



HISTORIC

# RIDDLE BRIDGE

By Van Beydler



Photo by Sam Beydler

Riddle Bridge is located south of Dixon off "O" Highway. The old iron bridge was built during the years of 1910 and 1911 by the Macon Bridge Company of Macon, Ohio. A gin pole was used to raise the bridge under the Ozark skies and towering bluffs. The bridge was welcomed by the residents of the area since they now could cross the Gasconade without having to worry if the river was up or not.

The bridge was named for the Riddle family that settled in the area in the early 1830s. John and Sarah Riddle came from Tennessee and

brought with them six children including a son named Jesse.

In 1844, Jesse made a cash purchase of land from the United States Government listed in Pulaski County as Section 27, Township 37, Range 11. This area covered 56 acres along the Gasconade River. Jesse was married to a widower named Narcisia (Henson) Cain. Among the children they had was a son named Elias M. Riddle. Elias was 21 years old in 1866 when he bought the land from Jesse.

It was Elias who homesteaded the property.

Elias' original home no longer exists, but it was located near the place where Riddle Bridge now sits. The house was a one room home and was up the lane that separated the river farm from the creek farm. As you go up the hill, you entered a little valley, the house and well sat on the right side of the road.

Elias had a welding shop in a little barn at the left of the road on a little hillside. A barn was located on level ground nearby. A second house was built up the hill from the original house years later. It was also a one

room home, but over the years was added on to. That house is still standing today.

Elias was married two times. His first wife was Nancy Hamilton who bore him six children. Only a few of those children survived. After Nancy died, Elias married Nancy's sister, Sarah... not an uncommon practice during those days. Sarah had three children.

Elias raised cattle and shipped them by the trainload to the St. Louis stockyards. Elias outlived his second wife by over a year. On October 5th, 1891, Elias Riddle died, repor-

tedly of a carbunkle on the back of his neck. The inscription on his gravestone reads, "Gone from us but not forgotten."

Before Riddle Bridge was constructed, an old road went up the ridge above where the Riddle Cemetery now sits. Today, you can almost see the old road that was used back then. The water near the old spring on the Riddle property was so shallow at one point that wagons would wade through to cross over to the Waynesville side or vice-versa.

