

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

**1. Name of Property**Historic name: Sperry BridgeOther names/site number: Sperry Grade Bridge, Kendrick Bridge

Name of related multiple property listing:

Metal Truss Highway Bridges of Idaho

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**2. Location**Street & number: Sperry Grade RoadCity or town: Kendrick State: Idaho County: Latah and Nez Perce CountiesNot For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☒**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x 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 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national x statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B x C DSignature of certifying official/Title: Tricia Canaday, Deputy SHPO

Date

Idaho State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title:

State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☐

Public – Local

☒

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

##### Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

Building(s)

☐

District

☐

Site

☐

Structure

☒

Object

☐

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1

0

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION, road-related (vehicular)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION, road-related (vehicular)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL: steel  
WOOD  
CONCRETE

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

### Summary Paragraph

The Sperry Bridge is a twin-span pin-connected Pratt through truss vehicular bridge constructed in 1908 by the Columbia Bridge Company. Located on Sperry Grade Road in Kendrick, Idaho, the 242-foot long and 17-foot wide (out to out) bridge spans the Potlatch River which is the natural border of Latah and Nez Perce counties. The *Metal Truss Highway Bridges of Idaho* Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) notes that the bridge is “the earliest remaining pin-connected vehicular steel truss bridge in northern Idaho.”<sup>1</sup> Despite minor alterations, the bridge retains good integrity and clearly conveys its original function, historic associations, and period of construction.

### Location and Setting

The Sperry Bridge is located on Sperry Grade Road at the southern end of the town of Kendrick in Latah County, Idaho. Latah County is located in north central Idaho, and the town of Kendrick is located in southern Latah County along the Potlatch River. The Potlatch River is the geographic boundary of Latah and Nez Perce counties. Nestled among pine, fir, and cedar trees in a 1,500-foot canyon, the town of Kendrick is a small agricultural community that was settled along the Potlatch River in the early twentieth century. The surrounding area above the canyon is primarily agricultural prairie land. The Sperry Bridge is the only access point from the town of Kendrick to the southeast prairies located across the Potlatch River.

<sup>1</sup> Donald W. Watts, “Metal Truss Highway Bridges of Idaho,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, August 10, 2000.

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Sperry Grade Road is a minor arterial that leads from Kendrick to the southeast to scattered agricultural and residential properties along the canyon, as well as the Kendrick Cemetery, which is located near the top of the grade on the south side of the Potlatch River. The two-lane undivided roadway winds up the canyon and connects with other arterials that lead to the prairie at the top of the bluff. As opposed to the major arterials that lead to and from the town of Kendrick, Sperry Grade Road is not heavily trafficked and is mostly used by local residents who live along the roadway or live in the prairie land to the southeast. The major arterials that lead to and from the town of Kendrick are Idaho State Highway 3, which connects Kendrick to the towns of Juliaetta to the southwest and Deary to the northeast; and Idaho State Highway 99, which runs northwest to the town of Troy.

### Narrative Description

The Sperry Bridge is located on Sperry Grade Road on the southwestern end of the town of Kendrick. The twin-span pin-connected Pratt through truss vehicular bridge was constructed in 1908 by the Columbia Bridge Company.

The Sperry Bridge is 242 feet long and 17 feet wide (out to out). The superstructure of the bridge is comprised of two spans, each 119-feet in length. Within each span are seven bays of vertical posts, each 17 feet in length. The trusses are 21 feet in height, but each truss has a vertical clearance of 17.83 feet. The roadway width clearance is 15 feet and is covered in wood boards. The Pratt through trusses are comprised of upper chords that are laced channels with cover plates; the lower chords are eyebars; verticals are laced channels; diagonals are eyebars and eyebars with turnbuckles. The bridge has steel I-beam floor beams, timber stringers, and a timber deck with timber running boards. The railing on the bridge is comprised of modern galvanized W-beam rails.

The substructure of the bridge is comprised of two poured in place concrete abutments and a central pier composed of two concrete-filled steel caissons joined by a concrete wall. The northern abutment (Latah County side) is comprised of a concrete wall flanked by two steel caissons, and a concrete wingwall located on the east side of the abutment. Between the spans is a central pier that was constructed similarly to the northern abutment and features a concrete wall flanked by two steel caissons. The southernmost abutment (located on the Nez Perce County side) is composed of a concrete wall that sits in front of a wall covered in metal sheets and flanked by two steel caissons. On either side of the caissons are concrete wing walls.

### Change Over Time and Integrity

Modifications to the bridge include replacement railing, and the wingwall on the northern abutment. Additionally, the original pier located beneath the southeastern end of the eastern truss was once a freestanding pier and at some point, became part of the southeastern abutment, when

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the river narrowed, and this area became filled in with an earthen embankment. A concrete wingwall was constructed in front of this pier. Neither the Idaho Transportation Department, South Latah Highway District, or Nez Perce County Road and Bridge Division have records that indicate when these alterations occurred.

