

NPS COPY

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 Medora Covered Bridge  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_ 071-398-55010

2. Location

\_\_\_\_\_ off SR 235, 1/2 mile southeast of Medora over the east fork of the \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number White River N/A  not for publication  
city or town Medora  vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county Jackson code 071 zip code 47260

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] 8/2/07  
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:  
 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 the Keeper Date of Action

Medora Covered Bridge  
Name of Property

Jackson IN  
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.)  
N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
0

**6. Function or Use**

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

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

TRANSPORTATION: Road-Related

WORK IN PROGRESS

**7. Description**

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

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Burr arch truss

foundation STONE: Limestone

walls WOOD: Weatherboard

roof METAL: Steel

other WOOD

METAL

**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.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENGINEERING

TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1875-1950

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Daniels, Joseph J.

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):

- Bibliography checkboxes and record number HAER-IN45.

Primary location of additional data:

- Primary location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, Federal agency, Local government, University, Other.

Name of repository:

Jackson County Commissioners Record

Medora Covered Bridge  
Name of Property

Jackson 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 

16	574060	4296760
Zone	Easting	Northing

3 

Zone	Easting	Northing

2 

Zone	Easting	Northing

4 

Zone	Easting	Northing

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 J. A. Barker Engineering & Fleeta Arthur  
organization Jackson Co. Park & Recreation Board; Jackson Co. Highway date 05-01-2006  
street & number 6594 W. SR 58 telephone 812/497-2424  
city or town Brownstown state IN zip code 47220

### 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 Jackson County Commissioners  
street & number Courthouse telephone 812/358-6121  
city or town Brownstown state IN zip code 47220

**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.

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**Section 7 Narrative Description**

The Medora Covered Bridge is located over the East Fork of White River in south central Indiana. The western half of the bridge lays in Carr Township, Jackson County, and one mile southeast of the town of Medora, Indiana. The eastern half of the bridge is located in Driftwood Township, Jackson County four miles southwest of Vallonia, Indiana and eight and three-tenths miles southwest of Brownstown, Indiana, Jackson County's county seat. The White River is the legal boundary between Carr Township and Driftwood Township. The bridge is located in an agricultural area with the property, including approaches, abutments, and piers, being less than a quarter of an acre. Downstream adjacent to the Medora Covered Bridge is a 1970-72 concrete/steel deck bridge maintained by the Indiana Department of Transportation. Upstream on the West side of the White River is a boat ramp site with paved road, parking and river access to White River maintained by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

Daniels utilized three 140 foot spans, totaling 460' for the Medora Bridge. Research indicates that Mr. Daniels utilized this span length for his earlier Burr arch Hazelton Railroad Bridge. He omitted the counter panel bracing featured in the patented Burr Arch Truss as well as the "Long truss" as did later bridge carpenters. His panel bracing was carefully executed and fitted into the kingposts.

The substructure of the Medora Covered Bridge features locally quarried "Oolitic limestone from the Dixon quarry"<sup>1</sup> at Fort Ritner; Southwest of Medora; fully mortared with 1/3 Louisville cement and 2/3-course sand. Each pier sits upon double oak piling twelve inches thick, submerged three feet below low water level into the bed of White River. Original Diagram A) The lower tier of piling is ten feet by thirty feet in length and is placed crosswise to the river flow. The upper tier of piling is twelve inches by ten feet according to the contract and design. It is placed with the current of the river. The masonry piers include cutwaters to high water mark on the upriver side. (Original Diagram A) Each pier was riprapped with rubble rock of at least 50 cubic yards of material. Twenty feet from the masonry base skewbacks were placed in the piers and abutments to accept the arch ends. The skewbacks are at an angle into the masonry. The abutments are two feet below the surface of the ground with the base at fifteen feet by twenty-one feet.

The wings extended back at right angles with the face of the abutment and batter the same as the pier, fifteen feet and ten feet from the back. The wings run above the bridge seat four feet and finish with a neatly cut coping. In 1883, the west abutment was compromised due to flooding and a ditch was created to cope with the problem. The following year the ditch was completely filled with silt. The bridge piers are seven feet by twenty-two feet with additional stone around the base. The piers include cutwaters on the upstream bridge side. The abutments rise twenty-five (25) feet to raise the bridge six feet (6') above high water mark. According to the state geologist's report of 1875, "Daniels utilized the Fort Ritner stone

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<sup>1</sup> Cox, E. T. "Sixth Annual Report of the Geological Survey of Indiana made during 1874." P. 71.

