

FINAL

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.

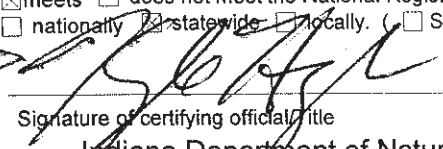
1. Name of Property

historic name Eikenberry Bridge  
other names/site number Bridge 1-19; Lost Bridge; Miami County Bridge #28 103-507-15054

2. Location

street & number CR 100 E over Eel River in Richland Twp N/A  not for publication  
city or town Chili  vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county Miami code 103 zip code 46962

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.)  
 7/27/06  
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. \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_  
 determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet. \_\_\_\_\_  
 determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
 removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
 other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Eikenberry Bridge  
Name of Property

Miami 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.)

**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

TRANSPORTATION: Road-Related (vehicular)

**7. Description**

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

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Pratt Through Truss

foundation CONCRETE

walls METAL: Steel

roof

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.)

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

ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

1920-1956

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Rochester 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:

Eikenberry Bridge  
Name of Property

Miami 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	579580	4522910
Zone	Easting	Northing

2 

Zone	Easting	Northing

3 

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 John Warner

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 05-15-2006

street & number 5018 Broadway telephone 317/284-5450

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 Miami County Commissioners

street & number 25 N. Broadway telephone 765/472-3901

city or town Peru state IN zip code 46970

**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 – Description (continued)**

**Narrative Description**

Oriented north and south, Eikenberry Bridge carries County Road 100E over the Eel River. For orientation purposes, bridge spans are numbered 1 and 2 from the south abutment. In photograph 1 (looking north) the south abutment is nearest the camera. The bridge nominated is variously identified in official records and according to local tradition, as one of the following: Bridge 1-19; Eikenberry Bridge; County Bridge #28; and finally, Lost Bridge. I have used these identifiers interchangeably in the nomination.

The bridge substructure consists of concrete abutments and a single pier in mid-channel. Photograph 2 is a view of the center pier with the upstream face on the right in the view. The bridge is a two-span, bolted Pratt through truss measuring 111 feet in each span of five panels, with a vertical clearance of 14 feet, 6 inches and a roadway width of 15 feet, 8 inches; the overall length of the bridge is 227 feet.

Truss construction for this bridge addresses stress somewhat differently by using different connection techniques. The extensive use of channel/angle metal components (off-the-shelf members) and bolted/riveted connections stiffen these Pratt trusses to a much greater degree than the pinned connections found on earlier trusses. The 1920s-era Eikenberry Bridge of Miami County appears much more “business-like;” that is, more reflective of a factory-made item mass produced using standardized parts that make many bridges appear identical to the viewer’s eye. Crafted structural members, those commonly used in pinned bridges of an earlier time, imbue a graceful symmetry to the entire bridge structure, especially in the Pratt trusses.

The end-posts and the upper chord are fabricated from channel metal components joined by a riveted cover plate on the outside surface and laced together on the under side (photographs 3 and 4). The lower chord is fabricated from metal angle members connected with rivets.

The compression and tension forces on the trusses are accommodated by chords, vertical members, diagonals, and counters (photographs 5 and 6). The vertical members of each truss consist of two laced channels connected at the upper and lower chords through the use of gussets, bolts, and rivets. Photographs 7 and 8 demonstrate the configuration of these connections at the portal brace, upper and lower chord, and ends of the floor beams respectively. Photograph 7, clockwise from top center in the photograph, demonstrates the connections for the portal bracing, the end-post, the end panel vertical member, the first diagonal, the top chord, and the top lateral bracing. Photograph 8 demonstrates the connection of the lower end of a vertical member with the diagonal of the second panel (on the right) and the counter on the center panel (on the left) and the lower chord. Visible in the photograph are the gussets used in joining the vertical, the lower chord, a diagonal, a counter, and the hanger that supports the end of the floor beam; connections are accomplished by rivets and bolts.

