

**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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: The Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District

Other names/site number: Poindexter Slough Bridge (24BE0538), Oregon Short Line Overpass (24BE0539), Poindexter Slough Bridge II (24BE1401)

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

## 2. Location

Street & number: Milepost 2.65-2.90 on Montana Secondary Highway 222

City or town: Dillon State: MT County: Beaverhead

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  X

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>_____<br/> <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p>                                    | <p>_____<br/> <b>Date</b></p>  |
| <p>_____<br/> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>                        |  |
| <p>In my opinion, the property <u>X</u> meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> |  |
| <p>_____<br/> <b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p>  | <p>_____<br/> <b>Date</b></p>  |
| <p>_____<br/> <b>Title :</b></p>  | <p>_____<br/> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p> |

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing      | Noncontributing   |            |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| <u>          </u> | <u>          </u> | buildings  |
| <u>          </u> | <u>    1    </u>  | sites      |
| <u>    5    </u>  | <u>    1    </u>  | structures |
| <u>          </u> | <u>          </u> | objects    |
| <u>    5    </u>  | <u>    2    </u>  | Total      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   N/A  

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular) = bridges

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular) = highway

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular) = bridges

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular) = abandoned highway segment

TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular) = highway

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Reinforced Concrete T-Beam Bridges

OTHER: Abandoned Highway Segment

OTHER: Highway

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL: Steel, CONCRETE; ASPHALT

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

The Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District is in the Beaverhead River valley of southwestern Montana. The district includes three reinforced concrete T-beam bridges, an abandoned highway segment, an active highway segment, and a noncontributing railroad grade. One bridge and the abandoned highway segment were constructed in 1929; the other two bridges and the present highway alignment were first constructed in 1936. The Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District consists of five contributing structures: three reinforced concrete T-beam bridges and two highway segments. The bridges are excellent examples of the type built between 1929 and 1936 and the highway segments are typical and reflect roadway construction of that period. The bridges and highway segments were designed and built by the Montana Highway Department. Two bridges were built under federal programs designed to reduce the impacts of the Great Depression and provide a grade separation at a busy railroad crossing. The historic district is associated with the Montana Highway Department's programs in the years following the passage of a gasoline tax and the federal "make work" projects of the Great Depression from 1933 to 1941.

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#### Narrative Description

The Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District consists of five contributing features: the Poindexter Slough Bridge, the Oregon Short Line Overpass, the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Site Bridge, an abandoned segment of U.S. Highway 91, and a segment of Montana Secondary Highway 222 (formerly U.S. 91). There is one noncontributing historic property in

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the district: the Oregon Short Line Railroad (24BE1408). The contributing properties cluster around Secondary 222 about two miles south of Dillon, the Beaverhead County seat.

**Poindexter Slough Bridge (one contributing structure, constructed 1936, 24BE0538)**

The Poindexter Slough Bridge (Lat./Long. 45.182279/-112.678113) is a three-span reinforced concrete T-beam Bridge built in 1936. The bridge measures 77 feet (ft.) in length and 27 ft. wide with a roadway width of 24 ft.

The structure's foundation consists of two solid reinforced concrete abutments supported by hand-stacked rock around the bases that functions as riprap; the riprap is shown on the bridge plans.<sup>1</sup> There are two open column-type concrete piers with extended pier caps that are chamfered at the ends. The caps are 24 ft. in length and extend 2 ft. 8 inches beyond the columns. The east pier is 16 ft. 6 inches in height and the west pier 17 ft. 9 inches in height. The difference in heights relates to the bridge's position on the approach to the Union Pacific Railway Overpass (24BE0359) located 465 ft. to the west. The piers are standard to this type of reinforced concrete T-beam bridges built by the Montana Highway Department from 1929 to 1941.

The bridge's end spans measure 25 ft. 6 inches and the center span is 26 ft. in length. The overhanging deck of the structure is supported by the pier caps and triangular concrete brackets on each side. The concrete deck and T-beams were poured as a single unit. The beams are 1 ft. 3 inches x 17 ft. and extend the length of the structure. There are transverse intermediate concrete diaphragms between the T-beams.

The concrete deck is overlain with asphalt. The driving lanes are flanked by 9-inch raised curbs with drains. The guardrails were poured as separate units and installed on the bridge and 12 concrete guardrail posts line each side of the bridge. The guardrail posts are 1 ft. x 1 ft. x 2 ft. 8 inches and have beveled caps. There are two horizontal rails between each post that measure 5½ inches x 5½ inches and tilt at a 45° angle. The guardrails are anchored at the ends by 3-ft. x 4-ft. x 2-ft. 11-inch concrete endposts. The endposts have three vertical bush-hammered grooves on the exterior faces and a 1 ft. 9-inch x 3-ft. bush-hammered panel on the side facing the roadway. Two vertical bush-hammered grooves are featured on the east and west ends of the endposts. The northeast endpost has a heavily rusted 2-ft. 6-inch x 4-inch metal sign embedded in the concrete that reads, "Poindexter Slough" in raised letters.

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<sup>1</sup> State of Montana, State Highway Commission, Bridge over Poindexter Slough near Dillon, USWPCG Project No. WPGH 255-A, Unit 4, Drawing no. 1518, Montana Department of Transportation, Helena, Montana.

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**Oregon Short Line Overpass (one contributing structure, constructed 1936, 24BE0539)**

The Oregon Short Line Overpass (Lat./Long. 45.182620/-112.680310) is a three-span, reinforced concrete T-beam Bridge built in 1936. The bridge is 143 ft. in length and 27 ft. wide with a roadway width of 24 ft.

The overpass's foundation consists of two solid reinforced concrete abutments. There are two open column-type concrete bents with extended pier caps chamfered at the ends. The caps are 27 ft. in length and extend 30-ft. 2-inches beyond the columns. The east pier is 36 ft. 11 inches in height and the west pier measures 37 ft. 6 inches in height. The bents are standard to this type of reinforced concrete T-beam bridges and overpasses built by the Montana Highway Department from 1929 to 1941.

The superstructure of the overpass is comprised of three skewed spans. The end spans are 45 ft. 9½ inches and the center span is 51 ft. 7 inches in length. The overhanging deck is supported by the pier caps and triangular concrete brackets on each side of the structure. The concrete deck and T-beams were poured as a single unit. The beams are 1 ft. 3 inches x 17 inches and extend the length of the structure. Transverse intermediate concrete diaphragms provide additional support to the T-beams.

The concrete deck is overlain with asphalt. The driving lanes are flanked by 9-inch raised curbs with drains. The guardrails were poured as separate units and installed on the bridge. There are 24 concrete guardrail posts on each side of the bridge. They measure 1 t. x 1 ft. x 2 ft. 8 inches at the bases and taper to 1 ft. 6 inches at the top; all are 2 ft. 8 inches in height with beveled caps. Two horizontal rails occur between each post and measure 5½ inches x 5½ inches and tilt at a 45° angle. The guardrails are anchored at the ends by 3-ft. x 4-ft. x 2-ft. 11-inch concrete endposts. The endposts have three vertical bush-hammered grooves on the exterior faces and a 1-ft. 9-inch x 3-ft. bush-hammered panel on the side facing the roadway. Two vertical bush-hammered grooves are featured on the east and west ends of the endposts. The southwest endpost holds an illegible badly rusted 2-ft. 6-inch x 4-inch metal sign embedded in the concrete.

**Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Site Bridge (one contributing structure, constructed 1929, 24BE1401)**

The bridge is a one-span, reinforced concrete T-beam structure (Lat./Long. 45.182611/-112.677822) that measures 25 ft. in length and 22 ft. wide with a 20-foot roadway width.<sup>2</sup> The bridge's foundation consists of solid reinforced concrete abutments with wing walls extending from the four corners of the bridge. The deck and T-beams were poured as a single unit. There are four beams recessed under the deck. Triangular concrete brackets support the deck and

<sup>2</sup> The plans for this bridge have not survived.

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extend off the outside beams. The deck is flanked by raised concrete curbs with drains. The guardrails are similar in appearance to the Poindexter Slough Bridge and Oregon Short Line Overpass. There are three concrete guardrail posts on either side of the bridge that support two rows of horizontal concrete railings tilted at a 45° angle. The guardrails are anchored at the ends by flared concrete end posts. Unlike later versions of this type of bridge, no decorative bush-hammered grooves or panels on the end posts exist. The bridge deck is overlain with gravel.

### **Abandoned U.S. Highway 91 Segment (one contributing structure, constructed 1929)**

The U.S. Highway 91 segment diverges from Secondary 222 at the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks' (FWP) Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Site access road (Lat./Long. 45.182157/-112.676437). The road is maintained for 360 ft. from the secondary highway to the east approach of the Poindexter Slough FAS Bridge. The roadway, now abandoned, then proceeds 450 ft. to the northwest where an at-grade crossing of the Oregon Short Line Railroad (Lat./Long. 45.183216/-112.679602) once existed. From the former crossing, the abandoned roadway extends 230 ft. to the northwest (Lat./Long. 45.183437/-112.680585) where it curves to the southwest and proceeds 842 ft. to where it re-connects with Secondary 222 (Lat./Long. 45.182790/-112.683820). The total length of the old U.S. 91 segment is 1,882 ft. (1,991 ft. including bridge and at-grade crossing).

The road grade measures approximately 8 to 30 ft. wide and the former driving surface 12 ft. wide. The existing roadway is largely dirt surfaced with patches of gravel and with considerable vegetation growing on it. The Montana Highway Department failed to pave the grade before it was bypassed by the existing Secondary 222 alignment in 1936. The Union Pacific Railroad has completely obliterated the old at-grade railroad crossing.

The improvement of the highway occurred in 1929 by the J.N. Brown & Son Company of Bozeman. The project involved the grading and drainage of 11.8 miles of U.S. Highway 91 south of Dillon. The alignment was bypassed in 1936 when the existing Secondary 222 alignment was constructed. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks built the fishing access circa 1990 and incorporated part of the old highway into its design.<sup>3</sup>

### **Montana Secondary 222/U.S. Highway 91 (one contributing structure, constructed 1936)**

This active highway grade stretches 2,195 ft. from the FWP's Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Site (Lat./Long. 45.182157/-112.676437) to a field access road west of the Oregon Short Line Overpass (Lat./Long. 45.182598/-112.684791). From the east, the road travels west-northwest and then southwest. The paved surface of the roadway is 24 ft. in width consisting of two 12-ft.

<sup>3</sup> Montana State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes [hereafter MSHC], Book 4, pp. 159, 160.

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driving lanes; there are no shoulders. The roadway includes raised approaches to the Poindexter Slough Bridge and the Oregon Short Line Overpass. The MDT routinely maintains the roadway.

Instead of modern steel guardrail approaches to the bridges, 72 treated timber piling guard posts line both sides of the roadway (35 on the northside and 37 on the southside). The posts begin on the east about 235 ft. west of the fishing access site access (Lat./Long. 45.182184/-112.677568) and proceed west-northwest approximately 1,600 ft. to the terminus of the abandoned U.S. Highway 91 segment terminus (Lat./Long. 45.182598/-112.684791). The posts consist of creosote-treated timber chamfered at the tops that measure 12 inches in diameter, 2 ft. in height, and located approximately 3 ft. from the paved roadway surface within the existing right-of-way.

### **Oregon Short Line Railroad Segment (one noncontributing structure, constructed 1936, 24BE1408)**

The active single-track railroad grade is 400 ft. in length. It begins at Lat./Long. 45.182459/-112.680525 and extends northeast to Lat./Long. 45.183304/-112.679491. It passes under the Oregon Short Line Overpass at Lat./Long. 45.182611/-112.680313. The grade is 22 ft. wide and holds two steel rails connected to creosote-treated wood ties bearing on gravel ballast. The railroad appurtenances include tie plates and spikes. There are no switches, signals or structures within the railroad right-of-way. The railroad grade is actively maintained by the Union Pacific Railroad.

### **Poindexter Slough Fishing Access (one noncontributing site, constructed 1990)**

In 1990, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks developed a fishing access site just over 400 ft. northwest of the junction of the abandoned U.S. Highway 91 road segment and the present Montana Secondary 222/U.S. Highway 91. The access essentially entails a widening of the historic abandoned segment of Highway 91 south of the road. The widened section that serves as a parking area measures 215 ft. northwest-southeast by 25 ft. southwest-northeast; gravel tops the parking area.

### **Integrity**

The three reinforced concrete T-beam bridges within the historic district retain all seven aspects of integrity and are good examples of the type of reinforced concrete bridges designed and built by the Montana Highway Department from 1929 to 1941. The bridges stand at their original locations and their spatial relationship to each other remains the same since their 1936 construction. The bridges, moreover, reflect their original locations as part of intact segments of both abandoned and active sections of U.S. Highway 91. Integrity of workmanship, design, and materials are strong as all the critical structural components standard to this type of bridge are intact, including the recessed T-beams and decorative end posts and guardrails. No intrusive materials have been installed on the bridges since their construction in 1929 and 1936 and they



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represent strong examples of the carpenter and cement workers' craft. They display integrity of feeling and association as Great Depression era concrete bridges. The bridges do exhibit deterioration common to reinforced concrete bridges of that era, such as exposed rebar, spalling, and cracking.

