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ASCE National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark Award Nomination Package for the Portage Lake Bridge MTU-249

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English

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Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country
Historical Collections

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Summary Information

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| Repository: | Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections |
| Title: | ASCE national historic civil engineering landmark award nomination package for the portage lake bridge |
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Historical Note

The Portage Lake Lift Bridge spans Portage Lake and connects the cities of Houghton and Hancock, Michigan. Prior to the lift bridge, both cities were connected by a wooden swing bridge constructed in 1875, which was replaced with a steel swing bridge in 1895. The center section of the steel bridge was damaged by a ship, the Northern Wave, in 1905, and replaced.

Construction on the modern lift bridge began in December 1957 and was completed in 1959. Today, the bridge stands approximately 180 feet high by 500 feet long and includes two decks,

the upper servicing as a four-lane highway, while the lower consists of a single-track railroad that was abandoned in 1982, which is now used by snowmobile traffic in the winter months.

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) is a professional organization founded in 1852, which represents members of the civil engineering profession. The organization includes a historic landmarks division that helps to "recognize historically significant local, national, and international civil engineering projects, structures, and sites."

The lift bridge was designated a state historic landmark in 2018 after servicing the community for nearly 60 years. In April 2019, Michigan Technological University (MTU) faculty member, Dr. Tess Ahlborn, along with former MTU alumni, Michael Prast and Emma Beachy, submitted a nomination package to ASCE to designate the Portage Lake lift bridge as an ASCE national historic civil engineering landmark. In late 2019, ASCE officially named the Portage Lake Bridge to the list of National Historic Civil Engineering Landmarks.

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Scope and Contents

ASCE national historic civil engineering landmark award nomination package, 2019, for the Portage Lake Bridge. The package was compiled by Michael Prast and Emma Beach with Dr. Tess Ahlborn of the Civil, Environmental, and Geospatial Engineering Department at Michigan Technological University. Included are nomination letters from ASCE Michigan section president, Christopher Owen, and the authors to the ASCE History & Heritage Committee; as well as the official nomination form and 10 sections outlining the history of the bridge, its significance, and references. Supporting documentation consists of copies of historic images, documents, correspondence and other material.

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Publication Statement

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Controlled Access Headings

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