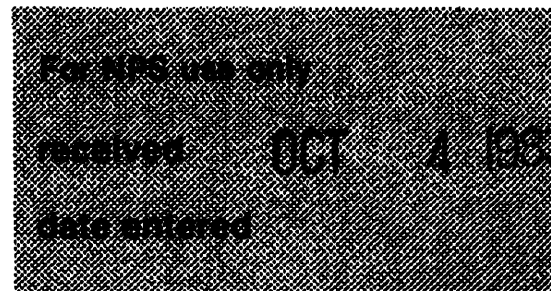


**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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Item number 7

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NAME: Main Street Bridge

LOCATION: Main Street at Pawtucket Falls of Blackstone River

OWNER: City of Pawtucket

137 Roosevelt Avenue

Pawtucket, RI 02860

CONDITION: Good; altered; original site

DESCRIPTION:

The original portion of the Main Street Bridge is a double-arch, stone, highway bridge, approximately 105 feet long between abutments, carrying a c. 25-foot roadbed over the Blackstone River at Pawtucket Falls. This original masonry bridge has been widened to the south twice during the twentieth century to achieve its present overall width of approximately 90 feet (c. 60-foot roadbed, c. 30-foot sidewalks). The original bridge has two slightly flattened arches, each of approximately 40-foot span, and each rising approximately 14 feet above its springing points. The central pier of the bridge stands on a ledge immediately below the V-shaped point of "the lower dam" (as opposed to the Slater Dam just upstream); the western wing of the lower dam passes under the western arch of the original bridge; the eastern wing terminates against the eastern bank of the river just upstream of the bridge. The height of the roadbed above the mean water level of the Blackstone, then, is roughly 18 feet on the upstream side of the dam, and approximately 35 feet on the downstream side. The piers, arches, spandrels, and abutments of the original bridge are all of coursed granite ashlar construction. All stones are left rock-faced except for the arch voussoirs, upon whose lower edges a continuous narrow draft has been carefully worked.

The coursed granite ashlar abutments for an early twentieth-century widening of the bridge remain; the deck which these abutments originally carried, however, appears to have been replaced during a later enlargement project in the 1960s. This 1960s enlargement involved the erection of new reinforced-concrete abutments south of the already once-enlarged stone abutments, and the construction of a reinforced-concrete deck, carried on eight steel I-beams. A new reinforced-concrete sidewalk with a steel railing seems to have replaced an earlier sidewalk and railing on the northern face of the bridge at this time as well.

PERIOD: 1800-1899

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Transportation; Engineering

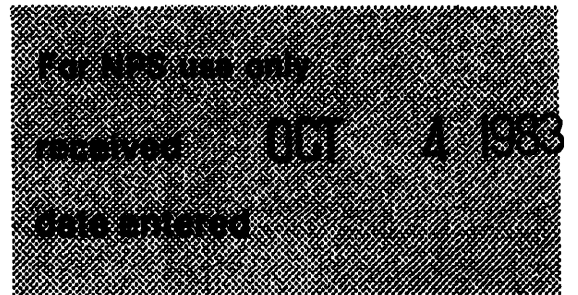
SPECIFIC DATE: 1858

ENGINEER: Samuel Cushing BUILDER: Luther Kingsley

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**SIGNIFICANCE:**

The Main Street Bridge appears to be the oldest major highway bridge still in use in Rhode Island. The last in a long series of bridges erected on this site to carry overland traffic moving between Providence (and areas even further south) and Boston, it and its predecessors have served both to link the two communities growing up on either side of the Blackstone and to stimulate the growth of their commerce and industry.

The earliest bridge on this site, a short-lived wooden structure of unknown configuration, was erected in 1713 with funds provided by both Massachusetts and Rhode Island. This original structure was replaced around 1735, and other major rebuildings or replacements occurred in 1741, c. 1807, 1817, 1832, and 1843. All of these earlier bridges were built of wood; the present structure, opened to traffic on November 4, 1858, was the first masonry bridge erected on this site. The 1858 bridge was designed by the Providence engineer, Samuel Cushing, and was built by the Fall River mason, Luther Kingsley, under Cushing's supervision. Although somewhat disguised by its twentieth-century additions, the core of the 1858 bridge still remains largely intact, and is an impressive surviving example of the nineteenth-century bridge-builder's art.

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**

The nominated property includes the Main Street Bridge from (and including) its eastern abutment to its western abutment.

ACREAGE: less than one  
LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local  
UTM: A 19 302180 4638600

(See Continuation Sheet #113)