The center panel of each truss has diagonals (one is a counter) in each direction that are fabricated with angled steel members and riveted plates. Diagonal members resist the shearing forces between the chords that arise when the load on the bridge causes the center of the span to sink. Diagonals in a Pratt truss are members in tension but a live (moving) load on a bridge truss tends toward stress reversal of the diagonal(s) at the center of a bridge; i.e., changing the stress force from tension to compression under a live load. The solution for stress reversal is to employ counters in the center panel(s) of the Pratt truss. Photograph 9 shows a typical arrangement of a counter and a diagonal. As the live load

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moves across the span in either direction, the diagonal and the counter in the center panel act to transfer the effect of the load by keeping the diagonals under tension.

The portal bracing is fabricated from various lengths of angled members riveted together in a simple “A-shaped” configuration to form the bracing. The bracing is bolted to the end-posts (photograph 10). The top lateral bracing is fabricated from angle metal riveted to small plates attached to the struts near their connection with the top chord (photograph 11)

The floor system for this bridge consists of I-shaped floor beams, I-beam stringers, and a wooden deck. The floor beams, bottom lateral bracing, and the stringers that support the wooden deck are standard items found in many bridges (photograph 12). Adjustments to the bottom lateral bracing are made by tightening or loosening the nut on the threaded end of the brace where it passes through the end of the floor beam (photograph 13).

Bridges have a fixed and an expansion end to accommodate the forces of expansion/contraction caused by seasonal temperature changes or other environmental forces. The fixed ends of these bridge spans are anchored on the single pier in the middle of the channel by securing flat cast-iron or steel plates, bolted to the end-posts, to the top of the concrete pier with threaded bolts embedded in the concrete (photograph 14).

The Rochester Bridge Company (RBC) of Rochester, Indiana, used a distinct method to accommodate bridge expansion and contraction. Generally speaking, most metal-bridge builders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century accommodated this requirement by placing roller-nests under both end-posts on one end of a span. The solid-steel rollers shown in the drawing (photograph 15), which act like elongated ball-bearings, are contained in a shallow box (the nest) that keeps the individual rollers in place (photographs 16 and 17). Post-World War I bridges often employed simple steel rockers on one end of a span to accomplish the same purpose (photograph 18).

RBC employed a simpler method to deal with the forces of expansion/contraction. The company’s method used two cast-iron or steel plates and a steel bolt to accomplish a similar function as a roller nest. The plates provided the smooth surfaces necessary to allow the bridge span to expand and contract within limits; the bolt was likely a measure of assurance that the end-post would not exceed design criteria and exit the abutment. Photographs 19, 20, and 21 demonstrate the relationship between the connection to the end-posts and the intended function of the plates and the bolt. Photograph 19 shows the outboard portion of the top plate that is bolted to the end-post; the inboard portion of the top plate is identical but not visible due to its position under the edge of the wooden deck of the bridge. The end-post is visible in the upper portion of the view. Visible in the lower right corner of the view is the forward edge of the bed plate upon which the top plate is designed to slide to account for movement along the long axis of the span. Photograph 20 shows the forward edge of both plates; corrosion obscures the joint line between the two plates. Photograph 21 is a close-up of a threaded bolt, also visible in photograph 19, embedded in the concrete of the abutments which extends upward through a three-inch by one-and one-half-inch elongated oval slot punched in the top plate. A nut, its purpose unknown, is threaded onto the three-quarter-inch bolt. The size of the slot, larger than the diameter of the bolt, allows the top plate to move horizontally around the bolt within the limits of the slot in the top plate. From the condition of the bent shafts of the bolts, possibly the nuts were intended to retard the end-post’s capability of sliding off the anchor bolts entirely.

In summary, this Rochester Bridge Company structure demonstrates a move away from the more flexible construction of Pratt trusses (pinned) in favor of the shop-riveted and bolted truss.

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**8Section 8 – Statement of Significance**

Miami County's Eikenberry Bridge is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, in this case, the development of transportation infrastructure in Richland Township, Miami County that provided local farmers and merchants two-way, all-weather access across the Eel River and shortened the distance to the county seat, Peru, Indiana for communities on the north side of the river. The bridge is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as the single remaining representative work, in Miami County, of a once-prosperous and prolific Indiana bridge building firm, the Rochester Bridge Company, that constructed their bridges regionally and nationally, for over three decades that spanned the turn of the century. This bridge is also one of only three metal through-truss bridges remaining in Miami County. The period of significance is 1920-1956.