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for all his Jackson County bridge construction.”<sup>3</sup>

The superstructure is primarily wood with supporting elements of wrought iron rods, bolts and nuts, representative of a later 19th century wooden “enclosed” bridge structure. The Medora Covered Bridge is a rectangular parallel chord; triple multi-span improved double Burr arch truss covered bridge. There are fourteen panels per span encased in double concentric arches, which lie slightly below the top truss chord ending below the lower chord, resting on stone abutments and stone piers. Overall, bridge span is 460 feet, while the Burr Arches span 458 feet. Each span length is one hundred forty feet and ten inches (140’ 10”). An overhang of fourteen feet ten inches (14’ 10”) protects each portal.

The overall horizontal deck width is sixteen feet clear of ports. Overall, oak deck length is four hundred thirty-three and fifty-three (433.53) feet laid longitudinally. Vertical clearance is thirteen (13) feet from the floor to the overhead lateral bracing. Truss height is seventeen (17) feet. Wrought iron pins join the wooden timber members, supposedly locally hand made. The upper chord timber is poplar. The truss consists of a series of vertical oak kingposts and poplar directional braces that meet at mid-span as an isosceles triangle which shares an oak center post at mid-span. The poplar arches were attached to the truss with iron bolts after the truss chords settled. Lower chord lateral braces of wrought iron pass through all arches as well as the lower chord at the first panel and the end panel of each span. Each arch poplar member crosses two panels of the truss with the arch ends resting in cast iron shoes at the abutments and piers. All lateral timbers both upper and lower are poplar. Metal wrought iron rods are in the top and bottom lateral bracing to hold the top chord and bottom chords in alignment. These wrought iron rods pass through the vertical kingposts at each panel section.

At the lower chord, other bridge engineers added metal connections around the kingposts to keep the wooden kingposts and wooden bracing together. The double lower oak chord members are joined by the use of wooden "double headed hook" joints (fish plate) carefully executed and held together with metal strapping on the joint side of the chord timbers with metal bolts which are alternated at each panel from the outside arch to the inside arch. See Design B. Each span has a single timber upper poplar chord that acts independently; while the double oak, lower chords pass over each pier joining the lower chords together to act as through truss.

The wooden truss components of the superstructure are: oak posts are eighteen feet in length; oak deck and oak lower chord timbers are 6”x12”x40 feet. Counter bracing and lateral wooden components are poplar. The yellow poplar arches are six inches by sixteen inches thick and each segment crosses two panels before it is spliced. The arches become eight inches thick at the ends and pass around the lower chord retaining the entire strength of the wood. (Picture #9) According to the contract, the wooden siding

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was pine but has been repaired with yellow poplar laid vertically and stripped with three-inch yellow poplar to cover the twelve-inch wide siding board. The siding follows the arches to the piers. The siding is fourteen inches below the top chord to admit light to the interior of the bridge. However, it was known as the "darkest covered bridge in the state" according to Ketchum.<sup>2</sup> On the upriver side, an opening at the piers exists to give access to the pier for the debris removal at water depth as well as manure disposal. The inside of the bridge is finished with poplar wheel guards, which protect the outside arch and the multiple kingpost trusses.

This parallel, nineteenth century two-lane bridge has a gabled, galvanized sheet metal roof, installed in 2007. In the years prior to this, the bridge had a shake roof. The bridge is in fair-poor condition. It received federal assistance in 1926 for refurbishing in amount of \$5,000 through Indiana Department of Highway. Further investigation has not been done regarding state repairs to the Medora Covered Bridge. One stick of the lower oak chord was replaced in the 1950's on the western span. Documentation is lacking. The West span lower lateral bracing is smaller than the adjacent bracing; thus, this could be the oral history regarding the lower chord replacement. Overhang replacement has occurred several times since 1875 to both ends of the Medora Covered Bridge. The Jackson County Park and Recreation Board altered the "portals in 1976". Further maintenance was done in 1983, when the roof, siding materials and painting of the south side of the Medora Covered Bridge.

