
Documentation of the Historic Mitchell Creek Bridge

Bridge No. F-151
Platte County, Route 9
MODOT Project J4U1192
June, 2008



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Platte County, Missouri

Route 9

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Submitted to:

State Historic Preservation Office
Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Prepared for:

The Federal Highway Administration
In Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

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Missouri Department of Transportation

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Historical Narrative

The Mitchell Creek Bridge (Bridge No. F-151) spans Mitchell Creek (also called White Alloe Branch) at Missouri Route 9 at Parkville, Platte County. The bridge is a single-span, reinforced concrete, continuous ribbed, filled spandrel arch structure with reinforced concrete abutments, cantilevered sidewalks and concrete balustrade guardrails. The bridge represents one of the earliest examples of filled spandrel arch construction employed by the Missouri State Highway Department. First designed in 1920, the Mitchell Creek Bridge was constructed in 1924.

The bridge's construction came after several years of planning and pitfalls while, in the meantime, road construction in Missouri transitioned from local control at the county level to a state highway system overseen by the Missouri State Highway Commission. The Mitchell Creek Bridge originated as a part of a local highway improvement project developed by the Parkville Benefit Assessment, Special Road District. The district formed in 1916 when local landowners successfully petitioned the Platte County Court for its incorporation. The Parkville Benefit Assessment, Special Road District encompassed about 20,000 acres surrounding the town of Parkville in southeast Platte County. Constituents of the district envisioned the general improvement of the roads in their area, but especially the construction of a "rock road" leading to Kansas City. Parkville's newspaper, the *Platte County Gazette*, approved of the district's formation, stating, "It is the thing that has long been needed in this part of Platte county and should meet with the hearty endorsement of all interested Let Parkville district lead off in Platte county. The remainder of the county will then follow, and in the end will do so gladly." In October 1916, the Platte County Court formally established the district and appointed its first three temporary commissioners until a regular election could be held--Daniel Lowmiller, Walter Harrington and John A. D. Renner, all farmers by occupation. In January 1917, the election for three district commissioners brought out "a very small vote, and but very little interest was taken." The voters retained Lowmiller and Renner, and replaced Harrington, who lived outside the district boundaries, with Henry C. Noland, also a farmer. They would serve staggered terms of one, two and three years. Guardedly optimistic, the *Gazette* urged its readers to back their efforts: "The three commissioners are good men, and are entitled to the support of the district. Give them a hearty support until it has been demonstrated whether there is anything of value in the special road district plan or not."¹

¹ Platte County Road Records, Book E, 1916-1924: 39-41, 57-58. Microfilm Roll No. C21964. Missouri State Archives, Missouri State Information Center, Jefferson City; *Platte County Gazette* (Parkville), July 6, October 5, 1916, January 4, 1917. Microfilm. Newspaper Library, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

During 1917 the three commissioners along with their Secretary C. P. Breen acquainted themselves with the state of their roads and learned what they might do to improve them. In their initial inspection tour in January they found a need for many new culverts and bridges along the forty-five miles of roads criss-crossing the district. In February they appeared before the Platte County Court to request the tax revenues allowed them. In April the commissioners attended a Good Roads meeting in St. Joseph and learned, “. . . if a county wants to be in on the big plans of state and national road improvement, it will have to get busy and put up dollar for dollar against the fund received from the outside.” By late April the commissioners had levied taxes in the district up to the legal limit, and had acquired about \$1,800 from the County Court. The Parkville Special Road District then began dragging or grading their roads with a goal of going over every mile. In May, the commissioners toured parts of eastern Kansas and found that oiled roads there maintained a firm surface over which they “traveled with ease and satisfaction,” compared to the impassable mud roads around Parkville. In August 1917 the commissioners announced their first bond issue of \$20,000 to be used for the construction of bridges and culverts throughout the district. On August 21 their constituents approved the passage of the bond issue overwhelmingly by a vote of 148 to 16. Meanwhile, people in the district collected \$127 toward improving the road east of Parkville, matched by \$100 of district funds. Commissioner Renner oversaw the work on the Parkville road that lowered the grade across a hill and widened the road near the Lakeside School.²

During 1917, while the Parkville Special Road District got underway in southeast Platte County, Missouri progressed toward a statewide system of improved roads. The Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 pushed the Missouri General Assembly to pass the Hawes Road Law in March 1917. The new state road law placed the four-year old Missouri State Highway Department under a four-member State Highway Board, and provided for a State Highway Engineer who would designate 3,500 miles of state roads with the advice of the county courts and county highway boards, and the approval of the State Highway Board. The State Highway Department would now provide standard plans and specifications for roads, culverts and bridges to the special road districts, township road districts, county highway boards, or to the county courts. However, those local bodies would have to initiate specific state road projects through citizen petitions, and provide the surveys, plans, profiles, specifications, and cost estimates for each road project. Each project would then need approval from the Missouri State Highway Board and from the Office of Public Roads and Rural Engineering of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Funds from the state and federal levels would pay one-half the costs of a project, meaning that the local jurisdictions would have to pay the other half, as well as purchase the necessary rights of way. While the new pieces of federal and state legislation provided much-needed revenues, road improvements remained expensive propositions for local

² *Platte County Gazette*, January 25, April 19, 26, May 3, 10, August 2, 9, 16, 23, 1917; Platte County Road Records, Book E: 83-84.

authorities. The layers of local, state and federal involvement rendered the system cumbersome.³

Soon after the implementation of the Hawes Road Law, the Platte County Court and the State Highway Board mapped out one state road that led south from Buchanan County through Platte City to Parkville, and east from Parkville towards North Kansas City. The designated state road through Parkville no doubt gratified the people in the Parkville Special Road District.⁴ The district commissioners sold the \$20,000 of bonds in about late March 1918, and in early May contracted for the construction of five culverts and one new bridge at Rush Creek. The district's Secretary C. P. Breen received the contract to build three of the new culverts along the state road east of Parkville.⁵ The remainder of Platte County tried to raise revenues for state road construction with a \$1 million bond issue, supported by the Platte County Good Roads Association. However, county voters narrowly defeated the bond issue in April 1918 by a vote of 1301 to 1289.⁶

Another purported ally for good roads during this period was the Jefferson Highway Association. One of many early auto trail booster groups, the Jefferson Highway Association crusaded for an international highway stretching from New Orleans, Louisiana, to Winnipeg, Manitoba. They called it the "Palm to Pine" highway. First organized in late 1915, the association mapped out the best roads for travelers and marked the routes in the field with blue and white signs stenciled with a stylized "JH". The association garnered membership subscriptions from the towns fortunate enough to be located along the highway. As it developed, the Jefferson Highway followed multiple routes through northwest Missouri. One alternate route heading north from Kansas City toward St. Joseph passed through Clay County and veered across the northeast corner of Platte County through Edgerton and Dearborn. In late 1918, Parkville residents brought in J. D. Clarkson, the president of the Jefferson Highway Association, and showered him with new memberships hoping to secure a branch of the Jefferson Highway through their town. The Jefferson Highway County Club organized at Platte City in December 1918 in another effort to secure the auto trail through central Platte County, while the Platte County Court authorized a preliminary survey of the newly designated state road that the Jefferson Highway presumably would follow. In early 1919, local road boosters launched a campaign to raise revenues through private subscriptions for improvements to the Jefferson Highway. They anticipated that county, state, and federal dollars would eventually match their generous donations. Platte County's collective enthusiasm paid

³ Harris B. Dickey, "History of the Missouri Highway Department," (manuscript, Highway Planning Survey Division, Missouri State Highway Department, ca. 1942), 12-13; Floyd C. Shoemaker, "Chapter 62: Modern Highway Development in Missouri," in *Missouri and Missourians: Land of Contrasts and People of Achievements*, 5 Vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1943), II: 514-516; Missouri State Highway Board, *Report of the State Highway Board of Missouri for the Period Ending December 1, 1918* (Jefferson City: Hugh Stephens Company, Printers), *passim*.

⁴ *Platte County Gazette*, May 17, 1917.

⁵ *Ibid.*, April 4, May 16, 1918.

⁶ *Ibid.*, March 7, April 4, 1918.

off in early 1919 when the Jefferson Highway Association formally located a branch of the Jefferson Highway through Parkville and Platte City, following the designated state road that remained largely unimproved. While the blue and white signs may have attracted some motorists between Kansas City and St. Joseph, the new designation brought little practical benefit.⁷

Plans for real road improvements pushed forward in early 1919 when residents of the Parkville Special Road District signed petitions to improve the state highway within the district as a “hard surface” road. In May 1919, the district commissioners contracted with Tuttle, Ayers and Woodward Engineering Company of Kansas City to prepare the necessary surveys, plans, specifications and cost estimates. In the same month, the Platte County Court signed with Leslie and Barnes Engineering Company of St. Joseph to prepare surveys for the road between the Parkville District and the Buchanan County line. The work for the County Court, and for the Parkville Special Road District, would be governed by standards set forth by the Missouri State Highway Department for Federal Aid Projects. The commissioners of the Parkville Special Road District presented their plans to the State Highway Department in August. On September 11, 1919, the State Highway Board approved the project through the Parkville Special Road District. The plans called for 8.22 miles of brick-paved highway estimated to cost over \$462,000, or over \$56,000 per mile. As the *Platte County Gazette* pointed out, “This is the Jefferson Highway and is the main road from Kansas City to St. Joseph.”⁸

Over the following months the commissioners of the Parkville Benefit Assessment, Special Road District poured over the many intricate details involving the tax lists and real estate valuations of the landowners within the district. In March 1920, the Platte County Court extended a district tax levy of 40 cents per \$100 valuation. At that time the *Platte County Gazette* sympathized with the commissioners, writing, “. . . the task is an enormous one, and it is no wonder that the work moves slowly.” Finally in July 1920 the commissioners filed all of the paperwork with the Platte County Clerk, including the plans, specifications and estimates of the proposed road work, the list of real estate parcels in the district along with their assessed valuations, and the original citizen petitions calling for the road improvements. Official notices advised of a hearing before the Platte County Court on August 9.⁹

In the meantime, after the project’s approval by the State Highway Board, the Missouri State Highway Department began assisting the Parkville Special Road District by preparing designs for two bridges. One bridge would cross Mitchell Creek on the east side of Parkville near the railroad depot. Locals called the creek “White Aloe.” A second bridge a few miles east of Parkville would cross Line Creek near the Clay County line. The State Highway Department’s Bureau of Bridges prepared the bridge designs in

⁷ *Ibid.*, March 21, November 21, December 12, 1918, February 6, March 6, 1919; Scott Lauck, “Route plans once put crossroads of nation in city,” *St. Joseph News-Press* (St. Joseph), November 28, 2004.

