

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name King Street Overhead Bridge

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number King Street between Battleground and Railroad Avenues not for publication N/A

city or town Kings Mountain vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Cleveland code 045 zip code 28086

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 _____ nationally X statewide _____ locally. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey A. Crow SHPD 2/21/05
Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

____ entered in the National Register _____
See continuation sheet.

____ determined eligible for the _____
National Register

____ See continuation sheet.

____ determined not eligible for the _____
National Register

____ removed from the National Register _____

____ other (explain): _____

King Street Overhead Bridge
Name of Property

Cleveland County, North Carolina
County and State

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

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

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: TRANSPORTATION Sub: road-related (vehicular)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: TRANSPORTATION Sub: road related (vehicular)

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: rigid-frame bridge

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

roof _____

walls Concrete

other Iron

Asphalt

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
See continuation sheet.

King Street Overhead Bridge
Name of Property

Cleveland County, North Carolina
County and State

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 a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Planning and Development
Engineering

Period of Significance

1938-1939

Significant Dates

1938

1939

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Craven, William L.-engineer

L (andon) Riddle &Company - builder

Ballenger Paving Co. - contractor

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See Continuation sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: North Carolina Division of Archives and History

King Street Overhead Bridge
Name of Property

Cleveland County, North Carolina
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1.0 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 17 468630 3899595
2 _____

Zone Easting Northing
3 _____
4 _____
____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Davyd Foard Hood

organization _____ date 3 July 2004

street & number Isinglass, 6907 Old Shelby Road telephone 704/462-1847

city or town Vale state NC zip code 28168

12. Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name The City of Kings Mountain, Mr. E. O. Murphy, Jr., Mayor

street & number Post Office Box 429 telephone 704/734-0333

city or town Kings Mountain state NC zip code 28086

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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King Street Overhead Bridge
Cleveland County, North Carolina

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The King Street Overhead Bridge is a reinforced concrete Moderne-style rigid-frame vehicular bridge erected in 1938-1939 in Kings Mountain, Cleveland County. It has a three-lane asphalt bed, flanked by slightly raised concrete sidewalks, that carries King Street/Business US 74 across the paired depressed tracks of the Norfolk Southern Railroad. The open arched span above the tracks, measuring about forty-eight feet in length and forty-nine feet in width, is supported by abutments on each side that carry the street to its intersection with Battleground and Railroad avenues, at its east and west ends, respectively. The bridge occupies an elevated site in central Kings Mountain, one of the highest in town, that was raised to provide clearance for trains. Because of its location at the north edge of the historic business district and the prominence of the railroad tracks, the bridge is a highly visible landmark in Kings Mountain. The small industrial town in the southeast corner of Cleveland County is about five and one-half miles north of the North Carolina/South Carolina state line and about seven miles north of Kings Mountain where the Revolutionary War battle was fought in 1780. The well-preserved and intact bridge was designed in the Raleigh office of William L. Craven, the chief bridge engineer for the North Carolina State Highway and Public Works Commission and erected by L. Riddle and Company of Asheville. Construction began in October 1938 and the bridge was completed in April 1939. The unpainted surface of the concrete has weathered through the course of sixty-five years and slightly exposed the sand and gravel mixed aggregate in its cement, giving it an unintended, granular appearance.

The bridge, entirely symmetrical in its fabric and finish, is aligned on a true east/west axis above the tracks which, at this point, carry on a near-true north/south axis for about two blocks through the old downtown commercial district. The bridge is supported on paired reinforced concrete abutments whose elevations are blind and continue to bear the horizontal ghostmarks of the wood formwork erected for the poured-in-place concrete supports. The respective faces of the abutments fronting on the tracks are flat and framed at their corners by pilasters whose shallow projecting outer north and south faces feature three parallel incised lines. These lines stop just short of the three-part stepped tops of the pilasters. Replacement metal lamp standards are centered atop each of the pilasters. The pilasters also serve as the spring point from which the curved wingwalls of the abutments begin their gentle arched ease into the grass-covered slopes of the cut. The three-part incision on the pilaster faces is repeated in a shallow three-part stepped horizontal molding across the top of the wingwalls which, in effect, give them a recessed-panel appearance.

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The openwork iron railing, carrying along the sides of the bridge and continuing in arches atop the curving abutments, is the bridge's principal decorative feature. While the concrete retains a mellow unpainted surface, the railing is painted hunter green. The three-part molding, which is reduced to two bands across the top of the span, incorporates the base of the railing which has its own hierarchical symmetry. The railing is composed of paired, round top and bottom rails that carry a simple repetitive series of open, centered rectangles. Rather than being continuous, it is crafted in fourteen and one-half foot sections. Three such sections, linked by two intermediate piers with stepped tops, carry between the pilasters and across the top of the span. The railing atop the curved wingwalls have a like three-part division. Its three-section railing is fitted between the pilasters, intermediate piers, and the piers at each end of the railing. These end piers, which like the pilasters have a three-level stepped top, while the intermediate piers have a two-part stepping, are fitted with simple three-part buttresses.

A bronze plaque on the east face of the pier at the east end of the bridge's north railing bears the following inscription:

Overhead Bridge
Cleveland County
State Project No. 8212
1938.
Cleveland County

An identical plaque is mounted on the west face of the pier at the west end of the bridge's south railing.

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King Street Overhead Bridge
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SUMMARY

The King Street Overhead Bridge, spanning the paired Norfolk Southern railway tracks at the center of Kings Mountain and carrying King Street (Business US 74) between Battleground and Railroad avenues, occupies an important position in the history and development of Kings Mountain and in the history of bridge construction in North Carolina. It satisfies National Register Criteria A and C, holds local significance in the area of community planning and development, and holds statewide significance in the area of engineering.

The construction of the bridge in 1938-1939 by L(andon) Riddle & Company of Asheville for the State Highway and Public Works Commission answered a long-standing need in the town of Kings Mountain for an overhead crossing. Since its founding in 1874 around a station on the newly-built Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line Railway until 1919, when the Southern Railway Company erected a narrow two-lane concrete overhead bridge, the streets of Kings Mountain crossed the railroad track(s) at grade. Following the organization of the Kings Mountain Manufacturing Company in 1888 the town developed as an important textile manufacturing center in the period to about 1920. As the town grew and both the number of drivers and their speed on the streets increased, the matter became acute. While the railroad-erected bridge alleviated the situation, the larger need remained and worsened as outside/through traffic also increased. These factors came together in the 1930s as the state highway commission was making further improvements to US Highway 74 and the federal government initiated a major program to eliminate grade crossings in the nation. In June 1938 the town council endorsed the overhead bridge, and by the end of summer 1939 the bridge was built and US 74 carried through Kings Mountain on a newly-built western extension of King Street.

