

**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: Maclay Bridge

Other names/site number: 24MO0521

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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

**2. Location**

Street & number: Milepost 0.1 on North Avenue

City or town: Missoula State: Montana County: Missoula

Not For Publication:  Vicinity: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           statewide        X   local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

  X   A           B           C           D

<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <u>    </u> meets <u>    </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Title :</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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
<u>1</u>	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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**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.)

Other: Parker through truss

Other: Warren pony truss

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

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: CONCRETE (footings)

Walls: N/A

Roof: N/A

Other: METAL / steel, 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.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Maclay Bridge is located on the outskirts of the City of Missoula, in Missoula County, Montana. This single-lane structure crosses the Bitterroot River, connecting the west end of North Avenue West, with the east end of River Pines Road. The bridge is located just upstream from the confluence of the Bitterroot and the Clark Fork rivers, at the west edge of the Missoula Valley. Here, the Bitterroot River runs northward along the base of the Bitterroot Mountains, which form the west boundary to both the Missoula and Bitterroot valleys. The area adjacent to the east side of the bridge consists principally of residential subdivisions. The area on the west side of the bridge consists of some agricultural fields and also large-lot rural residences.

The bridge is oriented northwest - southeast and has an overall length of 346 feet and is 16 feet wide. It consists of a 180-foot pin connected Parker through truss main span, a 39-foot riveted sub-divided Warren pony truss span, and two, 61-foot prestressed concrete T-beam approach spans on the southeast end of the structure. The Parker through truss was originally erected over the Blackfoot River in 1914 and moved to the Maclay crossing in 1953. The two prestressed concrete spans were constructed in 1964. While the exact date of construction of the Warren pony truss span has not been determined, engineering plans indicate that it has been in place since at least 1964, and possibly since 1953.



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### **Narrative Description<sup>1</sup>**

The substructure of the Maclay Bridge consists of a solid reinforced concrete pier that appears to have been constructed about 1923. The southeast end of the pony truss span rests on a solid concrete pier constructed in 1948. The two prestressed spans rest on an open columnar type concrete pier with a concrete web wall. The bridge ends rest on concrete abutments with wing walls, the west abutment built in 1948 and the east in 1964.

The pin connected Parker through truss span measures 180 feet in length, 16 feet wide and has a roadway width of 14 feet. The truss consists of nine 20-foot panels. The upper chords are paired laced channel sections with batten plates. A continuous steel plate is riveted to the top flanges of the chords. The lower chords are paired eyebars. Verticals are laced angle sections with batten plates. The diagonals are paired eyebars and the counters are eyebars with turnbuckles. Portal struts consist of angle sections with the top struts comprised of laced angle sections; the mid struts are angle sections. Top lateral and sway bracing include eyebars and eyebars with turnbuckles. The deck is supported by eight steel I-beam floor beams and eight lines of steel I-beam stringers. Additional support is provided by eyebar bottom lateral braces. The stringers support a corrugated metal deck, installed in 2003, with a bituminous asphalt overlay. The deck is flanked by angle section guardrails and modern channel section wheelguards.

The sub-divided riveted, Warren pony truss attaches to the southeast end of the main span. It measures 39 feet long and 16 feet wide with a 14-foot roadway width. The trusses consist of six 6½-foot panels. The upper chords are paired channel sections with batten plates and a continuous steel plate riveted to the top flanges. The lower chords are channel sections. The verticals are paired angle sections with batten plates, while the subdivided verticals are simple angle sections. The diagonals are angle sections. Gusset plates are riveted at the panel points. The trusses are further supported by angle section knee brackets. The deck is supported by two steel I-beam floor beams and seven lines of steel I-beam stringers; additional support occurs from eyebar bottom lateral braces. The deck of the structure is corrugated metal with a bituminous asphalt overlay.

Two prestressed concrete approach spans occur on the southeast end of the structure; each measures roughly 61 feet in length, 16 feet wide, with a 14-foot wide roadway. Each span features four lines of girders. The deck is flanked by high steel guardrails mounted on steel I-beam posts. The handrail is steel pipe. Steel ribbon-style guardrails are bolted midway on the posts between the handrail and the wood curbs. These approach spans were added to the structure in 1964 after flooding destroyed the original southeast approach span and severely eroded the east river bank

### **Integrity**

Maclay Bridge possesses all seven aspects of historical integrity. Other than the replacement of the bridge running surface and the addition of safety improvements, no substantial modifications have been made to the structure since the addition of the concrete spans in 1964. Its various structural components, the through- and pony-truss sections as well as the prestressed concrete spans, retain integrity of materials, workmanship, and design. The property also possesses integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Although the character of the setting has undergone some change (from open, agricultural land to suburban residential development) it retains a rural feel, which speaks to its importance to area residences. It continues to function as an important local crossing of the Bitterroot River.

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<sup>1</sup> The narrative description for Section 7 was prepared by MDT Historian, Jon Axline, for the 2012 Montana Historic Properties Inventory Form

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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.)

Transportation  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Period of Significance**

1953-1964  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1953 (erection of Parker through truss at Maclay Bridge site)

1964 (pre-stressed concrete approach spans added)  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Henry B. Berky & Son (Builder, concrete piers and west abutment; through- and pony-truss components)

Pew Bridge Company (Builder, 1964 prestressed concrete approach spans)  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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 Maclay Bridge is significant under National Register Criterion A at a local level of significance. The period of significance extends from 1953, when the main Parker through truss was moved to the Maclay crossing, to 1964, when the two pre-stressed concrete approach spans were added to the structure. Although the current structure dates to between 1953 and 1964, a bridge has been located at this site since the early 1890s. During that period, it has been an important crossing point for residents living on the west side of the Bitterroot River; the next nearest alternative crossing of the river being located about four miles to the southeast. The bridge's structural components (the Parker through truss, the Warren pony truss, and the two pre-stressed concrete approach spans) are intact and largely unaltered since their emplacement at the Maclay crossing. Post-historic period modifications are limited to the existing corrugated metal deck and the wheel guards. Finally, although it is unusual to find pre-stressed concrete approach spans in association with steel truss bridges, the former have been components of the bridge since 1964. The combination of the different bridge types, steel truss and concrete, to form a single entity, is reflective of the economic limitations experienced by Missoula County in its efforts to maintain its transportation infrastructure.

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

### **Establishment of Missoula and Area Settlement**

The Missoula Valley lies at the confluence of three major drainages, the Clarks Fork of the Columbia River, and its two major tributaries, the Blackfoot and the Bitterroot rivers. Prehistoric trails linking western Montana with geographic areas to the east and west converged in the vicinity of modern-day Missoula. People of many different ethnicities (Bitterroot Salish, Pen d'Oreille, Kootenai, Nez Perce, and Blackfeet) used these trails to journey to and from adjacent regions. After the Corps of Discovery traversed the valley in 1806, non-Indian explorers, trappers, and traders found their way into the area. In 1841, a small group of Jesuit priests established a mission in the Bitterroot Valley at the behest of the Bitterroot Salish, in the place now called Stevensville. When the priests pulled out, "Major" John Owen purchased some of their improvements and established a trading post dubbed Fort Owen. Army Lt. John Mullan spent the winter of 1853-1854 encamped near Fort Owen at a place he called "Cantonment Stevens." Mullan's task was to survey the area for an appropriate route for a transcontinental railroad.<sup>2</sup> Although a railroad would not access the area for another 30 years, between 1859 and 1862, Mullan used knowledge gained during the 1853-1854 survey effort to locate and construct a military wagon road between Fort Walla Walla (now part of Washington State) and Fort Benton, Montana.

By 1860, construction of the "Military Road" had progressed to the Missoula Valley. Christopher P. Higgins, who acted as the wagon master during the early 1850s railroad survey, thought the area would be a good location for a trading post. Higgins and his partner, Frank Worden, built a small store adjacent to the well-traveled route. The store formed the nucleus of a small settlement known as Hell Gate Village, which served as the Missoula County seat between 1860 and 1866. In 1865, however, Higgins and Worden built the Missoula Flour and Saw Mills on the north bank of the Clark Fork River near the intersection of present-day Higgins and Front streets. Hell Gate Village was abandoned by most of its residents, who followed Higgins and Worden to the new location, which became known as Missoula Mills—ultimately shortened to Missoula.

