



Historic Bridge Foundation Facebook Archives

Focus Bridges: Alabama

While the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma is undoubtedly Alabama's most famous bridge historically, the state has many other highly significant historic bridges. Florence, Alabama, is home to two impressive bridges over the Tennessee River. Here, a former 1893 railroad bridge, which originally also carried highway traffic on a lower deck, was abandoned when the movable span was relocated to Illinois for reuse in 1993. The surviving pin-connected Warren deck truss spans have been preserved for pedestrian use. Next to this bridge is the current highway bridge, the O'Neal Bridge, a continuous truss bridge built in 1939. Although it no longer remains, this bridge was originally built with a sidewalk that ran down the middle of the roadway, and was only accessible via a stairway that went under the deck and up into the middle of the roadway. This sidewalk was removed to widen the bridge, and now pedestrians are prohibited. The other distinctive feature of this bridge is how the trusses at the ends drop down below the roadway in the manner of a deck truss.

Later large-scale bridges in Alabama were also built with these unusual trusses that dip below the deck level at the ends. Examples include the 1958 Captain John Snodgrass Bridge and the 1961 Steamboat Bill Bridge, both over the Tennessee River. Two dams over the Tennessee River built by the Tennessee Valley Authority also feature a highway bridge component that allows the public to drive over them, and include a high level section that passes over the locks for each dam. One of these is the National Register listed Wheeler Dam, built 1937 and noted for its steel girder and truss spans. Another dam, the 1924 Wilson Dam, is a National Historic Landmark, and its bridge portion consists of concrete arch spans on the dam and a 1959 steel girder section over the locks, which replaced the original low-level bascule span.

One of the most spectacular historic bridges in Alabama is the Bibb Graves Bridge in Watumpka. Built in 1931, this landmark bridge features five concrete through (rainbow) arch spans, plus a deck arch span at each end. The bridge is largely unaltered from its original design and includes concrete benches on the sidewalks. Although this bridge ranks among the largest surviving rainbow arch bridges in the country, it is also the only surviving rainbow arch bridge of any size in Alabama.

The oldest surviving metal bridge in Alabama is the single span Espey Bridge, which is also the state's only known surviving cast and wrought iron bowstring truss bridge. Built in 1882 as part of a four span bridge over the Black Warrior River between Tuscaloosa and Northport, one of the spans was moved during a replacement project in 1897 to New Lexington in northern Tuscaloosa County and placed across

North River on Espey Road. The bridge was again moved and preserved for pedestrian use in a park at Northport. The bridge is a later example of a standard bowstring built by the King Bridge Company of Cleveland, Ohio.



Steamboat Bill Bridge



O'Neal Bridge



Florence Railroad Bridge



Espey Bridge



Edmund Pettus Bridge



Captain John Snodgrass Bridge



Bibb Graves Bridge



Wheeler Dam Bridge



Wilson Dam Bridge