

MHPR No. _____
Original or Addendum No. ____
Historic District Name: _____

**Minnesota Historic Property Record
Background Data Form**

1. Name of Property

Historic name: _____ SHPO inventory no.: _____
Current name: _____

2. Location

Street & number, intersection of feature carried and feature crossed, or general property location description:

City or township:

County: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Legal description:

UTM Reference: Zone _____ Easting _____ Northing _____ NAD _____

3. Description

Style/form/structure/landscape type

4. National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) status

NRHP, individually listed or eligible : Date of designation: _____

NRHP, in listed or eligible historic district: Date of designation: _____

National Historic Landmark: Date of designation: _____

5. Previous Designation or Recordation

Local designation program: Date of designation: _____ Name of program: _____

Name and location of repository: _____

Other (e.g. HABS/HAER/HALS): Date of designation: _____ Name of program: _____

Name and location of repository: _____

6. Preparer's Information

Federal or State agency: _____ Date MHPR prepared: _____

Preparer's name/title: _____ Company/organization: _____

Email address: _____

Street & number: _____ Telephone: _____

City or township: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Photographer's name:

Company/organization:

Email address:

Street & number:

Telephone:

City or township:

State:

Zip code:

Bridge 3130
MHPR No. FA-BET-003

I. Description

A. Bridge's Location and Setting

Location

Bridge 3130 carries Township Road 232 which runs north-south over Coon Creek in Blue Earth City Township. The bridge is located approximately one-half mile south of Blue Earth city limits in rural southwestern Faribault County. Township Road 232 is an extension of South Ramsey Street leading out of the city of Blue Earth and is also known as 385th Avenue outside the city limits. The bridge is owned by Blue Earth City Township; it was originally owned by Faribault County. The bridge was a standardized design by the Minnesota Highway Department and its construction was contracted to the Babcock Brothers firm of Winnebago, Minnesota. Between Blue Earth and Elmore, 13 miles to the south at the Iowa border, Township Road 232 runs parallel to two major features: U.S. Route 169 runs about one-half mile to its west and the Blue Earth River runs about one-half mile to its east. Coon Creek deposits into the Blue Earth River about one-quarter mile southwest of Bridge 3130.

Setting

Beyond the tree-lined banks of the creek, the bridge is flanked by modern homesteads and croplands that were historically farmsteads. Aside from its proximity to Blue Earth (pop. 3,263), the Faribault County seat, the general setting of Bridge 3130 is rural. Faribault County is located near the center of the southern tier of Minnesota counties along the border with Iowa and is comprised of nearly level to moderately rolling lands. Most of the county's area is devoted to agricultural cropland.¹

B. Bridge Description

The description and history of the bridge was previously discussed in Minnesota Department of Transportation, Local Historic Bridge Report, Bridge 3130, prepared by LHB and Mead & Hunt in 2014.²

Superstructure

Bridge 3130 is a single span, reinforced-concrete deck girder bridge, that is 63.1 feet in total length; the main bridge span is 60 feet in length. It has a clear width of 20'-9" and provides for two lanes of traffic, each approximately 10 feet wide. It is supported by concrete abutments and flared wingwalls. The "rectangular shaped deck girder, deck slab, abutments, wingwalls, and bridge railing are comprised of cast-in-place concrete. The concrete deck girder is composed of an integral concrete deck on top of, and integral with, four concrete girders." The "deck is cantilevered several inches past the girder on either side."³ Township Road 232 is gravel. The south approach is 24 feet wide with two driving lanes and the north approach is 26 feet wide with two driving lanes.⁴ The bridge surface is covered in five to ten inches of gravel fill. There is no plaque or other identifying text on the bridge.

Substructure

The substructure consists of concrete abutments with flared wingwalls at the north and south ends of the concrete deck. Earth and grass-covered slopes rise to the wingwalls. There are no piers, bents, or piles.

¹ Susan Roth, Faribault County Multiple Resource Area (Partial Inventory), Historic Resources of Faribault County (Partial Inventory – Historic Properties), National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, 1980, NRIS 64000352.

