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

PHO 358436

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 18 1977

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC **

West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Town Highway #7 across Tannery Brook

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

West 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

1974

__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
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	XUNALTERED	XORIGINAL SITE
XGOOD	__RUINS	__ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge (Townshend Bridge #34) carries Town Highway #7 (the old South Windham road) across Tannery Brook at the east edge of West Townshend village. A local farmer, mason, and intuitive engineer named James Otis Follett constructed the bridge in circa 1910 at a cost of about $900.00. One of eleven extant stone bridges built by Follett, the West Townshend bridge remains basically unaltered and structurally sound, and continues to carry local traffic.

The West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge consists of a single span supported by a stone segmental arch, which rests on exposed bedrock. At its base, the arch extends about 37 feet; it rises about 16 feet above the surface of the brook. The overall width of the arch is 14 feet, giving the roadway only one travel lane for modern vehicles. Adjoining the east end of the span, the roadway is supported by extended wing walls; the west end of the span is abutted by the steeply rising bank of the brook.

The arch itself is built of large rectangular blocks of granite which are roughly pitched and mortared into mostly regular courses. The spandrels of the arch are infilled with uncoursed rubble stone laid dry. The deck course above the spandrels is laid with irregularly shaped granite blocks, overlaid with the paved road surface. The wing walls abutting the east end of the span are also built of uncoursed rubble stone laid dry.

In 1939, following a major flood in 1938, the West Townshend bridge received some minor reinforcement. Low concrete walls were built along the sides of the roadway, reducing its travel width to 11.5 feet. (Originally the bridge may have had mortared stone sidewalls in the manner of the similar bridge built by Follett at Simpsonville, also in the Town of Townshend.) An amount of concrete was poured on the bedrock next to the west footing of the arch apparently to prevent slippage. At the same time, a mortared stone slab retaining wall was built perpendicular to the northwest corner of the bridge.

Recently, some rocks have dislodged from the south wing wall near the east end of the arch, causing the roadway to slump and fracturing the concrete sidewall. Gravel fill has been dumped against the wall in an attempt to prevent further disintegration. The problem does not yet affect the structural integrity of the arch; however, plans for permanent repair are indefinite.

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 1910 BUILDER/ARCHITECT James Otis Follett

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The West Townshend 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 1910 to carry a town highway across Tannery Brook represents a highly unusual structure among rural secondary 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 West Townshend 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 West Townshend bridge, still stand. The West Townshend bridge with its span of 37 feet holds the distinction of being the longest bridge built by Follett in Vermont, and may have been the last bridge that he built.

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.

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
A	18	686 375 (400)	4772 525 (500)
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 — DATE

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation — September 20, 1976

STREET & NUMBER — TELEPHONE

Pavilion Building — 802-828-3226

CITY OR TOWN — STATE

Montpelier — 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 4/18/77

ATTEST: — DATE 12/6/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

GPO 892-453

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

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 18 1977

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 West Townshend 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 the bridges, including a second bridge across Tannery Brook just downstream from the existing West Townshend bridge, 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.

Currently the greatest general threat to the surviving Follett bridges is inadequate maintenance, both of the active and disused ones. In the case of a bridge across Fair Brook in Townshend, actual demolition is now being considered rather than repair of its somewhat deteriorated structure. The indifferent treatment of the Follett bridges derives partly from their inconspicuous locations on back roads, which tends to keep them from becoming more widely known and appreciated by the public.

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.