in the Department of Agriculture, or the Oklahoma Highway Commission under the chairmanship of Lew Wentz of Ponca City. Those two agencies sought an alternate route that bypassed the town of Wellston by about a half-mile to the south. At the core of the controversy was the fact that the initial Route 66, the old Ozark Trails road, actually veered northwesterly from the section line to enter Wellston and then had to veer southwesterly upon exiting Wellston to return to the section line alignment. The result was what came to be known as the "Wellston Gap"—the shorter distance following the section line south of Wellston where the highway did not go, an east-west line between the points where the road was diverted north to Wellston. Quite understandably, to save money it would be preferable to pave the shorter route than the longer route where the road went through Wellston, and also to facilitate traffic, the straighter, shorter route offered advantages. But the question was also one of the community to be served, and the community had received a commitment from the Highway Department at the time of the bond election, but now the commitment wavered.

³ Ozark Trails Association, *The Ozark Trails Route Book 1919* (Monte Ne, Arkansas: The Association, 1919).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 13

Captain Creek Bridge
name of property
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
county and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma,"
multiple property listing

In an oblique reference to this dispute—and there were other similar disagreements elsewhere in the state—the Highway Commission in its report for 1929-1930 offered a promise to change the way it did business. Obviously sensitive to such an issue, the report noted:

Much of the community disagreements and disappointments which have been met by this Commission, and its predecessors, grew out of the practice of making long time promises to different counties and visiting delegations. A policy has been adopted to terminate this practice. The Commission prefers to be in a position to meet the most important problems as they arise, rather than to make promises of future action which it cannot fulfil itself and which would but embarrass future commissioners.⁴

This was doubtless sincere and a positive approach to future action, but it also proved less than satisfactory to those already injured. The local community took the case to court and it went all the way to the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Ultimately, according to press reports, the Supreme Court agreed with the townspeople that a commitment had been made and that commitment was binding. The road had to be built through Wellston. That decision, whatever weight it might carry in Oklahoma and whatever change it might work on the Oklahoma Highway Department, did not bind the federal agency that coordinated and funded U.S. highways like Route 66 and the Bureau of Public Roads did not budge from its position that the road must be the more direct, cheaper route that included filling the Wellston Gap, thereby bypassing the town. So the road still was not paved.

Ultimately in a system in which public policy and officials are accountable to the citizenry, such disputes find political venues. And the Wellston Route 66 alignment soon appeared on the political of Oklahoma state politics. In the gubernatorial election of 1930, William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray made clear his intention to change the way the state conducted business, including building its roads, and his inauguration in January 1931 gave him an opportunity to do just that. The size of the Oklahoma Highway Commission had been changed during the administration of Holloway from five to three, and Murray was now able to appoint two of the three. The new chair was Murray supporter Sam Hawks of Clinton and Murray also appointed Judge J. F. McKeel to the commission, leaving political holdover and opponent Lew Wentz in the minority. As Murray recalled, "during the entire two years, much disagreement arose, and much more publicity indulged in, in an attempt by the daily press to foster the wishes of Wentz and to belittle Hawks and McKeel."⁵ The commission was indeed rancorous, its temper mitigated only by the refusal of some of the

⁴ Oklahoma State Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the years 1929 to 1930 Inclusive* (Oklahoma City: December 31, 1930), 8.

⁵ William H. Murray, *Memoirs of Governor Murray and True History of Oklahoma* (Boston: Meador Publishing Company 1945), Vol. II, 438.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

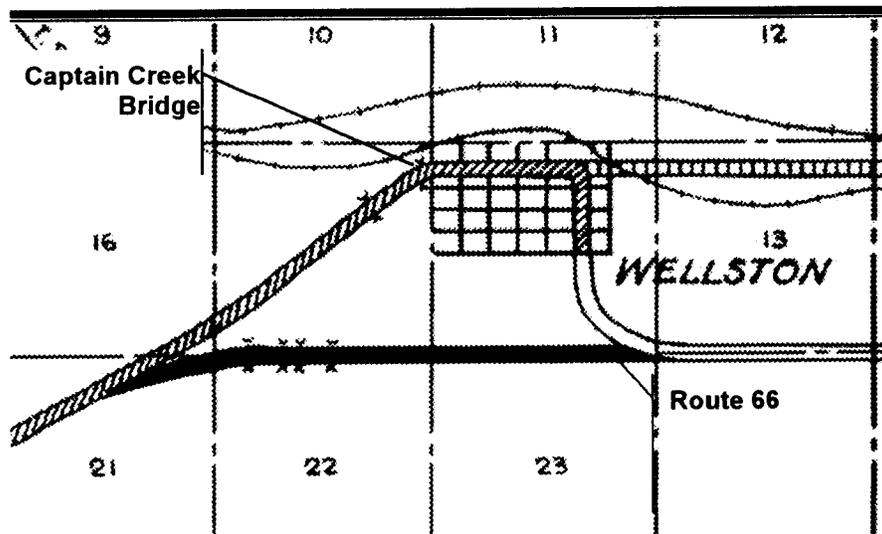
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 14

Captain Creek Bridge
name of property
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
county and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma,"
multiple property listing

members to speak to each other. As Murray noted, Wentz and McKeel engaged in a personal feud and "did not speak to each other or discuss between them any matter coming before the Commission." In that circumstance Hawks would simply ignore Wentz, dispense with procedural formalities, and dictate to the secretary the work that was to be done on the state's roads, over the objections of Mr. Wentz. When the commission submitted its biannual report to the Governor in December 1932, only Hawks and McKeel signed it, Wentz apparently declining to endorse the document.