The statewide significance of the bridge in the area of engineering and its satisfaction of Criterion C is associated with its importance as the earliest surviving example of a rigid-frame bridge erected by the State Highway and Public Works Commission. The rigid-frame bridge, answering to the limits of constricted space for abutments and the need for an aesthetic structure, was developed in Europe. It was first introduced in this country in the 1920s by the Westchester County (New York) Park Commission by its chief design engineer Arthur Gunderson Hayden who also wrote *The Rigid-Frame Bridge*(1931). Because these bridges were individually designed and required extensive formwork in construction, and were usually dressed with handsome stone veneers in parks and on parkways, they were not adopted by the North Carolina State Highway and Public Works Commission which was charged with building and maintaining thousands of bridges and adopted standard techniques for their construction. Most surviving examples of the rigid-frame bridge in the state are on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Nevertheless, in this instance the state bridge design office, headed by William L. Craven (1878-1944) from 1917

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until his death, produced this remarkably handsome rigid-frame bridge with Art Deco-influenced Moderne styling utilizing an economy of means and sure proportions. The bridge was erected and dedicated during the term (1937-1941) of Governor Clyde Roark Hoey (1877-1954), a member of the "Shelby Dynasty," and has remained a highly-visible landmark to travelers on US 74 through Kings Mountain to the present.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

The construction of the King Street Overhead Bridge in 1938-1939 in Kings Mountain reflects an important confluence of circumstances, time, and place. For ninety years after the Revolutionary War Battle of Kings Mountain, which was fought on 7 October 1780 some seven miles south at the mountain which rises above the North Carolina/South Carolina state line, the lands that became the town of Kings Mountain were rural in character and formed a part of piedmont North Carolina's agricultural landscape. This area was then a part of Lincoln County, newly formed in 1779 from Tryon County. In 1841 the western part of Lincoln County and an eastern section of Rutherford County, also formed in 1779 out of Tryon County, were set apart as Cleveland County. The boundary line between Lincoln and Cleveland counties carried through a farming community then known as White Plains and along today's Gaston Street in Kings Mountain. When Gaston County was formed in 1846 from the southern Lincoln County, this line became the new boundary between Cleveland and Gaston counties. From the year of its charter in 1874 as Kings Mountain until 1917, when the Cleveland/Gaston County line was moved to the very east edge of town, the west and east halves of Kings Mountain lay respectively in Cleveland and Gaston Counties.

The character of this rural area was forever changed in the 1870s when the tracks of the Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line Railroad were laid through rural North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Completed and placed in operation in December 1872, this railroad directly linked these two cities for the first time; by the early twentieth century both would become important centers of the "New South." A stop was established here, (then) the last on the route that next entered South Carolina, and took the name Kings Mountain. Kings Mountain developed first as a trading center, serving the surrounding agricultural community, and soon prospered as an important textile manufacturing center in the chain of textile mills and related concerns that stretched from Charlotte through Gastonia and west to Forest City and Spindale in Rutherford County. In the early twentieth century Gaston County emerged as the leading producer of textile goods in North Carolina. Adjoining Cleveland County would also come to be the leading producer of raw cotton in North Carolina. Kings Mountain, sitting astride the Cleveland/Gaston

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County line and bisected by the Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line Railroad, enjoyed an enviable position and came to be known as the “gate city.”

The construction of the railroad tracks in this section attracted enterprising men and their families from the region. The first of the group to settle and establish their families and business in Kings Mountain was Captain Freno Dilling (1839-1924) who moved his sawmill here from Cherryville in May 1872 and sold cross ties and lumber to the railroad company. Probably the most prominent of Kings Mountain's first citizens were two sons of David and Frances (Carpenter) Mauney who were born in the Muddy Creek settlement northwest of Kings Mountain. William Andrew (1841-1929) and Jacob Simri (1846-1936) Mauney came here in spring 1873, acquired acreage on the east side of the railroad, quickly built houses for their families, and jointly operated a general merchandise store. The first of their two wood frame stores and the modest one-story-with-loft frame house said to have been William Mauney's first dwelling, now 104 Battleground Avenue, were built to the immediate northeast of this bridge.¹ In 1878 the Mauney brothers relocated their business to the first brick store constructed in Kings Mountain. The Mauney store stood near the center of the area that developed around the station as the town's commercial district.² When the area post office at White Plains was relocated to Kings Mountain and assumed its name, it was first located in the Mauney brothers' store. William Mauney served both as the first postmaster of Kings Mountain and in 1876 its first elected mayor.

Through the 1870s and early 1880s others relocated to Kings Mountain, opened stores, and established professional offices to serve the small but growing town. Kings Mountain might have remained an area trading center except that the availability of local cotton, good rail transportation, and cheap labor proved to be an irresistible combination. In 1888 the Mauney brothers and Mr. Dilling and other stockholders established the Kings Mountain Manufacturing Company, the first of some dozen mills built and placed in operation in Kings Mountain in the period up to 1920. Although a number of other town residents had invested in the Mauney family mills and other, including the Enterprise (1892), Dilling (1893-1894), and Cora and Lula Mills of 1900, the Mauney family remained the leading figures in the textile history of Kings Mountain. Their role was strengthened and expanded in 1892 when Charles Eugene Neisler (1868-1931) married William Mauney's oldest daughter, Ida Pauline (1870-1964) and was soon named superintendent of the Kings Mountain Manufacturing Company. In 1910 he established the first of three mills in his own right, the Pauline Mills, that were named for his wife (and their daughter). In 1914 he opened the Margrace Mills (named for daughters Margaret and Grace), and the Patricia Mills followed in 1919.

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During the thirty-plus year period from the late 1880s through 1920, the town of Kings Mountain had grown in size, population, and presence. In 1880, when the town first appears as an entity (only) in the Federal Census for Cleveland County, eighty-seven families lived in Kings Mountain. By 1900 that number quadrupled to 409 families with 284 living in Cleveland County and 125 in Gaston County. The increase in 1910 to 342 families in Cleveland and 199 in Gaston for a total of 541 families was proportionally similar to the increase of 709 families in 1920 when all of Kings Mountain was reported in Cleveland County. One hundred forty-three of that number in 1920 were listed in what was then described as East Kings Mountain but was effectively part of the town. The physical development of Kings Mountain essentially followed the path of the Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line Railroad tracks which carried along a northeast/southwest axis through the town's essentially grid plan. (After change in ownership the railroad was leased to and operated by the Richmond & Danville Railroad from the early 1880s to 1894 when it and other railroad lines were merged into the Southern Railway Company.) Parallel roads on the railroad's east and west sides, today's Battleground and Railroad avenues, respectively, joined the streets and avenues laid out on generally true, expected east/west and north/south axes.

A sure understanding of the physical development of Kings Mountain is hampered by uncertainty over who laid out its streets and lots and when, and an absence of nineteenth-century maps. The first known map of Kings Mountain was prepared by Ramsaur & Bestor, engineers, and dated 1 June 1914. Five years later, in 1919, the Sanborn Map Company produced its first insurance maps for the town, which was followed by more extensive coverage of the town in 1925. Except for the Sadie and Pauline mills, the large brick factories, related buildings, and mill villages were located along the path of the railroad. The Cora, Phenix, and Dilling mills occupied a general cluster in the northeast quadrant of Kings Mountain while the Bonnie and Mason mills stood in the southwest part of town with the large Margrace mill complex situated to the southwest of Kings Mountain about one mile beyond its corporate limits. The mill owners, merchants, and other professional men in the town erected houses along streets and avenues on the east side of the railroad and along Piedmont Avenue which leads north to Cherryville (see Central School Historic District). Although these houses were the most prepossessing and architecturally developed, the majority of the town's building stock was found in the neighborhoods of worker housing including substantial residential villages adjoining at least six of the major mills (Dilling, Phenix, Margrace, Cora, Pauline, and Sadie). These mostly one-story frame houses, repetitive in plan, form, and finish, were home to the majority of the town's residents.

Kings Mountain's streets and roads and the Southern Railway line served the local community with success through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; however, with the growth

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of its commercial and industrial interests, its population, and the increasing use of automotive and vehicular traffic throughout the region and the nation, these linkages to other parts of the region and the state took on a larger importance. Beginning in the 1910s important changes and improvements would be undertaken that enhanced the municipal fabric of Kings Mountain, forever altered its character, and resulted in the construction of this bridge in 1938-1939. Concurrent with the first stages of these improvements, the city fathers were also resolving the inherent difficulties posed by their need to provide services to a citizenry which was parts of two separate counties. In 1915 the North Carolina Legislature passed an act providing for a referendum by Kings Mountain voters as to whether they wished to become a part of Cleveland or Gaston County through a relocation of the county line. The election was held in April 1915; 341 votes were in favor of Cleveland County while 270 citizens voted to join Gaston County. Although Gaston County politicians contested the results they became effective through a second legislative act in 1917 and approval of the two county's commissioners in 1918. (The boundary was slightly amended again in 1921.)

On the transportation front improvements were made by the Southern Railway Company, the town, and the North Carolina State Highway Commission. The consolidation of a series of regional railroad lines into the Southern Railway Company system in 1894, overseen by the company's founding president Samuel Spencer (1847-1906) until his death, enlarged both the significance of the track through Kings Mountain and the number of trains using the line. From 1872 to 1894 the tract was the important regional link between Atlanta and Charlotte; however, with the merger of 1894, the value of the line increased when it became the principal route linking Alexandria, Virginia, by way of Lynchburg and Danville, Virginia, and Greensboro with Charlotte and thence Atlanta. By 1899 the Southern Railway system had expanded to include New Orleans as its southernmost terminal and in 1901, through acquisition of interests in the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad, it had access to the critical Washington and Richmond markets. In 1901 the Southern Railway was operating trains from Washington to New Orleans on the main trunk line through Kings Mountain. With increased markets and volume on the Southern Railway lines Samuel Spencer initiated a massive improvement program that included realignment, regrading, double tracking, and grade crossing improvements or eliminations. These continued through the tenure (1906-1913) of his successor, William W. Finley (18__-1913), and were completed by Fairfax Harrison (1869-1938), the third president (1914-1937) of the Southern Railway Company. Two visible effects of this program were seen in Kings Mountain. The single track which had been in use since 1872 was replaced in 1919 by paired, parallel tracks that greatly facilitated the movement of trains through town and over the course of the Southern Railway system. It is unclear what amount of regrading was implemented

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here; however, a bridge, apparently of wood, was erected over the cut about 250 feet north of King Street.

On 24 July 1919 the *Kings Mountain Herald* published a short paragraph concerning a new reinforced concrete overhead bridge about to be built across the Southern tracks.

A construction force of the Southern Railway, under R. B. Ray, began Monday placing machinery and material for the rebuilding of the overhead bridge at the north end of the bridge here. The old bridge was removed in order to prosecute the work of grading and double tracking. The new bridge will be built at the same place but will be of re-inforced concrete with two concrete piers. The work will require 16 or 17 hands for about two months.

When completed this narrow two-lane bridge was the only above-grade, overhead crossing in Kings Mountain and it retained that status for twenty years when this bridge was completed and opened. Unaltered, it remains in use to the present.

The railroad crew joined another work force that had been busy on the streets of Kings Mountain since late April. Up to 1919 the streets of Kings Mountain had been a combination of packed clay and gravel (and perhaps other materials), but on Monday, 28 April 1919, history was made when the first street paving in Kings Mountain was undertaken. The *Kings Mountain Herald* announced the work in a front-page column on 1 May 1919.

Street paving has actually begun. The whistle gave its initial toot Monday morning at the corner of Mountain and Piedmont streets, the corner at the churches. Here the work began and will proceed through the business section of Mountain street first. A layer of concrete four inches thick makes the foundation for the asphalt top coat. Sewer taps have been going in all along the streets to be paved for several weeks but there are still a number of taps to be made.

A month later, on 5 June, the town newspaper published further good news on the street paving for the citizens of Kings Mountain.

