

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes ☐ no ☒

Property Name: John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker Inventory Number: M:26-27
Address: North Quadrant of Intersection of Edmonston Drive at Rockville Pike Historic district: ☐ yes ☒ no
City: Rockville Zip Code: 20852 County: Montgomery
USGS Quadrangle(s): Rockville
Property Owner: City of Rockville Tax Account ID Number: N/A
Tax Map Parcel Number(s): N/A Tax Map Number: N/A
Project: Maryland 355 at Edmonston Drive Agency: Maryland State Highway Administration
Agency Prepared By: Parsons Brinckerhoff
Preparer's Name: Rebecca Crew Date Prepared: 1/20/2011
Documentation is presented in: Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form, John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker (M: 26-27)
Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: ☐ Eligibility recommended ☒ Eligibility not recommended
Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G
Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:
Name of the District/Property: _____
Inventory Number: _____ Eligible: ☐ yes ☐ no Listed: ☐ yes ☐ no
Site visit by MHT Staff ☐ yes ☒ no Name: _____ Date: _____

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

Description

The John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker is a small, relocated commemorative object consisting of a bronze plaque mounted on a granite monument that comprises two stones and a foundation. The plaque is mounted to a cut, polished, granite stone with rock-faced sides. This stone stands on a rock-faced granite base that rests on a concrete and brick foundation.

The monument is approximately three feet tall, two-and-a-half-feet wide, and two feet deep. Three parts comprise the monument's form: foundation, base, and face stone. The foundation is a flat, concrete slab, partially concealed by ground and grass. Its rear elevation reveals bricks reinforcing the foundation. A rectangular granite base sits atop the foundation; its four sides are rock-faced, but its top is beveled. The base supports the granite face stone bearing the plaque, and the joint between the base and the face stone is smooth, neat, and concave. The face stone has a polished, angled face and rock-faced sides and rear elevation. The angle provides a convenient reading position for the plaque. The face's pinnacle is slightly pointed.

The plaque's inscription reads:

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MHT Comments:

Jim Tuleen
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

Bluntz
Reviewer, National Register Program

3/17/2011

Date

3/18/11

Date

201100544

THE
JOHN C. BROWN
(CORP'L U.S. ARMY)
MEMORIAL BRIDGE
DEDICATED
AUGUST 26 1950
TO THE MEMORY OF
THE FRIST MARYLAND SOLDIER
KILLED IN ACTION IN KOREA
JUNE 30, 1950

The all-capital inscription of raised letters contains ten lines of varying font sizes. Solder spreads around the "26" in the date, which is in the plaque's center, and solder is in the location of the missing comma. (The solder indicates a change to the marker's original text.) The bronze plaque is rectangular and slightly wider than its height. A plain border surrounds the plaque. Four bolts mount the plaque to the granite face stone.

The marker is in a suburban location at the north corner of the intersection of Rockville Pike (MD 355) and Edmonston Drive. It is south of the Edmonston Drive sidewalk and east of the Rockville Pike sidewalk. Pedestrians have formed a dirt path extending north from the Rockville Pike sidewalk to the Edmonston Drive sidewalk. The closest building is a Mobil gas station north and northwest of the marker. Rockville Pike is a busy, six-lane roadway, lined with banks, restaurants, retail shops, and office buildings; the marker is not a visually prominent component within this setting. Edmonston Drive is three lanes wide and leads to the residential neighborhood of Rockcrest. (The Maryland Historical Trust determined the Rockcrest Neighborhood, MIHP # M: 26-33, not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 2004.)

The current John C. Brown Memorial Bridge carrying Edmonston Drive over the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and Metro tracks is approximately 150 feet east-northeast of the John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker. Built in 1981, the modest, continuous span bridge has reinforced concrete piers, concrete parapets, and curved, metal-framed protective fencing above the parapets. It is a common type bridge, and being less than fifty years of age, it does not exhibit the exceptional importance required to be evaluated for the National Register of Historic Places. The marker is faintly discernible in the distance from the bridge; although the marker is visible from heavily traveled Rockville Pike, it is unreadable to motorists and not prominent due to the large scale of Rockville Pike and the comparatively small size of the marker. The connection between the bridge and the marker is significantly diminished because of the physical removal of the plaque from its original location on the earlier bridge.

History and Context

The Corporal John C. Brown Bridge was dedicated on August 26, 1950. It was named in honor of Corporal John C. Brown, of Baltimore, one of the earliest U.S. casualties of the Korean War and the first casualty from Maryland. The plaque was removed from its original location when the 1950 bridge was demolished and replaced in 1981. The symbolic connection between John C. Brown and the bridge has been minimized by the removal of the plaque from the original bridge and its relocation closer to Rockville Pike.