Miami County, the location of the Eikenberry Bridge, was organized in 1834 and Peru, the county seat rapidly became the center of the county both politically and economically. The county is traversed by a number of rivers, like the Wabash, the Mississinewa, and the Eel, and small streams that dictated to some extent the settlement patterns in the county. Topographically, the land in the county is comparatively level with slight undulations but hillier along these watercourses. Originally, the land was covered by dense forests interspersed "... now and then with small prairies and oak openings in the northern part." The coming of the white settlers changed much of that dense forest into lumber or burning brush fires and the rich river bottomlands became the farm fields that produced the crops that fed the local communities.<sup>1</sup>

Richland Township, in Miami County, was organized in 1837 and gained its name by virtue of its wealth of productive bottomland; the Eel River, one of the main rivers in the county, "... runs peacefully through the center of the valley." The village of Chili, one of the first settlements in the township, is located on the north bank of the Eel River and was first platted in 1839 as the town of New Market. The changing of the settlement's name to Chili occurred when post office officials notified local authorities that a New Market post office already existed and they would have to choose another name. The selection of "Chili" for the name is somewhat clouded in history but two alternatives (local myths) seem to bear the most weight. The first choice stems from the fact that some early prominent resident in town at the time of renaming had relatives in a town in New York that carried the name "Chili" and so the choice was obvious. The second possibility is just as reasonable and follows from the local practice of naming towns after foreign countries – Mexico, Peru, etc – so that "Chili" may well have been derived from "Chile."<sup>2</sup>

Chili prospered for many years as a primary trading center for the surrounding countryside and as a shipping point for local farmers after the Detroit, Eel River & Indianapolis Railroad finished track through the county in the 1870s. As the early road system of the county developed and farmers sought easier, all-weather access to the county seat at Peru, the need for more bridges across the Eel River, became apparent. Chili had a bridge over the Eel River in the late nineteenth century that carried a county road that eventually ended in Peru but west of Chili,

<sup>1</sup> *Combination Atlas Map of Miami County, Indiana* (Chicago: Kingman Brothers, 1877), 13-16.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur L. Bodurtha, *History of Miami County, Indiana* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1914), 184; John H. Stephens, *History of Miami County* (Peru, IN: John H. Stephens Publishing House, 1896), 327.

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between it and the town of Denver, local residents had to depend on a ford approximately one-quarter mile upstream from the bridge site, to cross the river. This condition existed until early in the twentieth century when some residents of Richland Township decided that a fair weather ford was a poor and inconsistent means of crossing the river in their automobiles or farm trucks. They determined a need for a bridge to expedite their travel to the county seat.<sup>3</sup>

The first official mention of a bridge over the Eel River between Chili and Denver appeared in the Miami County Commissioner's Records on 4 January 1917. Petitioners William West, Ira Eikenberry, et al, requested a bridge be built at the prescribed location and the Board "... being sufficiently advised of the premises, refers the said petition to the County Surveyor and directs him to report at the February, 1917, session of the Court an estimate of the probable cost of the structure petitioned." *The Peru Republican* reported on 16 February 1917 that the surveyor's report included estimates for two types of bridges, one concrete and one steel. The cost of the concrete bridge was \$27,810.00 and the steel version was estimated at \$21,400.00. The commissioner's record makes no further mention of the bridge in 1917 or 1918.<sup>4</sup>

On 20 March 1919, the Miami County Commissioners approved plans for eight new bridges in the county. The Board directed the Auditor to advertise in local newspapers for bids to be submitted not later than 9 April 1919. Separate bids were to be submitted for the superstructures (bridge spans) and the substructures (the piers and abutments). The county officials chose to identify this group of bridges numerically as 1-19, 2-19 and so on for bookkeeping purposes. The bridge across the Eel River between Chili and Denver was not identified in the entry in the commissioner's records but, on 20 March 1919, the local newspaper listed the eight bridges individually and bridge 1-19 was identified as being "over the Eel River, near the residence of Ira L. Eikenberry, in Richland Township." By late 1919, it was identified in official records as Bridge 1-19 and/or the Eikenberry Bridge.<sup>5</sup>