It is now a practical certainty that Kings Mountain and community will get a slice of government road money. The appropriation, as we understand it, will be sufficient to pay half on a 16 foot road for a distance of two and a quarter miles. It is the plan to begin this road at the Gaston county line near W. S. Mauney's and proceed through King street to Piedmont at the A. R. P. church, south a block to

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Mountain street, west Mountain street until the distance is exhausted which will carry it well out of town toward Shelby. This covers all the territory on these streets contained in the original paving plan already under way of construction. This government aid comes as a great boon to the town and we trust that all abutting property owners whose duty it will be to pay a part of the cost will come right to the front and put the deal over in good style. Of course, the town will finish making the road a full street width where the property owners have signed up to pay their part.

This road project paved what was then the principal east-west highway through the town of Kings Mountain. The King Street section would come to be known as North Carolina Highway #20 and later a part of US 74. The funds awarded to Kings Mountain in the summer of 1919 were probably a combination of state and federal monies including those awarded to North Carolina as a result of the passage in 1916 of the Federal-Aid Road Act (Turner, 4).

In the event the Kings Mountain street paving project and its support through federal and state funding occurred at the very beginning of an unprecedented road building program in North Carolina that continued through the 1930s and quickly earned the state the accolade, the "Good Roads State."³ The long-time lobbying efforts of North Carolina's Good Roads Association and the re-establishment of the State Highway Commission by legislative act in 1915 were followed in 1920 by the election of Cameron Morrison, who came to be known as the "Good Roads Governor," and the passage of landmark legislation in February 1921. The Highway Act of 1921 authorized \$50 million in road bonds, a penny a gallon gasoline tax, and increased registration fees for automobile and trucks to construct "hard surface and other dependable roads connecting by the most practical routes the various county seats and other principal towns of every county" (Turner, 12-13). For Kings Mountain this meant its inclusion on the path of North Carolina highway #20 which linked a series of county seats from Wilmington to Asheville.⁴ Major funding for highway improvements continued through the 1920s and the 1930s by North Carolina and the federal government. During the 1930s a series of Depression-era programs supported both general construction and targeted improvements such as grade crossing eliminations.

Between 1919 and 1939 local residents and travelers through Kings Mountain had a choice of crossing the Southern Railway lines either by the 1919 concrete bridge or at grade at Mountain Street and other crossings. The problem with either option, for the motorist traveling westward on King Street (for instance), was that he/she had to make either a right turn at the west end of King Street and a quick left turn to use the bridge, or a left turn, travel a block south to Mountain Street, and turn right and continue on the path of highway #20 out of town. This situation

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became increasingly troublesome as the number of vehicles increased, drivers drove faster, and when the road carrying south from Cherryville and along the east side of the rail line (as Railroad Avenue) south, out of town to Grover, NC, and Spartanburg, SC, gained in usage. Most of that route is now NC 216, including today's Piedmont Avenue, North Battleground Avenue, and South Battleground Avenue (south of King Street). During the score of years between 1919 and 1939 a portion of the path came to be and remains US 29. The intersection of King Street and Railroad Avenue, at the east edge of the railroad cut, increasingly became the scene of accidents. These were often fatal when vehicles went through the intersection and plunged into the cut; even when a barricade was erected here across the west end of King Street vehicles sometimes went through it.

Such accidents, the lawsuits which at times followed, and the general inconvenience of such situations, as well as delays when trains blocked street crossings at grade prompted action in the 1930s.⁵ In 1938 and 1939 North Carolina received \$1,245,000 and \$1,243,000, respectively, in special federal funding for grade crossing eliminations (Turner, 37). The King Street Overhead Bridge was funded through this initiative.

Although the above-cited factors obtained in Kings Mountain, the local movement to erect an overhead bridge on King Street came from a different yet related concern. Many of the leading businessmen in town wanted to secure the improved routing and funding for the recent national road, US 74, through Kings Mountain. A safe crossing of the railroad tracks and a westward extension of King Street were critical to success in gaining the highway that had superseded old North Carolina #20 and carried from Wilmington west beyond Asheville and into Tennessee. Matters came to a head in the late spring of 1938. The Men's Club named Jonie Brian Thomasson (1873-1949) as head of a committee to work with the Town Council and the State Highway Commission to secure the route (*Herald*, 19 May 1938). Under the direction of Hugh E. Noell (1885-1974), the Shelby division engineer of the highway commission, a survey was completed for a road that would route both US 29 and 74 south, out of town and through an underpass in the vicinity of the (then) Grover Road (*Herald*, 26 May 1938). The matter of an overhead bridge on King Street or an underpass was influenced by several considerations of which two drew the strongest attention: the benefits accruing to property owners along the possible route; and the effects on King Street property owners occasioned by the need to raise the grade of the street sufficient for the elevated crossing.

The matter came before the Town Council twice in special meetings in June 1938 and was approved at both sessions. At the first meeting on 13 June, mayor pro-tem Charles Eugene Neisler Jr. (1895-1966), then president of Neisler Mills, Inc., presided in the absence of Mayor James Edward Herndon (1893-1958), who was also his uncle by marriage. The motion to

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approve the proposal for the overhead bridge, endorsed by both Mr. Thomasson and Grady Patterson on behalf of the Men's Club, was supported by the four councilmen. Mr. Neisler did not support the motion (Herald, 16 June 1938).

When the motion to endorse the overhead bridge came before the council on 20 June it again gained majority support. The *Kings Mountain Herald* carried a front page account of the meeting in its 23 June edition under the headline "Council Passes Overhead Bridge at Meeting."

The Town Council in a special meeting Monday night approved the construction of the much-discussed overhead bridge at the corner of Railroad Avenue and King Street. All members of the Council with the exception of C. E. Neisler, Jr., were present. Mayor J. E. Herndon presided at the meeting.

The four members of the Council present voted for the proposal. Mayor Herndon said he thought before the project was approved the Town should determine what the damages will be.

One week ago the Council met and approved the overhead bridge providing the fill leading to the bridge would not exceed 8½ feet but Monday night the overhead bridge was approved regardless of the height of the fill which will be ten feet.

One member of the Council stated that he thought 90 percent of the citizens of Kings Mountain were in favor of the overhead bridge and he was elected to represent the people and he was for the proposal.