The Korean War began on June 25, 1950, and Corporal John C. Brown of Baltimore died on June 30, 1950, as a passenger aboard a U.S. plane that crashed when traveling from Japan to Korea. The eleven aboard were originally listed as missing, and the Defense Department reported their deaths on July 8, 1950. John C. Brown, born September 20, 1928, was from Baltimore, and

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Eligibility not recommended _____

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Date

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Date

ad joined the U.S. Army in 1947. He had been in Japan since September 1949. The Air Force reported that the plane crashed while attempting to land.

During this time, residents of the Rockcrest community in Rockville, Maryland, wanted a bridge to re-connect their neighborhood to Rockville Pike following the 1949 condemnation of a bridge that had previously served this purpose. That bridge carried Edmonston Drive over the Metropolitan branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which had been laid parallel to the Washington Turnpike—the precursor to Rockville Pike—in 1873. Historic maps show crossings near the current bridge location as early as 1906, and the first Rockcrest neighborhood plats were filed in 1940, indicating the original bridge at this crossing predated the residential Rockcrest community.

Local Silver Spring radio broadcaster Ernie Tannen suggested that the Rockcrest neighborhood's new bridge be named for Corporal John C. Brown even though John C. Brown had no known connection to Rockville. The State of Maryland and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad paid \$40,000 for the replacement bridge to Rockcrest. The Silver Spring Veterans of Foreign Wars paid \$85 for the plaque commemorating John C. Brown. The dedication ceremony was originally scheduled for August 12, 1950, but the Montgomery County Roads Commission was unable to complete the road approach in time for the celebration. This change in date explains the replaced date on the plaque. The bronze plaque was installed on the bridge to commemorate John C. Brown. Research has not specifically revealed the design of the 1949-1950 John C. Brown Memorial Bridge or the exact placement of the plaque.

The rescheduled dedication occurred August 26, 1950. A parade preceded the ceremony, and the major speaker was Korean Ambassador Dr. John M. Chang, who symbolized the United Nations' involvement in Korea as building a bridge to a better world. He honored Corporal John C. Brown's dedication to fight for freedom and praised the choice of a bridge as a fitting memorial to his memory, as a bridge from the dark troubles of our time to a new era of security, and freedom, and peace is the best memorial we can offer to all those who suffer and perish in the cause for which the United Nations has devoted its efforts and hopes. Chang's sentiments represented the era's deep respect for the armed forces. They are also indicative of the reasoning behind the twentieth-century custom of dedicating bridges, roads, and public buildings to military casualties and veterans. Chang, also known as Chang Myon, later became Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea.

Following the April 26 dedication, motorists and pedestrians immediately began using the John C. Brown Memorial Bridge. However, the bridge's memorial aspects—both in general and in relation to John C. Brown specifically—were not a major part of its association. One memorial service was held at the bridge on Memorial Day 1952 following a parade by the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars of Montgomery County, but research has revealed no other such use.

In 1979, the expansion of the Washington Metro required a bridge replacement at Edmonston Drive to accommodate the Red Line alongside the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad tracks. Newspaper reports announcing the bridge replacement mentioned the memorial aspect of the bridge but primarily focused on the neighborhood's daily bridge use. Prior to the demolition of the 1949-1950 bridge, the plaque noting the dedication to Corporal John C. Brown was removed and bolted to a reclaimed granite monument placed approximately 150 feet west-southwest of the crossing. The new bridge was completed in 1981. No known effort was made to re-install the plaque on the new bridge, and no known rededication occurred to honor John C. Brown by renaming the new bridge for him. Conservation efforts revealed that the reclaimed granite stone is inscribed "Margaret S. Fletcher 1916-1942." The removal of the plaque from its original location diminished the association between the current bridge and Corporal John C. Brown. Previously, the plaque and the 1949-1950 bridge together formed the commemorative element; when the plaque was removed and the bridge was demolished, the commemorative component of the site was destroyed. Because the marker is not located on the replacement bridge, the two elements no longer join to form a commemorative built resource. The plaque on the granite marker now forms the sole memorial to Corporal John C. Brown.

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Within Maryland, the John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker is one of many commemorative objects associated with the military. Maryland has approximately 400 military monuments, of which 31 commemorate the Korean War, either solely or in conjunction with other wars. Of the 15 military monuments in Montgomery County, the Bethesda-Chevy Chase War Memorial and the Montgomery County War Memorial Flags in Rockville also commemorate the Korean War. In Baltimore City, from whence John C. Brown came, a Korean War Memorial lists the names of the 527 Maryland citizens killed in action in the Korean War, as well as those still missing. The Maryland Military Monuments Commission has maintained the plaque since 1994 and conducted restoration prior to July 2010.

National Register of Historic Places Evaluation

The John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker was evaluated for the NRHP under Criteria A, B, and C and Criteria Considerations B and F.

