

**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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

**1. Name of Property**

Historic name: Mariposa Street Bridge DRAFT

Other names/site number: Swinging Bridge

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

**2. Location**

Street & number: roughly 10-ft. s. of junction of S. Mariposa St. and W. Valley Heart Dr.

City or town: Burbank State: CA County: Los Angeles County

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this    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    meets    does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

   national    statewide   X   local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

  X   A    B    C    D

<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p>
<p>In my opinion, the property <u>  </u> meets <u>  </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Title :</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

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**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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Recreation and Culture/outdoor recreation/pedestrian-equestrian related

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Recreation and Culture/outdoor recreation/pedestrian-equestrian related

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Wire-Cable Suspension Bridge

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: \_\_\_\_\_

Anchor blocks: Concrete

Deck: Wood

Floor beams: Metal

Suspension Cable: Metal

Tower posts: Metal

Walls: Metal

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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**Summary Paragraph**

Constructed in 1939, the Mariposa Street Bridge is a steel suspension bridge with a wood deck that spans the channelized Los Angeles River. The bridge is located entirely within the City of Burbank and links the equestrian neighborhoods of the Burbank and Glendale Ranchos and Los Angeles Equestrian Center on the north side of the river with Griffith Park's equestrian trails at the south side of the river. The bridge retains a high degree of integrity from when it was constructed and is nearly identical to its original appearance.

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**Narrative Description**

Although situated in a dense urban environment, the area immediately surrounding the Mariposa Street Bridge has a pastoral quality. The sound of the SR-134 Ventura Freeway, shielded by a concrete wall a short distance to the south of the bridge, is hardly perceptible through the mostly native chaparral vegetation with several mature pine trees. Hills of Griffith Park, south of the SR-134 Ventura Freeway, dominate the backdrop to the south, enhancing the rural atmosphere within the city. The boundary to the City of Los Angeles is located 10-feet to the east of the south side of the bridge. Northwest of the bridge is a residential neighborhood within the City of Burbank that is zoned to allow horse boarding in back yard stables. Northeast of the bridge are commercial horse stables. Dirt equestrian trails, restricted to horseback riding and hiking, line both sides of the river to the east and west (see maps in Figures A-C).

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Generally oriented in a north-south direction, the Mariposa Street Bridge is a suspension type bridge, 169-feet and 9-inches long by 7-feet wide with three spans. The north approach span is 12-feet long while the south approach span is 24-feet long. The center span, 133-feet and 9-inches, consists of a timber deck on timber stringers. The timber deck is comprised of three layers of pressure-treated Douglas Fir, which were installed in 2001. Steel I-beams extend in regular intervals beyond the deck, creating a regular rhythm across the bridge when viewed from the east and west.

The center span is supported by steel stiffening trusses on either side. Lateral cross bracing at regular intervals connects to stiffeners that, in turn, connect to the steel I-beams. Steel towers frame the approach to the center span from both directions. Two, 2.25-inch diameter, 7x19 galvanized steel suspension cables<sup>1</sup> round the top of the towers are anchored into concrete blocks embedded in the soil on both sides of the bridge. Contemporary signage attached to the lower portion of the towers indicates load limits and prohibition of bicycles and smoking.

The deck of the bridge is covered in approximately 2-inches of fibrous, organic material - a 50/50 mix of recycled wood bark and shredded rubberized material - allowing horses to feel as if they were on a dirt path. Chain link fencing provides additional protection on either side of the bridge.

*Integrity*

The only alteration to the bridge since it was constructed in 1939 was completed in 2001 and included replacing all of the timber stringers and timber decking, as well as the fill surface. Original plans show the timber deck had two layers of 2-inch wood decking while contemporary wood stringers have slightly different dimensions. Despite the changes to the decking which increased safety and ensured continued functionality, the bridge retains a high degree of integrity and appears almost identical to how it appeared when it was constructed (See historic photos in Figures G-I as well as original drawings).

The Mariposa Street Bridge retains integrity of location as it has not been moved. In addition, the Mariposa Street Bridge retains integrity of setting. Despite its location within a dense urban environment, the setting of the Mariposa Street Bridge continues to be pastoral. Constructed to allow equestrians to cross the newly channelized Los Angeles River, the bridge links bridle trails in Griffith Park on the south side of the River with stables and other equestrian-related properties on the north side of the River. Even though the SR-134 Ventura Freeway is located a short distance to the south of the river, the freeway is not visible and hardly audible due to a barrier wall and dense vegetation.

Furthermore, even though the wood decking and fill have been replaced, the Mariposa Street Bridge retains a high degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The bridge retains integrity of design as it clearly exhibits its form as a suspension bridge with its steel stiffening truss and steel cable. In addition, the wood decking is the only material that has been replaced with one that is similar but provides additional strengthening and therefore retains

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<sup>1</sup> A 7x19 steel cable indicates that the cable is made of 7 strands with 19 wires in each strand.

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integrity of materials. Because the Mariposa Street Bridge retains integrity of design and materials, it also retains integrity of workmanship. Finally, the Mariposa Street Bridge retains integrity of feeling and association. It literally bridges the equestrian areas on the north side of the bridge with the trails in Griffith Park on the south side of the bridge and continues to serve the function and equestrian audience for which it was designed and constructed.

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## 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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Community Planning and Development

**Period of Significance**

1939-1963

**Significant Dates**

1939 - construction

1940 – bridge deeded to City of Burbank

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Los Angeles County Flood Control District

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Designed for conveyance of horses and people, the Mariposa Street Bridge is significant for its association with the equestrian history of Los Angeles County. Situated at the nexus of the cities of Glendale, Burbank, and Los Angeles, the Mariposa Street Bridge spans a channelized portion of the Los Angeles River, leading from a unique commercial-equestrian area historically known as the Riverbottom, a unique residential and commercial equestrian area that includes the cities of Burbank (Burbank Rancho) and Glendale, as well as the Los Angeles Equestrian Center, into Griffith Park. The Riverbottom has long provided equestrian support services like stables, feed



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stores, horse rentals, and riding academies. Griffith Park includes over fifty miles of bridle trails. The Mariposa Street Bridge has been in continuous use since its erection in 1939. It is an essential point of conveyance, and the only historic bridge providing equestrian access over the Los Angeles River into Griffith Park. The bridge supports the ongoing, historic equestrian use of the neighborhood and equestrian community more generally. Retaining a high degree of integrity to convey its significance from its date of construction, 1939, the Mariposa Street Bridge appears eligible for the National Register under Criterion A. Its period of significance begins with construction in 1939, extending through 1963, a date connected with a decline in the percentage of Western films and television shows shot on nearby movie ranches, movie studios, and in Griffith Park that were made possible by the Mariposa Street Bridge spanning the Los Angeles River.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **History of the Mariposa Street Bridge**

The Mariposa Street Bridge was constructed in response to flood-control work and channelization of the Los Angeles River. In the 1930s, destructive flooding of the river prompted a request for federal assistance, with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ultimately taking the lead in channelizing the waterway. Work on channelizing the river began in 1938 and continued for decades, completed in 1960. By that time, over 50 miles of waterway had been channelized.<sup>2</sup> While channelization prevented widespread flooding, channelization “eliminated crossings formerly used by riders,” as “there was no way for horsemen north of the river to reach the Griffith Park bridle paths just across the stream.”<sup>3</sup> One 1938 article explains the situation:

Several weeks ago riders and hikers accustomed to using the bridle trails and paths of Griffith Park found themselves stranded on the north banks of the river by flood-control work. Walls of concrete and mountainous piles of dirt scooped from the river bed cut off Griffith Park approaches, except over a heavily traveled automobile bridge.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of the sudden and prohibitive access problem, a group of local equestrians formed a committee to request a new equestrian-pedestrian bridge be built over the river so Burbank and Glendale equestrians could access Griffith Park. This group was led by Attorney Paul Palmer and included Mrs. William E. Kneen, J. Robert Dollard, William Husted, William Klenck and Edward Houston.<sup>5</sup>

In 1938, the Burbank City Council voted on a resolution to construct the requested bridge. At a Council meeting, a letter of support penned by actor and singing cowboy Gene Autrey was read, along with thousands of names presented on a petition. The Council passed a resolution

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<sup>2</sup> Los Angeles County, Department of Public Works, “History of the Los Angeles River,” available <https://ladpw.org/wmd/watershed/LA/History.cfm>.

<sup>3</sup> “Equestrian Span Across River Will Be Started,” *Hollywood Citizen-News*, December 29, 1938, 2.

<sup>4</sup> “Riders Celebrate Approval of New Equestrian Bridge,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> “Riders Celebrate Approval of New Equestrian Bridge,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1938.

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requesting the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and United States Engineers “construct a crossing which could be used by horsemen and pedestrians in order to gain entrance to Griffith Park.”<sup>6</sup> The Board of Supervisors then instructed C.H. Howell, Chief Engineer of the County Flood Control District, to plan for a \$13,000 steel suspension bridge. Money would be taken from “county right of way funds.”<sup>7</sup>

In December of 1938 it was announced that construction of the bridge over the Los Angeles River at Mariposa Street would begin, with the County Flood Control District overseeing the project. In January of 1939, a bid for \$8,060 by the Standard Construction Company of Eagle Rock was accepted.<sup>8</sup> It was planned that the new crossing would allow “hikers and horseback riders from Burbank and Glendale access to the miles of bridle trails and recreation grounds in Griffith Park.”<sup>9</sup> Several accounts differ of the final cost of the bridge, varying between \$12,000 and \$13,000.<sup>10</sup>

The new bridge was soon completed and opened to much fanfare in a dedication event on March 18, 1939.<sup>11</sup> Several thousand people attended the ceremony run by Roger Jessup, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, and the bridge was presented to “outdoor-minded citizens of Los Angeles, Glendale and Burbank,” with riders “starting at Los Feliz Blvd. and Riverside Drive meet a mounted escort from Burbank on the bridge.”<sup>12</sup> Walter Mendenhall, Van Nuys publisher and a member of the Los Angeles Planning Commission, and Mayor Frank C. Tillson of Burbank were present to “accept the span on behalf of the cities.”<sup>13</sup> There was a flag ceremony by Burbank Legionnaires and a performance by the Los Angeles High School Boys’ Band.<sup>14</sup> Paula Palmer and Helen Griffith were among the first riders to cross.<sup>15</sup> One article heralded the bridge as “a surrealistic creation of gleaming aluminum-coated bars and metal netting, anchored to the river banks with unconcealed spun cables...”<sup>16</sup>

*Los Angeles River*

The Los Angeles River is a 51-mile flood control channel passing through 17 cities, starting in Canoga Park and ending in Long Beach where it discharges into the San Pedro Bay.<sup>17</sup> With the exception of a few areas, the river is almost entirely lined with concrete.<sup>18</sup> The U.S. Army Corps

<sup>6</sup> “Gene Autry for River Bridge,” *Hollywood Citizen-News*, August 25, 1938, 2.

<sup>7</sup> “Riders Celebrate Approval of New Equestrian Bridge,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1938.

<sup>8</sup> “Bid for Equestrian Span Approved by Co. Board,” *Hollywood Citizen-News*, January 3, 1939, 6.

<sup>9</sup> “Burbank to Build Equestrian Bridge,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 1939, 47.

<sup>10</sup> “Equestrian Bridge Ready,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1939, 12.

<sup>11</sup> “Bridge Dedicated to Los Angeles and Suburbs,” *Van Nuys News*, March 20, 1939, 1.

<sup>12</sup> “Equestrian Bridge Ready,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1939, 12.

<sup>13</sup> “Riders of Three Cities Dedicate New River Span,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1939, 30.

<sup>14</sup> “Riders of Three Cities Dedicate New River Span,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1939, 30.

<sup>15</sup> “Equestrian Bridge Opened to Griffith Park Trails,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1939, 30.

Helen Griffith was the granddaughter of Griffith J. Griffith, who donated land for Griffith Park to the City of Los Angeles

<sup>16</sup> “Riders of Three Cities Dedicate New River Span,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1939, 30.

<sup>17</sup> Emily Guerin, “LA Explained: The Los Angeles River,” *LAist*, June 22, 2018,

<https://laist.com/news/climate-environment/los-angeles-river-explained>.

<sup>18</sup> The Corps stopped removing sediment and vegetation in the 1980s due to funding issues and now focuses on “removing non-native vegetation using both herbicide and mechanical means.”

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of Engineers operates and maintains 22.5 miles of the Los Angeles River Channel spanning from Lankershim Boulevard in North Hollywood to Stuart and Grey Road in Downey, including the location under the Swinging Bridge. Ownership of the channel is multi-fold, including the County and City of Los Angeles, as well as private landowners.<sup>19</sup>

The City of Los Angeles grew up along the once free-flowing river, though it caused substantial flooding. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the river dramatically changed course multiple times, with the outflow moving from Long Beach to the Ballona Creek wetlands in 1815 and back to the original course in 1825,<sup>20</sup> shifting the river by 90 degrees and moving it 20 miles south.<sup>21</sup> Attempts were made at channelization in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century though flooding continued to be a big problem with a major flooding event in 1914. The Los Angeles Flood Control District was formed in 1915 in response. Dams were built in 1917 and 1924 though local funding to fully manage the destructive and costly flooding was lacking. In the 1930s, major flooding events proved costly and deadly.<sup>22</sup> In 1934, flooding in La Crescenta killed forty people and destroyed 483 homes; in 1938, flooding killed 113 people and resulted in \$45 million in damage. In response, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers took the lead in channelizing the waterway.

The river was found eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by the Corps in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), as part of a recent *Supplemental Environmental Assessment*. The channel was found eligible under Criterion A “for its significant association with the development of a comprehensive flood risk management program within Los Angeles County,” and under Criterion C “for its role in the development of the metropolitan area and as the first implementation of a fully concrete lined waterway engineered to address the unique conditions and environmental challenges of the locale and for its role as a prototype for flood control channels in the region.”<sup>23</sup>

### *Western Movies and Television Shows*

The Mariposa Street Bridge has played an essential role in the making of Western-genre movies and television shows, which were commonly shot on nearby movie ranches, movie studios, and in Griffith Park – the most popular place to film in Los Angeles County. As a critical point of conveyance, the Mariposa Street Bridge enabled access from the stables, horse rentals, riding academies, and skilled horsemen in the Riverbottom neighborhood into Griffith Park. Western-genre films have had profound influence on American culture nation-wide; their filming in the areas surrounding the Riverbottom is an essential aspect of the history of the genre.

