

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

FEB 07 1994

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Churchill Bridge

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Crosses Bicknell Brook on Mountain Road, 1 Mile West of Junction with Sodom Road N/A not for publication

city or town Buckfield vicinity

state Maine code ME county Oxford code 017 zip code 04220

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

E. S. Peterson 1/26/94
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:)

for Signature of the Keeper *Gus M. Lapsley* Entered in the National Register 3/17/94 Date of Action

CHURCHILL BRIDGE
Name of Property

OXFORD, ME.
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| _____ | _____ | buildings |
| _____ | _____ | sites |
| 1 | _____ | structures |
| _____ | _____ | objects |
| 1 | 0 | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/Road-Related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/Road-Related

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite

walls _____

roof _____

other Gravel Wearing Surface

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

CHURCHILL BRIDGE

Section number 7 Page 2

The Churchill Bridge is a dry laid, rubble stone structure which is approximately twenty feet in length and ten feet in width with a clear span of about five feet. It carries the town owned and maintained Mountain Road over Bennett Stream, the bed of which is some fourteen feet below the gravel road surface.

Oriented in an East-West direction, the bridge spans the stream at a slight skew with wingwalls extending from the northwest and southeast corners of the abutments. The clear span is formed from five massive rectangular ledge stones laid side to side, above which is several feet of rock forming the road sub-surface. The height of the opening is about seven feet above the stream.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Period of Significance

1797

Significant Dates

1797

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Churchill, William, Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

CHRUCHILL BRIDGE

Section number 8 Page 2

Believed to have been constructed in 1797, the Churchill Bridge is a dry laid, rubble stone structure located in a now unpopulated section of Buckfield. It was apparently built by William Churchill - whose homestead was nearby the bridge site - in lieu of that year's abatement of his highway tax. The bridge is still owned and maintained by the town. It is eligible for nomination to the Register under criterion C for its representation of local engineering and building skills at the turn of the eighteenth century.

The type of monolithic stone construction used in the Churchill Bridge appears to have been a common practice in Maine communities during the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. This fact is strikingly evident in the data gathered during a survey of bridges conducted by the State Highway Commission in 1924. Sketch plans and photographs made during this survey indicate the persistent tradition of this construction technique well into the 1890s, not only for relatively short crossings, but also on occasion for bridges requiring two spans and a center pier. In addition to the structures built entirely of stone, an equally large group of stone and timber bridges were still in use in 1924. Buckfield alone had twenty bridges constructed entirely of stone, one of which had two spans, and an additional sixteen using a combination of materials (there were only six truss bridges and one concrete culvert). All of the latter had been rebuilt before 1900 raising the question of whether they too may originally have been built of stone only.

It is not surprising that early bridges in Maine were constructed of stone, given the abundance of materials to be found both on the surface or from local quarries. This geologic legacy alone, however, would not account for the vast numbers of these structures were it not for the climate in which spring thaws produced fast moving, high water that carried destructive ice floes. Spring freshets were a constant threat to both bridges and mills; a threat which although greatly diminished, continues to confront residents along the State's major river systems on a yearly basis. This context provides not only a reason for the practice of stone bridge construction, but also an appreciation for the fact that any have survived into the late twentieth century. Between the constant assault from natural forces, the frequent lack of maintenance for decades (there has been no known repair made to this bridge since at least 1938), and an extensive state-wide bridge replacement program, the existence of a structure such as the Churchill Bridge is a remarkable tribute to the ingenuity and skill of its builder.

According to local historians, the area in which the Churchill Bridge is located was among the first settled in Buckfield (incorporated 1793). The neighborhood of homesteads which developed along Mountain Road was known as "Owls Head" in reference to the nearby hilltop of the same name. It was a dispersed community with upwards of twenty residences during the peak of

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Continuation Sheet**

CHURCHILL BRIDGE

Section number 8 Page 3

settlement well before the mid-nineteenth century. Thereafter, and increasingly after the Civil War, the area was abandoned to the point that only two buildings stand today. This pattern of early occupation seems to support the tradition that the bridge which exists today is the one for which William Churchill received a tax abatement in 1797. Furthermore, the subsequent out-migration from this area and the absence of references in town minutes to the bridge's reconstruction, also seem to indicate that it is the original structure.

The Churchill Bridge is the second Maine bridge of the type nominated to the Register. It joins the c. 1808 Thompson's Bridge (N.R. 3/22/91) in Industry as an example of early dry laid stone bridge construction. A third stone structure is the equally early Grist Mill Bridge (N.R. 12/27/90) in Lebanon, which is distinguished by its double span with center pier and wooden deck. These structures represent the earliest type of bridges to survive in Maine where the abundance of streams and rivers have always challenged its inhabitants to confront the task of crossing them.

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CHURCHILL BRIDGE

OXFORD, MAINE

Section number 9 Page 2

General Bridge Survey. Maine State Highway Commission, Augusta, 1924.

Notes taken from Buckfield Town Records by Kenneth Cooper. On file at the
Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta.

The Old Maps of Oxford County, Maine. Fryeburg, Maine: Saco Valley Printing.
1972.

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CHURCHILL BRIDGE

OXFORD, MAINE

Section number 10 Page 2

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property embraces the entire extent of the bridge structure including abutments, wingwalls, and the gravel covered deck.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is drawn to include only the physical components of the bridge structure as believed to have been substantially constructed in 1797.