

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Number:

QA-447

Name:

MD 213 OVER CHESTER RIVER (#140027)

The bridge referenced herein was inventoried by the Maryland State Highway Administration as part of the Historic Bridge Inventory, and SHA provided the Trust with eligibility determinations in February 2001. The Trust accepted the Historic Bridge Inventory on April 3, 2001. The bridge received the following determination of eligibility.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST	
Eligibility Recommended _____	Eligibility Not Recommended <u> X </u>
Criteria: <u> A </u> <u> B </u> <u> C </u> <u> D </u>	Considerations: <u> A </u> <u> B </u> <u> C </u> <u> D </u> <u> E </u> <u> F </u> <u> G </u> None
Comments: _____	
_____	
Reviewer, OPS: <u> Anne E. Bruder </u>	Date: <u> 3 April 2001 </u>
Reviewer, NR Program: <u> Peter E. Kurtze </u>	Date: <u> 3 April 2001 </u>

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**Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties  
Historic Bridge Inventory  
Maryland State Highway Administration  
Maryland Historical Trust**

MHT No. QA 447Name and SHA No. Chester River Bridge (140027)**Location:**Street/Road Name and Number: MD Route 213 over the Chester RiverCity/Town: Chestertown \_\_\_\_\_ \_vicinityCounty: Kent/Queen Anne's \_\_\_\_\_Ownership:  State  County  Municipal  OtherThis bridge projects over:  Road  Railway  Water  LandIs the bridge located within a designated district:  yes  no NR listed district  NR determined eligible district locally designated  otherName of District Chestertown Historic District \_\_\_\_\_**Bridge Type:** Timber Bridge Beam Bridge  Truss-Covered  Trestle  Timber-and-Concrete Stone Arch Metal Truss Bridge Movable Bridge Swing  Bascule Single Leaf  Bascule Multiple Leaf Vertical Lift  Retractable  Pontoon Metal Girder Rolled Girder  Rolled Girder Concrete Encased Plate Girder  Plate Girder Concrete Encased Metal Suspension Metal Arch Metal Cantilever Concrete Concrete Arch  Concrete Slab  Concrete Beam  Rigid Frame Other Type Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Description:**

**Describe Setting:**

*The Chester River Bridge carries MD Rte. 213 over the Chester River in a northwest/southeast direction, connecting Kings Town in Queen Anne's County and Chestertown in Kent County. Chestertown is a historic community of small-scale eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth century buildings. The abutment for the Chestertown side of the bridge begins approximately 120 feet from the intersection of Water Street and Maple Avenue. MD 213 is the most important and heavily travelled highway in the northeast section of the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Chestertown is the geographic and commercial center of the area.*

**Describe Superstructure and Substructure:**

*The Chester River Bridge is a reinforced concrete structure 1,470 feet long and approximately 29 feet wide, supported by 36 four-pile bents, two bascule piers and two reinforced concrete abutments. It consists of a double leaf rolling lift bascule draw span approached from both ends by a series of concrete girder spans. The bascule span is 89 feet in length. A rolling lift bascule is one in which the center of rotation moves away from the opening as the span swings upward. Fenders built in the water at the corner of each movable span protect the spans from possible impact from ships passing through the channel.*

*The girder spans total 34 thirty-five foot spans and 4 thirty-three foot spans. It is a two-lane structure, built low to the water, arching gently in the center to about 12 feet above mean high tide. The concrete is gray-tan in color with yellow and brown river run gravel. The bridge exhibits Neoclassical detailing both in its cast concrete railings with massive rectangular balusters and in the bridge keeper's building located at the western end of the draw span. The bridge railings are cast in sections that correspond to the distance between the piers. Art Deco-inspired lamp posts hold octagonal bronze lanterns at both portals. Lanterns at the beginning and end of the draw span are also set in bronze posts.*

*The replacement approach spans are constructed of concrete with set-in panels of brick and capped with concrete. Century Engineering, Inc. was given an award in 1990, for excellence in architectural and engineering design using precast, prestressed concrete in the new approach spans.*

*The bridge tender's house is 11 feet 4 inches square and is located at the western corner of the draw span. On each facade is a three-part window, a wide one-over-one sash window set between two narrow one-over-one sash. The doorway is also set between two side lights. The roof is ogee-shaped. The building is original and is constructed of the same concrete as the bridge.*

*There are three bronze plaques attached to the bridge. One, in the center span, is inscribed with the date of construction and the names of the men involved in its construction:*