The late 1860s and early 1870s witnessed an influx of non-native people into the valley, initially drawn to the mineral potential of the area. As is the case in most areas of the West, initial incursions by prospectors and miners were soon followed by more permanent occupants—farmers and small business owners catering both to people passing through and to area settlers. The federal census for 1870 recorded 2,544 people in Missoula County, which at that time incorporated most of Western Montana. Of these, only 100 lived in the town site proper.<sup>3</sup>

One of the earliest Euro-American settlers in the vicinity of the Maclay Bridge was Irish immigrant, Thomas Foley. Foley and his wife, Ellen, arrived in Missoula County in 1859 and established a ranch just east of the Bitterroot River.<sup>4</sup> However, in the absence of approved federal land surveys, Foley could not legally file a homestead claim. Surveys of the townships in the vicinity of Missoula Mills were completed in 1870, and in 1872 Foley received an Agricultural Scrip Patent to 160 acres in Section 35, about a half mile south of the future site of the first Maclay Bridge. In 1874, another Irishman, Terrence

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<sup>2</sup> Allan J. Mathews, "A Guide to Historic Missoula," (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 2002), 7, 9-11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

<sup>4</sup> *Butte Intermountain*, December 1, 1901, 8.

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McMurray, received an Agricultural Scrip Patent to 160 acres of land in Section 26 (T13N R 20W), a quarter-mile north of Foley's 1872 patent.<sup>5</sup>

In 1877, the federal government established the Missoula Military Reservation within the 640-acre Section 31 (T13N / R19W) just southwest of the Foley and McMurray ranches and about three miles southwest of the Missoula town site. Created under an Executive Order of February 17, the US Army occupied the reservation, the proximity of which encouraged continued non-Indian settlement.

In 1883, Missoula welcomed the arrival of the long-awaited Northern Pacific Railroad, which in turn facilitated a new wave of settlement in the area. The level bottom land in the vicinity of the Missoula Military Reservation, proved an attractive choice for agriculturalists.<sup>6</sup> Lands in the immediate vicinity of the Maclay Bridge mostly were patented from the mid to late 1880s through about 1901. Although private citizens gained title to most of the agricultural lands as either Original Homestead Entry or Cash Entry patents, beginning in the late 1890s, the Northern Pacific Railroad received some parcels as 'lieu lands.'

Missoula's increased population made farming quite lucrative over the next 20 years. From 1890 to 1910, the fruit industry gained a significant foothold in the nearby Bitterroot Valley, and northward into the Missoula Valley.<sup>7</sup> The fertile soils of the Bitterroot proved more productive than many other areas to the point that many of the small farms came to be generally known as orchard homes. Realizing the business potential of small-lot agriculture, in 1898 Robert Cobban and Samuel Dinsmore purchased 2,500 acres of land about two miles north of Fort Missoula on the east side of the Bitterroot River where they platted the first Orchard Homes Subdivision. The subdivision consisted of a series of 2.5-acre lots, which could be purchased singly or in larger quantities, depending upon the size of the agricultural operation.<sup>8</sup> Heavily promoted throughout the state and the nation, the farms in the Orchard Homes subdivision boasted 16,000 fruit trees which supplied a significant amount of the produce for the Missoula market.<sup>9</sup> The 1910 U.S. Census indicates that the Orchard Homes subdivision counted a population of about 200 people, or about 30 families.<sup>10</sup>

From 1900 to 1910, Missoula's population grew three-fold forcing many new residents to look for housing outside the downtown core. Some of the population settled west of town, including across the Bitterroot River, via the Maclay Bridge. Missoula's population continued steady growth after 1930 accounting for an increase of roughly 3000 to 5000 individuals every 10 years until 1980 when greater growth ensued.

By the middle of the 1940s, the continued population growth resulted in a construction boom, similar to many communities at the time. Housing increased dramatically with lots being subdivided. Rural areas,

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<sup>5</sup> Agricultural Scrip Patent Serial NO. AGS-0353-335 issued April 10, 1874 ([www.glorerecords.blm.gov](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov) 8/10/2016). The lands claimed by McMurray and Foley were adjacent to one another and data from the 1870 census indicates that both families, including two of McMurray's children, occupied the same household. Both men counted themselves as farmers, while Foley's wife, Ellen, "kept house."

<sup>6</sup> Mathews, 20 and 22.

<sup>7</sup> Mathews, 39.

<sup>8</sup> Ann Emmons, Delia Hagen, and Michael Warren, "Results of a Cultural Resources Inventory of the Russell Street Expansion Corridor," *Historical Research Associates*, August 2002, 11; Orchard Homes Subdivision No. 4, 5, 6, Missoula County Surveyor's Office. Subdivision Plats accessed online at <http://www.co.missoula.mt.us/research/>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid; Mathews, 40.

<sup>10</sup> Twelfth Census of the United States. Population Schedules for Hellgate Enumeration District. Government Printing Office, 1900; and Thirteenth Census of the United States. Population Schedules for Hellgate Enumeration District 63. Government Printing Office, 1910. The enumerator denoted subdivision names in the margins.

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including the area near the Maclay Bridge, absorbed some of the new development. Missoula continued to grow outside its original boundaries as more businesses opened along Reserve Street to serve the expanding community. Plans for a shopping mall were in the works by the 1950, growing to fruition in 1977 with the opening of the Southgate Mall at the corner of Russell St. and South Ave.<sup>11</sup> The steady increase in population was and is a result of Missoula's diverse economy which includes the university, the lumber yards, the rail yards, flour mills, agriculture, the Forest Service, and other government agencies.<sup>12</sup>

### **Crossing the Bitterroot River**

In the early 1890s, Pennsylvania native, William Plunket Maclay purchased a parcel of agricultural land in Section 27, straddling the confluence of O'Brien Creek and the Bitterroot River. Maclay proceeded to build a substantial farmhouse on the north bank of the creek, which served as the headquarters for his ranch over the next four decades.<sup>13</sup> Maclay's descendents credit him with the construction of the first structure at what has become known as the Maclay crossing. Prior to its construction, residents on the west side of the river had to cross the Bitterroot River at the old Buckhouse Bridge, which was located about three miles farther southeast. The new "Maclay" bridge shortened the time required to travel to Missoula—the center of commerce and trade, as well as the location of schools, church services, and social activities.<sup>14</sup>

In 1894, possibly in response to a petition from area residences, the Missoula County Commissioners issued a call for bids to construct a two-span "combination" bridge over the Bitterroot River at the Maclay crossing. The county received bids from two companies, one from Weatherhead & Thompson for \$1,774, and another from O. E. Peppard, a Missoula-based bridge builder.

Obert E. Peppard was born in Lansing, Michigan in 1855. The son of a bridge builder, he learned his trade from his father. He made his way to Montana as the Northern Pacific Railway's supervisor of bridges and buildings in its Missoula division. In 1889 he left the railway's employ to establish his own business:

Over the next three decades, Peppard built many bridges throughout western Montana, including the Van Buren Street Bridge (24MO248) in Missoula and nearly every vehicular bridge across the Bitterroot and Blackfoot rivers in western Montana. Like nearly every bridge-building company in the state in this era, he bid on all the major bridge projects. ... When he died in September 1929, the *Daily Missoulian* praised him as "one of the best known bridge builders and contractors of western Montana."<sup>15</sup>

Peppard's 1894 bid included six different scenarios—the most expensive would entail using all new material to build two 120-foot spans, while the least expensive option would entail using some components of the 'existing' bridge. Peppard's estimate is the only indication that a previous bridge existed at the site prior to the 1894 county-sponsored effort. Ultimately, the commissioners chose Peppard's bid No. 3. For \$1,795, he proposed the following:

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<sup>11</sup> Emmons et al., 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid; Mathews, 41.

<sup>13</sup> O'Brien Creek derives its name from David O'Brien, who patented the land adjacent to the stream/river confluence in 1888.

<sup>14</sup> The character of Maclay's first bridge at this location has not been documented. If William did construct the bridge himself, or hired its construction, it was likely a wood timber bridge.

