



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge Construction Photograph Album

NMAH.AC.1030

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge Construction Photograph Album
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1030
Date:	1883-1884
Extent:	0.15 Cubic feet ((1 box))
Creator:	Rila, Carter Ainsworth Bridge Company
Language:	English
Summary:	The collection consists of one bound photograph album, 1883-1884, documenting the construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge over the Snake River. The images depict machinery, piers, boats, and construction workers.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Carter Rila, 1976.

Provenance

Transferred to the Archives Center in 2007 from the Division of Mechanical and Civil Engineering, now called the Division of Work and Industry.

Processing Information

Processed by Kristin Davidson (intern), April, 2011; supervised by Alison Oswald, archivist.

Preferred Citation

Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge Construction Photograph Album, 1883-1884, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Restrictions

The collection is open for research use.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning intellectual property rights. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical / Historical

Built from 1883-1884 by the Northern Pacific Railroad, the Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge crosses the Snake River just above the Columbia River, between Ainsworth, Washington and Burbank (also known as South Ainsworth), in Walla Walla County, Washington.

The bridge was made of iron and consisted of a 146-foot Pratt through-truss span, a 346-foot swinging drawspan, four 248-foot Pratt through-truss spans, and a 65-foot deck girder span. The first train crossed the Snake River in 1884 on the Northern Pacific Railroad's bridge at Ainsworth, a railroad construction town located at the junction of the Snake and Columbia Rivers. The completion of the bridge linked the Northern Pacific's transcontinental line directly to the Oregon Railway & Navigation track down the Columbia River to Portland, and ultimately to Puget Sound. The Northern Pacific reported the total cost of the bridge to be \$1,135,743.

Reference

Peter J. Lewty, *To the Columbia Gateway* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1987), 48-49, 113-16.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of one bound album of photographs, documenting the construction of the Snake River Bridge from November, 1883 to December, 1883. The images depict machinery, piers, boats, and construction workers.

Arrangement

The collection consists of one series.

Series 1, Photograph Album

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

Gloves must be worn when handling unprotected photographs and negatives. The front cover of the album is not attached.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Bridges -- Design and construction
- Bridges -- Washington
- Railroad bridges

Types of Materials:

Photograph albums -- 19th century
Photographs -- 19th century

Geographic Names:

Snake River
Washington (State)

Container Listing

Photograph Album, 1883-1884

Box 1

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