**CHESTER RIVER BRIDGE**  
**BUILT 1930**  
**STATE ROADS COMMISSION**  
**HOWARD BRIDE JOHN K. SHAW**  
**H.D. WILLIAR, JR. - CHIEF ENGINEER**  
**W.C. HOPKINS - BRIDGE ENGINEER**

*A dedication plaque is attached to the base of the lamp post on the Chestertown side. It dedicates the bridge to "the Ex-Service Men of Kent County and of Queen Anne's County." The November 11, 1930 dedication was sponsored by the Frank M. Jarman - Jefferson Davis Post of the American Legion. The third plaque announces the reconstruction of the Chester River Bridge by Century Engineering, Inc., Design Consultants, and McLean Contracting Company, Contractor, in 1989.*

**Discuss major alterations:**

*The deck of the bascule span was replaced in 1967, when the original timber deck was replaced with a steel grid deck. In 1988-1989, the bascule girders and the superstructure were removed and repaired off-site. At the same time the existing concrete girders were repaired, new roadway joints were constructed, an impervious wearing surface was installed, new pile jackets were placed on all piles, new concrete barriers and a new fender system were installed. The bascule machinery was rehabilitated and new expansion bearings were installed at the same time. The approach spans were replaced with precast sections in 1990. The bascule span was also rehabilitated in 1990. At some time after its 1988-1989 installation, the new fender system was removed.*

**History:**

**When Built:** 1930/1989/1990

**Why Built:** To replace an earlier bridge that was inadequate to handle increased traffic.

**Who Built:** State Roads Commission/Century Engineering, Inc.

**Who Designed:** 1930: J. E. Greiner and Co. under the direction of H. D. Williar, Jr. and W. G. Hopkins, State Roads Commission/1990: Century Engineering, Inc.

**Why Altered:** For repairs to deteriorated sections.

**Was this bridge built as part of an organized bridge building campaign:**

*Yes. The 1920s and 1930s saw an active bridge-building program to replace narrow and unsafe bridges on the major highways of the Eastern Shore. Since the Good Roads Movement of the 1880s, Maryland citizens had been increasingly vocal in their demands for better roads. While the Eastern Shore had long relied on navigable waterways to transport goods to market, the decline of steamboat traffic and the rise of faster, more efficient vehicular traffic required action. With the growth in the number of automobiles and trucks early in the twentieth century, the need for better roads became particularly urgent. The program carried out in the 1920s and 1930s came in response to the shift from steamboats to motor trucks as the principal carriers of the region's agricultural produce to markets in Baltimore and beyond.*

**Surveyor Analysis:****This bridge may have NR significance for association with:** A Events  B Person C Engineering/Architectural Character**Was the bridge constructed in response to significant events in Maryland or local history?**

*Rivers and streams provided the primary means of transportation on the Eastern Shore before the twentieth century. If bridges were built across navigable rivers, they had to be either high enough to allow ships clearance beneath the bridge or they had to be movable to allow navigation on the waterway. High, fixed bridges required extensive approach work and very high grades; hence, movable bridges became the primary technological method for spanning the Eastern Shore's navigable rivers (Spero 1994:85).*

*By the 1920s, however, vehicular traffic was taking precedence over steamboats as the primary carriers of the region's agricultural and maritime produce to market. The decline of steamboat transportation left the Eastern Shore isolated and its economy damaged. Highway transportation was faster, but it required building better and wider roads and bridges that could accommodate increased traffic volumes, loads, and speeds. The Chester River Bridge was one of a group of movable bridges constructed on the Eastern Shore in the 1920s and 1930s to meet this need.*

*This Chester River Bridge was built to replace an earlier timber bridge that was too narrow to accommodate the increased traffic volumes. It is the fourth bridge constructed at this location. The first was built in 1821 to supersede ferry service that had been operating since 1708.*

**When the bridge was built and/or given a major alteration, did it have a significant impact on the growth and development of the area?**

*While its precise influence on the growth and development of Chestertown at the time of its construction is not known with certainty, it is presumed that a wider crossing at this point, with a capability to handle increased traffic loads and speeds, would have had a positive economic impact on the town by facilitating improved transport of goods and services.*

**Is the bridge located in an area which may be eligible for historic designation and would the bridge add to or detract from the historic and visual character of the possible district?**

