

GAULEY BRIDGE HISTORIC DISTRICT SURVEY

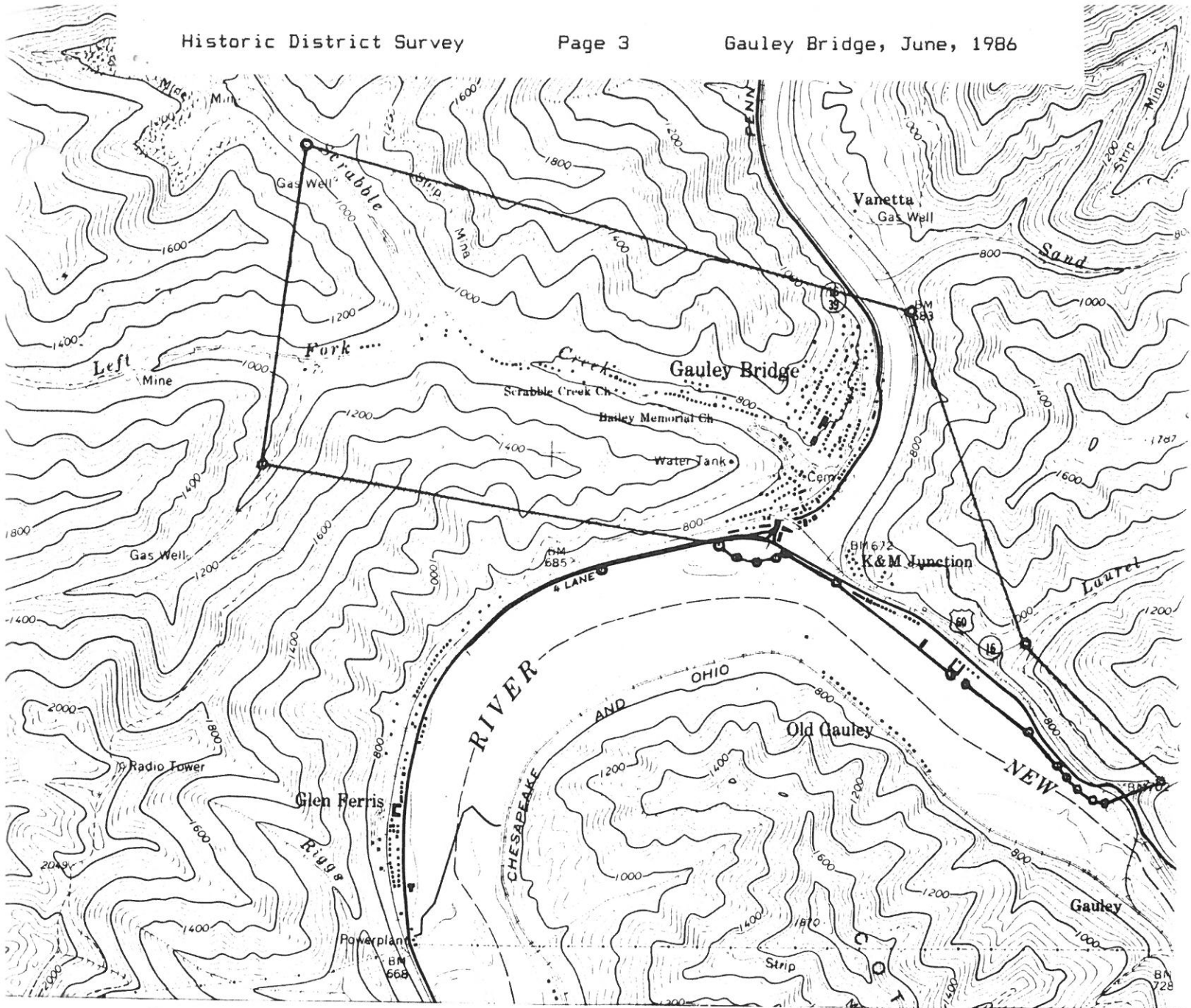
TOWN OF GAULEY BRIDGE

June 10, 1986

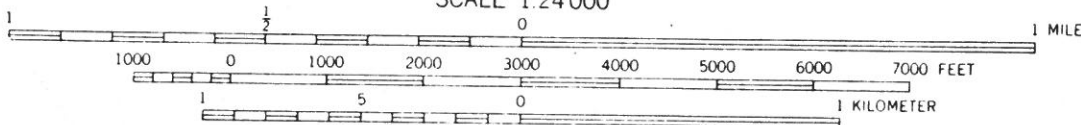
Otis K. Rice
Lyle M. Blackwell

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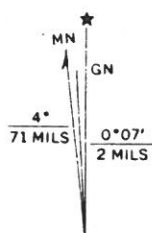
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SCALE 1:24 000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 40 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL



UTM GRID AND 1969 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



GAULEY BRIDGE, W. VA.
NW/4 FAYETTEVILLE 15' QUADRANGLE
N3807.5—W8107.5/7.5

1969

AMS 4760 II NW—SERIES V854

METHODOLOGY - NARRATIVE

The methodology utilized in this survey closely parallels that given in the "West Virginia Historic Resource Survey Handbook". The Basic Field Work Phase was done via the customary "windshield survey" including preliminary mapping, followed by more in-depth cataloging of information on significant sites. The Research and Documentation phase of the survey then followed utilizing standard historical research techniques.

One significant feature of this particular survey might be that both principals were professional educators (one an engineer and one an historian). One principal had previously published a history of the local area and participated in the background research, design, relocation and rehabilitation of one significant area structure placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The other principal is a widely published and recognized authority on West Virginia History. Thus the principals were able to draw upon a large body of prior knowledge of the area and those sites of historic significance.

HISTORY OF GAULEY BRIDGE - NARRATIVE

Gauley Bridge, located at the confluence of the New and Gauley Rivers, is the eastern gateway to the Kanawha Valley. The town itself and its environs had no significant pre-Revolutionary War history and at the time did not even lie on the access route from eastern Virginia to the Kanawha Valley. As early as 1773, however, some of the first settlers on the Kanawha visited the site of the town, which was thereafter recognized as an important landmark.

During the next few decades the routes westward from Greenbrier and the Valley of Virginia generally bypassed Gauley Bridge. In response to pleas of George Washington for transportation links that would tie the trade of the Ohio Valley to eastern Virginia by way of the James and Potomac rivers and to the urging of George Clendenin, a member of the House of Delegates from Greenbrier County, the legislature in 1785 provided for construction of a highway from Lewisburg to the falls of the Kanawha. In time the route became known as the Old State Road. In 1787 the legislature extended the road from the Kanawha Falls to Lexington, Kentucky. Legislative authorizations for these roads, nevertheless, did very little to stimulate the growth of Gauley Bridge and its immediate vicinity, where farmland was scarce and unattractive in comparison to the rich river bottoms farther down the Kanawha and in the Ohio Valley.

In many respects the year 1821 marked a turning point in the early history of Gauley Bridge. Possibly in part an outgrowth of a study of a proposed canal to join the James and Kanawha rivers, the legislature became convinced that a new road should follow the right side of the New and Kanawha rivers on the basis that it would entail less bridge construction. Ironically, the James River and Kanawha Turnpike, as the new road was called, required major bridges across the Gauley and the Greenbrier rivers. James Moore, a Muncy, Pennsylvania, contractor, was engaged to construct the bridges at a cost of \$18,000 each. The bridge over Gauley River was built first. Muncy flung three double-barreled spans 480 feet across the wide mouth of the river in 1822. Virginia authorities described it as:

"...exceedingly beautiful, in the midst of remarkably wild scenery and the best bridge in the state."

The completion of the bridge across Gauley River gave rise to a substantial traffic of westward bound pioneers, land seekers, droves of livestock, and other travelers, which gave rise to taverns and other accommodations. The ferry business, however, was cut out of the promising future, and on July 11, 1826, the bridge was burned and the former ferryman was convicted of arson. Two years later a second

bridge was built on the piers and abutments of the original structure, and the town began to flourish on a modest scale. The Gazetteer of Virginia, published in 1835, declared that,

"There are here two saw mills, one manufacturing flour mill, two mercantile stores, and one hotel. A daily mail arrives. This is one of the wildest and most picturesque regions of the State."