⁸ *Platte County Gazette*, February 27, May 22, August 14, September 18, 1919; Platte County Road Records, Book E: 214-218.

⁹ *Platte County Gazette*, March 18, July 8, 22, 1920; Platte County Road Records, Book E: 273.

February and March 1920, designating the Mitchell Creek Bridge as F-151 and the Line Creek Bridge as F-152. Both were reinforced concrete, filled spandrel arch structures. The Line Creek Bridge was the larger of the two with a span length of 70', while the Mitchell Creek Bridge had a span length of 30'. The Bureau of Bridges had been in existence for a relatively short time, having formed in the latter half of 1917. The Bureau initially focused on producing standard designs of culverts and bridges while also designing individual structures. In 1919 bridge engineers drew up standard plans for reinforced concrete, filled spandrel arch structures. Based on those standard drawings, the Mitchell Creek Bridge and the Line Creek Bridge represented two of the earliest--if not the first--filled spandrel arch bridges designed by the Bureau of Bridges of the Missouri State Highway Department.¹⁰

When the Platte County Court convened on August 9, 1920, for the hearing on the proposed road improvements, it heard protests from several landowners within the district. The *Gazette* reported no specifics, only that the County Court took the matter under advisement. The newspaper hoped, however, “. . . that out of all this tangle a way may be found for real, permanent road improvement--the thing that this county so sorely needs.” In its September 9 issue in an article entitled “That Road Question,” the *Gazette* printed a letter from George E. McIninch, a member of the State Highway Board. A resident of St. Joseph, McIninch at one point also served as president of the Jefferson Highway Association. McIninch's letter was in reply to Platte County Court Judge H. D. Judson. McIninch assured Judge Judson that, “The fears of some of the people living in the district that the money will not be carefully handled by the commissioners is certainly groundless.” McIninch explained that the project would be under the control of the Missouri State Highway Department, that the costs would not exceed the contract amount, that the contractor would be bonded for 100 percent of the contract amount, and that state and federal engineers would inspect the work. “All state road construction is surrounded by every possible safeguard,” McIninch wrote. He personally had fought hard for the approval of the project as a part of the Jefferson Highway between Kansas City and St. Joseph. “As a member of the State Highway Board,” McIninch told Judge Judson, “I shall feel deeply chagrined if the Platte County Court does not get behind this proposition.”¹¹

On September 13, 1920, the Platte County Court rendered its decision on the proposed road improvements in the Parkville Benefit Assessment, Special Road District.

¹⁰ Missouri State Highway Department, “Bridge Over Mitchell Creek,” [bridge plans, single sheet], Bridge No. F-151, and “Bridge Over Line Creek” [bridge plans, two sheets], Bridge No. F-152. Microfiche. Bridge Division, Missouri Department of Transportation, Jefferson City; Missouri State Highway Board, *Report of the State Highway Board of Missouri for the Period Ending December 1, 1918*; Clayton B. Fraser, *Missouri Historic Bridge Inventory*, 5 Vols., Missouri Department of Transportation, Project No. NBIH(6), Fraserdesign, Inc., Loveland, Colorado, 1996, I: 136. The Bureau of Bridges prepared a second design for the Line Creek Bridge in 1922. Labeled Bridge No. F-153, it also was a 70' arch span. The Line Creek Bridge has since been demolished. Missouri State Highway Commission, *Third Biennial Report of the State Highway Commission of Missouri for the Period Ending December 1, 1922*, 142.

¹¹ *Platte County Gazette*, August 12, September 9, 1920; Lauck, “Route plans once put crossroads of nation in city.”

In accordance with the original citizen petitions, the road project through the district consisted of two Sections labeled “A” and “B”, with Section B starting at the west end of the planned bridge at Mitchell Creek and continuing east to the Clay County line. Section A led north from Parkville’s Main Street to the district’s north boundary. The County Court rejected both petitions and effectively canceled the project, saying “the estimated cost[s] of said proposed improvements are excessive, exorbitant, and an unreasonable burden on the owners of land within one half mile of said proposed improved road . . .” As planned, the eight miles of highway would have been paved with vitrified brick on a concrete base, for a cost of about \$52,000 per mile.¹²

At the same time that the County Court dismissed the road petitions, it received another petition calling for the disincorporation of the Parkville Special Road District. At an open meeting in late November, those in favor of retaining the district formed a committee to talk to interested parties and try to “devise ways out of the tangle in which the district finds itself.” District residents debated the issue through the end of December 1920. The *Platte County Gazette* spoke out in favor of keeping the special road district intact. It had been one of the first special road districts in the state and even though its long-laid plans had broken down “under the powerful hammer of outrageous prices” it deserved to continue:

It had to do pioneer work. Mistakes were made, of course. Experience has taught many lessons. The way opens to the correction of those complained of conditions. Will it not be of distinct disadvantage to both the county and the district to stop now, just when we need it most? Let us not trade our pony for a string of gaudy beads.¹³

A resolution to the dispute came on December 30 before the County Court. In an apparent compromise, the three commissioners of the Parkville Special Road District-- Daniel Lowmiller, Henry Noland and John A. D. Renner--resigned at once, and those demanding the disincorporation of the Parkville Special Road District withdrew their petition. A district election held on January 4, 1921, voted in R. B. Noland and Dr. J. Underwood as two new commissioners. A special election on January 25 replaced John A. D. Renner with John A. Renner, who “with great reluctance” had agreed to run.¹⁴

While the Parkville Special Road District had met with resistance and failure, Missouri had moved forward with the passage in November 1920 of a \$60 million bond issue dedicated to state road construction. The money would be used to finance 6,000 miles of state roads interlinking the county seats and providing cross-state highways. Details about the locations of the highways, their types of surfacing, and a governing

¹² Platte County Road Records, Book E: 313; *Platte County Gazette*, September 16, 1920.

¹³ *Ibid.*, December 2, 23, 1920; Platte County Road Records, Book E: 324.

¹⁴ *Platte County Gazette*, January 6, 13, 27, 1921; Platte County Road Records, Book E: 335, 343.

authority over state roads would be hammered out by the Missouri General Assembly in a special session in the summer 1921.¹⁵

The three new commissioners of the Parkville Special Road District tried to salvage what they could of the state road project through Parkville. First, they took their case to the Circuit Court. On July 5, 1921, the Circuit Court found that the County Court had exceeded its authority in judging the costs of the road improvements to be excessive. The Circuit Court rendered the County Court's decision null and void, allowing the Parkville Special Road District to resume its pursuit of the state road project. The commissioners meanwhile sought consensus with their district constituents on the extent of the improvements, and decided to pave the new road with concrete. In late July, the commissioners refiled the petitions, plans, specifications and the other details with the Platte County Clerk. The County Court, this time hearing no protests or objections, approved the project on August 15 and authorized the district commissioners to proceed. At that point the *Platte County Gazette* stated, "It looks like we are to have real road improvement after all." A Good Roads Meeting at Parkville on September 29 brought in George McIninch of the State Highway Board and A. C. Lingley, the State Highway Department's Division Engineer in Kansas City. Those present at the meeting reaffirmed their support and voted to proceed with the concrete road project. The Parkville Special Road District only needed a formal order by the Platte County Court, and scheduled a hearing for its November term. The *Gazette* expressed its delight on that news: "The *Gazette* feels that this is the best piece of road news it has been able to give you at any time during the period of its existence." The Platte County Court formally ordered the state road improvements on November 7, 1921. The estimated costs for the project, still divided into Sections A and B, then stood at \$385,586.90. Half of that would come from state and federal aid; the Parkville Benefit Assessment, Special Road District would pay its share through a tax levy over a fifteen-year period.¹⁶

With everything finally in place for the project to proceed, the people in the road district met on January 9, 1922. The well-attended meeting quickly dissolved into chaos when many spoke out in strong opposition to the project. Led by Samuel P. Forsee, a Kansas City attorney who owned land in the district, the opponents argued against the district's continued involvement in light of the Centennial Road Law passed the previous summer. The new state legislation implemented the \$60 million bond issue of 1920. It effectively ended local involvement in state road construction. The Centennial Road Law set up a Missouri State Highway Commission with broadened powers to locate, design, construct, and maintain the state highway system, to let contracts, and to purchase rights of way. It explicitly defined a statewide system of hard-surfaced roads within each county that "shall be constructed by the state of Missouri." The legislation specifically included the previously designated state road through the Parkville Special Road District. At the contentious meeting at Parkville, Forsee and his supporters contended that it was

¹⁵ Richard C. Traylor, "Pulling Missouri Out of the Mud: Highway Politics, the Centennial Road Law, and the Problems of Progressive Identity," *Missouri Historical Review* 98(1): 47-68.