To be eligible for the NRHP within the registration requirements set forth by the MPDF, bridges must retain “enough of its original or historic characteristics to reflect the period or reasons for which it is considered significant.”<sup>2</sup> While **location** is an important aspect, truss bridges can be considered moveable structures as they were frequently disassembled and reassembled in other locations. For its **design**, a bridge must still function as a truss and carry a portion of the load with minimal modifications. Each truss bridge must be evaluated on its own when considering the **setting, feeling, and association** aspects of integrity. As the MPDF is concerned primarily with Criterion C (engineering), these integrity aspects are less critical.<sup>3</sup>

**Materials** and **workmanship** should be present in the bridge structure enough to give a clear indication of its historic appearance. For truss bridges, the most important material aspect is the truss itself. The actual roadbed need not be original (as these frequently change over time). Modified elements such as guardrails, reinforced piers, and abutments should not detract from the original bridge.

The Sperry Bridge retains integrity of most of its materials, design, and workmanship - but has undergone some alteration as the railings have been replaced and wingwalls have been constructed at the northern and southern abutments. However, these are minor alterations to its materials, design, and workmanship. The bridge retains its location and setting. The bridge has also retained its feeling and association as a through truss bridge constructed in the early twentieth century. Therefore, the bridge retains all seven aspects of integrity.

<sup>2</sup> Watts, “Bridges of Idaho,” Section F, page 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

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## 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.)

- ☐ 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Engineering

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1908

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1908 (Construction)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Columbia Bridge Company

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), *Metal Truss Highway Bridges of Idaho*, specifically identifies the Sperry Bridge as, “the earliest remaining pin-connected vehicular steel truss bridge in northern Idaho.”<sup>4</sup> Built by the Columbia Bridge Company, a major contractor in the Pacific Northwest, the Sperry Bridge is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion C, for Engineering, as an excellent example of a steel, pin-connected Pratt through truss bridge. The MPDF determined that the level of significance is statewide. The period of significance is 1908, the date of construction.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, Section E, page 1.



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The period of significance is 1908, the date of the bridge's completion.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Brief Chronological History of the Sperry Bridge**

The Sperry Bridge was constructed in 1908 and was the third bridge constructed at this location. The first bridge was destroyed in a devastating flood on the Potlatch River in 1898. No information could be found to indicate exactly what year this first bridge was originally constructed. When the first bridge was destroyed in 1898, a second bridge was constructed at this location.<sup>5</sup> In March 1908, the Potlatch River flooded again and wiped out the second bridge. The third bridge is the current Kendrick Bridge, constructed later that year (1908). Some sources refer to the Sperry Bridge as the "Sperry Grade Bridge."<sup>6</sup> The bridge is less commonly referred to as the "Kendrick Bridge" for its location in the town of Kendrick.

### ***History of Latah County***

In 1870, when the first miners and settlers from California and other parts of the country arrived in the area to set up mining operations, what would become Latah County was part of Nez Perce County. The newly formed Idaho Territory was seven years old, and known for its abundance in precious metals, timber, and a rich agricultural prairie later known as the Palouse.<sup>7</sup> A small supply and trade center was established as early as 1871, in an area first known as Hog Heaven, later known as Paradise Valley. Paradise Valley was located approximately 30 miles north of Lewiston, the Nez Perce County seat. A mail route was established between Lewiston and Paradise Valley in 1872.<sup>8</sup> In 1885, Oregon Railway and Navigation Company (OR&NC) laid tracks through Paradise Valley, expediting the growth of the town, and increasing interest in creating a separate county from Nez Perce. In 1887, Paradise Valley was incorporated as Moscow.<sup>9</sup>

Latah County was carved out of Nez Perce County in 1888 and has the distinction of being the only county in the U.S. created by an Act of Congress. Despite several attempts by Lewiston to quash secession from Nez Perce County, Fred T. Dubois, Idaho's delegate in Congress

<sup>5</sup> "Bridge is Washed Out," *Spokesman-Review*, Spokane, Washington (March 22, 1908): 45.; "Higher Water than 1898," *Lewiston Evening Teller*, Lewiston, Idaho (March 16, 1908): 1.

<sup>6</sup> Craig Clohessy, "Sperry Bridge Holds Fond Memories for Many in Kendrick," *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*, November 22, 2000.; "Sperry Bridge," *Bridgehunters*. Accessed June 3, 2021, <https://bridgehunter.com/id/nez-perce/29935/>.

<sup>7</sup> Carlos Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho* (University of Nebraska: Lincoln, Nebraska, 1991), 23.

<sup>8</sup> Latah County, "History of Latah County" Latah County website. <https://www.latah.id.us/history.php>. Accessed April 12, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Latah County, "History."; Julie R. Monroe, *Latah County* (Arcadia Publishing: Charleston, SC, 2006): 4.

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introduced a bill for the creation of the county, which was passed and then approved by President Grover Cleveland in 1888.<sup>10</sup> Moscow was made the county seat in the same year. Before Idaho gained statehood in 1890, north Idaho boosters were reluctant to join south Idaho and Boise in statehood. Lewiston was the original capital of Idaho Territory before it was moved to Boise in south Idaho, and several north Idaho stakeholders felt more akin to Washington Territory and favored annexation to their neighbors to the west. However, a deal was struck between delegates in the territorial legislature to approve establishing the University of Idaho in Moscow (northern Idaho) in exchange for votes to join south Idaho in statehood. The University of Idaho was approved by Territorial Governor Stevenson in January 1889. North Idaho delegates voted in favor of statehood with south Idaho in June 1890.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Development of Kendrick***