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, “Los Angeles River,” <https://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Asset-Management/Los-Angeles-River/>.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, “Los Angeles River,” <https://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Asset-Management/Los-Angeles-River/>.

<sup>20</sup> “Flood Controls,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 1995, 30.

<sup>21</sup> “Forget Earthquake, Think Flood: Why Los Angeles Is Hostage to an Ecology of Denial,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 15, 1999, 272.

<sup>22</sup> Los Angeles County, Department of Public Works, “History of the Los Angeles River,” available <https://ladpw.org/wmd/watershed/LA/History.cfm>.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Project, Reach 1 Phase A, Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment*, February 2023, 13.

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The significance of Western-genre films and television shows in American culture cannot be understated. Author Stuart Miller summarizes this fact in his recent article on the continuing importance of the genre:<sup>24</sup>

The western has been a movie staple since the pioneering 1903 film, *The Great Train Robbery*. It became the dominant genre, especially after the second world war, creating an image – John Wayne – of rugged American self-reliance and manliness. From 1910 through 1960, approximately a quarter of all films featured hats and horses and the television landscape was similarly populated with cowboys.

Miller quotes Syracuse University television scholar Robert Thompson, who emphasizes the continuing primacy of the genre in our culture: “The western has always been the American epic... It’s exciting and violent and huge. We don’t have a single text like *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey* but the western is our story.”<sup>25</sup>

Frequently filmed in the San Fernando Valley, immortalizing “the former ranches of the 19<sup>th</sup> century” on film,<sup>26</sup> Western movies and television shows were often shot utilizing the horse stables, riding academies, and other resources of the Riverbottom commercial-equestrian neighborhood. The significance of this area for filming dates to 1911, when the first studio in Hollywood, the Nestor Film Company, was established. Nestor Film Company utilized the Providencia Ranch, which later became Lasky Studios and is now Forest Lawn Memorial Park, as its “principal location for filming westerns.” This location is just southwest of the Riverbottom, accessible via the Mariposa Street Bridge and Griffith Park bridle trails. Other significant movie ranches were established nearby, with the filming of Westerns on these properties common. The Republic Studios and CBS Studio Center, active beginning in 1935 and continuing for decades, was located just east of the Riverbottom along the Los Angeles River. This location featured a movie set known as the CBS Western Town, “used for famous television shows such as *Zane Grey Theatre*, *The Rifleman*, *Wanted Dead or Alive*, *Gunsmoke*, *Rawhide*, *The Big Valley*, and *Wild Wild West*.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, Universal Studios had a large ranch property nearby, in the foothills of Mt. Hollywood spanning the Los Angeles River near Barham Boulevard.<sup>28</sup> Early work of Universal Studios included Westerns starring prolific actor Harry Carey, known for his work in Western films. Warner Brothers Studios, founded in 1912, moved nearby in 1929, with their property located immediately north of the Los Angeles River near Barham Boulevard.<sup>29</sup> The Riverbottom was at the geographic center of these movie ranches, making it an important place for riding academies, horse stables, and related needs of studio

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<sup>24</sup> Stuart Miller, “The American Epic: Hollywood’s Enduring Love for the Western,” *The Guardian*, October 21, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/oct/21/western-films-hollywood-enduring-genre>.

<sup>25</sup> Stuart Miller, “The American Epic: Hollywood’s Enduring Love for the Western,” *The Guardian*, October 21, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/oct/21/western-films-hollywood-enduring-genre>.

<sup>26</sup> Marc Wanamaker, *Images of America: San Fernando Valley*, (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 113.

<sup>27</sup> Wanamaker, 104-105.

<sup>28</sup> Wanamaker, 107.

<sup>29</sup> Wanamaker, 101.