As noted, the present "portal design is not original"<sup>3</sup> to the Medora Covered Bridge. (1913 Picture), (Original Design A, B, & C) The original design will be duplicated at the portal ends during rehabilitation. (Design C) The shingles were replaced at least once through the years. A major problem of the substructure is the movement of the quarried limestone due to the deterioration of the Louisville Cement and sand mortar that is creating arch failure at the abutments. The lower chord timbers have moved from the abutment supports that is compromising west span of the bridge. Two arches are broken on the downriver side at each end of the bridge. (Picture 4, Picture 14) At the first panel, the lateral bracing of the lower chord of the East span of the Medora Covered Bridge is missing as well as one-quarter of the lateral bracing at the eastern pier.

The bridge has survived the McKinley overflow, 1887, 1913, & 1917, 1927, and 1937, 2004, 2007 floods and numerous local overflows through the years. "It was saved from demolition by Governor Edgar D. Whitcomb in 1970."<sup>4</sup> "The Indiana State Highway Commission informed the Jackson County Commissioners that the Commission was prepared to relinquish the Medora Covered Bridge September 24, 1975 to the Jackson County Commissioners."<sup>5</sup> The Commissioners on September 24, 1975, approved

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<sup>2</sup> Ketchum, Bryan. Covered Bridges and Byways of Indiana. Oxford, OH: Oxford Printing Company, 1949, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Original design of Medora Covered Bridge-East span-J. J. Daniels 1875. Courtesy of Indiana Historical Society.

<sup>4</sup> Indianapolis Star. "Old Bridge Saved by Whitcomb", September 26, 1970, Col. 2, p. N.A. Courtesy of Indiana Covered Bridge Society files.

<sup>5</sup> Jackson County Commissioners Record, Vol. 28, p. 158 dated September 24, 1975.

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this action. The bridge was then placed under the County's Park and Recreation's umbrella. Dry rot is present on upper chord of the down river truss but is rapidly deteriorating due to deteriorated roof. Several kingposts will have to be replaced. Eight arches are failing due to truss load. (Picture 1 and picture 13) Portions of these timber arches will be replaced. Repairs have been minimal since the bridge was bypassed. Siding, painting and re-roofing a portion of the bridge were done in 1979. Additional support was placed under the lower chord of the Southeast span in 1983 but was washed away. Most recently, a National Historic Covered Bridge Grant of \$69,600 was granted for engineering that is partially completed. Additionally, the Park and Recreation Board have a Transportation Enhancement Grant of \$500,000 for the Medora Covered Bridge and the rehabilitation of the structure's historic integrity. Further rehabilitation funds are needed for complete renovation; however due to the emergency structural failure of this bridge the Jackson County Commissioners have borrowed with County Council approval \$100,000 to furnish the local match for emergency stabilization repairs, which will be a portion of the local match for the local TE 21 match of the \$500,000. The Park and Recreation Board has requested discretionary Transportation Funds for all of Jackson County's covered bridges from the Federal Highway Administration in 2006 through our elected representatives due to our county's economic health and the emergency situation which exists with all Jackson County's historic covered bridges.



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**Section 8 Statement of Significance**

Medora Covered bridge meets National Register Criteria A and C. At 460', the bridge is the longest surviving historic wooden covered bridge in the United States, and is representative of the work of master builder J.J. Daniels of Parke County, Indiana. It is nationally significant for its length and design. The particular design significance of Medora Covered Bridge lies in its use of metal components and combination of kingpost and Burr arch building technologies. The bridge has statewide significance under Criterion A for its role in connecting the western third of Jackson County to its market towns and railroad towns of Vallonia, Brownstown (county seat), and Seymour. The bridge continued to serve its purpose well into the twentieth century, until it was bypassed in 1970. The bridge also handled traffic for major U.S. and State Routes in its years of active service.

Medora Bridge is representative of the early nineteenth century patented bridge models, which were designed, fabricated, and constructed by local skilled craftsmen, which contributed to the transportation infrastructure and development of this country. Structural significance of the Medora Covered Bridge is the triple double arches lying inside and outside the truss plane enclosing a multiple kingpost truss, commonly identified as an improved Burr arch truss. It contains perfectly symmetrical arches, fish claw joints with the metal strapping in the lower chord, (Picture 7, Design B) metal plates which separate the arch from the stone skewback at the abutments and piers, all signature features of a J. J. Daniels covered bridge. It is a representative example of the Waterford patented Burr arch truss by Theodore Burr of 1817. "The Burr Arch Bridge consisted of two separate parts; the main member was a flat truss with parallel top and bottom chords and either single or double timber arch ribs, one on each side of the roadway, either outside or inside the truss plane."<sup>6</sup>