According to the General Land Office patent records, John C. Nichols purchased the southern Latah County land where Kendrick now sits in January 1890.<sup>12</sup> However, secondary sources indicate that the town was founded in 1889 by Thomas Kirby, the first postmaster, who named it Latah City.<sup>13</sup> The following year, Kirby gave the Northern Pacific Railroad a deed to one-half of the townsite, or approximately 240 acres, in exchange for a guarantee that the railroad would build its line to the town. The town was renamed Kendrick, in honor of the railroad's chief civil engineer, and the line was completed in February 1891.<sup>14</sup> Surrounding the town of Kendrick are tall ridges of approximately 1,100 square acres of agricultural land, also commonly referred to as the "Potlatch district" or the "Potlatch farming belt"- which was noted for having excellent soil for growing fruit such as apples, prunes, cherries, and berries.<sup>15</sup> Other crops such as corn, sorghum sugar cane, vegetables, oats, barley, rye, and flax were successfully grown and shipped out from Kendrick.<sup>16</sup> Grain was the principal crop shipped from Kendrick. In 1890, about 50,000 bushels of wheat was hauled out of Kendrick by wagon teams. When the railroad arrived the following year, 225,000 bushels were shipped out.<sup>17</sup> By 1892, Moscow and Kendrick were the two main trade centers in Latah County.<sup>18</sup>

White pine grown in the Potlatch district was known for its good quality, and timber became another popular industry in Kendrick. The mining districts of Ruby Creek, Boulder Creek, Cedar

<sup>10</sup> Latah County, "History,"; Derig, *Roadside History*, 294.

<sup>11</sup> Derig, *Roadside History*, 295.

<sup>12</sup> GLO records indicate that the 160 acres of land located at N ½ of the NE ¼ of Section 25, the E ½ of the SE ¼ of Section 24 in Township 38 North, Range 3 West was purchased by John C. Nichols on January 7, 1890 from the U.S. Government, certificate no. 1975.

<sup>13</sup> John P. Vollmer, *An Illustrated History of North Idaho: Embracing Nez Perce, Idaho, Latah, Kootenai and Shoshone Counties, State of Idaho* (Spokane, WA: Western Historical Publishing Company, 1903), 613; "Thomas Kirby, Founder of Kendrick," Kendrick Advocate, Kendrick, Idaho (June 20, 1891): 2.; *Oregonian Souvenir*. (Press of Lewis & Dryden Printing Company: Portland, OR, 1982): 177.

<sup>14</sup> Vollmer, "North Idaho," 613.; Fay Boquist, "Railroad Reached Kendrick 8- Years Ago," *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, Lewiston, Idaho (February 4, 1971).

<sup>15</sup> Vollmer, "North Idaho," 615.; *Oregonian Souvenir*, 176.

<sup>16</sup> Vollmer, "North Idaho," 615.

<sup>17</sup> *Oregonian Souvenir*, 177.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 176.

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Creek, and the Clearwater mines were located approximately 12 miles from Kendrick, making the town an important shipping point for miners as well.<sup>19</sup>

The town's population grew to 800 within two years of the railroad arriving.<sup>20</sup> The downtown area was lined with timber commercial buildings along Main Street. A devastating fire wiped out 31 businesses along Main Street in August 1892, and the citizens of Kendrick rebuilt the downtown. Within three months, nine brick buildings were erected, and soon after, the town was back to work.<sup>21</sup> A devastating flood in 1898 swept away a levee that was erected to protect the town. Afterward, the Northern Pacific Railroad erected another dike along the river to prevent additional flood damage.

### ***Bridging the Potlatch River***

Despite its unpredictable nature, the Potlatch River was an integral part of Kendrick. One of the advantages of the town was its access to waterpower from the river. As J.P. Vollmer explained in his 1903 *History of Northern Idaho*:

The Potlatch, with its numerous tributaries, taps valuable forests of timber. Fir, cedar, yellow and white pine timber tracts line the banks of both these streams. The current of the river is strong; the waters have about 30 feet fall in every 1,000 yards. Along the banks of the streams are many splendid sites for mills. In the corporate limits of the town the river has a fall of 38 feet for the 1,000 yards, which, with the body of water that runs continually the year round, would furnish power to operate a number of mills. With the expenditure of a little money the stream could be cleared sufficiently to drive logs down to mills where shipping facilities can be had over the Northern Pacific. With such a waterpower and with mill sites in abundance, Kendrick offers advantages to manufacturers superior to any town in the country. A flouring mill and a tannery are among the successful industrial enterprises established at Kendrick.

The river was used to power mills, float logs for the logging industry, fishing, recreation, and as a water supply for fire prevention.<sup>22</sup>

The Potlatch River flooded again in March 1908, a devastating event that newspaper articles described as higher than 1898.<sup>23</sup> The flood destroyed nine sections of the Northern Pacific Railroad track between Kendrick and Troy, including a railroad bridge. The Pine Creek Lumber Company, located four miles from Kendrick, lost a dam and about 800,000 feet of logs.<sup>24</sup> The

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 177.

<sup>20</sup> Kerry Davis, "Kendrick Downtown Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, November 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Vollmer, *North Idaho*, 612.

<sup>22</sup> Vollmer, *North Idaho*, 613; Clohessy, "Sperry Bridge."

<sup>23</sup> "Higher Water," 1.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

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Vollmer-Clearwater Company lost their footbridge across the river, and sustained damage to their mill flume, mill, and warehouse.