The John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker is associated with the Korean War, in the manner, common to the twentieth century, of dedicating roads, bridges, highways, and civic buildings to the name of those killed in war and surviving veterans. The bridge, built in 1949-50 and dedicated to Corporal John C. Brown, was demolished in 1981 to accommodate the installation of additional rail tracks beneath it. The plaque that noted the dedication was removed prior to demolition and placed on a reclaimed granite stone that had no known relationship to the bridge or to Corporal John C. Brown. The stone was placed approximately 150 feet from the bridge, which is too far to portray a strong association. The current bridge was completed in 1981, but no known re-dedication to Corporal John C. Brown occurred, and no known effort was made to reinstall the plaque on the new bridge. The removal of the plaque from its original location removes the association of the current bridge with Corporal John C. Brown and removes the association of the plaque with the current bridge. The plaque is a remnant of the c. 1949-50 bridge, which is no longer extant, and the plaque on the granite stones comprise the John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker, in effect commemorating the demolished bridge that commemorated Corporal John C. Brown. The John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker's indirect association with the current bridge does not exhibit events or trends that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; thus the John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker is not eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A.

The John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker is peripherally associated with several individuals, including Corporal John C. Brown, radio personality Ernie Tannen, and Korean Ambassador Dr. John M. Chang. Tannen originated the idea of commemorating Brown's life by naming the bridge for him, but that accomplishment does not prove Tannen significant to local, state, or national history. Chang's speaker role at the dedication was as a visiting dignitary, and he had no on-going association with the bridge or marker. While Chang later served as Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea, he is not significant in American history. While the marker commemorates the life of U.S. Army Corporal John C. Brown and honors his service to his country, John C. Brown was not a significant person in American military history or local Rockville history. Despite giving his life for his country, his specific contributions to the U.S. Army and the Korean War were minor and not justified as significant to American military history. He was one of over 50,000 U.S. casualties in the Korean War, and the marker is not associated with his productive life. Therefore, the John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker is not eligible for the NRHP under Criterion B.

The John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker is a small object that does not embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. It is a typical bronze plaque on undistinguished granite stones. Its style is unremarkable and ubiquitous. Its maker is unknown and its form is not distinctive. It does not represent the work of a master or possess high artistic values. Therefore, the John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker is not eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C.

The John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker was not evaluated under Criterion D as part of this assessment.

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Date

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Properties that would generally not be eligible for the NRHP for various reasons can be assessed under the NRHP Criteria Considerations. These properties must first be eligible under Criteria A, B, C, or D. While the John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker is not eligible under these criteria, a discussion of the assessment under Criteria Considerations for moved and commemorative properties adds additional insight into the changes to the historicity of this object.

Ordinarily structures that have been moved from their original locations are not eligible for the NRHP, although Criteria Consideration B allows moved buildings and structures that are significant primarily for architectural value or are the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event to potentially be eligible. Moved properties eligible for their architectural value must retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker is not eligible for the NRHP under Criteria B or C, and it does not retain sufficient integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association; because of this, it no longer relates to its original historic context. Moved properties eligible for their historic associations must be demonstrated as the surviving property most importantly associated with a historic event or an important aspect of a historic person's life. The John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker is not associated with a significant historic event nor an important aspect of John C. Brown's productive life. Therefore, the John C. Brown Memorial Bridge is not eligible under Criteria Consideration B.

Properties primarily commemorative in nature are also generally not eligible for the NRHP, although Criteria Consideration F qualifies these properties if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance. Commemorative properties derive significance from their value as cultural expressions at the date of their creation or over time. The John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker is a modest design and undistinguished and does not exhibit design qualities that bestow upon it exceptional significance. The John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker has not acquired significance over time for its age, tradition, or symbolic value; it is not associated with Korean War commemoration nor is it recognized as a widely known symbol of values or enduring principles. In its removal from the bridge, it has lost its symbolism endowed by the generation that created it. The marker still commemorates John C. Brown, but not in the way originally intended. Therefore, the John C. Brown Memorial Bridge is not eligible under Criteria Consideration F.

The John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker has a low level of integrity. While integrity is most commonly assessed for eligible historic properties, several integrity issues contribute to the significance assessment of the marker. The marker lacks integrity of location, as the plaque has been removed from its original location on the bridge that carries Edmonston Drive over the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The plaque's design remains intact, but the introduction of the granite marker as its mounting place changes the overall design of the original plaque. The integrity of setting is low; not only has the plaque been moved, but the overall setting of Rockville Pike has changed substantially since the plaque was originally installed on the first bridge. The plaques' integrity of materials and workmanship remain intact, but again the introduction of the granite marker is incongruous to the original intent. The integrity of feeling is diminished by the relocation of the plaque and its installation on the granite marker, but it still conveys its original intent as a commemorative object. However, the marker does not retain integrity of association. The plaque and original bridge were interrelated, together forming the element associated with the commemoration of Corporal John C. Brown. The demolition of the original bridge and the removal of the plaque have removed this association; the current marker has no integrity of association.