The multiple kingpost truss system was reinvented by nineteenth century American bridge builders but was originally created in the western world during the fifteenth century work of Palladio. German bridge builders utilized the covered truss system in the sixteenth century. Timothy Palmer an early American bridge builder introduced the "first enclosed" or covered bridge to America "at the insistence of the bridge company president, Judge Richard Peters in 1805 which spanned the Schuylkill River West of Philadelphia."<sup>7</sup>

The following year, Theodore Burr patented a multiple kingpost truss with an attached arch, which rested below the bridge deck on the abutments. Burr's bridge building career began in Chenango County, New York where he resided as a millwright and bridge builder in the town of Oxford, New York. He removed

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<sup>6</sup> Condit, Carl W. *American Building Art: The Nineteen Century*. New York: Oxford. 1960, p. N/a.

<sup>7</sup> Barth, Donald O. M. ASCE "America's covered bridges," *Civil Engineering*, New York: ASCE, February 1980, pp. 51-52.

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to Northumberland, Pennsylvania before the War of 1812, at the forks of the Susquehanna River where he continued perfecting and patenting bridges until his death in 1822 at Middletown, Pennsylvania. An additional bridge patent was issued in 1817 from Burr Haven, Pennsylvania for the "Waterford bridge type" which was widely adopted by many nineteenth century bridge carpenters. This "Waterford" type Burr arch truss had a level roadway whereas the earlier design had an arched roadway and arched upper chord. The patented Burr Arch Truss design was widely utilized by later nineteenth bridge carpenters after Theodore Burr's 1822 death, due to knowledgeable wood craftsmen trained in shipbuilding and barn construction and the availability of native materials. Local carpenters could readily duplicate the Burr form. It spread widely due to heavily forested areas of the "West," today's Midwest.

The arch covered bridge had migrated to Indiana by the "1820."<sup>8</sup> Covered bridges were built earlier than the documented "National Road bridges"<sup>9</sup> in southern Indiana. Jesse L. Williams, Indiana's first chief engineer specified the double multiple kingpost truss and arch system for all Indiana's roadways after 1838. Thus, Williams' recommendation influenced generations of Indiana bridge builders in the adoption of the multiple kingpost and arch system. Often, bridges were constructed to be covered later when funds became available for such improvement and protection of the investment, thus one will never know when the first "enclosed" structures were built.

As the Burr design moved westward, native white pine for the upper chords and arches were frequently replaced with yellow poplar by local craftsmen and bridge contractors which was more readily available, durable, and as easily handled as pine. The Burr Arch Truss system had been well tested upon Indiana's White River as well as Daniels's experience at spanning wide waterways, by the time the Medora Bridge was constructed. He had bridged the Wabash River, the western boundary of Indiana with a seven span bridge at Vincennes; his documented longest Indiana bridge, as well as twice spanning the East Fork of White River for the Evansville and Crawfordsville Railroad with a four span railroad bridge. Nearing completion in 1853, the Evansville and Crawfordsville Railroad Bridge at Hazelton was promoted as "something never done in this State heretofore a bridge of this dimension put up in workmanlike style in such a short time."<sup>10</sup> It had served the Evansville and Crawfordsville Railroad that carried heavier loads than nineteenth century agricultural wagons. The typical nineteenth century farm wagon holds about 360 pounds of ear corn. A standard pickup bed of today holds the same amount.

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<sup>8</sup> Bartold, John, "Southern Searches" Indiana Covered Bridge Newsletter, Vol. No. 29, Number 4, October 1992, p. 1-2 and Eugene Bock.

<sup>9</sup> Lindley, Harlow, "From Diary and Recollections of Victor Colin Duclos". Copied from the original manuscript by Mrs. Nora C. Fretageot, New Harmony, Ind. Indiana as seen by Early Travelers: A collection of Reprints from Books of Travel, Letters and Diaries Prior to 1830, 1916, p. 547. See Fredrick Rapp to Jacob Kern for a subscribed bridge as early as 1823. Arndt's book on A Documentary History of the Indiana Decade of the Harmony Society, 1814-1824, Vol. 11, p. 659. Further research is needed to verify this report. The Indiana State Journal for 1820's need to be examined for bridge activity. Additional records of Floyd, Harrison and Washington County seem to indicate that covered bridges were built earlier than the "National Road" bridges on smaller streams. Early southern Indiana surveyors' diaries and records need to be examined. U. S. Topographical Engineers' records regarding Lt. Sanders in bridge and road building for Internal Improvements by the federal government for 1821-1824 should be examined.

