

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

*FILE*

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Jeffers Bridge  
other names/site number Birch Creek Bridge; Clay County Bridge #127 021-568-40067

**2. Location**

street & number CR 200S over Birch Creek N/A  not for publication  
city or town Clay City  vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county Clay code 021 zip code 47841

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 36CFR 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. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*[Signature]* 1/28/90  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
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 certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:)	_____	_____

Jeffers Bridge \_\_\_\_\_

Clay \_\_\_\_\_ IN \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Property

County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: Road-Related (vehicular)

TRANSPORTATION: Road-Related (vehicular)

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Pratt through truss

foundation

walls

roof

other

METAL  
CONCRETE

**Narrative Description**

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

Jeffers Bridge \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Property

Clay \_\_\_\_\_ IN \_\_\_\_\_

County and State

**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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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**

1926-1949 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

N/A \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Vincennes Bridge Company \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(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: \_\_\_\_\_

Jeffers Bridge  
Name of Property

Clay IN  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	6
---	---

4	8	7	7	4	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	3	5	6	3	7	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone

Easting

Northing

3 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone

Easting

Northing

2 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

4 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

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 John Warner

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 6-1-99

street & number 5018 Broadway Street telephone (317) 283-5450

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46205

### Additional Documentation

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Board of Commissioners, Clay County

street & number 609 East National Ave. telephone 812-448-9001

city or town Brazil state IN zip code 47834

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

## **National Register of Historic Places**

### **Continuation Sheet - Jeffers Bridge #127**

Sections 7, 8, 9, and 10

Page 1

---

#### **Section 7 Description**

Oriented generally east to west, Jeffers Bridge #127 carries County Road 200 South over Birch Creek. For location purposes, bridge members are numbered from the east end (photo 1). The east-end of the bridge is the expansion end (the west-end is fixed) with the typical roller bearing nest that eases the effects of temperature change and other expansion-contraction inducing forces.

The bridge is a single span, pin-connected Pratt through truss measuring 91' in five panels and has a 16' roadway (photo 1). The vertical clearance is 17'2" at the portals. Positioned on concrete abutments and wingwalls the bridge trusses are skewed at approximately 10 degrees from each other. The intermediate verticals are laced channels between panels 1-2 and 4-5 and latticed channels between panels 2-3 and Die-forged eyebars serve as diagonals between verticals 1-2 and 3-4. Cylindrical rods, single and adjustable, provide the diagonal and counter for the center panel (photo 2).

Photo 3 is a view of the northwest corner of the west abutment showing the stepped top of the abutment, the lower chord, and a batten and lacing of the channels of the endpost.

Although over 70 years old, the bridge retains excellent integrity including a, angle iron railing, latticed portals, and a concrete deck, all appearing original compared to the plans (photo 4). Visible in center frame is the connecting point between panels 3-4. It demonstrates the relationship of the pin plates at the lower end of the vertical; the connecting pin; the two flat bars of the lower chord; the flat bars of the diagonal brace; and the single cylindrical bar of the center diagonal.

The 10-degree skew between the trusses of the bridge is accommodated by the use an angled flange bolted to a standard pin plate (photo 5). In the upper center of the frame is a view of a connecting pin, the ends of the lower chord, and a pin plate that supports the floor I-beam. Photo 6 is another view of the angled flange. The round bar and threaded nut, in the upper left corner, are components of the floor system diagonal bracing.

#### **Section 8 Significance**

Jeffers Bridge is significant under Criterion A for its association with the events that defined the settlement and economic development of Clay County, Indiana. The topography of Clay County is such that two main watercourses dissect the county from northeast to southwest and north to south; first, the Eel River and secondly, Birch Creek. Jeffers Bridge carries County Road 200S across Birch Creek, which has steep banks and is subject to high water during certain months of the year, and affords all-weather access from farmsteads in Perry Township to the SR 59, the main north-south route in the county. Additionally, Jeffers is one of only four county-owned metal truss bridges extant and the only county truss bridge still actively carrying traffic.

Clay County, Indiana, named for the noted statesman Henry Clay, was originally a part of a land cession from the Delaware, Potawatomie, and Miami Indians in 1809.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

## **National Register of Historic Places**

### **Continuation Sheet - Jeffers Bridge #127**

Sections 7, 8, 9, and 10

Page 2

-----  
This elevated portion of the Wabash Valley was heavily forested with burr oak, ash, beech, elm, black walnut, and gum trees at the time the General William H. Harrison expedition marched through the area in 1812. With Harrison's command was a private soldier by the name of Samuel Rizley, who liked the land around Bowling Green so much he later returned to become one of the county's earliest white settlers.