Although not eligible for the NRHP, the boundary of the resource is defined as a three-foot radius circle centered on the monument. This translates to 0.000649 acre or 28.274 square feet.

Works Consulted

Kurtz, Nancy. Brown, John C. Memorial Bridge (M: 26-27). Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form, Crownsville, MD:

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Maryland Historical Trust, 2010.

Lyens, Richard L. "Memorial Day is Observed in D.C Area by Thousands." The Washington Post, May 31, 1952: 1.

Maryland Military Monuments Commission. Inventory of Maryland Monuments By County.
<http://www.mdva.state.md.us/MMMC/inventory.html> (accessed January 11, 2011).

Singer, Jill M. "Rockville Residents Protest Bridge Closing." The Washington Post, November 29, 1979: Md. 14.

The Sun. "Army Moving First of 700 War Evacuees." July 9, 1950: 3.

The Sun. "Baltimorean is Missing in Korea Action." July 15, 1950: 22.

The Sun. "Corporal Brown's Name Given." August 27, 1950: 28.

The Sun. "Memorial Honors Korea War Victim." June 28, 1950: 15.

The Washington Post. "11 Casualties in Far East Crash Listed." July 3, 1950: 2.

The Washington Post. "New Bridge Dedicated to Maryland's 1st Casualty." August 27, 1950: M15.

The Washington Post. "War Memorial Bridge Dedication is Postponed." August 9, 1950: 3.

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Eligibility not recommended _____

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Date

Memorial Bridge Marker (M: 26-27)

Rockville, Montgomery County, MD

USGS Rockville Quad, 1985



1,000

Feet 124,000

John C. Brown
Memorial Bridge Marker (M: 26-27)

John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker (M: 26-27)
Northeast corner of Edmonston Drive and Rockville Pike
Rockville, Montgomery County, MD

Montgomery County Parcels



100

Feet

1:2,000

Photo Log:

M: 26-27_2011-01-06_01.tif

View facing north

M: 26-27_2011-01-06_02.tif

View facing south

M: 26-27_2011-01-06_03.tif

View facing west showing marker and Rockville Pike

M: 26-27_2011-01-06_04.tif

View facing east along Edmonson Drive to John C. Brown Memorial Bridge

M: 26-27_2011-01-06_05.tif

Plaque Detail

M: 26-27_2011-01-06_06.tif

View southwest along Edmonson Drive depicting marker at Rockville Pike intersection

M: 26-27_2011-01-06_07.tif

View from marker facing southeast on Rockville Pike

*Printed using HP Premium Plus Photo Paper and HP 100 gray photo cartridge

THE
JOHN C. BROWN
(CORPL U. S. ARMY)
MEMORIAL BRIDGE

DEDICATED

AUGUST 26, 1950

TO THE MEMORY OF
THE FIRST MARYLAND SOLDIER
KILLED IN ACTION IN KOREA
JUNE 30, 1950

M: 26-27

John C Brown Memorial Bridge
Marker

Montgomery Co, MD

R Crew

1/2011

N/A

Photo 1/7: View Facing North



M: 26-27

John C. Brown Memorial Bridge
Marker

Montgomery Co., MD

R. Crow

1/2011

N/A

Photo 2/7: View facing south



M 26-27

John C Brown Memorial Bridge
Marker

Montgomery Co, MD

R Crew

1/2011

N/A

Photo 3/7: View facing west showing
marker & Rockville Pike

Rockville Pike 900



M:26-27

John C Brown Memorial Bridge
Marker

Montgomery Co, MD

R Crew

1/2011

N/A

Photo 4/7: View east along Edmonson Drive to
John C Brown Memorial Bridge

THE
JOHN C. BROWN
(CORPL U. S. ARMY)
MEMORIAL BRIDGE

DEDICATED
AUGUST 26, 1950
TO THE MEMORY OF
THE FIRST MARYLAND SOLDIER
KILLED IN ACTION IN KOREA
JUNE 30, 1950

M: 26-27

John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker
Montgomery Co, MD

R Crew

1/2011

N/A

Photo 5/7: Plaque Detail



DO NOT
BLOCK
DRIVEWAY

M : 26-27

John C Brown Memorial Bridge
Marker

Montgomery Co, MD

R Crew

1/20/11

N/A

Photo 6/7: View southwest along Edmonson Drive
to marker at Rockville Pike
intersection.



M: 26-27

John C. Brown Memorial Bridge Marker
Montgomery Co., MD
R. Crew

1/2011

N/A

Photo 7/7: View from marker facing southeast
on Rockville Pike