<sup>10</sup> Evansville Daily Courier, October 1853 p.3.

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Oral history of an earlier time, indicate the placement of horizontal bridge siding allowed for the lowest horizontal siding to be removed during floods to save the bridge's superstructure, allowing the water to flow across the roadway. Daniels deviated from the earlier nineteenth century bridge carpenters as his bridge structures were built above the high water mark. He specified vertical siding in all examined contracts with the exception of the Jackson Bridge, which has horizontal siding. Clearly, Daniels was more comfortable in utilizing the arch design of Burr's than Long's more scientific bridge patent. It appears that other than the Rising Sun Bridge; Daniels built no other "Long" patented bridge in Indiana. Perhaps, it was due to the patent license fee, the state specifications issued by Chief Engineer of Indiana, or Daniel's lack of knowledge of Indiana waterways during floods.

Bridge contractor Joseph J. Daniels built modified Burr Arch Trusses without laminated arch components as designed by Theodore Burr. Daniels' bridges included limited amounts of ironwork utilized for lateral stability as well as connecting the arch to the multiple kingpost trusses. Economically conscious, Daniels laid his floors longitudinally as opposed to crosswise placement reducing subsequent floor repair due to shod horses as the horseshoes cut into floor timbers. Crosswise floor placement required the removal of the entire board for the deck length whereas; lengthwise placement required the removal on only the worn floorboards where the horse trod. Lengthwise placement gave a quieter as well as smoother ride across the bridge.

Medora Covered Bridge served local, state and federal highway transportation routes from 1875 until bypassed in 1970. The White River diagonally cuts through Jackson County separating the western third of the county that includes Carr Township from the major communities of Jackson County. The original settlement of Jackson County was between the Muscatatuck River to the South and the White River to the West. Both rivers prohibit vehicular travel, flooding area roads. Jackson County entered the state of Indiana a year before statehood. West Lee Wright was a large Carr township landowner and provided the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad with a portion of the needed acreage for the rail line through Carr Township in 1853 creating the town of Medora in the process. The rail line opened in 1857 to St. Louis.

Jim McMahan, one of three ferry operators in Carr Township petitioned the Commissioners for the Vallonia and Medora gravel road. The Medora Covered Bridge was located one-half mile upstream from the McMahan ferry crossing. Daniel Peck Hinderlider, landowner and township trustee proposed and organized the Medora Bridge Company to locate a bridge in Carr Township near McMahan's ferry in May 1874 across White River. This county bridge served as the only major bridge connection across White River linking this township with the remaining sections of Jackson County until the late nineteenth century. Travel was limited to foot, horse, or wagon transportation over very poor roadways and flooded roadways. While rail transportation was available, only the wealthy landowners seem to have availed themselves of the opportunity.

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The bridge was let in November 2, 1874 with the approaches, and abutment soils delivered to the bridge site by the bridge company for spring construction to be finished by September 1, 1875. The Jackson County Commissioners received the Medora Covered Bridge July 15, 1875. It was the first free bridge across White River although the Jackson County Commissioners had purchased four earlier county toll bridges across White River by 1874. The Medora covered bridge remained toll free. Other county bridges existed over other smaller waterways since 1817; however, due to the economics of the time, enabling legislation, and the financial state of county government the citizens formed their own bridge companies to upgrade the infrastructure of the county for the larger county bridges. Only twenty-seven Carr Township citizens paid taxes in 1870, not enough to generate the required tax revenue for a bridge of 460 feet. The Indiana State Legislature in 1874 altered bridge law that made county government responsible for county bridges, before local townships had been responsible for building such structures, which had necessitated the formation of bridge companies to erect major infrastructure improvements.