*Chestertown, a historic district dating from the eighteenth century, is situated at the northwestern end of the Chester River Bridge. The town has been designated a National Historic Landmark. At the time of its designation, the boundaries of the historic district were drawn to exclude the bridge, probably because of its relatively late date; however, its low elevation and combined Neoclassical and Art Deco-influenced styling add to the visual character of the historic district.*

**Is the bridge a significant example of its type?**

*The Chester River Bridge is the last of the upper Shore bridges built during the 1920s and 1930s that is still in good condition. It is also one of the few remaining movable bridges on the Eastern Shore.*

*It is significant under Criterion A for its role in the development of transportation on the Eastern Shore during the Modern Period, when vehicular traffic took precedence over steamboats to transport local agricultural and maritime products to markets in Baltimore and beyond.*

*It is significant under Criterion C as one of only 20 bascule bridges remaining in Maryland. Bascule bridges currently are more common than other forms of movable bridges on the Eastern Shore. They were the earliest type of movable bridge built in Maryland, and although swing bridges, for a time, gained precedence, bascule bridges garnered renewed interest with the development by the State Roads Commission of standardized reinforced concrete bridges (Spero 1994). It is also significant for its overall neo-classical design and the Art Deco-inspired lamp posts.*

**Does the bridge retain integrity of the important elements described in the Context Addendum?**

*The bridge retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and association. With the exception of the approach spans, which were replaced in 1990, and the replacement of the deck of the bascule span in 1967, it appears that the concrete girders and the superstructure were repaired rather than replaced. The replacement spans were designed with sensitivity to the overall design of the bridge and do not detract from its architectural and engineering significance. The original lanterns also remain. It retains its original four-pile bents and the bascule piers. The tender's house, with its ogee-shaped roof, also remains. The fender system no longer exists.*

**Is the bridge a significant example of the work of the manufacturer, designer, and/or engineer and why?**

*The Chester River Bridge is a significant example of the collaborative work of the J. E. Greiner Company and the State Roads Commission under H. D. Williar, Jr. and W. G. Hopkins, Chief Engineer. The J. E. Greiner Company was established in 1908 by John Edwin Greiner, a prominent Baltimore engineer, who had previously designed railroad bridges for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The Greiner Company appears to have designed most of the movable bridges on the Eastern Shore during the 1920s and 1930s, and each bridge exhibits a different style and different decorative elements.*

**Should this bridge be given further study before significance analysis is made and why?**

*Further study of this bridge may provide answers to the question of its impact on the growth and development of Chestertown at the time of its construction.*

QA-447

**Provide black and white prints and negatives and color slides of bridge, details, and setting labeled according to NR Bulletin 16A and Maryland Supplement to Bulletin 16A.**