By then a stage line, with one trip per week, had been established between Lewisburg and Charleston, and since 1827 a post road had been opened from Gauley Bridge up Gauley River. In 1835 a Baptist Church was organized, giving the little community a semblance of permanence and stability.

In the antebellum era Gauley Bridge combined the sleepiness of a rural town with the bustle of activity stimulated by the James River and Kanawha Turnpike. Along with stage coaches, whose drivers were the kings of the road, and freight wagons, many loaded with salt from the Kanawha Salines, the turnpike accommodated great droves of livestock, particularly hogs, many of them driven from Kentucky and southern Ohio to eastern markets. The inns and taverns of Gauley Bridge enjoyed a thriving business, but prominent patrons of the stage lines were probably more likely to seek the accommodations offered by Aaron Stockton and his well-known inn a present Glen Ferris.

Life might have continued its accustomed course for several more decades had it not been interrupted by the Civil War, and Gauley Bridge was destined to play a conspicuous role in military affairs of western Virginia. The town first assumed importance in late July, 1861, when Confederate forces under General Henry A. Wise withdrew from the Kanawha Valley after the battle of Scary and the surrender of Charleston to Union forces under General Jacob D. Cox by its mayor and a delegation of leading citizens. Retreating Confederates, with Cox in pursuit, passed through Gauley Bridge, burning the covered bridge that spanned the Gauley River, and taking up positions at White Sulphur Springs. The Union troops occupied Gauley Bridge and erected earthworks, blockhouses, and gun emplacements. The Union was in control of a key position, essential to communications with northcentral West Virginia by way of the Gauley River, the Greenbrier region by way of the James River and Kanawha Turnpike, and southwestern Virginia by way of Fayetteville, Flat Top Mountain, and Princeton.

Gauley Bridge was important to Confederate plans in the autumn of 1861, when General Robert E. Lee aspired to reestablish a Confederate presence in western Virginia through his Cheat Mountain campaign. When those plans fell through, Lee visited the Sewell Mountain area, but Union forces prepared to challenge any Confederate advance. Once again, Gauley Bridge experienced military activity, with Confederate forces under General John B. Floyd occupying Cotton Hill, from whence they could attack Union forces under General William S. Rosecrans, who had fallen back to Gauley Bridge. The Confederates hoped to push the

Federals back along the Gauley Bridge and Weston Turnpike, but Cox crossed the rivers above and below Gauley Bridge and drove the Confederate pickets from their positions preparatory to Union advances toward Fayetteville and Raleigh Court House.

The Union position at Gauley Bridge assumed new importance in the spring of 1862, when John C. Fremont, who had been placed in command of the new Mountain Department, decided to shift his base of operations to Gauley Bridge, from which he would strike at the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad and ultimately occupy Knoxville. Lincoln, however, diverted Fremont from his plan and ordered him to the Valley of Virginia in a futile attempt to trap General Stonewall Jackson, who was playing havoc with Union plans there.

In the early autumn of 1862, Union forces under General Joseph A. J. Lightburn, who was then in command at Gauley Bridge, seemed less secure and Confederate armies under general William W. Loring made preparations to regain possession of the Kanawha Valley. By then the famous raid of General Albert Gallatin Jenkins had given new spirit to Confederate expectations, and Lightburn had fears that, following the raid at Ravenswood, he might be cut off from any retreat down the Kanawha. He therefore ordered removal of all his equipment and supplies from Gauley Bridge to Charleston. Loring saw an opportunity and pressed the retreating Lightburn relentlessly, forcing him to abandon Charleston and the upper Kanawha Valley.

The Confederate occupation of the Kanawha Valley, brief though it was, wrought a considerable change. Once again loaded salt wagons moved from the Salines to Lewisburg and other points, and a new sense of assurance emanated from Confederate areas. The Confederate reprieve was short-lived. In October General Jacob Cox returned to the Kanawha Valley, and with overwhelming numbers forced General John Echols, who had succeeded Loring, to retire from the Kanawha Valley and to evacuate positions at Charleston and Gauley Bridge. Thereafter, whatever campaign strategies were devised by the opposing sides, Gauley Bridge and its immediate vicinity were safely in Union Hands. The town, as much as any other in southern West Virginia, had witnessed the changing fortunes of war.