The Medora Covered Bridge was the Daniels' second covered bridge over East Fork of White River in Jackson County. Locally, it was one of three identified bridge structures built in Jackson County by Joseph J. Daniels over White River. The Jackson County Commissioners in 1970 destroyed the first Daniels' bridge. The Ewing Bridge was an 'identified Indiana Covered Bridge fabricated and built by the Daniels' brothers-Joseph and Stephen."<sup>11</sup> Their father, Stephen Daniels, Sr. a carpenter from New York relocated to Marietta, Ohio pursuing bridge carpentry for both highways and railroads after 1820 becoming an agent for the "Long Trusses" patented by Stephen H. Long. Three of Stephen Daniels' sr. sons, Joseph, Stephen, and William D. Daniels pursued the occupation of bridge mason and bridge carpenter. Joseph J. Daniels and William D. Daniels pursued their bridge carpentry in Indiana after their father's death. Joseph followed his father's occupation and had built several "Long" truss bridges in Ohio for turnpikes and the Little Miami Railroad before building his first "Long" truss bridge in Indiana for the Rising Sun & Aurora Turnpike in 1850. By his father's death (1853), Joseph J. Daniels, was constructing a four multi-span Burr arch bridge over White River Bridge at Hazelton, Indiana for the Evansville and Crawfordsville Railroad in Southwest Indiana.

Daniels did follow Stephen H. Long's design form for his covered bridge piers and abutments as Long detailed in his published paper on bridge construction, particularly following Long's recommendation on the width of the stonework. Subsequently, Mr. Daniels became superintendent for the E & C railroad. Leaving the railroad, Daniels became a "flour miller and whiskey distiller in Gibson County after August 1857"<sup>12</sup> until a disastrous fire. He relocated to Rockville

in 1861 after the fire and continued as a successful bridge contractor ending his bridge-contracting career

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<sup>11</sup> Seymour Times. "An Address", January 20, 1870 Col. 1, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> 1860 Census of Gibson County ending June 1. Products of Manufacturing for Gibson County. Page 2. Additionally, 1860 Gibson County Census -White River Township. Microfilm.



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in "1904 with the Neet Bridge."<sup>13</sup> Some documentation, unsubstantiated at present indicates that Joseph J. Daniels may have resumed his bridge building in co-operation with his brothers, Stephen H. Daniels and William D. Daniels for a time.

The residents of Carr Township proposed building a bridge across the river as early as 1870 but they were not as politically astute or financially able as other county residents were. "The newly organized 1917 Indiana Highway Commission designated a roadway from Evansville, Indiana to Aurora, Indiana as a main market route identified as route four (4) for Indiana."<sup>14</sup> This route passed over the Medora Covered Bridge, as did the market route five (5) which began at Vincennes, Indiana and intersected with route four at Mitchell, Indiana which connected Vincennes with Aurora, Indiana.

The trustees of Carr and Driftwood Township had been responsible for repairs for the Medora Covered Bridge after its construction, until the Indiana Highway Commission took over the market route 4 on April 1, 1920.<sup>15</sup> Township records have not revealed specific bridge expenses for the Medora Covered Bridge other than general maintenance in 1905 for painting and repairing the structure; at this time funded by the Jackson County Commissioners. Subsequently in 1926, the Medora Covered Bridge served as a transportation structure for U.S. 50 that ran from Washington, D.C. to Ely, Nebraska. In 1950, U.S. 50 was relocated upriver in Jackson County under the jurisdiction of the Indiana Highway Commission. The bridge structure continued to serve the Indiana Department of Highway as a transportation structure as a part of State Road 235 from 1950 to 1975, returning full circle to Jackson County in 1975.

Completed and opened for travel July 15, 1875, the citizens had celebrated the construction of their new bridge during their Fourth of July celebration at the bridge site. "While the new concrete bridge was under construction in the 1970's one of the last loads that crossed the Medora Covered Bridge was a 70 ton load of steel. The driver lost his job for this delivery."<sup>16</sup> Additionally, fully loaded grain and fertilizer semi-trailers made trips across this bridge in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, it survived modern transportation abuse in spite of the early nineteenth century Burr arch bridge patented by an American mechanic, a tribute to a nineteenth century master bridge contractor, J. J. Daniels, and his knowledge of timber as well as his masonry skills.

Other identified long bridge structures built by Daniels not previously mentioned was a Wabash Railroad bridge for Danville and Indianapolis Railroad, the Freedom Bridge, the Tunnelton Bridge and the Stumphole Bridge. These bridges no longer exist.

Aside from the above bridges, Daniels' longest Indiana single span is the Jackson Bridge at Rockville.

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<sup>13</sup> Gould, George E. Indiana Covered Bridges thru the years. 1977, P. 16.