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horses and movie stuntmen. Historian and horseman Don Burt writes about life in the area in the 1930s:

In those days the River Bottom housed many famous horses and horsemen and became the learning area and watering hole for lots of the Hollywood stars of the era – especially those who made Westerns. I rode across that bridge for many years with Jocko Mahoney (The Range Rider), Wild Bill Elliott (Red Ryder...), Hoot Gibson (who had a club called The Painted Post Saloon), and Jerry Ambler (champion bronc rider who owned the Amble Inn)...<sup>30</sup>

As summarized by Hollywood historian Marc Wanamaker, “From then on, the Valley became Hollywood’s backlot.”<sup>31</sup> There were numerous Westerns filmed in Griffith Park. Famed Western actor John Wayne “grew up across the river from Griffith Park in Glendale,” and could often be found filming in Griffith Park beginning in 1933.<sup>32</sup> Over several decades, from the 1930s through the 1960s, Griffith Park became the setting for numerous Westerns including: *The Great Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok* (1938), *Wolf Call* (1939), *The Leather Burners* (1943), *Split Second* (1952), *Pirates of Monterey* (1947), *Hellgate* (1952), *Thunder Pass* (1954), *Badlands of Montana* (1957), *Gun Glory* (1957), *Return to Warbow* (1958), *Ride the High Country* (1962), and *The Gun Hawk* (1963).<sup>33</sup> In addition, numerous non-Western films involving horses were also filmed in Griffith Park including: the Three Stooges film, *Ants in the Pantry* (1934), which involved “an ill-advised foxhunt on a Griffith Park bridle path.” Other Western films shot in Griffith Park include *Manhattan Love Song* (1934), which involved a ride on the bridle trails; and *Julius Caesar* (1953), which saw the “Roman legions storm through Bronson Canyon.”<sup>34</sup> According to a recent analysis, the park is still the most popular place to film in Los Angeles County, boasting 341 days of production in 2010.<sup>35</sup>

## Equestrians in Los Angeles County

### *Riverbottom*<sup>36</sup>

The Riverbottom has served local equestrians since the early 1900s. Riding academies, schools for teaching horsemanship, were established in this location by the 1920s. Stables, as well as restaurants, feed stores, and related properties service local equestrians. The Riverbottom provides linkages to surrounding bridle trails for equestrians living in the adjacent “Riverside Rancho” neighborhood and the Mariposa Street Bridge is one such linkage. Constructed when

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<sup>30</sup> Don Burt, *Horses & Other Heroes: Recollections and Reflections of a Life with Horses*, (Connecticut: The Lyons Press, 2002), 133.

<sup>31</sup> Wanamaker, 113.

<sup>32</sup> E.J. Stephens and Marc Wanamaker, *Images of America: Griffith Park*, (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 78.

<sup>33</sup> Stephens and Wanamaker, 83-125.

<sup>34</sup> Stephens and Wanamaker, 83-125.

<sup>35</sup> Stephens and Wanamaker, 127.

<sup>36</sup> The Riverbottom is also referred to as the River Bottom.

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the Riverbottom was at its height of use for riding academies and equestrian uses, the bridge has long been a central component of the local equestrian ecosystem.

Located in close proximity to Griffith Park, the Riverbottom is a critical service area for equestrians as well as a point of access to the park's extensive bridle trail system. Heralding the significance of this area in California's horse culture, one 1940 *Los Angeles Times* article declared,

California has more horse-flesh and more horse people than any place in the country outside of Kentucky.... And the holy ground, the mystic Mecca, the sanctified gathering place for the initiate is out Griffith Park way, north of Los Feliz Blvd., along the banks of that torrential stream known as the Los Angeles River.<sup>37</sup>

The Mariposa Street Bridge is located in this "mystic Mecca," the Riverbottom, which spans areas of three cities: Glendale, Burbank and Los Angeles. Both Glendale and Burbank have since zoned the area specifically for equestrian uses. The larger neighborhood that includes portions of Burbank and Los Angeles not only includes commercial-equestrian properties, but also residential-equestrian properties. Many of the homes were constructed in the late 1930s through the mid-1950s, reaching their height of popularity in the 1940s. According to historian and horseman Don Burt, the Riverbottom was "the horse capital of the western United States at that time."<sup>38</sup> Riding academies were first established in the area in the early 1920s; in the 1940s, the number of local riding academies peaked with five in Glendale and eight in Burbank.

As the previously quoted 1940 *Los Angeles Times* article aptly stated,

The temples of the cult are the riding academies. Follow the river from Los Feliz north and west as it curves around Griffith Park to Warner Bros. studio. The stables are thick as ticks and within rifle range of the river. The geographical center of this horsy holiness is Bette Davis' home, situated where the river bends to the west beyond the Grand Central airport. Here the horse is supreme. Even the homes of the district are known as Riverside ranchos. And every one of them has a stable for a horse or two just as surely as a ship has a rudder.<sup>39</sup>

### *Riverside Rancho*

The Riverside Rancho, as the residential neighborhoods were frequently referred to by real estate promotion, also referred to as the Rancho Neighborhood, is the broad residential-equestrian neighborhood within the cities of Burbank and Glendale that is northeast and northwest of the Mariposa Street Bridge. This area is notable for its historic "semi-rural" design with stables in the backyards of houses.<sup>40</sup> Situated on the rim of Griffith Park, property owners have close access to the equestrian trail system. It appears that while some properties were separately constructed in this area, other properties were part of a planned development referred to as the

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<sup>37</sup> "Hoss Auction," *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1940, H12.

