Did You Know…

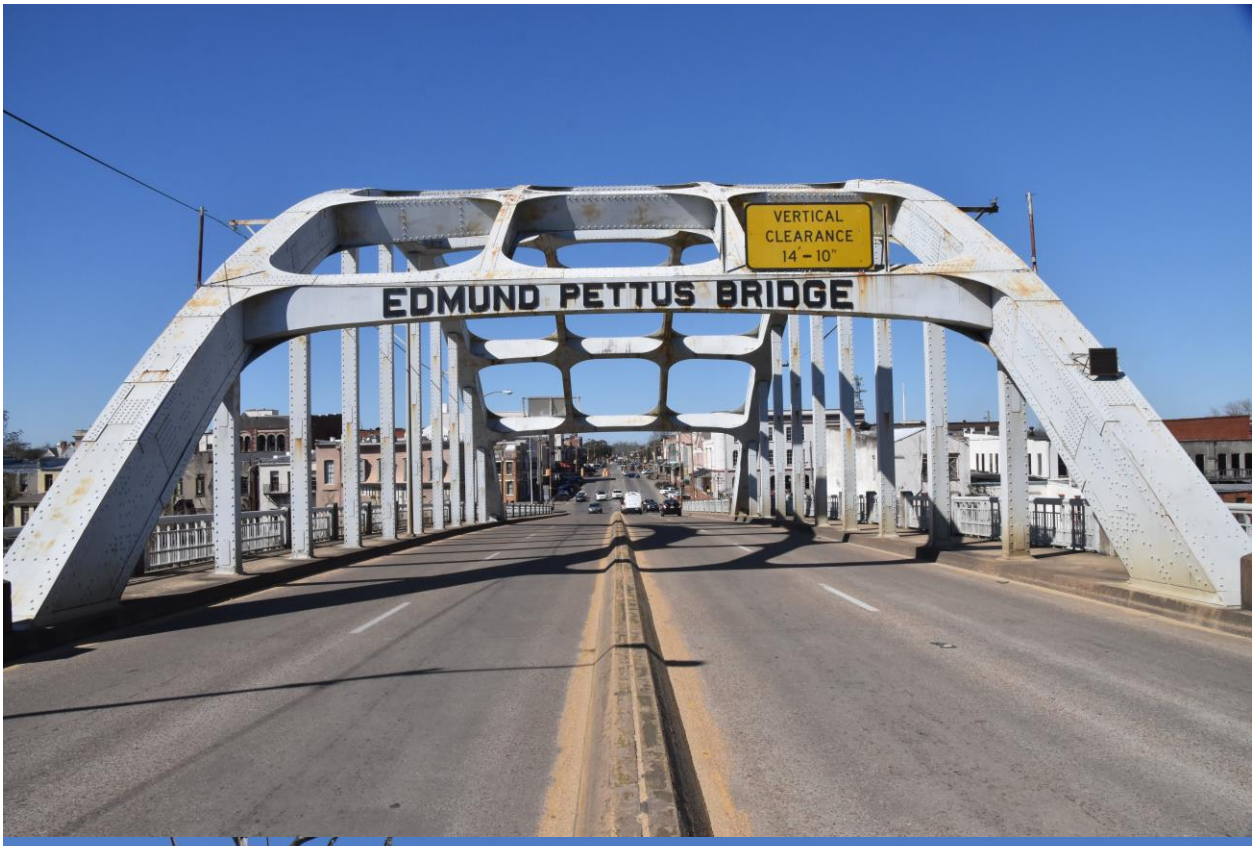
… that the Edmund Pettus Bridge at Selma, Alabama, is one of the most architecturally significant bridges in Alabama? The bridge is one of the few historic bridges in America to be designated as a National Historic Landmark. The reason for this rare designation is the bridge's association with the civil rights movement, particularly Bloody Sunday on March 7, 1965, when law enforcement violently stopped marchers who were fighting for voting rights legislation. The bridge's significance in the more traditional areas of engineering and architecture is often overlooked in the shadow of this major event in American history.

The bridge was completed in 1940s, and consists of a 250 foot steel though arch main span, which has overhead bracing. The steel arch springs from concrete piers below the deck, with arches that rise above the roadway. The bridge also features 10 concrete open spandrel deck arch approach spans, which vary in span length from 41.5 feet to 154.5 feet. The overall length of the bridge is 1,248.6 feet, and the bridge features a total deck width of 56 feet.

Selma sits on a bluff, which makes the banks of the Alabama River uneven. As such, there are nine concrete arch spans of increasing span length leading from the south end to the through arch, forming an approach ramp up to the through arch span. North of the through arch span toward Selma there is only one concrete arch approach span.

The bridge has a number of unique architectural features. The steel sidewalk railings are of particular interest. The panels include ornate Art Deco style plates within each panel. The top of the railing features a steel pipe that was rolled by Bethlehem Steel. The steel arch span is also noted for its striking overhead bracing design which differs from traditional period design. The bracing steel is laid out in a grid-like arrangement, with curved details at the corners where the members intersect, forming a unique overhead pattern of rounded rectangles.

The bridge appears to retain good historic integrity, with no major alterations to the original design and materials of the bridge. The bridge retains its original railings, and there are no major repairs noted to steel arch or the concrete arch approach spans. The bridge appears essentially the same as it did during Bloody Sunday, and appears to be largely identical in appearance to its original 1940 design.


VERTICAL
CLEARANCE
14 – 10"
EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE