

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Covered Bridges of Erie County Thematic Resources

and/or common

2. Location

street & number

not for publication

city, town

vicinity of

congressional district

24

state Pennsylvania

code 42

county Erie

code 049

3. Classification

Category

☐ district
☐ building(s)
☐ structure
☐ site
☐ object
☒ The matie

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 Multiple

street & number

city, town

vicinity of

state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Erie County Courthouse

street & number West Sixth Street

city, town Erie

state Penna

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Erie County Historical & Architectural Preservation Plan

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

date June 1976

☐ federal ☐ state ☒ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Erie County Planning Department

city, town Erie

state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition☐ excellent☒ good☒ fair☐ deteriorated☐ ruins☐ unexposed**Check one**☐ unaltered☒ altered**Check one**☒ original site☐ moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Only four covered briges remain in Erie County today. Three use the kingpost trussing system and one the Town laitice trust. The attached inventory sheets describe each bridge in more detail. =

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Located in the far northwestern part of the Commonwealth the four covered bridges of Erie County are the only remaining in this part of the state. These four bridges are all that remain of what was once a total of fourteen for the county. Located on country roads they have managed to survive the hundred years since their construction. Three of the bridges were built by one builder William Sherman in the years 1868 and 1870. These three are identical in styling and use the multiple kingpost trussing system. The fourth bridge was built in 1875 with Richard Cross as the architect and Charles and James Phelps as the builders. This bridge uses the Town lattice truss developed by Ithiel Town in 1820.

These remaining covered bridges are the only surviving examples of a period and style of bridge building in Erie County, as well as the Commonwealth as a whole.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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RECEIVED JUL 1 1980

DATE ENTERED SEP 17 1980

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Covered Bridges of Erie County Thematic Resource
Erie County

CONTINUATION SHEET

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The covered bridge is an important and significant historic structure in the Commonwealth of Pa. Not only does Pa. have the most extant covered bridges today, it probably had the most during the height of the covered bridge period 1830 to 1875. Estimates have been made that Pa. once had at least 1500 covered bridges. (Allen, 1959: 51). Not only is the sheer number important but Pa. had the first known U.S. covered bridge, as well as the prototypes for most of the major truss types.

The first US covered bridge was located in Philadelphia over the Schuylkill, built in 1800 by Timothy Palmer, a master carpenter from Newburyport, Massachusetts. From the completion of this first bridge, the age of the covered bridge was upon Pa. Not only was the truss types of Burr and others first tried out in Pa. but the covered bridge spread as the local carpenter adapted it to the local problem of crossing the numerous small streams and creeks throughout Pa. The covered bridge is also important in the history of bridge building. The early stone arch bridges were really only practical on smaller streams and then in areas with an abundance of good building stone. The peak of the stone bridge in Pa. can be seen in the Rockville Bridge over the Susquehanna River built by the Pa. Railroad and contains a quarter of a million tons of stone. The covered bridge was the transition from the stone to the cast-iron in most places.

Since the heyday of the covered bridge they have been rapidly disappearing through neglect, flood, arson and progress. Prior to the Agnes Flood of 1972, Pa. had 271 covered bridges, spread across 41 of its 67 counties. Since that time the number has been decreasing at a fast rate. Because of their importance, the state level National Register Review Committee as well as the Office of Historic Preservation have embarked on a covered bridge survey and registration project. A survey form and inquiry letter were developed and mailed to county bridge engineers, historical societies, members of the Society of Industrial Archaeologists, the Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Society and numerous others. To date we have information on approx. 3/4 of the 41 counties containing covered bridges. Our results to date show that the number of covered bridges is down about a third from the 1972 figure of 271. Just since beginning our survey, two bridges have been destroyed by arson and one by an overloaded truck. It is because of

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this rapid disappearance rate, as well as their significance to Pa. in the history of transportation that we intend to nominate as many as possible to the National Register of Historic Places. Because of time and the immensity of the task a thematic nomination covering the whole state is impossible. We are therefore nominating these structures on a county or two county basis. All bridges constructed after 1930 have been excluded unless the bridge has a significance of its own. Bridge construction dates and builders are not always readily available, therefore after exhausting the files of the bridge engineers, historical societies and the archives, we have been lenient with the bridges for which we could find no dates, mainly on the view that very few have been built in the last 50 years and that the registration of all of these fast disappearing resource is valuable. Moved structures have been included in our nominations for several reasons; firstly in all cases if these structures had not been moved they would have been destroyed, secondly they still retain their significance as examples of trussing types and while they have lost their location they still retain an integrity of location in a rural setting. Therefore we have tended to nominate every eligible covered bridge in each county.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Shank, William H., Historic Bridges of Pennsylvania. York: Bucharthorn, 1966
p. 3-27

Allen, Richard Sanders, Covered Bridges of the Middle Atlantic States Battleboro Vermont: Stephen Greene Press, 1959 PP 73,105,106,110

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED
OF NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property .02

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name _____ See Continuation Sheet

Quadrangle scale _____

UMT References

A

Zone Easting Northing

B

Diagram B shows three empty coordinate axes. The first axis is labeled 'Zone' and has two tick marks. The second axis is labeled 'Easting' and has four tick marks. The third axis is labeled 'Northing' and has four tick marks.

D

The figure shows three bar charts, each with a horizontal axis representing the number of children (0 to 10) and a vertical axis representing frequency. The first chart has two bars of height 1 at positions 1 and 2. The second chart has five bars of height 1 at positions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. The third chart has seven bars of height 1 at positions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

E

1	2	3	4
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5	6	7	8
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9	10	11	12
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13	14	15	16
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F U U U U . U U U U

G

H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title	John R. Claridge/Executive Director
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organization Erie County Historical Society

date December 27, 1979

street & number 417 State Society

telephone (814) 454-1813

city or town Erie

state Penna

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national X 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

ED WEINTRAUB, State Historic
title Preservation Officer

date 01/24/80

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

date 7/17/82

Attest: Wm A. Oliver

date Sept 2 1980

Chief of Registration