Gauley Bridge, with its strategic geographical position, was almost inevitably in importance to the economic changes following the Civil War. True enough, the isolated little town surrounded by rivers and mountains, would not in itself become a center of industry or transportation, but it would bear the marks of the great changes that began to transform much of West Virginia during the nineteenth century.

By the close of the Civil War transportation developments, the key to the future of Gauley Bridge, had undergone considerable change. The idea of a central water route that would join the James and Kanawha Rivers had finally, after almost a century, been abandoned. The James River and Kanawha Turnpike remained, and, although much traveled, it

was by no means an entirely satisfactory thoroughfare. The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, which was extended from Covington to Huntington in 1873, was of enormous importance to the development of the Kanawha Valley, but its tracks crossed from the north side to the south side of the New River at Hawks Nest and continued along the south bank of the Kanawha River to Saint Albans, where it turned through the Teays Valley to Huntington. For a time the town of Gauley Bridge was left behind in the great sweep of history. Not even a bridge spanned the Gauley, the Union Army having destroyed its suspension bridge when withdrawing from Gauley Bridge in the fall of 1862.

The late nineteenth century marked a rapid expansion of industry in most parts of West Virginia, particularly in the production of coal, timber, oil, and natural gas. Within the watershed of the Gauley River were vast stands of timber. Recognition of these resources prompted the Chesapeake and Ohio to extend its lines to complete its Gauley Branch from Gauley Bridge northward along the Gauley River and the waters of Twenty Mile Creek to Greendale, in Nicholas County, in 1893-94, primarily for the purpose of tapping timberlands. Meanwhile, in 1893 the Kanawha and Michigan Railroad, which connected Gauley Bridge and Corning, Ohio, was completed to Gauley Bridge, and later extended to Nallen, Fayette County, and Enon, Nicholas County, in 1898. The Kanawha and Michigan was later acquired by the New York Central Railroad, but already the Chesapeake and Ohio, which owned a half-interest in the Kanawha and Michigan, had sold its part to the New York Central. The new lines, which converged at Gauley Bridge, added a new dimension in transportation to the little town and made it something of a center of communications for parts of central West Virginia. Moreover, it became a commercial center for a considerable hinterland.

Gauley Bridge assumed new importance with the construction of the Electrometallurgical Company plant at nearby Glen Ferris, at the falls of the Kanawha, in 1898. Most of the functions of the plant were taken over in 1932 by the new plant at Alloy, which produced ferrochrome alloys and other products used in a variety of manufactured goods.

One of the most important events in the history of the town of Gauley Bridge involved construction of the Hawks Nest Tunnel, which was begun in 1930 in the depths of the Great Depression and completed in 1933. The purpose of the tunnel, which varied in diameter from 32 to 44 feet, was to carry the flow of the New River for a distance of three miles through Gauley Mountain to the power plant of the Electrometallurgical Company just above Gauley Bridge. During its construction its 5,000 workers encountered a stratum of pure silica, and hundreds contracted silicosis and died. The high death rate became a sensation, with failures at the time to diagnose the real nature of the disease, surreptitious burials of the dead at Summersville, and ultimately, investigations by federal authorities. In time the deaths gave rise to numerous lawsuits, but the contractors, employed by the Union Carbide Corporation, the successor

of the Electrometallurgical Company, hastily departed once the construction of the tunnel was completed. The widely hailed engineering achievement was gained at great human cost and became the subject of an investigation by a United States Senate subcommittee and the theme of a novel, Hawks Nest, by Hubert Skidmore, which resulted in further lawsuits and withdrawal by the publisher of all available copies.

The future of Gauley Bridge, as coal and timber resources were depleted, seemed to rest upon improved transportation, particularly with the arrival of the automobile age. In 1952 a four-lane highway was constructed through the town that sped motorists on their way along Route 60, formerly the Midland Trail and the James River and Kanawha Turnpike. Gauley Bridge remained a small town with a high school, residences, and several small business establishments. Much of its business was drained to other towns following improvements to highways, and a hope that it might reap advantage from construction of Interstate 64 disappeared when another route that swung southward from Route 60 to Beckley was chosen as the course of the new superhighway.