The two highway segments exhibit good integrity and are illustrative of the highway construction standards from 1927 to 1941. They remain on their original alignments that date to 1929 and 1936. The 1929 segment never received pavement and still displays some of its original gravel surfacing along with the materials that constitute the grade; no culverts or other road-related appurtenances exist on this abandoned segment of U.S. Highway 91, other than the bridge.

The 1936 highway segment (Secondary 222) retains its original width and materials, including the pavement. The segment is marked by the treated timber guard posts that still line the roadway. All design elements of the road segment are present and still utilized by motor traffic. The setting of the property is largely unchanged with some residential encroachment in the area and the nearby presence of Interstate 15, which doesn't detract from the overall setting of the historic district. The segment also retains integrity of feeling and association as a pre-World War II highway.

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## 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.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ENGINEERING

TRANSPORTATION

**Period of Significance**

1929-1975

**Significant Dates**

1929, 1936

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Montana Highway Department/Designer

Lawler Corporation/Builder (1936 bridges)

W.K. Trippet/Builder (1929 bridge)

J. N. Brown & Son/Builder (abandoned US 91 segment)

Lawler Corporation/Builder (Montana Secondary 222)

Oregon Short Line Railroad/Builder

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District is eligible to list at a local level of significance in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C for its association with the Montana Highway Department's statewide road-building programs from 1929 to 1941. Although the three reinforced concrete bridges in the district will not be listed under the

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*Reinforced Concrete Bridges of Montana, 1900-1958* Multiple Property Document (MPD)

(reference number 64501109) due to the presence of other resources within the district including two contributing road segments, the MPD provides significant history and context for the three bridges of this nomination and serves as an important reference document for listing the bridges. The bridges meet the Registration Requirements set forth in the MPD under the context of *The Montana Highway Department and Reinforced Concrete Bridges, 1916-1961*, and the *Reinforced Concrete Highway Bridges* property type, despite their listing outside of the MPD parameters. The two contributing highway segments within the district are representative of the road design standards of the time of their construction and exemplify two distinct types of roadway design: one unpaved as was common before the 1930s and the other paved as was standard to the 1930s.

The period of significance for the district begins with the initial 1929 bridge construction and ends in 1975, the end of the historical period and reflecting the continued importance of the bridges and roadways to the local population. There have been no significant alterations or modifications to the highway segments or the bridges since their construction. Significant dates include 1929, reflecting the date of the earliest bridge's construction and 1936, noting the second bridge construction date.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Overview**

In November 1926, Montana voters overwhelmingly passed a three cents per gallon gasoline tax. The revenue from the tax went directly into a highway trust fund used to match federal money for highway and bridge projects in the state. Prior to 1926, the counties were responsible for the matching funds. In Montana, however, the decade was plagued by drought and economic depression. Over 60,000 people left the state, significantly depleting the counties' tax base and diminishing their ability to match federal highway money. Montana held the reputation of having the worst highways in the nation, a dubious distinction indeed. The passage of the law in 1926 had a profound impact on the development of Montana's highway system. The large influx of gas tax money into state coffers sparked a boom in highway construction for the Montana State Highway Commission. From 1927 to 1932, the commission and the Montana Highway Department improved approximately 800 miles of Federal Aid highways and constructed 788 bridges, including 96 reinforced concrete structures that counted the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge and the abandoned US Highway 91 segment toward that total.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Jon Axline, *Taming Big Sky Country: The History of Montana Transportation from Trails to Interstates*, (Charleston: The History Press, 2015), 71-72; Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, rev. ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 283MSHC, Books 3-5.

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The boom collapsed in 1930 with the advent of the Great Depression. Again, drought and economic depression caused a significant decline in the state's highway program because of the lack of matching money. The Hoover Administration attempted to alleviate the effects of the economic calamity by providing emergency funds for road and bridge projects. The program focused on putting unemployed men back to work on highway projects. When Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office in March 1933, he initiated the New Deal, which continued the road programs begun by President Hoover. The New Deal, however, was much more far-reaching and more successful than Hoover's emergency programs. Through grants to the states, the state highway commission road and bridge programs again boomed. From 1933 to 1936, the Montana Highway Department built 341 bridges, including 17 reinforced concrete structures. Thereafter until 1941, the number of stand-alone reinforced concrete bridges precipitously dropped. Instead, the department utilized T-beam structures primarily as approach spans to larger steel stringer or girder bridges, such as railroad grade separation structures. The Works Progress Grade Crossing Program provided funds exclusively for the construction of highway over and underpasses at busy at-grade railroad crossings. The New Deal programs of the Great Depression ended with the United States' entry into World War II in December 1941.<sup>5</sup>

The Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District is representative of the post-1927 and Great Depression highway construction booms. The two programs essentially brought Montana out of the mud and into the mid-twentieth century by providing a modern paved highway system. The programs had a profound effect on commercial, passenger, and tourist traffic in the state, alleviating, somewhat, the effects of the two economic depressions.

The historic district is, therefore, strongly associated with the broad pattern of events in Montana history, which continues to impact the state into the twenty-first century. The historic district is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A.

There are five contributing features in the Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District: three reinforced concrete bridges and two historic highway segments. The concrete bridges represent two different phases of the same type, the T-beam bridge. The Montana Highway Department's bridge bureau developed a standardized plan for concrete T-beam bridges in the late 1920s. The new design did away with the cumbersome guard walls and replaced them with art deco-style streamlined rails that were more visually appealing. They included beveled-top concrete posts with two concrete rails between them with the rails tilted at a 45° angle. The guardrails were anchored at the ends to concrete endposts. Initially, the endposts were plain with no decorative features. The Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Site Bridge reflects its early build under the new

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<sup>5</sup> Axline, *Taming Big Sky Country*, 79-80; Jon Axline, *Conveniences Sorely Needed: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860-1956*, (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2005), 85-86.

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standardized plan and lacks the decorative features on the endposts, although it does display the art deco-style guardrails and standard T-beam design used by the highway commission until 1941. The Poindexter Slough Bridge and the Oregon Short Line Overpass, both built in 1936, feature the ornamentation on the endposts used by the commission from 1930 to 1941. All three bridges stand in proximity to each other and illustrate the change in design that occurred to this type of bridge within a two-year span. All three are structurally intact and have not been modified in any way. They retain the standard T-beam design, endposts, and art deco-style guardrails. They are also representative examples of 1930s-era concrete bridges, a design replicated throughout Montana, making dating the structures easier.

The two road segments within the historic district also represent good examples of Federal Aid highways constructed between 1929 and 1941. Both lie on their original 1929 and 1936 alignments and both are standard to highways built after 1926 and until 1941. One segment abandoned in 1936 has essentially been preserved in place. It still retains parts of its original gravel surfacing; an approximate 215-ft. by 25-ft. length immediately southwest and parallel the original grade was groomed in 1990 for access to and parking at the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Site (north of the bridge). The historic abandoned graveled segment south of the bridge, despite regrading, retains its original width consistent with the segment north of the bridge.

In 1936, the Montana Highway Department realigned the roadway at this location to accommodate a new highway grade separation structure, the Oregon Short Line Overpass. The 1936 segment also lies on its original alignment and displays its original width. The segment within the historic district consists primarily of approaches to both structures, the Poindexter Slough Bridge and the Oregon Short Line Overpass. Unlike other bridge approaches, however, these approaches have not been lined by modern steel guardrails. This segment still has treated timber guard posts to keep traffic on the roadway. It is unusual, to say the least, that these features remain present and still function in their original capacity.

The three bridges and two highway segments combine to create a microcosm of standard bridge and highway design representative of the Montana Highway Department's programs from 1927 to 1941. They clearly illustrate standard highway design of that time and how reinforced concrete bridge design evolved during that period. The historic district provides a stark example of how the state's highway system evolved during a traumatic time in the state's history. Reinforced concrete bridges are demonstrative of permanence in infrastructure. Further, the historic district is part of a significant north-south travel corridor in Montana, U.S. Highway 91. The Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District are eligible to list in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C.

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## EARLY HISTORY OF THE AREA

In July 1862, prospectors discovered gold on Grasshopper Creek, about 17 miles southwest of the Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District. The strike precipitated the first major gold rush into southwest Montana. The stampede profoundly impacted the Beaverhead River valley as many unlucky miners established small ranches and farms in the valley. They sold their products to merchants in the mining camp of Bannack and other camps in the vicinity. Importantly, an indigenous trail described by Lewis in 1805 became the primary freighting road into Montana from the Overland Trail to the south. Established by early 1863, the road's southern terminus was Salt Lake City until the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869. The road's terminus then shifted north to Corinne. It was over the Corinne, or the Montana Road, that the bulk of supplies, mail, and passengers reached the Montana mining camps.<sup>6</sup>

In 1871, the Salt Lake City-based Utah Northern Railroad Company began construction of a narrow-gauge railroad north from Ogden, Utah to Montana with the ultimate destination being Butte. The company had built about 77 miles of railroad in Idaho when it ran into financial difficulties and ceased construction. In 1878, the Union Pacific Railroad purchased the company and renamed the railroad the Utah & Northern Railroad. It resumed construction in 1879 and crossed the mountains via Monida Pass into Montana Territory in March 1880. Construction proceeded smoothly through the Red Rock River valley and passed by Rattlesnake Cliff into the Beaverhead valley, when it hit a snag: a cattle rancher, Richard Deacon, refused to sell right-of-way to the railroad.<sup>7</sup>

An Irish bachelor sitting on 430 acres of prime river bottom land in the Beaverhead Valley, Deacon was no fan of the Utah & Northern Railroad and refused to sell right-of-way to it. Indeed, he even threatened to make it difficult for the railroad if it tried to condemn any of his land and, reportedly, dug a rifle pit to defend his property. Deacon provided a price of \$8,000 to the railroad to buy him out. The railroad's directors would likely not approve the expense, so Utah & Northern construction superintendent Washington Dunn approached the merchants following the line as it made its way northward. Dunn told the merchants that if they purchased the land and provided the railroad with right-of-way, then they would halt construction at the site for the winter.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Jon Axline, *Taming Big Sky Country: The History of Montana Transportation from Trails to Interstates*, (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2015), 17-18.

<sup>7</sup> Malone, et al, *Montana*, 175; Don Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana*, (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Co., 1999), 226-227; Robert G. Athearn, "Railroad to a Far-Off Country: The Utah and Northern," *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, vol. XVIII, no. 4 (Autumn 1968), 4, 21; Stanley R. Davison and Rex C. Myers, "Terminus Town: The Founding of Dillon, 1880," *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, vol. XXX, no. 4 (Autumn 1980), 23.

<sup>8</sup> Davison and Myers, "Terminus Town," 23; Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana*, 226.

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### **Dillon, Montana**

The merchants realized the railroad's offer meant financial opportunity for them. Consequently, nine representatives from the group met over dinner with Deacon to hammer out a deal. Deacon, perhaps realizing the desperation of the railroad to obtain the land, raised his asking price to \$10,500 for his 430 acres. The merchants accepted and the deal was done. The day following the dinner, the merchants laid out a town at the confluence of the Beaverhead River and Blacktail Deer Creek and began selling lots on September 9, 1881. Within a day, the landowners recouped their investment in the land and made a \$3,500 profit. They named the town after the Utah & Northern's president, Sidney Dillon, and successfully lobbied the territorial legislature to move the county seat from the waning mining camp of Bannack to Dillon just five months after the establishment of the community. The city incorporated in 1885, and within a few years became a regional trading center and shipping point for surrounding mines, ranches, and farms. By 1890, Dillon boasted a population of a little over a thousand residents.<sup>9</sup>

Like all Montana communities, Dillon had high hopes for the city's future. The commercial district continued to expand along the Union Pacific Railroad's tracks and the population steadily increased. In 1897, the city successfully lobbied the state legislature to locate the new State Normal College in Dillon. The college brought added revenue in the form of students and associated services. In 1910, Dillon's population reached 1,835 people. The 1927 Sanborn map showed a vibrant commercial district and a surfeit of warehouses, including some that could hold three million tons of wool, along the Union Pacific Railroad tracts. The substantial Andrus Hotel occupied a prime location in the district at the intersection of Glendale and Idaho streets.<sup>10</sup> The city suffered through the post-World War I economic depression and drought and both calamities again during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Dillon's population historically enjoyed a steady increase. The city's stable economy based its status as a trade and shipping center, nearby recreational opportunities, location on Interstate 15, and its relatively low crime rate all contribute to the prosperity of the community.<sup>11</sup>

### **Poindexter & Orr Live Stock Company**

Similar to many transportation-related properties in Montana, the location of the Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District found its earliest settlement via farmers or ranchers.