<sup>14</sup> Yearbook of the State of Indiana for the year 1917. P. 481.

<sup>15</sup> Brownstown Banner. "About Sixty Miles of Jackson County Roads Under Supervision of the State Highway Commission.

<sup>16</sup> Henderson Interview 2004.

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Several long span examples exist in west central Indiana, but Jackson County has two of the longest extant structures by Mr. Daniels. The Shields Mill Bridge in Jackson County was his third bridge built over the East Fork of White River. Its length is 331 feet with 12 feet over hang at each portal. The Medora Covered Bridge is the last and longest Burr Arch Truss Bridge with multiple spans built by Joseph J. Daniels, one of Indiana's premier bridge contractors.

It is one of approximately sixty bridge structures built by J. J. Daniels who elected to construct the earlier nineteenth century wooden Burr arch bridge design although he was a skilled timber bridge builder of the patented wooden bridge designs of William Howe as well as Stephen H. Long, the nation's first "educated" structural bridge engineer. It is Indiana's longest remaining covered bridge. Historically, Cass County held the record for Indiana's longest bridge, spanning between 800-1000 feet over the Wabash River. The bridge was called the Georgetown Covered Bridge and was created by an unidentified builder;<sup>17</sup> It was a patented Town Truss bridge. Many Indiana bridge contractors utilized the Burr Arch truss including the Kennedy Family of Rushville, Indiana as well as Joseph Britton of Parke County. These Indiana wooden bridge contractors entered the bridge construction field later than Daniels.

The Medora Bridge is one of ninety standing enclosed timber bridge structures statewide. The Medora Covered Bridge is one of sixteen Indiana bridges that "the National Park Service and the American Society of Civil Engineers have identified as significant to America's engineering history."<sup>18</sup> It is the "longest remaining nineteenth century covered bridge structure in the United States although no longer serving vehicular traffic."<sup>17</sup>

Locally, it was one of three "enclosed" bridges built over White River in Jackson County, all by Joseph J. Daniels. While four covered bridges over White River are recorded, it is believed that the Bell Ford Bridge was not "enclosed" until sometime after the completion of the Shields Mill Bridge in 1876. The Medora Covered Bridge is one of seven Jackson County covered bridges documented by this researcher. It was and is the longest remaining covered timber structure. The Bell Ford Bridge and the Shields Mill Bridge are the only other remaining covered bridges in Jackson County. Tragically; the remaining span of Bell Ford collapsed into White River January 2, 2006, though much of it has been salvaged and some funds are in place to begin its restoration. The Medora Bridge was designed to serve local needs; farmers taking grain loads and cattle to market, horse and buggies, and foot traffic. Later it served just as well as a state and federal route, handling automobile and commercial truck traffic for nearly three-fourths of the twentieth century. Now it serves pedestrian, animal, and light vehicular traffic of the twenty-first century.

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<sup>17</sup> *Outdoor Indiana "Indiana's Covered Bridge Heritage"*, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Delony, Eric, *Landmark American Bridges*, appendix Second page, 1995.

<sup>19</sup> McKee, Brian, P. E. in cooperation with ASCE, *Historic American Covered Bridges*, no p. n. 1997

<sup>16</sup> Barker, James A. Field Measurements of Medora Covered Bridge May 16, 2000, Cornish-Windsor Bridge Field Measurements June 8, 2003.



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**Section 10 Geographical Data: Verbal Boundary Description**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Medora Covered Bridge is located in the extreme southwest corner of Section 36, Range 3 East, Township 5 North, Jackson County, IN. The boundary includes the right-of-way of the Medora Covered Bridge and the bridge itself; its abutments and wing walls, two intermediate piers in the East Fork of the White River and any footings for said piers, abutments and wing walls; the entire wooden superstructure, including the trusses, Burr Arches, bracing, fittings, siding and roof.

