FISH HOUSE BRIDGE
Acadia National Park Roads and Bridge
Spanning Park Loop Road on Fish House access road
Otter Creek Vicinity
Hancock County
Maine

HAER NO. ME-16

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

FISH HOUSE BRIDGE

HAER No. ME-16

LOCATION: Park Loop Road spanning "Fish House Road" extension of Otter Cliff Road, .7 mi. SE of Otter Creek community, Acadia National Park, Otter Creek vicinity, Mount Desert Island, Hancock County, Maine

Quad: Seal Harbor, Maine
UTM: 19/564030/4907030

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1938

DESIGN: Bureau of Public Roads

ENGINEER: Nathan Gordon, Bureau of Public Roads, Resident Engineer

CONTRACTOR: J. M. Francesca & Company, Fayetteville, WV

STRUCTURE TYPE: Stone-faced reinforced concrete filled spandrel arch bridge

FHwA STRUCTURE NO.: 1700-002P

OWNER: Acadia National Park, National Park Service

SIGNIFICANCE: Fish House Bridge was built to provide a grade separation for a small access road to a boat landing used by local fishermen in the Otter Creek area. The bridge is faced in native granite and is distinguished by its semicircular arch.

PROJECT INFORMATION: Documentation of the Fish House Bridge is part of the Acadia National Park Roads and Bridges Recording Project, conducted in 1994-95 by the Historic American Engineering Record.

Richard H. Quin, Historian, 1996

HISTORY

This is one in a series of reports prepared for the Acadia National Park Roads and Bridges Recording Project. HAER No. ME-11, ACADIA NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES, contains an overview history of the park motor road system.

History of the Fish House Bridge

One of the smaller structures on the Park Loop Road, the Fish House Bridge is a stone-faced semicircular arched reinforced concrete bridge. It is the smallest stone-faced true bridge on the Loop Road (the smaller Little Hunters Beach Creek Bridge is actually a box culvert). Although the bridge only crosses an unpaved access road to a boat landing, its arched construction and native stone veneer reflects the same attention to detail as larger bridges on the motor road system.

The "Fish House Road" was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps to provide access to several fishermens' houses which were isolated from the Otter Cliff Road by the construction of the Park Loop Road. The narrow unpaved spur was built in 1938 and 1939. Its construction necessitated an underpass under the Loop Road, the structure now known as the "Fish House Bridge."[1]

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who funded the construction of the Otter Cliffs segment of the Park Loop Road, managed to have the Town of Otter Creek discontinue the town road and the landing as part of his plan to extend the park motor road. Some local residents believed he used his position as a major employer to influence the town's vote.[2]

Stephen Smith of Otter Creek had erected a small "fish house" at the old landing in defiance of Acadia National Park, which controlled the property. He withstood a court challenge and two lots at the landing were subsequently deeded to the Aid Society

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[1]Leo Grossman, Assistant Highway Engineer, Bureau of Public Roads, District No. 9, to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 26 November 1938. Rockefeller Archives Center, Offices of the Messrs Rockefeller, Record Group 2, Homes (Seal Harbor), Box 122 Folder 73.

[2]Thomas G. Richardson, "Otter Creek," in Gunnar Hansen, ed., *Mount Desert: An Informal History* (Mount Desert, ME: Town of Mount Desert, 1989), 129.

of Otter Creek for fishermens' use.[3] The fish house is no longer extant, but the park recognized the continued use of the landing by townspeople in summer 1994.

The bridge itself was built in 1938 as part of the construction of the Otter Cliffs segment of the Park Loop Road. Although construction of this section was funded by Mr. Rockefeller, the work was carried out as a contract under Bureau of Public Roads supervision. The bridge was constructed by contractor J. M. Francesca & Company of Fayetteville, West Virginia.[4]

Fish House Bridge remains in active use. In 1990, a bridge safety inspection report prepared by the Federal Highway Administration stated the structure was in need of rehabilitation. It noted a number of problems including efflorescence on the underside of the arch and both abutments, deterioration of mortar joints, erosion at an abutment wingwall, and heavy vegetation in contact with the bridge walls. FHwA engineers recommended repointing mortar joints, removing the vegetation, and repairing a concrete waterway on the bridge's east side in order to channel water away from the structure.[5]

DESCRIPTION

The Fish House Bridge is a single span stone-faced reinforced concrete rigid frame grade separation structure. The structure is 97' long and is constructed on a 5 percent grade. It is 30' wide (out to out) with a roadway width (curb to curb) of 20.7'. The single semicircular arch is 19.5' wide and stands 15' over the roadway; it is defined by stone arch radiating voussoirs. The bridge is faced in native granite except for the intrados or underside of the arch, which is plain exposed concrete.

The structure is located on the eastern shore of Otter Creek Cove at the end of a spur road off the Otter Cliff Road, 1.5 miles south of Maine Highway 3. West of the bridge is a small parking

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[3]Richardson, 129.

[4]A. G. Bruce, District Engineer, Public Roads Administration, "Progress Views, Structures, Black Woods Project #7A1, Acadia National Park, Maine, 1938-1939," n.d. Acadia National Park Archives.

[5]Randall T. Galpin, Federal Highway Administration, "Bridge Safety Inspection Report, Park Loop Road over Carriage Road (sic), Acadia National Park Str. No. 1700-002P" (Sterling, VA: Federal Highway Administration, Eastern Direct Federal Division, 26 June 1990).

area on the cobbled beach, from which a ramp leads down to the water, providing a launching area for small boats. Numerous old apple trees in the area suggest an orchard was once located here.

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Correspondence

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Richardson, Thomas G. "Otter Creek," in Gunnar Hansen, ed., *Mount Desert: An Informal History*. Mount Desert, ME: Town of Mount Desert, 1989.

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JET LOWE, PHOTOGRAPHER, SEPTEMBER 1994

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