² Mead & Hunt, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Local Historic Bridge Report: Bridge Number: 3130, prepared by LHB and Mead & Hunt for Minnesota for Minnesota Department of Transportation, 2014.

³ Mead & Hunt, IV-8.

⁴ Stonebrooke, Bridge No. 3130: Evaluation of Rehabilitation Alternatives, SAP 022-599-100 State Aid for Local Transportation, prepared for Faribault County Public Works, 2016.

Aesthetics/overall form/design

The railings on either side of the bridge are solid reinforced concrete. They are 3 feet, 2 inches tall set on 6 inch concrete curbs that stand atop the concrete bridge deck. Each railing is comprised of three thin, cast-in-place concrete parapets that exhibit a restrained Classical Revival style. Each parapet has two recessed panels on either side. Wider concrete coping surmounts the parapets. Concrete spalling, concrete patches, and mortar along the seams of each parapet are evident. In 2015, the north end of the west railing was repaired due to damage caused by an automobile collision on the west side of the bridge. The repairs were in keeping with the original design and materials.

Alterations

Aside from those repairs, the bridge has undergone no significant alterations and retains its original railing design, and length and width.

II. History and Context

A. Bridge History

Bridge 3130 was constructed in 1920 to better serve automobile traffic between Blue Earth and Elmore, Minnesota, which is located 13 miles to the south at the Iowa border. The plans for a concrete girder, single span bridge had been prepared by the Minnesota Highway Department.⁵ Faribault County engineer R.J. Short and auditor J.L. Herring solicited bids between August 1919 and January 1920 for the construction of three bridges south of Blue Earth along the township road: "Bridge 3130, 60-ft. deck girder, 22 ft. wide, Bridge 3131, two 30-ft. spans, 20 ft. wide, Bridge 3132, 18-ft. span, 24 ft. wide."⁶ The \$25,637 contract was awarded to the Babcock Brothers firm of Winnebago.⁷ The Mead & Hunt historic bridge report states that Bridges 3130 and 3131 were awarded on the same contract, but it does not mention Bridge 3132. The bridge is not listed in MnDOT records and further research has not identified its location. The estimated construction cost of Bridge 3130 was \$10,944.⁸ The bridge was completed in 1920.

B. Areas of Significance and Historic Context

Bridge Engineering

Bridge 3130 is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as a representative and early example of the Minnesota Highway Department's standardized plan for concrete deck girder bridges. With its 60-foot span, Bridge 3130 is significant for its construction at the outer limit of length for the reinforced-concrete deck girder span type at the time of its construction. A concrete girder bridge constructed before 1921 is considered at the outer limit for the bridge type if it is 50 feet and over.⁹ Concrete girders became the popular type of bridge built over short spans in Minnesota in the 1910s until the 1930s. The concrete girder type was generally replaced by "pre-cast concrete and steel I-beam spans in the 1940s."¹⁰ State Highway Department specifications issued prior to 1921 defined the outer limits of concrete girder span length as 50 feet. Bridge 3130 was determined

⁵ The original plans for Bridge 3130 have not been located; see Mead & Hunt, III-7; Stonebrooke, 2.

⁶ "Bridges," *The American Contractor* 40 (August 23, 1919): 37. See also *The American Contractor* 40, no. 37 (September 13, 1919): 35; *Engineering News-Record* 84, no. 5 (January 29, 1920): 68.

⁷ "Prices and Contracts Awarded," *Engineering News-Record* 84, no. 11 (March 11, 1920): 182.

⁸ Mead & Hunt, II-3. This report inadvertently lists Bridge 3131 as Bridge 3031.

⁹ Mead & Hunt, II-4.

