



An American Tour: 154



Hastings, Nebraska's *Spiral Bridge*

At Hastings, there is a tall bluff on the north side of the Mississippi River. A conventional bridge would have required a long approach on the southern side. The problem is that a long approach would cause traffic to bypass downtown Hastings. Building a spiral solved the problem—it allowed traffic to enter and exit from Main Street downtown Hastings, yet the approach gained the elevation needed to allow the bridge to be level. When built, this was the only spiral wagon and automobile bridge in the US, and only 2 are known to have been built in Europe. The Spiral Bridge was completed in 1895 as a wagon bridge. The defining spiral ramp on the south end allowed it to be constructed with enough clearance to allow river traffic to pass underneath while insuring that it didn't bypass the main commercial area on 2nd Street by extending too far south .

The old bridge served for many years. But due to neglect, the steel rusted, and towards the end, the bridge could only support 4 tons, which prevented truck traffic from crossing the river. The new bridge was built shortly after WWII. The old bridge was given to the City of Hastings, but they could not afford to maintain it. An effort by the citizens also failed to raise the needed money. As a result, the old bridge was removed in the mid-1950s. As soon as it was torn down, the city realized they had made a mistake. The Spiral Bridge was a symbol of the city for decades. Now days, when someone in Hastings wants to tear down a historic building, the cry goes out to remember what happened to the spiral bridge.

Hastings residents Steve and Sylvia Bauer took that cry to heart. They collected historical buildings from around Hastings and founded the Little Log House Pioneer Village. A star attraction in the village is a replica of the Spiral Bridge, complete with a model of the Mississippi River. [<https://www.johnweeks.com/bridges/pages/b08.html>]

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