Naming a bridge during its planning and construction phases is not an unusual practice. Around the state, county officials generally named bridge projects after an individual or family involved with the bridge in some manner. Often the bridge was identified with the name of the owner of land near the bridge or the name of the petitioner. In the case of Eikenberry Bridge, it turned out that Ira L. Eikenberry met both qualifications, he was a petitioner and his family owned the land that the south abutment would eventually rest upon. In fact, near the end of the nineteenth century, George Eikenberry, Ira's father, owned approximately 300 acres of land on the south bank of the Eel River. The land was divided between Richland and Jefferson Townships.<sup>6</sup>

The county commissioners awarded contracts for eight bridges on 9 April 1919. The contracts addressed both the super- and substructures separately, therefore, dual contracts were

<sup>3</sup> *Combination Atlas Map of Miami County, Indiana*, 90-91.

<sup>4</sup> *Miami County Commissioner's Records*, Volume 10, October 1915–May 1918, 352; *The Peru Republican*, 16 February 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Miami County Commissioner's Records*, Volume 11, 8 May 1918–29 September 1921, 128; *The Peru Republican*, 20 March 1919 and 10 April 1919.

<sup>6</sup> *Combination Atlas Map of Miami County, Indiana*, 90-91; Bodurtha, *History of Miami County, Indiana*, 613 and 804.



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awarded for each of the eight bridges. Frank N. Hoffman received the contracts for the pier, abutments, and the steel superstructure of the Eikenberry Bridge; in fact, Mr. Hoffman received seven of a possible sixteen contracts awarded in this contracting cycle. Hoffman was the primary representative for the Rochester Bridge Company, Rochester, Indiana. The general improvement contract for Eikenberry Bridge required “Jennison & Wright 16lb block to be used [for the floor]” and the bridge was to be “completed on or before 1 November 1919” for a cost of \$18,959.00. Jennison & Wright creosoted wooden-block floors were in regular use for floors of bridges in Miami County. The company was headquartered in Toledo, Ohio, at the time of the contract. Today, the company, now located in Cleveland, Ohio, continues to manufacture wooden floors for industrial applications.<sup>7</sup>

Frank N. Hoffman was more than a field representative for the Rochester Bridge Company. According to one source, Hoffman along with L.E. Curtis and Robert C. Wallace formed the company in 1887 with a capitalization of about \$30,000. After a slow start in the bridge business, expansion in the first decade of the twentieth century became the norm as more contracts for metal bridges were awarded the company. In 1907, the company built its largest bridge to date with a 170-foot span that was assembled in Smithfield, North Carolina. One spur to the firm’s growth was the appointment of William L. Deniston to be president of the firm in 1908. His son, Arthur, assumed the position of secretary and treasurer at the same time. In 1909, to meet its growing contractual commitments, the company bought out the Anderson Bridge Company from Anderson, Indiana, and moved the entire shop to its new factory building. By 1910, the factory was operating thirteen hours a day to fill its contracts and shipping its bridges to Texas, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, and the Indian Territory, now Oklahoma.<sup>8</sup>

Rochester Bridge Company, like many other bridge companies of the period, made a move into the field of structural steel work in the early 1910s. Some of its earliest projects were structural steel for an International Harvester building in Chicago, a new high school in Bloomington, Indiana, a baseball grandstand in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and in 1916, the Culver Military Academy Riding Hall. By this year, the firm opened new offices in Lynchburg, Virginia. The bridge end of the business continued to flourish and one of the company’s largest bridges, a 200-foot span, was erected in Mann, West Virginia in 1914. Arthur L. Deniston became president of the company in 1917 and the company geared up, doubled its capacity for structural steel, to support the ship-building industry’s expansion for World War I. Rochester Bridge Company secured contracts for 4,000 tons of ship work from the American International Shipbuilding Corporation of Hog Island, Pennsylvania and continued in this work until early 1919. The end of the war brought a slow down in structural steel business and the company struggled along into 1920 when bridge business began to increase but the trend did not continue. From 1921 to 1925, the firm operated at reduced capacity and with the exception of a few large contracts for structural steel in Chicago in 1925, the company experienced hard times. The nature of competition with large steel firms, their ability to underbid small firms and still make a profit, spelled the end of the

<sup>7</sup> *Miami County Commissioner’s Records*, Volume 11, 8 May 1918–29 September 1921, 150.