<sup>38</sup> "Ingenuity and Service," *America's Horse*, July/August 2003, 10.

<sup>39</sup> "Hoss Auction," *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1940, H12.

<sup>40</sup> "Small-Farms' Lure Told," *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1937, E1.

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“Riverside Ranchos,” originally established beginning in the 1930s by the Fritz B. Burns Company and described at the time as an “urban ranch.”<sup>41</sup> These properties were especially unique at the time for their accommodation of the horse and connectivity to the local bridle trail system. As noted by historian and horseman Don Burt, “At one time, this area of Burbank was the focal point and home to nearly all of the famous horses and horsemen from the 1930s on.”<sup>42</sup> Burt goes on to describe the uniqueness of the housing in the area, stating, “My family bought their first stable there when I was about five or six years old... During that time, there was a real estate development called Riverside Ranchos. If you bought a house, they gave you a horse, and to this day, instead of garages or swimming pools, there is a stable in every backyard on a lot consisting of 50 x 100 feet.”<sup>43</sup> Burt is perhaps most poignant in his summary of the charmed local culture: “One of the most significant products generated from this area was the people. Those who grew up there or used it as a layover or watering hole have maintained a lifelong camaraderie. Many to this day stay in touch, from trainers, movie stars, and jockeys to business tycoons and champion cowboys. Horses, movies, and industry have a shared lifestyle, a common thread woven between glamour and nostalgia...”<sup>44</sup>

Early advertisements for homes in the Riverside Rancho focused on the primacy of equestrian amenities, noting a certain home was “right in the heart of horse district with 3,200 acres of park to ride in.”<sup>45</sup> A 1949 advertisement even stated, “Corral? Of course. Why live in Riverside Ranchos if one is not an addict of spur and saddle!”<sup>46</sup> Articles about the development described the charms of “semi-rural” living in this “island of peace and quiet,”<sup>47</sup> noting, “the semi-rural home is part and parcel of our community planning,” and that Los Angeles County was “ideally situated for this half-city, half-country living.”<sup>48</sup> Playing on the romanticized notions of life in the American West, one 1937 advertisement for the Riverside Ranchos stated, “Have you seen Ranch O’Romance Number Two?”<sup>49</sup> The Riverside Ranchos featured several demonstration homes described as “modern adobes.”<sup>50</sup> One such house, described as a “100-Year Home” that was “built to last until 2037,”<sup>51</sup> was shown as part of an exhibit focused on its “latest example of groutlock brick masonry construction.”<sup>52</sup>

The residences in the Riverside Rancho continued to be used in combination with equestrian uses over the ensuing decades. In the late 1970s, approximately 3,500 horses resided in the Riverside

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<sup>41</sup> Jean Burden, “The House Moved Out to the Horse,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 6, 1949, H8.

<sup>42</sup> Burt, 132.

<sup>43</sup> Burt, 132.

<sup>44</sup> Burt, 118.

<sup>45</sup> “Classified Ad 8 – No Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 1947, C10.

<sup>46</sup> Jean Burden, “The House Moved Out to the Horse,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 6, 1949, H8.

<sup>47</sup> Jean Burden, “The House Moved Out to the Horse,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 6, 1949, H8.

<sup>48</sup> “Small-Farms’ Lure Told,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1937, E1.

<sup>49</sup> Advertisement was for the property located at 1712 Riverside Drive, Burbank.

“Display Ad 23 – No Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 19, 1937, A7.

<sup>50</sup> “Display Ad 13 – No Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 1938, 14.

<sup>51</sup> “The Homebuilder’s Department: House Design Has Strength,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 1937,

F4.

<sup>52</sup> The address of this home was not given, though its location was described as being in “Riverside Ranchos, adjoining Griffith Park, on Riverside Drive.”

“Many Visitors View Model Residence,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 1937, F3.

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Rancho area of Burbank and Glendale, and most houses often came with stables in the backyards.<sup>53</sup> Advertisements from the 1970s mentioned stables in backyards and proximity to horse trails as an important feature of the properties.<sup>54</sup> As late as 1978, a *Los Angeles Times* article described the significance of the local community and its adjacency to Griffith Park: “The rancho area, which straddles the southern borders of Glendale and Burbank, is situated at the head of the equestrian trails which lead under the Ventura Freeway into Griffith Park. In addition to the rental and boarding stables in the area, nearby homes are zoned for single-family residences with horses. Thus, rancho houses, which sell at premium prices, often come with a stable in the backyard.”<sup>55</sup>