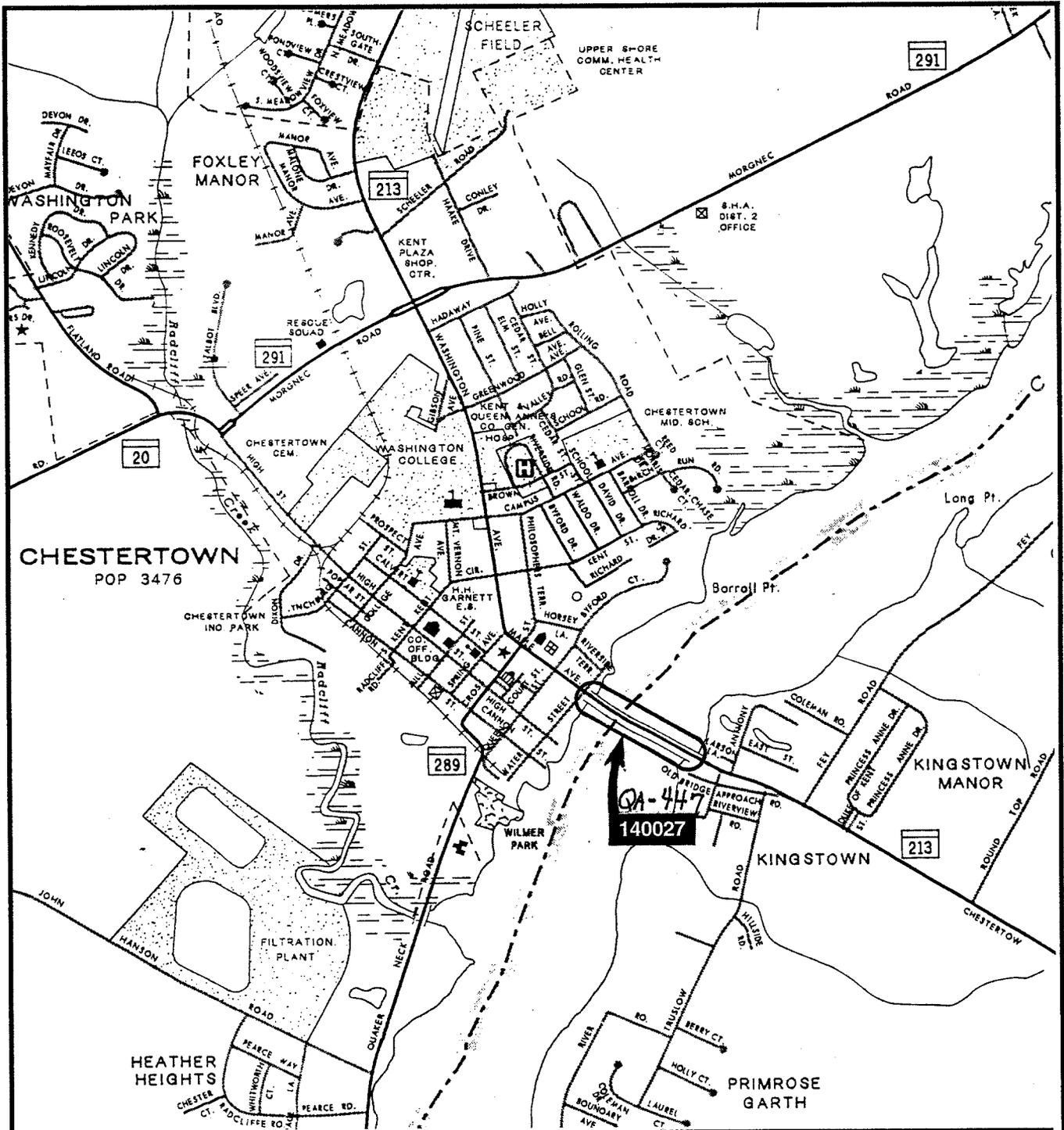
**Provide a photocopy USGS map illustrating the location of the bridge.**

**Surveyor:**

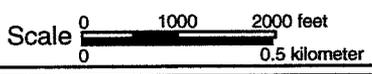
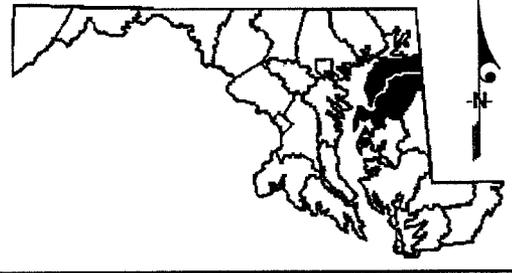
**Name:** Alice Crampton/Julie Abell  
**Organization:** Parsons Engineering-Science  
**Address:** 10521 Rosehaven Street  
Fairfax, Virginia 22030-2899