The original proposal cost between \$90,000 and \$125,000, for the bridge and about a mile of new street from the west side of the bridge to where the new highway would join with the Number 74. It was thought that King Street from the East city limit to the bridge would have to be rebuilt.

In the next week's edition Haywood E. Lynch, the editor of the *Herald* somewhat grudgingly endorsed the project under the heading "That Bridge."

The overhead bridge has been officially approved by the Town Council. We have never been so enthusiastic about this location, but since most of the citizens who have expressed themselves and the Council are for it, we are in favor of it too. We

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think it is time for citizens to put aside personal gain and work for the betterment of the Town as a whole.

So, we are now for the bridge at the corner of Railroad Avenue and King Street, and the sooner the actual work is started the better we will like it.

Following approval of the project the work of designing the bridge advanced in the office of William L. Craven, chief bridge engineer for the State Highway and Public Works Commission. The project was let out to bid that summer. The final step before construction could begin was to secure the bond for the necessary right of way. On 15 September 1938 the *KINGS MOUNTAIN Herald* carried another account of council action under the heading "Bridge Bond Signed."

At a special meeting of the Town Council held Monday night by unanimous vote Councilman W. K. Mauney and Clerk Charles Dilling were authorized to sign the bond guaranteeing to the State Highway Department a right-of-way for the overhead bridge at the corner of Railroad Avenue and King street. Mayor J. E. Herndon stated to the councilmen that he wanted more time to consider the matter of signing. The council deemed it necessary to have the papers signed at once so the above action was taken and the papers were signed immediately. The matter of signing the bond has been hanging fire for some time. Bids for the construction of the bridge has already been let, and it was thought that actual construction would start in the near future.

It was understood that the bond signed by Councilman Mauney and Clerk Dilling would be acceptable to the State Highway Department.

Mayor J. E. Herndon issued the following statement in connection with the signing of the bond: "I did not think it was right so I did not sign it. I was against it two years ago and I am against it now. . . . I did just what I thought was right and for the best interest of Kings Mountain as a whole."

Three weeks later, on 6 October, the *Herald* announced the award of two contracts totaling \$107,283.10 for the project. The construction of the bridge was awarded in the amount of \$27,387 to L(andon) Riddle & Company of Asheville. The larger contract, in the amount of \$79,896.10 was awarded to Ballenger Paving Company of Greenville, South Carolina. This contract for the approaches to the bridge included "the grading and paving of 1.18 miles of 22 feet street. Most of this will be on the West side of the bridge to where the new road will enter the present highway near Goforth Service Station. The contract also includes two five foot

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sidewalks.” On 20 October 1938 the *Herald* informed its readers that work had started on the bridge the day before. “Carpenters were busy Wednesday morning building the office and warehouse on Railroad Avenue across from the Plonk Motor Co. Work on the bridge will begin immediately.”

Although the local press expressed the view that the work would be completed quickly, the construction of the bridge and its approach roads continued well into 1939. The *Kings Mountain Herald* published occasional mentions of the progress. On 19 January “Overhead Bridge to Have Lights” was a front-page heading. “Contractor Riddle was notified Wednesday Morning that the new overhead bridge now under construction is to have four electric lights. This, he said will add a great deal to the beauty and service of the structure. Lights on attractive poles will be located at each of the four corners.”

On 6 April 1939 the *Herald's* editor Haywood E. Lynch offered a somewhat snide notice in his “Here and There . . .” column. “Kings Mountain’s sky scraper bridge is now completed. All that is now to be done is for the two mountains leading to it to be made. Oh, and I almost forgot, a few basements to be made from what is now first floor buildings.”

On 1 June Mr. Lynch included mention of the first car to cross the bridge in his column. It was driven by James Kirby Willis (1894-1966), a member of the council who voted for the bridge in June 1938. He noted “The fill is not near completed, but at one end the grade has been filled in enough for a car to climb up.”

The audit for the year ending 30 June 1939, published in 1940 as part of the *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the State Highway and Public Works Commission*, reported an expenditure of \$47,509.39 on the overhead bridge project (#8212).⁶ This figure included the bridge and a small portion of the related road work. The construction of the approaches to the bridge and related highway work had been undertaken on the completion of the bridge in April 1939. On 13 July 1939 the *Herald* carried a short article under the heading “New Highway Work Progressing.”

Construction on the stretch of new Highway between the newly constructed overhead bridge and the junction of the old highway is moving steadily along, with approximately one third of the distance now covered with concrete. It is not known definitely how long it will take to cover the road completely.

When finished, the road will form, with King street, an almost straight stretch from one city limit to the other.

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The work advanced quickly, the project was completed by early September, and on 14 September 1939 the *Kings Mountain Herald* published an announcement of the dedicatory ceremonies to take place on Friday afternoon the 15th. Congressman Alfred Lee Bulwinkle (1883-1950), who had been instrumental in securing WPA funds for projects in Kings Mountain and elsewhere in his district, was the main speaker in a program that included both the commissioner and engineer for Division Nine of the State Highway Commission, located in Shelby. Jonie Brian Thomasson who had long advocated the bridge project and had been elected mayor of Kings Mountain in May 1939 served as host for the ceremonies and was to cut the ribbon opening the road.

The announcement concluded with a short description of the completed work.

During the process of construction 136 men were employed steadily by the construction company. These men laid 23,000 square yards of concrete in the highway. Sidewalks required 3,300 square yards of concrete.

Battleground Avenue, formerly known as Railroad Avenue, on the east side of the tracks, and Railroad Avenue on the West side of the tracks, had to be filled to come up to the level of the new highway. Several sections of the new highway itself, from the bridge to Piedmont Avenue, and just out from town, required filling. This filling required 58,000 cubic yards of dirt.

The banks of the places filled in on each side of the railroad have been sodded, lending the view of the bridge from the business section a much more attractive air, with the green grass hiding the ugly red banks which formerly greeted the eyes.

The new section is one and two-tenths miles in length, making an almost straight section of highway from the East City limit to the West, and allowing persons who are headed from Gastonia to Shelby or vice versa, to cross the railroad over the new bridge eliminating the hazard which formerly existed.

Of the one and two tenth miles, half of it is 36 feet curb to curb, the remainder is regular width.

Mr. Lynch also commended the bridge in an editorial published on the 14th.

