Historic Bridge Foundation Facebook Archives

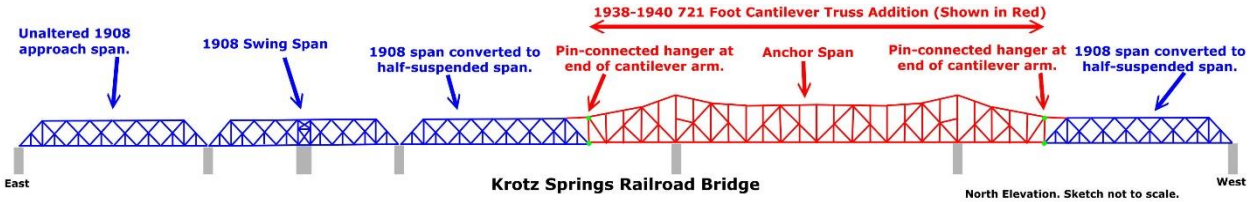
Did You Know…

…That railroad engineers often designed very unusual and creative bridge projects? A great example is the Krotz Springs Railroad Bridge at Krotz Springs: Pointe Coupee and St. Landry Parishes, Louisiana crossing Atchafalaya River.

The bridge was originally built in 1908. Kohman and McMurray constructed the substructure and Union Bridge and Construction Company of Kansas City, Missouri built the superstructure. For the five years prior to construction of a nearby highway bridge, the bridge was modified to carry vehicular traffic as well as train traffic, from 1930-1935. A few years later, the federal government prepared a project to improve the discharge capacity of the river. In order to accommodate this, there was a requirement for the railroad to lengthen the Krotz Springs Bridge with a new 721 foot extension. At this time, the bridge was only around 30 years old, and so the railroad would have not wanted to spend the money to demolish and replace the bridge. Instead, an unusual extension project was designed that made as use of as much of the original bridge as possible, while also providing a larger distance between bridge piers in the river.

This extension took an unusual form. A three span cantilever structure was built, but unlike most 3 span cantilever bridges, the center span was designed as the anchor span while the end spans were cantilever arms. These cantilever arms each held one of the original fixed 1908 Double-intersection Warren through truss approach spans, turning these former simple truss spans into half-suspended spans. The project took place from 1938-1940.

This bridge remains in use today, and as of 2019, steel repairs were being completed on the bridge. The unusual history of the bridge means that the main span of the bridge is neither the visually largest nor the longest span on the bridge. The main swing span length is 305 feet. The cantilever truss's largest span is about 450 feet. The cantilever unit, including the half-suspended spans, is about 1,330 feet. The swing span is 305 feet, and the unaltered fixed truss span is about 295 feet. Traditionally, alterations on historic bridges reduce historic significance. With this bridge, this is not the case. The added cantilever truss span, which dates to a historical period, and represents a significant creative engineering solution, adds to the historical significance of the bridge.



Krotz Springs Railroad Bridge

North Elevation. Sketch not to scale.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