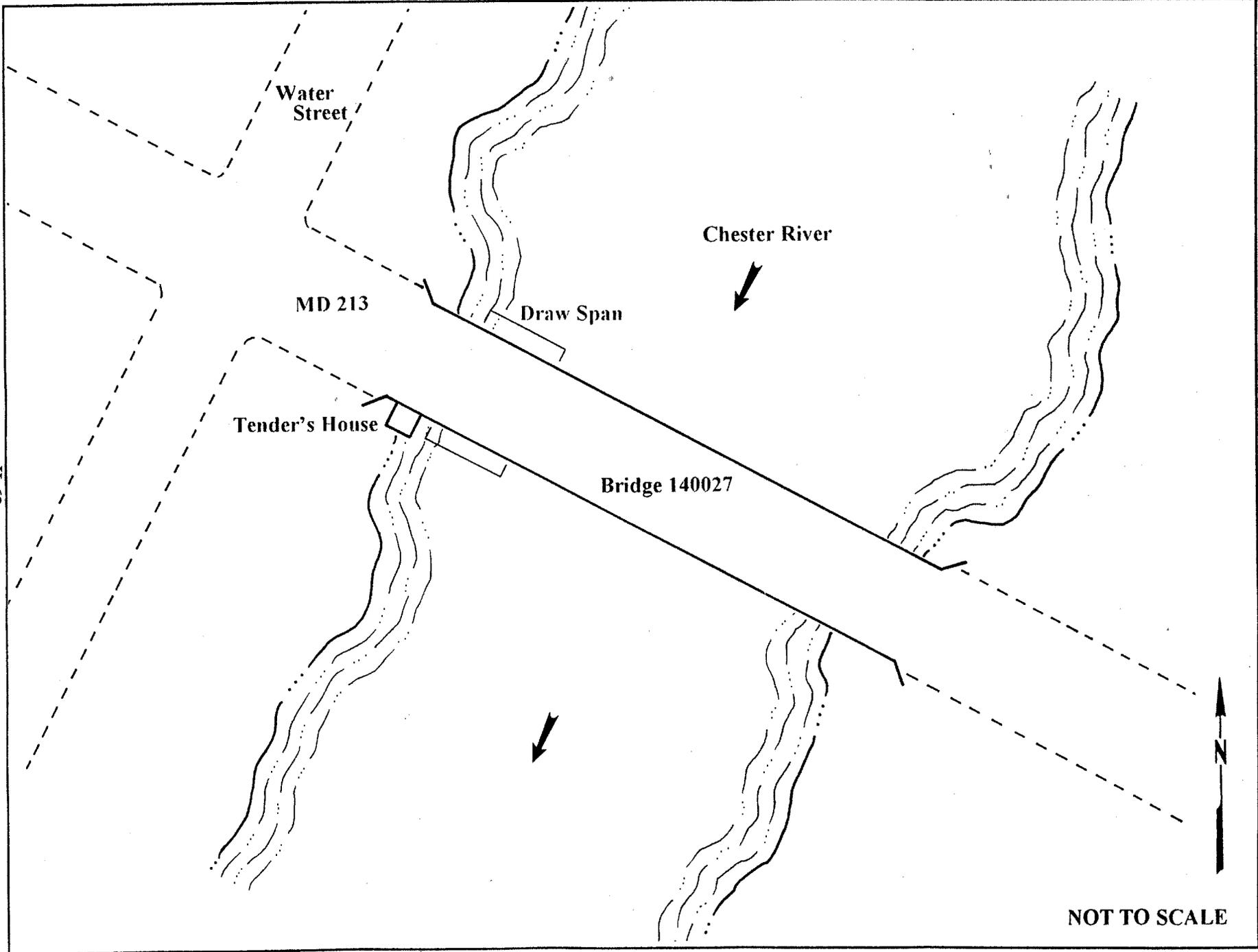
**Date:** Dec. 12, 1994  
**Telephone:** (703) 591-7575

QA-447



**Kent/Queen Anne's Counties -  
 Bridge Number 140027**  
 MD 213 over Chester River (Chester River Bridge)







QA - 447

Chester River Bridge (140027)

Queen Anne's and Kent Counties, Maryland

Julie Abell

12/94

Maryland State Highway Administration

Northeast elevation

1 of 11



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Chester River Bridge (140027)

Queen Anne's and Kent Counties, Maryland

Julie Abell

12/94

Maryland State Highway Administration

Northeast elevation, detail

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QA-447

Chester River Bridge (140027)

Queen Anne's and Kent Counties, Maryland

Julie Abell

12/94

Maryland State Highway Administration

Southwest elevation

3 of 11



QA-447

Chester River Bridge (140027)

Queen Anne's and Kent Counties, Maryland

Julie Abell

12/94

Maryland State Highway Administration

Southwest elevation, detail

4 of 11



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Chester River Bridge (140027)

Queen Anne's and Kent Counties, Maryland

Julie Abell

12/94

Maryland State Highway Administration

Southwest elevation, detail

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FOR RENT

777-1005

QA-447

Chester River Bridge (140027)

Queen Anne's and Kent  
Counties, Maryland

Julie Abell

12/94

Maryland State Highway  
Administration

Approach looking northwest

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Chester River Bridge (140027)

Queen Anne's and Kent  
Counties, Maryland

Julie Abell

12/94

Maryland State Highway  
Administration

Approach looking southeast

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Chester River Bridge (140027)

Queen Anne's and Kent Counties, Maryland

Julie Abell

12/94

Maryland State Highway Administration

1930 plaque on interior parapet

8 of 11

RECONSTRUCTION OF  
CHESTER RIVER BRIDGE

A Division of Transportation

1989  
The reconstruction of the Chester River Bridge was completed on October 1, 1989. The project was a major undertaking for the State of Maryland and the Division of Transportation. The bridge is a vital link in the transportation network of the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The project was completed on time and within budget. The new bridge is a significant improvement over the old bridge and will provide a safer and more reliable mode of transportation for the residents of the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