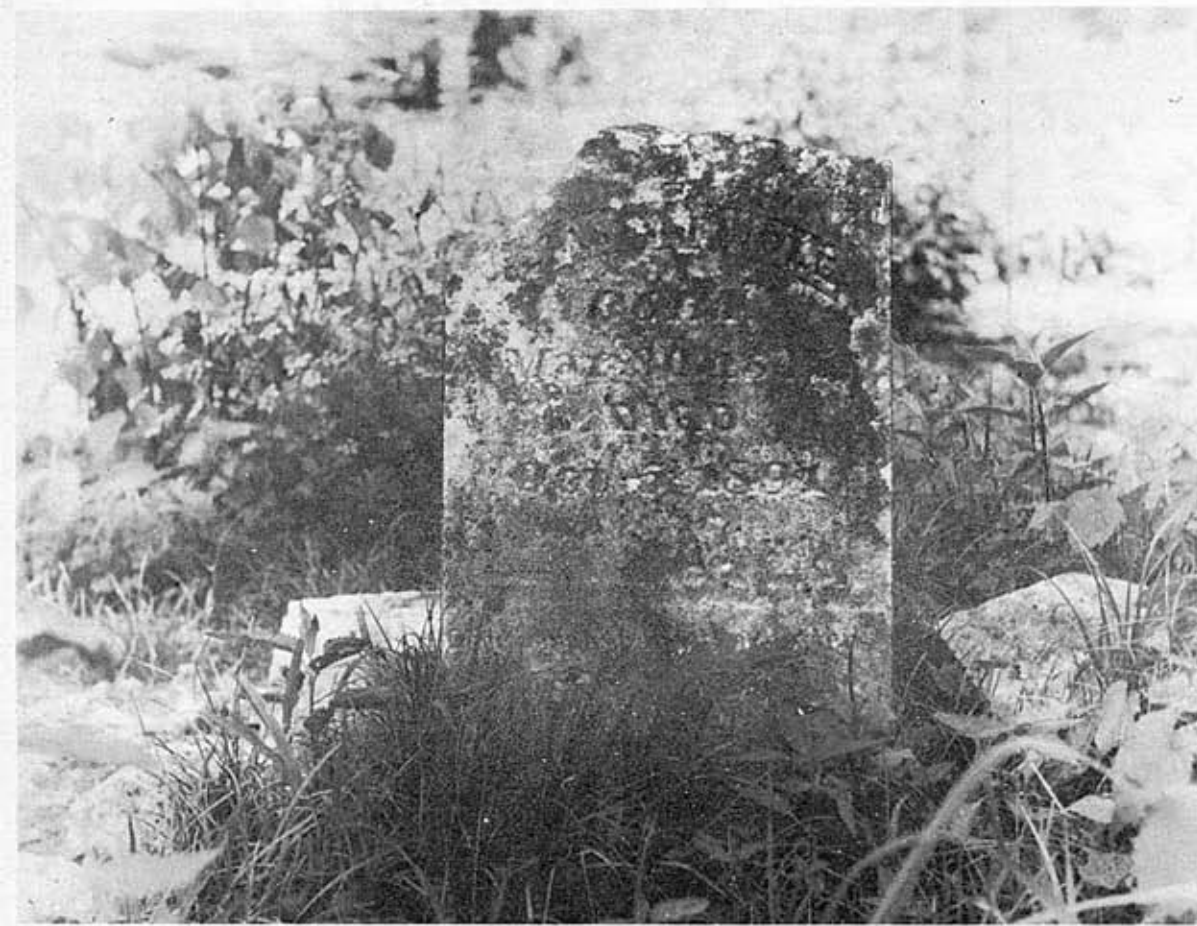
Over the years, Riddle

Bridge has aged and will soon be replaced. Pulaski County received money to help build a new Riddle Bridge and surveys are already being done for the new structure. As of today, you can still enjoy the old-time beauty of the historic Riddle Bridge. The sound of boards on the bridge floor echo off the bluffs as cars pass over the bridge. Many people enjoy swimming at the public access or bringing their boats in after a float down the river. Riddle Bridge, "almost gone from us, but not forgotten!"

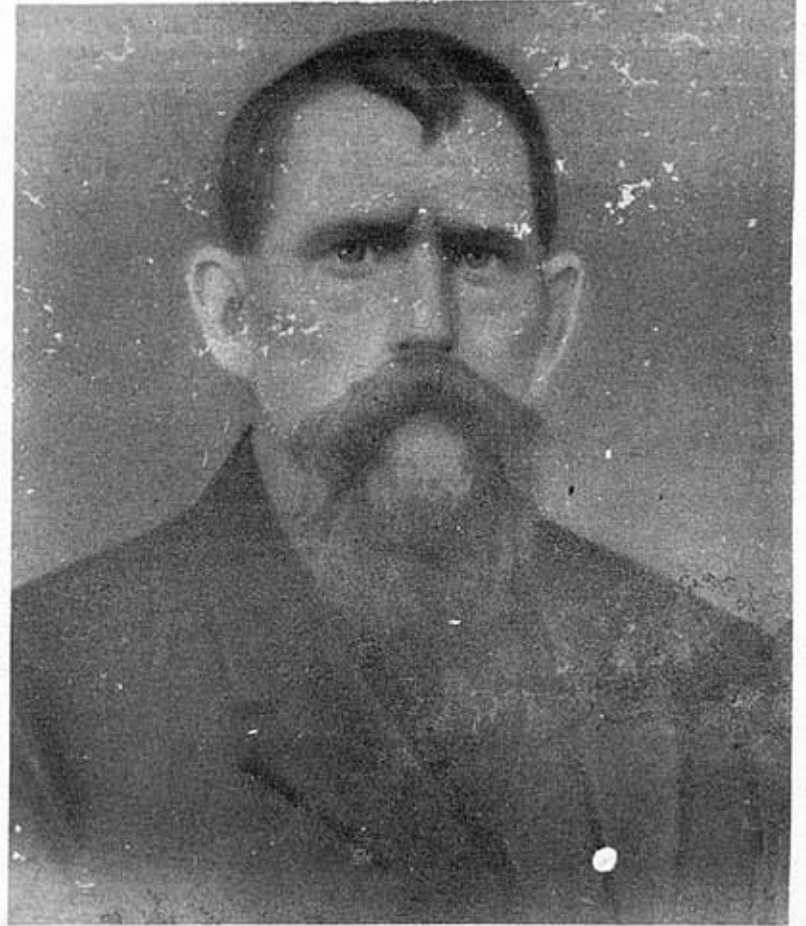




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Gravestone of Elias Riddle in the Riddle Cemetery. (Photo By Van Beydler)



Elias M. Riddle homesteaded the property that Riddle Bridge was built on. (Photo Courtesy of Robert Sooter)



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