¹⁰ Mead & Hunt, II-4.

eligible under Criterion C for its engineering design within the historic context of “Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges in Minnesota, 1900-1945.” The Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) associated with this context states in Registration Requirement 4 that a reinforced-concrete highway bridge may be eligible under Criterion C if it was designed at the outer recommended limits for its span type which, for a deck girder bridge, is 50 feet and over before 1921, because such a bridge “represent[s] [an] extraordinary engineering effort to push a particular span sub-type to its limits . . . and [is] rare.”¹¹ Bridge 3130 satisfies these conditions. The bridge was determined eligible for listing in the NRHP by the Minnesota Department of Transportation based on recommendations in the *Management Plan for Minnesota’s Historic Bridges*.¹² The 2014 Local Historic Bridge Report was prepared in conjunction with the updating of the *Management Plan* and its eligibility was affirmed.¹³

EARLY TRANSPORTATION IN FARIBAUT COUNTY

As described in 1980, the significance of Faribault County “lies in the inter-relationships of settlement, agriculture, and rail transportation.” Due in large part to its agricultural roots, the cities “are maintained as commercial centers and despite the decline of railroad transport, the increase of truck traffic combined with the location of the county on a new transportation line – this time a major interstate freeway, the relationship between farm, city, and transportation remains supportive and unchanged.”¹⁴

Until 1870, “stage coach lines provided the chief means of transportation for Faribault County communities and rural residents. The state lines which criss-crossed the county provided connection to the cities of Waseca and Albert Lea to the east. Along the stage route, way station communities consisting of little more than a store, post office, and hotel provided accommodations.”¹⁵ The decades between 1870 and 1900 “represent[ed] a crucial development period for Faribault County. The construction of the railroads strengthened the already platted communities, established new communities, and eliminated those hamlets not located on the rail line.” The first railroad entered the county in 1870 and Blue Earth “gained its first trackage in 1879” with the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway.¹⁶ The St. Paul based line ran south out of the Twin Cities, through the city of Blue Earth and into Iowa. Elmore was platted along the line 13 miles south in 1880. The railroads provided “convenient crop marketing” that in turn “focused county agriculture on the production of grain and hogs, and the cities responded to this production by providing good services for agricultural use. The inter-relationship between farm and city remain[ed] basically unchanged [in 1980].”¹⁷

¹¹ Robert Frame, *Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges in Minnesota, 1900-1945*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1989, NRIS 434060, F-8.

¹² Jeffrey Hess, “Bridge 3130,” *Management Plan for Minnesota’s Historic Bridges*, prepared by Hess, Roise and Company for Minnesota Department of Transportation, 1997.

¹³ Mead & Hunt, I-1, II-4.

¹⁴ Roth.

¹⁵ Roth.

¹⁶ Roth.

¹⁷ Roth.

Figure 1. West half of Blue Earth Township, 1913 (Faribault Co. Atlas, Webb Publishing Co.)

Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Ry runs north-south through Blue Earth