STATE OF MARYLAND

1989

William Donald Schaetzle  
Governor

Louis L. Gaidycz  
Comptroller

Louise Healy  
Treasurer

QA-447

Chester River Bridge (140027)

Queen Anne's and Kent Counties, Maryland

Julie Abell

12/94

Maryland State Highway Administration

1989 plaque on interior parapet

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BICYCLES

  
MUST WALK  
ON SIDEWALK  
ON BRIDGE

1930-88

QA-447

Chester River Bridge

Queen Anne's and Kent Counties, Maryland

Julie Abell

12/94

Maryland State Highway Administration

1988 inscription on interior parapet

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QA-447

Chester River Bridge (140027)

Queen Anne's and Kent Counties, Maryland

Julie Abell

12/94

Maryland State Highway Administration

Bridge tender's house

11 of 11

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Chester River Bridge

AND/OR COMMON

Chester River Bridge

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Maryland Route 213 crossing of the Chester River

CITY, TOWN

Chestertown

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Queen Anne's

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

\_\_\_DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

\_\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_\_MUSEUM

\_\_\_BUILDING(S)

\_\_\_PRIVATE

\_\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_\_PARK

bridge  STRUCTURE

\_\_\_BOTH

\_\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_\_SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

\_\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_\_OBJECT

\_\_\_IN PROCESS

\_\_\_YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_\_INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

not applicable

\_\_\_NO

\_\_\_MILITARY

\_\_\_OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Maryland State Highway Administration District Engineer

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

Morgnac Road

CITY, TOWN

Chestertown

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21620

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. No deed reference

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Maryland Historical Society

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

April 1983

\_\_\_FEDERAL  STATE \_\_\_COUNTY \_\_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

CITY, TOWN

Annapolis

STATE

Maryland 21401

**7 DESCRIPTION**

QA-447

<b>CONDITION</b>		<b>CHECK ONE</b>	<b>CHECK ONE</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED    DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The Chester River Bridge, carrying Maryland Route 213 across the Chester River at Chestertown, Kent County, Maryland, is a reinforced-concrete structure 1470 feet long and approximately 29 feet wide, constructed in 1930. It consists of a double leaf bascule draw span approached from both ends by a series of concrete girder spans. Its elevation is approximately 12 feet above mean high tide. The bridge exhibits Neoclassical detailing in its cast concrete railings with massive rectangular balusters, and in the bridge keeper's building located at the western end of the draw span, which features a bell-cast roof. Art Deco-influenced lamp posts hold octagonal bronze lanterns at both portals.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The highway bridge between Chestertown, Kent County, and Kings Town in Queen Anne's County carries Maryland Route 213 northwest - southeast across the Chester River. It consists of a double leaf bascule span of 89 feet in length approached from both ends by a series of concrete girder spans,

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

## CONTINUATION SHEET

## 7.1 DESCRIPTION

totalling 34 thirty-five foot spans and 4 thirty-three foot spans. It is a two-lane concrete structure, relatively low to the water, arching gently in the center to about 12 feet above mean high tide. The concrete is gray-tan in color with yellow and brown river run gravel.

The bridge railings are cast in sections that correspond to the distance between the piers. The hand railing is plain and Neo-classical in feeling with massive rectangular ballusters. Both ends of the bridge have octagonal, bronze lanterns set in tall square posts with cast Art Deco geometric design lamp posts. Lanterns at the beginning and end of the draw span are also set in bronze posts.

The gate keeper's house is square and its roof is a handsome ogee in shape. On each facade is a three-part window, a wide one over one sash window set between two narrow one over one sash. The doorway on the northeast facade is also set between two side lights.

The gate keeper's house sits above the water on tall piers at the westernmost corner of the draw span and is a typical one-room at road level structure. The gate keeper's house is a square structure 11'4" on a side and 8' from street level to ceiling. It is original and made of the same concrete as the bridge.

## CONTINUATION SHEET

## 7.2 DESCRIPTION

The total length of the bridge is 1470 feet.

The overall width is 28 feet 11 inches.

The distance between rub rails is 22 feet.

The two draw spans in the center of the bridge are 44 feet long each.

