

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUL 30 1979

SEP 10 1979

DATE ENTERED

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Atherton Bridge

AND/OR COMMON

Atherton Bridge

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Bolton Road

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Lancaster

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts

CODE

025

COUNTY

Worcester

CODE

027

**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 COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Town of Lancaster

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Town Hall

CITY, TOWN

Lancaster

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Worcester County Registry of Deeds

STREET &amp; NUMBER

2 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Worcester

STATE

Massachusetts

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth

DATE

1977

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Massachusetts Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

294 Washington St., Boston

STATE

Massachusetts

# 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 Atherton Bridge is a single span pony truss constructed in 1870. Located on Bolton Road, in a rural area surrounded by flat, open flood plain, the bridge spans the Nashua River approximately 3/4 miles east of South Lancaster.

The eight truss paneled structure has a span of 72' and width of 18½' and rests on large granite block abutments. Although the bridge is not a patented version of the post truss like the nearby Ponakin Bridge (NR-eligible) it employs many Post truss features such as diagonal compression members that incline toward the center of the bridge and riveted dual tension rods that incline outward, the outermost of which extend two panels and the others across one panel. Compression members are Phoenix Columns (patented by the Phoenix Iron Co. of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania). The end posts are vertical dual tension rods. Top chords are riveted compound beams. Floor construction consists of a cross planked deck supported by longitudinal planking on riveted transverse "I" beams that rests directly on the bottom chords, an older type of bridge technology. Wood transverse beams notched to fit over the bottom chords are spaced between each "I" beam.

Because several compression members are loose from their fittings, the bridge has been closed to traffic for several years.



## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Allen, Richard S., Iron Bridges on S.S. Post's Patent  
 Condit, Carl, American Building Art, 19th C., vol I, pp. 145-6, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1960
- Marvin, Abijah P., History of Lancaster 1652-1879, Lancaster 1879  
 Town Clerk and Selectmen's records  
 Correspondence with Donald Jackson, HAER

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 1/4 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Clinton, MA

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 280215 4702390

B                        

C                        

D                        

E                        

F                        

G                        

H                        

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Atherton Bridge is located on Bolton Road where the road crosses the Nashua River.

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 Elizabeth T. Durfee  
Inventory Coordinator

with Phyllis and Lee Farnsworth  
 (for) Lancaster Historical Commission

ORGANIZATION  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

DATE  
July 1, 1979

STREET & NUMBER  
294 Washington Street

TELEPHONE  
617-727-8470

CITY OR TOWN  
Boston,

STATE  
Massachusetts

## 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 R. Weseloh* 7/18/79

TITLE Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*John C. Shull*  
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER  
 ATTEST: *Margaret Oulay*  
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 9-10-79

DATE 9/10/79

Property Atherton Bridge

State Mass. (Worcester) Working Number 7.30.79.1809

**TECHNICAL**

Photos     
Maps   

**CONTROL**

*OK 7.30.79*

**HISTORIAN**

*One of 2 remaining examples known to the Post  
tuss, a popular tuss in RR construction in the  
last 1/2 of the 19th C. Atherton Bridge was, in addition,  
part of a major transportation route.*

*Accept  
Ouelus  
9/10/79*

**ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN**

**ARCHEOLOGIST**

**OTHER**

**HAER**

Inventory     
Review   

**REVIEW UNIT CHIEF**

*Accept. Ouelus  
9/10/79*

**BRANCH CHIEF**

**KEEPER**

National Register Write-up     
Federal Register Entry 10-2-79

Send-back     
Re-submit   

Entered SEP 10 1979



Atherton Bridge  
Lancaster, MA  
Phyllis A. Farnsworth  
Lancaster Historical Commission  
August 1977  
looking northeast

