

STATE LEVEL HISTORIC DOCUMENTATION  
MOREHEAD BRIDGE

Location: West Virginia State Route 14, over Right Fork of Reedy Creek  
Near Palestine  
Wirt County  
West Virginia

USGS Elizabeth Quadrangle

Date of Construction: 1923

Builder: Oregonia Bridge Company of Lebanon, Ohio

Present Owner: West Virginia Department of Transportation  
Division of Highways  
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, Building 5, Room A-110  
Charleston, WV 25305

Present Use: Vehicular Bridge

Significance: The Morehead Bridge is significant for its association with the Good Roads Movement, its local significance as a transportation link and for its bridge design/builder.

Project Information: The project has been undertaken due to the poor condition of the bridge. Any future deterioration of the bridge would result in its closure, the existing bridge warrants replacement. The documentation was undertaken in December 2011 in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement among the West Virginia Department of Transportation and West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office. These measures are required prior to replacement of this National Register eligible structure.

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Charleston, WV 25305  
December 13, 2011

The Morehead Bridge was constructed in 1923 by the Oregonia Bridge Company of Lebanon, Ohio. The bridge company was established in 1873 as a blacksmith shop in Oregonia, Ohio by John Bradbury, and English immigrant. In 1888, Thomas Spencer became a partner and the firm was known as Bradbury and Spencer. The company built its first iron bridge in 1888. In 1896, the name of the company was changed to Oregonia Bridge Company to reflect the evolution of the blacksmith shop. By 1903, the company had outgrown its factory and built a larger facility in Lebanon, Ohio. The company was known for constructing county bridges, and aided the effort during World War I by providing parts for ship-building. In 1950, the Oregonia Bridge Company was acquired by the Dave Steel Company, which continues to operate today.



The existing 19' x 120' two lane Morehead Bridge consists of a simple span riveted steel through truss supported by full height reinforced concrete abutments. The existing road alignment is fair, with the bridge located in a curved section of roadway and skewed 40 degrees left forward. Sight distance is adequate at both ends. The existing asphalt approaches are 19'6" wide, with no defined stone shoulders. A private driveway intersects 50' south of the structure. The bridge is located in a 100-year flood area with base elevations undetermined, according to the 1988 Wirt County FEMA-NFIP map. The average daily traffic (ADT) for this crossing is 960 (2007). Traffic consists of school buses, mail carriers and commercial vehicles.

There are 120 steel through truss bridges remaining in West Virginia today that were built prior to 1965. Steel through trusses were popular throughout the state, and these bridges still stand in 46 counties with three in Wirt County, including the Morehead Bridge. This bridge along with the McClung Bridge (FR#10-762-WI), were constructed as a part of WV 14 in 1923 by the Oregonia Bridge Company. The construction of WV 14 and these two bridges were the result of the Legislation of 1921, part of it authorized by the constitutional amendment of November 2, 1920, which marked the beginning of a new era in roads for West Virginia. Known as the Good Roads Amendment it allowed the State Road Commission to establish a state road system, sell bonds, and designate revenue from motor vehicle licenses and other provisions. The Morehead

Bridge was renovated in 1980 and 1990 by State Forces. Also, extensive work was done in 2007.

The Morehead Bridge is eligible under Criterion A for its association with the Good Roads Movement and its local significance as a transportation link. Also, the bridge is eligible under Criterion C for its association with a master bridge builder for its local significance as a simple span riveted steel through truss.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

West Virginia Division of Highways, Bridge Files, Maintenance Division, Building 5, Capitol Complex, Charleston, West Virginia, April 2011.

West Virginia Division of Highways, Historic Property Inventory Form, Engineering Division, Building 5, Capitol Complex, Charleston, West Virginia, April 2011.

West Virginia Division of Highways, Phase 1 Cultural Resource Management Report, Engineering Division, Building 5, Capitol Complex, Charleston, West Virginia, April 2011.

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Morehead Bridge

West Virginia State Route 14, over Right Fork of Reedy Creek

Near Palestine

Wirt County, West Virginia

Photographer: Sondra Mullins

March 2011

MOREHEAD -1	Sideview of the bridge on the upstream side
MOREHEAD -2	Bridgeseat and rocker arm on the downstream side at Abutment #1
MOREHEAD -3	End view of structure looking north toward Abutment #2
MOREHEAD -4	Bridge deck
MOREHEAD -5	Vertical bracing
MOREHEAD -6	Thru truss looking north
MOREHEAD -7	End view of structure looking south toward Abutment #1
MOREHEAD -8	Sideview of the structure at railing
MOREHEAD -9	Sideview of the structure on the downstream side (note repairs done)
MOREHEAD -10	Underneath deck of bridge

Original March 1923 bridge plans

1990 Renovation Bridge Plans