

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

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JUN 19 1984
date entered JUL 19 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Pequabuck Bridge

and or common Meadow Road Bridge

2. Location

street & number Meadow Road at the Pequabuck River N/A not for publication

city, town Farmington N/A vicinity of

state CT code 09 county Hartford code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	N/A <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: out of service

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Farmington

street & number Town Hall--1 Monteith Drive

city, town Farmington N/A vicinity of state CT 06032

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Town Clerk's Records--Town Hall

street & number 1 Monteith Drive

city, town Farmington state CT

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town 59 South Prospect Street, Hartford state CT

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved <input type="checkbox"/> date
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Meadow Road Bridge (Photograph 1), formerly known as Pequabuck Bridge, is an arched, brownstone span that was built in 1832-1833. It stands about one mile south of Farmington center and about 1,000 feet west of present-day Route 10. Until recently it carried Meadow Road over the Pequabuck River. Today, a new bridge about 300 feet to the west carries the road and the old bridge is closed to vehicular traffic. East and north of the bridge lies the densely settled area of Farmington. To the west and south is the plateau that was known in the early 19th century as the Great Plain, an area of upland farms and swamps.

Meadow Road Bridge is a brownstone-rubble arch with cut-and-fitted brownstone voussoirs at the outside edges of the arch (Photograph 2). The arch spans about 22 feet and its highest point is about 11 feet over the Pequabuck River; the roadway is about 20 feet wide. At the corners of the bridge, brownstone-rubble wing walls flare outward from the arch for a length of 12 feet. The rubble spandrels of the arch are surmounted by two-and-one-half-feet-high rubble parapets (Photograph 3); the south parapet has been refaced with concrete. The roadway (currently blacktop) rests on soil and stone that fills between the sides of the bridge and above the arch. An earth embankment extends westward from the bridge, sloping downward by some 15 feet over its 200-foot length (Photograph 4).

The rubble stones in the arch range in size from eight inches up to three feet (Photograph 5). Most of the larger pieces are squared, while the smaller ones are unfinished. Traces of lime mortar are evident in the interstices, but recent repairs have utilized concrete grouting. The voussoirs (Photograph 6) are 25 inches high and flare from 13-inches width at bottom to 15 inches at top. The keystones (Photograph 7) are two inches higher than the others, and protrude slightly from the arch's sides; they bear the carved date of construction, 1833. The voussoirs vary in depth from 15 inches to 28 inches, providing an irregular inside face to bind them solidly to the rubble interior of the arch (Photograph 8).

The bridge retains its historic appearance and, except for the grout and parapet, its original material. When it was built, an embankment ran approximately 450 feet east from the bridge, to the point where Meadow Road crossed the Farmington Canal; much of this embankment is gone. Cracks have developed in the arch, including one that reaches a width of six inches, and

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Description (continued):

a hole has eroded all the way through from the roadway to the arch. A recent (1982) preliminary engineering study maintained that the bridge is sufficiently sound to merit rehabilitation, so these structural flaws can be considered non-threatening to the survival of the bridge.

During construction of the nearby new bridge, the Pequabuck River was rechanneled away from the old brownstone structure. Two feet of fill under the brownstone arch prevent scouring from the small amount of water that still passes through the old riverbed. A pipe culvert carries this water through the fill.

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 checked="" 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)

Criteria A,C

Specific dates 1832-1833--built **Builder/Architect** not known

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Meadow Road Bridge is significant because it is an extremely rare example of an early 19th-century, masonry town bridge. Stone offered the most solid construction available, and its expense was quite high relative to the more commonly used wood. Masonry bridges went up where high levels of use demanded greater durability. Meadow Road Bridge embodies the vernacular masonry techniques that were used for everything from residences to engineering structures, whenever maximum solidity was a consideration (Criterion C). Meadow Road Bridge is also significant in the local history of Farmington (Criterion A), because it illuminates the effects of the Farmington Canal on the community: accelerated commercial growth, greater expenditures for the growing surface-transportation system, and the need for physical coordination between the town's road system and the canal.

In the second half of the 18th century the quest for land to cultivate impelled the sons of Farmington residents to range farther and farther from the central settlement. Led by members of the well-to-do Cowles family, Farmington people established farms in the Great Plain, the area that was incorporated as the town of Plainville in 1869. After the Revolutionary War, agricultural-based commerce underwent tremendous expansion, as Farmington farmers sold their surplus output to local merchants who assembled shipments of grain and cattle to sell in the nation's growing cities or to export to the West Indies. These two trends of geographic expansion and commercial growth put pressure on the transportation routes over which farmers carried their goods to the merchants in the center. Farmers west of town, from the Great Plain and its northern meadows, had to cross the Pequabuck River, which lay between their farms and the town center, so this crossing came in for close attention. In 1801, the town meeting appropriated \$200 to improve the wooden bridge then in place. Then in 1819 the town rebuilt it entirely, using timber.

