

10. NAME(S) OF STRUCTURE

State Bridge Number 809

11. PHOTOS (W/ FILM ROLL & FRAME NO.) AND SKETCH MAP OF LOCATION

22A:11-17



22A:11

Mack, Warren W. "A History of Motor Highways in Delaware", in Reed, Henry Clay, Delaware: A History of the First State, vol.2, pp.535-550 (NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1947).

Delaware State Program. Delaware State Highways; The Story of Roads in Delaware... [Newark, Delaware: Press of Kells, 1919].

Federal Writers Project. Delaware: A Guide to the First State. (New York: Viking Press, 1938).

Carter, Dick. The History of Sussex County. Georgetown, Delaware: Community Newspaper Corp., 1976.

Hancock, Harold Bell. The History of Sussex County, Delaware. [s.l. : s.n.] 1976.

Delaware State Archives. Sussex County Road Papers 1875-1940.

Delaware DOT records: Annual Reports; contract files.

Plans on file at Delaware DOT: Contract # 769

13. INVENTORIED BY:

AFFILIATION

DATE

P.A.C. Spero & Company with Kidde Consultants for Delaware DOT

April-November 1988

HABS/HAER INVENTORY

See "HABS/HAER Inventory Guidelines" before filling out this card.

1. NAME(S) OF STRUCTURE
State Bridge Number 809

2. LOCATION
Route 22, Broadkill River
Milton, Sussex County, Delaware

3. DATE(S) OF CONSTRUCTION
1916/1941

4. USE (ORIGINAL/CURRENT)
Vehicular

5. RATING
SG

6. CONDITION
Good

State Highway Bridge 809 is a concrete encased steel girder bridge located in the Milton Historic District. The bridge spans 24'-7" and is 34'-0" wide carrying two lanes of traffic and a sidewalk on each side. The superstructure consists of concrete abutments and straight, rubble wingwalls. The bridge has been widened on the downstream elevation, but its original configuration is evident on the upstream elevation, where the original stone parapet and metal lattice railing remain.

State Bridge 809, originally called "Red Bridge", was built in 1916 by authority of the Sussex County Levy Court, under contract CS21. Morgan T. Gum was the county engineer and Alfred H. Megee the road commissioner. The bridge was constructed as part of a project to build a road between Milton and the village of Harbeson. It was widened in 1952, under State Highway Department contract 769; at that time the downstream railing was replaced with a concrete parapet which reflects the shape of the original metal railing.

Constructed in 1916, Bridge 809 represents one of the earliest structures of its type surveyed in Delaware. It predates the creation of the Delaware State Highway Department, and exemplifies the road construction and improvement activities undertaken by the Sussex County Levy Court in the period before state and federal assistance became available in significant amounts for these purposes. During this period, county road and bridge construction was financed by local real estate taxes; especially in rural areas, where property values were lower than in the cities and suburbs, this funding proved insufficient to maintain the roads as motor traffic steadily increased. By 1917, rural Sussex County had only managed to underwrite 35 miles of macadam-surfaced roads. The construction of Bridge 809 during this period, as part of a roadbuilding project which encompassed approximately four miles, represented a significant undertaking for the County at the time. The passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act in 1916 set in motion a series of changes which would greatly accelerate the pace of road improvement in Delaware. The Act provided Federal matching funds to states for road construction up to 50% of cost or \$10,000 per mile, and required that states set up an authoritative highway department with a professional staff. In response, the General Assembly passed the Highway Act of 1917, creating the Delaware State Highway Department. The road building program was further stimulated in 1919, when the State Aid Road Law enabled counties to issue bonds to match state funds. The 1919 law enabled each of Delaware's three counties to receive \$250,000 annually in matching funds for road and bridge construction. Sussex County was the first to take full advantage of this program, accepting \$250,000, matched with a bond issue, to construct 58 miles of road. Bridge 809 thus represents the construction activities of the Sussex County Levy Court in the period before significant financial assistance became available. This bridge is located in the Milton Historic District, which is significant for its early associations with navigation on the Broadkill River and is characterized by buildings reflecting a variety of architectural styles representing periods from the mid-nineteenth through early twentieth centuries. Although one elevation has been altered, the structure in its entirety appears to be in character with its surrounding environment and may be considered a contributing element in the historic district.