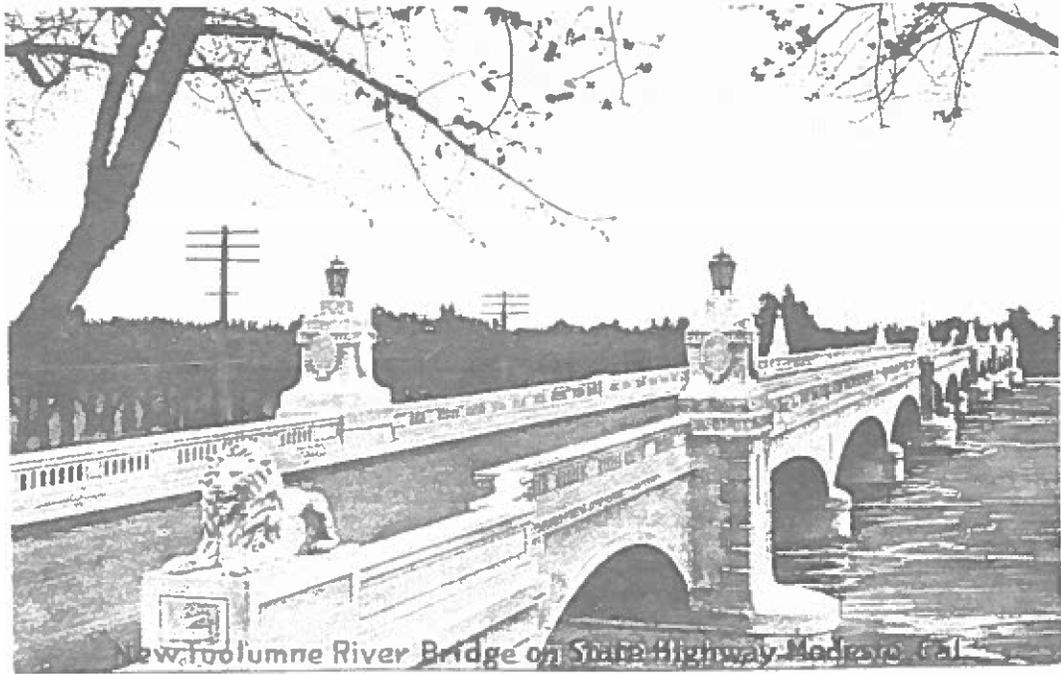


## 14. SEVENTH STREET BRIDGE (1916)

### Seventh Street



**Landmark Preservation Commission Resolution:** November 18, 1991

**Designated by City Council:** April 28, 1992

**Listed on National Registrar of Historic Places:**

**Description:** concrete Bridge with internal steel trusses. Decorative lions are situated at both entrances.

**Engineering Significance:** Built in 1916, this is a "Cantcrete" bridge with internal steel trusses. It was designed by architect John B. Leonard and is the most important of the four Cantcrete structures still in existence in California. For many years, the Seventh Street Bridge, opened to traffic in 1917, was the only bridge in Modesto across the Tuolumne River. Three bridges have stood on this site. The first was a turntable bridge built in 1884 to replace the Whitmore Ferry. It lasted until 1887 when it was judged unsafe. The second bridge was a 320-foot long trestle type constructed by the Pacific Bridge Company. By that time, a turntable bridge was no longer necessary since river traffic had decreased to the point that a bridge that could be moved to let riverboats pass was no longer needed.

The area continued to grow and transportation changed – automobiles and trucks replaced horses and wagons. By 1915, the second bridge was no longer capable of handling the amount of traffic required of it. The design of the current bridge was dictated by a number of factors. First, the county wanted to build a bridge that was capable of handling heavy traffic and would not become obsolete quickly. Second, the outbreak of World War I had caused the price of steel to more than double to \$70 a ton and a bridge using a minimum amount of steel was desired. Using a light framework of steel encased in concrete solved the problem. After its opening 1917, use of the bridge steadily increased, and for many years it was the route of Highway 99 through Modesto. By 1971, the 54 year old bridge had begun to shake and rattle, cracks marred its surface, and the steel

framework at the foot of the pilings was exposed where the concrete had been eroded by the swiftly running river. From 1971 to 1976 the future of the bridge was in doubt. Debate over the bridge continued until April 1976, when the City Council voted to give up a \$556,000 federal grant to build a new bridge. Instead local money was used to salvage the old structure. Major repairs were completed by June 1979.