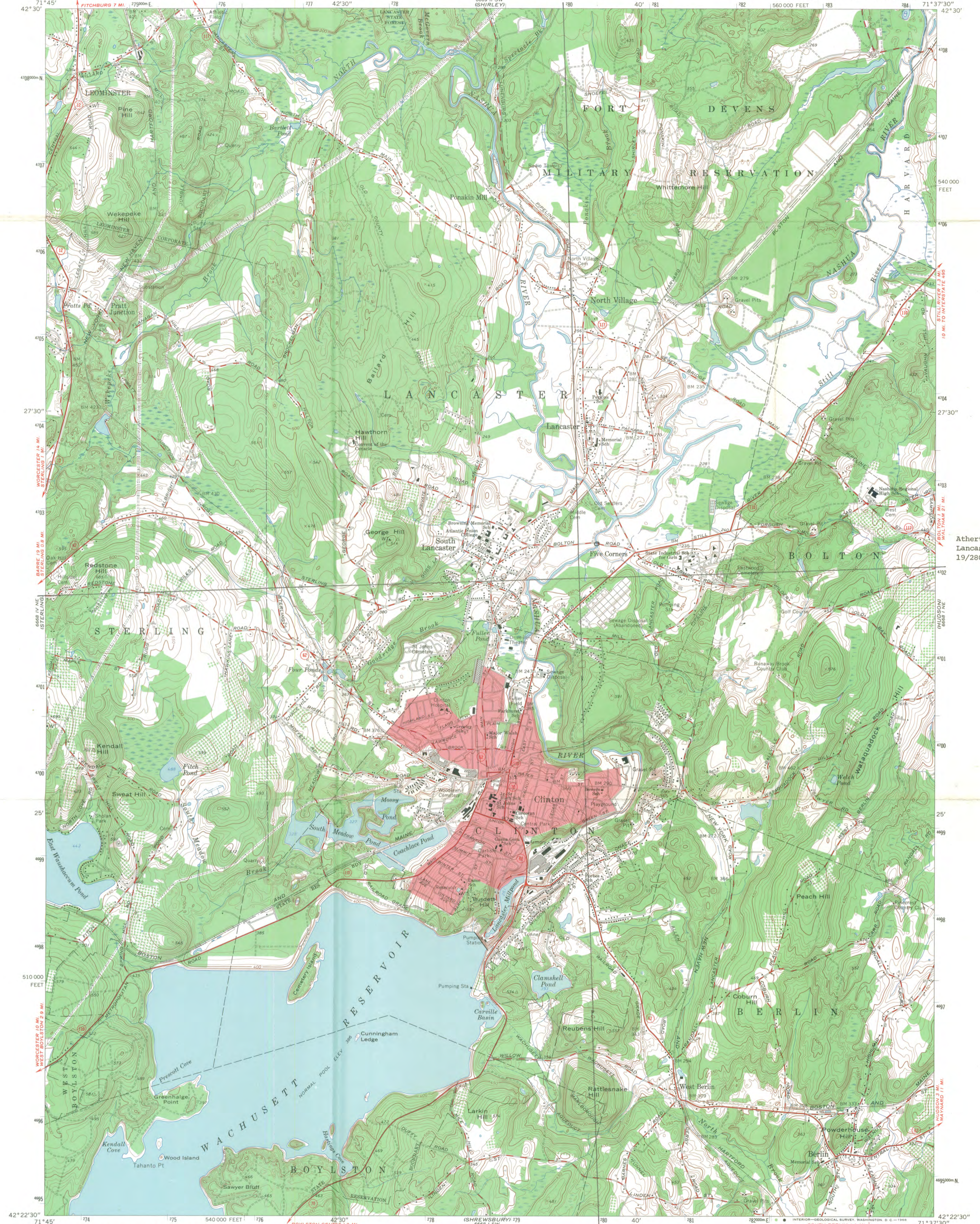
SEP 10 1979

Worcester  
JUL 30 1979 County

Atherton Bridge, Bolton Road, Lancaster, Mass.,  
Created 1875, From southeast side of bridge facing  
northeast, photo by Phyllis A. Farnsworth, August 1977