The county lost several bridges, including the 1898 bridge to Sperry Grade. A *Spokesman-Review* newspaper article from March 22, 1908, described,

This bridge is at the foot of the Sperry grade, the chief road for the people of the lower Potlatch. It has been in use for 10 years, and is about 360 feet long, composed of three piers or spans and approaches. Ordinarily the water is about 15 feet below the bridge floor, but during the flood it lapped the floor, and the jam of logs and debris forming was too heavy for the structure, and Sunday evening about 9 o'clock, two spans were carried downstream.<sup>25</sup>

In May 1908, Latah and Nez Perce counties announced that a contract to construct a new bridge at Sperry Grade would be let out the following month. A conference between the county commissioners of both counties was held in Lewiston and according to the *Kendrick Gazette*, "it was decided that the joint bridge structure to be erected over Potlatch creek near Kendrick should be built of wood material, with cement abutments."<sup>26</sup> This conclusion was made after the commissioners and engineers visited several steel bridges located in Asotin, Washington. Their conclusion was that steel was too expensive, estimating the cost of a steel bridge would be about \$8,000, and neither county wanted to invest that much in this bridge. Instead, the commissioners decided on, "a wood structure of the Howe truss pattern, comprising three spans, each of 80 feet, and the piers to be concrete."<sup>27</sup> Later that month they announced the bid would be let on June 9, 1908 and expected that the bridge should be built on or before September 1, 1908.<sup>28</sup>

However, by June, further investigations concluded that it would not cost that much more to construct a steel bridge.<sup>29</sup> In July 1908, the counties jointly hired the Columbia Bridge Company, who agreed to construct a 240-foot steel bridge for \$4,648.<sup>30</sup> The parties agreed that the bridge would be completed by October 12, 1908.

According to Nez Perce County Commissioners minutes, the completed Sperry Bridge was inspected and accepted by William Enoch in April 1909.<sup>31</sup> While it has been used for local traffic only, it has also been a gathering place for local community members. According to longtime residents, the bridge was a beloved spot for local kids in the mid twentieth century. In the spring and summer, the bridge was a popular spot for fishing. In the winter, when the Potlatch River would freeze over, residents would go ice skating under the bridge.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> "Washed Out," 45.

<sup>26</sup> "Counties Decide Bridge Potlatch," *Kendrick Gazette* (Kendrick, Idaho), May 8, 1908.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> "1908 Bid for Bridge," *Kendrick Gazette* (Kendrick, Idaho), May 22, 1908.

<sup>29</sup> "Ask for Bids Steel Bridge," *Lewiston Evening Teller* (Lewiston, Idaho), June 17, 1908.

<sup>30</sup> "Kendrick Bridge Contract Let," *Spokesman-Review* (Spokane, Washington), July 19, 1908; "A Good Bridge," *Kendrick Gazette* (Kendrick, Idaho), July 17, 1908.

<sup>31</sup> "Record of Proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners," Nez Perce County, October 17, 1907.

<sup>32</sup> Clohessy, "Sperry Bridge."

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Today the bridge continues to be used for local traffic and is not heavily utilized, as the main roadway corridors are the state highways that travel to and from Kendrick.

### ***Columbia Bridge Company***

The Columbia Bridge Company was a prolific bridge builder in the Pacific Northwest. According to historic newspaper articles, the company was most active during the first decade of the twentieth century and won several steel truss bridge projects, primarily in eastern Oregon, although it also worked in Washington and Idaho.

The company was founded by P.S. Easterday, who first started his bridge building company sometime in the early 1900s. The first iteration of his company was called "P.S. Easterday and Co.," based in Fairbury, Nebraska.<sup>33</sup> In 1906, the company moved and was based in Salt Lake City, Utah.<sup>34</sup> Two years later, the company was renamed Columbia Bridge Company and its headquarters was moved to Walla Walla, Washington. Soon after, it opened another office and moved its headquarters once again to Portland, Oregon.<sup>35</sup> Sometime around 1908, A.E. Eberhart and C.W. Smith joined Easterday in management of the company. Both Eberhart and Smith were prominent bridge engineers and worked previously at the American Bridge Company.<sup>36</sup>

The Columbia Bridge Company specialized in steel, wood, and combination bridges and, according to historic newspaper coverage, was actively winning construction projects until around 1914.<sup>37</sup> In Idaho, bridge building first began with wood construction when the railroads began to lay tracks through the state in the late nineteenth century. By the early 1900s, Idaho experienced a large population boom and, by then, iron and steel manufacturers were able to supply parts for steel bridges. When the Columbia Bridge Company arrived in the Pacific Northwest, steel bridges were primarily being built, and the company followed this trend in their bridge designs. While prolific, they were not known for innovative bridge designs and their work appeared similar to their contemporaries.

The company's work includes the Rhea Creek Bridge in Morrow County, Oregon (1909); Umatilla River Bridge in Pendleton, Oregon (1909); the Troy Bridge in Troy, Oregon (1910); and the North Myrtle Creek Bridge in Jackson County (1912), Oregon.<sup>38</sup> The Sperry Bridge is the only extant example of a bridge constructed by this company in Idaho. There are a few other extant bridges constructed by the Columbia Bridge Company located in Washington and Oregon, none of which are currently listed in the NRHP.

<sup>33</sup> *Lincoln Star* (Lincoln, Nebraska), October 12, 1904.