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<sup>9</sup> Davison and Myers, "Terminus Town," 23-25; Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana*, 226-227; *Montana Place Names from Alzada to Zortman: A Montana Historical Society Guide*, (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2009), 68-69; US Census Records, viewed at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>10</sup> Listed December 2, 2019, NR No. SG 100004711.

<sup>11</sup> Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana*, 266; US Census Records; Federal Writers' Project, *Montana: A State Guide Book*, (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1939), 290; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (1927), Montana Historical Society Research Center, Helena, Montana.



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Settler sheep rancher Philip Poindexter obtained the patent to 160 acres on the north side (NW1/4 S. 35, T7S R9W) of existing Secondary 222 and the Poindexter Slough Bridge site in November 1878. A native of Virginia, Poindexter joined the California gold rush in 1852. From 1852 to 1856, he worked as a miner in the California gold fields. In 1856, he and William Orr formed a partnership in California to operate a cattle ranch. After hearing news of gold strikes in southwestern Montana in 1865, the business partners decided to try their luck in the new territory. In 1865, Orr drove a herd of cattle north to the Beaverhead Valley and established “the present home ranch” there. The following year, in 1866, Poindexter followed him to the valley with another cattle herd. Poindexter apparently settled on the land just east of the Beaverhead River prior to the December 1870 GLO survey of the township. Nearby Poindexter Slough bears his name.<sup>12</sup>

After their arrival, the business firm of Poindexter & Orr dominated the ranching industry in southwestern Montana. Credited with driving the first large cattle herd to Montana in 1864, the men continuously added to their land holdings in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1885, they held or leased 5,480 acres and may have been the largest stock dealers in the territory. Sixteen years later, in 1901, the partnership owned 16,000 acres in the Dillon area and leased another 10,000 acres of school trust land<sup>13</sup>. In addition to cattle, the men raised horses, draft horses from Great Britain and France, and thoroughbred shorthorn cattle. The business also owned a large ranch in Custer County where they ran 10,000 sheep. Poindexter truly was a mover and shaker in Beaverhead County. He served in the territorial legislature in the 1870s, the Masons, and an active member of the Democratic party. Poindexter retired from the ranching business shortly after the death of William Orr. He lived at the home ranch, The Cottonwoods, about two miles south of Dillon, until his death in February 1911.<sup>14</sup>

East of Poindexter about ½ a mile was his neighbor, Richard A. “Dick” Reynolds.<sup>15</sup> Born in Wales in 1842, Reynolds emigrated to the United States with his family in 1844 and settled first in upstate New York, before moving to Wisconsin. For a time in 1864, Reynolds was at either Fort Union or Fort Buford at the mouth of the Yellowstone River. He returned to Wisconsin for a couple years and then moved west to Montana Territory in 1866 and worked as a miner for a short time. Reynolds established a farm in the Beaverhead Valley in the late 1860s, using the

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<sup>12</sup> GLO Records; *Progressive Men of the State of Montana*, (Chicago: A. W. and Co., 1902), 496-498; M. A. Leeson, *History of Montana, 1739 – 1885*, (Chicago: Warner, Beers & Company, 1885), 994; “Oldest Beaverhead Pioneer, P. H. Poindexter, Found Dead,” *The Butte Miner*, February 28, 1911.

<sup>13</sup> William Orr died in 1901, but Poindexter carried on the firm name in honor of his old friend until his death in 1911.

<sup>14</sup> Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, Rev. ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 146, 148; *Progressive Men*, 497-498; Leeson, *History of Montana*, 994; *The Butte Miner*, “Oldest Beaverhead Pioneer.”

<sup>15</sup> The county road was slightly north of the existing Secondary 222 alignment.

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gold dust he collected to buy seed. Unfortunately, grasshoppers destroyed his crops. In 1869, he and John Bishop travelled to Oregon, acquired a large flock of sheep and trailed the animals back to the Beaverhead Valley. He settled “where he now resides” in 1870. That same year he married widow Virginia Johnson, a sister of his neighbor, Philip Poindexter. He built their residence in Section 36 in 1875, “the best in the valley.” Virginia filed immediately east and adjoining Poindexter’s land on 160 acres in the W1/2 NE1/4 of Section 35 under the 1862 Homestead Act; she “proved up” on the claim in February 1880 and signed the property over to her husband, Richard.<sup>16</sup> Virginia Reynolds died in 1884. By the following year, Richard owned 1,200 acres and kept 2,400 sheep on the property. In 1887, Reynolds married Della Thompson, who taught at the Poindexter School, located near the center of Section 35. Dick Reynolds died of a stroke in January 1904. Perhaps a fitting epitaph for this pioneer stockman appeared in Leeson’s *History of Montana* in 1885: “Mr. Reynolds came to the territory a poor man with very limited means, and he says the grasshoppers ate that up.” At the time of his death, Reynolds’ estate was worth \$100,000.<sup>17</sup>

### John Conover

The land occupied by the west portion of the Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District (SE¼ NE¼ of Section 34, T7S, R9W) was deeded to John Conover in March 1889.<sup>18</sup> Born in California in the early 1880s, Conover drove a herd of horses to the Blacktail Deer Creek valley south of Dillon, selling most of the animals to the Poindexter & Orr Livestock Company. The company offered Conover a job as a ranch hand, a position he held for most of his life. Over the years, Conover and his wife, Ellen, filed and proved up on a number of ranches under both the 1862 Homestead Act and the Desert Land Act of 1877. After the couple obtained the title to the land, they promptly turned it over to Poindexter & Orr. Large ranch owners commonly used the practice to expand their land holdings in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For a time, Conover cut and sold timber to Beaverhead County and others to make ends meet. The 1930 U.S. Census shows the Conover’s living on the extensive Poindexter & Orr Ranch. The ranch was indeed a small community on its own. Conover was one of 39 ranch hands and servants living on the spread that also included another family, that of Ernest Orr and 13 of his relatives. Ellen died of uterine cancer in August 1934. John Conover lingered for another two years, dying of heart disease in Dillon in October 1936.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> GLO Records; Leeson, *History of Montana*, 994; *Progressive Men*, 382-383.

<sup>17</sup> Leeson, *History of Montana*, 994; *Progressive Men*, 383; “Richard A. Reynolds Dead,” *The Anaconda Standard*, January 10, 1904.

<sup>18</sup> Conover transferred ownership of the 80-acre homestead to the adjacent Poindexter & Orr Livestock Company ranch sometime in the 1890s. GLO Records, viewed at [www.glorerecords.blm.gov](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov).

<sup>19</sup> “Well-Known Dillon Resident Summoned,” *The Dillon Tribune*, October 29, 1936; U.S. Census Records, viewed at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); GLO Records; Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, rev ed., (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 164; “Mrs. John Conover is Summoned,” *The Dillon Tribune*, April 11, 1934.

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## **THE BRIDGES OF POINDEXTER SLOUGH HISTORIC DISTRICT**

### **Transportation Origins of the District**

The Montana-Utah Road generally followed the route of U.S. 91 from Monida Pass to Dillon. The route appears as a county road on the 1870 General Land Office map and was not on the State Highway System when the Montana State Highway Commission designated it in 1914. The county road south of Dillon, part of Montana's seven percent system created by the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1921, became part of the Federal Aid Highway System that year.<sup>20</sup> In Montana, the highway system totaled 4,742 miles, including the highway south of Dillon. The route was not included among the named highways in the early 1920s. The highway commission expended no federal funds on improvements to the highway from 1921 to 1929 but the Bureau of Public Roads, American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO), and the state highway commission designated the route a component of US Highway 91 in 1926. The route traversed Montana from Monida Pass, 64 miles south of Dillon, to the Canadian border at Sweetgrass, a distance of 396 miles.<sup>21</sup> This route originally encompassed the abandoned road segment in the district subsequently replaced by the 1936 (active) realignment.

### **U.S. Highway 91 and the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge**

The 1927 to 1929 period revitalized the nascent highway programs in Montana. It was a period of moderate expansion to compensate for many years of neglect to the system because of lack of funds to make improvements to the state's roads and bridges. The late 1920s were also a period of transition for the Montana Highway Department as it developed new road and bridge designs to accommodate modern traffic demands. In the case of bridges, it involved the use of a new streamlined reinforced concrete design. The abandoned US Highway 91 segment and the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge are representative of that evolution of design standards to meet the then current traffic needs of Beaverhead County and Montana.

By 1929, financial assistance arrived as J.N. Brown & Son Company of Bozeman received a contract to grade and drain 11.8 miles of U.S. Highway 91 south of Dillon, which included the now abandoned road segment within the district. It was also at this time that W.K. Trippet constructed the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge that still crosses the river and leads to the fishing access site. The road work and bridge construction greatly enhanced the travel between Dillon to the north and area to the south, including those bound for Utah. The

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<sup>20</sup> The seven percent system consisted of seven percent of the total road mileage in each state.

<sup>21</sup> Statewide Planning Survey, *History of the Montana State Highway Department, 1913-1942*, (Helena: State Highway Commission, 1943), 121-124; Axline, *Taming Big Sky Country*, 62-63, 67; *Rand McNally Official 1923 Auto Trails Map*, District No. 13, (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1923); *Report of State Highway Commission of Montana for Period Ending December 1928*, (Helena: State Highway Commission, 1929), 26-30.

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alignment graded by J.N. Brown and Son was bypassed in 1936 when the existing Secondary 222 alignment was constructed.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Poindexter Slough Bridge and Oregon Short Line Overpass (Separation Structure)**

During the Great Depression from 1930 to 1941, the federal government enacted new funding programs to put unemployed men back to work improving highways and building bridges. Both the Hoover Administration and Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal funded emergency projects on the highway system to mitigate the effects of high unemployment, particularly in rural states like Montana. Importantly, federal involvement had a strong impact on Beaverhead County.

Contractors utilizing federal funds were required by the Montana State Highway Commission to obtain labor on projects from the local National Reemployment Office in Dillon. Project workers had to be local unemployed men and only a contractor and his immediate staff could be from out-of-state on highway commission projects. Federal regulations also established wage rates, number of allowable hours to work each week, and how payments occurred to the work crews. The regulations also sought to minimize the amount of power equipment used on a project to maximize the number of men employed on the projects. Undoubtedly, the construction of the Poindexter Slough Bridge, the grade separation structure, and the currently used road segment were constructed under these stringent federal regulations to alleviate unemployment in Beaverhead County.

With economy tumbling and high unemployment, only six years after the recent improvements to the highway and the construction of the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge, the Montana State Highway Commission advertised on November 21, 1935, a project that entailed the construction of two large structures: a railroad grade separation structure to span the Oregon Short Line Railway, and equally important, the "construction of a three-span, 77-foot reinforced concrete bridge over Poindexter Slough near the overpass" on U.S. Highway 91, a little over two miles south of Dillon. Nine days later, on November 30<sup>th</sup>, the highway commissioners awarded the project to the Lawler Corporation of Butte. The contractor won the award with the low bid of \$84,579. Although the highway commission imposed a completion date for the project of August 31, 1936, Lawler missed the appointed date by a few days and completed the project September 3 of that year; Montana Highway Department changes to the design of the Poindexter Slough Bridge delayed its completion. The changes are not shown on the bridge plans. Since its completion, no other work, other than routine maintenance, has occurred to the bridge.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Montana State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes [hereafter MSHC], Book 4, pp. 159, 160.

<sup>23</sup> "Beaverhead Highway Projects Planned," *The Dillon Examiner*, November 20, 1935; "Notice to Contractors," *The Lima Ledger*, November 21, 1935; Montana State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, Book 6, pp. 401, 402; *Ibid*, Book 7, p. 33.

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Montana Highway Department's bridge bureau developed the design for this style of reinforced concrete T-beam bridge by 1929.<sup>24</sup> As standards changed though, engineers updated the standardized design for these structures to reflect changing materials and traffic demands. In March 1935, bridge engineers Josef Sorkin and Philip A. Upp developed the upgraded design for reinforced concrete T-beam bridges.

The completion of the three structures and maintenance to the road segments illustrate two distinct periods in the local transportation history and in the expansion of the highway commission to accommodate increased federal involvement in highway and bridge project. The now abandoned road segment, the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge, the active road grade (Montana Secondary 222/U.S. Highway 91), the Poindexter Slough Bridge, and Oregon Short Line Overpass served the local citizens well through their existence, generally in a prosaic manner. That changed in January of 1966, when Butte miner Nels Salmonsens was killed when the automobile he rode in crashed head on into the east abutment of the Poindexter Slough Bridge. Although unfortunate occurrences are part of any transportation network, all the structures in the Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District facilitated passenger and commercial traffic until the advent of Interstate 15, with the final seven miles of the interstate south of Dillon completed in 1988.<sup>25</sup> In addition to addressing standard transportation needs, the early highway segments also enabled and facilitated early years of tourist traffic beginning in the 1930s.

