

Firm: Pueblo Bridge Company
Other Firm Names: Bullen Bridge Company
Office Location: Pueblo
Operating Dates: 1884-1937
Principals: Joseph A. Bullen
Fredrick H. Bullen
Joseph A. Bullen, Jr.

Information

Joseph A. Bullen was born in Maine and first came west during the California gold rush of 1849. He returned to the East, moving to St. Paul, Minnesota, where he worked as a surveyor and construction supervisor. Around 1873, the Dallas and Wichita Railroad employed Bullen as general superintendent, but the Panic of 1873 forced the closure of the line after only 40 miles of track had been laid. After moving to Leavenworth, he began building a few modest wagon bridges in the eastern part of the state in 1875. As settlement expanded westward so did his business. In 1884 he formed the Bullen Bridge Company, marking an expansion into other states, including Colorado. Three years later Bullen erected the first iron bridge in Pueblo. He relocated his business to the Colorado city in 1892. From its Colorado base the company began building steel highway bridges throughout the West and Midwest. The Bullen Bridge Company built the first steel bridge over the Willamette River in Oregon in 1893. Soon afterward the company opened a west coast office in Portland.

After Joseph Bullen's death around 1900, his son, Fredrick H. Bullen, assumed control of the company. Fred Bullen was born in 1867 in Leavenworth, Kansas, and had worked for his father designing and erecting trusses in the 1880s and 1890s. One of the first things that he did was to change the name of the company to the Pueblo Bridge Company, naming himself as president and H.L. Hollister as secretary. Pueblo Bridge continued at the same pace as its predecessor, putting up steel trusses at a prodigious rate across the West. Fred's son, named Joseph A. Bullen after his grandfather, was born in Pueblo in 1896 and, like his father, began working for the company. In 1913 the younger Bullen opened the Fountain Sand and Gravel Company at the same time the Pueblo Bridge Company was awarded the contract for a major three-span bridge over the Arkansas River at Avondale. In the 1930s, Joseph held the position of secretary and treasurer of the Pueblo Bridge Co.

Although the Bullens previously built reinforced concrete arches using Daniel Luten's patented design as early as the 1907 F Street Bridge in Salida (National Register), and had consulted with the inventor himself in Pueblo, they were primarily steel truss builders. This new diversification marked the beginning of a subsidiary branch for the company. While Fred dealt primarily with the steel construction, Joseph managed the construction of the arches, and the Pueblo Bridge Company was busier than ever during the 1910s. Both father and son frequently visited with city and county officials around the state, consulting on bridge design and construction and praising the values of the Luten arch. As a result many Luten examples, ranging in span from 54 feet to 100 feet and almost all constructed by Pueblo, are still functioning in the state. The Bullens' hold on bridge building in Colorado was so absolute that in some regions of the state—primarily the south and the Arkansas River Valley—they were virtually the only contractors to put up major spans from 1890 through the 1910s. In 2000, over two dozen Bullen-built bridges remained standing in Colorado, including the Fourth Street Bridge in Cañon City, the oldest Bullen structure in the state; the Butte Valley Bridge in Huerfano County; the Prowers Bridge in Bent County; the Wolcott Bridge in Eagle County; the Apishapa Bridge in Otero County; and the three Beulah Bridges in Pueblo County.

Firm history from Clayton B. Fraser, *Highway Bridges of Colorado*

Credited Projects (partial list)

Project or Development	Location	Site Number	Date*	Status
Fourth Street	Cañon City	5FN.104	1891	Relocated to park in 2004
Prowers Bridge	County Road 34 over Arkansas River, Prowers vicinity	5BN.374	1902	National Register
F Street Bridge	F St. over Arkansas River, Salida	5CF.406.75	1907	National Register
Brown's Canyon Bridge	County Road 191 Salida vicinity	5CF.1058	1908	Extant
Apishapa Bridge	County Road HH.5 Otero County	5OT.806	1911	Extant
Avondale Bridge (National Register removal pending)	County Road 237 over Arkansas River Avondale vicinity	5PE.300	1916	To be demolished in 2006
Butte Valley Bridge	Huerfano County	5HF.1907	1916	Extant
Wolcott Bridge (National Register removal pending)	CO Hwy. 131 Wolcott vicinity	5EA.1614	1916	To be demolished in 2006
Beulah Bridge (1)	County Road 220 over South Creek Beulah vicinity	5PE.3993	1916	Extant
Beulah Bridge (2)	County Road 220 over South Creek Beulah vicinity	5PE.3994	1916	Extant
Beulah Bridge (3)	County Road 220 over South Creek Beulah vicinity	5PE.4005	1916	Extant
Huerfano Bridge	US50 over Arkansas River, Boone vicinity	5PE.302	1921	National Register
Fountain Bridge	US. Bus. Rt. 24 Manitou Springs vic.	5EP.395	1932	National Register

*Completion date or construction span is stated if known. Plan, building permit, or assessor dates are used if completion date or period is unknown.

Reference Material

Colorado Department of Transportation Historic Bridge Database, accessed 3-13-2002.

Pueblo City Directory. Colorado Springs: R.L. Polk Directory Co. 1935; 1936-37; 1938; 1939

Fraser, Clayton B. *Highway Bridges of Colorado*, National Register of Historic Places multiple property documentation form, March 30, 2000.

Site Files Database, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

Revised: August 22, 2006