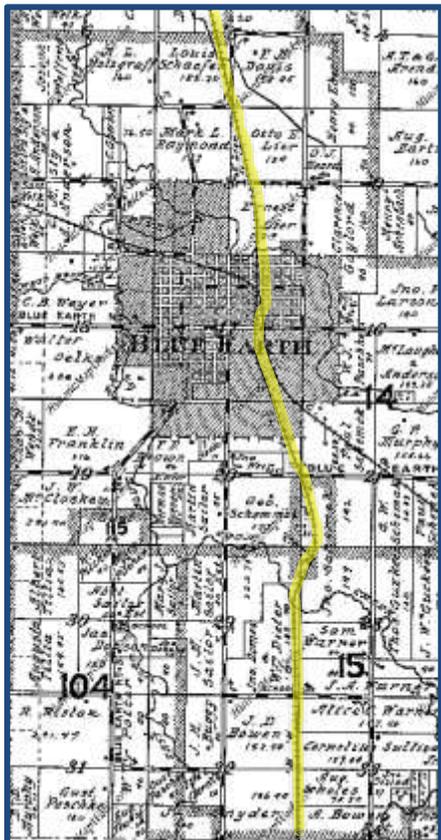


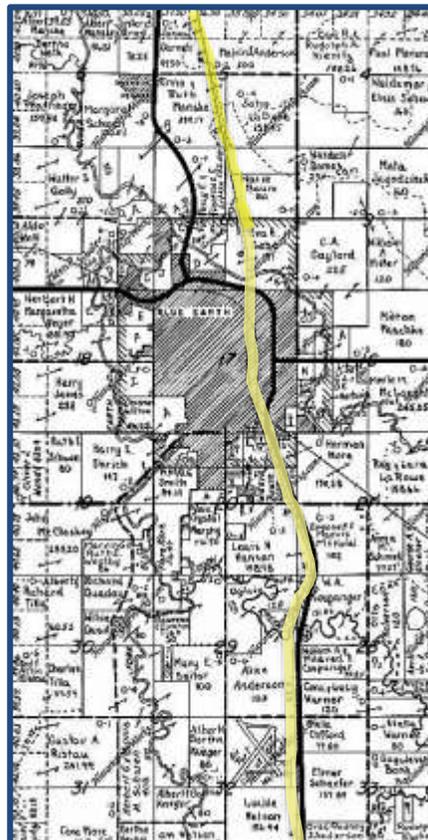
Figure 2. West half of Blue Earth Township, 1929 (Faribault Co. Atlas, Webb Publishing Co.)

Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Ry runs north-south through Blue Earth



Figure 3. West half of Blue Earth Township, 1962 (Faribault Co. Atlas, Thomas O. Nelson)

Railway runs in concurrency with U.S. 169 south of Blue Earth (in bold)



STATE HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION IN MINNESOTA

During the mid-1910s, as the personal automobile gained popularity in the United States, state and federal departments were established to create and manage new and improved roadways. Early thoroughfares and trails were informally named. In the early twentieth century, as the Good Roads Movement grew, automobile associations and local booster clubs across the country began to name highways – both as a value to themselves and automobile travelers. They often “selected a route over existing – often, just barely existing – roads, gave it a colorful name, formed an association to promote the trail, and collected dues from businesses and towns along the way. The associations published trail guides and newsletters, held annual conventions, and promoted the improvement and use of their route. The goals were to promote the road, the good roads cause, and economic opportunity for the cities and businesses along the way.”¹⁸ These roads, which were called trails, were marked informally by “painting signs or insignia on telephone poles, barns, rocks, or any other surface facing the road.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Richard F. Weingroff, “From Names to Numbers: The Origins of the U.S. Numbered Highway System,” *AASHTO Quarterly*, Spring 1997. Online resource, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/numbers.cfm>. Accessed 5/2/2017.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

As the number of informally named roadways across the country increased, so too did personal automobile use. Public funding was required to improve existing roads and build new ones; establish direct thoroughfares between major cities and through states; and create a standardized system of names. In 1916, the Federal Aid Road Act was passed with the primary goal to “give the maximum of local service and connect with one another to form a great national system of highway.”²⁰ Better roads would also aid rural “farm-to-market” travel and improve mail delivery. The five-year program provided 50-50 matching funds for up to 6% of each state’s roads.²¹

In Minnesota, this established a “6,200-mile federal aid road system to connect all county seats and population centers in the state. The Minnesota State Highway Commission [organized in 1906] administered the system of roads.”²² As a part of the Federal Act of 1916, each state receiving funds was required to establish an agency to provide control over the funding and development of its roads. The Minnesota Department of Highways replaced the Highway Commission the following year. Its first commissioner Charles Merritt Babcock formed the goals of the department: to provide paved roads (at least with gravel), to shorten routes between cities, and to eliminate at-grade rail crossings.²³ The construction of Bridge 3130, along with the related Bridges 3131 and 3132 and highway improvements, was partially funded by Federal Aid Project No. 36. The remainder of expenses were paid by the county and state.²⁴ The bridge was constructed in 1920 to cross a meandering creek and thus better serve automobile traffic between the Faribault County towns of Blue Earth and Elmore, Minnesota, which is located 13 miles south at the Iowa border. At the time, Blue Earth had a population of 2,568 and Elmore had 904 residents.²⁵

Figure 4. Excerpt, Map of Babcock Plan for a trunk highway system in Minnesota, 1920 (University of MN)



²⁰ Federal Highway Administration, *America's Highways 1776-1976: A History of the Federal Aid Program* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Transportation, 1977), 108-109.