In the early 1970s, the bridge lost significant traffic as Interstate 15 bypassed the route and structure. Despite the loss of heavy traffic, the route continued and still plays a role in access to the town of Dillon, serving as the most southern exit/entry to Interstate 15. The route also allows locals from Dillon and farmers and ranchers who live west of town and drive Highway 278 to avoid the Interstate when they travel by using an underpass that runs below the Interstate. The highway commission re-designated this section of U.S. Highway 91 as Secondary 222 in July 1976.<sup>26</sup>

### **Criterion C—Engineering Significance—Overview**

Historically, reinforced concrete was a pervasive material used by the Montana Highway Commission from 1916 until the advent of the prestressed concrete era after World War II. The

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<sup>24</sup> The first bridge built under the standardized reinforced concrete T-beam design still stands and also crosses Poindexter Slough (24BE1401). It crosses the slough about 150 ft north of the Poindexter Slough Bridge. It was on the original alignment of US 91. The highway commission abandoned the bridge when the existing Secondary 222 alignment was constructed in 1935. The old bridge stands within the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks' Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Site.

<sup>25</sup> "Timeline outlines Montana Department of Transportation history," *The Montana Standard*, June 16, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> "Butte Miner Killed in Auto Crash," *The Dillon Tribune*, January 24, 1966; 2019 Road Log, Montana Department of Transportation, Helena, Montana, p. 3.

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highway commission developed a standardized design for reinforced concrete slab and T-beam bridges in 1915. The first commission-designed T-beam bridge was constructed in Silver Bow County in 1916. Initially, the bridges appeared almost monolithic because of the square angles and concrete guard walls pierced by rectangular or semielliptical arched openings. Concrete, unlike steel and timber, could be molded into aesthetically pleasing shapes and still retain its functionality. Montana Highway Department engineers, perhaps influenced by other state highway departments, completely revamped the T-beam design so it displayed art deco influences. This included the streamlined open appearance of the guardrails, the decorative guardrail posts and end posts along with the concrete brackets supporting the overhanging deck.<sup>27</sup>

An unknown highway department engineer redesigned the standardized reinforced concrete T-beam design to incorporate the above elements in 1927 or 1928. The Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge stands as one of the first bridges built incorporating many of the design elements mentioned above. By 1930, decorative grooves and recessed panels appeared on the standard T-beam design. The design, moreover, was particularly suitable to relatively narrow stream crossings in areas rich in gravel sources for the aggregate necessary for the concrete. Between 1929 and 1936, the highway department built over 100 reinforced concrete T-beam bridges under the design, mostly in southcentral and southwestern Montana. Reinforced concrete T-beam bridges became the most utilized concrete structures built by the department in the early 1930s. By 1936, however, it built few standalone T-beam structures and instead incorporated them as approaches to long-span steel stringer and girder bridges and railroad grade separation structures. The Poindexter Slough Bridges gain additional significance for their association with the early years of concrete bridge construction during the Great Depression.

### **Criterion C—Reinforced Concrete T-Beam Bridges, 1910-1941**

Carbon County pioneered the construction of reinforced concrete bridges in Montana in the first two decades of the early twentieth century. The county initially relied on structurally simple concrete slab bridges, but graduated to the more complicated T-beam structures just before World War I. For wide creek crossings, the county relied on reinforced concrete T-beam bridges. First developed in the mid-1870s by American engineer Thaddeus Hyatt, the design derives its name from the “T”-shaped configuration of the support beam. The head of the “T” is incorporated into the deck slab of the structure that also functions as the floor of the bridge. While the reinforced steel reinforcement bars were fabricated as a separate unit, the “T” beams, deck slabs, and guard walls were cast as a single section at the construction site. Concrete T-

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<sup>27</sup> George R. Metlen, *Report of the Montana State Highway Commission for the Years 1915-1916*, (Helena: Montana State Highway Commission, 1916), 10; Montana State Highway Commission, 32' x 18' Concrete Bridge over Silver Bow Creek ½ Mile East of Gregson Springs, Silver Bow County, Montana, Drawing No. 37 (June 14, 1916), Bridge Bureau, Montana Department of Transportation, Helena, Montana.

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beam bridges were also more suitable to areas of heavy traffic and where environmental conditions required an alternative to steel or timber structures. The bridges, however, required skilled labor (carpenters and concrete mixers) for their construction. Carbon County built seven T-beam bridges from 1913 to 1919, including the Bluewater Creek Bridge (NR# 11000223; listed April 28, 2011). Carbon County, however, was not the only entity using the material at that time.<sup>28</sup>

The Montana State Penitentiary in Deer Lodge also experimented with reinforced concrete in the early part of the twentieth century. Despite opposition from labor unions who argued that prison convicts took good-paying jobs away from them, the penitentiary maintained an active road and bridge-building program for over two decades. Between 1911 and 1914, convicts constructed at least four reinforced concrete bridges near Deer Lodge.<sup>29</sup>

Built by convict labor in 1911, the Conley Street Bridge crossed the Clark Fork at the south end of the old prison grounds in Deer Lodge.<sup>30</sup> It provided access between the penitentiary and the Milwaukee Road and Northern Pacific railroad yards. Warden Frank Conley told the State Board of Prison Commissioners that a “new cement bridge will cost in the neighborhood of \$1600.00 provided it is built with convict labor which will take twenty convicts three days.” The bridge was an experiment in the use of T-beams, a style that became increasingly popular as World War I neared because it allowed for longer reinforced concrete bridges better able to support heavier loads than more simple concrete slab structures and hence didn’t require the steel needed for the war effort. Instead of recessing the beams underneath the deck as was done on the Bluewater Creek Bridge in Carbon County, the outside beams were placed flush with the structure’s sidewalls on the Conley Street bridge.<sup>31</sup>

The Thirteenth Legislature’s creation of the State Highway Commission in March 1913, caused a profound change in Montana’s bridge industry. The commission was the result of many years’ lobbying by state good roads groups to develop engineering standards for roads and impose order on the bridge-building industry. Importantly, the Congress’s impending passage of the first Federal Aid Road Act in 1914 made it mandatory that the states establish state highway

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<sup>28</sup> The concrete formwork was usually the most expensive portion of the construction process, absorbing anywhere from 10 to 60% of the total construction cost of the bridge. Jeffrey A. Hess and Robert M. Frame III, *Historic Highway Bridges in Wisconsin: Stone and Concrete-Arch Bridges*, Volume 1, (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 1999); Federal Highway Administration, *Bridge Inspection Training Manual*, (Washington DC: US Department of Transportation, 1979), G-4; Condit, *American Building*, 169; Plowden, *Bridges*, 247-248.

<sup>29</sup> Jon Axline, “Building Permanent and Substantial Roads: Prison Labor on Montana’s Highways, 1910-1925,” *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, vol. 62, no. 2 (Summer 2012), 65-66.

<sup>30</sup> Powell County condemned the bridge for safety reasons in about 2015 and later replaced it.

<sup>31</sup> Frank Conley, *Nineteenth Annual Report for the Montana State Prison for the Year Ending December 31, 1914*. (Deer Lodge: Montana State Prison, 1915), 17.

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commissions to manage the federal funds. When formed in March 1913, the highway commission consisted of three governor-appointed civil engineers. At first, the commission was only an advisory body that provided information on modern road construction techniques to the state's counties. It published pamphlets, developed a statewide highway map, and met with local governments about their transportation needs. Even with the state's increased influence on road and bridge matters, the counties still followed the old system of advertising and letting contracts for new bridges because there was no state money available to them for construction.<sup>32</sup>

In March 1915, at the state legislature's direction, the highway commission formed a bridge department and hired Utah engineer Charles A. Kyle to head it up because of his extensive experience in the design and construction of steel bridges. Over the next month, the commissioners and Kyle hammered out the details of Montana's new bridge-building system, which included guidelines for letting contracts and distribution of standardized bid sheets to all the counties. Although these bridge plans were housed at the county courthouses, the commission required contractors to obtain final plans from the bridge department in Helena to ensure that the contractors built the bridge to the specifications defined in the standard plans. The counties remained responsible for letting the contracts and paying for the structure. The state, however, supervised the construction and inspected the bridges before authorizing payments to the contractors. Most Montana counties welcomed the involvement of the state bridge department in their bridge projects.<sup>33</sup>

By the end of its first year, the commission's bridge department had worked through the procedural details of its new system and regularly provided plans to the counties for steel truss, timber stringer, and a few concrete bridges. The commission promoted Kyle to Chief Bridge Engineer and authorized him to hire "competent engineers to supervise the construction of new steel bridges" in the state. Indeed, by the end of 1915, Kyle and his assistants had overseen the counties' construction of nearly 70 steel and three concrete bridges in the state. Kyle also developed standard plans for timber and steel stringer bridges. The state legislature reorganized the highway commission in 1917 to better manage the additional responsibilities caused by Montana's \$1.5 million share of the first Federal Aid Highway Act. The policies and procedures enacted by the commission in regard to the bridge department remained in effect. The

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<sup>32</sup> In Montana, the good roads groups included community commercial clubs and chambers of commerce, road organizations such as the Yellowstone Trail Association and the Montana Good Roads organization, and "persons interested in good roads." In 1913, these groups and individuals came together at the request of the newly-formed Montana State Highway Commission and formed a Citizens Advisory Board to assist the commission in its decision-making about road and bridge improvements in the state. MSHC, Book 1, p. 67; *Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana Passed by the Thirteenth Regular Session of the Legislative Assembly* (Helena: State Publishing, 1913), 318-326; *Statewide Highway Planning Survey, History of the Montana State Highway Department, 1913-1942*, (Helena: State Highway Commission, 1943), 9-12.

<sup>33</sup> Metlen, *Report of the Montana State Highway Commission*, 5-8; MSHC, Book 1, pp. 71, 72.



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restructured highway commission was more concerned with road building than bridges – with the exception of two Great Falls bridges on Second Avenue North and Tenth Street.<sup>34</sup>

Reinforced concrete allowed more variations in design than rigid steel truss bridges built at that time. Although the basic guts of the design for T-beam bridges had been codified many years before, there were many ways an engineer could design around those elements that made the bridges more aesthetically pleasing and yet functional. Engineer Kyle standardized a basic T-beam design for Montana by 1916, designs that appear to be based on those developed by the American Concrete Institute earlier in the decade. In Montana, it included girders recessed under the deck on T-beam bridges, decorative concrete guard walls pierced by rectangular openings (sometimes, however, the openings were in-filled), flared endposts, corniced balustrades on the guard walls, and solid concrete piers and abutments. The highway commission built the first bridges of this design on the Butte-Anaconda section of the Yellowstone Trail (later US Highway 10), and on the road between Lewistown and Hilger in Fergus County.<sup>35</sup>

The 1920s marked a transitional period in the construction of bridges in Montana. Changes in the organization and funding of the Federal Aid highway system by Congress in 1922 and 1926 had a profound effect on Montana, the state highway commission, and the counties. Most notable was the formation of the Montana Highway Department in 1919. Prior to then, all activities occurred under the aegis of the highway commission. With the creation of the department, however, the highway commission became responsible for the political agenda of road and bridge building as well as awarding contracts, managing the department's budget, setting policies, and working with the federal Bureau of Public Roads (BPR). The highway department was responsible for the actual design, construction, and maintenance work on Montana highways. The department operated under the direction of the Chief Engineer, who supervised other department heads, including the bridge department. The Chief Engineer ensured the highway department carried out the program set by the highway commissioners. The commission's and highway department's relationship with the BPR also became more formalized in the Twenties. The BPR channeled federal funds to the state, approved all projects scheduled by the department, and had the final approval of plans developed by the state's bridge department. The BPR was also responsible for the design and construction of roads and bridges on federally-owned land, such as the national forests, and national parks. The process of road and

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<sup>34</sup> MSHC, Book 1, p. 93; "Bridge Building in Montana," *Dillon Examiner*, November 24, 1915; "Many New Steel Bridges," *Dillon Examiner*, December 15, 1915; Metlen, *Report of the Montana State Highway Commission*, 8-10; MSHC, Book 1, P. 81.

<sup>35</sup> Metlen, *Report of the Montana State Highway Commission*, 6; Jon Axline, *Monuments Above the Water: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges*, (Helena: Montana Department of Transportation, 1993), 60.

