

Kansas

Brush Creek Bridge

The Brush Creek Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Source of the following photo and Overview is:

<https://www.nps.gov/places/brush-creek-bridge.htm#:~:text=Built%20in%201923%2C%20the%20130-foot%20bridge%20carried%20Route,the%20National%20Register%20of%20Historic%20Places%20in%201983>



NPS Photo courtesy of Rhys Martin

Overview of Brush Creek Bridge

Three and a half miles north of Baxter Springs, Kansas stands the elegant Brush Creek Bridge, the only remaining example of a fixed Marsh Rainbow Arch bridge left on Kansas Route 66. Two other examples, the Spring River and Willow Creek bridges, were dismantled in the early 1990s.

The Brush Creek Bridge, also known as the Rainbow Bridge, was part of a project in the early 1920s to connect the mining communities of Galena, Riverton, and Baxter Springs with a concrete road. The unique and graceful Rainbow Arch design was the brainchild of James Barney Marsh, a bridge designer from Iowa, who patented the concrete and steel truss design in 1912. Marsh spent the next two decades erecting approximately 70 of his Rainbow Arch bridges throughout the Midwest, most of them in Kansas, where approximately 35 still remain.

The bridge consists of a pair of arches disposed between two abutments, with concrete banister railings aligned...[with the edges of] the bridge deck. The original patents called for slidable wear plates, molded into the concrete where the bridge deck came into contact with the...abutments. This is important, as one of the main benefits of this design was to allow for the expansion and contraction of the reinforced concrete bridge under varying conditions of temperature and moisture. Built in 1923, the 130-foot bridge carried Route 66 motorists over Brush Creek until it was bypassed by the interstate in the 1960s.

The Brush Creek Bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. In 1992, upon seeing two other Marsh Arch bridges on the short stretch of Route 66 through Kansas dismantled, the Kansas Historic Route 66 Association worked successfully to save the Brush Creek Bridge. At this time, a new bridge was built just to the east of the Brush Creek Bridge to redirect and accommodate the increasing needs of local traffic. Two years later, the Association and the Cherokee County Commission combined efforts to make important repairs to the Brush Creek Bridge. In 2005, the National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program provided additional Cost-Share Grant funds to assist with repairs to the concrete superstructure.

The Brush Creek Bridge can be reached by driving north on N. Willow Ave. (Southeast 50th) approximately 3.5 miles out of Baxter Springs, KS. Although local traffic has been rerouted around the bridge, it is still possible to walk or drive across the bridge.

1. **Historic Significance:** Served as an element in Route 66, a highway which is historically significant for its effect on regional and national economic, social, and political development.
2. **Contributions:** Supported Route 66's role in contributing to region and national growth.
3. **Uniqueness:** See Uniqueness narrative for Route 66 as a whole in the Nomination Discussion section.
4. **Date of original construction:** Constructed in 1923 to 1924.
1926 – newly designated Route 66 routed over the bridge
Circa 1992 – replacement bridge built nearby
5. **Names of key engineers:** Bridge designed by engineer James B. Marsh.
6. **Photographs:** Included above.
7. **Additional documentation:** National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form. Available at: https://www.kshs.org/resource/national_register/nominationsNRDB/Cherokee_BrushCreekBridgeNR.pdf

Location: 37 04 24.5 N 94 44 27.0 W

Local and vicinity maps: The Brush Creek Bridge can be reached by driving north on N. Willow Ave. (Southeast 50th) approximately 3.5 miles out of Baxter Springs, KS. Although local traffic has been rerouted around the bridge, it is still possible to walk or drive across the bridge.