<sup>15</sup> Jon Axline, *Montana's Historic Steel Truss Bridges National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form*, (document on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, Montana, 2010), part E, 3.

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1 – 120 ft. combination span as shown by stain sheet all new material in truss and 1 – 120 ft. combination span reserving the right to use the old iron in the Rattle Snake Bridge that can be used all other to be replaced with new iron. Stain sheet of new span figured to correspond with sizes in old span. This bid is for using old timbers in floor and in making crib around center pier. 4 additional piles in east abutment as show by drawing and also 4 additional piles in concrete pier.<sup>16</sup>

The bridge built in 1894 served the community for only five years before it was damaged by spring flooding. An article in the April 20, 1899 edition of the *Anaconda Standard* indicated that the Missoula County Surveyor had identified several county bridges that could be threatened by high runoff, and consequently had let contracts for the placement of riprap adjacent to the bridge piers. The contract for riprapping the Maclay Bridge went to William Maclay.<sup>17</sup> The effort, however, proved unsuccessful. In early July, the *Anaconda Standard* carried the following story:

The Maclay bridge across the Bitter Root is a wreck. The high water in the Bitter Root has taken out the west span and the stone pier at that end. Residents of the other (west) side of the river are compelled to drive up the stream to the Buck house crossing.<sup>18</sup>

By mid-July, “farmers and wood haulers from the Big Bend” (of the Bitterroot River) had come to Missoula to “interview” the county commissioners about reconstructing the bridge.<sup>19</sup> Based upon a field review of the damaged bridge, the commissioners initially decided to try to keep the undamaged span and only replace the span destroyed by flooding: “The commissioners came to the above conclusion after figuring that to build a new bridge and to buy a new right of way could cost the county a great deal of money.”<sup>20</sup>

On July 26, 1899, the commissioners directed the County Surveyor to prepare plans for a new combination wood and iron bridge to be built near the damaged structure. They noted that area residents had agreed “to donate in money or labor \$510, to be expended in any manner the County Surveyor may deem best.”<sup>21</sup> Once again, the commissioners awarded the job to O. E. Peppard, who again, submitted multiple bid scenarios: one for \$2,390 if he could reuse the surviving span and \$2,990 if an entirely new structure was required. The amount awarded to Peppard was the larger of the two figures, indicating that the commissioners anticipated paying for an entirely new structure.<sup>22</sup> Peppard completed the project in December—roughly six months after the flood that destroyed the 1894 bridge.<sup>23</sup>

Over 10 years later, in July of 1907, the commissioners visited the Maclay Bridge to assess its condition, due to its importance as it was “needed for public travel.” The examination resulted in a contract award, the very same day as the visit, to, once again, O. E. Peppard for the sum of \$1,950 to build a new span on the bridge.<sup>24</sup> Soon after the award, several area residents petitioned the commissioners to change the location of the bridge, but all petitions were denied. The reasons for requesting the location change were not specified.

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<sup>16</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book G: 120, 7 September, 1894.

<sup>17</sup> *The Anaconda Standard*, April 20, 1899 (Morning edition) 12.

<sup>18</sup> *The Anaconda Standard*, July 6, 1899, 12.

<sup>19</sup> *The Anaconda Standard*, July 19, 1899, 12.

<sup>20</sup> *The Anaconda Standard*, July 28, 1899, 12.

<sup>21</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book H: 51.

<sup>22</sup> *The Anaconda Standard*, August 10, 1899, 12.

<sup>23</sup> *The Anaconda Standard*, December 17, 1899, 12.

<sup>24</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book I:181.



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The next major project undertaken by the county at the Maclay Bridge occurred in 1922, when the commissioners once again considered construction of a new structure at the crossing (Figure 1). Apparently, a flood event had damaged the bridge--possibly during the previous year's spring runoff. On January 27, 1922, W. P. Maclay, Henry DeBerge, and others appeared before the board to request that the location of the "proposed new bridge known as the Maclay Bridge," be moved about a quarter of a mile upstream. Although the commissioners agreed to take a look at the site, they decided against moving the bridge, as it was not in the best interests of the county.<sup>25</sup> On February 10 the county published a notice in *The Daily Missoulian* indicating that it would open bids for the new bridge on February 14. Six contractors submitted bids ranging from roughly \$7,000 to \$5,000. J. F. Harrington, with the low bid of \$5,038 was awarded the contract.<sup>26</sup> He completed the project in early June (Figure 2).<sup>27</sup>

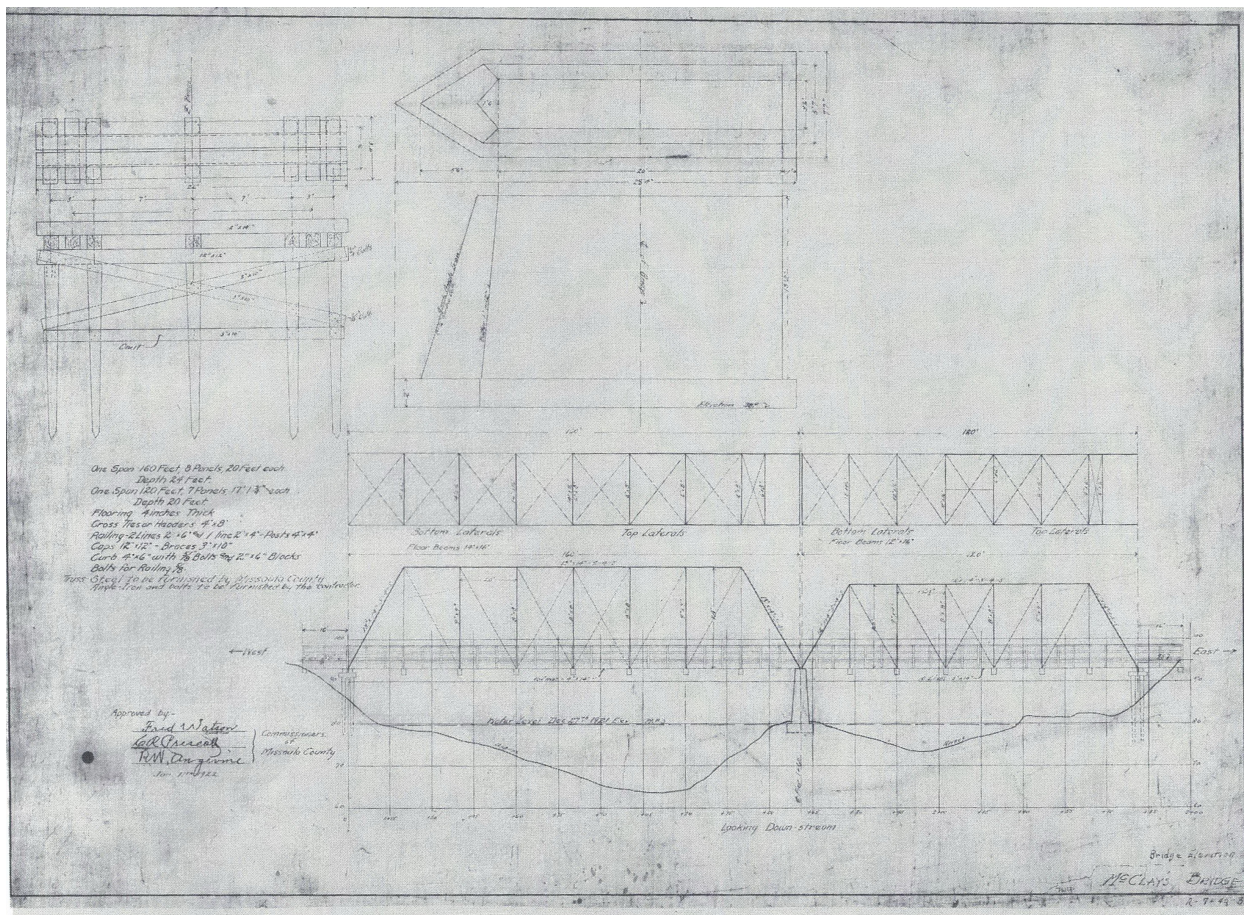


Figure 1. 1922 plans for the Maclay Bridge (courtesy, Missoula County Engineering).