The topography of the Eel River Basin proved to be one major factor in developing the transportation and industrial history of the county. At the time of settlement, the county contained as many as thirty streams, large and small, and the Eel River that traverses the county from Cass Township in the northeast, meanders through Washington, Sugar Ridge, Harrison, Perry, and Lewis Townships and exits the county in the southeast corner. With a very small change of elevation throughout its length, the river tended to flood at regular intervals and created an obstacle to travel even at its lowest depth in the dry months of the year. The Eel River, along with its major tributary, Birch Creek that drains much of the center of the county, often confounded personal travel and transportation of goods by early settlers. Birch Creek gained early historic significance in the county as a feeder stream to the Wabash and Erie Canal. On a positive note, streams like Jordan Creek, situated in some places in rugged terrain, provided enough fall to power mills, both saw and flouring. Another topographical factor in county development was the presence of a number of sloughs and marshy areas that once drained and controlled made accessible fertile land suitable for farming.

After 1816, the General Assembly and other private citizens sought ways to make Indiana a place attractive to settlers and entrepreneurs searching for opportunities. Indiana, like the other states carved from the Northwest Territory, lacked even a rudimentary infrastructure that would spur the influx of settlement. More importantly, it lacked an infrastructure to serve as the means to import goods these new citizens would need to live and export excess production that would result from the burgeoning economy. Debate on a solution continued until in 1827, the US Congress offered Indiana a substantial land grant to build a canal (the Wabash and Erie Canal) that when completed would connect Lake Erie with the Ohio River via the Wabash River. The canal would impact the history of Indiana and Clay County.

In 1832, construction on the canal began at Fort Wayne, Indiana, and progressed fitfully through the next two decades and reached Evansville, Indiana, in the early 1850s. Part of the canal system was the Cross-cut Canal that was to connect the Wabash and Erie with the never-constructed Central Canal in the vicinity of Worthington in Greene County. The Cross-cut Canal traversed the south west quadrant of Clay County and accounts for the names of well-known county historic assets/ events such as Feeder Dam Bridge, Aqueduct or Towpath Bridge, Towpath Road, and the Reservoir War of 1855. The Wabash and Erie Canal only operated over its full length of 459 miles for approximately a decade, but its short existence belies its importance in the growth of the Wabash River Valley and the State of Indiana.

Water transportation was not the only element of infrastructure developing in the county in the 1850s. The first railroad survey for the Terre Haute & Richmond Railroad was made in 1849. In 1850, construction of the rails began with work commencing from

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

## **National Register of Historic Places**

### **Continuation Sheet - Jeffers Bridge #127**

Sections 7, 8, 9, and 10

Page 3

both ends of the line – Indianapolis and Terre Haute – simultaneously. By 1852, daily freight and passenger trains were crossing the county. By 1872, railroad tracks from the Terre Haute & Cincinnati Railroad and the Brazil branch of the Evansville & Indianapolis Railroad also crisscrossed the county.

Starting with privately financed turnpikes and continuing through the latter decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Clay County made steady progress in improving its ground system of transportation. Private individuals like David Thomas, who started and operated a ferry across the Eel River west of Bowling Green for almost 50 years, provided a service to the casual traveler, the farmer going to market, and the wagons carrying coal from the small mines in the county. Parker's Ferry, named for its owner/operator William B. Parker, crossed the Eel River west of Poland, carried folks and wagons across the stream for approximately 35 years before a bridge was built north (upstream) of the ferry site. As population increased, more acres were farmed, and more products needed to get to market, the necessity for more permanent solutions to transportation problems in the county became more apparent.

The 1870s and 1880s in Clay County witnessed many changes. The extensive coal reserves in the county were identified early in the development of the county. From initial estimates, the coal area was found to encompass roughly 300 square miles in the south half of the county. Its positive economic potential for the county was obvious to many but one source defined a problem that could thwart progress because, "for want of suitable transportation ... only a small portion of it [coal reserves] ... can be made available for mining purposes." While railroads would eventually haul the majority of the coal mined in the county, mines not near a railhead or those earliest mines were dependent on wagon transportation to get their coal to the consumers. For example, the pig iron furnaces around Brazil would have ceased to function without adequate supplies of coal.

The need to transport agricultural products to market also spurred development of a more all-weather infrastructure. Clay County's farmers were hard at work raising more corn and wheat to market as grain or as flour processed in some of the local flouring mills. The 790,000 bushels of corn produced in the county in the 1880s nearly doubled to 1,346,160 bushels in the 1890s; a significant achievement but without purpose unless the grain reached market. Wheat, another county-grown grain, increased from 165,600 bushels in the 1880s to 267,590 bushels in the 1890s; another admirable achievement. County officials harkened to the needs of the taxable public and moved forward to resolve transportation issues.