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bridge building in Montana became much more bureaucratically structured in the 1920s as the federal government channeled more money into the state for that purpose.<sup>36</sup>

During the 1920s, the highway department concentrated on the construction of simple reinforced concrete slab and T-beam bridges. Department engineers modified Charles Kyle's standard design to include higher concrete guard walls with semi-elliptical arched and diamond-shaped openings in the wall rather than rectangles as was standard to the design previously. That design was adopted by the BPR, which it used well into the 1930s. The design, however, may have included more decorative detailing than the steel and timber bridges, but the structures appeared bulky and massive. Despite that, the department built 22 reinforced concrete bridges from 1925, when the design change was implemented, to 1929, when it changed the design yet again. Concrete bridges comprised seven percent of the 305 total number of bridges built during that period. In 1929, the highway department completely changed the design of the bridges to make them appear more modern, in keeping with the department's initiation of a program to upgrade and improve the state's highways. The new Art Deco-influenced design included a thinner, overhanging deck, open piers and abutments, tapered and beveled endposts with double-coursed guardrails tilted at a 45° angle, and flared endposts with decorative bush-hammered panels or vertical grooves. The result was an open streamlined design that reflected the department's efforts to modernize the state's highways.<sup>37</sup>

The Great Depression devastated Montana. Drought and declining prices for agricultural goods, copper, timber, and oil put thousands of Montanans out of work and their families in desperate need of relief. Ironically, hard times contributed to the transformation of Montana's transportation system from one of the worst in the United States to one of the nation's best in less than a decade. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal programs put unemployed Montanans to work on a variety of public works projects, including improvement or construction of the state's roads and bridges. The transformation, however, was not always easy as federal and state governments struggled to work out the details of the funding formulas, strict employment guidelines, and set priorities for the road and bridge building programs.

From 1930 to 1941, the Montana Highway Department built nearly 3,000 miles of road and 1,213 bridges, many of which still survive on the state's two-lane roads. The federal government believed that one of the paths to economic recovery was highway projects. Only about eight percent of the bridges built by the department during the 1930s were reinforced concrete bridges. Most were inexpensive timber structures designed to span the countless creeks and dry coulees in eastern Montana. They also met the intent of the federal government's economic relief programs:

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<sup>36</sup> Statewide Highway Planning Survey, *Montana State Highway Department*, 19-21, 23.

<sup>37</sup> Jon Axline, *Taming Big Sky Country: The History of Montana Transportation from Trails to Interstates*, (Charleston: The History Press, 2015), 79.

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they required large numbers of laborers. While not structurally distinctive, timber bridges played a vital role in the state's economic recovery by putting hundreds of unemployed men back to work.<sup>38</sup>

### Reinforced Concrete Bridges

The department built 73 reinforced concrete bridges from 1930 to 1932 under the Hoover Administration's limited economic relief programs. Concrete, however, required abundant and adjacent supplies of good aggregate material. Thus, the scarcity of both gravel and water on the high plains limited concrete bridge construction in eastern Montana. Even when aggregate was close at hand, reinforced concrete bridges were costly to build, requiring a large skilled labor force to construct forms, install the reinforcing steel, and correctly mix the concrete. The contractors' skill at building forms and the aggregate is also important to the longevity. Good aggregate and good construction techniques meant the bridge could efficiently carry traffic for a longer period of time than those not as well constructed. Only a few contractors had the necessary experience to build the bridges, including Evarts Blakeslee and Angus McGuire of Great Falls and Tom McGeever of Butte. Most of the concrete bridges they built were located in the Yellowstone, upper Missouri, and Clark Fork valleys where aggregate sources and water was plentiful.<sup>39</sup>

For the most part, reinforced concrete bridges were comparable in length to the more abundant timber bridges, consisting of one or two spans with a maximum length of 99 feet. The cost of the wood needed for the concrete forms, the aggregate, reinforcing steel, and concrete, however, made them more expensive per foot to build than timber bridges. Timber bridges cost about \$2,119 per structure, while a reinforced concrete bridge cost around \$6,265 to construct – over twice the price of a timber bridge. By the mid-1930s and New Deal years, the federal government and state highway commission's goal was to build more inexpensive bridges to put more people to work. Reinforced concrete largely fell out of favor with the commission except for use as approach spans to steel truss structures and railroad overpasses.<sup>40</sup>

Until the Interstate highway era of the 1960s and 1970s, more reinforced concrete bridges were constructed during the Great Depression than at any other time in the state's history. Between 1930 and 1941, the Montana Highway Department built 101 reinforced concrete bridges, mostly

<sup>38</sup> Statewide Highway Planning Survey, *History of the Montana State Highway Department*, 55.

<sup>39</sup> Axline, *Monuments Above the Water*, 64-66.

<sup>40</sup> The contractors could reuse wood forms for the concrete at other bridge sites. While the sub- and superstructures of concrete bridges were poured on site, there is some evidence that the bridge rails were poured off-site and then attached by some means to the main structure of the bridge. It may be that because of the complicated nature of the rails, that a standardized form had been developed and purchased by the contractors for use on Montana's bridges. The fact that steel girder and steel stringer bridges built at this time had the same kind of concrete railing supports this hypothesis. John Fenn, "Did You Know that ...," *Center Line*, 3, No. 7 (July 1940), p. 5.

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in western and southcentral Montana. About 72 percent of the total number of concrete bridges built by the department occurred from 1930 to 1932 under the auspices of the Hoover Administration's emergency relief program; thirty-five concrete bridges were built in 1931 alone. Concrete bridges constituted about 15 percent of the 482 bridges built during that period. Most of the bridges were located on U.S. Highways 10 and 91 and most were reinforced concrete T-beam bridges. All displayed the open, streamlined Art Deco-influenced design developed by the highway department in 1929. The Sheep Creek Bridge (24LC1157) is an excellent example of the standard 1930s Highway Department design.<sup>41</sup>

During FDR's New Deal years, the focus of the highway department's bridge program changed. Instead of relying on labor-intensive reinforced concrete bridges, the department began an extensive program of building simple treated timber bridges, mostly in eastern Montana. Indeed, the department built only 28 reinforced concrete bridges from 1933 to 1941 and 71 percent of those were railroad grade separation structures. The move from reinforced concrete to treated timber reflected the department's concentration on simple inexpensive bridges that could be built in large numbers by largely unskilled labor. While 28 concrete bridges were built during that eight-year span, the highway department built 623 timber bridges during that same period. Reinforced concrete, however, proved particularly suitable to railroad grade separation structures. Built under the federal government's Works Progress Grade Separation Program, 20 of the 28 concrete bridges built between 1933 and 1941 were railroad overpasses. Concrete overpasses constituted 54 percent of the total number of grade separation structures built at that time.<sup>42</sup>

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and Hitler's declaration of war against the United States ended the bridge-building boom, which peaked in 1936, and transformed Montana's transportation landscape. The Public Roads Administration, state highway commission, and the highway department built well over 1,200 bridges of all shapes, sizes, and types between 1930 and 1941, including 101 reinforced concrete slab and T-beam bridges. Initially during the decade, reinforced concrete appeared to have fulfilled its promise to allow a wider range in design and aesthetics. Unlike other bridge forms of the decade (e.g. steel truss, girder, and timber), reinforced concrete permitted a design that reflected the prevailing Art Deco influence of the decade. Unfortunately, while slab bridges were easy to widen, T-beam bridges were not, resulting in a rapid decline in the numbers of T-beam bridges over the last 50 years. As of

<sup>41</sup> Axline, *Monuments Above the Water*, 67-68; NR-listed April 28, 2011, NR No. 11000225.

<sup>42</sup> FDR authorized the Works Progress Grade Separation Program in April 1935. The intent of the program was to provide either over or underpasses at high volume at-grade railroad crossings. This included main east-west and north-south highways, like U.S. Highway 91. Under the program, the federal government provided fifty percent of the costs of the structures, while the railroads were required to make up the difference, usually about twenty percent. The Oregon Short Line Overpass was a product of the program. MSHC, Book 6, p. 270; Axline, *Taming Big Sky Country*, 90.

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September 2010, only 42 of the 101 reinforced concrete bridges built between 1930 and 1941 still exist.

### **Architects/Builders**

#### ***Montana Highway Department***

The name(s) of those who designed the original (now abandoned) U.S. Highway 91 segment that leads to the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access and Bridge remain unknown, as does the name(s) of the designers of the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge. However, while their names remain obscured to history, they worked for the Montana Highway Department.

#### ***Josef Sorkin and Philip A. Upp***

Bridge engineers Josef Sorkin and Philip A. Upp developed the upgraded design for reinforced concrete T-beam bridges in 1935. Their design included implementation on the Poindexter Slough Bridge. The two are also credited with the design of the Oregon Short Line Overpass, and the highway reroute.

Little is known about Sorkin. He went to work for the Montana Highway Department as a bridge design engineer in January 1935 and left in November of that year.<sup>43</sup>

More is known regarding Philip A. Upp, however. Born in Edgerton, Ohio in October 1898, Upp received a degree in civil engineering from the Case School of Engineering in Cleveland. The 1920 census shows him living in a boarding house in Cleveland while he attended school. By 1930, he worked as a civil engineer for a railroad in St. Louis, Missouri. In January 1935, he went to work for the Montana Highway Department as a bridge designer. He held the position until February 1936, when he left the department to take a job as a bridge designer for the Wyoming State Highway Department.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Personnel Card: Josef Sorkin, Human Resources & Occupational Safety Division, Montana Department of Transportation, Helena, Montana.

<sup>44</sup> Draft Registration Card, Serial No. 1887, viewed at <http://interactive.ancestry.com>; 1920 U.S. Census, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Population Schedule, supervisor's district no. 19, Cleveland city, enumeration district (ED) 250, sheet 7B, dwelling 150, Grace L. Mitchell household; digital images, ancestry.com (<http://interactive.ancestry.com>); 1930 U.S. Census, St. Louis, Missouri, Population Schedule, supervisor's district no. 8, Ward 16, Block 2124, enumeration district (ED) 96-34, sheet 20B, dwelling 244, Phillip Upp household; digital images, ancestry.com (<http://interactive.ancestry.com>); Personnel Card: Phillip A. Upp, Human Resources & Occupational Safety Division, Montana Department of Transportation, Helena, Montana; 1940 U.S. Census, Laramie County, Wyoming, Population Schedule, supervisor's district no. 5, Cheyenne City, enumeration district (ED) 11-5, sheet 7B, dwelling 275, Phillip A. Upp household; digital images, ancestry.com (<http://interactive.ancestry.com>).

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### ***J. N. Brown & Son***

J. N. Brown & Son received the contract to build the now abandoned road segment of U.S. Highway 91 in 1929, which involved the grading and drainage of 11.8 miles of the highway. Joseph N. Brown and his son, Fred, worked as road contractors in Montana from about 1916 to 1929. Born in Illinois in 1850, Joseph Brown came to Montana in 1871 and operated a farm in the Gallatin valley. By 1902, he established a brick manufacturing plant in Bozeman. The 1916 Bozeman city directory lists him as a grading contractor. His son, Fred, was born in Bozeman in 1881. He obtained a degree in civil engineering from Stanford in 1902. From 1908 to 1920, he was the Gallatin County Surveyor. He also served as the second city manager of Bozeman from 1920 to 1924.<sup>45</sup>

J. N. Brown & Son was in the road contracting business by 1921. The father and son are listed as road contractors employed by the state highway commission in 1922. They were actively involved in road construction for the commission until 1929. The abandoned segment of U.S. Highway 91 listed above was the company's last project for the highway commission. Joseph, apparently, retired in 1931 and died in Bozeman in 1939. Fred went to work for the Montana Highway Department in 1923 as an instrument man on a survey crew. By the time of his retirement in 1949, he was a field division engineer for the department. He died in Medford, Oregon in 1958.<sup>46</sup>

### ***William K. Trippet***

Credit for the construction of the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge goes to William "Will" Kennedy Trippet. Trippet enjoyed a long career as a civil engineer and concrete contractor. Born in Indiana in 1881, he moved with his family to Deer Lodge, where his father was an attorney. Will graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in civil engineering and moved back to Deer Lodge, where he worked as a consulting engineer. In 1907, he relocated to Whitefish, recently established as a division point on the Great Northern Railway. He was the city engineer there for six years before resigning to, once again, work as a consulting civil engineer. By 1927, went into business as a concrete contractor. From 1927 to 1935, Trippet was active in western and southwestern Montana building concrete bridges for the Montana

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<sup>45</sup> "J. N. Brown Dies Thursday Morning Result of Injury," *The Bozeman Courier*, April 28, 1939; R. L. Polk & Co., *Bozeman City Directory, 1902-1903* (Helena: R. L. Polk & Co. of Montana, 1902), 37; Tom Stout, *Montana: Its Story and Biography*, vol. 2 (Chicago: The American Historical Society, 1921), 407.

<sup>46</sup> "Bids for Federal Project Received," *The Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, July 31, 1921; *Third Biennial Report State Highway Commission of Montana, 1921-1922* (Helena: State Highway Commission, 1922), 56-57, 59; "J. N. Brown Dies Thursday Morning Result of Injury," *The Bozeman Courier*, April 28, 1939; Personnel Card, Fred M. Brown, Human Resources & Occupational Safety Division, Montana Department of Transportation, Helena, Montana; "Fred M. Brown, Ex-City Manager, Dies in Oregon," *The Gallatin County Tribune and Belgrade Journal*, June 19, 1958.