A four foot wide concrete walkway on the south side of the surface extends the length of the bridge.

The total surface area, including the approaches, is a few square feet less than one acre.

There are two bronze plaques set in the bridge. One, in the center span, is inscribed with the names of the men involved in the bridge construction and reads as follows:

CHESTER RIVER BRIDGE  
BUILT 1930  
STATE ROADS COMMISSION  
C. CLINTON UHL - CHAIRMAN  
HOWARD BRICE      JOHN K. SHAW  
H.D. WILLIAR, JR. - CHIEF ENGINEER  
W.C. HOPKINS - BRIDGE ENGINEER

A dedication plaque is attached to the base of the lamp post on the Chestertown side. It dedicates the bridge to "the Ex-Service Men of Kent County and of Queen Anne's County". This dedication was sponsored by the Frank M. Jarman - Jefferson Davis Post of the American Legion on November 11, 1930.

The land approach abutments to the bridge are 102 feet long, rising on a uniform slope from the highway

## CONTINUATION SHEET

## 7.3 DESCRIPTION

level to the road surface of the bridge, a distance of 4 1/2 feet in height. The width of the abutments is 36 feet overall.

The abutment for the Chestertown side of the bridge starts a distance of 120 feet from the intersection of Water Street and Maple Avenue.

The abutment extends to mean low tide at the river side.

At the juncture point of the bridge surface and abutment are located on the rail four lamp posts, two each side of the bridge. They are concrete-based, three feet above the road surface with a 30" square top footing. Mounted on this top is a 24" square tapered lamp post, constructed of the same concrete mix as is the bridge, with a 2 1/2 foot high bronze lamp on the top.

Located at the lift position of the bascule section of the bridge are four cast iron lamp posts, five feet high with a bronze lamp enclosure on top of each post.

Directly adjacent to the base on the south walkway at the Chestertown end of the bridge is a U.S.C.&G. survey benchmark number A-89-1942.

The support for the roadway is composed of transverse columns, 30" thick, three feet high, and 25 feet long, supported by four each, 2 feet x 2 feet concrete pilings immersed into the bed of the river.

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 100-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Chester River Bridge is significant for its association with the development of transportation on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. It is a product of a period of great activity in road building carried out in response to the shift from steamboats to motor trucks as the principal carriers of the region's agricultural products to market. During the 1920's and 1930's several reinforced concrete drawbridges were constructed across the wide rivers of the Shore to accommodate increased volumes of truck traffic. The Chester River Bridge embodies the characteristics of these bridges in its reinforced-concrete construction, low elevation, combination of Neoclassical and Art Deco-influenced decorative elements, and picturesque bridge keeper's house with a bell-cast roof. Two other bridges of similar design remain on the Upper Eastern Shore, spanning

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

## CONTINUATION SHEET

## 8.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

the Bohemia and Sassafras Rivers; another spans the Choptank at Cambridge to the south, and one crosses the Severn at Annapolis on the Western Shore. The bridge derives additional significance for its contribution to the townscape of Chestertown, a historic community of generally small-scale structures dating from the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. The scale of the bridge and its restrained Neoclassical detailing provide an appropriate and pleasing approach to Chestertown. The present bridge is the fourth at this location; the first bridge in the series was constructed in 1802 to supersede ferry service which had been carried on since 1708.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

The 1920's and 1930's saw an active road building program on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The decline of steamboat service on the Chesapeake Bay had isolated the Shore, making shipment of farm products to market difficult and severely damaging the economy of the region. Good roads and bridges were badly needed, and engineers turned to the relatively new construction material, reinforced concrete, to solve the problem.

From the Conowingo Dam south, concrete bridges were constructed to carry the traffic over the wide rivers of the Shore; many accommodated marine traffic with draw

## CONTINUATION SHEET

## 8.2 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

spans. The gate keepers' houses, often with whimsical roofs, made for picturesque crossings, and the bridges, typically low and graceful, were in harmony with the landscape. In its design the Chester River Bridge has an interesting combination of design motifs, from Neo-classical and Art Deco styles of the period.

Now in their fifties, these bridges are beginning to disappear and too frequently are being replaced by wide, high, graceless bridges designed to speed traffic across the rivers with little attention to the view from the structure.

The Chester River Bridge is the last of these upper Shore bridges still in fairly good repair. As much a part of the townscape as the eighteenth century mansions, such as "River House" and "Wide Hall", it deserves preservation as a monument to early twentieth century engineering and design.