<sup>34</sup> "Bridge Contracts are Awarded," *Evening Statesman* (Walla Walla, Washington), May 10, 1906.

<sup>35</sup> *Oregon Daily Journal* (Portland, Oregon), April 24, 1910.

<sup>36</sup> "Eberhart Heads Company," *Evening Observer* (LaGrande, Oregon), March 28, 1908.

<sup>37</sup> Research conducted at newspapers.com and through historic *Oregonian* newspaper archives indicate that the Columbia Bridge Company did not turn up in searches after 1914.

<sup>38</sup> Rebecca Burrow, Chris Bell, and Chris Leedham, "Oregon's Historic Bridge Field Guide," *Oregon Department of Transportation*, 2013.



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Newspapers, state agency records, journals, and other available archival sources contain no information about how or when the company dissolved. In 1914, A.E. Eberhart started another bridge building company called the Atlas Bridge Company, which came under scrutiny in eastern Oregon after the company was found to have overcharged for the price of steel, and suspiciously won the majority of bridge projects in Umatilla County, Oregon, sparking controversy that Eberhart was colluding with county officials to an unfair advantage.<sup>39</sup>

Despite exhaustive research, no original plans of the Sperry Bridge were found to indicate which engineer designed it.

### Criterion C: Engineering, pin-connected Pratt truss

The Sperry Bridge is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C, as an excellent example of a steel, pin-connected Pratt truss and the earliest remaining pin-connected truss bridge in Idaho.

The earliest metal truss bridges in Idaho were generally assembled with pin connectors. This method of construction was easy to assemble in the field and consisted of a large pin that passed through all the bridge members and was fastened on either end with nuts.<sup>40</sup> While this method of construction was easy, later inspection and maintenance proved difficult and inefficient. Because the pins hold the bridge members together, it was pertinent that routine inspection of these bridge elements occur. To inspect these pins, however, the truss had to be jacked up to relieve the tension of the pins, which could then be pulled out for inspection. This process generally meant that the bridge itself had to be closed, causing delays for commuters. When riveted connections became available, this method was more rigid and easier to inspect, thereby replacing the pin-connected method in bridge building. Riveted connections generally replaced the pin-connected method after World War I. In Idaho, this shift occurred around 1920.<sup>41</sup>

Designed and patented by American engineer Thomas Willis Pratt and his father, Caleb Pratt, in 1844, the Pratt truss is characterized by parallel top and bottom chords with the vertical members under compression and the diagonals under tension. The Pratts' earliest design of this truss was made with wood or iron members under compression and diagonal iron rods under tension.<sup>42</sup> While it was rarely constructed with wood, Pratt trusses became one of the more popular truss designs for iron and steel in American bridge construction because it was easy to construct, and the parts could be easily made in shops and transported to the bridge site. The cost of

<sup>39</sup> "Sworn Statement Shows The Inside Facts of Notorious Deal Under Gilliland Term," *East Oregonian* (Pendleton, Oregon), October 30, 1914; "Is the Atlas Bridge Company Incorporated?" *East Oregonian* (Pendleton, Oregon), October 26, 1914; "Estimated County Lost \$20,000 Through Swindle," *East Oregonian* (Pendleton, Oregon), October 26, 1914.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., F1.; Kitty Henderson, "Metal Truss Connections," *Historic Bridge Foundation*, accessed March 18, 2021, [https://historicbridgefoundation.com/bridge-types/#Metal\\_Truss\\_Connections](https://historicbridgefoundation.com/bridge-types/#Metal_Truss_Connections).

<sup>41</sup> Herbst, "Idaho Bridge Inventory," 25.; Henderson, "Metal Truss Connections."; Dennis DeBruler, "Pin-Connected Bridge Trusses," *Industrial History* (blog), June 4, 2017, <http://industrialscenery.blogspot.com/2017/06/pin-connected-bridge-trusses.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Henry Grattan Tyrell, *History of Bridge Engineering* (Chicago: The G.B. Williams Company Printers, 1911), 142.

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constructing the iron members was also low, as iron and steel technology developed in the early twentieth century. The Pratt truss was a standard bridge design in the United States for moderate spans (25' to 150') from the late nineteenth into the early twentieth century.<sup>43</sup> The Pratt was also a favored truss for railroad bridges, as it could be used to span long distances using simple construction methods.<sup>44</sup>

### Summary

The Sperry Bridge is the earliest remaining pin-connected vehicular steel truss bridge in northern Idaho.<sup>45</sup> It has undergone only minor alterations since its original construction by the Columbia Bridge Company and retains historic integrity across each of the seven aspects. According to the evaluation criteria in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, *Metal Truss Highway Bridges of Idaho*, the Sperry Bridge is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion C at the statewide level of significance, for Engineering, as an excellent example of a steel, pin-connected Pratt through truss bridge.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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<sup>43</sup> "Pratt Through-Truss Bridge," *The Historical Marker Database*. Accessed May 18, 2021, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=20498>; "The Pratt Truss," *State of Maryland*. Accessed May 18, 2021, <https://www.sha.maryland.gov/OPPEN/V-Pratt.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> "Pratt Truss Bridge," *History of Bridges*. Accessed May 19, 2021, <http://www.historyofbridges.com/facts-about-bridges/pratt-truss/>.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, Section E, page 1.