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highway commission. An illness forced him into retirement by 1940. He died while undergoing treatment at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota in March 1942.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Lawler Corporation***

The Lawler Corporation constructed both the 1936 Poindexter Slough Bridge, the Oregon Short Line Overpass, and the still active realigned U.S. Highway 91 segment. Leo Timothy Lawler was a prolific road and bridge builder in Montana for 20 years from 1917 to 1937. Born in Rochester, Minnesota in 1887, he left Minnesota for Calgary, Alberta shortly after graduating from high school in 1905. In 1906, he moved to Butte, Montana and began work for the Milwaukee Road Railroad as a timekeeper. Three years later, in 1909, the railroad promoted him to Road Master of the Bitterroot Division, headquartered in Butte, Montana. Lawler held that position until 1912 when the Anaconda-based contracting firm of Clifton, Applegate and Toole hired him. Lawler supervised the construction of the Knights of Columbus Hall and the Mueller apartment building on West Granite Street in Butte. In 1917, he left the company to form his own contracting firm.<sup>48</sup>

From 1927 to 1936, the Montana highway commission awarded Lawler 34 projects to build roads and bridges primarily in southwestern Montana. In addition to the two Poindexter Slough bridges and the highway segment connecting them, he also reconstructed a portion of the Butte-Anaconda Highway, long segments of US Highway 91 between Dillon and Helena, large segments of Harding Way in Silver Bow County, and the Yellowstone Trail east of Butte. Lawler also constructed a section of the Going-to-the-Sun Highway in Glacier National Park. Lawler incorporated his company in 1932. The court dissolved the corporation in September 1937 when he and his wife moved to Los Angeles County, California.<sup>49</sup>

Letting no grass grow under his feet, Lawler soon partnered with J. C. Maguire and organized Pacific Constructors, Inc. in California in 1938. The company built the \$36 million Shasta Dam in northern California and were in the process of building the San Gabriel Dam in Los Angeles County in July 1940 when Lawler died of a heart attack in his office.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> "W. K. Trippet Dies, Rochester, Minn.," *The Whitefish Pilot*, March 13, 1942; "Services for W. K. Trippet Held Sunday Afternoon," *The Whitefish Pilot*, March 17, 1942; Harriet Fitzgerald Sanders, *A History of Montana*, vol. 2 (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1913), 1189-1190; Roberta Carkeek Cheney, *Names on the Face of Montana: The Story of Montana's Place Names*, (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Co., 1990), 287; MSHC, Books 3 through 7.

<sup>48</sup> "Leo T. Lawler, Ex-Butte Man, Taken by Death," *The Montana Standard*, July 28, 1940.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*; "Contract is let for Storage Dam," *The Montana Standard*, June 4, 1938.

<sup>50</sup> "Leo T. Lawler."

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“W. K. Trippet Dies, Rochester, Minn.” *The Whitefish Pilot*, March 13, 1942.

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: Montana Department of Transportation

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 10.5

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Lat. 45.182780, Long. -112.684370
2. Lat. 45.183570, Long. -112.680680
3. Lat. 45.181950, Long. -112.675450
4. Lat. 45.181750, Long. -112.675490
5. Lat. 45.182770, Long. -112.682660
6. Lat. 45.182600, Long. -112.684330

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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for the Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District is an irregular geometric shape measuring roughly 2200 ft. east-west with the greatest north-south extent measuring about 400 ft. The boundary extends slightly beyond the bridges and road segments to provide a sense of setting. The district is located in the SE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> NE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> of Section 34 and the S<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> NW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> of Section 35, T7S, R9W. Reference to the maps on pages 38 and 39 confirm this location.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is determined by space occupied by the bridges, their approaches, and the highway segments associated with them.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Jon Axline/Historian  
organization: Montana Department of Transportation  
street & number: 2701 Prospect Avenue  
city or town: Helena state: MT zip code: 59620-1001  
e-mail jaxline@mt.gov  
telephone: (406) 444-6258  
date: October 2024

**Property Owners:**

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

name Montana Department of Transportation  
street & number 2701 Prospect Ave. telephone (406) 444-6200  
city or town Helena state MT zip code 59620-1001

name Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
street & number 1420 East Sixth Ave. telephone (406) 444-2535  
city or town Helena state MT zip code 59620-1701

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### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log, All Photographs

Name of Property: Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District

City or Vicinity: Dillon, Montana

County: Beaverhead State: MT

Photographer: Rob Park

Date Photographed: October 2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of \_\_\_\_.

Please see Continuation Sheets

**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 listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

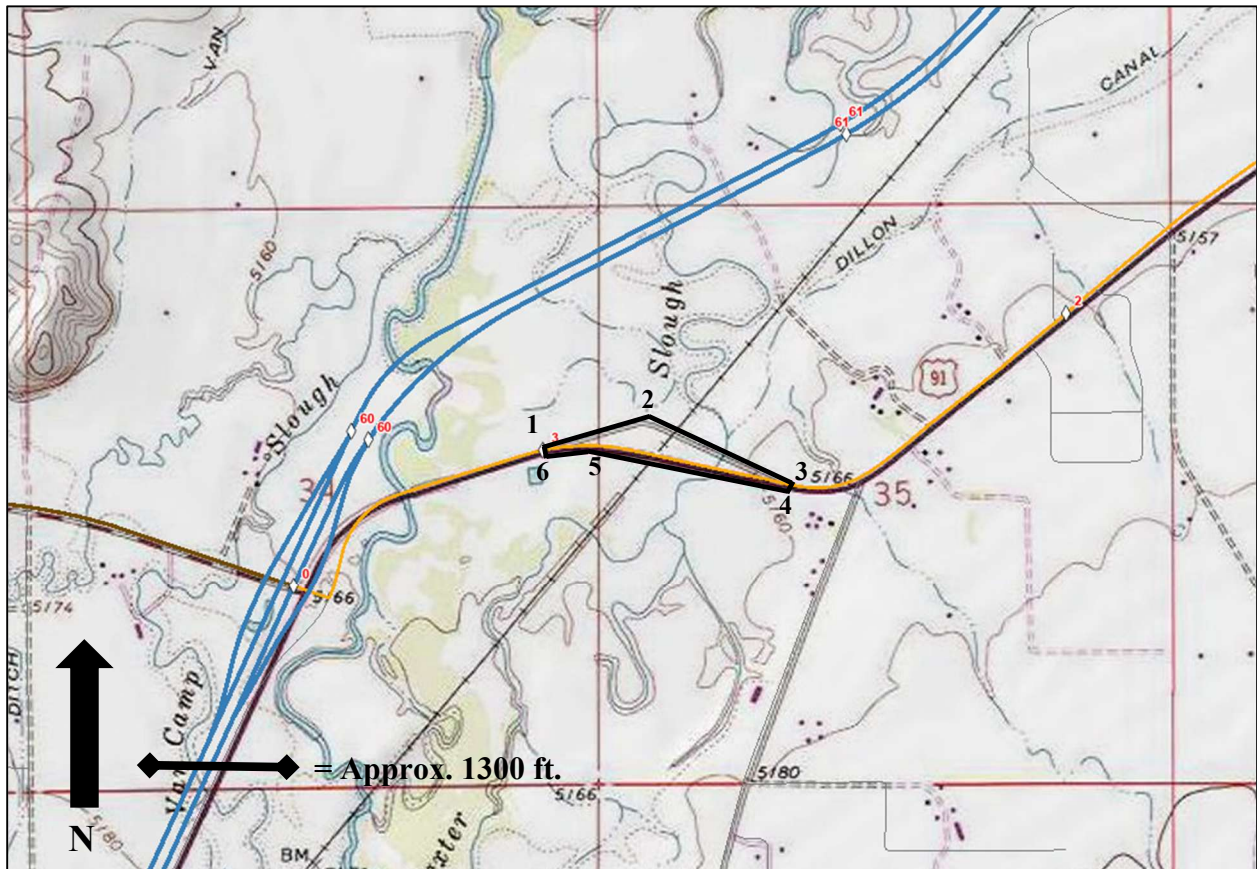
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District |
| Name of Property                               |
| Beaverhead County, Montana                     |
| County and State                               |
| MT's Historic Reinforced Concrete Bridges      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable)       |

Section number Additional Documentation—Maps and Drawings Page 38



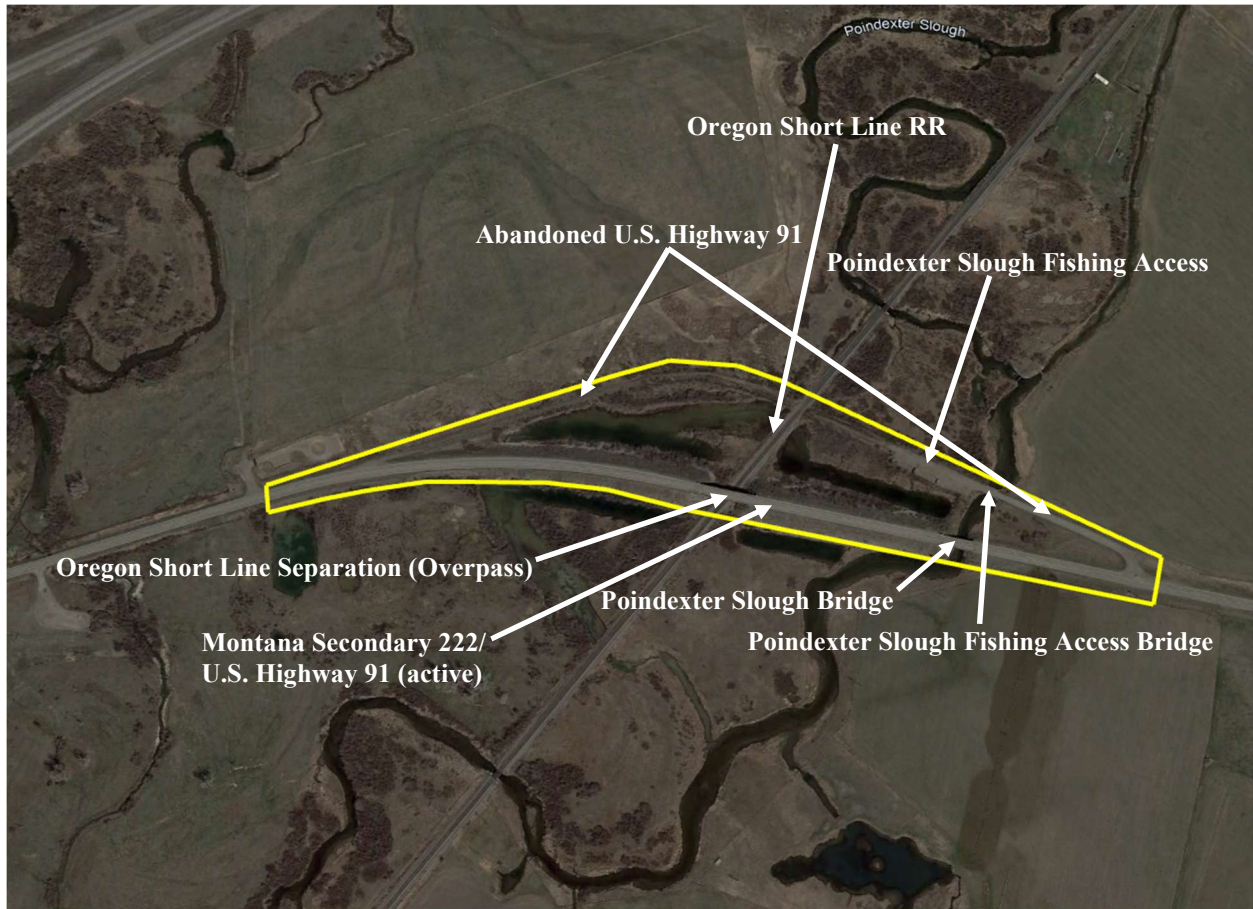
**Location of the Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District. Found on the USGS 7.5' Quadrangle map: Dillon West (2011).** 1) Lat. 45.182780, Long. -112.684370, 2) Lat. 45.183570, Long. -112.680680, 3) Lat. 45.181950, Long. -112.675450, 4) Lat. 45.181750, Long. -112.675490, 5) Lat. 45.182770, Long. -112.682660, 6) Lat. 45.182600, Long. -112.684330

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

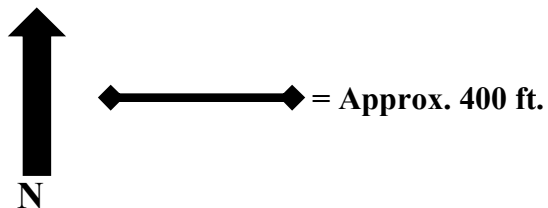
**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

|  |
|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District |
| Name of Property                               |
| Beaverhead County, Montana                     |
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| MT's Historic Reinforced Concrete Bridges      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable)       |

Section number Additional Documentation—Maps and Drawings Page 39



**Aerial view of the Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District (bordered in yellow).  
Center point = Latitude: 45.182976 Longitude: -112.680556.**

