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CHICAGO AND WESTERN INDIANA RAILROAD BRIDGE
(Belt Railroad of Chicago Bridge)
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
Crossing Sanitary and Ship Canal
at Nerska Junction
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-79

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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NOTE: Photographs taken by Martin Stupich, HAER photographer,
1988.

IL-79-1 EAST SIDE OF BRIDGE LOOKING NORTHWEST.

IL-79-2 SOUTH PORTAL.

IL-79-3 DETAIL OF PIVOT MECHANISM.

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Location: Crossing Sanitary and Ship Canal at
Nerska Junction, east of Cicero Avenue
Chicago, Cook County, Illinois

UTM: 16 E.438680 N.4629950
Quad: Englewood

Date of Construction: 1898-1900

Builder: Chicago & Western Indiana Railroad
Bridge

Present Owner: Belt Railroad of Chicago

Present Use: Unknown

Significance: This bridge is one of the seven
surviving 1899 swing bridges built
across the Sanitary and Ship Canal.

Project Information: The Illinois and Michigan Canal was
designated a National Heritage Corridor
in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER
embarked on an extensive inventory and
documentation project of the 100 mile-
long corridor. Field work for this
project was concluded in 1988. Final
editing of the documentation was
completed in 1992.

Historians: Frances Alexander and John Nicolay,
1986.

CHICAGO AND WESTERN INDIANA
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With the erection of this center-pivot, swing span bridge in 1900, the Chicago & Western Indiana Railroad was carried over the newly constructed Chicago Drainage Canal. Between 1898 and 1900, the Sanitary District of Chicago supervised the design of this and fourteen other movable highway and railway bridges crossing the Drainage Canal. Originally double-tracked, the bridge was later built to carry four tracks. Presently, the bridge is double-tracked and is operated as part of the Belt Railroad of Chicago.

Originally constructed as a center-pivot, swing bridge, the bridge is now a fixed span. The bridge measures 334'-6" in length. The superstructure consists of a pin-connected, steel Pratt through truss with eyebar tension members. Riveted plates and channel sections form the compression members. The tracks are carried on riveted, steel-plate, girder floor beams; originally, there was a four-track bridge with one set of tracks cantilevered on each side of the bridge outside of the truss panels. The two cantilevered tracks have been removed. The superstructure rests on ashlar limestone abutments. The stone center pivot, capped with concrete, measures 33'-8" in diameter and supports a 28'-0" diameter turntable that is no longer operable.

SOURCES:

"Bridges Over the Chicago Drainage Canal,": The Engineering Record, XXXVI (June 19, 1897): 53.

"Railway Drawbridges Over the Chicago Drainage Canal," Engineering News, XXXVIII (December 2, 1897): 363-366.

Isham Randolph, "The Salient Features of the Chief Engineer's Annual Report of the Drainage Canal of the Sanitary District of Chicago for 1898," Journal of the Western Society of Engineers, IV (August 1899): 317-334.

"Swing Bridges on the Chicago Drainage Canal," The Engineering record, XXXVI (October 30, 1897): 469; XXXVII (December 25, 1897): 71-73; XXXVII (March 19, 1898): 338-339.

C. Arch Williams, The Sanitary District of Chicago: History of its Growth and Development, (Chicago: the Sanitary District of Chicago, 1919).