### *Los Angeles Equestrian Center*

Formal plans to design and construct the Los Angeles Equestrian Center in the north part of Griffith Park were discussed in the late 1940s. Planning continued for decades, documented by a conceptual drawing from 1960<sup>56</sup> and in the 1968 Griffith Park Master Plan.<sup>57</sup> In 1966, Mayor of Los Angeles Sam Yorty announced the development would be “one of the greatest equestrian show places in the world.”<sup>58</sup> While many parts of the Griffith Park Master Plan were contested at the time, “The one major part of the plan that almost no one objected to – the proposed Equestrian Center – continued to move forward.”<sup>59</sup> Despite delays, the center was constructed and the first horse show was held in June 1982.<sup>60</sup> While the center was a popular place for a variety of horse-related and other social activities, it had financial problems immediately. Due to massive financial debt, the property was leased in 1990 by Del Rey Properties, a Burbank-based company, which took over operations, though the property remained part of Griffith Park, owned by the City of Los Angeles.

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<sup>53</sup> “Riverside Rancho Residents Vow to Resist Changes in Horse-Oriented Community,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1978, GB6.

<sup>54</sup> “Classified Ad 86 – No Title,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 1974, K73.

<sup>55</sup> “Riverside Rancho Residents Vow to Resist Changes in Horse-Oriented Community,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1978, GB6.

<sup>56</sup> Mike Eberts, *Griffith Park: A Centennial History*, (Los Angeles: The Historical Society of Southern California, 1996), 366.

<sup>57</sup> Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, *Griffith Park Master Plan*, December 19, 1968.

<sup>58</sup> Eberts, 368.

<sup>59</sup> Eberts, 237.

<sup>60</sup> Eberts, 369.



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*Griffith Park*

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Donated to the City of Los Angeles in 1896, Griffith Park was an essential early location for bridle trails in Los Angeles. Construction of trails began in the early 1900s. In 1911, 18,930 feet (or 3.5 miles) of bridle trails were constructed in the park.<sup>61</sup> By the 1920s, Griffith Park had become “a favored spot for equestrians,”<sup>62</sup> and “spurred the development of equestrian land uses in surrounding areas.”<sup>63</sup> Mike Eberts’ *Griffith Park: A Centennial History* establishes the important relationship between the Griffith Park bridle trails and the resources of the nearby Riverbottom area in the 1920s:

Busy businessmen particularly appreciated the park’s close-in wilderness because it gave them a place to ride on weekday mornings before work. By fall 1924, a group of men prominent in the business, professional and social life of the region fell into an informal ritual. After their Friday morning rides, they’d eat breakfast in the park, gathering around a chuckwagon operated as a sideline by local banker Marco Hellman. Afterward, most would ride back to the Griffith Park Riding Academy on Riverside Drive.<sup>64</sup>

Signaling the ongoing importance of horses in the local community, a massive bridle trail system with over fifty miles of trails was established in Griffith Park beginning in the 1930s. This work was started in order to help put people back to work during the Great Depression. In 1931, the Los Angeles City Council passed a bond for public improvements that enabled construction of 13 miles of the park’s bridle trail system.<sup>65</sup> In 1939, landscape architect Ralph D. Cornell was hired to design a master plan for the park. Eberts writes:

Cornell didn’t forget the park’s equestrians. He proposed a horse entrance paralleling Crystal Springs Drive. He suggested a half-mile-long path for carriages and sulkies along with more conventional equestrians. The path was designed to allow equestrians to enter the park from the stables near its south end without having to mingle with automobile traffic...<sup>66</sup>

A central trail leading from what is now Allen Avenue served as a feeder from the local equestrian commercial and residential areas of Glendale and Burbank into Griffith Park. However, access for equestrians has required ongoing work. As noted above, after the Los Angeles River along the Riverbottom was channelized due to constant problems with flooding, the Mariposa Street Bridge was subsequently constructed over the channelized river to allow continued access to the park. In 1954, patronage of the Griffith Park bridle paths was 625,520 during that single year.<sup>67</sup> After years of controversy, in 1955-1957, the I-5 Freeway was

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<sup>61</sup> ICF Jones & Stokes, “Landscape Elements of Griffith Park,” as requested by the Cultural Heritage Commission and Office of Historic Resources of the City of Los Angeles, October 20, 2008, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Mike Eberts, *Griffith Park: A Centennial History*, Los Angeles: The Historical Society of Southern California, 1996, 146.

<sup>63</sup> “Atwater Village Equestrian Historic District,” SurveyLA, Northeast Los Angeles, Historic Districts, Planning Districts, and Multiple-Property Resources, prepared for City of Los Angeles, February 6, 2017, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Eberts, 146.

<sup>65</sup> Eberts, 152.

<sup>66</sup> Eberts, 165.

<sup>67</sup> Eberts, 230.