Highway Dedication

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Two of the many highways of the south meet in Kings Mountain. The Best Town in The State. This is one of the biggest assets of the community, and tomorrow marks the dedication day, a big improvement on these highways. Leading citizens of the state have been invited to rejoice with Kings Mountain citizens on this big step forward. This overhead bridge and highway did not just happen, it came about after hard work on the part of local citizens, even after opposition. In fact the Herald was never very much in favor of the "man-made" mountain but now it is really very attractive and we are glad it is here.

In the event the account of the Kings Mountain Overhead Bridge project published as an announcement for its dedication would be the most extensive appearing in the pages of the *Kings Mountain Herald*. In other circumstances the *Herald* would probably have published a long account of the project and the ceremonies, but the events of early September 1939 in Europe intervened. The German invasion of Poland on 1 September, followed by declarations of war by Britain and France on the 3rd, and that of Canada on the 10th, challenged the United States position of avowed neutrality. The six-paragraph account of the dedicatory ceremonies, published in the *Kings Mountain Herald* on 21 September 1939, bore the headline "Major Bulwinkle Says 'Stop War Talk.'"

The Kings Mountain Overhead Bridge has continued in use to the present as the principal overhead, central Kings Mountain crossing of the paired tracks owned by the Norfolk Southern Corporation (since the 1982 merger of Southern Railway with the Norfolk and Western Railroad). During this period it has survived remarkably intact except for the replacement of the four lamp standards.

With the construction of Interstate 85, the relocation of US 29 out of central Kings Mountain to carry with the interstate, and the completion of Bypass US 74 through northeast Kings Mountain and around its northwest section by 1985, most of the out-of-town, through traffic formerly using King Street (US 74) and the King Street Overhead Bridge now uses those newer roads. Today the King Street Bridge is essentially a part of the local street system serving the citizens of Kings Mountain.

Engineering Significance

The King Street Overhead Bridge is one of seven bridges in Cleveland County and one of two in the town of Kings Mountain that were included in the North Carolina Historic Bridge Inventory conducted by Lichtenstein Consulting Engineers in 2001 (-2004) and identified as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The inventory was conducted

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under contract to the North Carolina Department of Transportation. The consultants' phase one report, "Criteria for Determining Significance and Thresholds of Integrity, Historic Context for Transportation Networks, Historic Context for Bridge Technology," provides a scholarly overview of bridge construction in North Carolina and includes individual reports on each of the bridges recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The report for the King Street Overhead Bridge includes the following "Summary of Significance."

Summary of Significance:

The 1938 reinforced concrete rigid frame bridge is a handsome example of its type with no surviving rivals in the state context. It is one of the few rigid frame bridges built by the state highway commission prior to 1961, and it is one of the few non-standard, architectonic bridges designed by the state bridge unit under the leadership of State Bridge Engineer William L. Craven. The bridge reflects the then-prevailing Moderne-style with strong vertical, horizontal, and geometric lines. It is a technologically distinguished example in the state context (Criterion C).

The reinforced concrete rigid frame bridge, where the top member and the verticals are integral and the legs perform useful work in supporting the loads, is one of the most efficient uses of both steel and concrete. The technology was developed in Europe during the last part of the 19th century, and it was not utilized in this country until the early 1920s when Arthur G. Hayden, design engineer of the Westchester County Parks Commission, used it for overpasses on the parkways in Westchester County, NY. The technology requires expensive form work to erect, but it is an efficient use of material, and it reduces the amount of work in the ground because the mass of the abutments is reduced. The intrinsic form of the rigid frame with its typical shallow arch is usually well proportioned and lends itself well to settings where an aesthetic bridge is desired. It is frequently used in parks and on parkways. In North Carolina, fewer than 20 rigid frame bridges before 1961 have been identified with all but a handful located on the Blue Ridge Parkway and designed by the federal Bureau of Public Roads and the National Park Service. The King Street Overhead Bridge is the earliest surviving example of a rigid frame built by the state highway commission. The state bridge unit did not adopt the rigid frame as a standard design, and since individual designs were rare, the rigid frame did not become a popular type in North Carolina.

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Arthur Gunderson Hayden (1874-1964) put his experience with rigid-frame bridge construction as designing engineer of the Westchester County (New York) Park Commission to advantage when he wrote *The Rigid-Frame Bridge*. The technical manual was first published in 1931 and reissued in 1940 and 1950. Rigid-frame bridge technology was first utilized in the United States in a series of some ninety bridges erected in the Westchester County parkway system between 1922 and 1933. Some 400 were erected elsewhere in the United States in the period up to 1939 (Hayden, 184). The King Street Overhead Bridge was one of that number. The illustrations of rigid-frame bridges appearing in the 1950 edition are largely those erected in parks and on parkways and scenic roads including those in the Westchester County system and Henry Hudson Parkway in New York, the George Washington Parkway in Virginia, Merritt Parkway and Wilbur Cross Parkway in Connecticut, and the Palisades Parkway in New Jersey. These illustrations confirm the advantage of the rigid-form bridge under particular physical circumstances and where an "aesthetic bridge is desired." Most of the bridges illustrated are enhanced with handsome stone veneer whose design and craftsmanship are especially appealing to both motorists and pedestrians. In North Carolina the principal early usage of the rigid-frame bridge technology occurred in the construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway, initiated in 1935 and arguably the most important public works project supported by the federal government in North Carolina in the interwar period. The bridges on the Blue Ridge Parkway, like those in Virginia and in the Northeast, were handsomely veneered with granite or other stone.

Although King Street and its carriage of US 74 do not fit the description of a parkway, the location of the bridge, highly visible from the Kings Mountain business district and adjacent to the town's most important residential neighborhood, required special consideration in its design. Thus the rigid-frame form was adopted here and its fabric developed in imposing, if simple, architectonic fashion. Had the financial exigencies of the time and circumstances not obtained, the bridge might have been veneered in one of the local building stones like the Toluca granite found in the Acre Rock quarry near Toluca in western Cleveland County, which was utilized regionally for mostly domestic buildings from the 1920s through the 1940s.

