

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Old Blenheim Bridge

AND/OR COMMON
Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
North Blenheim

--- NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
31

--- VICINITY OF

STATE
New York

CODE
36

COUNTY
Schohaire

CODE
095

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Discontinued bridge

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Schoharie County, Commissioner, Schoharie County Board of Supervisors

STREET & NUMBER
RD #2

CITY, TOWN
Schoharie

--- VICINITY OF

STATE
New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Schoharie County Court House

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Schoharie

STATE
New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
None

DATE

--- FEDERAL --- STATE --- COUNTY --- LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The covered wooden bridge at North Blenheim, New York, is a remarkable feat of wooden structural engineering. It is the longest (210 feet) single span wooden bridge in the world, and is built largely of virgin pine, the mighty arch of oak.

The main feature of the structure is its single center arch on which the bridge relies for strength, stretching in a three-rib segment from the abutments, clear up to the ridge pole at the center of the bridge, and back again. It has three trusses, a large one enclosing the arch at the center, and two side trusses 27 feet apart, of lesser height. This divides the bridge into two lanes and sometimes it is, therefore, called a "double-barrel" or "double-tunnel" bridge.

The trusses are a series of all wooden "X"'s in boxes, a system devised and patented in 1830 by a Colonel Stephen Long. Often used and gradually improved upon, by 1855, 25 years after Long's invention, Powers used bolts and washers to connect the braces. In fact, he used 3,600 pounds of bolts, and 1,500 pounds of washers.

Ninety-four thousand board feet of lumber were used (27 tons). The ridgepole is 232 feet long, the truss is 228 feet, and the clear span is 210 feet. Mr. Powers was paid \$7.00 a day (totalling \$2,000), his workers, \$1.00 a day.

Interestingly, the structure was not built over the stream as one might have expected, but rather was built piece by piece in the village, taken apart and reassembled across the river. It was opened in 1855 to horse-drawn traffic and was thereafter regularly in service as a privately-owned toll bridge (footmen 1¢, teams 12¢) until taken over by the State highway department in 1891.

In the Spring of 1869, an especially severe freshet cleared out a wide channel at the western abutment, necessitating the erection of a small wooden extension across this new gap. In 1895, after several teams and threshers had crashed through the new wooden extension, it was replaced with a "permanent" iron one at a cost to the Town Board of \$2,200.

By 1930, the iron span had cracked beneath a heavy load of ice, although Powers' covered wooden bridge was still serenely carrying heavy loads without a structural complaint. The plan was to abandon the Old Blenheim Bridge and build a new steel and concrete bridge 100 feet downstream. The old structure would come down.

Instead, however, an organized outpouring of public sentiment for retention of the covered bridge was enough to secure town support for retention of the old relic. The new bridge was indeed built in 1932, and the old bridge had its iron extension removed, so that since that time, it has been attached to only the eastern abutment, and, therefore, carries only sightseeing traffic.

The bridge remains in excellent condition today, and is currently being re-sheathed in blue spruce. It is part of a small picnic area maintained on the eastern bank by the Town Board of North Blenheim.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1834

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Old Blenheim Bridge, spanning Schoharie Creek near the village of North Blenheim, New York, is the longest single-span wooden bridge in the world. The bridge has a startling span of 210 feet between the two stone piers in the Schoharie Creek. In 1855, it was completed for \$6,000 by a private entrepreneur, Nicholas Montgomery Powers, of Vermont, who is known elsewhere for his great skill at this unusual job. The main feature of the covered bridge here is its single center arch, stretching in a three-rib segment from the abutments, clear up to the ridge pole in the center of the bridge, and back again.

Boundary Justification

The Old Covered Wooden Bridge at North Blenheim, New York, spans Schoharie Creek at the eastern end of the village of North Blenheim. No longer used for anything but pedestrian traffic of interested visitors who can enter the bridge from the east end, the bridge was replaced as a traffic carrier on Route 30, when a modern concrete and steel bridge was constructed in 1931 about 100 feet downstream. The Old Blenheim Bridge is connected only to the east bank of the creek, which at that point runs directly north-south. The boundary then, consists only of the bridge, which actually spans the creek. The ridgepole is 232 feet long. If the bridge were to be restored for access from either side, a small section of perhaps 30 feet would have to be added to the west end of the bridge, which today falls that far short of the west bank. Today being used as a small picnic area, no other structures at the site contribute to the National significance of the Old Blenheim Bridge.

