NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

**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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name: Big Blue River Bridge
other name/site number: NEHBS Number FM00-44

## 2. Location

street & number: county road over West Fork of the Big Blue River — N/A not for publication
city, town: 5 miles north, 1 mile west of Grafton — x vicinity
state NE county: Fillmore code 059 zip code 68365

## 3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Fillmore County
Category of Property: structure

| Number of Resources within Property | |
|---|---|
| Contributing | Noncontributing |
| 0 | 0 buildings |
| 0 | 0 sites |
| 1 | 0 structures |
| 0 | 0 objects |
| 1 | 0 Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0
Name of related multiple property listing: **Highway Bridges in Nebraska, 1870-1942**

## 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.

[signature] DSHPO — 5/6/92
Signature of certifying official — Date

Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

____ entered in the National Register
____ see continuation sheet
____ determined eligible for the National Register ____ see continuation sheet
____ determined not eligible for the National Register
____ removed from the National Register
____ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Function (enter categories from instructions)
TRANSPORTATION/road-related

Current Function (enter categories from instructions)
TRANSPORTATION/road-related

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)
OTHER /concrete filled spandrel arch

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

| | |
|---|---|
| foundation | N/A |
| walls | N/A |
| roof | N/A |
| other | N/A |

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located northwest of Grafton, the Big Blue River Bridge spans the river's west fork in a rural Fillmore County setting that has changed little since the structure's period of significance. Other than maintenance-related repairs, the bridge remains essentially unaltered as it continues to carry vehicular traffic. The Big Blue River Bridge today retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. A description of the structure follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| span number: | 1 | construction date: | 1918 |
| span length: | 50.0' | construction cost: | $4250.00 |
| total length: | 52.0' | current condition: | good |
| roadway wdt.: | 20.0' | alterations: | none |

superstructure: concrete filled spandrel arch
substructure: concrete abutments with flared sloped wingwalls
floor/decking: gravel over earth fill
other features: beveled stringcourse/coping, solid concrete parapet with recessed rectangular panels

___See continuation sheet

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: statewide

| | |
|---|---|
| Applicable National Register Criteria | C |
| Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) | N/A |
| Areas of Significance | Engineering |
| Period of Significance | 1918 (The period of significance is derived from the original construction date.) |
| Significant Dates | 1918 |
| Cultural Affiliation | N/A |
| Significant Person | N/A |
| Architect/Builder (Designer) | Nebraska State Engineer |
| (Builder) | Frank N. Craven, Exeter NE |

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations and areas of significance noted above.

In June 1917 the Fillmore County Board authorized construction of a 40-foot concrete arch on the line between Sections 1 and 2, Grafton Township. It is not clear whether this bridge was ever built, because the road and bridge committee authorized a 50-foot arch on the section line the next year. The state engineer prepared plans for the bridge in early May, and that month the county awarded a contract for its construction to Frank N. Craven of Exeter for $4250.00. He completed the Big Blue River Bridge later that year.

After some initial experimentation with concrete bridge construction in the early 1900s, Fillmore County built concrete arch and slab spans almost exclusively from 1914 through the 1920s. The state engineer appears to have been largely responsible for the county's acceptance of concrete. The state was a major proponent of concrete, believing it to be more durable than steel. Fillmore County relied on state bridge plans until 1918, when it hired William A. Biba as its county engineer. Biba, a graduate of the University of Nebraska, appears to have designed all of the county's bridges until 1931 (using state plans as a model). As the best example of the more than thirty such small-scale concrete structures remaining in the county, the Big Blue River Bridge is technologically significant for its representation of this construction trend.

For further contextual information regarding bridge building in Nebraska, registration requirements, and property types, see related multiple property listing "Highway Bridges in Nebraska, 1870 - 1942."

___See continuation sheet

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Nebraska Department of Roads, Structure Inventory and Appraisal: Structure Number C003001125; Proceedings of the Fillmore County Commissioners, 1903-1920, located in Fillmore County Courthouse, Geneva, Nebraska, refer to the following entries in Book 6: 15 June 1917, p. 285; 21 May 1918, p. 309; State of Nebraska, "Plan For 50-Foot Arch, Sections 1 and 2, Grafton Twp.," 7 May 1918, plan number 509, located in Bridge Division, Nebraska Department of Roads; State Board of Irrigation, **Tenth Biennial Report, 1912-1914**, pp. 231-234; Nebraska Department of Public Works, **Monthly Report** (October 1919): 17; field inspection by Jeffrey A. Hess, 18 April 1989.

___See continuation sheet

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 #

Primary location of additional data:

__x__ State historic preservation office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
Other (specify repository:)

## 10. Geographical Data

| | |
|---|---|
| Acreage of Property | less than one acre |
| Cadastral Reference | S 2, T8N, R4W |
| USGS Quadrangle | Grafton (7.5 Minute Series, 1969) |
| UTM References | zone 14 easting 607400 northing 4505610 |

___See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is a rectangular shaped parcel measuring 52 feet by 22 feet, which is centered on the UTM point listed above. Included within this rectangular parcel are the bridge's superstructure, substructure and floor system.

___See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated structure includes the bridge's superstructure, substructure, floor system, any approach spans and the property on which they rest. These boundaries encompass, but do not exceed, all of the property that has been historically associated with this bridge.

___See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By


| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| name/title | Demian Hess, Research Historian | | |
| organization | Fraserdesign and Hess, Roise and Company | date | 30 June 1991 |
| street & number | 1269 Cleveland Avenue | telephone | 303-669-7969 |
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Photos by Jeffrey A. Hess, Fraserdesign, 18 April 1989 (original negative at NeSHPO)