

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED OCT 8 1975
DATE ENTERED DEC 30 1975

**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 **West Cornwall Bridge**

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER **Route 128 at Housatonic River**

CITY, TOWN

West Cornwall

___ VICINITY OF

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

6th - Toby Moffett

STATE

Connecticut

CODE

09

COUNTY

Litchfield

CODE

005

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME **State of Connecticut**

STREET & NUMBER

State Capitol - Capitol Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

CT

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. **Cornwall Town Clerk**

STREET & NUMBER

Town Hall - Pine Street

CITY, TOWN

Cornwall

STATE

CT

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE **Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources**

DATE

1975

___ FEDERAL STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT DETERIORATED
 GOOD RUINS
 FAIR UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

* The West Cornwall Bridge crosses the Housatonic River at one end of a small village of 19th-century houses, shops, studios and restaurants. Because it is still in use, it has undergone several modifications. Nevertheless, this covered bridge retains its historical appearance. Its board-and-batten sides, painted red, are broken at irregular intervals by small window openings, most with 6-pane sash, though some are unglazed. The square portals are approximately 12' wide and 11' high, and the moderately pitched roof is covered with white cedar shingles.

Originally built as a single 242' span, the bridge was strengthened in 1924 by the addition of a central concrete pier. The original abutments, of unmortared rubble, have also been reinforced with cement. The primary structural member is a Town Lattice truss, held together by large wooden pegs; secondary support is provided by a king-post truss pegged to both sides of both lattices. Although these members are all still in place, a steel deck, concealed beneath the diagonally-laid plank floor, actually carries the load. The deck is not visible except from the river which, at the time of writing, was about 12' below the bridge. In order to install the deck, the entire bridge was raised 2'; the abutments and pier were heightened with concrete and the approaches to the bridge were reconstructed. At the same time (about 1972), many repairs, including a new roof, were made.

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 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 1841 - built

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Ithiel Town (?)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The West Cornwall Bridge is significant because it is one of three remaining covered bridges in Connecticut and because it displays an important engineering innovation. Due to their resistance to decay, covered bridges were extremely common throughout America in the 19th century, yet comparatively few remain. Since it is still in use, the West Cornwall Bridge is doubly valuable, since it is an historic resource accessible in its original context.

Built in 1841, this bridge is borne by a Town Lattice truss, a series of closely spaced, overlapping triangles with neither arches nor uprights. Because it avoided the serious problem of fatigue at the joints between uprights and diagonals, this truss was strong and durable, and exceptionally easy to construct. Most of the stress was borne by the pegs at each point where the triangles overlap, but since there are so many, no individual point is critical. For these reasons, it became one of the most popular forms of support for wooden bridges.

Although today he is recognized primarily as one of America's foremost architects, Ithiel Town (1784-1844) achieved a great fortune and world renown through the invention of his lattice truss. Because he collected \$1 per foot in royalties and \$2 per foot if he discovered an infringement of his patent, Town made it a habit to visit in person Northern communities where bridges were being built or considered. Interestingly, the construction of the West Cornwall Bridge is said to have been supervised by Town himself, but even if not, the 242' span remains an excellent example of a major innovation in bridge design.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Allen, Richard S. "Covered Bridges in Connecticut," The Antiquarian, II (November, 1950), 11-19.

_____. Covered Bridges of the Northeast. Brattleboro: Stephen Greene Press, 1957.

Connecticut Department of Transportation, Bureau of Highways, "Restoration of the Covered Bridge," transcript of hearing, Cornwall, October 13, 1971.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one *0.7561*

UTM REFERENCES *74*

A	1,8	6,35	7,80	4,6	3,6	6,1	0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING					ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C								D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The bridge is built across the town line between Cornwall, of which the village of West Cornwall is a part, and Sharon, Connecticut.

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 Bruce Clouette, Consultant

ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission DATE July 25, 1975

STREET & NUMBER 59 South Prospect Street TELEPHONE (203) 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN Hartford STATE CT

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE 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 *John W. Shenn*

TITLE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER DATE 9/29/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Acting *[Signature]* DATE 12/30/75
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: *[Signature]* DATE DEC 29 1975
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

West Cornwall Bridge

9

one

DeVito, Michael C. Connecticut's Old Timbered Crossings. Warehouse Point: DeVito Enterprises, 1964.