<sup>8</sup> *Fulton County Handbook*, Rochester, Indiana at FULCO.LIB.IN.US/Genealogy.

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company and the onset of the Depression in the early 1930s finished the job. The Rochester Bridge Company closed its doors, with a hush, circa 1930.<sup>9</sup>

The bridge over the Eel River near the residence of Ira L. Eikenberry does not appear in the commissioner's proceedings in November 1919, as might be expected, with a report of completion of the contract. The company did not complete the bridge by 1 November 1919 and oddly, the commissioners make no mention of that fact. There is no further mention of the Eikenberry Bridge until 8 June 1920 when the bridge company representative and the county surveyor/engineer, Louis C. Johnson, made a request of the commissioners. The basis for the request was a change to the plans, formerly approved, for the pier in midstream. According to the request, "...the shifting of the channel [of the river]" created a situation where "the foundation of such pier would be therefore inadequate and insufficient to support said bridge." The company, therefore, considered it "necessary to lower the foundation thereof [the pier] to a depth of three (3) feet below the present river bed." By approving the request, the commissioners agreed to pay the extra costs required to lower the depth of the foundation plus a 15 percent profit.<sup>10</sup>

Evidently, work on the pier and the bridge proceeded without any further delay because the next and last entry about the Eikenberry Bridge appeared in the official record on 5 October 1920. The notation in the record, sworn to and certified by Ira L. Eikenberry and Louis C. Johnson, states that "... the undersigned superintendent and engineer of bridge #1-19, Richland Township..." guarantee that the "... work on said bridge has been completed according to the plans, specifications, and contract" and that the "... same should be accepted and received of said contractor [Rochester Bridge Company]." The commissioners accepted the report of the two supervisors involved with the bridge at their 22 October 1920 meeting and the bridge became a part of the county's infrastructure.<sup>11</sup>

There is a folklore component to the history of this bridge. Locally, the bridge is more often referred to as the "Lost" Bridge rather than by its current official designation of County Bridge 28 or even by Eikenberry Bridge. Two theories (stories) exist concerning the genesis of the "lost" nickname for the Eikenberry Bridge. One story relates that a shortage of county funds was responsible for the bridge not being completed sooner than it was; a second version relates that a shortage of money and the non-existence of a completed road from the south end of the bridge were responsible for the period of the bridge's isolation (lost status). Neither official records nor collective memory can be relied upon to determine the exact date when this nickname came into common usage. A lack of county funds, needed to honor the petition that the commissioners had essentially granted does not seem to support either local story. The Auditor's Exhibit for 1917, published in a local newspaper, reported an ending balance of \$175,808.78 in the county coffers at the end of the year; therefore, belief the county "ran out of money" in 1917 seems inaccurate at best. The county council, meeting in 1916, did not appropriate any money for the coming year, 1917, for bridge construction, only repairs on existing bridges. The Auditor's Exhibit at the end of 1918, also in the same newspaper, reported an ending balance of \$173,676.12. *The Peru Republican* reported that the county council included a general

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Miami County Commissioner's Records*, Volume 11, 8 May 1918–29 September 1921, 149-150.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 449; *The Peru Republican*, 22 October 1920.

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appropriation for new bridges (\$12,500.00) in 1918. The *Miami County Council Record* contains a special appropriation in 1919 authorizing \$20,000 specifically for Bridge 1-19.<sup>12</sup> There are a few random references in the various public records consulted, and in period newspapers, that indicate the newly-formed county highway department was having difficulty staying within its budget but a lack of overall county funds does not appear to have been the reason Eikenberry Bridge may have become “lost.”

