

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

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date entered

1. Name

historic Louisville Municipal Bridge, Plyons and Administration Building

and/or common George Rogers Clark Memorial Bridge, Pylons and Administration Building

2. Location

Between Louisville, Kentucky and Jeffersonville,
street & number Indiana over the Ohio River not for publication

Administration Building, 315 N. Illinois Ave.

city, town Jeffersonville, Indiana na vicinity of congressional district

Kentucky 021 Jefferson 111
state Indiana code 018 county Clark code 019

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
na district	na public	X occupied	na agriculture na museum
X building(s)	na private	X unoccupied	X commercial na park
X structure	X both	na work in progress	na educational na private residence
na site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	na entertainment na religious
na object	na in process	X yes: restricted	na government na scientific
	na being considered	X yes: unrestricted	na industrial X transportation
		na no	na military na other:

4. Owner of Property

name See Continuation Sheet

street & number NA

city, town NA NA vicinity of state NA

5. Location of Legal Description

(see also cont. sheet)

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Commonwealth of Kentucky, Department of Highways

street & number State Office Building

city, town Frankfort state Kentucky

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Kentucky Department of Transportation Survey of Bridges
title Bureau of Highways, Division of has this property been determined eligible? NA yes X no
Environmental Analysis

date 1982 NA federal X state NA county NA local

depository for survey records Kentucky Department of Transportation

city, town Frankfort state Kentucky

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<u>na</u> excellent	<u>na</u> deteriorated	<u>X</u> unaltered	<u>X</u> original site
<u>x</u> good	<u>na</u> ruins	<u>X</u> altered	<u>na</u> moved date <u>NA</u>
<u>na</u> fair	<u>na</u> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Louisville Municipal Bridge spans the Ohio River between Louisville, Kentucky and Jeffersonville, Indiana. It is one of six bridges which cross the Ohio at Louisville;; three highway bridges, two railroad bridges and one abandoned bridge.

Constructed in 1928-29, the Louisville Municipal Bridge is a single deck, six span cantilever truss bridge, with Warren through trusses. The eight piers are of ashlar stone, one anchored on each bank of the river. The bridge design is as follows: "an anchor arm from Pier I to Pier II, 362' long; a cantilever structure from Pier II to Pier III, 820' long; and anchor arm from Pier III to Pier IV, 500' long; followed by a duplicate structure consisting of an anchor arm from Pier IV to Pier V, 500' long; a cantilever structure from Pier V to Pier VI, 820' long; an anchor arm from Pier VI to Pier VII, 362'6" long and a single span from Pier VII to Pier VIII, 376' long."¹

The length of the bridge proper is 3740', with a 1200 foot Jeffersonville approach and 800 foot Louisville approach. The four lane roadway is approximately 40' wide with five-foot walkways on either side.

The bridge approaches on both sides of the river are flanked by smooth limestone pylons. The pylons are Art Deco in style, with engaged, fluted columns topped by sculptured eagles. The Kentucky pylons bear Kentucky state symbols and the incised words "Kentucky" on both sides. The Indiana state symbols, the name "Indiana" are similarly treated on the Indiana pylons. An Art Deco lantern tops each pylon. The pylons are approximately 14' long, 5' wide and 30' tall. (see photos 12, 14, 15 - Figure 1)

The Municipal Bridge Administration Building, located on the Jeffersonville side of the river, is a two-story limestone structure on a raised basement. The main entrance of the building is on the east side. Five steps rise centrally to a pair of bronze doors with a transom which originally held a cast iron grill shaped as a crest with the initials "MB" in the center. This grill is no longer in place. The push bars for the doors, however, are cast bronze in stylized dolphin motifs. A limestone panel is located above the entrance with the name "Louisville Municipal Bridge" incised. Stone pilasters divide the three facade bays. Steel casement windows with single transoms are used in all first floor openings and smaller, nearly square steel casement windows for the third floor. The basement windows are steel casement types with wrought iron grills. (See photos 5, 7- Figures 3, 4)

The west elevation, which originally faced the toll booths, does not have the stone pilasters of the east facade and has considerably more fenestration. The first floor, central bay contains a central door flanked by windows, all three of identical design; casement, steel with single transoms. Each is crowned by a stone panel with the name of the bridge incised over the door and "MCMXXVIII" over each window. A delicate, shallow, Art Deco balconette projects from the facade and encases this bay. Windows flank the central bay and there are five second floor and basement windows. (See photo 6 - Figure 3)

¹Ralph Modjeski and Frank M. Masters, The Louisville Municipal Bridge; Final Report. ND

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DESCRIPTION CONT.

The north and south facades each contain three first-floor windows and one second-floor window. The garage entrance to the basement story is on the south and the single door, used by the toll takers, is located on the north.

A delicate, limestone-colored, terra cotta cheneau crowns the building. The clearly Art Deco flavor of the design is reminiscent of classical swag and anthemion motifs.

