

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Petit Jean River Bridge
other names/site number Bridge #17726, Site #YE0106

2. Location

street & number Dale Bend Road (County Road 49) over the Petit Jean River not for publication
city or town Ola vicinity
state Arkansas code AR county Yell code 149 zip code 72853

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination
request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets
does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional
comments.)
Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is: Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet
 determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:) _____

Petit Jean River Bridge
Name of Property

Yell County, Arkansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

"Historic Bridges of Arkansas"

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)/bridge

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)/bridge

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Pratt Thru Truss

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls N/A

roof N/A
other METAL/Steel

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** 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.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B.** removed from its original location.
- C.** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION
ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

1930-1960

Significant Dates

1930

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Builder: Vincennes Bridge Company

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department

Petit Jean River Bridge
Name of Property

Yell County, Arkansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u> Zone	<u>477995</u> Easting	<u>3881604</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joseph Daily, Intern, and Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date June 10, 2009
street & number 1500 Tower Building 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9787
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Yell County
street & number P.O. Box 219 telephone 501-495-2630
city or town Ola state AR zip code 72853

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

SUMMARY

One of only three Pratt Thru Truss bridges in Yell County, the Petit Jean River Bridge is located on Yell County Road 49 where it crosses the Petit Jean River. The bridge is within the boundaries of Ola, Arkansas in Yell County. A pin-connected Pratt through truss with a main span approximately 119 feet long, the bridge has a total length of 159 feet.

ELABORATION

The Pratt Truss was originally designed by Thomas and Caleb Pratt in 1844 and was one of the bridge designs that successfully made the transition from wood construction to metal. Their innovation was to simply reverse the standard method of bridge construction; in the Pratt design vertical beams and the top chord took the compressive load of the bridge while the diagonal beams and bottom chord provided the tension load for the bridge. Prior to the Pratts' redesign, diagonal members carried both the compressive and tension loads for the bridge. The standardization of forms possible with the multi-paneled bridges made them highly economical. Thomas and Caleb Pratt's invention was the most commonly built early twentieth century bridge design.¹

The Petit Jean River Bridge consists of a single Pratt through truss span with seven panels, measuring 119 feet. The total structure is 159 feet and is comprised entirely of steel and concrete. The overall width of the bridge is 12 feet with the roadway allowing one-lane traffic. The deck surface is concrete. The bridge is supported by two concrete pillars on each side of the river.

Located in the vicinity of Ola, Arkansas, in Yell County, the bridge is accessed from the west and east on Yell County Road 49. The bridge is in a wooded area.

INTEGRITY

No structural alterations have been made to the bridge to compromise its integrity. The bridge is located in a rural area and its setting remains undisturbed. The bridge still illustrates its original design and materials. The bridge is still in use for vehicular travel.

¹ T. Allen Comp and Donald Jackson "Bridge Truss Types: A Guide to Dating and Identifying" American Association for State and Local History Technical Leaflet 95, *History News* 32, no.5 (May, 1977).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

SUMMARY

The Petit Jean River Bridge is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** with **local significance** for its association with the development of highway infrastructure in Yell County during the 1930s. The Petit Jean River Bridge, which was built in 1930, was part of an effort to develop more improved roads and river crossings in Yell County in the early 1900s. It illustrates the importance of providing good infrastructure for automobiles. The bridge has continued to be used since its construction.

The Petit Jean River Bridge is also being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C** with **local significance** as a good example of early twentieth-century bridge-building technology. The Petit Jean River Bridge is a good example of a Pratt thru truss bridge that was built by the Vincennes Bridge Company.

The Petit Jean River Bridge nomination is being submitted under the multiple property listing “Historic Bridges of Arkansas.”

ELABORATION

Yell County, Arkansas’s forty-second county, was formed on December 5, 1840, from portions of Scott and Pope counties. Located in west-central Arkansas, the northern portion of the county, adjacent to the Arkansas River, is part of the Arkansas River Valley geographic region, while the southern and most of the eastern portions are within the Ouachita National Forest, and a small portion of eastern Yell County is within the Ozark St. Francis National Forest. Named for Governor Archibald Yell, the county boasts a forest products and lumber industry, poultry production and processing, row crops, and livestock production. In 1875, Dardanelle was established as a second county seat. This dual system continues today.²

Yell County was formed from Scott and Pope counties in December 1840. Like Perry County, Yell County is bisected by the Petit Jean and Fourche LaFave Rivers. Both rivers cross the county from west to east. The Petite Jean River valley, to the north, is separated from the Fourche LaFave River valley by the east to west oriented Dutch Creek Mountain, Danville Mountain, and Ola Mountain. The Fourche LaFave River has the aforementioned Fourche LaFave Mountains to its north and the Fourche Mountains to its south. For many years after the founding of the county the two rivers were the primary means of travel in the county.³

² Mildred Diane Gleason. “Yell County” *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*. Located at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/> accessed 10 June 2009.