<sup>25</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book K:581, 582.

<sup>26</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book K:587, 588.

<sup>27</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book L: 29.



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Figure 2. Photo of the through truss bridge that occupied the Maclay crossing from about 1922 to 1948. Photo courtesy of Chuck Honeycutt.

In 1948, the Maclay Bridge was once again damaged by high spring runoff. According to accounts in *The Daily Missoulian*, the entire western part of the state and the greater Pacific Northwest experienced severe flooding. The edition from Saturday, May 29, carried accounts of high water on the Flathead River near Dixon and on the Bitterroot River south of Maclay Bridge. Along the Bitterroot River, the Klapwyk Ranch, located south of South Avenue below the Maclay Bridge was hard hit; flood waters stranded cattle and flooded at least one barn on the property.<sup>28</sup> Two days later, the front page of the newspaper carried multiple stories about the flooding. Five of the eight Bitterroot River bridges in the Bitterroot Valley had been closed due to hazardous conditions, and three bridges across the river near Missoula were “menaced,” including the Buckhouse Bridge, the Northern Pacific Railroad span, and the Maclay Bridge—all located southwest of Missoula.<sup>29</sup> By June 1, the flood waters in the Clark Fork and Bitterroot rivers began to recede but not before the west approach to the Maclay Bridge had “given way to the pounding of the flood.”<sup>30</sup> Two days later, the front page of *The Daily Missoulian* carried a photograph of a severely damaged Maclay Bridge under the headline, “West Span of Maclay Bridge Disappears in Swollen Bitter Root.” The photo caption read:

Here is the scene at the Maclay bridge site since flood waters of the Bitter Root river swept away the 100-foot west span of the structure Monday night. The span, which carried telephone and power lines, vanished completely before daylight, the wreckage washing in to the Clark Fork river. The bridge served the farm residents of the area southwest of Missoula, and if replaced at present prices would cost about \$350,000, county commissioners estimate. The loss of the bridge is the costliest single casualty to the county during the current high water period. County Surveyor R. J. Hale said the bridge was about 28 years old.<sup>31</sup>

The commissioners lost little time in attempting to replace the bridge. On June 11, 1948 they placed a notice in the paper soliciting bids to deconstruct the “9 Mile Prairie Bridge” formerly located on the

<sup>28</sup> *The Daily Missoulian*, May 29, 1948, 2

<sup>29</sup> *The Daily Missoulian*, May 31, 1948, 1.

<sup>30</sup> *The Daily Missoulian*, June 1, 1948, 1.

<sup>31</sup> *The Daily Missoulian*, June 3, 1948, 1.

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Blackfoot River, and re-erect it at the Maclay Crossing.<sup>32</sup> Potential contractors had until July 6 to submit their bids as well as a certified check in the amount of 10 percent of the bid and a contractor's license. About a month following the first bid notice, the county advertised for a second bridge-related project that included the construction of concrete piers and abutments at the Maclay crossing.<sup>33</sup>

On August 13, the commission unanimously adopted a resolution for an emergency expenditure of \$30,000, "for the purpose of construction of necessary piers and abutments at the Maclay Bridge, and that emergency warrants be issued for such purpose."<sup>34</sup> Three days later, they unanimously approved the award of the contract for construction of the piers and abutments to Henry Berky & Son Construction Company, which submitted the low bid of \$44,839.<sup>35</sup> Berky & Son also won the contract to dismantle and re-erect the 9 Mile Prairie Bridge at the Maclay crossing for a cost of \$14,000.<sup>36</sup> At just under \$60,000, Berky & Son's combined bids represented a fraction of the cost of the commissioners' \$350,000 estimate for an entirely new bridge. Figures 3 and 4 show components of the proposed 1948 bridge project.

Up to the point of awarding the contracts, the process for replacing the bridge went smoothly. It appears however, that the commissioners had placed themselves at odds with the County Surveyor, R. J. Hale. During their September 21 meeting, they made a motion to send an official notification to Hale, to continue "surveying" the Maclay Bridge abutment and pier construction until its completion. Two days later, Hale responded with a letter to the commissioners:

Your instructions under date of September 21<sup>st</sup> notifying me to proceed with the engineering of pier and abutment on the McClay Bridge has been duly received.

Your letter does not instruct me to take complete charge of the building of the structure and inasmuch as I feel that good engineering practice has not been followed, by your board, in the matter of constructing this bridge and that in all fairness to the engineering profession and myself, it is my earnest desire to be relieved of the engineering responsibility.<sup>37</sup>

The commissioners accepted Hale's resignation from the bridge project, and based upon recommendations from the county attorney to replace him with another "competent civil engineer," on

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<sup>32</sup> In its original location, the Nine Mile Prairie or "Sunset" Bridge crossed the Blackfoot River west of Clearwater Junction (the intersection of Montana 200 and Montana Highway 83), near the east edge of Missoula County. Built originally as a joint project between Missoula and Powell counties, Missoula-based bridge builder, O. E. Peppard submitted the winning bid of \$9,950. He began work on the structure in the fall of 1913 and completed it in 1914. Later, when the boundary line between the two counties shifted to the east, the bridge became the sole responsibility of Missoula County. In May of 1941, the state highway commissioners awarded a project to construct a new steel girder bridge over the Blackfoot River to the Portland Bridge Company. However, this project was suspended by the material shortages (primarily steel) that resulted from America's entry into WWII. The new Blackfoot River Bridge was completed in 1946, and the old truss bridge was left sitting on the river bank awaiting a new use. County Commissioners Proceedings, book I, pp. 64ff; County Commissioners Proceedings, book J, pp. 88-90, 120; "Peppard is Lowest of Nine Bidders," *The Daily Missoulian*, 3 October 1913; "Sunset Bridge Matter is Now All Arranged," *The Daily Missoulian*, 8 October 1913.

<sup>33</sup> Call for Bids "9 Mile Prairie Bridge Tearing Down and Erecting, Maclay Site," 11 June 1948; Call for bid "Concrete piers and abutments, Maclay Bridge Site", 10 July 1948.

<sup>34</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings Book V: 307.

<sup>35</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings Book V: 308, 310.

<sup>36</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings Book X: 46.

<sup>37</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings Book V: 336.

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September 24, they hired Charles Dimmick, to act as Superintendent and Inspector of the Maclay Bridge Project.<sup>38</sup>