The interior of the building is in remarkably good condition with few alterations. Pink Lepanto marble wainscoting is used in the foyer and lobby. Decorative cast iron grills cover the radiators throughout the building. Lighting fixtures are brass in an Art Deco styling. All woodwork, including chair rails and picture molding in some rooms, is oak. All restrooms contain marble wainscoting and stall dividers. Floors are slate or terrazzo in some areas. (See photos 8-11, Figure 2)

The bridge, pylons and administration building compliment one another and represent architectural, engineering and transportation history in both Louisville and Jeffersonville.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
NA prehistoric	NA archeology-prehistoric	NA community planning	NA landscape architecture	NA religion
NA 1400-1499	NA archeology-historic	NA conservation	NA law	NA science
NA 1500-1599	NA agriculture	NA economics	NA literature	NA sculpture
NA 1600-1699	X architecture	NA education	NA military	NA social/
NA 1700-1799	NA art	X engineering	NA music	humanitarian
NA 1800-1899	NA commerce	NA exploration/settlement	NA philosophy	NA theater
X 1900-	NA communications	NA industry	NA politics/government	X transportation
		NA invention		NA other (specify)

Specific dates	1928-1929	Builder/Architect	Madjeski & Masters, Engineers Paul Cret, Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)	American Bridge Co., Contractors Vang Construction Co., Contractors Henry Bickel Co., Contractors		

The Louisville Municipal Bridge is significant as the first highway bridge across the Ohio at Louisville, and as an engineering milestone in bridge construction. Architecturally, the paired pylons on each side of the bridge and the Administration Building are excellent and rare local examples of the Art Deco style. They also represent the work of internationally famed architect Paul Phillippe Cret.

By 1928, when construction began on the Municipal Bridge, three railroad bridges spanned the Ohio. The Kentucky & Indiana Terminal Railroad Bridge, in ca. 1915, added wagon paths to either side of its bridge which linked Louisville to New Albany, Indiana. But the K&I structure was not easily accessible to downtown Louisville, nor was it sufficient to accommodate large numbers of vehicles. Until the completion of the Louisville Municipal Bridge, ferry service across the river was the predominant means of crossing.

The need for such a bridge was long in evidence, but the rapid increase in automobile ownership in the late teens and early twenties forced the city of Louisville to take the issue in hand and move forward.

After a decade of discussion, debate, referendums and negotiations, the Louisville Bridge Commission, appointed by the Louisville Board of Trade, signed a contract with the prestigious engineering firm, Modjeski and Masters. Its senior partner was Ralph Modjeski. Modjeski graduated in 1885 from Government College, Paris, France, "Ecole des Ponts es Chaussees," with the degree of civil engineer and ranked at the head of his class. Other distinguished works include the Huey P. Long Bridge (1933-36) and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (1933-37). His excellence as an engineer was recognized by his receipt of the coveted John Fitz gold metal for scientific and industrial achievements in 1929, the same year that the Municipal Bridge was completed. He was, in fact, unable to attend opening ceremonies in Louisville due to a trip to Japan as the engineering emissary of President Herbert Hoover.

Modjeski and Masters began subcontracting in spring of 1928. The contract for the substructure went to Vang Construction Co. of Pittsburgh. Work on the piers began in June of 1928. In July, the American Bridge Co. of New York was awarded the contract for the superstructure. Because of the delay of the purchase and demolition of the properties in the path of the approaches in Louisville and Jeffersonville, and because of time constraints, it was necessary that the erection of the cantilever structure begin in the middle of the river. The American Bridge Co., in order to accommodate this situation, developed a new method of construction which proved to be cost and time efficient. The method is best described in the Madjeski & Masters final report to the Bridge Commission.

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"The American Bridge Company developed a new method of erecting this cantilever structure known as their 'guy derrick system of erection.' This system involved the use of four ordinary guy derricks for the erection of each half of the bridge; two derricks travelling away from each of the main tower piers, one erecting the anchor arms while the other derrick at the same time erected the cantilever arms and suspended span. This system of erection had the advantage of light weight in the erection equipment, thus making it unnecessary to increase the structural sections to provide for the erection stresses. The power plant for the operation of the derricks was located in a barge floating in the river at the foot of each pier, thus eliminating the weight of all power plant on the cantilever structure. The derricks were supported by means of top guys clamped to the tops of the mast and fastened to the tops of the piers. The mast was secured sideways by means of guys fastened to the floorbeams of the bridge, as well as to a special guy beam slung under each floorbeam. The derrick itself was mounted on a small four wheel railway truck carriage travelling on the stringers."

The other contracts let by Modjeski and Masters were for construction of the bridge approaches, toll houses and administration building, all of which were awarded to Henry Bickel Co. of Louisville. The lighting system contract went to F. A. Clagg Co., also of Louisville.

The outstanding Roman-influenced Art Deco styling of the Pylons and Administration Building were from designs of Paul Phillippe Cret (1876-1945). An internationally famed architect and educator, other examples of Cret's work include the Integrity Trust Building (1929), Rodin Museum (1932), the Folger Shakespeare Memorial Library (1932). Cret, a French-born architect trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, was a teacher in the school of architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. Louis I. Kahn (1901-74) was Cret's most famous student.