¹⁶ Platte County Road Records, Book E: 313, 383, 388, 413; *Platte County Gazette*, June 30, July 14, 28, August 18, October 6, 13, November 10, 1921.

unnecessary for the district to build the road because the state would now build it. Forsee offered up a resolution for a committee to visit the Highway Commission to determine their plans for the road. According to the *Gazette*, “His motion was recognized as a subterfuge--a play for time to delay the proposed work.” Forsee’s resolution was voted down 70 to 40. A motion to proceed with the road project carried, “. . . but by that time the meeting was in such confusion that a definite count could hardly be made, and the meeting was adjourned.” Forsee vowed to go to the courts. The *Gazette* called the situation “an unfortunate snarl.”¹⁷

With the community divided over the issue once again, the district commissioners presented the straight facts in the pages of the *Gazette*. Sections A and B of the road project totaled over eight miles. The properties in the district had been divided into four zones according to their respective distances from the roadway. Properties near Section A would be taxed at a rate of about 4 percent. Those near Section B would be taxed at a rate a fraction above 6 percent. Money collected through the district tax would not exceed \$20,000 per mile of highway. The tax would extend over fifteen years and would not be especially burdensome.¹⁸ Forsee, in turn, advised the *Gazette* that he had filed a lawsuit in the Circuit Court at Platte City. The newspaper did not print his letter, however, because some of his statements could not be verified and other of his statements were “interrogatory” toward the district commissioners.¹⁹

Circuit Court Judge Tibbals heard the “Parkville Road Case” on March 23 and rendered his decision on April 27, 1922, ruling in favor of the road district. The attorney Forsee who personally argued the case unsuccessfully sought a new trial and the right to appeal to the Missouri Supreme Court. However, Tibbals allowed him to appeal to the Missouri Court of Appeals in Kansas City. No more would be heard from Samuel P. Forsee.²⁰ On May 2, the Platte County Court once again took up the proposed road improvements, although consideration was only given to Section B, the Kansas City-Parkville Public Road running from the west end of the bridge over “White Aloe Branch” to the Clay County line. The court noted the estimated costs for Section B stood at \$261,254. It assessed a special tax, or a “benefit assessment,” against real estate valuations in the Parkville Special Road District. Project costs would be paid in fifteen annual installments. The court then formally ordered the improvements to be made. Subsequently, the Parkville Special Road District issued \$105,000 in bonds at 6 percent interest. The principal plus interest would come due at a rate of \$7,000 per year for fifteen years.²¹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, January 12, 1922; The Centennial Road Law is reprinted in *Third Biennial Report of the State Highway Commission of Missouri for the Period Ending December 1, 1922*, 32-61.

¹⁸ *Platte County Gazette*, January 26, 1922.

¹⁹ Forsee’s grounds for his lawsuit are unknown. *Ibid.*, February 16, 1922.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, March 2, 16, 23, May 4, 1922.

²¹ Platte County Road Records, Book E: 462-464; *Platte County Gazette*, December 7, 1922.

For unknown reasons the project remained at a standstill for the next six months. In the meantime the Missouri State Highway Department designated the planned road through Parkville as Route 59. Another highway, Route 1, a primary cross-state highway, would connect Kansas City and St. Joseph by way of Nashua in western Clay County. Parkville lost its position on a major state highway.²² In its issue of November 30, 1922, the *Platte County Gazette* provided some vague, ambiguous news on the status of the Parkville road project. The district commissioners and the County Court had discussed the pros and cons of their “situation” and decided to “let the matter rest for the time being.” The district commissioners withdrew an application for a re-hearing and a re-estimate. They would not levy taxes, “pending an adjustment of the case along other lines.” The commissioners had work to do to “untangle the snarl.” “In the meantime,” the paper reported, “there is no road improvement in sight.”²³ In the next week’s issue, the *Gazette* printed a response to its article from George W. Day, an attorney and Secretary to the Parkville Special Road District. Day stated emphatically that there was “no snarl to be untangled.” According to Day, the district commissioners had met with the chairman of the State Highway Commission, and received advice from Chief Engineer Bion H. Piepmeier who recommended that the commissioners place the \$105,000 in bond money at the disposal of the State Highway Commission. State and federal aid would add another \$114,000 toward the project, and work could begin that winter. In Day’s words, “the commissioners of our district hesitate to proceed, hoping, it seems, that this road will finally be paved without cost to the landowners.” Day pointed out that without the bond money from the Parkville Special Road District, the \$114,000 of matching funds would vanish. Reliance on the state alone would likely mean another two-year delay and at best Parkville would get a low-cost gravel road. Day urged issuing the bonds and paying the reasonable benefit assessment over the fifteen-year period in order to secure a first-class, paved road.²⁴

The district commissioners apparently heeded the advice of George Day and Chief Engineer Piepmeier. On December 28, 1922, contractor bids for Section B of the project were opened at Platte City. The L.A. Woods Construction Company of Smithville, Missouri, received the contract for \$80,769.23, although their bid did not cover the costs for the concrete pavement, only for 4.703 miles of graded earth road plus the bridges at Mitchell Creek and Line Creek. Their bid for the Mitchell Creek Bridge exclusive of the other work totaled \$10,055.50.²⁵

²² “Missouri Route Map Showing Designated Routes and Numbers, Missouri State Highway Commission, Approved September 19, 1922,” centerfold map in *Third Biennial Report of the State Highway Commission of Missouri for the Period Ending December 1, 1922*.

²³ *Platte County Gazette*, November 30, 1922.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, December 7, 1922.

²⁵ The bid tabulation sheet referred to the road as the Jefferson Highway. “Tabulation of Bids Received,” Project No. F-48B, Platte County, December 29, 1922. Microfiche. Design Division, Missouri Department of Transportation, Jefferson City.

Four years after first circulating the petitions for the road improvements, the people in the Parkville Special Road District finally saw construction begin in late April 1923. Through the first several months, the contractor focused on building new concrete culverts, blasting, and road grading. Work on the Line Creek Bridge began in about mid-August. By late October, the *Platte County Gazette* had grown impatient with the contractor's crew: "The State Highway Commission should plant a stick of dynamite or some other equally effective accelerator under the contractors on the Parkville-Kansas City road. If the whole bunch are not loafing on the job, we wouldn't know what to call it." A month later, the paper seemed a little more positive: "After weeks and months of slow work, delay and sometimes idleness, real progress is now being made on the new Line Creek bridge on the Parkville-Kansas City road."²⁶

In early November 1923, the commissioners of the Parkville Special Road District approached the County Court, saying the cost estimates for Section B were too high. They needed a re-estimate before sending out the tax bills to the people in the district. The Missouri State Highway Department consequently revised the cost estimates for Section B by a large margin, from \$256,923 to \$122,142. That amount, exclusive of state and federal aid, represented substantial savings to the taxpayers in the Parkville Special Road District. The large discrepancy most likely reflected the omission of the concrete pavement in the second estimate.²⁷

The L.A. Woods Construction Company missed their contractual deadline of December 31, 1923. Work on the Mitchell Creek Bridge began sometime in late 1923 or early 1924. The design plans for the bridge had been revised in April and again in June 1923, although the nature and extent of the revisions are unknown. By the end of January 1924, after being delayed by severely cold weather, workmen had completed the forms for the east abutment and had already poured a considerable amount of concrete there. Through February, they worked on the west abutment, and by the end of the month had the forms ready for the arch. The concrete arch for the Mitchell Creek Bridge was poured on or about February 28, 1924. The centering underneath the arch remained for about two weeks while the concrete cured. With the centering struck, the north sidewalk opened to pedestrians. The *Gazette* commented, "The new bridge is a good looking piece of work and appears to be very substantial." However, the road contract did not include placing the roadway fill over the arch. Someone else--either the State Highway Department or the Special Road District--initiated that work, taking dirt from a nearby hill at Park College. The Mitchell Creek Bridge opened to traffic on Saturday, April 5, 1924; it was thought the traffic would pack the fill dirt more quickly. Placing more fill on the arch and the abutments continued for approximately another two weeks. The construction of the Mitchell Creek Bridge thus took a relatively short amount of time in

²⁶ *Platte County Gazette*, April 26, May 3, 24, June 21, July 5, 19, August 2, 16, October 25, November 29, 1923.

²⁷ *Platte County Road Records*, Book E: 606, 615-617, 625.

the early months of 1924, although it, and the rest of Section B, still awaited a concrete pavement.²⁸

Toward that end, Commissioner Underwood traveled to Jefferson City in April 1924 to register \$109,000 in district bonds with the state auditor. Bids for the paving contract were opened on May 20. The Metropolitan Paving Company of St. Joseph received the paving contract for \$132,121.81. In mid-July, “after much delay and many quibblings, arising from a variety of causes,” the bonds were finally sold and the money transferred from the Parkville Special Road District to the State Highway Commission. The district’s portion of revenues amounted to \$94,696. At its August 6 meeting, the State Highway Commission adopted a resolution to refund the district the amount of \$6,000 per mile, or \$28,278 for the 4.713 miles of pavement along Section B. However, the Commission could not reimburse the district until 1926 “or as soon thereafter as money becomes available.” Soon after bringing in its equipment in mid-August the Metropolitan Paving Company “put a great force of men and machinery to work.”²⁹

As the paving got started, local opposition to the Parkville Special Road District resurfaced. A number of people attended a meeting on August 16, 1924, to protest what they considered the continued excessive taxation. They believed it more prudent to simply wait for the state to pave the new road, also knowing that Section A still awaited construction.³⁰ While their opposition came too late to stop the paving contract, and they took no definitive action on that day, they had a valid point. Statewide, a campaign was on for the passage of Proposition No. 5, a proposal intended to boost revenues and speed up state highway construction through a gasoline tax of 2 cents per gallon and a 50 percent increase in vehicle registration fees. It would allow the sale of the state road bonds to proceed at a faster pace. When the vote came in November, Missourians approved Proposition No. 5 by over two to one. At Parkville, it passed almost unanimously by a vote of 428 to 11, showing a strong sentiment for state-financed highways.³¹

Meanwhile, the concrete paving work along Section B of Route 59 started in August at the east end of the project at the Clay County line and moved west. On a good day the Metropolitan Paving Company advanced the pavement about 600 feet. In about mid-September they reached the Line Creek Bridge. By mid-November they were within a mile of Parkville, and the company moved in its dry mixer. Colder weather slowed

²⁸ *Platte County Gazette*, January 31, February 14, 28, March 13, 27, April 10, 24, 1924; Missouri State Highway Department, “Bridge Over Mitchell Creek.”

²⁹ *Ibid.*, April 24, May 22, July 17, August 14, 21, 1924; “Refund for Money Advanced for Project 48-B, Platte,” August 6, 1924, Minutes of Proceedings of the Missouri State Highway Commission, Secretary’s Office, Missouri State Highway Commission, Jefferson City.

³⁰ *Platte County Gazette*, August 21, 1924. Section A of 3.6 miles was eventually built as a graded earth road in 1927, with its concrete pavement completed in 1929.

³¹ Missouri State Highway Commission, *Roads and their Builders* (Jefferson City: Division of Public Information, Missouri State Highway Department, n.d.): 78; Dickey, “History of the Missouri Highway Department,” 18; *Platte County Gazette*, November 6, 1924.

their progress. The company experienced a two-day delay when they exhausted their supply of coarse aggregate. They shipped in four railroad cars of rock, “a great scuffle was made to finish the work,” and they completed the concrete paving on December 16 “just two jumps ahead of the blizzard.” Some work remained on the Mitchell Creek Bridge in connecting up the sidewalks and placing fill alongside the abutments. They completed that work on Monday, December 22, 1924, taking some special precautions against the cold weather in placing and curing the last bit of concrete. The Metropolitan Paving Company worked into March 1925, past their deadline of March 6, placing dirt along the highway shoulders and installing guardrails along the higher embankments.³²

It had taken the Parkville Special Road District six years and over \$94,000 of district funds to secure the 4.7 miles of paved highway that included the Mitchell Creek Bridge.³³ Initially formed as a proactive, local body for modern road construction, the Parkville Special Road District soon lost much of its relevance in the face of an emerging state highway program backed by an infusion of state and federal funds. In their pursuit of the highway, the district commissioners faced local opposition, litigation, and a multi-level entanglement of governmental authority. The actions of the commissioners demonstrated their belief in the urgent necessity of modern bridges and highways, even if it meant paying their share.

As a postscript, the State Highway Commission refunded the \$28,278 to the Parkville Special Road District in December 1927 upon formal, certified requests by both the road district and the Platte County Court. In May 1928, the Parkville Special Road District agreed to advance money to the State Highway Commission to help pave the remaining section of Route 59 north of Parkville; it would initially have one concrete lane and one gravel lane. In January 1933, the State Highway Commission advanced credit to the Parkville Special Road District to the amount of \$64,956, representing the remainder of the district’s outlay in the construction of Project 48-B nine years earlier.³⁴

Description of the Mitchell Creek Bridge

The following physical description of the Mitchell Creek Bridge is based on the original design plans first compiled in February and March 1920, and revised in April

³² *Ibid.*, September 11, October 23, November 20, December 4, 18, 25, 1924, February 12, March 19, 1925.

³³ The breakdown in financing Project 48-B included \$94,696 of local funding, \$44,423 of state aid, and \$96,641 of federal aid, for a total price tag of \$235,760, or approximately \$50,000 per mile of highway. Missouri State Highway Commission, *Fourth Biennial Report of the Missouri State Highway Commission for the Period Ending December 1, 1924* (Jefferson City: Hugh Stephens Press), 111.

³⁴ “Refund to Parkville Special Road District of Platte County for Funds Advanced in the Improvement of Project 48-B, Platte County,” November 8, 1927; “Refund to Parkville Special Road District of Platte County for Funds Advanced in the Improvement of Project 48-B, Platte County,” December 13, 1927; “Parkville Special Road District to Advance Funds for Construction of Route 59, From Parkville North,” May 8, 1928; “Establishment of an Additional Refund Credit for Money Advanced for Project 48B, Platte County,” January 10, 1933, in Minutes of Proceedings of the Missouri State Highway Commission.

and June 1923.³⁵ The Mitchell Creek Bridge (Bridge No. F-151) spanning Mitchell Creek at Route 9 at Parkville, Platte County, is a single-span, reinforced concrete, continuous ribbed, filled spandrel arch with reinforced concrete abutments. It has a span length of 30' and an overall bridge length of 73'-4", with a roadway 24' wide flanked by sidewalks 5' wide. Concrete balustrade guardrails run the length of the structure. The concrete used in every component except the guardrails had a mix ratio of cement, fine aggregate and coarse aggregate of 1:2:4, respectively.

