

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Austin Bridge  
Neosho County, Kansas  
Nomination Amendment

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**Austin Bridge**  
**Neosho County, Kansas**

***Background***

The Austin Bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places September 15, 1977. A proposal to relocate the bridge and retain its National Register status was approved by the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review in February 1996. The Keeper of the National Register approved the relocation request on August 2, 1996.

This amendment provides additional information on the new location and history of the bridge. It is intended to supplement and update the information provided in the original nomination.

***Section 2: Location***

Street and Number: West side of Santa Fe Street south of 21<sup>st</sup> Street  
City: Chanute  
State: Kansas  
Code: KS  
County: Neosho  
Code: 133  
Zip Code: 66720

***Section 7 – Narrative Description***

Prior to its relocation in 1996, the Austin Bridge included two sections – a bowstring truss and a Pratt truss. These two trusses were linked together when they were moved to the Austin town site in 1910. Prior to 1910, they had functioned independently of one another.

The bowstring section of the bridge was relocated in 1996. It was moved two miles west and one-and-one-half miles north of its former location and placed over Little Turkey Creek, a tributary of the Neosho River in the city of Chanute. That location is just downstream of Santa Fe Lake, and Little Turkey Creek is the outlet for the lake. The Santa Fe Railroad originally constructed lake as a backup water supply. It was later given to the city and over the years the area surrounding it has been landscaped into a park with hiking trails and picnic areas. Little Turkey Creek is a small stream bordered by trees within the park itself. The new orientation is roughly north/south. When originally erected, the orientation was east/west and after the first relocation was northeast/southwest. This is in the SE ¼, NE ¼, S. 32, T. 27, R. 18.

The new bridge abutments and round support columns are constructed of concrete. It features a wood-plank surface.

***Section 8 – Statement of Significance***

The bowstring structure is significant because of its association with Zenas King of the King Wrought Iron Bridge Company of Topeka. King was originally from Cleveland, Ohio, but came to Iola in 1871 and convinced the city to vote bonds and erect a large bridge and iron works. It went into operation that fall and appeared to be quite successful. By September 1872, we find King having negotiated an agreement with the city of Topeka and the Santa Fe Railroad to remove the plant to that new location. King defaulted on the Iola bonds and moved to Topeka. By the fall of 1873, it would again close its doors and move out of town. The plant was reestablished in Cleveland and was quite successful. The corporation was dissolved in 1906. Although several bridges were fabricated in Topeka during his stay, the Austin Bridge is the only one known to exist in the state.

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King fabricated bridges up to at least 500 feet in length, but most of what we have in existence in Kansas is in the 50-foot range. At 160 feet, this is certainly the longest remaining King Patent Bowstring remaining in Kansas and, at the time of its relocation in 1996, was one of just four king bridges in the state.

By the mid-1990s, the bridge had again fallen into disrepair. After the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review and the Keeper of the National Register approved the relocation request, ISTEA funding was used to relocate the bridge to become part of a walking and biking trail in the Chanute area.

The bridge was listed in the National Register initially because of its length and its association with King and the Topeka bridge works. This significance has not changed. The bridge was not listed in the register because of its location. The Pratt truss that was added in 1910 was not moved when the bridge was relocated in 1996. The Pratt truss was not considered significant, however, because it was added to the structure in 1910 and the bridge was listed for its bowstring, not the Pratt.<sup>1</sup>

**Section 10 – Geographical Information**

*UTM Coordinates*

Chanute, KS Quad Map (NAD 1927)      Zone 15      283620 E      4170360 N

**Additional Documentation**

*Archeological Effects*

Prior to the relocation of the bridge, the Kansas State Historic Preservation Office reviewed its cultural resource files for the area proposed for relocation of the Austin Bridge in accordance with 36 CFR 800. The location crosses Little Turkey Creek, a tributary of the Neosho River in the city of Chanute. The proposed relocation was reviewed to have no effect on properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places or otherwise identified in our files. This office had no objection to the implementation of the project.

*Photographs*

Property Name:      Austin Bridge / Neosho County, KS  
Photographer:      Kim Smith (photos 1 & 2); Sarah Martin (Photos 3 & 4)

Photo 1: View of bridge in new location spanning Little Turkey Creek, facing S – taken November 5, 2009

Photo 2: View of bridge in new location, facing S – taken November 5, 2009

Photo 3: View of bridge in new location, looking across bridge, facing NW – taken June 28, 2011

Photo 4: View of bridge in new location, showing concrete supports, facing E – taken June 28, 2011

\_\_\_\_ See File \_\_\_\_\_

Signature / Patrick Zollner, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

<sup>1</sup> Between 1980 and 1983, the Kansas Department of Transportation and the Kansas State Historical Society partnered to conduct a survey of historic bridges in Kansas. The survey identified 274 Pratt high trusses and 1,040 Pratt low trusses. Eighty-five percent of metal high trusses found in the survey were of the Pratt design. Several significant examples were nominated to and listed in the National Register in 1990. In light of the large number of Pratt trusses, the Kansas State Historical Society was quite selective in identifying National Register candidates. The bridges were evaluated on their rarity, history, condition, manufacturer, and preservation potential. Part of this preservation potential included the potential for continued minimum maintenance. The Pratt truss section of the Austin Bridge was not considered a unique example of Pratt truss construction and little was known of its history.