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constructed in Griffith Park, alongside the channelized river.<sup>68</sup> Griffith Park continues to be of central importance to neighboring equestrian communities, providing invaluable space for horses to exercise. Current maps of Griffith Park show proximity of the Mariposa Street Bridge, reinforcing its crucial role in connecting all of these hives of equestrian activity—Riverbottom, Riverside Ranchos, the Equestrian Center, and Griffith Park (See Figures A-G).

The importance of equestrian trails in Griffith Park is emphasized in the Los Angeles Municipal Code as well as documents related to the City of Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument (HCM) designation of the park.<sup>69</sup> Specifically, Section 63.44 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code includes bridal paths within the definition of a park. The Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission required a study of the park's landscape, including bridle trails. Consulting firm ICF Jones and Stokes prepared a supplemental document to the HCM nomination called "Landscape Elements of Griffith Park."<sup>70</sup> In this report, bridle trails are identified as a "component feature" of Griffith Park.<sup>71</sup> The report notes, "One of the primary character-defining features within the wilderness area is the presence of foot and bridle trails, in addition to the vistas that are associated to them... Throughout the wilderness, hiking and equestrian activity are the predominant activities."<sup>72</sup> Griffith Park was designated as HCM No. 942 in 2009.

Significant under criterion A, the Mariposa Street Bridge is vital to equestrian activity in Los Angeles, not only allowing passage of horses and riders across the Los Angeles River from the Riverbottom, Riverside Rancho, and Equestrian Center into Griffith Park, but also by facilitating the making of Western films in the area. Constructed in response to channelization of the Los Angeles River in this area in 1939, the bridge is an essential, historic linkage between the two sides of the river. The bridge has allowed for production of Western films to be shot nearby, which have become an archetypal American genre.

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<sup>68</sup> Eberts, 253.

<sup>69</sup> Los Angeles Municipal Code §63.4; Los Angeles Department of City Planning, "Historic Cultural Monument Application for Griffith Park," Recommendation Report to the Cultural Heritage Commission, CHC-2008-2724-HCM, October 30, 2008, 9.

<sup>70</sup> ICF Jones & Stokes, "Landscape Elements of Griffith Park," as requested by the Cultural Heritage Commission and Office of Historic Resources of the City of Los Angeles, October 20, 2008, 1.

<sup>71</sup> ICF Jones & Stokes, "Landscape Elements of Griffith Park," 1.

<sup>72</sup> ICF Jones & Stokes, "Landscape Elements of Griffith Park," 21.

Mariposa Street Bridge  
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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

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**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Mariposa Street Bridge  
Name of Property

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**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 34.155507 | Longitude: -118.312659 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927    or     NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

As the Mariposa Street Bridge does not have an Assessor Parcel Number, the boundaries of the property include all portions of the bridge within the City of Burbank, from its north approach, which is approximately 15-feet south of the intersection of West Valley Heart Drive and South Mariposa Street, to its south approach, which is approximately 10-feet northwest of the boundary between the City of Los Angeles and the City of Burbank.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes all portions of the bridge that are associated with the structure.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jenna Snow and Kathryn McGee  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number: 14900 Magnolia Blvd., P.O. Box 5201  
city or town: Sherman Oaks state: CA zip code: 91413  
e-mail: jenna@preserving buildings.com  
telephone: 323-317-3297  
date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Current Map of Griffith Park (Figures A-B)

Historic Aerial Photographs (Figures C-F)

Historic Photographs (Figures G-K)

Original Drawings (Figures L-P)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Mariposa Street Bridge

City or Vicinity: Burbank

County: Los Angeles State: CA

Photographer: Jenna Snow and Kathryn McGee

Date Photographed: February 9, 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

CA\_Los AngelesCO\_MariposaStreetBridge\_001  
West side of bridge from north riverbank, view southeast

CA\_Los AngelesCO\_MariposaStreetBridge\_002  
West side of bridge from north riverbank, view southeast

CA\_Los AngelesCO\_MariposaStreetBridge\_003  
East side of bridge from north riverbank, view southwest

CA\_Los AngelesCO\_MariposaStreetBridge\_004  
East side of bridge from north riverbank, view southwest

CA\_Los AngelesCO\_MariposaStreetBridge\_005  
Bridge from north riverbank, north approach and north tower, view southeast

CA\_Los AngelesCO\_MariposaStreetBridge\_006  
Detail of anchor

CA\_Los AngelesCO\_MariposaStreetBridge\_007  
East side of bridge from south riverbank, view northeast

CA\_Los AngelesCO\_MariposaStreetBridge\_008  
East side of bridge from south riverbank, view northeast

CA\_Los AngelesCO\_MariposaStreetBridge\_009  
East side of bridge from south riverbank, view northwest

CA\_Los AngelesCO\_MariposaStreetBridge\_0010  
South approach from south riverbank, view northeast



Mariposa Street Bridge  
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CA\_Los AngelesCO\_MariposaStreetBridge\_0011  
South approach from south riverbank, view north

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.