Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

PH0358428

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED OCT 1 1976
DATE ENTERED APR 11 1977

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC **
Simpsonville Stone Arch Bridge

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Vermont Route #35 across Simpson Brook at Simpsonville —NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Townshend — VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Vermont

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Vermont	50	Windham	025

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
—DISTRICT	X PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	—AGRICULTURE	—MUSEUM
—BUILDING(S)	—PRIVATE	—UNOCCUPIED	—COMMERCIAL	—PARK
X STRUCTURE	—BOTH	—WORK IN PROGRESS	—EDUCATIONAL	—PRIVATE RESIDENCE
—SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	—ENTERTAINMENT	—RELIGIOUS
—OBJECT	—IN PROCESS	—YES: RESTRICTED	—GOVERNMENT	—SCIENTIFIC
	—BEING CONSIDERED	X YES: UNRESTRICTED	—INDUSTRIAL	X TRANSPORTATION
		—NO	—MILITARY	—OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Town of Townshend

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Townshend — VICINITY OF

STATE
Vermont

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Office of the Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Townshend

STATE
Vermont

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey

DATE
1976 —FEDERAL X STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN
Montpelier

STATE
Vermont

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
X EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
__GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Simpsonville Stone Arch Bridge (Townshend Bridge #4) carries Vermont Route #35 (Town Highway #1) across Simpson Brook at the hamlet of Simpsonville, about 2 miles north of Townshend Village. A local farmer, mason, and intuitive engineer named James Otis Follett constructed the bridge probably in circa 1909. One of eleven extant stone bridges built by Follett, the Simpsonville bridge remains in excellent condition and carries the traffic of the state highway without reinforcement. However, in 1959, the bridge was widened by the addition of steel culvert wings on both sides to accommodate two full travel lanes for modern vehicles, and only the soffit of the Follett arch remains visible.

The Simpsonville Stone Arch Bridge consists of a single span supported by a stone segmental arch. At its base, the arch extends 20 feet; it rises 6 feet above the surface of the brook. The width of the stone arch is 18 feet; each of the two steel culvert wings attached to the faces of the arch is 8.5 feet wide, giving the present bridge an overall width of 35 feet.

The stone arch is built of large rectangular blocks of granite which are roughly pitched and mortared into regular courses. The spandrels and abutments of the stone arch are concealed behind the added wings. A corrugated steel multi-plate culvert supports each wing, following closely the form of the stone arch. Above the culverts, the wings are faced with uncoursed, mortared rubble stone. The surface of the road is now paved between wide gravel shoulders; guard rails consisting of wood posts supporting steel cables extend along the shoulders.

The original appearance of the Simpsonville Stone Arch Bridge is known only from a photograph (reproduced as #3 of this nomination). The spandrels of the arch were built of uncoursed rubble stone apparently mortared into place; this masonry may remain, although now buried by the fill above the added culvert wings. On the deck of the bridge, mortared stone sidewalls extended somewhat beyond the length of the arch; the sidewalls were built of large, roughly pitched, irregularly shaped blocks of stone which rose two courses and were capped by relatively thin rectangular stone slabs overhanging slightly the vertical planes of the walls. The sidewalls were removed from the bridge probably in 1959 when it was widened.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION	
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE	
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE	
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
__1700-1799	__ART	X ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER	
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	X TRANSPORTATION	
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		__INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES Circa 1909 BUILDER/ARCHITECT James Otis Follett

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Simpsonville Stone Arch Bridge holds primary significance for being the work of an intuitive engineer, a local farmer and mason named James Otis Follett. The masonry arch applied by Follett in circa 1909 to carry a town highway across Simpson Brook represents a highly unusual structure among rural road bridges in Vermont, especially for having been built after the turn of the twentieth century when iron and steel had almost completely displaced wood and stone in bridge construction. The Simpsonville bridge together with nine other extant stone bridges built by Follett in Townshend and nearby Putney constitute probably the largest group of such related structures in the state. (An eleventh bridge built by Follett--and the only one with two spans--survives in Walpole, New Hampshire.)

Born in nearby East Jamaica in 1843, Follett lived and worked most of his life on a farm in Townshend. Among other public activities, he served the town for several years as road commissioner, being responsible for the maintenance and improvement of its public highways. During the 1890's, Follett seems to have shifted his vocational emphasis from farming to masonry. The first known entry of payment to Follett for the construction of a "stonebridge" appears in the Townshend town records in 1894. Thereafter, Follett built one or two bridges almost every year until his death in 1911, creating substantial yet inexpensive structures to meet the needs of at least three small rural towns. In addition to the bridges, Follett constructed foundations for buildings and abutments for wood covered bridges, including in 1900 a center pier for the famous Holland Bridge (demolished in 1952) across the West River in Townshend.

The total number of bridges built by James Otis Follett is not known definitely. A grandson, Robert Follett of Ascutney, Vermont, estimates that he may have built about forty bridges. Entries in the Townshend and Putney records list payments to Follett for a total of about twenty bridges and culverts built on public highways in those two towns. The Townshend records indicate about thirteen bridges, including at least one culvert, between 1894 and 1910; six of the arch bridges built there, including the Simpsonville bridge, still stand. The Simpsonville bridge seems to have been the next-to-last bridge that Follett built.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Derry, Anne. James Otis Follette (sic), Bridgebuilder. Unpublished manuscript prepared for Graduate Program in Restoration and Preservation of Historic Architecture, Columbia University, New York, New York, 1975.

Notes from interview of Robert Follett, Ascutney, Vermont by Michele Frome on 9 July 1976.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	18	690875	4771975	B			
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Hugh H. Henry, Historic Sites Researcher

ORGANIZATION: Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

DATE: September 20, 1976

STREET & NUMBER: Pavilion Building

TELEPHONE: 802-828-3226

CITY OR TOWN: Montpelier

STATE: Vermont

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE X LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE William B. Pinney — William B. Pinney

TITLE Director/State Historic Preservation Officer — DATE September 20, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Chief — DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION — DATE 4/11/77

ATTEST: — KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER — DATE 12/6/76

GPO 892-453

Form No. 10-300a
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Although Follett lacked formal training in engineering, apparently he did consult a popular engineering text of the period, A Treatise on Masonry Construction by Ira Osborn Baker. A copy of the ninth edition, published in 1899 and apparently used by Follett, remains in the possession of the Follett family. The book describes methods of constructing stone arch bridges; however, it is not known to what extent Follett actually depended on the book in his work, for he built at least four bridges in Townshend prior to the publication of his copy of the Baker text.

Whatever the source of his skill, Follett succeeded in building durable and handsomely crafted bridges. Some of them, including the Simpsonville bridge, now carry truck loads which Follett could not have imagined, yet it has not been necessary to alter or reinforce them significantly. None of his bridges is known to have failed structurally; floods have destroyed some of them by undermining their foundations. Complementing their structural integrity, the Follett bridges possess distinctive aesthetic qualities in their individual variations of the arch form and stone material. The Simpsonville bridge displays the most evenly coursed and carefully finished masonry of the Follett bridges in Vermont.

Taken together, the surviving bridges constructed by James Otis Follett constitute a highly representative and intact record of the work of an extraordinary native builder. At the same time, the bridges belong among the last structures of their kind in Vermont. In response to the outstanding nature of these historic resources, the Historic American Engineering Record plans to conduct field surveys and systematic recordings of the remaining bridges. The Follett bridges deserve immediate public recognition and careful preservation to ensure the continued survival of this unique legacy from late nineteenth century rural Vermont.