Aside from a dramatic new commitment to building roads in the western part of the state, there was one other denouement of the new political reality. In April 1931 one newspaper noted this development: "Governor Murray's announced policy of building the state highways through the smaller towns was carried out by the state highway commission today when the long fight of Wellston to bring a paved highway on U.S. 66 through that city ended."⁶ Sam Hawks' solution was simple. The highway through Wellston (the Wellston Loop) would be built; at the same time, since the state had already committed to filling the Wellston Gap (the short-cut), and the Bureau of Public Roads insisted on that route, that alternate route would also be constructed.



Captain Creek Bridge is located on the shaded Wellston Loop of Route 66, immediately west of the town. The Wellston Gap is the black section of Route 66 south of Wellston. 1931-1932 *Report of the State Highway Commission of Oklahoma*.

While this seemed to settle the issue, such was not to be the case. If the people of Wellston were growing impatient with the Highway Commission, so also was the Bureau of Public Roads. The state and the federal government in late March seemed to arrive at an agreement that would start the building process, but a month later the federal government thought better of the language it had previously allowed in the agreement. The Bureau informed the Oklahoma Highway Commission that the state would not receive its annual allotment of Federal Aid highway funds until the state the commission agreed to fill the Wellston Gap sooner rather than later. Previously a commitment to

⁶ Blackwell *Morning Tribune*, April 30, 1931.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 15

Captain Creek Bridge
name of property
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
county and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma,"
multiple property listing

connecting the two points was sufficient, but the federal government now insisted that "the building of the cutoff at Wellston at some future date be made more certain and definite and that construction begin now. It is suggested that you secure agreement to make more definite and certain by a stipulation of 12 months from this date." So, in April 1932 agreement was finally reached under which the state would complete the work within a year.⁷

An additional court action after that appears to have caused further delay, but by July 1932 one state newspaper could report: "Held up by court action for several months, a contract for paving the controversial 5.3 miles on U.S. No. 66 through Wellston was finally awarded yesterday." Over five years after Route 66 had been designated and after the people of Wellston had voted bonds to build the road, finally work was begun. Included in the contracts for the project were two bridges and for that work, "D.C. Sampley of Sulphur was low bidder on two bridges for \$24,488."⁸ The Captain Creek Bridge, long awaiting, would finally be built.

In December 1932, the Highway Commission reported that the section of road containing the Captain Creek Bridge, west of Wellston on the loop connecting back to Route 66, was under construction, but it also used the occasion to place the burden of the controversy, and the delays, at the door of the federal government, noting that, "Developments of the past few months in our relations with the road department of the Federal Government have served to emphasize its rigid, unrelenting and dictatorial attitude toward this State."⁹ To underscore the importance of the Wellston case, which actually resembled three other lesser-noted instances in Oklahoma, the Highway Commission commented that "The Wellston incident may be cited as a typical example of the attitude of the Bureau of Public Roads."¹⁰

The strategy of the Highway Commission, however, seems to have worked. On May 3, 1933 a huge celebration in Wellston marked the completion of the road through town. The statewide newspaper described the event so:

⁷ "Federal Road Aid Released by New Pact," *Daily Oklahoman*, April 22, 1932.

⁸ "Costly Bridge to be Built for 66 over S. Canadian," *Blackwell Morning Tribune*, July 15, 1932.

⁹ Oklahoma State Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the years 1931 to 1932 Inclusive* (Oklahoma City: December 31, 1932), 31. The report also made a not-so-subtle jab at the holdover Republican member of its own commission, Lew Wentz, when it noted that "the problems were not created by the majority members of the present Commission, but were inherited by them," page 29.

¹⁰ Oklahoma State Highway Commission, *Report of the State Highway Commission for the years 1931 to 1932*, 31. One of the other issues also involved Route 66—one that the Highway Commission referred to as the Davenport Gap.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 16

Captain Creek Bridge
name of property
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
county and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma,"
multiple property listing

Highway 66 which, since 1927, has been a bone of contention as to whether the road should run through Wellston or miss the town less than a half-mile, now runs right through the town, which is just what the folk of Lincoln county voted for six years ago. These folk tied up the state highway department every time a move was made to build the road without bending through Wellston. Justice finally prevailed, the road is built, all signs guide the tourists through the middle of town, and everybody is happy, and to give everybody a chance to let loose and cheer about it was the reason for the day's celebration.¹¹