²¹ History.com, “President Woodrow Wilson signs Federal Aid Road Act,” This Day in History. Online resource, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/president-woodrow-wilson-signs-federal-aid-road-act>. Accessed 5/1/2017.

²² Minnesota Department of Transportation, *Building on a Strong Foundation: The History of State Aid for Local Transportation*, (St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Transportation, 1999), 9. Online resource: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/stateaid/programlibrary/history-sa.pdf>.

²³ Don Demers, “100 Years in the Making ... Minnesota's Highway System,” *Minnesota Highways* (Winter 2014-2015). Online resource: http://www.ascern.org/PDFs?MN_Highway_System.pdf.

²⁴ Mead & Hunt, II-3.

²⁵ US Census Bureau. 1920.

The minimal changes to Bridge 3130 and Township Road 232 are in large part due to the development of two major state highways in the early 1920s. In 1920 the state approved the Babcock Amendment to the state constitution, which established Constitutional Route Numbers 1 to 70, including “main or arterial roads, which reach into every section of the state, the highways to be ‘located, constructed, re-constructed, improved, and forever maintained as public highways by the state of Minnesota.’”²⁶ The General Highway Act was adopted in 1921 to create and fund the state’s trunk highway system. Trunk Highway 5 generally followed the established north-south route of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway corridor between the Twin Cities and Iowa. Between Blue Earth and Elmore this route runs parallel to, and about one-half mile east of, Township Road 232. Running east-west across the southern end of the state, State Trunk Highway 9 has a junction with Trunk Highway 5 on the north side of Blue Earth. By 1930, both state highways would be designated U.S. Route highways.

Because of its proximity to Trunk Highway 5, further improvements along Township Road 232 were deemed unnecessary as state and federal transportation programs directed their focus towards interstate highway systems. By the early 1920s it “became evident that road building by the States and by Federal agencies on public lands needed to be closely correlated” and a central system of organization was needed to create a standardized highway system to connect routes across state lines.²⁷ In 1923, the Bureau of Public Roads estimated that “for the country as a whole at least 90 percent of the population resided not more than 10 miles from a Federal-aid road.”²⁸ In 1924 the “American Association of State Highway Officials passed a resolution requesting the Secretary of Agriculture (the Bureau of Public Roads was in this department at the time) to investigate the possibility of creating a system of standardized highways, [...] giving highways throughout the United States a standard numerical designation.”²⁹ The Federal Highway construction program grew significantly during the 1930s as Congress sought to “alleviate effects of the economic depression by providing funds for increasing the number of public works.”³⁰ Regular federal-aid authorizations were suspended and a “massive program of job-creating emergency public works” was embarked upon.³¹ The two state highways with a junction at Blue Earth were both designated U.S. highways: State Trunk Highway 5 became part of U.S. Route 169 and Trunk Highway 9 became U.S. Route 16.

The named highway “U.S. Route 169” was first established in Tulsa, Oklahoma in the early 1920s. Like most U.S. highways, the road ran along many previously established highways as it extended north through the state of Kansas to Kansas City, Missouri; north through the center of Iowa; then entered Minnesota at Elmore along State Highway 5; and terminated in Virginia in northern Minnesota. U.S. Route 169 was extended into Minnesota about 1930 and the highway remained graveled until 1941. North of its junction with U.S. Route 16/Trunk Highway 9, and with a greater amount of traffic to and from the Twin Cities, U.S. Route 169 was paved by 1934.³² The reduced traffic south of U.S. Route 16 along U.S. Route 169 remains evident today: between Elmore and Blue Earth and 40 miles north to Mankato, the roadway is a two-lane, undivided highway. Since the early 1960s, between Mankato and

²⁶ MnDOT, *Building on a Strong Foundation*, 10.