The second story, probably more accurate, comes from lifetime residents of the area and again cites a lack of funds and the lack of a road to the south that was unavailable for travel for a number of years after completion of the bridge; the time period is variable according to the story teller. A section of road to the north of the bridge was completed already. The grandson of Ira L. Eikenberry relates that, according to family memory, it took years for a road to be completed to the south. Other longtime residents recounted this same information and further attributed part of the delay in road construction to regular flooding into the fields south of the bridge site which also would have isolated the bridge periodically. This flooding condition, according to these same sources, was eventually corrected by construction of a levee/elevated roadway that cured the problem. Photograph 22 is a view south on County Road 100E from the bridge and shows the elevated nature of the embankment that supports the road. One version of the story included a private individual’s actions concerning the construction of the levee in lieu of a tax levy. If a shortage of county funds were offered as an explanation for the lack of a road from the bridge southward, the condition of the county’s overall funds in the early 1920s indicates that would not be the case.<sup>13</sup> While the full and factual story may never be known, the local perception that the bridge was at one time “lost” has become a favorite story to tell visitors and through common usage, the nickname has survived the test of time. From the very first time a local wag identified Eikenberry Bridge as “that lost bridge in Richland Township,” its place in local history was assured.

Now, the official version of the missing road completes the final chapter in the story of the “Lost” (Eikenberry) Bridge. In a special session of the County Council on 25 June 1923, the council met “...to view and pass on the public utility [of four other county road units]... and the Ira L. Eikenberry County Unit Road No. 3 in Richland and Jefferson Townships.” The council considered each of the various county road units and unanimously approved all five. On 8 August 1923, the county commissioners entered into a contract with George Bolley, Akron, Indiana, for the completion “... within one year of the sale of the bonds issued for the construction of this road, the Ira Eikenberry County Unit Gravel Road No. 3, in Jefferson and Richland Townships...” for the amount of \$9,370.00. An allowance for possible unforeseen expenses raised the amount sought by the county auditor’s bond issue to a total of \$11,000.00. The next

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<sup>12</sup> *The Peru Republican*, 26 September 1917, 18 January 1918, and 24 January 1919; *Miami County Council Record*, Volume 1, 1899 -July 1933 (3 September 1918), 393; *The Peru Republican*, 22 September 1916.

<sup>13</sup> Conversation between John Warner and Dallas Eikenberry, Grandson of Ira L. Eikenberry, 17 April 2006; Conversation between John Warner and Jim Mull, Richland Township resident, 23 April 2006; Electronic mail between Don Musselman and John Warner, March and April, 2006; *The Peru Republican* and *The Sentinel*, 1920 through 1924.

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entry in the county commissioner's record, made on 5 November 1924, notes completion of the contract by Bolley and the certification by the county engineer, Louis C. Johnson and the superintendent, William F. West, that the work had been in accordance with the approved plans and specifications.<sup>14</sup>

In summary, Eikenberry Bridge's significance is three-fold. First, it is the sole remaining representative, in Miami County, of the work of the once-thriving Rochester Bridge Company, an Indiana bridge builder that successfully marketed its product, both regionally and nationally. Secondly, the bridge demonstrates the industry's move to the fabrication and use of stiffer bridge structures with bolted/riveted joinery to combine standardized components and a move away from the more flexible pinned bridge structure common at the turn of the century. Finally, whether the folklore surrounding the bridge's sobriquet proved to be factually correct or not, the Eikenberry Bridge represents a thread in the historic fabric of the community that it served in the past and continues to serve today.

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<sup>14</sup> *Miami County Commissioner's Record*, Volume 12, 3 October 1921-5 November 1924, 383, 402, 411, and 460; *Miami County Commissioner's Record*, Volume 13, 5 November 1924 -1 December 1927, 1; *Miami County Council Record*, Volume 1 (25 June 1923), 457.

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**Section 9 – Bibliography**

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*The Sentinel*. 1920 through 1924.

