

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 92001565      Date Listed: 11/27/92

Property Name: Packerville Bridge      County: Windham      State: CT

Multiple Name \_\_\_\_\_

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patricia Andrews  
Signature of the Keeper

12/1/92  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

In consultation with the Connecticut SHPO, transportation has been deleted as an area of significance. The statement of significance does not establish the importance of this bridge in transportation history. The nomination is officially amended to delete transportation as an area of significance.

**DISTRIBUTION:**  
National Register property file  
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

OCT 13 1987

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name: PACKERVILLE BRIDGE

other name/site number: Bridge No. 4754

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2. Location

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street & number: Packerville Road over Mill Brook

city/town: Plainfield

not for publication: N/A  
vicinity: N/A

state: CT county: Windham

code: 015 zip code: 06374

=====

3. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property: public-local

Category of Property: structure

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
<u>1</u>	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  x  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  x  meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. See cont. sheet.

John W. Shannahan Signature of certifying official October 2, 1992 Date

John W. Shannahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the National Register
removed from the National Register
other (explain):

Patrick Andrews Signature of Keeper 11/27/92 Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: TRANSPORTATION Sub: road-related
Current: TRANSPORTATION Sub: road-related

7. Description

=====  
Architectural Classification:

other: masonry arch  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation N/A roof N/A  
walls STONE other CONCRETE  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

=====  
8. Statement of Significance

=====  
Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: state.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : N/A

Areas of Significance: ENGINEERING  
TRANSPORTATION  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1886

Significant Dates: 1886

Significant Person(s): N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Nathaniel Olin, masonry contractor  
Isaac J. Baldwin, engineer (?)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.



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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description	Packerville Bridge Plainfield, Windham County, CT	7-1
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Packerville Bridge is a single-span stone-arch bridge built in 1886 (Photographs 1 and 2). It is located in a rural, residential part of Plainfield, Connecticut, just downstream on Mill Brook from the stone dam that impounds Packers Pond. In the immediate vicinity are several 19th-century buildings, including former mill-owned multi-family houses, that reflect the area's past as the site of a small textile-manufacturing village known as Packerville; the mill complex itself, which included both a wood-frame and a stone factory, is today marked only by foundations, millraces, and a chimney.

Packerville Bridge spans 26 feet, with an overall length of 31 feet; the travel lane is 20 feet wide. The roadway is carried about 20 feet above the brook, which runs through a rocky, wooded gorge at this point. The bridge takes the form of a semicircular arch, springing from ledge outcroppings at both ends.

The barrel of the arch (Photograph 3) is built of squared-up granite blocks, about 1'-square by 2' long, of the grayish-pink color associated with Westerly, Rhode Island. The spandrels are built from randomly sized fieldstone, with small pieces of the dark shale found on the banks inserted into many of the interstices. Although mortar has been applied to much of the spandrel walls, the stonework appears to have been originally dry-laid.

The principal alteration to the bridge is the use of modern pre-cast concrete "Jersey"-profile roadway barriers (Photograph 4) in place of the low wooden fence that formed the original guardrail. Also, on all but the northwest corner, rubble channel walls for the stream have been built up against the spandrels (Photograph 5); these probably date from the resumption of manufacturing in the early 20th century. Despite these alterations, the setting and overall appearance of the bridge today resemble to a remarkable degree those shown in an 1895 gravure (Photograph 6).

The town-owned bridge is designated as Bridge No. 4754 in the Connecticut Department of Transportation's State Highway Bridge Log.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance

Packerville Bridge  
Plainfield, Windham County, CT

8-1

Packerville Bridge is significant as a well-preserved example of stone-arch bridge construction (Criterion C). Stone arches represent a vernacular technology; they were built using traditional carpentry and masonry skills that were available in nearly every Connecticut community in the 19th century. The stonework is typical of the rural dry-laid masonry of the period. Shaping of stone was limited to the arch ring itself, where a more expensive stone was used<sup>1</sup> and the faces cut to provide a better bearing surface. The rubble stonework of the spandrels, which did little more than support their own weight and resist the outward push of the roadway fill, resembles that found in stone walls and house foundations throughout the Connecticut countryside. Similar stone arches were built throughout Connecticut from the 1790s to about 1900, wherever the importance of the road, difficult conditions, or the threat of flooding from nearby millponds justified the expense. Most have disappeared or been substantially altered, so that today only about 20 comparable to Packerville Bridge remain in the state.<sup>2</sup>

Plainfield was hit by a tremendous flood on February 13, 1886, and most of the town's bridges were damaged or washed away. Town records indicate expenditures for a "temporary bridge at Packerville," so presumably the wooden predecessor to this bridge was one of the ones that were destroyed. Plainfield mason Nathaniel Olin (1819-1893) received \$2,200 that year, probably for building this bridge, with small additional sums paid for other materials and teams of horses or oxen. Local tradition holds that Isaac J. Baldwin (1833-1894) had a hand in its construction. Baldwin, born in nearby Canterbury, was a land surveyor who spent most of his time in the West following the death of his wife in 1869. In the late 1880s, however, he was back in Plainfield, surveying properties for local millowners and publishing, shortly before his death, a map of Plainfield and vicinity.<sup>3</sup>

The millpond just upstream was the chief incentive to build in stone. Severe rainstorms would swell rivers and streams, causing milldams to burst, and the bridges downstream would be washed away. Although stone arches could be damaged by such floods, they were thought to hold up better than wooden bridges. In addition, although it was probably not a prime consideration, the bridge's soaring geometry, contrasting granite and fieldstone masonry, and wooded setting gave it exceptional visual qualities. Its scenic value was appreciated at least as early as 1895, when a view of the bridge appeared in the Plainfield Souvenir.

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Significance  
Packerville Bridge  
Plainfield, Windham County, CT  
8-2

Modern alterations have had relatively little effect on the integrity of the bridge. The addition of the concrete roadway barriers has had some impact on the bridge's appearance. However, the visual effect of this modern element is outweighed by the preponderance of historic material in the arch itself. Moreover, the barriers are not replacements for historic parapets: in the 19th century, the roadway was protected only by a simple two-rail wooden fence supported on stone posts.

1. Although probably brought from Westerly, Rhode Island, the stone was hardly an exotic material: similar pink-granite slabs are used as the doorsteps of several Packerville houses.
2. Exclusive of railroad-built structures. Based on the Connecticut Historic Bridge Inventory, which identified 18 stone-arch highway bridges as having sufficient significance and integrity to make them eligible for National Register listing.
3. Baldwin attribution in personal communication from Elizabeth Fairbrother, Canterbury Historical Society. Baldwin's mill-village surveys of 1887 are in the Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford. His Map of Plainfield and Vicinity was published in 1892.



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Plainfield, Windham County, CT

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Photographs                      Packerville Bridge                      Photos-1  
   Plainfield, Windham County, CT

All photographs:

1. Packerville Bridge
2. Plainfield, Windham County, CT
3. Photo Credit: HRC, Hartford, CT
4. April, 1992
5. Negative filed with Connecticut Historical Commission  
Hartford, CT

Captions:

East elevation, camera facing northwest  
Photograph 1 of 6

West elevation, camera facing northeast  
Photograph 2 of 6

Roadway, camera facing northeast  
Photograph 3 of 6

Underside of arch, camera facing southeast  
Photograph 4 of 6

Detail of stonework, east elevation, camera facing west  
Photograph 5 of 6

View of bridge, 1895, from Plainfield Souvenir, p.18  
Photograph 6 of 6