PRINCIPAL SITESEXTANT STRUCTURES

K. & M. Railroad Station c. 1890	11
Miller Home and Stagecoach Tavern c. 1830	14
Miller Warehouse and Store c. 1830	17
Nickell Home c. 1900	20
Conley Home c. 1875	23
Glen Ferris Inn c. 1850	26
Bridge Piers c. 1822	29

OTHER SITES

(Not Cataloged)

Gauley Bridge Cemetery (Gauley Bridge)
Stockton Cemetery (Glen Ferris)
Zoll's Hollow (Magazine Hollow - Glen Ferris)

**TOWN OF
GAULEY BRIDGE**

FAYETTE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

LEGEND

- ① K & M DEPOT
- ② MILLER TAVERN
- ③ MILLER WAREHOUSE
- ④ NICKELL RESIDENCE
- ⑤ CONLEY RESIDENCE
- ⑥ GLEN FERRIS INN
- ⑦ COVERED BRIDGE PIERS

2 MILES

CORP. LIMIT

**TOWN OF
GAULEY BRIDGE
FAYETTE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA**

LEGEND

- 1 K&M DEPOT
- 2 MILLER TAVERN
- 3 MILLER WAREHOUSE
- 4 NICKELL RESIDENCE
- 5 CONLEY RESIDENCE
- 6 GLEN FERRIS INN
- 7 COVERED BRIDGE PIERS

Other labels on the map include: TOWN PARK SITE, HAMILTON SUBD, MOORE ADDITION, KEENAN & WALDO SUBD, GAULEY RIVER VIEW SUBD, CONLEY HILL, MILLER SUBD, SITES OF OLD CIVIL WAR BRIDGEPIERS, TAYLOR HILL ADDITION, and 2 MILES.

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- TOWN OF
GAULEY BRIDGE
FAYETTE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA**
- LEGEND**
- 1 K & M DEPOT
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 - 7 COVERED BRIDGE PIERS
- Other labels on the map include: TOWN PARK SITE, HAMILTON SUBD, COBBLE FIELD, MOORE ADDITION, WOODS SUBD, KEENAN & WALDO SUBD, GAULEY RIVER VIEW SUBD, CONLEY HILL, WATER TANK, TAYLOR HILL ADDITION, and 1/4 ANKLEID 400.
- Scale: 2 MILES
- Corp. Limit

ADDENDUM

GAULEY BRIDGE HISTORIC DISTRICT SURVEY

The following paragraphs identify those inventoried properties which the investigators feel have justification for National Register Nomination.

1. K. & M. Railroad Depot. This structure has already been placed on the National Register. It has been rehabilitated and serves as Gauley Bridge Town Hall.
2. Miller Tavern (and Residence) This structure has been acquired by the town and is certainly a candidate for National Register Nomination. Its significance in the town history is clear and the town will certainly initiate steps toward nomination. It served not only as a residence, but as an overnight stage stop, and during the occupation of the town during the Civil War, the Miller home was requisitioned to serve as officer's quarters and command headquarters by both the Union and Confederate Armies.
4. The Nickell Residence is definite candidate for nomination. Its period, excellent condition, family associations, and proximity to the Miller Tavern all would indicate potential for nomination.
6. The Glen Ferris Inn is certainly a candidate for National Register Nomination because of its imposing, colonaded structure, its age, its excellent condition, and its historical associations. It is a truly impressive structure, the most imposing in the entire area, and its site overlooking the Falls of the Kanawha is outstanding. Its present corporate ownership and use as a hotel and restaurant, however, may preclude nomination.

There is now no historic district in the Gauley Bridge-Glen Ferris area, but there is definite potential in the small downtown area bounded by the Town Hall (1), Miller Tavern (2), Miller Warehouse (3), Nickell Residence (4), and the Covered Bridge Piers (7). The potential exists for a restoration in this area, and the town has already moved in this direction by acquiring the Rail Road Depot, the Miller Tavern, and properties adjacent to the Covered Bridge Pier abutment and Miller Warehouse. There can be no doubt that a significant historic development is possible around these properties, clustered together as they are. The number of intrusive elements may be excessive, although acquisition and removal is possible in some cases. Assuming that the necessary properties could be acquired, significant long-range planning would have to be undertaken to insure a coherent and properly phased development of the total area.