

DATA SHEET PH028 1026

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED OCT 8 1975

DATE ENTERED

JAN 1 1978

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 Comstock's Bridge

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Route 16 at Salmon River

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

East Hampton

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd - Christopher Dodd

STATE

Connecticut

VICINITY OF

CODE

09

COUNTY

Middlesex

CODE

007

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"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME State of Connecticut

STREET & NUMBER

State Office Building - Capitol Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. East Hampton Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

94 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

East Hampton

STATE

CT

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources

DATE

1975

__FEDERAL STATE __COUNTY __LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Comstock's Bridge spans the Salmon River at the boundary of Colchester and Easthampton, Connecticut. Originally part of the road to Middletown, the bridge is now the focal point of a wooded picnic area; the highway, Connecticut Route 16, now crosses the river a short distance downstream. The main span is a covered one-lane (about 12') wide bridge, 80' long and about 15' above the river, having plank sides, a moderately pitched roof, cedar shingles, and oval portals. Two square unglazed window openings have been cut into the sides, and wooden latticed gates prevent vehicular traffic.

The bridge is borne by a Howe truss, which combines crossed wooden diagonals with iron tie rods for uprights. The stringers are built up of thick lapped planks, and the floor, laid parallel to the bridge over a diagonally-planked sub-floor, is borne by joists reinforced with diagonal supports. The east pier of this span is of dressed granite laid as regular ashlar, but the west abutment is of both granite and a mixed-stone mortared rubble, suggesting a later rebuilding of the abutment.

A second wooden span of 30' connects the east pier of the covered bridge with the eastern abutment, built of unmortared rubble, mostly flat stones. This shorter span is uncovered, leaving the floor and its bracing, which projects at an angle from the sides, exposed. However, the trusses are boxed in with vertical planking, and topped with a peaked cap. The design of this part as well as the difference in the abutments suggests that this is a remnant of an earlier bridge, but this is conjecture.

Most alterations have been made necessary by wear and tear, but nevertheless these have been extensive. In the 1920's a truck crashed through the floor, necessitating much repair. The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Thirties did a great deal of work on the bridge, installing the gates and windows as well as making important replacements, such as roof and floor supports, stringer sections, and siding, for which they used old barn boards. Some of the older, narrower siding may remain. Similar repairs, including a new cedar roof and spacers between the sides and the structural members, were made when the bridge was renovated as part of a park. At one point the truss was braced with steel plates at the joints.

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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Comstock's Bridge is significant because it is one of only three covered bridges left in Connecticut and because it exhibits structural features which are of interest in the history of wooden bridges. Because they sheltered their supporting members from decay, covered bridges were once common throughout America, yet comparatively few are left. Although no longer used by traffic, Comstock's Bridge, located in a state-maintained picnic area, is widely accessible, thereby increasing its value as an historic resource.

The short 30' span which serves as an entrance ramp on the east bank is typical of construction prior to covered bridges, although it is not known that it precedes the main span. In this short section, the trusses themselves, the weight-bearing members, are protected by being encased in wooden planks, but the floor and the projecting braces which hold the floor's supports are all exposed. Most New England bridges were built like this until covered bridges with their greater protection became the norm.

Secondly, Comstock's Bridge exhibits a revolutionary step in bridge building, the use of iron at a key structural point. Although it cannot be precisely dated, it apparently was there in 1868 and cannot have been built before 1840, when its truss design was invented.¹ The Howe truss overcomes the chief defect of designs which used wooden uprights: under load, the joints between vertical, horizontal and diagonal members tended to work loose. For the wooden uprights Howe substituted adjustable iron tie rods, in essence binding the whole structure together with iron and thereby providing a rigidity and a security to the truss previously unknown. This also made building easier, since complicated joinery was made less critical. Howe's design became widely accepted, and Comstock's Bridge is an example of the many bridges built with this innovation, a step toward the structural iron bridge.

Although much of Comstock's Bridge is not original - the floors, siding, roof - repair and reconstruction have generally been thoughtful, insuring the retention of the appearance of a typical covered bridge. More to the point, however, the main structural element, the truss, is as it was, and together with the shorter span, is an important artifact in documenting attempts to build stronger and more durable bridges.

¹Beers' Atlas of New London County (New York: Beers, Ellis & Soule, 1868).

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Allen, Richard S. "Covered Bridges in Connecticut," The Antiquarian, II (November, 1950), 11-19.

_____. Covered Bridges of the Northeast. Brattleboro: Stephen Greene Press, 1957.

Interview with Alice Campbell, former resident, July 19, 1975.

DeVito, Michael C. Connecticut's Old Timbered Crossings. Warehouse Point: DeVito Enterprises, 1964.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 712750 4603080
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Connecticut	09	New London	011
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Bruce Clouette, Consultant

ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission DATE July 25, 1975

STREET & NUMBER 59 South Prospect Street TELEPHONE (203) 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN Hartford STATE CT

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE X 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 W. Shunnahan*

TITLE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER DATE 9/29/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE <u>1/1/76</u>
ATTEST: <u><i>Ronald M. Greenberg</i></u>	DATE <u>12/30/75</u>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	