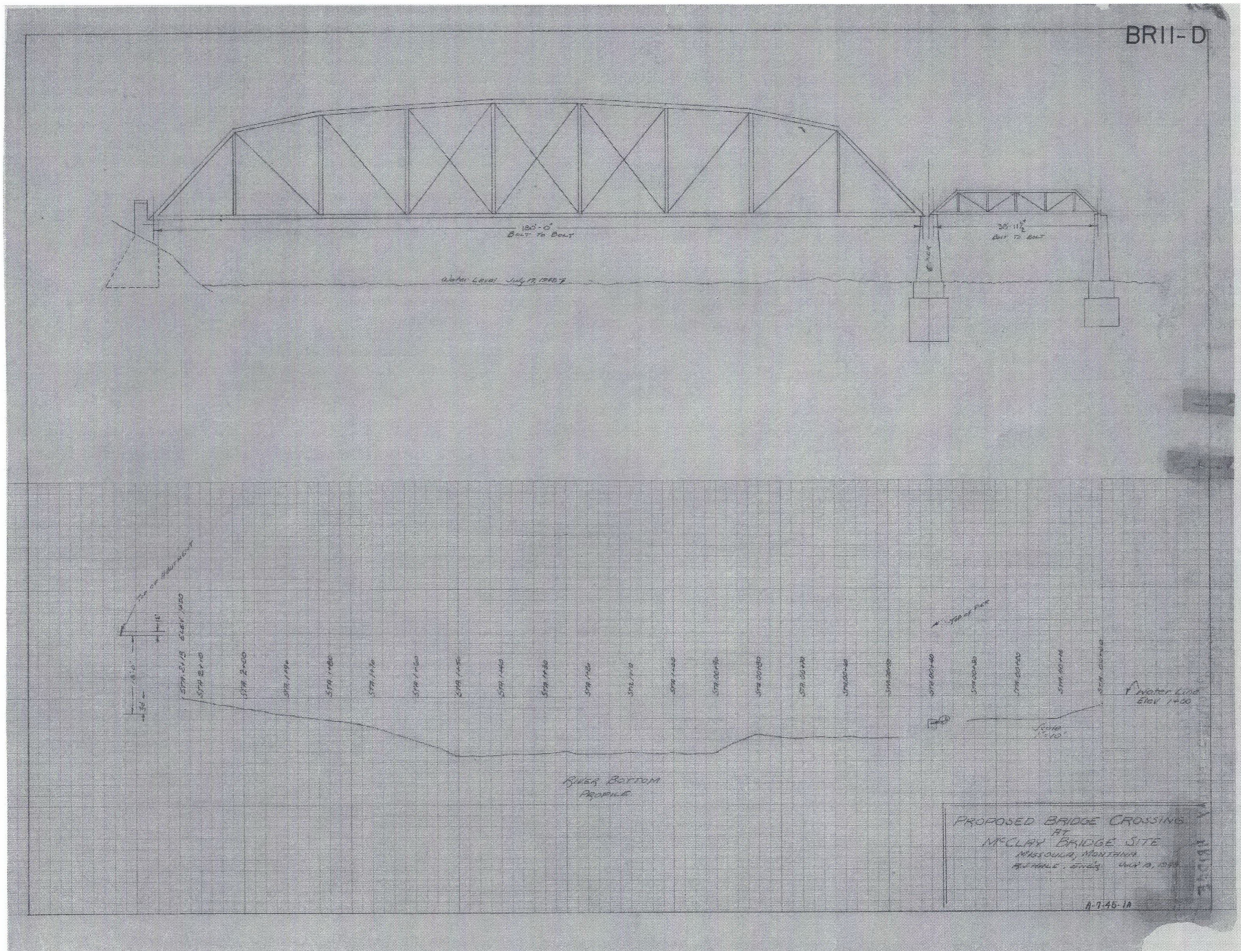


Figure 3. 1948 bridge plan prepared by Missoula County Engineer showing former Nine Mile Prairie bridge emplaced at Maclay crossing (courtesy Missoula County Engineering).

<sup>38</sup>County Commissioners Proceedings Book V: 336, 337.



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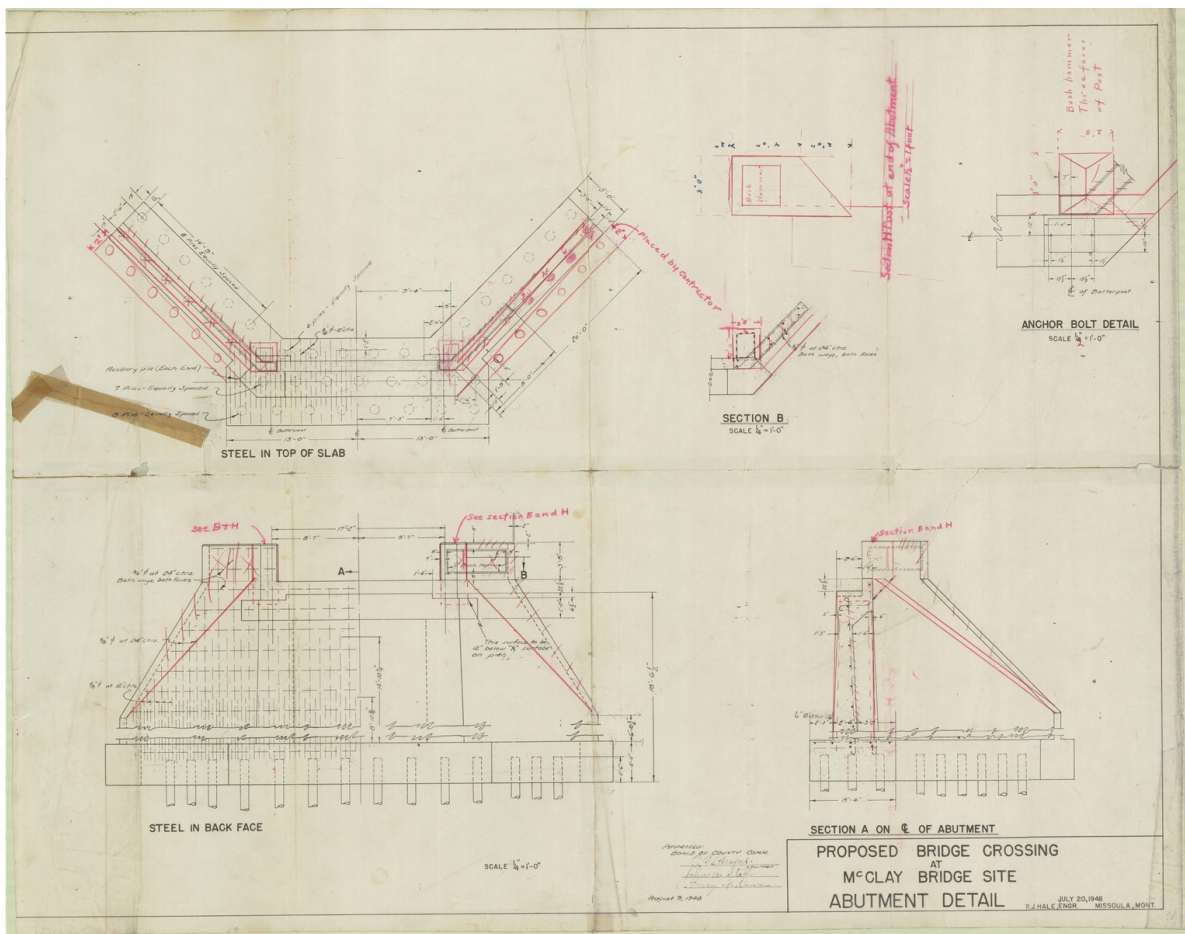


Figure 4. 1948 Abutment Detail, proposed Maclay Bridge Site (courtesy Missoula County Engineering)

Meanwhile, word of conflicts over the bridge construction must have spread to the community. On October 1, 58 area residents signed and sent a petition to the commissioners stating: “We the under signed who reside in the vicinity of the Maclay Bridge, and who are users of the same, are very anxious to have the Maclay Bridge rebuilt.” The commission acknowledged receipt of the petition during its October 5 meeting.<sup>39</sup> During their meeting on October 10, however, they unanimously decided to discontinue work on the Maclay Bridge “due to pending litigation pertaining to engineering ...”<sup>40</sup>

It is unclear which of the two bridge projects (construction of the piers and abutments or the removal and re-erection of the 9 Mile Prairie Bridge) was affected by the stop work order. Work on the piers and abutments may have continued, because in November the board issued a change order on the pier design that required additional quantities of cement. Berky & Son agreed to the change order, which required

<sup>39</sup>County Commissioners Proceedings, Book V: 348.

<sup>40</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book V: 352.

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them to accept the modification without increasing the cost of the project.<sup>41</sup> They likely completed a substantial portion of the pier and abutment contract before discontinuing work on the job.

