

# Teton County Historic Site Survey

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road

other name/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number 1/10 mile east of U. S. 89 on Swinging Bridge Road ☐ not for publication

city or town Jackson ☒ vicinity

state Wyoming code WY county Teton code 039 zip code 83001

## 3. Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private  
☒ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## 4. Category of Property

(check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☒ structure  
☐ object

## 5. 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>	_____	Total

## Property Owner

name/title Teton County Board of Commissioners

street & number Teton County Administration Building / 200 S. Willow telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Jackson state WY zip code 83001

## Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

## Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_

## National Register Status:

- ☒ Eligible ☐ Unevaluated  
☐ Not Eligible ☐ District Potential

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: road related

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Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: road related

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Pratt Through Truss Bridge

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Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation      concrete

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walls

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roof

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other      steel

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

**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.)

Property is:

- ☐ **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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Areas of Significance**

Engineering

**Period of Significance**

1959--

**Significant Dates****Significant Persons**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation****Architect/Builder**

Levy Construction Co.

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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:**

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

Teton County Historical Society

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property less than two acres**UTM References**

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/2 5/2/1/1/3/0 4/8/0/2/1/3/8  
Zone Easting Northing2 1/2 / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing3 1/2 / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing4 1/2 / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10**11. Form Prepared By**

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Maps**
- **Photographs:** Representative photographs of the property.



# Teton County Historic Site Survey

## Continuation Sheet

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road

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### **Narrative Description**

The Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road is located about eight miles south of the Y in Jackson and 1/10 mile east of U.S. Highway 89 where Swinging Bridge Road crosses the Snake River.

This bridge is a Pratt Through Truss Bridge with three spans, the center span longer than the two spans on either end, supported by two concrete piers that rise dramatically from the Snake River below; the bridge also rests on two concrete abutments on the banks. The bridge is not situated in a true east-west alignment but at an angle so that it inclines to the northeast as it is viewed from the west. Reflecting its origins at a time when motor vehicles were few and the trucks were small, the bridge is deceptively small, wide enough for only one lane of travel and with an overhead clearance of 12 feet, three inches. The bridge is approximately three hundred fifty feet long.

The bridge deck is wood planking laid crosswise overlaid with two tracks of planks laid lengthwise to support the vehicles crossing. Above the wooden curbing on either side of the bridge a steel diamond grill provides a guardrail inside the truss system which uses the characteristic vertical supports connected in an overhead web. The truss uses a pin connection system rather than a rigid connection system (using rivets) that facilitated assembly in the field.

Adjacent to the truss bridge immediately north on the west bank are the abutments for the footbridge that was replaced in 1938 by the swinging bridge and the abutments for the swinging bridge too. These are not part of the current bridge.

# Teton County Historic Site Survey Continuation Sheet

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road, south of Jackson, Wyoming. Looking north.  
Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

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# Teton County Historic Site Survey Continuation Sheet

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road, south of Jackson, Wyoming. Looking southwest.  
Photo: Michael Cassity, 2005.

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# Teton County Historic Site Survey Continuation Sheet

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road, south of Jackson, Wyoming. Looking northeast.  
Photo: Michael Cassity, 2004.

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# Teton County Historic Site Survey Continuation Sheet

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road, south of Jackson, Wyoming. Looking west. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2005.

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# Teton County Historic Site Survey Continuation Sheet

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road, south of Jackson, Wyoming. Detail of pin connection system in truss system allowing bridge to be dismantled and re-assembled. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2005.

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# Teton County Historic Site Survey Continuation Sheet

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road, south of Jackson, Wyoming. Abutments for footbridge and "swinging bridge." Looking west. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2005.

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# Teton County Historic Site Survey

## Continuation Sheet

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road

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### **Narrative Statement of Significance**

The Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of significance, Engineering. Because of the complexity of the history of the bridge and its removal to this location in 1959, that eligibility, however, may be best construed as beginning in 2009 or 2010.

