Texas

Bridge over the Chicago, Rock Island, and Gulf Railroad

The Bridge over the Chicago, Rock Island, and Gulf Railroad is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Source of the following photo and Overview is: https://www.nps.gov/places/route-66-bridge-over-chicago-rock-island-and-gulf-railroad.htm#:~:text=It%20was%20listed%20in%20the%20National%20Register%20of,part%20of%20a%20frontage%20road%20for%20Interstate%2040

NPS Photo by Judson McCranie

Overview of Bridge over the Chicago, Rock Island, and Gulf Railroad

The Route 66 Bridge over the former Chicago, Rock Island, and Gulf Railroad right-of-way is a Route 66 landmark that travelers might miss if they're not looking for it. The bridge stands in the arid plains eight miles east of Shamrock, five-and-a-half miles west of the Oklahoma State line, and 12 miles southeast of Wheeler.

The Kiowa and Comanche Indians once lived in the area, hunting great herds of buffalo. Anglos arrived in the late 1800s, replacing the buffalo with crops, sheep, and Hereford cattle. During the 1920s, agriculture in the Texas Panhandle boomed. The oil industry emerged, generating substantial growth in Amarillo, which became a commercial and corporate center of the region. Highways had to be built to connect the relatively isolated Panhandle to the rest of the country.

Paved in 1932, Route 66 was the primary road in this development. The highway passed through numerous small towns, most of which had fewer than 500 residents. The high plains of the Panhandle are relatively flat, so the area didn't require many bridges, which makes the bridge in Wheeler County somewhat unusual. The bridge passed over the railroad tracks for the Chicago, Rock Island, and Gulf Railroad running 25 feet below the roadbed of Route 66.

The bridge designer was concerned that steel I-beams supporting the bridge deck above the railroad track would be exposed to blasts of coal smoke and water vapor from steam engines passing below. To address this problem, the designers did something a little unusual for 1932. They encased the steel beams in concrete. The result is a five span, 126-foot bridge with a main span of concrete-encased beams. Other spans are made of reinforced concrete girder units resting on reinforced concrete pile bents. Encasing the steel beams in concrete helped to protect the structure from harsh weather and blast from the locomotives which passed beneath it. [This paragraph has been revised to better explain the purpose of concrete-encased beams.]

The Route 66 Bridge in Wheeler County has not been altered since its construction, allowing visitors a good look at the design, workmanship, and materials of its era. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.

The Route 66 Bridge over the Chicago, Rock Island, and Gulf Railroad crosses the Chicago, Rock Island, and Gulf Railroad eight miles east of Shamrock, TX, and remains in use as part of a frontage road for Interstate 40.

1. **Historic Significance:** The Statement of Significance in the National Register nomination reads, "The Route 66 Bridge over the Chicago, Rock Island and Gulf Railroad near Shamrock, Wheeler County, Texas, is nominated to the National Register under Criteria A and C at the state level of significance for its historical and engineering significance. As part of Route 66, the bridge reflects the development and history of the national highway, which served as the main corridor from the Midwest to the West during the early to mid-twentieth century. The bridge's concrete encased steel I-beam design is noteworthy and is one of the few examples of this bridge type in Texas, and is the last vehicular bridge in Texas directly associated with Route 66."
2. **Contributions:** Supported Route 66's role in contributing to regional and national growth.
3. **Uniqueness:** The steel beams of the main span are encased in concrete. The result is a 126-foot long bridge with a main span of concrete-encased beams.
4. **Date of original construction**: Constructed in 1932.
   1960 - Interstate 40 completed immediately to the north and served as a replacement to Route 66. The bridge became part of the I-40 frontage road.
5. **Names of key engineers**: Designed by Engineer M. L. Grady, an employee of the Texas State Highway Department's Bridge Division.
6. **Photographs:** Included above.
7. **Additional documentation**: National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. Available at: https://catalog.archives.gov/id/40970769

8. **References:** Cassity, Michael. "Route 66 Corridor National Historic Context Study." Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, National Trails System Office - Intermountain Region, National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico, December 15, 2004.

"Route 66: Across 1930s Texas," in Texas: A Guide to the Lone Star State. Federal Writers' Project of the Works Projects Administration for the State of Texas, 1940.

Texas Department of Transportation. Historic Bridge Inventory, Structure 25 242 0275-23-001. August 31, 1999.

Texas Highway Department, Texas Highway Map, 1939.

Young, Nancy Beck. "Chicago, Rock Island and Gulf Railway," The Handbook of Texas Online, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/chicago-rock-island-and-gulf-railway

Location: 35 13 35.1 N 100 06 20.1 W

Local and vicinity maps: The Route 66 Bridge over the former right-of-way of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Gulf (CRI&G) Railroad is located on the Interstate 40 Frontage Road on the south side of I-40 approximately eight miles east of the town of Shamrock, Texas. The bridge is approximately 5.5 miles west of the Oklahoma state line.