Over the next three and a half years the Maclay Bridge project languished because a District Court restraining order prevented the county from continuing work on the bridge. During this interval, area residents were forced to detour three miles south to use the Buckhouse Bridge over the Bitterroot River on US 93. On February 2, 1952 a delegation of area residents represented by Attorney Jack Rimel, met with the commissioners to determine the possibility of restarting the project:

Attorney Rimel explained that his understanding with Mr. Birkey (sic) who was the contractor who built the abutment and who was not paid for his services, was that Mr. Birkey (sic) would complete this bridge if the county would pay him for service rendered. Further that and if the county would haul the material from the old Nine Mile Bridge up the Blackfoot River to the location of the Maclay Bridge. Assistant County Attorney John Forsythe was in attendance at this discussion. Both Commissioners and the Chairman were favorable on considering the building of this bridge if all Court matters could be cleared and that a written agreement be entered into by all parties concerned. That the County Surveyor and the Commissioner go to the Nine Mile Bridge and ascertain just what material is there and thereafter come to a conclusion as to just what definite action could be taken. It was understood that Mr. Rimel would contact Mr. Birkey (sic) and get this reaction and that the County Attorney's office would get an interpretation of the Restraining Order and report back to the Commissioners.<sup>42</sup>

Ultimately, four area residents [Joel Atrim, John Klapwyk, Clyde Maclay (son of William Maclay), and Kirk E. Badgley] filed suit against Missoula County over its lack of action on replacing the bridge. On June 10, 1952, the court ordered the county to replace Maclay Bridge, and two days later Fourth Judicial District Judge, C. E. Comer issued a Judgment and Decree ordering the Missoula Board of County Commissioners and the County Surveyor "to immediately... appropriate, designate, allocate and assign the sum of \$20,000 from the capital outlay account of the Bridge Funds of Missoula County." The commissioners authorized the expenditure during their regular meeting on June 13.<sup>43</sup>

On the first of July, the commissioners authorized the County Surveyor to submit the Maclay Bridge plans to the Montana Highway Department for review. Two months later, on August 29, 1952, the county directed County Clerk Joe E. Brown to advertise for bids for the "erection of the abandoned Nine Mile Prairie Bridge located approximately 35 miles north of Missoula . . . at the Maclay site approximately six miles southwest of Missoula."<sup>44</sup> The county received only one proposal when it opened bids on September 25. The Spokane-based Hansen and Parr Construction Company bid \$35,728 for the job. When the commissioners began discussing the proposal and the fact that only \$20,000 was available for the project, Parr hastily reconfigured the company's bid, eventually lowering it to \$23,840 to.<sup>45</sup> Residents of the area who would be served by the new bridge met with attorneys Jack Rimel and R. E. Bulen and decided against raising additional private funds to complete the project. Consequently, on September 27, the county commissioners rejected Hansen and Parr's bid.

Henry Berky, who attended the commission proceedings, announced that he could relocate the Nine Mile Prairie Bridge to the Maclay crossing and place the structure on the existing piers for less than \$20,000. The commissioners withheld action on Berky's claim, but directed the County Clerk to re-advertise for

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<sup>41</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book V: 364; "Change Order: Maclay Bridge Site," O. B. Parsons, Chairman, Board of County Commissioners to H. B. Berky & Son, Contractors, November 3, 1948.

<sup>42</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book W: 534.

<sup>43</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book W: 641.

<sup>44</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book X: 41.

<sup>45</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book X: 1, 60.

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bids, to be opened on October 1. In addition, Commissioner Thomas Duncan inquired about the ownership of the concrete piers at the Maclay crossing indicating that because Berky had built them (but had not been paid for the work), he felt that the county needed an agreement with Berky to protect itself from possible litigation.<sup>46</sup> The commissioners received two bids on October 1, 1952, one from Berky & Son and the other from Hansen and Parr. On October 24, they accepted Berky's bid of \$19,500 and entered into a verbal contract with him to construct the approaches for an additional \$400.<sup>47</sup>

Berky completed the project in late January of 1953, after which he requested County Surveyor, Vernon R. Peterson, to make a final inspection. Peterson completed the inspection on January 30, reporting that Berky successfully completed the main contract and had also installed the decking, which had not been included in his work schedule. He concluded: "Under Article 4 of the contract agreement, I approve the work of contractor Berky as being satisfactorily carried out, and that final payment can thus be made in accordance with this article."<sup>48</sup>

Despite Peterson's recommendation, during its March 31 meeting the commissioners indicated that Berky & Son's six claims for work on the Maclay Bridge (totaling \$42,208.79) were "disallowed."<sup>49</sup> Berky was forced to sue Missoula County to recover the cost of labor and material incurred during the Maclay Bridge project. The District Court case was decided in favor of the plaintiffs. During their September 9 regular meeting the commissioners voted two to one to pay Berky the \$39,750 owed him for the Maclay Bridge project. The court also ordered the county to pay Berky's attorney's fees.<sup>50</sup>

For the next ten years, the Maclay Bridge withstood the seasonal flooding that periodically impacted the area. However, a major flood event in the spring of 1964 washed out a southeast approach span and a substantial portion of the east river bank.<sup>51</sup> The following September, the Missoula County Commissioners contracted with the Pew Bridge Company of Missoula to build two new pre-stressed concrete approach spans at a cost of \$27,583 (Figure 5).<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion

Since completion of the prestressed concrete approach spans in 1964, the only modifications to the Maclay Bridge have been the application of the corrugated metal deck with asphalt overlay and the addition of the guardrails, the latter likely within the last 20 years. Other than limited periods of closure resulting from flood events, some iteration of a Maclay Bridge has been in continuous use since the early 1890s. The present bridge illustrates the creativity envisioned by the Missoula County Commissioners in the face of the fiscal constraints of the time. The current bridge has served, and continues to serve, Missoula County residents for over 60 years.

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<sup>46</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book X: 60, 62.

<sup>47</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book X: 85.

<sup>48</sup> Vernon R. Peterson to County Commissioners, January 30, 1953 (Missoula County Archives, Missoula, Montana).

<sup>49</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book X: 178.

<sup>50</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book X: 311.

<sup>51</sup> Deemed the worst flood in Montana's history, flooding in the spring of 1964 hit most communities in the western part of the state, with the worst impacts in those located along the Rocky Mountain Front. Thirty-one people lost their lives, and millions of dollars of property damage occurred in affected areas. "1964 Flood: Worst flood in Montana History left death, destruction," *Great Falls Tribune*, 22 May 2014. The approach span destroyed by the 1964 flood may have been the one remaining span from the 1922 bridge built by Harrington.

<sup>52</sup> County Commissioners Proceedings, Book CC: 212, 231-233, 240.



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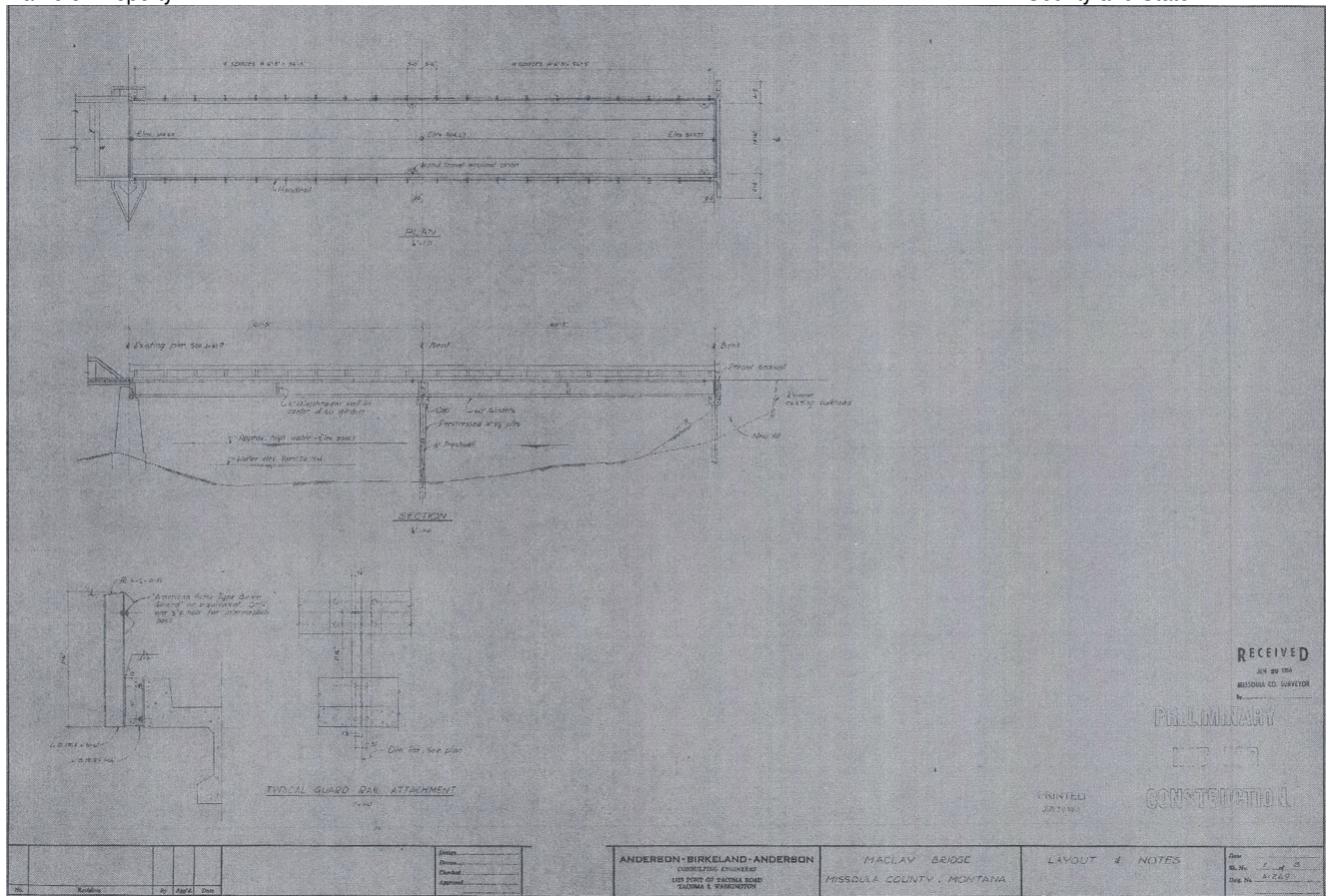