³ Van Zbinden. “National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form for Ward’s Crossing Bridge. In the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2008.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

As with neighboring Perry County, travel, trade, and settlement between 1830 and the late 1850s were primarily accomplished by boat. The majority of early settlers to the county settled on the flat, grassland areas near the present site of Dardanelle. This area was easily accessible by boat on the Arkansas River and had ready access to markets at Norristown on the north side of the river. Small communities quickly grew on the bottomlands around Mount Nebo, Magazine Mountain and in the Petit Jean River Valley. At formation the county already had a substantial population; by 1850 it was listed at 3,341. The population doubled by 1860 but slowed during the Civil War. Nevertheless the county did grow in the decade from 1860 to 1870 and reached 13,852 by 1880.⁴

Farming was the primary occupation of Yell County's nineteenth century residents. Wheat and corn were the largest harvested products in the county from the 1840s to the end of the century. Swine and cattle were the primary livestock raised by Yell County farmers. Generally Yell County farms were more productive and better improved than Perry County farms; however, population density meant that Yell County contained more farms of smaller size than neighboring Perry County. The Civil War seemed to have little impact on the productivity of Yell County farms. However, for many Yell County farmers, particularly the majority of small farmers living in the uplands, their farms often provided no more than subsistence. For those farmers living in the bottomlands of the Fourche LaFave River valley or the uplands along the river, getting what cash crop they did produce to market was a difficult task. For those living along the Petit Jean and Fourche LaFave Rivers they were not in better shape. The Fourche LaFave River in Yell County was only navigable by boat in high water above Aplin; and that was after the Army Corps of Engineers began river improvements in 1879.⁵

Ola is the third-largest town in Yell County. Until 1875, it was known as Petit Jean, but its name was changed on December 10, 1880. On February 24, 1900, it was incorporated as a second-class town. The first house was completed in 1860 by homesteader Elisha Harrel. A permanent post office was established in 1880. This early settlement included one doctor, a school, and an interdenominational church. Originally called Red Lick, the area became known as Petit Jean in 1866, after the nearby river. The Petit Jean name was discontinued on September 27, 1875, and the current name, Ola, was used from January 10, 1876, and officially adopted in 1880.⁶

In 1899, the Choctaw Railroad needed a right of way through Ola. James Matthias Harkey granted the right of way under two conditions: first, Ola would be the railroad name used; second, the railroad would guarantee for ninety-nine years to stop at Ola. The deal was struck, and Ola entered a period of expanded

⁴ Gleason.

⁵ Zbinden.

⁶ Gleason.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

growth based on its railroad location. During the twentieth century, newcomers arrived and timber, fruit, and cotton production increased with the expanded transportation capability of the town.⁷

When automobiles appeared in the United States between 1910 and 1920, Americans were abandoning the ideas defining Victorian-era leisure activities in favor of more daring, physically challenging activities. Favoring outdoor setting and Thoreau-inspired activities, they chose expression of the emerging leisure ethic characterized by an unhurried, unstructured lifestyle. The automobile fostered family togetherness, instead of the gender-based separateness that characterized Victorian spas.⁸ Driving and traveling was a rebellion against Victorian conventionality, but retained the traditional, paternalistic values that appealed to the middle class that feared moral decay and family disintegration. Car travel allowed tourists to experience the American landscape train where scenery passed the window like a movie on a screen. The car traveler developed an intimacy with the American countryside. Forsaking the luxury and relative comfort of the train car, autocampers braved mud, bridge washouts, and breakdowns. For the tourists the experience of traveling was as important as reaching their destination. Travel accounts illustrate the belief that the road was the real democratic America. All classes traveled the same muddy roads, and all were expected to lend a hand to overcome diverse road conditions. Autocampers downplayed class distinctions by wearing common comfortable clothes. Talk of wealthy privileges, such as servants, was shunned.