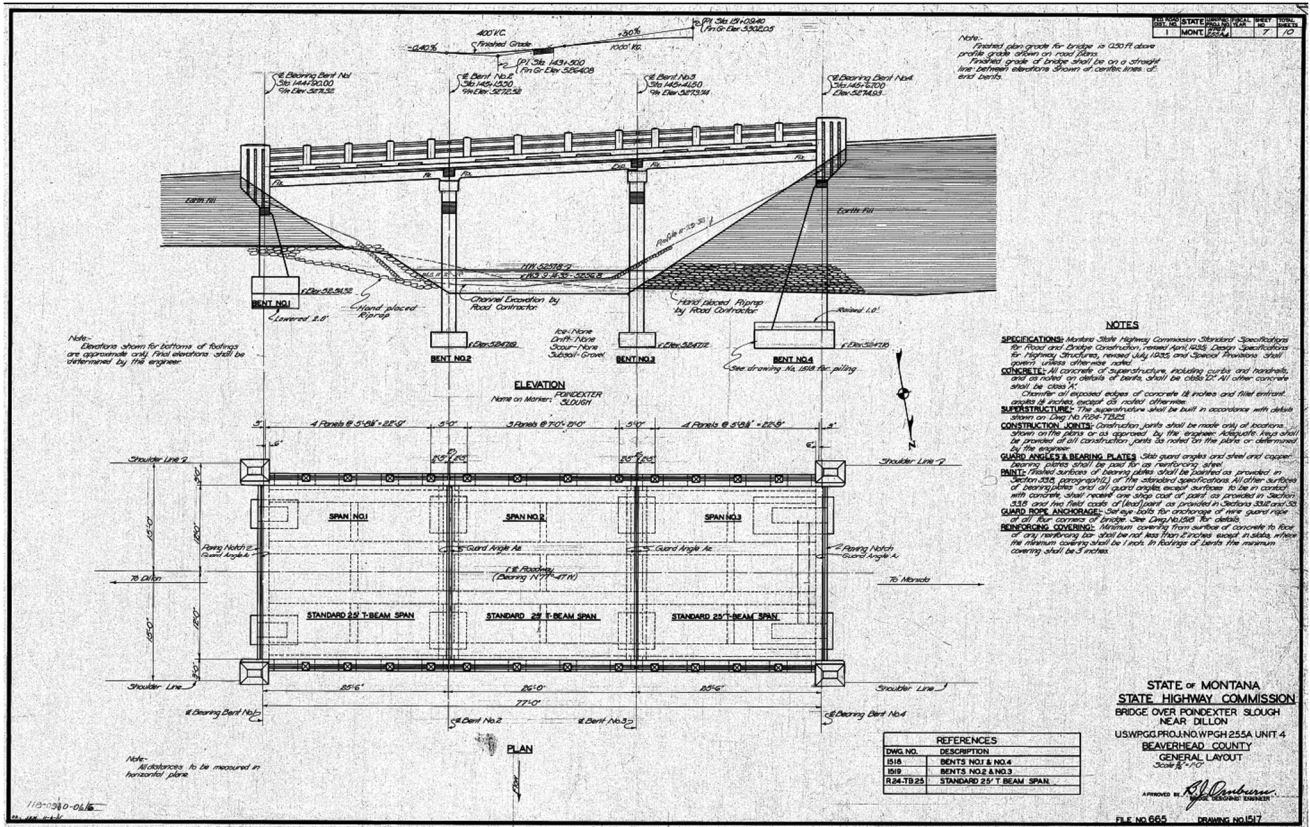


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District  
Name of Property  
Beaverhead County, Montana  
County and State  
MT's Historic Reinforced Concrete Bridges  
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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Montana State Highway Commission. General Layout. Poindexter Slough Bridge plans (1935). Drawing no. 1517.

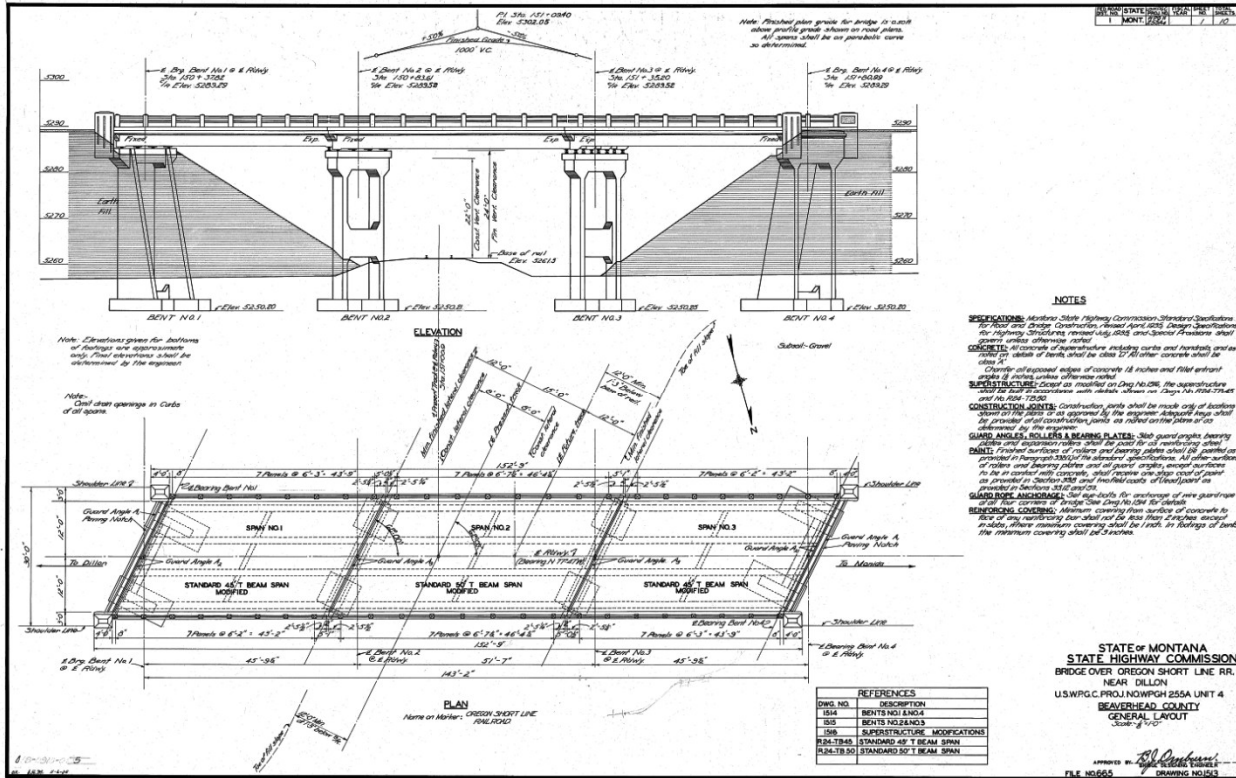


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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| Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District |
| Name of Property                               |
| Beaverhead County, Montana                     |
| County and State                               |
| MT's Historic Reinforced Concrete Bridges      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable)       |

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Montana State Highway Commission. General Layout. Oregon Short Line Overpass Bridge plans (1935). Drawing no. 1513.

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Continuation Sheet**

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District |
| Name of Property                               |
| Beaverhead County, Montana                     |
| County and State                               |
| MT's Historic Reinforced Concrete Bridges      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable)       |

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**Photo Log, All Photographs:**

Name of Property: Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District  
City or Vicinity: Dillon vicinity  
County: Beaverhead State: MT  
Photographer: Rob Park  
Date Photographed: October 2024



**Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District. Overview. View to north.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0001**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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| Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District |
| Name of Property                               |
| Beaverhead County, Montana                     |
| County and State                               |
| MT's Historic Reinforced Concrete Bridges      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable)       |

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**Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District. Overview. View to the south.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0002.**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District |
| Name of Property                               |
| Beaverhead County, Montana                     |
| County and State                               |
| MT's Historic Reinforced Concrete Bridges      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable)       |

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**Poindexter Slough Bridge. South side. Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge in background. View to north.**

**MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0003.**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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| Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District |
| Name of Property                               |
| Beaverhead County, Montana                     |
| County and State                               |
| MT's Historic Reinforced Concrete Bridges      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable)       |

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**Poindexter Slough Bridge. South side. View to north.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0004.**

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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| Bridges of Poindexter Slough Historic District |
| Name of Property                               |
| Beaverhead County, Montana                     |
| County and State                               |
| MT's Historic Reinforced Concrete Bridges      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable)       |

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**Poindexter Slough Bridge. South side. View to the northwest.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0005.**

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

|  |
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| Gardiner Bridge                          |
| Name of Property                         |
| Park County, Montana                     |
| County and State                         |
| MT's Historic Steel Truss Bridges        |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Poindexter Slough Bridge. North side. View to south.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0006.**

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

|  |
|--|
| Gardiner Bridge                          |
| Name of Property                         |
| Park County, Montana                     |
| County and State                         |
| MT's Historic Steel Truss Bridges        |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Poindexter Slough Bridge. North side. View to the south.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0007.**



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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Poindexter Slough Bridge. Detail. Pier, underside, and guardrail. View to north.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0008.**

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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|---|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough                      |
| -----<br>Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana                        |
| -----<br>County and State                         |
| -----<br>Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Poindexter Slough Bridge. Detail of endpost.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0009.**

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Continuation Sheet**

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| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
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**Oregon Short Line Overpass. Overview. South side. View to the north.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0010.**

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Continuation Sheet**

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| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Oregon Short Line Overpass. Overview. South side. View to the northwest.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0011.**

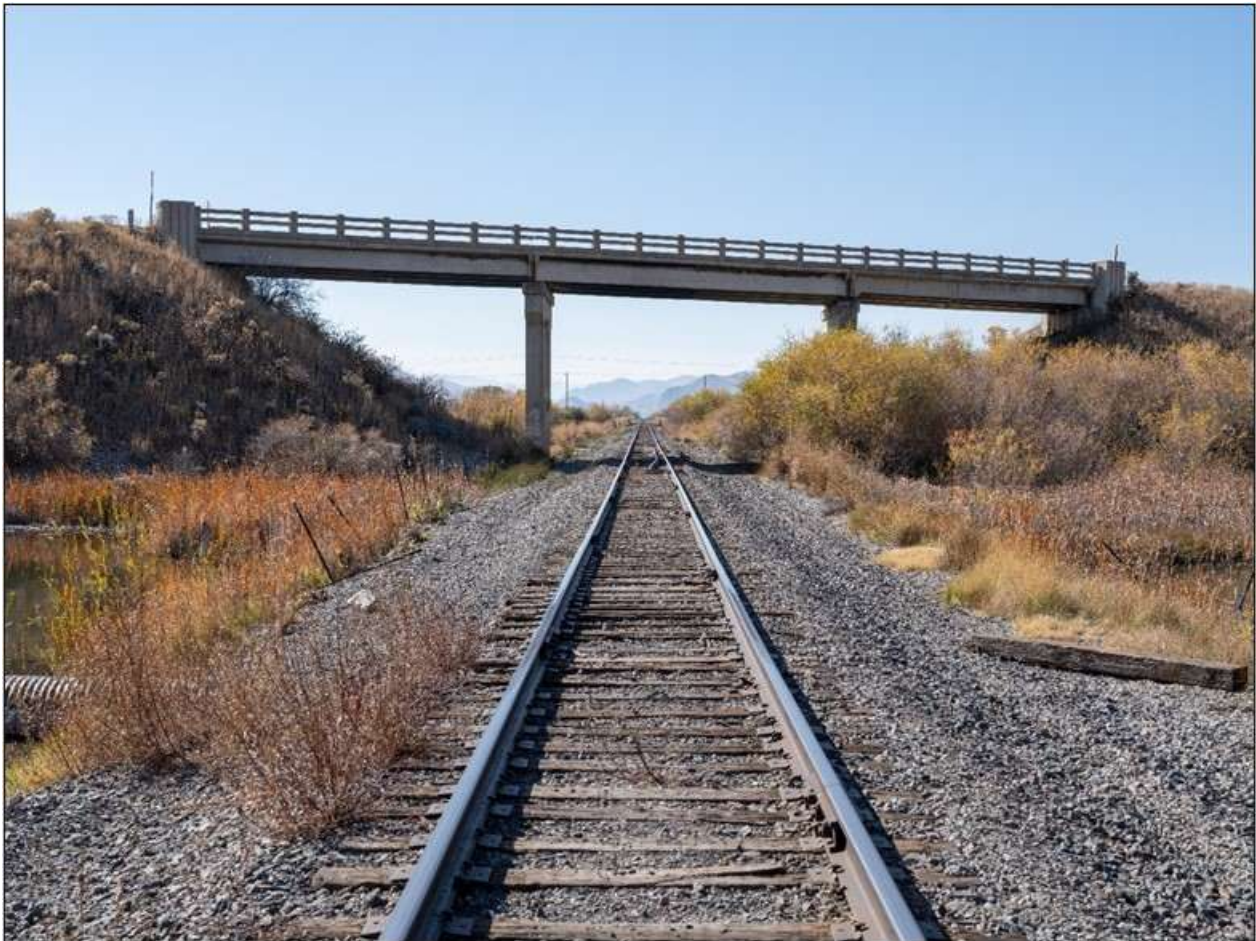
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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Oregon Short Line Overpass. North side. View to the south.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0012.**