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acres of Property** less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

- |              |                 |                   |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 11T | Easting: 526195 | Northing: 5162149 |
| 2. Zone:     | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:     | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:     | Easting:        | Northing:         |

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the property includes the footprint of the bridge ending at the abutments, including the roadway length upon which the bridge sits, and the width (out-to-out) of the bridge structure. The bridge is located on Sperry Grade Road and sits over the Potlatch River in Kendrick, Latah County, and spans into Nez Perce County, Idaho.

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**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is the footprint of the bridge, which is the property in its entirety.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Jennifer Gorman, M.H.P., Architectural Historian  
organization: Gorman Preservation Associates and Idaho Transportation Department  
street & number: 12020 N. Country Club Drive  
city or town: Spokane state: WA zip code: 99218  
e-mail jennifer@gormanpreservation.com  
telephone: (509) 279-5845  
date: March 17, 2022

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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### Photo Log

Name of Property: Sperry Bridge

City or Vicinity: Kendrick

County: Latah, Nez Perce

State: Idaho

Photographer: Jennifer Gorman

Date Photographed: May 1, 2021

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 12. Overview of the Sperry Bridge looking east.
- 2 of 12. View of the Sperry Bridge north approach looking south.
- 3 of 12. View of the Sperry Bridge from the south bank of Potlatch River looking northwest.
- 4 of 12. View of the northern span of the Sperry Bridge looking northeast.
- 5 of 12. View of the center of the Sperry Bridge between the two trusses looking east.
- 6 of 12. View of the southern span of the Sperry Bridge looking southeast.
- 7 of 12. Detail of the bridge superstructure of the Sperry Bridge.
- 8 of 12. Detail of the Sperry Bridge sign.
- 9 of 12. View of the substructure of the bridge.
- 10 of 12. View of the central pier and southern abutment looking southeast.
- 11 of 12. View of the deck, girder, and northern abutment looking northeast.
- 12 of 12. View of the southern abutment looking southeast.

### Figure Log

1. Location Map of Sperry Bridge.
2. Sketch map of photographs taken of the Sperry Bridge, Latah County, Idaho.
3. View of the Sperry Bridge looking west, circa 1910. Photo courtesy of the Juliaetta-Kendrick Heritage Foundation, Kendrick, Idaho.
4. View of the Sperry Bridge looking west, circa 1910. Photo courtesy of the Juliaetta-Kendrick Heritage Foundation, Kendrick, Idaho.
5. Annotated diagram of a truss bridge type.

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**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours  
Tier 2 – 120 hours  
Tier 3 – 230 hours  
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

DRAFT



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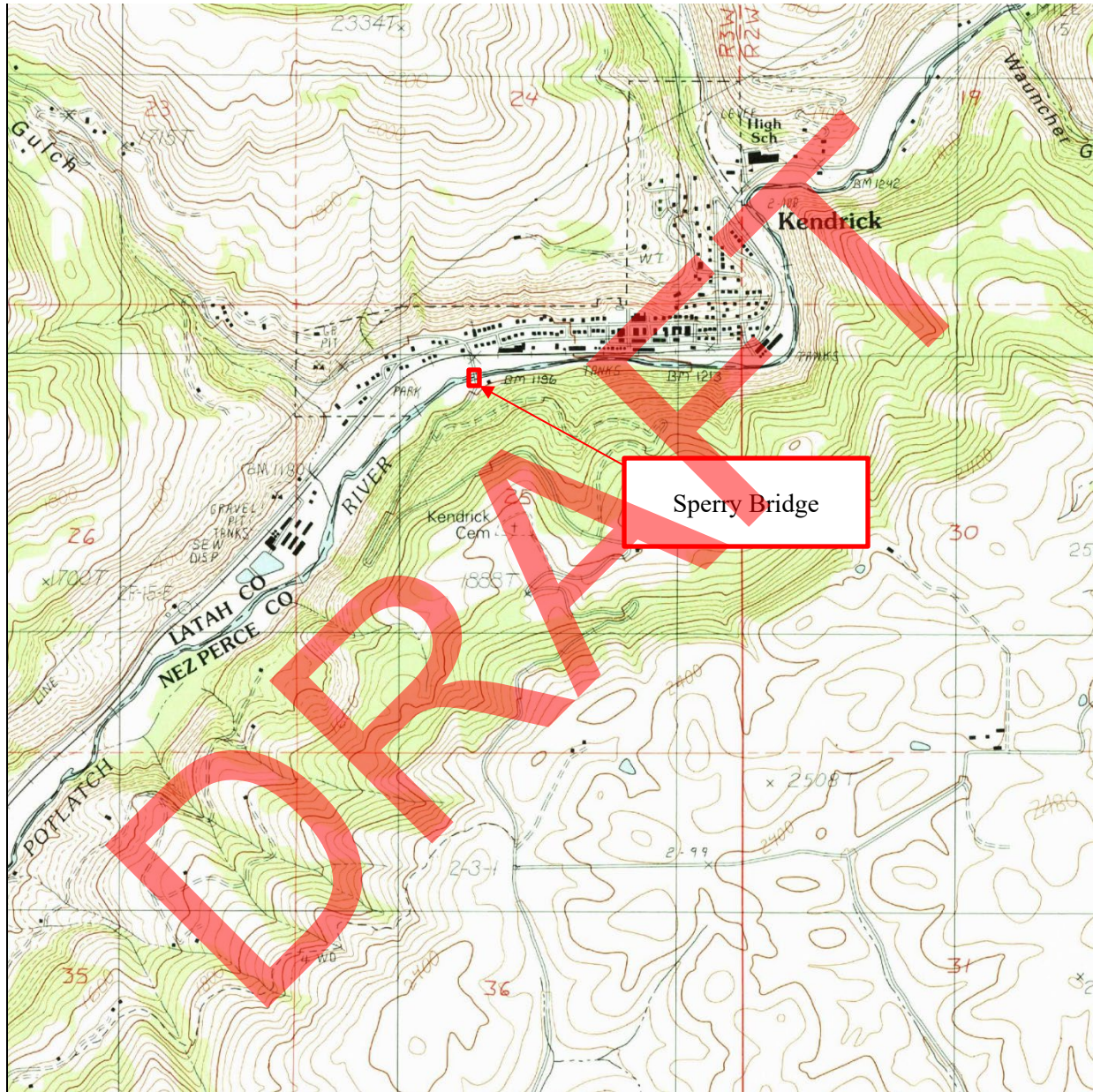
Latah/Nez Perce Counties, Idaho