Once the decision was made in June 1939 to build an overhead bridge, the design of the structure was taken up in the Raleigh office headed by William L. Craven, the state bridge engineer. The extent to which Craven was personally engaged in the bridge's design remains to be confirmed; however, given the fact that its design was not standard but tailored to the site and circumstances and that it is "the earliest surviving example of a rigid frame (bridge) built by the state highway commission" virtually necessitates his professional involvement in its design. William L. Craven (1878-1944) had been hired in 1916 as a consultant and after the disastrous flood of that year destroyed many bridges and roads in western North Carolina he served as chief bridge engineer and held that post until his death. A native of Concord and a graduate in 1901 of today's North

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Carolina State University with a degree in civil engineering, he gained a wealth of drafting and design experience working successively for the American Bridge Company, Carolina Steel Bridge & Construction Company of Burlington, North Carolina, the Virginia Bridge & Iron Company headquartered in Roanoke, Virginia, and the York Bridge Company of York, Pennsylvania where he was assistant chief engineer (*News and Observer*, 24 March 1944). Mr. Craven, a charter member of the bridge committee of the American Association of State Highway Officials, would have known the work of Arthur G. Hayden in Westchester County and had a copy of his *The Rigid-Frame Bridge*. At this distance it is unclear how many, if any, of the handsome stone-clad rigid-frame bridges on the Blue Ridge Parkway had been built--and seen by Mr. Craven--between September 1935 and the summer of 1938 when the design for this bridge was produced.

The engineering significance of the King Street Overhead Bridge lies not in its particular association with William L. Craven, which eludes specific documentation, nor as a prototype of a technology that influenced bridge design in North Carolina. Instead, as "the earliest surviving example of a rigid frame (bridge) built by the state highway commission," it is significant as a remarkably intact example of that form in North Carolina and for its role as a highly successful experiment in bridge construction by one of the leading state highway bridge engineering offices in the United States. Like the bridges on the Blue Ridge Parkway and others which utilized the rigid-frame technology in parks and on parkways elsewhere, and because of its highly visible location, the King Street Overhead Bridge was designed to meet both functional and aesthetic requirements. With a remarkable economy of means, sure proportions, and simple geometric detailing the King Street Overhead Bridge stands as a rare and well-preserved example of the Art Moderne style applied to bridge design in North Carolina.

ENDNOTES

1. In time both William Andrew and James Simri Mauney would build imposing two-story Victorian houses on their original purchase, at 106 North Battleground Avenue, and 107 North Piedmont Avenue, respectively. William Andrew Mauney's first house and both of the above houses survive and are included in the Central School Historic District (NR, 2001).
2. The building still stands today at 223 Battleground Avenue; however, its appearance has been altered by a succession of businesses operating in it.
3. Numerous accounts of North Carolina's road building program have been published including, most recently, Walter R. Turner's *Paving Tobacco Road: A Century of Progress by the North Carolina Department of Transportation* (2003).

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4. As late as 1920 none of the roads in North Carolina had been numbered. North Carolina Highway #20 was created and named by 1930. See Turner, 22-23.
 5. One such fatal accident, which occurred on 30 August 1937, resulted in suits. That of Mrs. Annie Adams of Greenville, South Carolina, brought jointly against the town and Southern Railway, was reported in the *Herald* on 11 August 1938. See "Town and Railroad are Sued Again." Grade crossings in King Mountain were also the scene of fatal collisions including one occurring on 12 June 1938 and reported in the *Herald* on 16 June under the heading "Negro Killed in Car-Train Crash Here Sunday."
 6. *Thirteenth Biennial Report*, p. 48. This same report, published at the end of the 1939-1940 year ending on 30 June 1940, also listed final figures for the cost of the bridge at \$28,136.28 (p. 14) and the completion of 1.191 miles of "36 concrete pavement" at \$80,452.64 (p. 12). These figures vary only slightly from the contract information published in the *Herald*. The bridge project, including the necessary roadwork bore project number 8212. Some preliminary planning or surveying work was undertaken in 1935-1936. The amount of \$799.36 is reported as having apparently been expended on project #8212 in the year ending 30 June 1936 in the *Eleventh Biennial Report of the North Carolina State Highway and Public Works Commission* (1937), p. 148. Work was also done on the project after the bridge was dedicated and placed in use. The amount of \$750 was expended on project #8212 in the year ending 30 June 1942 and reported in the *Fourteenth Biennial Report of the State Highway and Public Works Commission* (1943), p. 133. The cost of the spring 1938 survey for the routing of US 74 that included the underpass might well have been the sum of \$653.83 reported as having been expended on project #8212 during the year ending on 30 June 1938 in the *Twelfth Biennial Report of the State Highway and Public Works Commission* (1939), p. 125.

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Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary includes the area covered by and limited to the substructure and superstructure of the bridge. It is contained within the rectangle drawn in pencil on the enclosed Cleveland County Tax Map "Kings Mountain, N.C., Map 1."

Boundary Justification: The boundary is drawn to include the physical site of the bridge exclusive of its setting.

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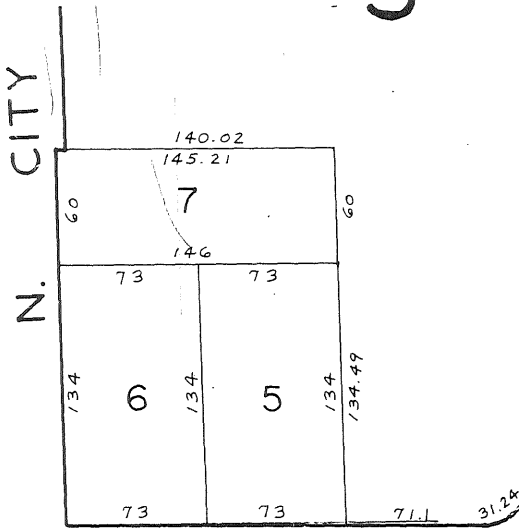
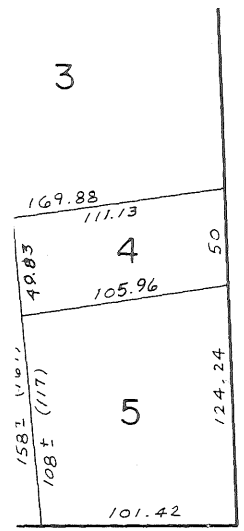
King Street Overhead Bridge
Cleveland County, North Carolina