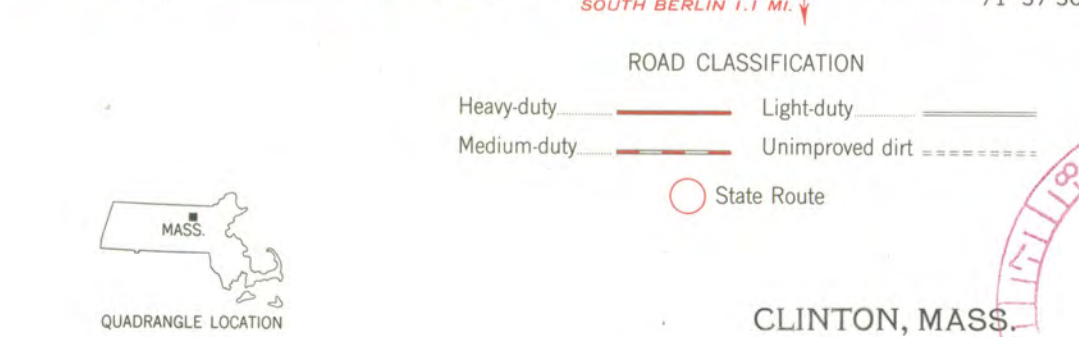
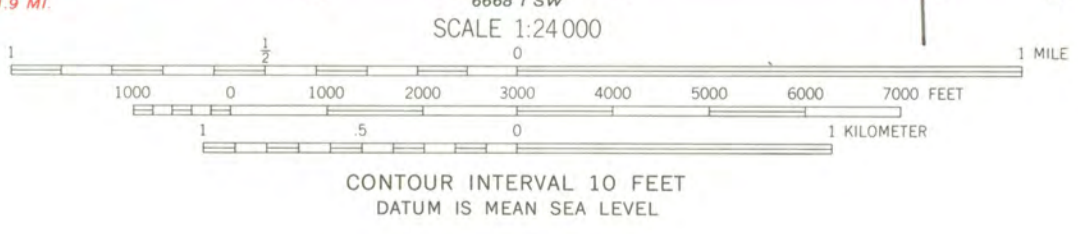
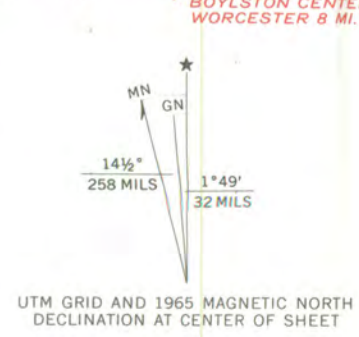
6668 II SE  
(FITCHBURG)

6668 II SE  
(WALTHAM)



Atherton Bridge  
Lancaster, MA  
19/280215/4702390

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey  
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs  
taken 1939. Topography by planetable surveys 1923 and 1940  
Revised 1965  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,  
mainland zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 19, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown



CLINTON, MASS.  
N4222.5-W7137.5/75

1965  
AMS 6668 I NW—SERIES V814

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



473 Harvard Road  
Lancaster, Mass. 01523  
31 July 1978



To the Board of Selectmen and the Road Commissioners  
Lancaster, Massachusetts 01523

Gentlemen:

I have just received confirmation from the Chief of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) of the Department of the Interior in Washington, D. C., that both the Atherton and Ponakin Bridges are of significant historical importance and should be saved if at all possible. He states that "Both bridges date from the early 1870's and are rare examples of the Post truss." "Taken together, the bridges comprise a unique pair of structures representing an important aspect of America's engineering heritage." "Many Post trusses were built throughout America, but the two in Lancaster are the only ones the HAER knows to survive."

The town already has provided repair funds to maintain the Ponakin Bridge operational at a minimum restricted load, and it is on a roadway that has very little traffic now since the new Lunenburg Road has been opened.

The Atherton Bridge, however, has been closed for a number of years and is planned to be torn down and replaced, and is on a roadway that would have heavy traffic if it were opened again. With this confirmation of its significance, we should initiate new plans to save it.

A way to do this would be first to leave the Atherton Bridge in its present location, and repair it enough to use it for foot traffic, horseback riding and other recreational uses. These uses would tie-in well with the Master Plan for the town, and the uses of the Nashua River Greenway in this area. Then second, move the highway south and build a new bridge there to support the traffic expected on this roadway..

Enclosed is further information on historic truss bridges and their preservation.

Sincerely,

*Phyllis A. Farnsworth*

Phyllis A. Farnsworth  
National Register Coordinator for  
Lancaster Historical Commission

Encl: Ltr dtd 7/26/78 from  
Douglas L. Griffin, HAER  
Information on Simeon S. Post  
Article, Sec 3, Executive Order 11593, Historic Bridge  
Preservation at the Community Level

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

MASSACHUSETTS

STATE

Date Entered **SEP 10 1979**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Atherton Bridge	Lancaster Worcester County
Ponakin Bridge	Lancaster vicinity Worcester County
International Trust Company Building	Boston Suffolk County

Also Notified

Honorable Paul G. Tsongas

Honorable Edward M. Kennedy  
Honorable Edward P. Boland  
Honorable John J. Moakley

State Historic Preservation Officer  
Mrs. Patricia L. Weslowski  
Executive Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
294 Washington Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

NR Byers/bjr 9/18/79