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**Figure 1. Location map of the Sperry Bridge, Latah and Nez Perce Counties, Idaho**

USGS Topographic Map, 7.5-minute series  
Juliaetta, Idaho 1990 Quadrangle  
Township 38N, Range 3W, Section 35



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**Figure 2. Sketch map of photographs taken of the Sperry Bridge, Latah and Nez Perce Counties, Idaho.**



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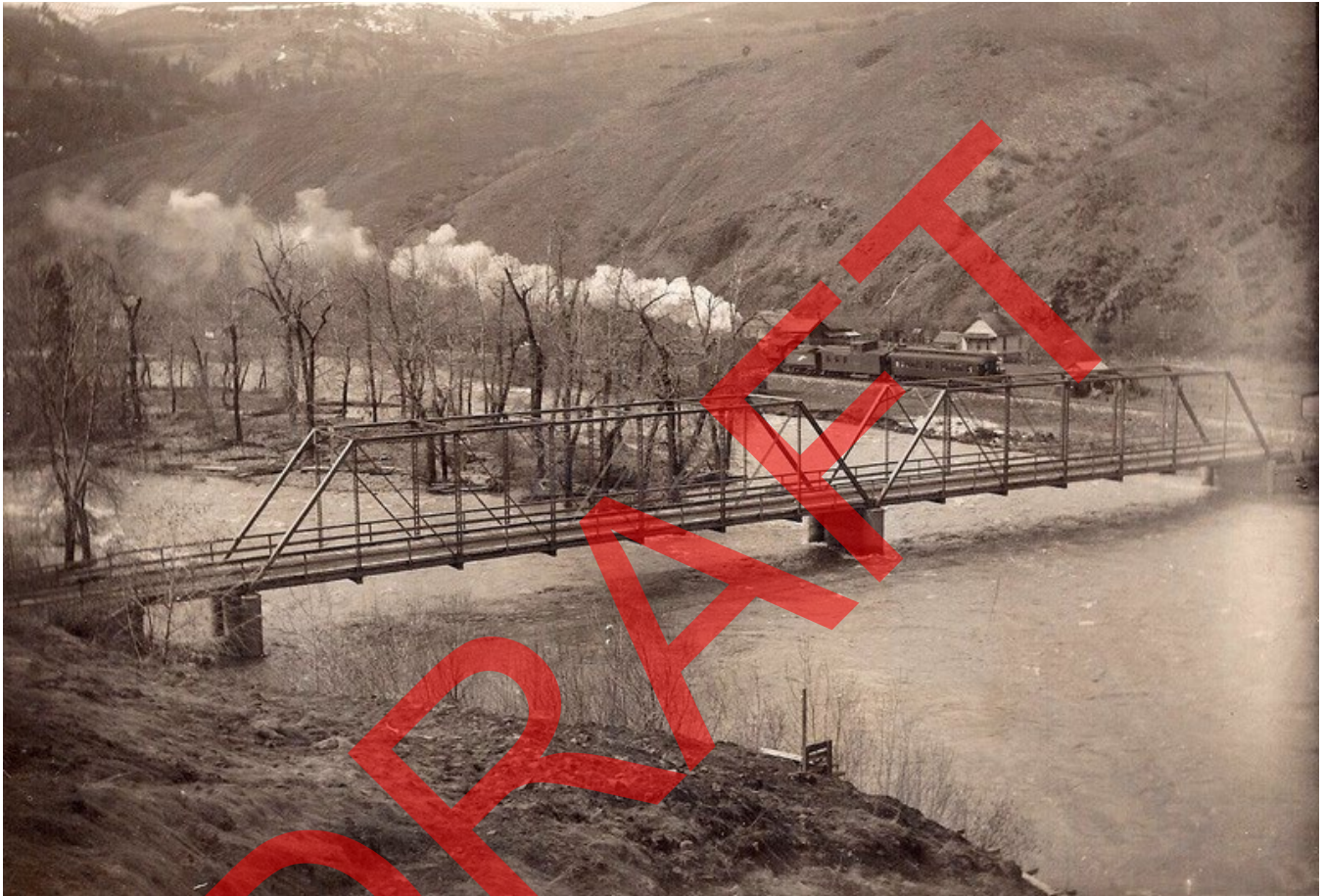
Latah/Nez Perce Counties, Idaho

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**Figure 3.** View of the Sperry Bridge looking west, circa 1910. Photo courtesy of the Juliaetta-Kendrick Heritage Foundation, Kendrick, Idaho.