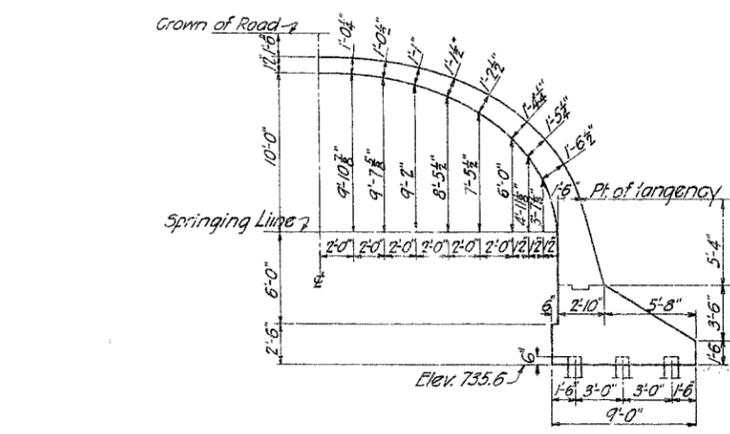
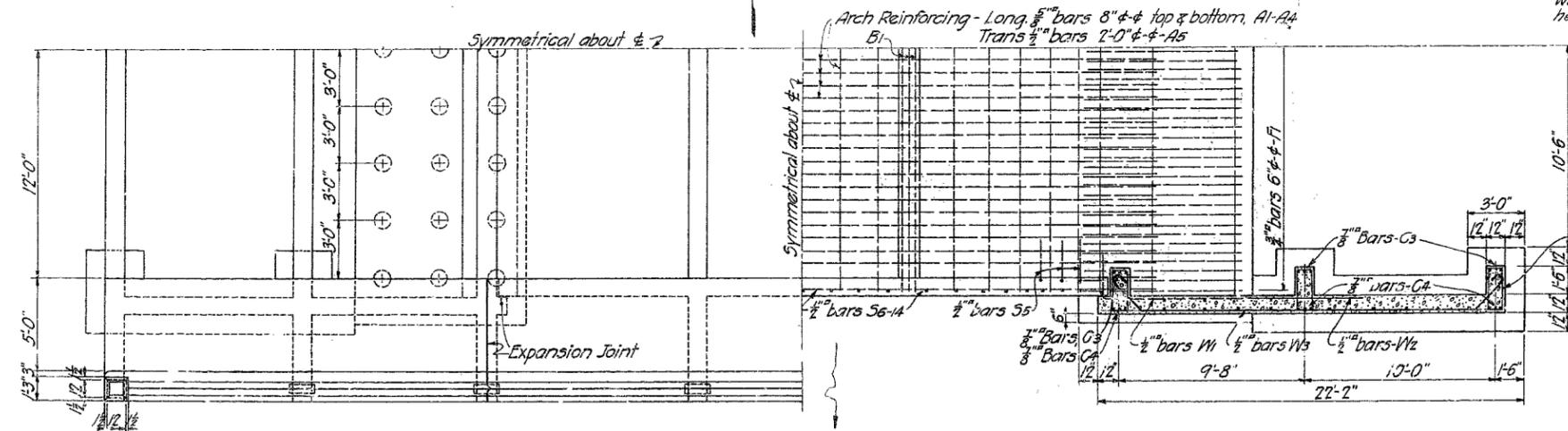
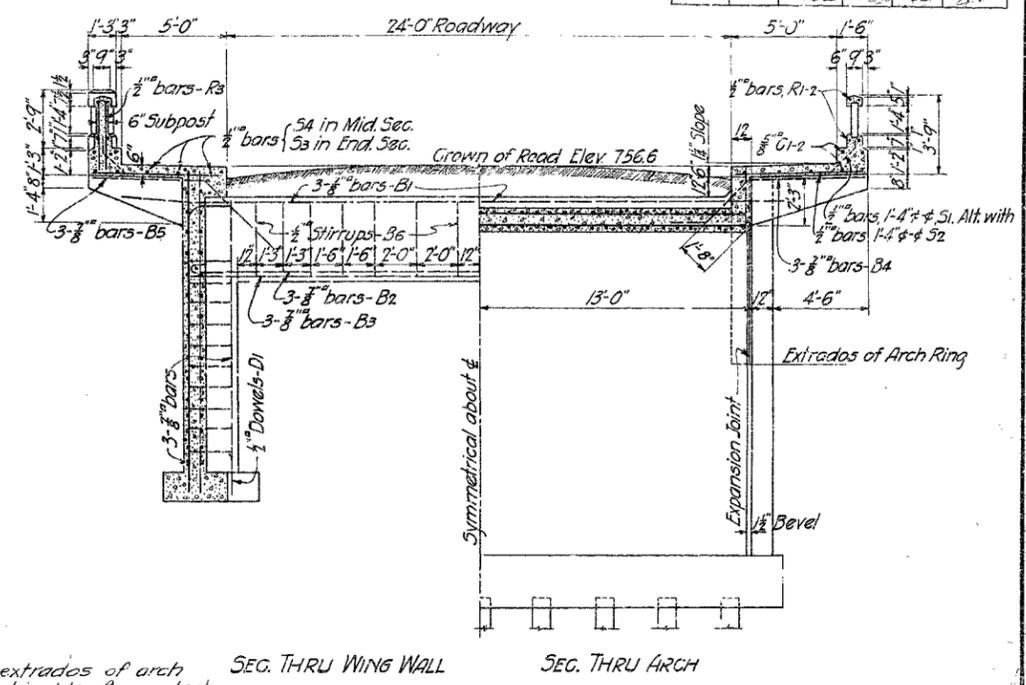
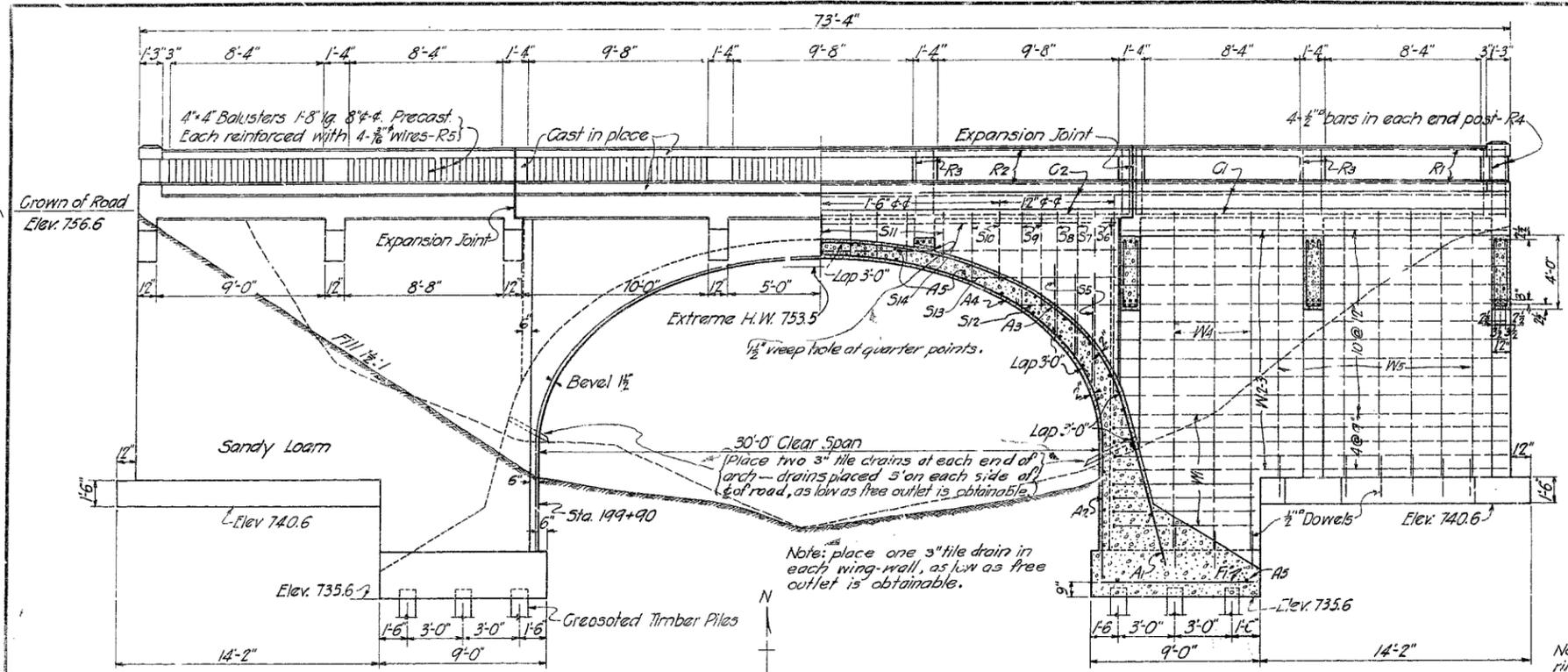
The two reinforced concrete abutments are identical in dimensions. Each is rectangular in shape, and consists of wing walls on two stepped footings. The lower footings at each abutment are set upon three rows of creosoted timber piles driven through a sandy loam substrata to an approximate depth of 25'. The lower footings measure 28' x 9' x 2'-6", and serve to support the arch buttresses. Each is set at an elevation of 735.6'. A second stepped footing at the rear of each abutment rests at an elevation of 740.6'. Those footings measure 28' x 14'-2" x 1'-6". The wing walls are 1' thick and are braced by interior posts and cross-braces. The arch buttresses extend the length and width of the lower footings. The arch springing line is at the 744' elevation where the arch barrel, or continuous rib, is 1'-6" thick and 26' wide. The arch gradually tapers to a thickness of 1' at the crown. However, the lines of the arch are not plainly evident in the side elevations as it was integrally constructed with the spandrel walls. The arch has a rise of 10' from the springing line to the intrados, and a clear span length of 30'. The crown of the roadway at the elevation of 756.6' is 1'-6" above the crown of the arch. Pedestrian walkways on either side of the bridge are supported by reinforced concrete cantilevered braces 1' wide that extend 5'-6" from the spandrel walls. Concrete curbs and balustrades are 3'-6" high, with handrails 1'-3" wide. Bronze plaques on the endposts read, "Missouri / Highway Dept / Bridge N^o F.151 / 1922."

With its 30' span, the Mitchell Creek Bridge is a modest example of a continuous ribbed, filled spandrel arch designed by the Missouri State Highway Department's Bureau of Bridges. However, many other structures of this type were also single spans of 60' or less. Among other early examples was a group of three single-span bridges, each 40' long, constructed along Route 21 in Iron County in 1922. The Line Creek Bridge, built contemporaneously with the Mitchell Creek Bridge, had a span of 70'. On the other side of the state in St. Louis County, the Deer Creek Bridge built in 1925 on Route 66 was largely based on the earlier design of the Line Creek Bridge and also had a span of 70'. Other filled spandrel arch bridges were longer, multiple-span structures. In 1922, the Bureau of Bridges completed a design for a three-span bridge in Saline County featuring a central span of 90' flanked by two 60' spans. Several other larger examples followed in 1923. The Current River Bridge on Route 19 in Shannon County had three 130' spans and two 60' end spans, for a total length of 602'. The 130' span length exceeded Missouri's other filled spandrel arch structures. A filled spandrel arch bridge on Route 5 in Ozark County begun in 1925 had three 80' spans. Completed in 1926, the Meramec River Bridge in Crawford County, also on Route 19, surpassed all others in total length at 640', with five 110' spans and two 35' end abutments. At about that time, the use of filled spandrel arch bridges fell out of favor, particularly those with multiple

³⁵ Missouri State Highway Department, "Bridge Over Mitchell Creek."

spans. One late example dated to 1934 was relatively short with three 37' spans. Around 1925, the Missouri State Highway Department began designing and building multiple-ribbed, open spandrel arch bridges because of their more economical use of reinforced concrete.³⁶

³⁶ David C. Austin, "Meramec River Bridge Spanning the Meramec River at Missouri State Route 19, Steelville vicinity, Crawford County, Missouri, HAER No. MO-109," Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 1999, 7-8; David C. Austin, "Deer Creek Bridge, Bridge No. G-681R, St. Louis County, Route 100," Missouri Department of Transportation, 2007.



	Concrete Cu. Yds. 1:2:3	Concrete Cu. Yds. 1:2:4	Reinf. Steel Lbs.	Piles Lin. Ft.
Handrail	6.4		870	
Curb & Sidewalk		27.8	3600	
Wing Walls	96.5		10900	
Arch Ring	68.9		7680	
Spandrel Walls	7.3		420	
Abutments	63.2		1950	
Totals	6.4	265.7	25420	1350
		3.0	1690	800
		271.1	27110	1650

GENERAL NOTES.
 Concentrated load 15-ton tractor with 10-ton trailers or 200 lbs. per sq. ft.
 Impact 20% of Live Load.
 Steel in tension 16000 lbs. per sq. in. Concrete in compression 650 lbs. per sq. in.
 All concrete to be 1:2:4 mix except in handrail which shall be 1:2:3 mix.
 Rub exposed surfaces free from form marks to a smooth and uniform appearance. No plastering permitted.
 Sliding surfaces of expansion joints shall be painted with a heavy coat of tar; abutting ends separated by 3/4" bituminous felt.
 Assumed length of piles 25 ft. Bearing capacity 22 tons.
 Wing walls are to be cast before arch ring.

No	Size	Length	Mrk	Remarks	No	Size	Length	Mrk	Remarks
16	1/2"	20'-0"	R1	Straight	4	1/2"	7'-6"	S7	Straight
8	"	37'-9"	R2	"	4	"	6'-6"	S8	"
36	"	7'-1"	R3	See Sketch	8	"	5'-0"	S9	"
16	"	3'-9"	R4	Straight	8	"	3'-9"	S10	"
720	3/8"	1'-6"	R5	"	18	"	2'-3"	S11	"
16	3/8"	20'-0"	G1	"	4	"	5'-6"	S12	"
8	"	37'-9"	G2	"	4	"	8'-0"	S13	"
36	3/8"	12'-9"	G3	"	4	"	31'-9"	S14	"
36	"	16'-3"	G4	See Sketch	36	"	10'-0"	W1	Bent in Field
24	"	34'-0"	B1	Straight	60	"	6'-0"	W2	Straight
18	"	30'-6"	B2	See Sketch	60	"	2'-6"	W3	See Sketch
18	"	27'-6"	B3	Straight	20	"	18'-3"	W4	Straight
12	"	10'-3"	B4	See Sketch	32	"	14'-3"	W5	"
36	"	10'-2"	B5	"	100	"	2'-0"	D1	"
84	1/2"	9'-6"	B6	"	78	3/8"	4'-0"	A1	"
110	"	6'-6"	S1	"	78	"	14'-0"	A2	See Sketch
110	"	6'-2"	S2	Straight	78	"	24'-0"	A3	"
12	"	20'-0"	S3	"	39	"	33'-0"	A4	"
6	"	37'-9"	S4	"	62	1/2"	25'-8"	A5	Straight
12	"	6'-0"	S5	See Sketch	104	3/4"	8'-6"	F1	"
8	"	9'-6"	S6	Straight					

Drawn Feb. 1920 by I.W.G.
 Ch'k'd March 1920 by W.M.O.