Stores closed in Wellston for the grand opening and schools were dismissed so the children could join the celebration. Bands from Edmond, El Reno, Chandler, and Davenport played for the crowd. The National Guard was called out to direct traffic and handle the crowd, and traffic was routed away from Main Street, "that thoroughfare being reserved for visitors." Many dignitaries were present and at least five main speeches were given, including one by Cyrus Avery himself regarding the history of Route 66, and one by Judge McKeel of the Highway Commission who told "how he himself finally cleared up the gap muddle enabling the Wellston people to get what they had voted for and paid for." The man who presided over the celebration was Jack Thompson, the same man the Ozark Trails had identified as the local road booster in Wellston in 1919. The road was finally open and traffic on Route 66 passed through Wellston on Main Street and coursed southwesterly over Captain Creek Bridge to rejoin the route. The Wellston Gap was now also connected south of town, but that opening received no fanfare.

As momentous as were the events leading up to the construction of the segment of Route 66 of which Captain Creek Bridge was a part, it is unclear exactly how long that bridge and road section actually served Route 66 traffic. What is clear, though, is that a mercilessly brief time, perhaps technically and officially no more than the day of the opening. And in the brevity of that time span the bridge and the road it symbolizes increases in historical significance. The core of the problem was that there could only be one Route 66, and here the Oklahoma Highway Commission had effectively dodged the issue. It had built two roads, the loop through Wellston with state funds and the cutoff with federal funds. It was clear, even as the celebration was going on, which of the two alignments would become Route 66. Not long after the opening of the cutoff that filled the Wellston Gap, the highway signs directing traffic through town were removed and Route 66 passed south of Wellston. Clearly there were times when travelers passed through the town in large numbers even after the redirection of traffic, but that volume steadily declined. Route 66, which had served Wellston since the highway was designated in 1926, ironically moved away from the town when they sought its improvement.

The festivities of opening day were splendid, but they were quickly replaced with the hard feelings that had been building over the years of delays and were added to now by feelings of betrayal that deepened even though the town got its road. In 1939 a newspaper reporter visited Wellston to learn the consequences of the changes in alignment,

¹¹ "Wellston Takes Day Off to Celebrate over New Road," *Daily Oklahoman*, May 4, 1932.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 17

Captain Creek Bridge
name of property
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
county and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma,"
multiple property listing

and he reported that the state had dropped the highway from even the state system and refused to maintain it, that traffic engineers praised the shortcut because of its routing the fast traffic away from the town center, and the widespread feeling that the people "were double crossed on the deal." One automobile dealer and garage owner estimated that he previously counted up to six hundred cars passing through town in an hour, with about ten percent stopping; that number had declined to the point where only six or eight cars pass in an hour, the rest going south of town. A café owner bemoaned the loss of traffic and business similarly, remarking how she had been forced to reduce staff when the road moved away from town.¹² It was clear that just as the commerce Route 66 brought into town, the highway could also carry it away. After World War II, Jack Rittenhouse prepared a guide for travelers using Route 66 and he probably offered the final indignity of Wellston's loss of the road when he gave the gas station / tourist court at the Route 66 turnoff to the Wellston loop more attention than he gave the town and even misspelled the town's name: "WELLESTON is a small community located about one mile north of here. At the crossroads is the Pioneer Tourist Court, with a gas station."¹³ Route 66, and all that it symbolized, had bypassed the town in every sense.

Summary

The bridge over Captain Creek, designed to carry the enormous volume of traffic planned for—and realized by—Route 66, but fated ultimately to serve a more local-oriented traffic, symbolizes the ways in which Route 66, a potent force for social change, could both connect and disconnect vital, vibrant parts not just of the landscape, but of the society as well. There had been a time when the Main Street of Wellston had also been, as the promoters of Route 66 liked to call the road, "The Main Street of America." When the highway no longer followed Main Street the shift was accordingly of much more than local significance.

¹² Ray Parr, "Still on the Map," *Daily Oklahoman*, January 8, 1939.

¹³ Jack Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66* (Los Angeles: privately published, 1946; reprinted by University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 50-51.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 18

Captain Creek Bridge
name of property
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
county and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma,"
multiple property listing

The bridge over Captain Creek is significant within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma." Constructed in 1933 as an integral element of the Route 66 loop through Wellston, this road experienced a brief, but powerfully significant relationship with Route 66 in Oklahoma. Because of this association, the bridge qualifies under that multiple property nomination. The bridge is significant under Criterion A because it represents the property type, "Road Bridges on Route 66" in the area of significance of Transportation.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 19

Captain Creek Bridge
name of property
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
county and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma,"
multiple property listing

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 20

Captain Creek Bridge
name of property
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
county and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic
Resources in Oklahoma,"
multiple property listing

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Verbal Boundary Description

This property includes the bridge and approaches with boundaries forming a rectangle fifty feet wide and three hundred feet long centered on the Captain Creek Bridge.

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes the property historically associated with the Captain Creek Bridge on the Wellston Loop segment of Route 66.



Captain Creek Bridge