The through and local traffic growth using the bridge, the relative size of the bridge as related to the traffic volume, the location of historical properties at the Chestertown side of the bridge, and the relative center of town traffic discharge point toward the construction of a new bridge north or south of Chestertown.

For Route 213 through traffic, this is an anticipated reality, and with such a bridge, the Maryland Highway

## CONTINUATION SHEET

## 8.3 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Department will be inclined to consider the new bridge as a principal means of inter-county travel and close or allow the present bridge to go into complete disrepair. Kings Town and Chestertown are so closely inter-related that a source of travel via the present bridge site must be maintained. The relative inconvenience, under the present economy, of these two inter-related towns would be definitely affected adversely by having an alternate bridge with both ingress and egress located so far from the center of the community activities.

Maryland Route 213, which is conveyed over the Chester River via the Chester River Bridge, is the most important and heavily travelled highway in the northeast section of the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Route 213 has its origin at the town of Fair Hill, near the Maryland-Pennsylvania border. It then passes through Elkton, Chesapeake City, Cecilton, Galena, Chestertown, Church Hill, Centreville, and terminates at U.S. Route 50 at Wye Mills, in addition to passing through many smaller communities, and is the principal artery through this section.

Chestertown, as the geographic and commercial center of this area, generates the major portion of the traffic moving north and south on Route 213. As such, the patterns of commercial and domestic traffic, already established over the present bridge and system, should be considered

## CONTINUATION SHEET

## 8.4 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

the principal factor for the retention of the river crossing at its present location.

The design of the present Chester River Bridge with its relatively low elevation of road surface fits perfectly into the design of the eighteenth century homes that face the bridge and the oncoming traffic to Chestertown.

Until approximately 1914 wooden bridges used for country travel were quite sufficient. However, after that time, the advent of mass production of automobiles and their counterparts, trucks, created a radically changing picture for these wooden structures.

Most importantly, a bridge such as the Chester River Bridge serving the vital aforementioned route 213, connecting the growing population and economy of the area served by route 213, was bound to bear increased traffic between the northern and southern communities along this route.

Being primarily an agricultural country when the Maryland Highway Department took over the operation and maintenance of the roads, this also included the bridges.

Except for a very few primary arteries, most of the roads were gravel base. The highway department could not financially or otherwise embark on a major road building and an expanded bridge building at the same time.

Realizing the condition of the aforementioned wooden bridge crossings, they considered it prudent to be sure the

## CONTINUATION SHEET

## 8.5 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

crossings were intact and safe. Hence, the priority of the bridge structure. Employing the then new design of structure and construction, the nature of the type of river crossings were able to use the comparatively standard design for this bridge and other bridges mentioned.

As the truck and automobile increased, the public demanded that something be done about the highways. To this end and due to the paucity of funds, the highway department embarked upon a program of installing "9-Foots", a concrete paving nine feet wide instead of the usual 20 foot wide paving in the urban and suburban areas.

The Chester River Bridge and other bridges mentioned were an overall part of the State highway program, which was not limited to bridges alone, but the need to make expeditious and convenient travel through the communities, the impedance of the various water obstructions to the highway system put the bridging of the streams and waterways a top priority in the overall system. (Just as the Chesapeake Bay ferries had to be replaced by the Bay Bridge.)

QA-447

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	COUNTY
STATE	COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

**William S. Coar**

ORGANIZATION

DATE

**April 27, 1983**

STREET & NUMBER

**Still Pond Neck Road**

TELEPHONE

**301-348-2118**

CITY OR TOWN

**Worton**

STATE

**Maryland 21678**

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438



Morgnac

TRAVILLA WHARF

Chat-hor Manor

BUCKINGHAM WHARF

Possum Pt

GILL AIRPORT

CHESTERTOWN

Peachtree Pt

NEWMAN AND QUEEN KINGS HOSPITAL

Barroll Pt

Kings Town

Ewingtown

Boyer Chapel

QA-447  
Chester River  
Bridge

Primrose Pt

Piney Grove

Skillen Pt

Fryingpan Pt

Hollow Marsh Pt

Deep Pt

Wilmer Pt

Pomona

Old Town

isontown

Northwest Pt

Riverview WINDMILLS

Melton Pt

Shell Pt

ASHLAND LDG

Indian Town

Church Hill

Amen Ch

Church Hill Airport

Eastern Correctional Camp

Lead Fill