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**Section 10 – Geographical Data**

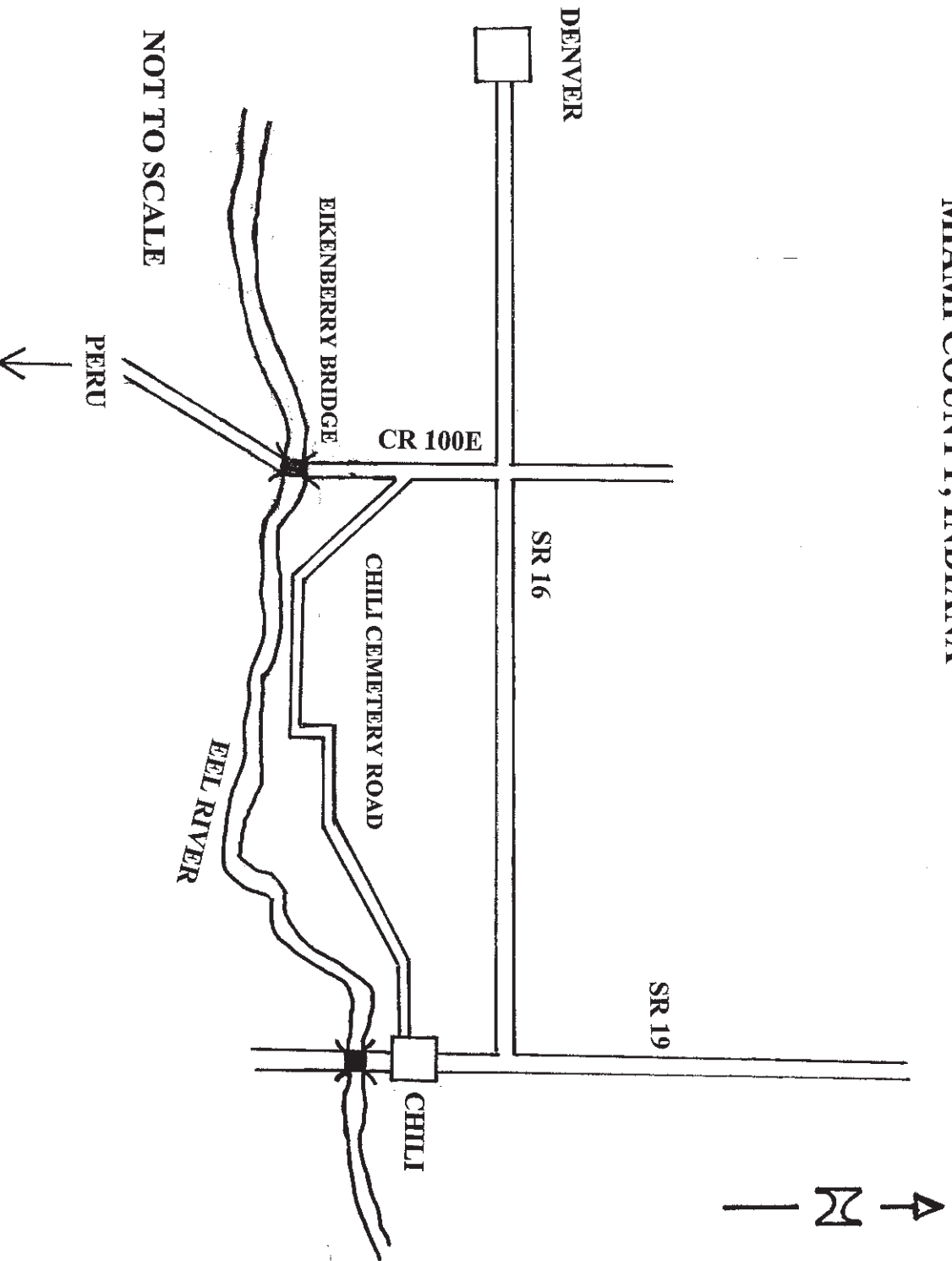
**Boundary Description:**

From a start point 40 feet north and 20 feet west of the northwest end post of the bridge; proceed east across Miami County Road 100E to a point 10 feet east and 40 feet north of the northeast end post of the bridge; turn south and proceed across the Eel River to a point 20 feet east and 40 feet south of the southeast end post of the bridge; turn west and proceed across Miami County Road 100E to a point 20 feet west and 40 feet south of the southwest end post of the bridge; turn north and proceed across the Eel River to close on the start point.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundary as described includes the abutments, pier, and spans of the bridge and its immediate environs.