Figure 5. Plans for 1964 prestressed concrete approach spans (courtesy Missoula County Engineering).

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### **Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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US Census Records, 1910-1930. Viewed at: [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).



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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: Records of the Board of County Commissioners, Missoula County Engineering, Missoula, Montana

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

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

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

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                                |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 46.852988 | Longitude: -114.09755443851509 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:                     |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:                     |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:                     |

**Or**

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### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 11 | Easting: 721258 | Northing: 5192918 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting :       | Northing:         |

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

The boundary of this property is drawn to include the four bridge spans (the Parker through truss, the Warren pony truss, and the two prestressed concrete approach spans) the supporting piers and the two abutments. The bridge is 346 feet long and 16 feet wide.

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

Boundary is the extent of the Maclay Bridge proper.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Brian Herbel & Janene Caywood  
organization: Rabbittbrush Archaeological Services / CRCS  
street & number: \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town: Missoula state: Montana zip code: 59807  
e-mail: [crcs@montana.com](mailto:crcs@montana.com)  
telephone: 406 728-9190  
date: October 24, 2016

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### 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.)

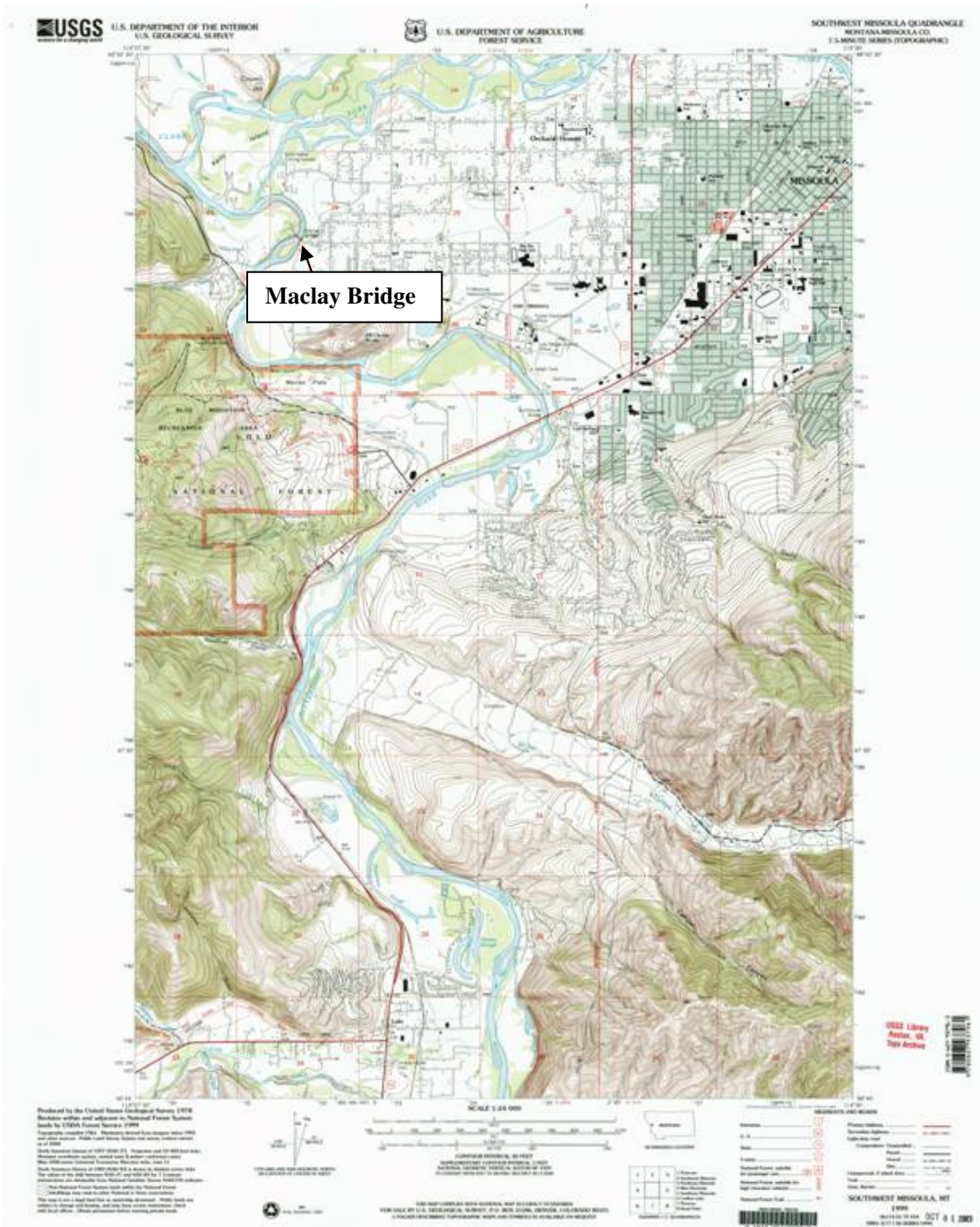
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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7.5' Southwest Missoula (1999) USGS topo map showing the location of the Maclay Bridge, 24MO0521.