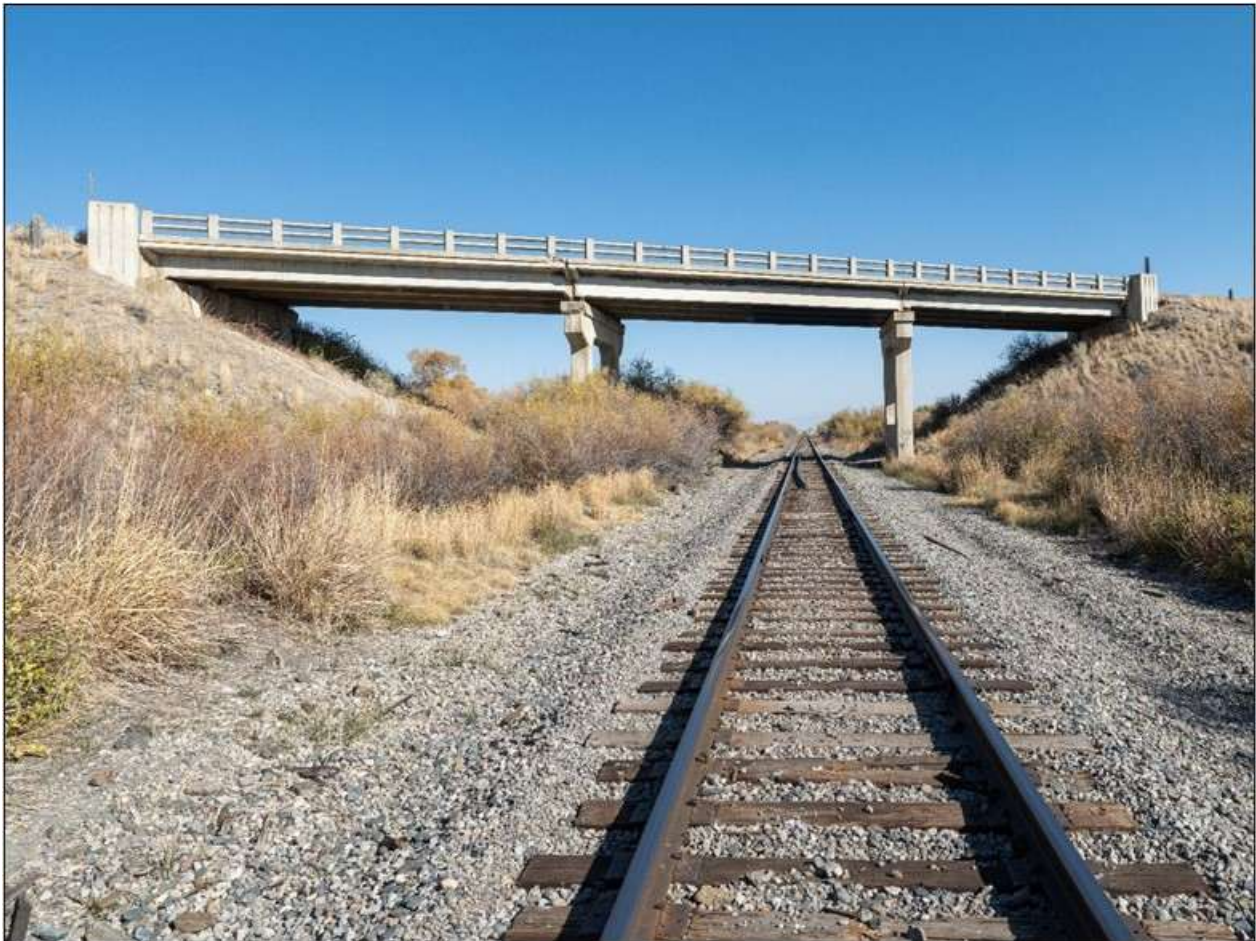
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
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**Oregon Short Line Overpass. South side. View to south.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0013.**

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Oregon Short Line Overpass. Detail of bents and superstructure. View to the southeast.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0014.**

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Oregon Short Line Overpass. East approach. View to the west.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0015.**



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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet**

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| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge. South side. View to the north.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0016.**

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge. North side. View to the south.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0017.**

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Bridge. Detail of north guardrail. View to the north.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0018.**

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Montana Secondary 222/Old U.S. 91. View to west.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0019.**

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet**

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Montana Secondary 222/Old U.S. 91 and Poindexter Slough Bridge. View to east.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0020.**

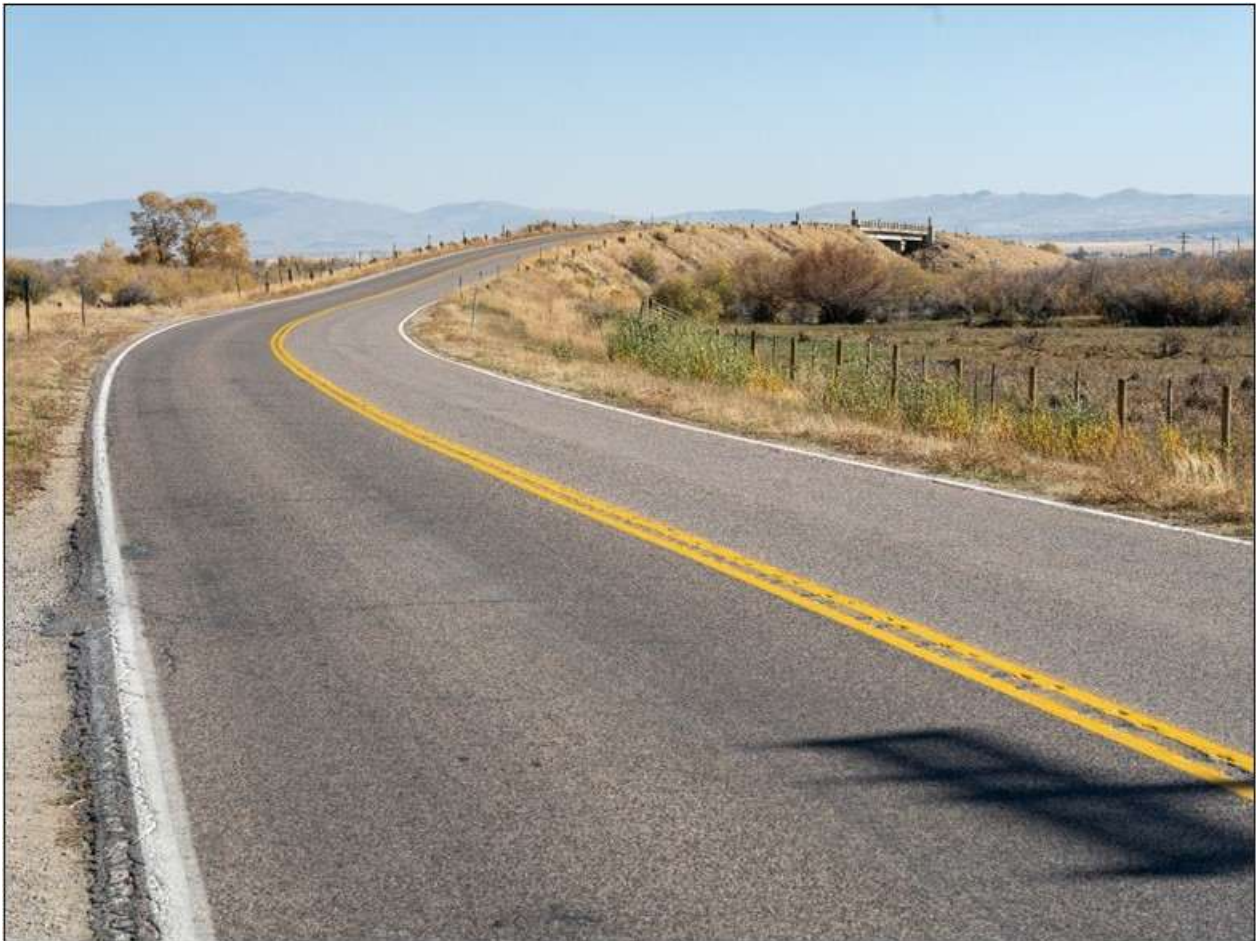
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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet**

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Montana Secondary 222/Old U.S. 91. View to east-northeast.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0021.**

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet**

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|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Montana Secondary 222/Old U.S. 91. Detail of guard posts. View to east.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0022.**

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Continuation Sheet**

|  |
|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Montana Secondary 222/Old U.S. 91. Detail of guard posts. View to west.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0023.**



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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet**

|  |
|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Montana Secondary 222/Old U.S. 91. Detail of guard posts. View to east.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0024.**

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

|   |
|---|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough                      |
| -----<br>Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana                        |
| -----<br>County and State                         |
| -----<br>Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Montana Secondary 222/Old U.S. 91. Guard post detail.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0025.**

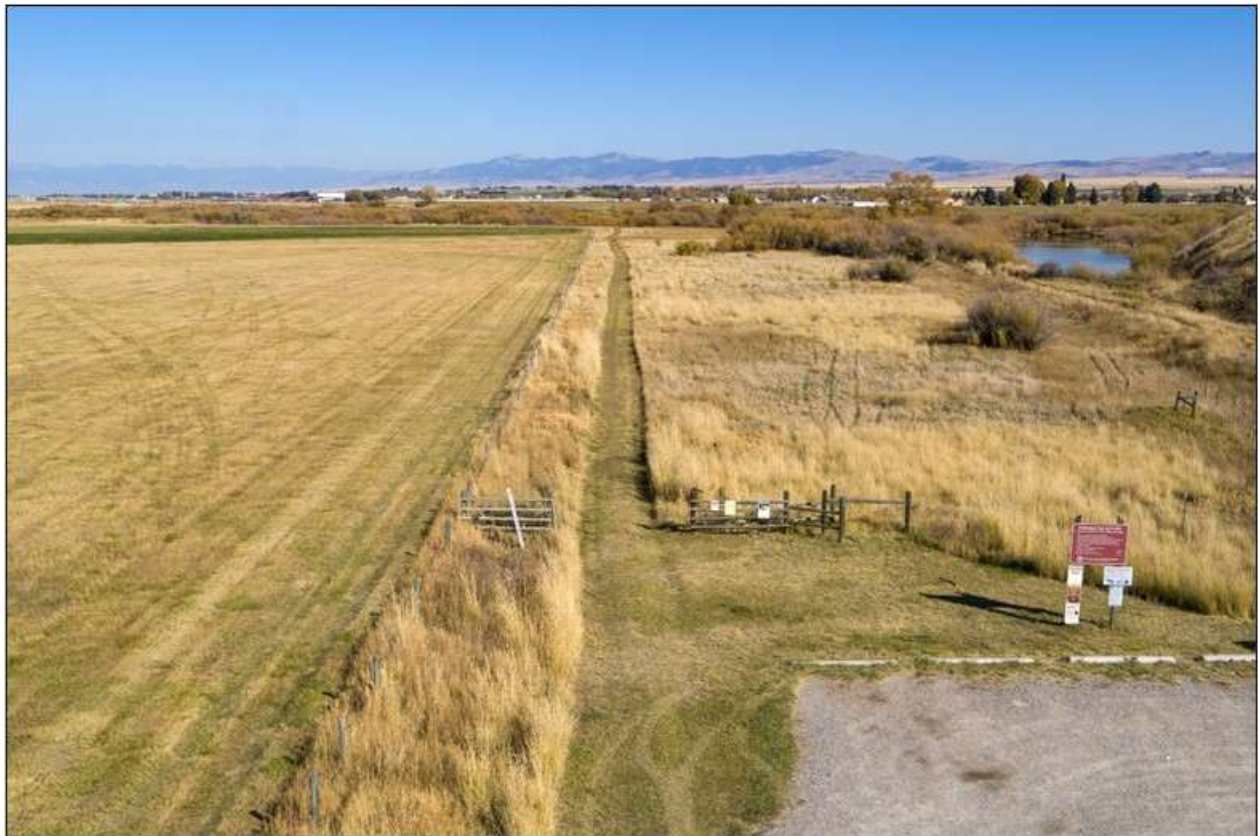
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet**

|  |
|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Old U.S. 91 alignment. View to west.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0026.**

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

|  |
|--|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough             |
| Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana               |
| County and State                         |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Old U.S. 91 alignment. View to west.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0027.**

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

|   |
|---|
| Bridges of Poindexter Slough                      |
| -----<br>Name of Property                         |
| Beaverhead County, Montana                        |
| -----<br>County and State                         |
| -----<br>Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Old U.S. 91 alignment. View to west.  
MT\_BeaverheadCounty\_BridgesOfPoindexterSloughHistoricDistrict\_0028.**