**EIKENBERRY BRIDGE (County Bridge #28)  
MIAMI COUNTY, INDIANA**

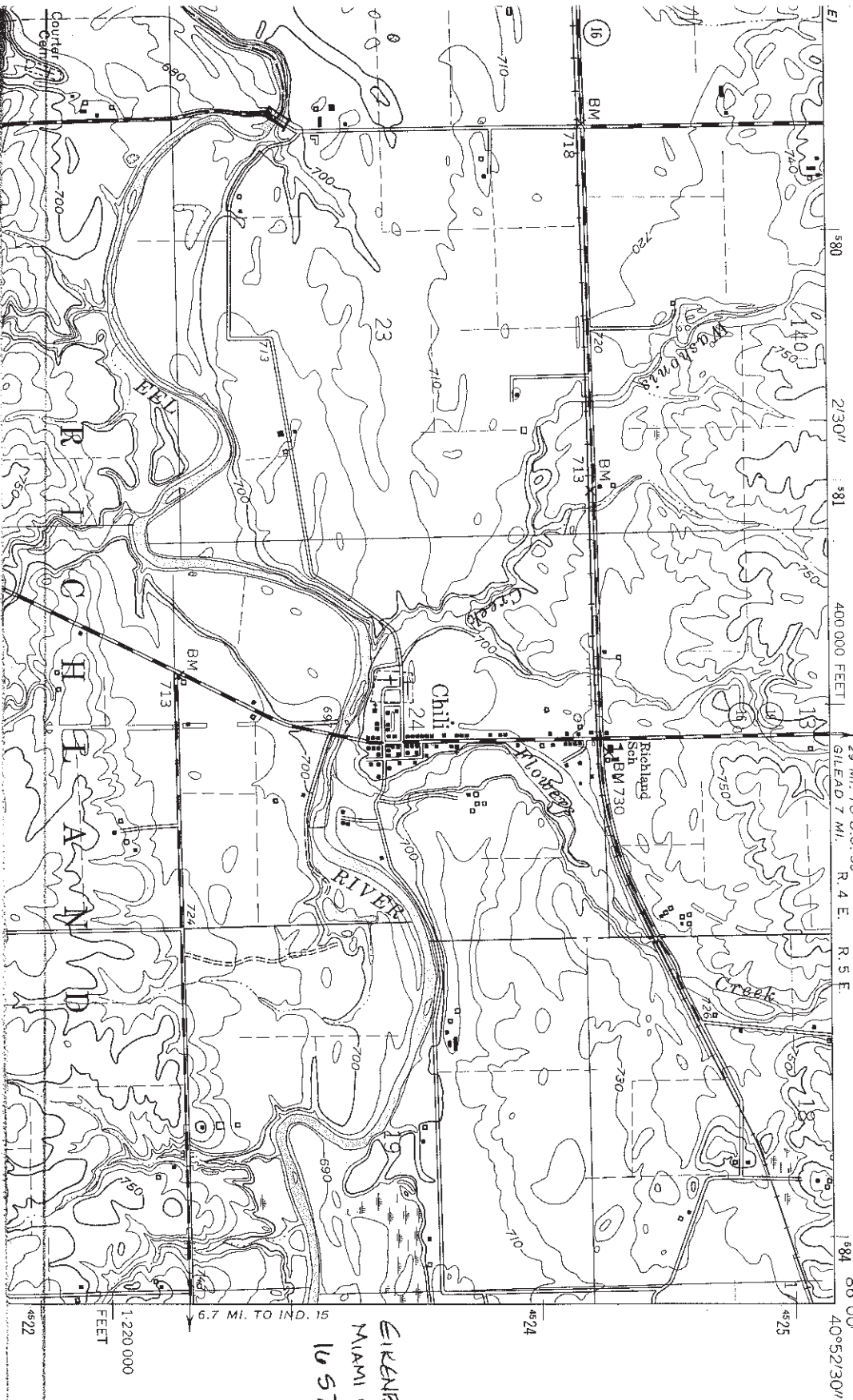




INDIANA  
URAL RESOURCES  
INDIANA

PERU QUADRANGLE  
INDIANA - MIAMI CO.  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

388 1/4 NW  
(ROAD)



SILKREPPERY BRIDGE  
MIAMI COUNTY, INDIANA  
10 579580 4522910

1:220 000  
FEET

4522

40°52'30"  
86°00'