

# Historic Ross Bridge

by Gary Knehans

With the June 30th announcement of state funding for a new bridge over the Big Piney in southeast Pulaski County, there has been an upsurge in interest in preserving historic Ross Bridge, located east of Big Piney on Route TT. Some residents of the area want to keep the bridge standing and to use it as a pedestrian bridge. Members of the Pulaski County Commission say they are receptive to the idea, if they can reach agreement with a responsible group to care for the bridge.

Construction of a new bridge will not force the dismantling of Ross Bridge, because the expected site of the new span will be somewhere upstream. The old structure, with its antique, rusty steel beams and well-aged wooden planks, can remain in place without any threat to the proposed new bridge.

While it never rivaled the fame and lore surrounding Riddle Bridge, its now dismantled cousin over the Gasconade, Ross Bridge is actually the older of the two structures. Constructed in 1908, Ross Bridge was in place about three years before Riddle Bridge, on which construction began in November, 1911.

At the time both bridges saw the light of day, there was a flurry of road building and bridge construction in Pulaski County. An article in the October 26th, 1911, edition of the "Pulaski County Democrat" enumerated those bridges constructed before Riddle Bridge. These consisted of Ross Bridge over the Big Piney; bridges over the Gasconade at Mc Cain Ford, Skaggs Ford, and Fish Dam; a bridge at the mouth of Bear Creek near Richland; and one across the Roubidoux just west of Waynesville.

Most, if not all, of these bridges were constructed by Canton Bridge Company of Canton, Ohio. County Court records from 1909 through 1912 listed several payments to this company for bridge construction.

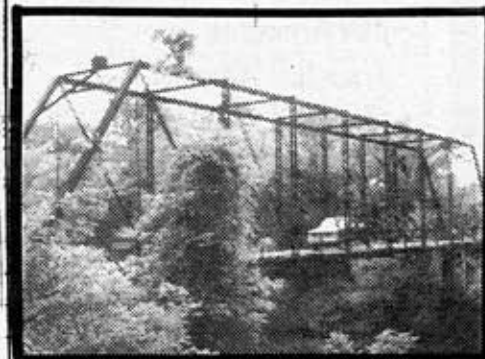
On February 3rd, 1909, payment in the amount of \$5400 was made for one half of the contract price for building two steel bridges in Pulaski County. There was a \$3262.50 payment on March 19th, 1909, to cover the cost of a bridge across the Gasconade at Bear Creek. Payment in the amount of \$2237.50 was made on May 6th, 1909, for erecting bridges over the Big Piney River and Gasconade River. A

payment in the amount of \$1800 was tendered on February 11th, 1911, as full payment for constructing a bridge over the Roubidoux in Waynesville. Entries on November 10th, 1911, and on February 7th, 1912, refer to payments of \$3348 on both occasions. As it would be unlikely to assume that the construction of Riddle Bridge was twice as costly as at Bear Creek, the November entry may have indicated the appropriation of \$3348, and not the actual payment of that amount at that time.

Ross Bridge's superstructure is a one-span pinned Pratt through truss. The substructure consists of concrete-filled steel cylinder piers. The bridge itself is 148 feet long with an 11.7 foot roadway width. The bridge and its east and west approaches total 245 feet in length.

The historic bridge spans the Big Piney River at a very scenic location. The downstream view from the bridge is a breathtaking vista of clear, sparkling water, verdant vegetation, and a beautiful emerald island dividing the current. A recreational resort borders the eastern bank of the Piney at the bridge site. Another facility is

located about a half mile downstream.



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