

Bridge # 18 at Rock Creek

Bridge # 18 at Rock Creek is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Source of the following photo and Overview is: <https://www.nps.gov/places/bridge-18-rock-creek.htm>



NPS Photo courtesy of Rhys Martin

Overview of Bridge # 18 at Rock Creek

Of the great number of bridges built on Route 66, Bridge #18 at Rock Creek is one of the better examples of the remaining steel-truss bridges in Oklahoma. Truss bridges were developed in the mid-1800s and used extensively until World War II, when technology changed and more standardized concrete designs were developed.

In terms of lineage, the ancestor of the steel-truss bridge is the beam bridge, usually built of wood and limited in the amount of weight it could support. As a result, early roads generally followed old trails where rivers and creeks were shallow. Even bridges that were quite long were located at shallow crossings.

One of the oldest types of modern bridges, truss bridges were altogether something new. Bridge #18 at Rock Creek is composed of connected elements, in this case steel beams, which stressed by tension and compression (or sometimes both) in response to dynamic and heavier loads. Because of truss bridges, deeper water could be safely crossed. Roadways no longer had to meander from one low-water crossing to another. Instead they could be built along the shortest route. Bridge #18 is a Parker through truss bridge. Its

ancestor is the beam bridge, while its descendants are today's cantilever, truss-arch, and lattice bridges. Unusual for a steel truss bridge, #18 has brick decking.

Bridge #18 is an illustration of the bridges of its era. Route 66 travelers who crossed Rock Creek near Sapulpa during the late 1920s would have thought the bridge the most dynamic design of its time, and it was. Constructed in 1924, #18 served as part of the old Ozark Trail, one of the few marked U. S. roads at the time. It became part of Route 66 in 1926. Just over a decade later the State's entire section of Route 66 was paved. The bridge served Route 66 until the construction of a new alignment in 1952. The bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.

1. **Historic Significance:** Bridge No. 18 is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has significance under National Register criteria A and C. Criterion A is that: Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. Criterion C is that: 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. As stated in the National Register of Historic Places form, Bridge No. 18 at Rock Creek, constructed in 1924 southwest of Sapulpa, is significant as an excellent example of a Parker Through Truss bridge on Route 66 in Oklahoma. The Parker Through Truss is a Pratt Truss with a polygonal top chord. This type of bridge design was used extensively along Route 66 during the first quarter of the twentieth century for large bridges. The Pratt Truss was developed in 1844 and was used extensively until the beginning of World War II when bridge technology changed and new and better designs were developed.
2. **Contributions:** Supported Route 66's role in contributing to regional and national growth.
3. **Uniqueness:** Bridge No. 18 has brick decking on a steel Parker Through Truss.
4. **Date of original construction:** Constructed in 1924. Likely closed in 1952.
5. **Names of key engineers:** Designer unknown. Constructed by the Concrete and Steel Construction Company, a New York company with an office in Joplin, Missouri.
6. **Photographs:** Included above.
7. **Additional documentation:** National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. Available at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/86510015>
8. **References:**
County Commissioners Report, November 16, 1921, p.125.
Snyder, Tom. The Route 66 Traveler's Guide and Roadside Companion. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.
State of Oklahoma Department of Highways. "Plans and Profile of Proposed State Highway including Bridge No. 18 over Rock Creek," 1924-1925.

Location: West Ozark Trail, Sapulpa, OK 35 59 37.2 N 96 08 10.2 W

Local and vicinity maps: (following page)