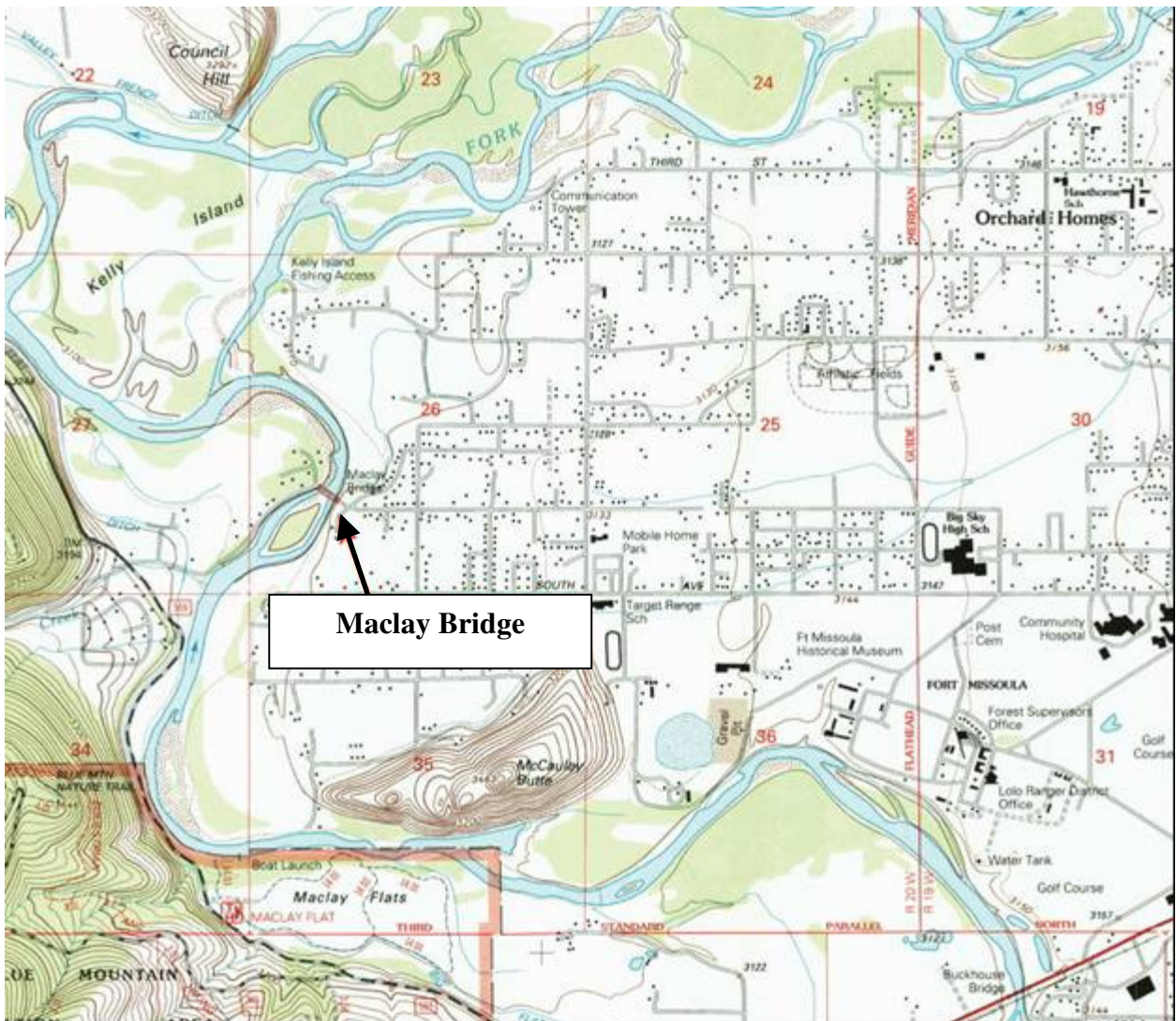
United States Department of the Interior  
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7.5' Southwest Missoula (1999) USGS topo map (detail) showing the location of the Maclay Bridge, 24MO0521.

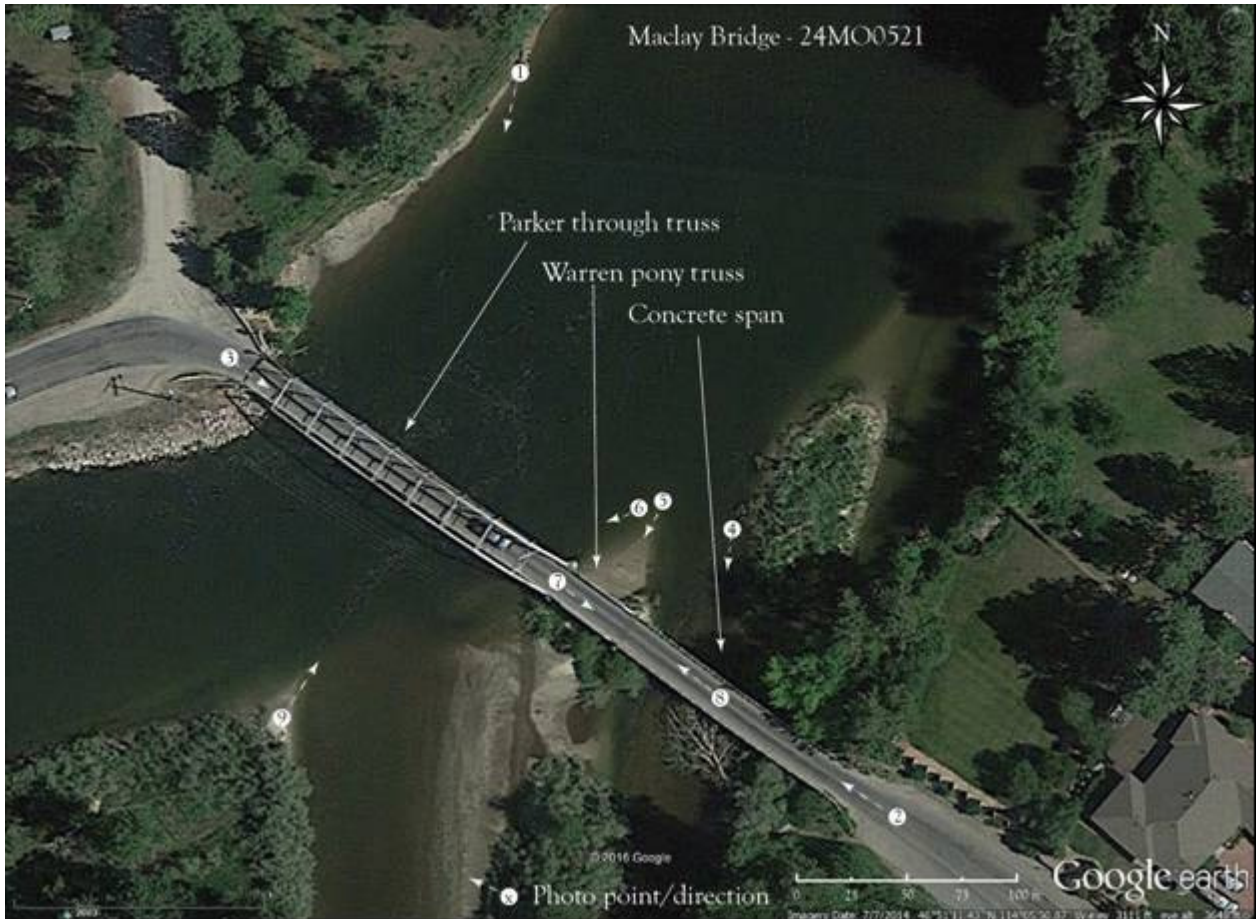
United States Department of the Interior  
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Plan of the Maclay Bridge showing photo points

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**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. 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.

**Photo Log**

**All Photos**

Name of Property: Maclay Bridge

City or Vicinity: Missoula

County: Missoula County

State: Montana

Photographer: Brian Herbel

Date Photographed: July 8, 2016

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



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Photo MT\_MissoulaCounty\_MaclayBridge\_0001 (1 of 9) - Maclay Bridge: overview looking south.

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Photo MT\_MissoulaCounty\_MaclayBridge\_0002 (2 of 9) - Maclay Bridge: view to the northwest from east bank of Bitterroot River.



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Photo MT\_MissoulaCounty\_MaclayBridge\_0003 (3 of 9) Maclay Bridge: view to the southeast from the west bank of the Bitterroot River.

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Photo MT\_MissoulaCounty\_MaclayBridge\_0004 (4 of 9) Maclay Bridge: view to the south showing the two prestressed concrete T-beam approach spans: columnar type concrete pier mid span and solid concrete pier to the right where the span joins the southeast end of the Warren pony truss.

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Photo MT\_MissoulaCounty\_MaclayBridge\_0005 (5 of 9) - Maclay Bridge: view to the southwest showing the Warren pony truss with the circa 1923 solid reinforced concrete pier to the right and possibly circa 1953 pier to the left.



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Photo MT\_MissoulaCounty\_MaclayBridge\_0006 (6 of 9) - Maclay Bridge: view to the west showing the riveted Parker through truss component. Concrete abutment with wing walls on the west bank of the river / solid reinforced concrete pier at the junction of the through-truss and pony-truss components.

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**National Park Service**

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Photo MT\_MissoulaCounty\_MaclayBridge\_0007 (7 of 9) - Maclay Bridge: view to the southeast across the deck of the Warren pony truss component and of the pre-stressed concrete approach spans with high steel I-beam guardrails.

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Photo MT\_MissoulaCounty\_MaclayBridge\_0008 (8 of 9) - Maclay Bridge: view to the northwest across the bridge deck.



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Photo MT\_MissoulaCounty\_MaclayBridge\_0009 (9 of 9) - Maclay Bridge: view to the north showing the panels, channels sections, and angle sections of the riveted Parker through truss span.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.