MISSOURI STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
 BRIDGE OVER MITCHELL CREEK
 STATE ROAD FROM KANSAS CITY TO PARKVILLE
 AT PARKVILLE
 PROJECT No. 48B (R.C. 59) STA. 199+90
PLATTE COUNTY
 Submitted by *Arthur D. Mann* BRIDGE ENGINEER
 Approved by *C.W. Brown* acting STATE HIGHWAY ENGINEER

revised April 4, 1923
 revised June 2, 1923

F151

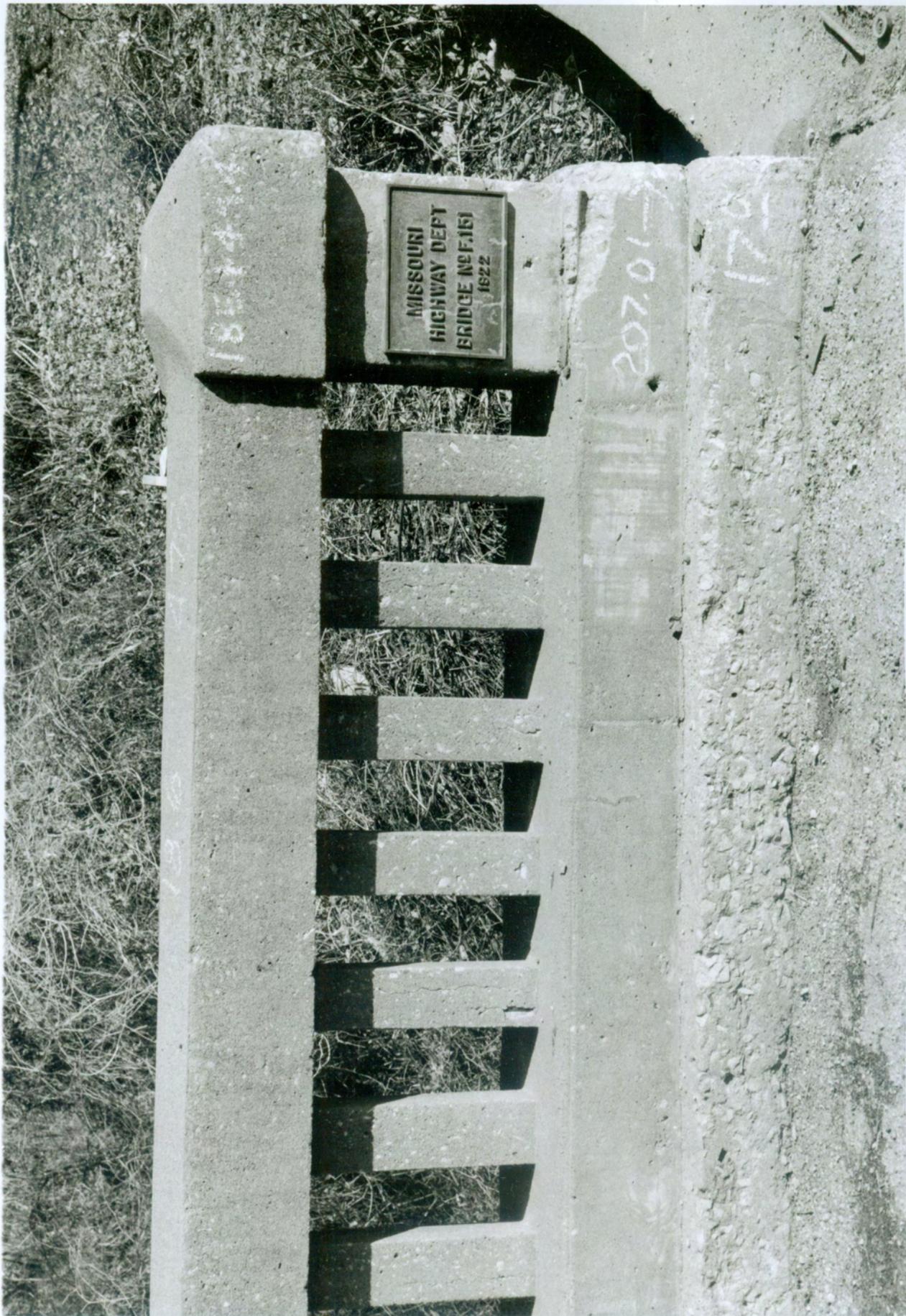
Mitchell Creek Bridge
(Bridge No. F-151)
Route 9, Platte County

Randall D. Dawdy, Photographer
February 2008

Photo Index:

1. Bridge No. F-151. Nameplate. View to north.
2. Bridge No. F-151. Northeast end post. View to north.
3. Bridge No. F-151. North balustrade. View to northeast.
4. Bridge No. F-151. West approach. View to east.
5. Bridge No. F-151. East approach. View to west.
6. Bridge No. F-151. South profile. View to northwest.
7. Bridge No. F-151. South profile. View to northwest.
8. Bridge No. F-151. West end. View to northwest.
9. Bridge No. F-151. Filled arch. View to northwest.
10. Bridge No. F-151. South balustrade. View to north.
11. Bridge No. F-151. East end. View to northeast.
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17. Bridge No. F-151. East abutment. View to southeast.
18. Bridge No. F-151. Suspended utilities. View to east.