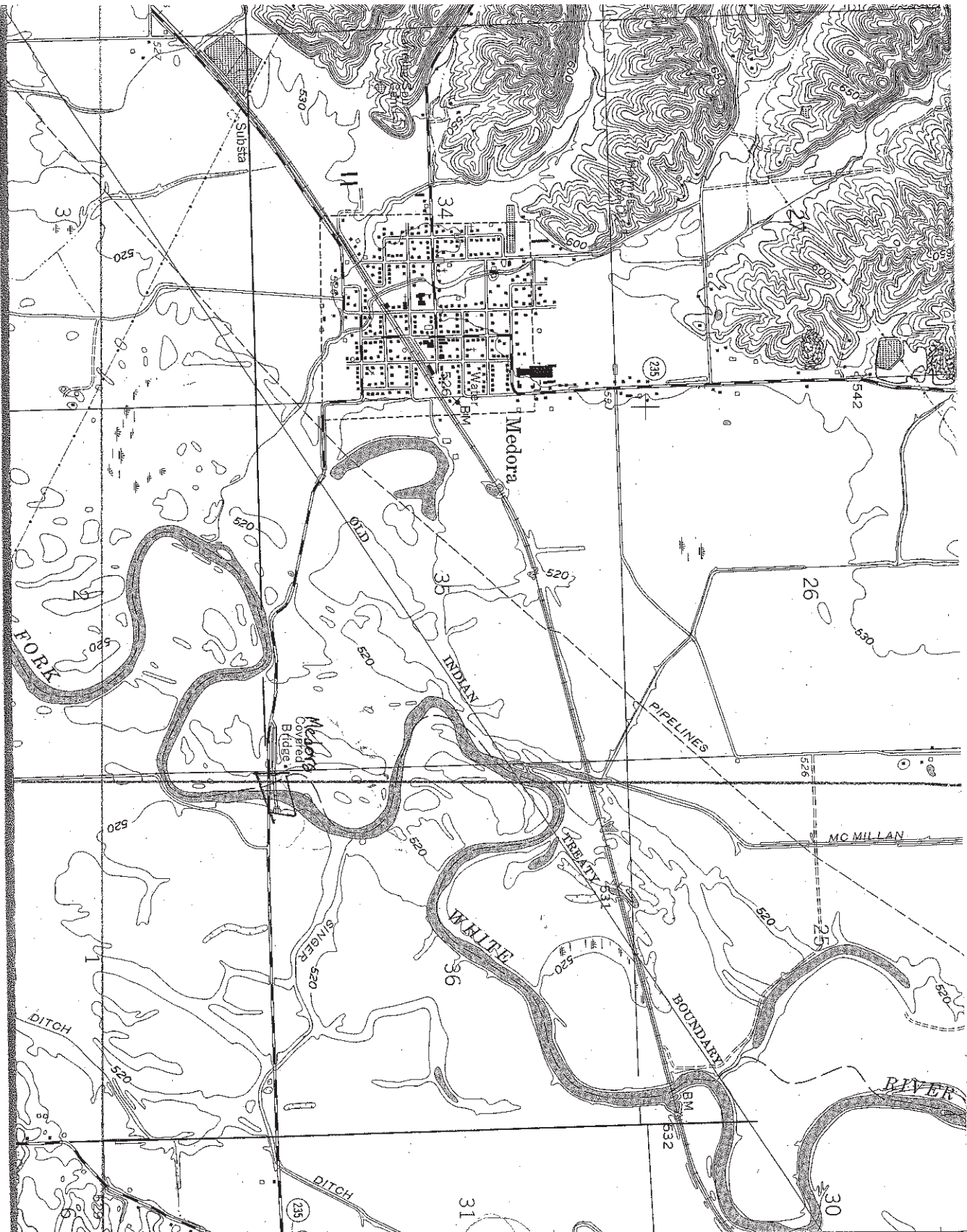
On the each side of the bridge, include a parcel as follows:

*On the east side of the bridge*, begin at a point fourteen (14) feet south of the southeast corner of the portal (point A), proceed east for eighty (80) feet (point B). This defines the south line. On the north, begin at a point fourteen (14) feet north of the northeast corner of the portal (point C), and proceed east for eighty (80) feet (point D). This forms the north line. Connect points B and D to form the east line, and connect points A and C to form the west line.

*On the west end of the bridge*, repeat the process to define a similar parcel, with point E being fourteen (14) feet south of the southwest corner of the portal, heading west eighty (80) feet to point F, this defining the south line; point G is fourteen (14) feet north of the northwest corner of the portal, proceed west eighty (80) feet to point H; connect points H and F to form the west boundary, connect points G and E to form the east boundary

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the Burr Arch Truss covered bridge; its historic locally quarried stone abutments, and its two quarried piers. Enough right-of-way and approach is included to convey the significance, immediate setting, and particular design solution relative to the site of the bridge.



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BRIDGE  
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