



Miller County's Unique Bridges

By Peggy Smith Hake

In Miller County's boundaries have existed eight swinging bridges which have spanned eight decades. They were built in the era of the 1920's and 30's. Although most are in need of repair, the idea of rebuilding any of them has caused some murmurs of disapproval among those familiar with the graceful structures.

The largest of the eight is the Auglaize Bridge, built in 1931 when the formation of the Lake of the Ozarks backed up the waters of the Auglaize Creek. It is located near Brumley and is 400 feet in length. Not far away is Mill Creek Bridge which spans the little creek called Mill Creek. It was built the same year and measures 100 foot in length.

Boeckman Bridge, a timber suspension bridge, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in March 1979. It is located in eastern Osage township and crosses the Big Tavern Creek. It is 240 feet long and 14 feet wide. A load limit was placed on it up to 12 tons, but it is typical of the other historic bridges. Time and use have played havoc on its timbers. School buses once crossed the old bridge, but they are no longer allowed to cross over and have to re-route. It was built in 1926, making it almost 75 years old. It is slated to be replaced in the future with a new low-water bridge. It is hoped that old Boeckman Bridge can be preserved since it is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Brumley/Kliethermes Bridge is located near St. Anthony in Osage township. It also spans the Big Tavern Creek. The bridge is 304 feet long, 12 feet wide, and was built in the late 1920's. The load limit for this

bridge is only two tons.

Another 'swinging' bridge is located about two and a half miles south of St. Anthony and is located in Richwoods township. It crosses the Big Tavern Creek near the Buechter farm, and was named Buechter Bridge a long time ago. It is 138 feet long and 12 feet wide with a load limit imposed on it of two tons. Needless to say, heavy loads should not feel safe while crossing these old and fragile bridges.

The Kemna Bridge, also located on the Tavern Creek in Osage township, has undergone some repairs similarly given to the Mill Creek Bridge near Brumley. Extra cables were strung and new steel piers were installed. The floor was covered with aluminum decking. It is 189 feet long and 12 feet wide. Kemna was built in the early 1930's, and is located southeast of St. Elizabeth.

Hoecker Bridge was located near where the Big Tavern Creek empties into the Osage River just off Highway E north of St. Elizabeth. The 'truss-style' bridge was 240 feet long and 12 feet wide. It has now been replaced with a new bridge spanning the Big Tavern at "the mouth of the Tavern." Nearby is a popular camping area owned and maintained by the Missouri Conservation Department.

The eighth 'swinging' bridge is called Singer Bridge, located in Osage township, a few miles east of St. Elizabeth. It also spans the Big Tavern Creek. Singer is no longer in use because of huge and devastating floods which occurred in 1998. I believe the Miller County commission is looking into replacing Singer Bridge in the future, using the same piers to reconstruct a new structure.

So, six of the eight bridges were built across the Big Tavern Creek as it meanders north and east through Miller County. The other two were built across and near Auglaize

Creek, a short distance from Brumley in Glaize township.

These unique bridges are truly county landmarks and are very important to the local farmers for access to county and state

highways. With proper care, they should be around for future generations to enjoy and use. Miller County has the distinction of having more old swinging bridges than any other county in Missouri.



Newer wooden flooring adorns Buechter Bridge between Iberia and St. Anthony.



Auglaize Bridge near Brumley is longest of Miller County's swinging bridges.

