Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY DATA SHEET
RECEIVED JAN 11 1977
DATE ENTERED AUG 22 1977

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Van Metre Ford Stone Bridge

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Across Opequon Creek on ~~County Route~~ 36 _NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Martinsburg X VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Second

STATE
West Virginia

CODE
54

COUNTY
Berkeley

CODE
003

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
_DISTRICT	X PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	_AGRICULTURE	_MUSEUM
_BUILDING(S)	_PRIVATE	_UNOCCUPIED	_COMMERCIAL	_PARK
X STRUCTURE	_BOTH	_WORK IN PROGRESS	_EDUCATIONAL	_PRIVATE RESIDENCE
_SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	_ENTERTAINMENT	_RELIGIOUS
_OBJECT	_IN PROCESS	_YES: RESTRICTED	_GOVERNMENT	_SCIENTIFIC
	_BEING CONSIDERED	X YES: UNRESTRICTED	_INDUSTRIAL	X TRANSPORTATION
		_NO	_MILITARY	_OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
State of West Virginia (Department of Highways)

STREET & NUMBER
1900 Washington Street, East

CITY, TOWN
Charleston _ VICINITY OF

STATE
West Virginia 25305

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Berkeley County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
King and Queen Streets

CITY, TOWN
Martinsburg

STATE
West Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Berkeley County Historical Society and Berkeley County Historical Landmarks Commission Survey

DATE
1973-74

_FEDERAL _STATE X COUNTY _LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Berkeley County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN
Martinsburg

STATE
West Virginia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
X GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This three-span, stone-arch bridge was built in 1832 by Silas Harry under contract with the Berkeley County Court. It was constructed in order to eliminate the fording of Opequon Creek when traveling on the Warm Springs Road.

The bridge is 165 feet long and is built of uncoursed ashlar limestone masonry. Each of the three segmental arches, delineated with smooth-surfaced, but irregular width, voussoirs, springs from low, round-ended piers that have cone-shaped buttresses carried into the solid masonry spandrels. The center arch spans 32 feet while each of the end arches spans 29.6 feet.

Parapet walls appear to have had cement capping added at some later time. Low pylons, also capped with cement, terminate the parapet walls at the approaches to the bridge. In plan, the structure is wider at the ends (22 feet) then at the center (16 feet). The stone work in the piers and buttresses as well as in the voussoirs is especially precise. Mortar erosion over the years has revealed closely fit joints.

The only changes to the bridge have been resurfacing of the road and repair to the walls above the roadline where automobile accidents have caused destruction. Although worn, the stonework has held up superbly to the stresses of load and the forces of the elements.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION	
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE	
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE	
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
__1700-1799	__ART	X ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER	
X 1800-1899	X COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	X TRANSPORTATION	
X 1900-	X COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		__INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1832 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Silas Harry

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Van Metre Ford Stone Bridge in Berkeley County, West Virginia, played a significant part in the development of the local transportation system and helped spur commerce and communication by making the crossing of Opequon Creek easier and less expensive. Constructed by a private bridge builder (a stone mason no doubt) under the auspices and guidance of a commission appointed by the county court, the method of proceeding with this type of improvement was important in its own right as indicative of the role of government in the field of transportation regulation and development. The product was a structure of utility and beauty, for the rise in height and constriction in width toward the center combined with the stout but graceful buttresses and purposeful but pleasing arches to provide a water crossing able to carry the heaviest load through what has always been a picturesque setting.

The opening of new land and the building of a new nation after the Revolutionary War found a literal and figurative barrier in the lengthy chain of mountains called the Appalachians, even while the cry for internal improvements emphasized the development of greater commercial accessibility to the hinterland. The first phase of the process, in many instances, was reaching the mountains from the cities and waterways of the eastern coastal areas. Roads, canals and eventually railroads became enterprises of benefit to more than just the subscribers to each effort, and the undertakings required the outlays of groups rather than individuals. This basically took the form of a variety of private, quasi-public and public companies, but all transportation development came in one way or another to call upon the resources of local governments.

Major links like the National Road, Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and Baltimore and Ohio Railroad would be the outstanding and primary objectives, yet it was the local turnpike, waterway and railroad spur that touched small farmers, craftsmen and the general public most directly. Van Metre Ford Stone Bridge, though a minor, almost insignificant, element in the opening of the interior, represents effort on the local level that complemented the grand design.

Land along Opequon Creek where the bridge stands had been in Van Metre hands since the 1730s, and the Warm Springs Road traversed it early on. This road apparently stretched the distance between Alexandria and the Warm Springs (Bath or Berkeley Springs today), the latter a place frequented because of its quality mineral waters. Probably beginning as little more than a path, the road eventually became a main east-west artery of the area and carried much local commerce and communication. By the nineteenth century there was a need for a set and improved route to serve the visitors to the springs, travelers to eastern cities, mails, drovers headed for markets and the growing amount of local business enterprise. Among improvements decided upon was the upgrading of fords and construction of permanent bridges, and one of the latter was

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Martinsburg (Virginia) Gazette, April 26, 1832.
Martinsburg, W.Va. Berkeley County Courthouse. Court Minute Book "O."
Complete Record Book 1. Will Books 1 and 2.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	18	248045	4370045
B			
C			
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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
James E. Harding, Historian

ORGANIZATION
West Virginia Antiquities Commission

DATE
October 7, 1976

STREET & NUMBER
P.O. Box 630

TELEPHONE
(304) 296-1791

CITY OR TOWN
Morgantown

STATE
West Virginia

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 Leonard M. Davis

TITLE West Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer DATE January 7, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 8/22/77

~~DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION~~
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: Charles A. Cummings

DATE 8/18/77

~~KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER~~

GPO 888-445

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scheduled for the Opequon at the old Van Metre Ford.

Not being a turnpike or legislated highway that had access to funds from subscriptions, special appropriations or lotteries, the Warm Springs Road through Berkeley County had to be improved at local expense. During the early 1830s, the county court established a commission composed of James Doll, Daniel Burkhart and Jacob Vandoren to study the Van Metre crossing and contract for the erection of a stone bridge. In 1832 they reported that a contract had been agreed upon with Silas Harry of Pennsylvania (he had done some bridge building in nearby Maryland). The commissioners were given $850 early in the year and told to obtain stone, timber and other materials necessary. In late April, a local newspaper reported that the bridge would cost $3700, but the matter-of-fact way it was mentioned indicates that the sum, apparently raised by a county levy, neither was viewed as excessive nor the project inappropriate.

Harry used limestone, a common building material of the area, to construct the triple-arch span. Engineering skills in the use of stone for bridges had evolved over a fairly long period, but the arches became wider and higher and piers narrower as new techniques developed and understanding of stresses and pressures progressed. In the Van Metre Bridge, Harry translated engineering skills into an attractive passage over the Opequon. The stonework itself was well executed, and the varied sizes of the blocks has provided an interesting backdrop to the seemingly smooth and proportioned voussoirs of the arches. All is complemented by the cone-shaped buttresses on the piers to either side of the main arch.

Since 1832 the Van Metre Ford Stone Bridge has served the area well, at first as a major crossing of an important waterway on a primary transportation route and more recently as a convenient (though narrow) crossing of a small stream on a secondary road. Modern highway development and bridge engineering have passed it by, but the strength of its stout construction has defied the destructive forces of the elements and man-made obstacles. Utility in purpose has now been transcended by attractiveness in setting and design in stone to make the structure a landmark unique in the area.