Farmington merchants played an important role in the promotion and financing of the Farmington Canal. The canal increased the town's prosperity, making it a market center for the region including not only western Farmington but also Burlington and Canton. The surge in road traffic that resulted again brought the condition of bridges to the top of the town's agenda. In 1830 a committee of the selectmen plus two western farmers, Richard Cowles and Joshua Youngs, was appointed to study the town's bridges. Two were found

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bickford, Christopher P., Farmington in Connecticut (Canaan, New Hampshire, 1982), chap. 12.
 Farmington Town Meeting Records, volume 2, 1800-1840, pp. 92-93, 239, 246, 248, 256.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1

Quadrangle name New Britain

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	1 8	6 7 19 6 6 0	4 6 2 0 3 4 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			
E			
G			

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D			
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property includes only the bridge and the remaining embankment that were part of the right-of-way as constructed in the 1830s. Thus all the material relating to this crossing will be encompasses.

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name title Matthew Roth & Bruce Clouette, Partners edited by: John Herzan, National Register Coordinator
 organization Historic Resource Consultants date February 20, 1984
 street & number 55 Van Dyke Ave. telephone 203 547-0268
 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 *[Signature]*
 title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date 6/13/84

For NPS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
[Signature] date 7/19/84
 Keeper of the National Register
 Attest: date
 Chief of Registration

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Significance (continued):

inadequate: Pequabuck Bridge (i.e., Meadow Road Bridge) and Perry's Bridge in the northern part of town. The relatively greater importance of the Pequabuck crossing is apparent in the committee's recommendation to rebuild it in stone, while wood was specified for the new Perry's Bridge.

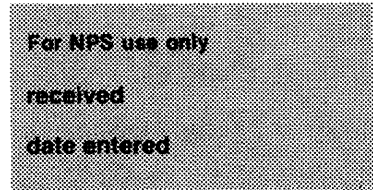
The recommendations took full account of physical coordination with the canal, which Meadow Road crossed about 450 feet east of the Pequabuck River. The committee made the requirements that the new stone bridge be the same height as the one over the canal, and that an embankment be built between the two bridges so that travel would proceed at a constant grade. Without the embankment, wagons would have had to climb and descend two rises within several hundred feet. The resolution that approved the plan was contingent on the canal company's agreeing to "raise and extend the Canal bridge embankment between the canal bridge and river bridge, in such manner as that the one may be adapted to the other; and provided that the canal company will permit the town to take gravel from the Company's ground for the purpose of extending the embankment westwardly from the river bridge."¹

The relative prosperity of Farmington, and the provision of materials by the canal company, enabled construction of the stone bridge. Connecticut towns rarely undertook such ambitious bridge-building projects in the early 19th century; the great majority of town bridges in the state were of wood. There was not even a mason in Farmington who could perform the work, so Horace Cowles took on the task of finding a qualified contractor. His four finalists came from the towns of Windham, Woodbridge, Watertown and Haddam. (The contract for the bridge's construction has not survived, so it is not possible to determine which of the four actually performed the work.) Farmington was not extravagant with its public expenditures, despite opting for the more expensive stone construction. Economical construction was assured by limiting the cutting and fitting of stones to only the areas where it was absolutely necessary, the outside edges of the arch. Even with the savings from this technique, the bridge cost \$1,081, nearly twice as much as the \$546 it took to rebuild Perry's Bridge in timber.² The limited use of cut stone makes Meadow Road Bridge highly distinctive. In comparison, Hartford's Main Street Bridge, another arched brownstone span from the early 1830s, has cut-and-fitted masonry for the entire underside of the arch, the spandrels and the parapets.

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Significance (continued):

The idiosyncratic mix of finished and unfinished stone identifies Meadow Road Bridge as the product of a specific time and place. Farmington had more wealth than most inland Connecticut communities, permitting the use of the more expensive stone construction. But its people still retained the basic conservative impulse of outlying Connecticut towns, and they would not countenance the fullest application of expensive masons' labor. Thus Meadow Road Bridge illuminates the concerns of a community as its economy evolved from one of subsistence and local commerce to one of market growth based on regional and extra-regional trade. The bridge also makes clear the impact of the Farmington Canal. Not only did the canal contribute significantly to the growth of the market economy, but it altered the physical makeup of the town and forced the townspeople to adapt their road system to the new conditions.

Meadow Road Bridge belongs to an extremely small group of early 19th-century, masonry town bridges. Ante-bellum stone bridges were built by the Housatonic Railroad and by factory owners, but publicly funded stone bridges were not common. Meadow Road Bridge and Hartford's Main Street Bridge are the only examples of their size known to survive in the state.

NOTES

1. Farmington Town Meeting Records, II: 248 (1831).
2. Farmington Town Records, Bridges and Highways, Record Group 62, Box 30 (Town Accounts, 1832-33), Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

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Farmington Town Records, Bridges and Highways, Record Group 62, Boxes 19, 30,
State Library, Hartford.

A.G. Lichtenstein & Associates, Inc., Consulting Engineers, Preliminary Inspection
Report, November 5, 1982; copy at Connecticut Historical Commission, Hartford.