As population grew and production of agricultural items and coal increased in the post Civil War decades, county officials and citizens realized that without good roads and all-weather stream crossings in the region real limits to economic success existed. Around 1868, the county commissioners took a major step in resolving some stream crossing problems when they directed construction of a covered wooden bridge over the Eel River west of Bowling Green. Built by the firm of Rarick & Black the bridge cost \$12,000 to complete. Next, around 1871, the commissioners engaged contractors Ernst Muehler and David Notter, a firm that operated in Clay County during the 1870s and

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

## **National Register of Historic Places**

### **Continuation Sheet - Jeffers Bridge #127**

Sections 7, 8, 9, and 10

Page 4

1880s, to build a bridge across Jordan Creek north of Bowling Green. The firm was associated with the construction of many of the stonework abutments on Clay County bridges of that era. It might be worthy to note that Bowling Green was the county seat until 1877, when the seat of government was moved to the city of Brazil.

Once committed to furnishing permanent all-weather stream crossings, the county commissioners moved rapidly to contract with Muehler & McNamar for the Poland covered wooden bridge over Eel River for \$7,200 (1872), and with William Graber and Levi Fair for the Hooker's Point bridge for \$6,300 (1876). Later destroyed in 1883 by an act of nature, this bridge was replaced by an iron bridge from the Canton Iron Bridge Company, Canton, Ohio, at a cost of \$5,120. Muehler & Notter furnished the stone abutments for \$600.00. Muehler & Notter also built the first Feeder Dam Bridge over the Eel River, a wooden structure (1878) at a cost of \$8,700. The first iron bridges built over Birch Creek were built by Muehler & Notter on the Bowling Green & Brazil Road (1878), the Birch Creek Reservoir bridge near Saline City (1880), and the abutments for the aqueduct bridge (1880).

Many of the earliest county bridges over smaller streams were very likely small wooden structures built by local contractors. While Birch Creek is one of the main streams in the county it appears that the first bridge that carried County Road 47W, now 200 South, over Birch Creek was likely a wooden structure and as local residents noted in serious need of repair. In early 1926, a local landowner, Andrew J. Jeffers and an unspecified number of his neighbors petitioned the county commissioners for a bridge where the North Line of Section 36, Township 11N, Range 7 W crossed Birch Creek. They noted in their petition that the present bridge was "unsafe for public travel." In June 1926, the county auditor published a notice to contractors that he would "receive sealed proposals until 6 July, 1926," for the construction of Jeffers bridge. Three bidders submitted their proposals: the firm of Rupert & Braden for \$4,850; the firm of John White & Son for \$4,864; and the Vincennes Bridge Company for \$4,795. The lowest bid, Vincennes Bridge Company's, was selected. A notation in the Clay County *Commissioner's Records* indicates that the board accepted the bridge and paid the company in full in October 1926.

#### **Section 9 Bibliography**

Blanchard, Charles, ed. *Counties of Clay and Owen, Indiana, Historical and Biographical Atlas*. (Chicago, Ill.: F. A. Battey & Company, 1884).

*Brazil Daily Times*, 6 July 1926.

*Brazil Weekly Democrat*, 12 March 1917.

*Bridge Papers, Clay County, Indiana*. County Auditor's Files, 1897-1926.

*Clay County Enterprise*, 16 August 1894, 27 September 1894, and 7 February 1895.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

## **National Register of Historic Places**

### **Continuation Sheet - Jeffers Bridge #127**

Sections 7, 8, 9, and 10

Page 5

---

*Commissioner's Records.* Clay County, Indiana, 1880-1926.

Edwards, Llewellyn N. *A Record of the History and Evolution of Early American Bridges.* (Orono, Me.: University Press, 1959).

Hool, George A. and W. S. Kinne, eds. *Steel and Timber Structures.* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1942).

Travis, William. *History of Clay County, Indiana. Vols. 1&2.* (Chicago, Ill.: Lewis Publishing Company, 1909).

#### **Section 10 Geographical Data**

##### **Verbal Boundary Description**

From a start point 20 feet east and 10 feet north of the northeast endpost of the bridge; turn south and proceed across CR 200S to a point 20 feet east and 10 feet south of the southeast endpost of the bridge; turn west and proceed across Birch Creek to a point 20 feet west and 10 feet south of the southwest endpost of the bridge; turn north and proceed across CR 200S to a point 20 feet west and 10 feet north of the northwest endpost of the bridge; turn east and proceed across Birch Creek to close on the start point.

##### **Boundary Justification**

The boundary as described includes the approaches, abutments, and span of the bridge.