**MISSOURI
HIGHWAY DEPT
BRIDGE NO F.151
1922**

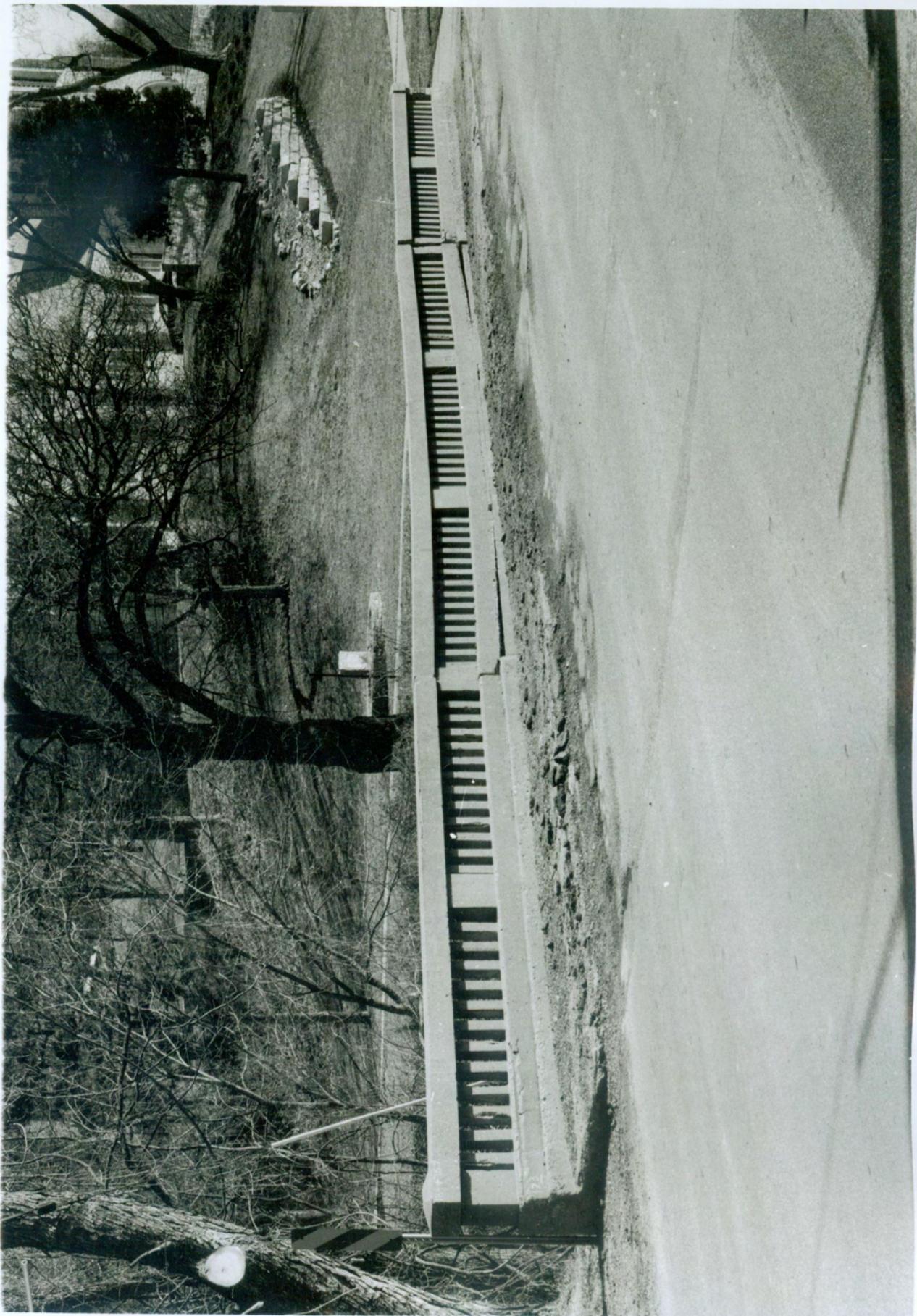


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BRIDGE NO. F. 151
1922

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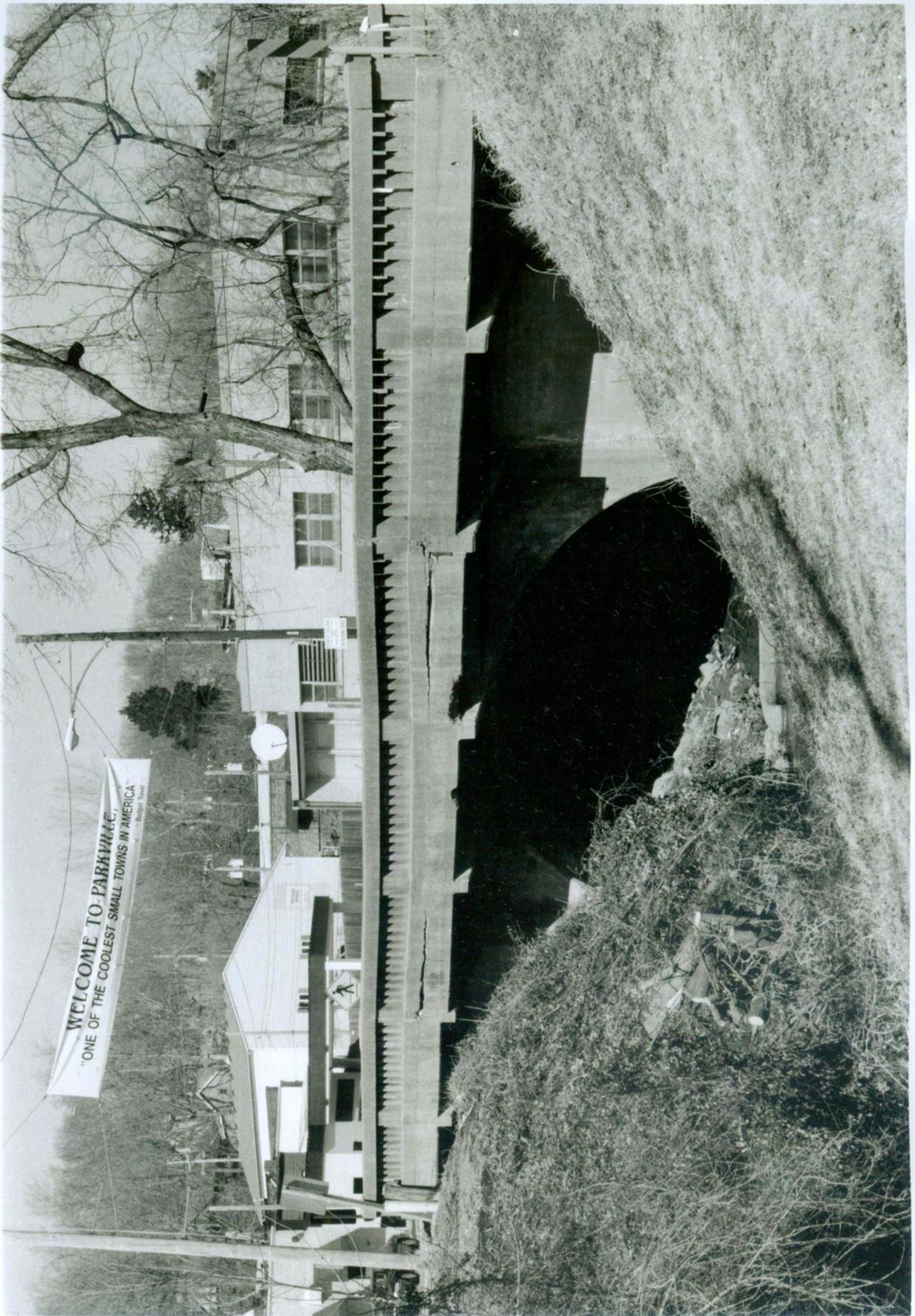
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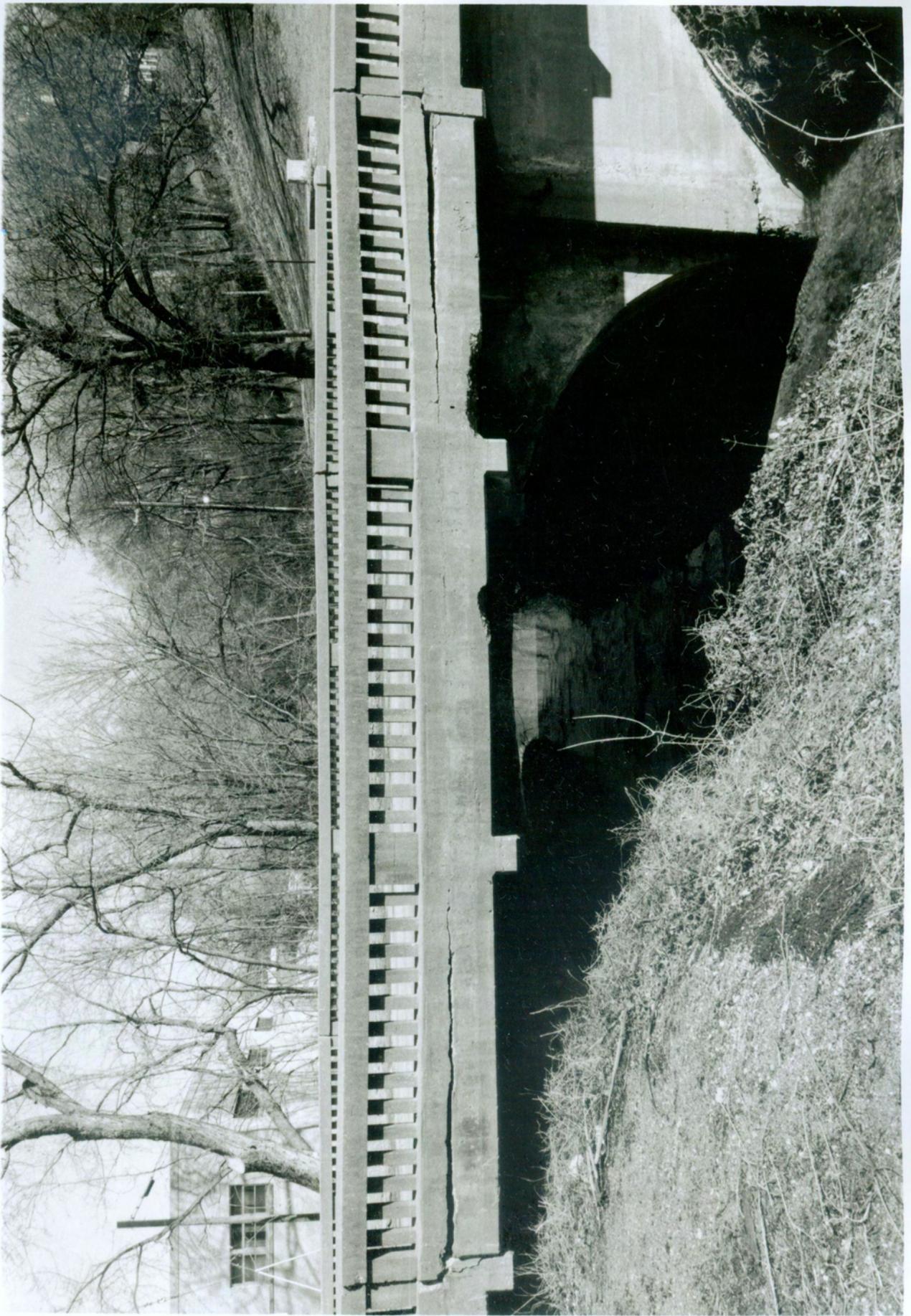