Photography Schedule (the following information applies to all photographs)

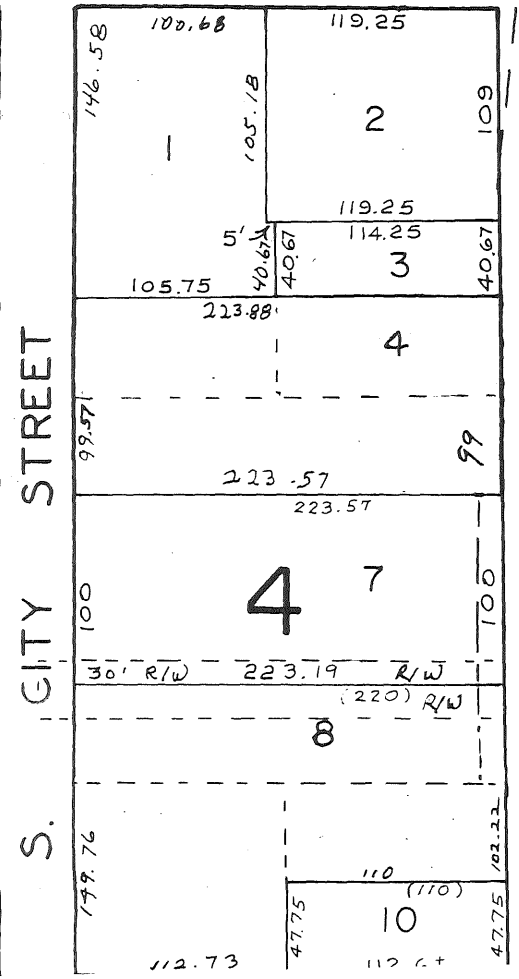
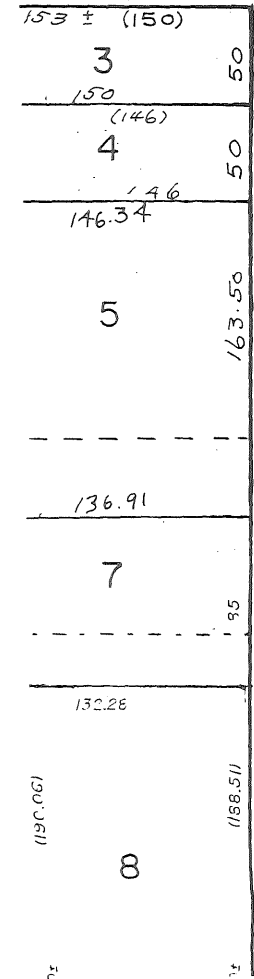
1. Name of property: King Street Overhead Bridge
2. Location of property: Cleveland County, North Carolina
3. Name of photographer: Davyd Foard Hood
4. Date of photographs: 21 October 2003
5. Location of original negatives: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, NC

Photographs

- A. King Street Overhead Bridge, overall view, looking north.
- B. King Street Overhead Bridge, east abutment, looking north/northeast
- C. King Street Overhead Bridge, end pier at the southeast corner of bridge, looking northwest
- D. King Street Overhead Bridge, south elevation of bridge, looking west.
- E. King Street Overhead Bridge, street view with south railing, looking east/northeast.
- F. King Street Overhead Bridge, street view, with William Andrew Mauney houses at 104 (center) and 106 (left) Battleground Avenue in background, and north railing in middle ground, looking northeast.

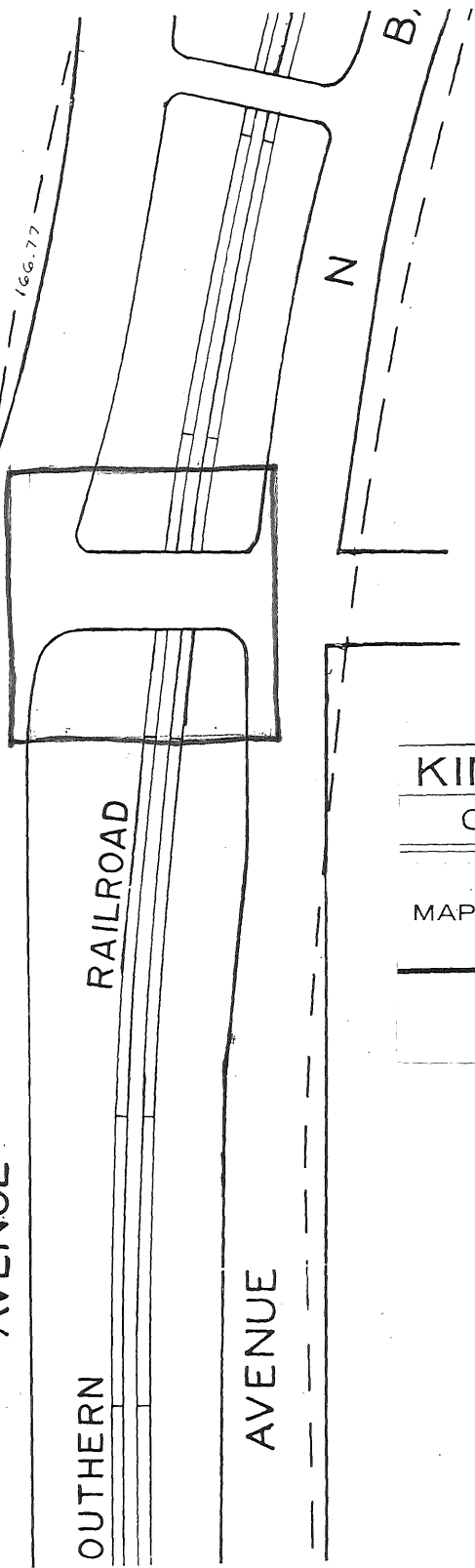


WEST KING STREET



S. CITY STREET

AVENUE



King Street Overhead Bridge
 Kings Mountain
 Cleveland County, NC
 Scale 1" = 100'
 19 July 2004

KINGS MOUNTAIN, N. C.	
CLEVELAND COUNTY, N. C.	
MAP	TWP. NO. 4
	SCALE: 1"=100'
	DATE: JAN. 1967
REV. 1-1-70	7-30-81
" 1-1-76	7-11-84
" 4-3-80	2-27-86
" 10-20-87	