In 1900 the National Good Roads Association was formed. Auto enthusiasts had joined the movement and by 1910 auto owners would control this association. Along with the American Auto Association, formed in 1902, the Good Roads Association formed the driving force of the movement for better roads on a national scale. After the second Good Roads Convention in Little Rock, Arkansans agreed on the value of good roads, but the question of who would meet the financial burden remained unanswered. The issue was first addressed by the Arkansas Legislature in 1907 when an act allowed the formation of local road improvement districts. The practice of using local districts with poor centralized supervision and planning would only worsen Arkansas's situation, however. In 1911, Arkansas legislation imposed a registration fee on autos in the state.⁹

There were 3,596 registered passenger vehicles in Arkansas in 1913, and the number was growing rapidly. Arkansas's roads were not designed for the arrival of the automobile on the transportation scene. Road matters had been handled at the local level for years and the roads that were built were often constructed to serve specific neighborhoods or even individuals. Most were rough and dusty in dry weather, and muddy or impassable during rains. A connected system of roads was far from a reality. In 1913, the 39th Arkansas General Assembly convened and signed the first highway administrative agency in Arkansas. Act 302 established the State Highway Commission, and the State Highway Department was created as an affiliate of

Petit Jean River Bridge

Yell County, Arkansas

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

the Department of State Lands under the same Act. The new agency was renamed the Department of State Lands, Highways, and Improvements. The signing of the legislation on March 31, 1913, by Governor J.M. Futrell meant that Arkansas had taken a big step out of the horse and buggy days. Act 302 of 1913 took effect April 1, 1913, and established a three-member Highway Commission. Unfortunately, it would be ten more years before the Highway Commission could convince the general assembly that a system of state highways was desperately needed.¹⁰ The need for good roads was increasing with Arkansas's registered autos tripling in the two years between 1914 and 1916.¹¹

The early, three-member Highway Commissions, acting on limited authority, had done a good job of establishing a basis of policy for future Commissions to expand on. However, by 1922 it was time for the legislature to act on what every Highway Commission had recommended in every biennial report since 1913 – the creation of a state highway system to be constructed and maintained under the direct supervision of the State Highway Department.¹²

In Arkansas, the number of vehicles had grown from 3,596 in 1913 to over 112,000 in 1923.¹³ More vehicles being driven required more road construction and maintenance. And as more roads were needed, so were more bridges. In 1930, Vincennes Bridge Company won the contract for building the Petit Jean River Bridge. They also managed to complete construction on the structure in that same year. The bridge allowed much easier access to and from the north and south sides of the Petit Jean River. Farmers in the region found it less difficult to transport crops and drivers found it easier to travel and explore Yell County.

One of only three Pratt Thru Truss bridges still extant in Yell County, the Petit Jean River Bridge is located on Yell County Road 49 where it crosses the Petit Jean River. The bridge has not been demolished and is still in good condition. The bridge is within the boundaries of Ola, Arkansas in Yell County. A pin-connected Pratt through truss with a main span approximately 119 feet long, the bridge has a total length of 159 feet. The Dale Bend Bridge is associated with the development of transportation in Yell County and stands as an example of bridges of the early 20th century.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Petit Jean River Bridge is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** with **local significance** for its association with the development of highway infrastructure in Yell County during the 1930s. The Petit Jean River Bridge, which was built in 1930, was part of an effort to develop

Petit Jean River Bridge

Yell County, Arkansas

¹⁰ "Historical Review Arkansas State Highway Commission and Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department 1913-1992" (Little Rock: Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, 1992). p 19.

¹¹ McLaren.

¹² Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, 30.

¹³ Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, 31.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

more improved roads and river crossings in Yell County in the early 1900s. It illustrates the importance of providing good infrastructure for automobiles. The bridge has continued to be used since its construction.

The Petit Jean River Bridge is also being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C** with **local significance** as a good example of early twentieth-century bridge-building technology. The Petit Jean River Bridge is a good example of a Pratt thru truss bridge that was built by the Vincennes Bridge Company.

The Petit Jean River Bridge nomination is being submitted under the multiple property listing "Historic Bridges of Arkansas."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Comp, T. Allen, and Donald Jackson "Bridge Truss Types: A Guide to Dating and Identifying" American Association for State and Local History Technical Leaflet 95, *History News* 32, no.5 (May, 1977).

Gleason, Mildred Diane. "Yell County" *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*. Located at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/> (accessed 10 June 2009.)

"Historical Review Arkansas State Highway Commission and Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department 1913-1992" (Little Rock: Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, 1992).

McLaren, Christie. "Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965." Located at www.arkansaspreservation.org/publications (accessed on 17 June 2009.)

Zbinden, Van. "National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form for Ward's Crossing Bridge. In the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2008.

Petit Jean River Bridge

Name of Property

Yell County, Arkansas

County and State

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point in the center of County Road 49 (Dale Bend Road) 20 feet north of the north end of the Petit Jean River Bridge, the boundary includes the area within 20 feet of each side of the centerline of County Road 49 (Dale Bend Road) to an ending point 20 feet south of the south end of the Petit Jean River Bridge.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This boundary includes the Petit Jean River Bridge and its immediate setting.