²⁷ Federal Highway Administration, “Brief History of the Direct Federal Highway Construction Program,” *The Trailblazers* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Transportation, 1976). In *Highway History* (updated 2015). Online resource: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/blazer01.cfm>. Accessed 5/2/2017.

²⁸ Federal Highway Administration, *America’s Highways 1776-1976*, 108-109.

²⁹ Casey Cooper, “History of the U.S. Highway System,” *Historic California US Highways* (2004). Online resource: <http://www.gbcnet.com/ushighways/history.html>. Accessed 5/1/2017.

³⁰ Federal Highway Administration, “Brief History.”

³¹ Federal Highway Administration, “Milestones for U.S. Highway Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration,” *Public Roads* 59, no. 4 (Spring 1996). Online resource: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/96spring/p96sp44.cfm>. Accessed 5/1/2017.

³² Minnesota Department of Highways, *Official Highway Map of Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Highways, 1930, 1934, 1941).

the Twin Cities, U.S. 169 has been upgraded to at least an expressway with several bypasses around smaller cities. U.S. Route 16 has become a prominent thoroughfare. The 1971 state highway map indicates that U.S. Route 16 was in the planning stages of becoming part of Interstate 90. The interstate was under construction in 1975 and completed sometime before 1981.³³ Today U.S. Route 169 is a major north-south artery that spans 966 miles between Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Virginia, Minnesota. Due primarily to the development of U.S. Routes 16 and 169 that began in the early 1920s, Township Road 232 remains unpaved gravel and average daily traffic over the bridge is about 200.³⁴

RECENT HISTORY

In 2016 Faribault County Public Works undertook an Evaluation of Rehabilitation Alternatives for Bridge 3130. Based on the Alternatives Study, a recommendation was made to replace Bridge 3130 to provide a safe, unrestricted crossing that would: meet engineering criteria, meet the Township's objectives for maintenance, and qualify for funding. The replacement of Bridge 3130 would result in a determination of adverse effect to a National Register eligible property.³⁵ As part of the bridge replacement, Faribault County has applied for a Department of the Army permit through the St. Paul District, Corps of Engineers (USACE), to discharge dredged, or fill, material into Coon Creek.

The USACE found and the SHPO concurred that the removal and replacement of Bridge 3130 will have an adverse effect on Bridge 3130. In consultation with the SHPO and other consulting parties, the USACE developed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to resolve the adverse effect. One of the identified mitigation measures is the preparation of this Minnesota Historic Property Record.

³³ Minnesota Department of Transportation, *Official Highway Map of Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Transportation, 1971, 1975, 1981).

³⁴ Stonebrooke, 4.

³⁵ Stonebrooke, 12.

Figure 5. Excerpt, Map: MN Trunk Highways, 1923

MN T.H. 5 around Blue Earth is graded & graveled; lightly graveled to the north.

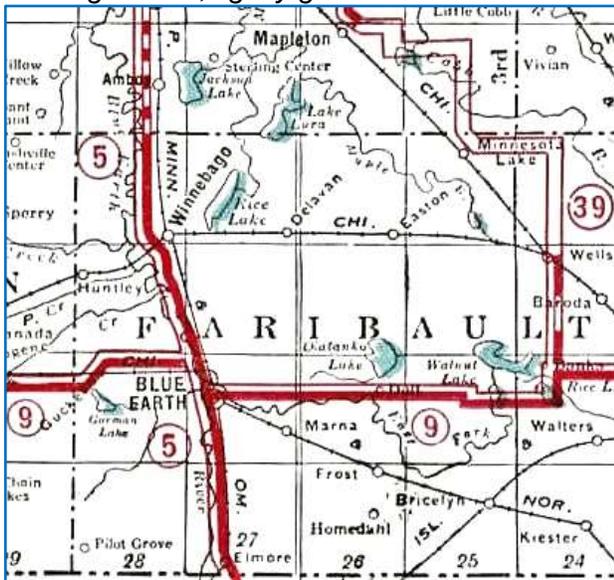


Figure 6. Excerpt, Map: MN Trunk Highways, 1934

MN T.H. 5 / US 169 is graveled south of Blue Earth; paved to the north. US 169 is denoted.