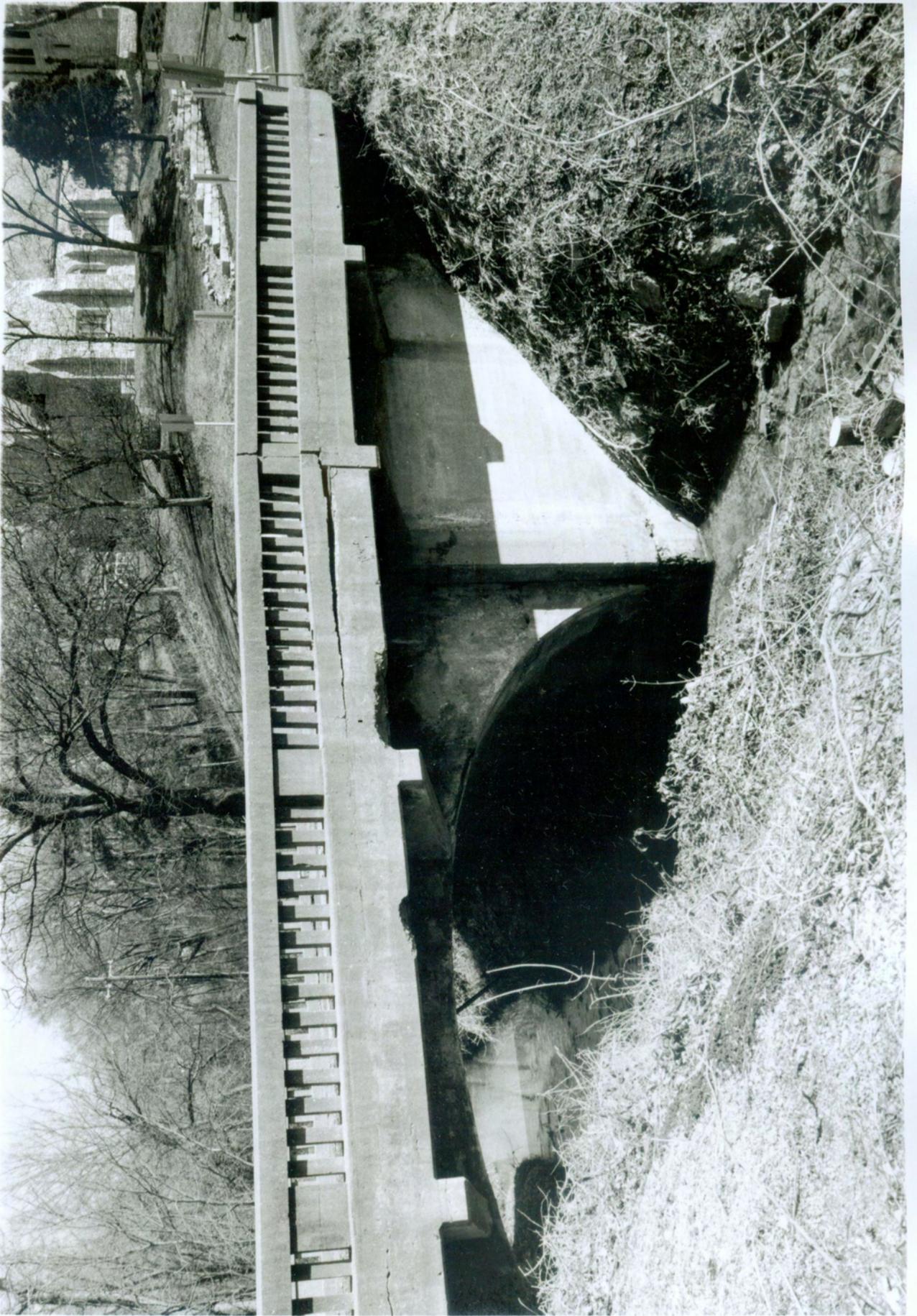




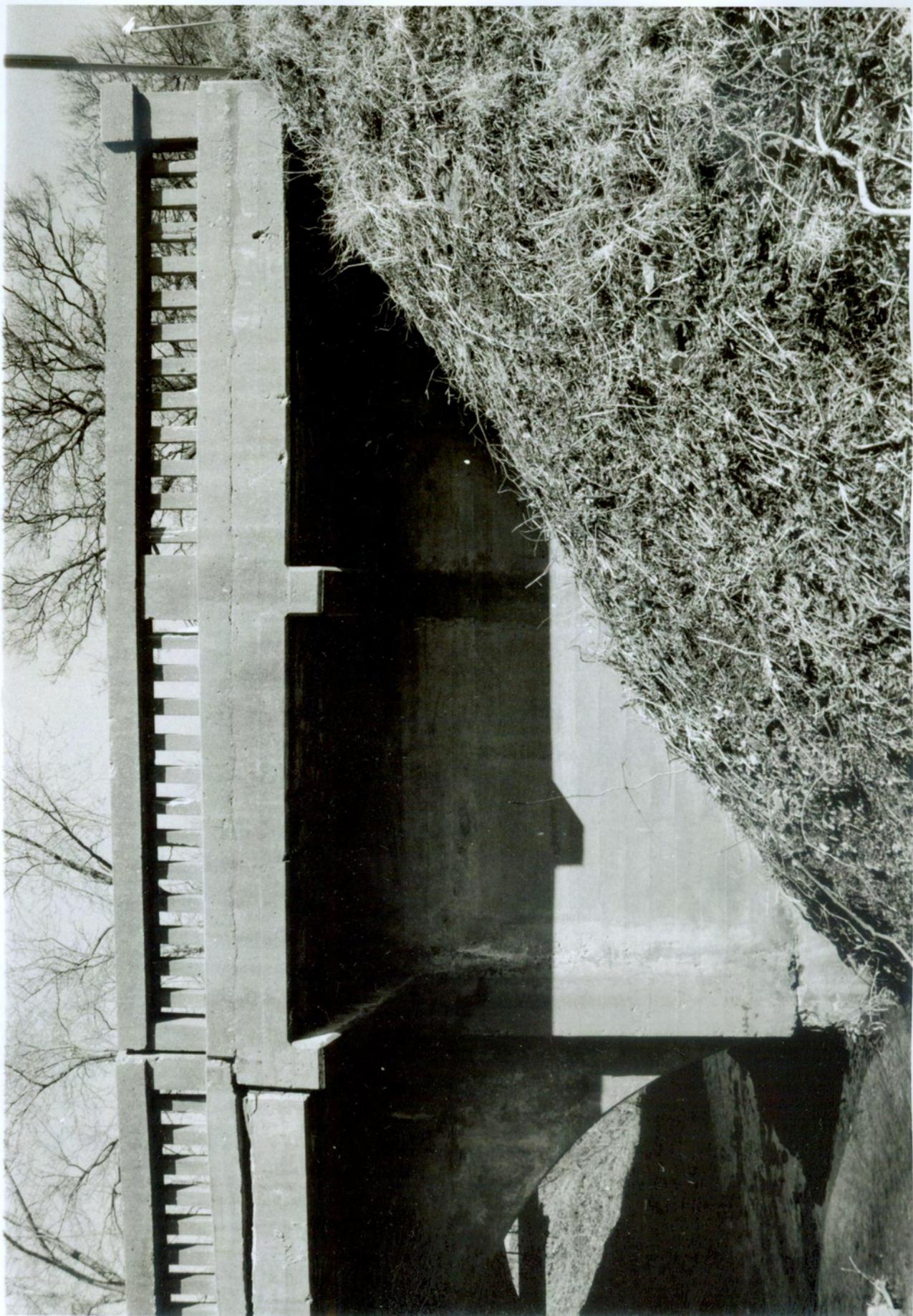


WELCOME TO PARMIK,
ONE OF THE COOLEST SMALL TOWNS IN AMERICA
Parmik, Pa.
1892

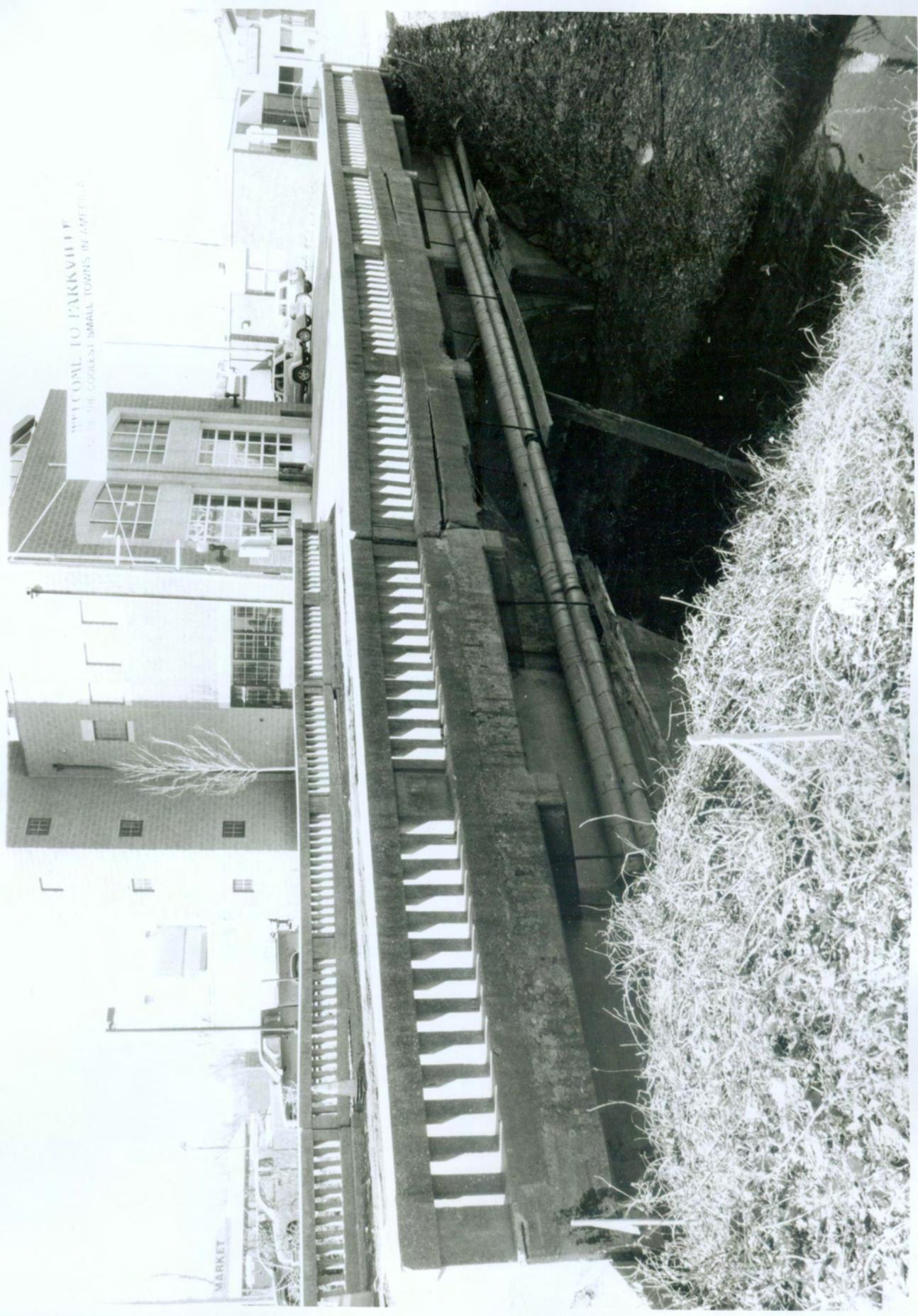












WELCOME TO PARKVILLE
HOME OF THE COOLEST SMALL TOWNS IN AMERICA

MARKET

WELCOME TO PARKVILLE
MAY 1951