The Pratt Through Truss bridge system was patented by Thomas and Caleb Pratt in 1844 and was widely adopted in the nation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The truss system itself is an elaborate, and once common, bridge arrangement that uses vertical supports evenly spaced, with each side connected by an overhead web to the other.

The bridges became popular because they were strong and could support the heavy vehicular traffic that was emerging on the nation's roadways whereas many earlier bridge types could support only the horse-drawn and pedestrian traffic that once dominated the roads. They were, moreover, relatively easy to assemble once the piers were sunk. This became a common feature on Wyoming roadways and tended to mark the arrival of automobiles and trucks into an area, and also the concomitant increase in traffic to a particular location. This was, in other words, a critical feature in the modernization of an area, a feature that both allowed and encouraged greater traffic. As engineering technology itself continued to evolve, however, the Pratt Through Truss Bridges of the state began to fade. The first step in that process was to cease building the Pratt bridges; after 1920 few, if any, Pratt bridges were constructed in Wyoming and the state began to use the Warren Truss system for major crossings. The next step was actually to replace the older bridges. The Pratt Through Truss Bridges with straight top chords (such as this bridge) in particular were targets for replacement in bridge overhaul programs; those with polygonal (camelback) top chords were retained longer on the major roadways. After World War II, though, a systematic effort was underway to replace the Pratts and often those bridges were moved from the state highways to less used county roads. This was exactly the fate of this bridge.

Constructed in 1915, this bridge was erected where the Snake River crossed the road between Jackson and Wilson, less than a mile above the current bridge on Highway 22, at a point currently marked by the original piers. (See, in this survey, Snake River Bridge Piers and Jetty.) Once that bridge was replaced by the modern bridge, work began to disassemble the old bridge. At that time, in 1959, parts of the bridge—the original was much longer—were removed to this location where it would replace the historic (1938) but unstable Swinging Bridge.

The history of this particular site is fascinating but murky. Apparently the first crossing here was a footbridge that was subsequently replaced by the Swinging Bridge, a suspension bridge that could carry light vehicular traffic but left much to be desired in stability. That Swinging Bridge was replaced by the current bridge in 1959.



# **Teton County Historic Site Survey**

## **Continuation Sheet**

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road

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The period of historic significance for this bridge could conceivably be extended back to 1915, although that would require a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places to address Consideration B because of its removal from its original location. The alternative is to wait until 2009 or 2010 at which time this bridge will have been at this location for the required fifty years and then nominate it under Criterion C for its engineering features without needing to address its previous history and the circumstances of its removal, and thus its disconnection from its prior history. That approach holds substantive merits too since the extent of disassembly is unclear and it could be that in 1959 and 1960 when the bridge took shape here, it was largely reassembled from parts rather than a wholesale transport of an intact bridge.

# Teton County Historic Site Survey

## Continuation Sheet

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road

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### Bibliography

Daugherty, John. *A Place Called Jackson Hole* (Moose, Wyoming: Grand Teton National Park, 1999).

Fraser, Clayton B., "Vehicular Truss and Arch Bridges in Wyoming," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property nomination form, Wyoming SHPO, 1985.

Huser, Verne. *Wyoming's Snake River: A River Guide's Chronicle of People and Places Plants and Animals* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2001).

Interview with Dave Evans, about November 15, 1991, in Jackson Hole Historical Society oral history collections.

Land Records, Office of the County Clerk, Teton County, Wyoming.

Tonkin, Floy. "The 'Swinging Bridge'," Jackson Hole *Guide*, June 12, 1969.

# **Teton County Historic Site Survey Continuation Sheet**

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Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road

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## **Geographical Data**

### Verbal Boundary Description

This property consists of part of the SW ¼ Section 3, T39, R116.

### Boundary Justification

This boundary includes the property historically associated with the Snake River Bridge at Swinging Bridge Road.