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**Figure 4.** View of the Sperry Bridge looking west, circa 1910. Photo courtesy of the Juliaetta-Kendrick Heritage Foundation, Kendrick, Idaho.

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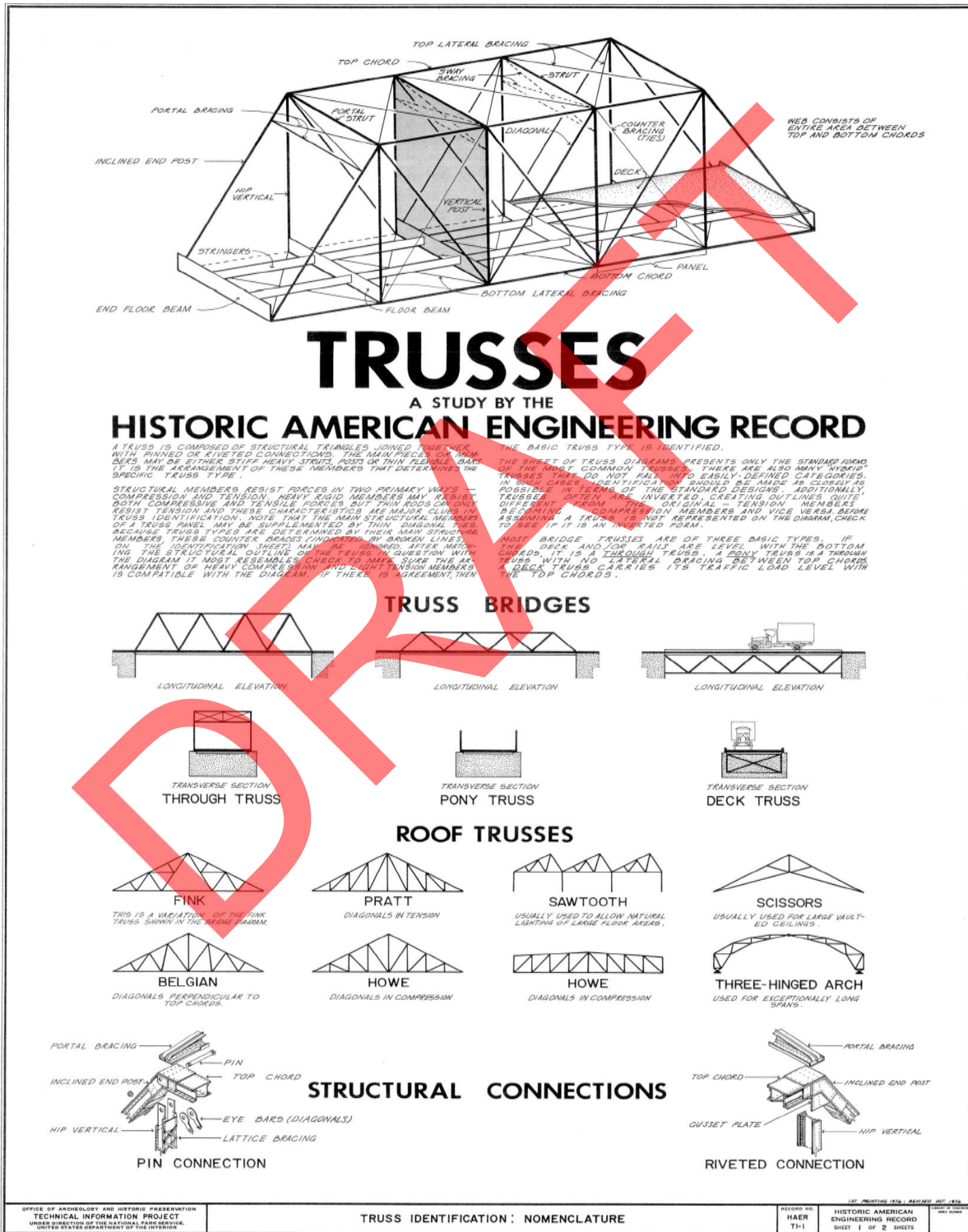


Figure 5. Annotated diagram of a truss bridge type.



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**Photo 1.** Overview of the Sperry Bridge looking east.



**Photo 2.** View of the Sperry Bridge north approach looking south.



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**Photo 3.** View of the Sperry Bridge from the south bank of Potlatch River looking northwest.



**Photo 4.** View of the northern span of the Sperry Bridge looking northeast.



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**Photo 5.** View of the center of the Sperry Bridge between the two trusses looking east.



**Photo 6.** View of the southern span of the Sperry Bridge looking southeast.



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**Photo 7.** Detail of the bridge superstructure of the Sperry Bridge.



**Photo 8.** Detail of the Sperry Bridge sign.



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**Photo 9.** View of the substructure of the bridge.



**Photo 10.** View of the central pier and southern abutment looking southeast.



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**Photo 11.** View of the deck, girder, and northern abutment looking northeast.



**Photo 12.** View of the southern abutment looking southeast.