The Administration Building is an outstanding example of Cret's expertise. The classical proportions and subtly classical architectural elements are complimented by the Art Deco motifs throughout the design. The materials used in this small, utilitarian structure are of the quality expected in any fine public building. Stone, brass, marble, terra cotta, stone, cast and wrought iron all merge in this design to provide efficient, functional and aesthetically pleasant space.

The pylons, for which Cret is also responsible are pillars of pride and patriotism. Every detail was carefully designed, including the lanterns and sculpted eagles.

The opening of the Louisville Municipal Bridge was one of the most heralded events in the early twentieth century for Louisville. The method of financing the bridge, a \$5 million revenue-bond issue floated at 4½% interest to be paid off from tolls on the city-owned bridge, gained national attention and became known as "the Louisville plan." Its opening meant an increase in commerce for both sides of the river and was regarded in such glowing terms as "dream of a century," "a strip of steel suspended in mid air, seemingly held in place by a force like that of Atlas...", and

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"a bridge of friendship linking Kentucky and Indiana and truly making Louisville the Gateway to the South."²

The tolls were discontinued in 1946 when the bonds were retired. At that time, the city transferred ownership of the bridge and the Administration Building to the State of Kentucky, and the name was changed to the George Rogers Clark Memorial Bridge. The Administration Building was then used by the Kentucky Highway Department, and later by Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency. The toll booths were removed sometime in the late 1960s and the Administration Building was sold to a private individual ca. 1979. The building is currently used for storage and is in excellent condition.

The Louisville Municipal Bridge, its pylons and Administration Building, are significant remnants of the early state highway systems of both Kentucky and Indiana. The engineering of the bridge structure is an important work of the prestigious firm Modjeski and Masters, and the American Bridge Company introduced to the industry the "guy derrick system" of construction. The pylons and Administration Building represent important examples of the work of famed architect Paul Phillippe Cret, and are excellent examples of the Art Deco style. The Louisville Municipal Bridge remains today as a great source of pride to both the Louisville and Jeffersonville communities.

²Jean Howerton Coady, "Clark Bridge; A Glamor Boy of Another Day," Courier-Journal and Louisville Times, Louisville, KY. ND

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Gordon, Steve. "Maysville-Aberdeen Bridge National Register Nomination." Frankfort, Kentucky: Kentucky Heritage Council, 1982.

Kramer, Carl E. "Bridging the Ohio," Louisville Magazine (Louisville), August, 1979.

Kentucky Department of Transportation. A Survey of Truss, Suspension, and Arch Bridges in Kentucky. Frankfort, Kentucky, 1982.

Modjeski, Ralph and Masters, Frank M. The Louisville Municipal Bridge: Final Report, ND.

Morgan, William. "Old Bridge Building Awaits Inspiration," Courier-Journal and Louisville Times (Louisville), July 3, 1977.

"Ralph Modjeski Famed As Builder of Bridges," Louisville Times (Louisville), October 29, 1929.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 5 acres

Quadrangle name (Bridge, pylons) New Albany (A,B,C)
(Admin. bldg.) Jeffersonville (D)

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state Kentucky code 021 county Jefferson code 111

state Indiana code 018 county Clark code 019

11. Form Prepared By

name/title M. A. Allgeier, Director of Research

organization Louisville Landmarks Commission

date October 13, 1983

street & number 727 W. Main St.

telephone 502-587-3501

city or town Louisville

state Kentucky

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

The description of the Administration Building, although found with the Kentucky Department of Highways, may also be found in the Clark County Courthouse, Jeffersonville, Indiana.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

Beginning at a point in the northwest corner of the intersection of the north line of West Main Street in Louisville and the west line of that portion of North Second Street which runs along the east side of the Clark Memorial Bridge approach, running thence north to a point in Jeffersonville, Indiana, just north of the Indiana Bridge, pylons, and including the full width, height and breadth of the Clark Memorial Bridge, piers and structure (approx. 3740'), and approaches (Kentucky approach approx. 800', Indiana approach approx. 1200').

Also included is part of Jeffersonville City Block 17, Lots 10 & 11, upon which sets the Municipal Bridge Administration Building. The boundaries extend ten feet from the foundation walls of said building.

The nomination is structured to include all adjacent structures and buildings related to the Louisville Municipal Bridge.

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OWNERS OF PROPERTY

Bridge - The Commonwealth of Kentucky, Department of Highways
State Office Building
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Admin. Bldg. - Kenneth J. & Doris J. Baumgartle
228 E. Court Ave.
Jeffersonville, Ind. 47130

Reed K. & Charlotte A. Baumgartle
1504 Cameron Dr.
Jeffersonville, Ind. 47130

Louisville Municipal Bridge
Between Louisville, KY and
Jeffersonville, Indiana

Louisville Landmarks Comm.
727 W Main St
Louisville, KY

Figure 3 - detail of plans for
Louisville Municipal Bridge
Modjeski & Masters, Final Report