Figure 7. Excerpt, Map: MN Trunk Highways, 1941

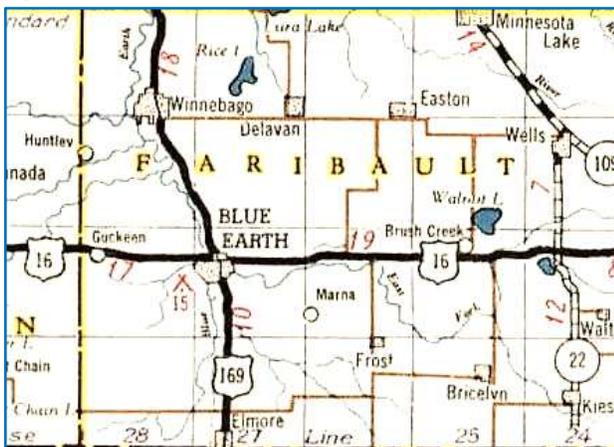


Figure 8. Excerpt, Map: MN Trunk Highways, 1960



Figure 8. Excerpt, Map: MN Trunk Highways, 1971

I-90 projected along U.S. 16 in Faribault Co.



Figure 9. Excerpt, Map: MN Trunk Highways, 1978

I-90 nearly complete across Faribault Co.



C. Historic Fabric and Elements: physical manifestations of significance

The following are identified as character-defining features of Bridge 3130:³⁶

Feature 1: Design and construction of a single-span, reinforced-concrete, deck girder with exceptional span length.

West side of bridge
facing south

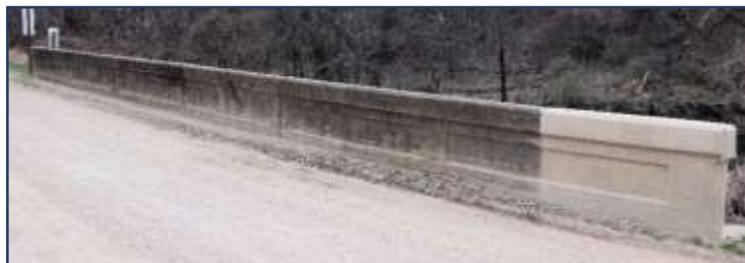


East side of bridge
facing south



Feature 2: Ornamental reinforced-concrete parapet railings featuring recessed panels designed in the Classical Revival style.

West side of bridge
facing southwest
*(Note repaired section
on north end)*



East side of bridge
facing south-southeast



³⁶ Mead & Hunt, II-6.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES AND INFORMATION SOURCES

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The original plans for Bridge 3130 have not been located. Plans for County Local Aid Bridges were designed by the Minnesota State Highway Department and executed under the jurisdiction of the county. Other sources used to compile historic data on the bridge are cited in Mead and Hunt above.

MINNESOTA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

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BRIDGE 3130
Carrying Township Road 232 over Coon Creek
Blue Earth City Township
Faribault County
Minnesota

MHPR No. FA-BET-003

Large format photographs by Daniel R. Pratt, April 2017.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| FA-BET-003-01 | VIEW OF BRIDGE 3130 IN CONTEXT, LOOKING NORTH. |
| FA-BET-003-02 | OBLIQUE VIEW OF BRIDGE 3130 EAST ELEVATION, LOOKING
SOUTHWEST. |
| FA-BET-003-03 | VIEW OF BRIDGE 3130 WEST ELEVATION, LOOKING EAST. |
| FA-BET-003-04 | OBLIQUE VIEW OF BRIDGE 3130 NORTH ABUTMENT, DECK
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| FA-BET-003-05 | OBLIQUE VIEW OF BRIDGE 3130 EAST CONCRETE RAILING,
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| FA-BET-003-06 | OBLIQUE VIEW OF BRIDGE 3130 WEST CONCRETE RAILING,
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| FA-BET-003-07 | DETAIL VIEW OF BRIDGE 3130 WEST CONCRETE RAILING,
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