

PH 0662071

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED FEB 6 1978  
DATE ENTERED MAY 22 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 Cumberland Covered Bridge

AND/OR COMMON Matthews Covered Bridge

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER County Road 1000 East over Mississinewa River NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Matthews VICINITY OF 5th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE Indiana CODE 018 COUNTY Grant CODE 053

CLASSIFICATION

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>OWNERSHIP</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>PRESENT USE</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input 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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Board of Commissioners for Grant County

STREET & NUMBER Grant County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN Marion VICINITY OF STATE Indiana

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Records Office

STREET & NUMBER Grant County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN Marion STATE Indiana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

DATE 1972 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Department of Natural Resources, Div. of Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN Indianapolis STATE Indiana

# 7 DESCRIPTION

**CONDITION**  
 EXCELLENT                       DETERIORATED  
 GOOD                                 RUINS  
 FAIR                                  UNEXPOSED

**CHECK ONE**  
 UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

**CHECK ONE**  
 ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Cumberland Covered Bridge is a Howe Truss single span across the Mississinewa River at the east edge of Matthews, Indiana.

The bridge is 175 feet long, rests on stone abutments, and has four foot overhangs at each end. A gabled shingled roof is supported by square portals which provide a clearance of sixteen feet above an asphalt roadbed. The structure is a Howe Truss with wooden cross braces which form boxed X's along the sides. The vertical posts of the boxes are iron rods. Vertical wood siding covers the truss skelton. A two foot opening along the top of the sides admits light and air to the bridge interior. The exterior is painted red with white on the portals; the interior is white.

The original floor consisted of white oak planks. Flood damage in 1913 resulted in several changes. The structure was raised by increasing the height of each abutment three feet. In removing and replacing the siding and roof, the only major change was the use of sheet metal instead of shingles for the roof material. Heavy snow caused the 1913 sheet metal roof to collapse on December 20, 1973; and the roof was replaced with shingles to match more closely the 1877 appearance. In 1976 steel barriers were erected at each entrance to limit traffic using the bridge. Other alterations have been restricted to painting and routine maintenance.

# 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 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 checked="" 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 1877

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Robert W. Smith

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cumberland Covered Bridge is an important surviving example of engineering techniques used to meet transportation needs in the nineteenth century.

In March, 1863, forty petitioners appeared before the Grant County Commissioners to request that a bridge be erected over the Mississinewa River at New Cumberland. The Commissioners responded to the request and paid William F. Parks \$722 in 1865 to construct a wooden span. This first bridge was an open structure which rotted in ten years.

The County turned to the Smith Bridge Company of Toledo, Ohio to build a new bridge. The Smith Bridge Company was awarded a contract on August 8, 1876, to construct an open Howe Truss bridge. Robert W. Smith established this Ohio firm in 1867. Smith was a native of Ohio, and although he had little formal education, he developed engineering skills from his natural talent and brief years as an apprentice. In 1867 and 1869 he received design patents for what is known as the Smith Patented Truss. Earlier he had developed a self-supporting roof truss system for large barns. Until taken over in the early 1890's by the Toledo Bridge Company, the Smith Bridge Company was associated with at least 43 Indiana covered bridges. As a rule, after being cut and assembled in the Toledo yard, timbers were dismantled and shipped by rail or water to the bridge site. A local agent or carpenter from the Toledo yard would then make the final assembly.

The Smith Company charged \$18.50 per lineal foot to construct the Cumberland Bridge without siding and a roof. After the bridge was completed in 1877, Peter Millspaugh, a local carpenter, and his fifteen year old son William finished the bridge by adding siding and a roof.

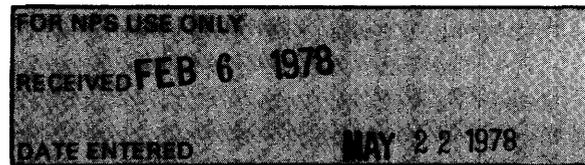
The bridge served the village of New Cumberland which had been laid out in 1833. In addition to providing a route for farmers north of the Mississinewa River to come into New Cumberland, the bridge gave the village and farmers south of the river access to the larger town of Hartford City. As a transportation link, the structure became more important after the gas boom of the late 1800's created more towns and commercial activity in the area. The settlement of Matthews was founded in 1895 near New Cumberland. The brick and 23 glass factories in Matthews no doubt relied heavily on the covered bridge. When it was officially incorporated in 1902, Matthews was expanded to include the old village of New Cumberland.

Indiana suffered from major floods in 1913, and the Cumberland Covered Bridge was a victim of the disaster. On March 24, 1913, flood waters washed the structure about three quarters of a mile down stream. Upon examination it was determined that although the siding and roof had suffered considerable damage, the frame was sound. The County Commissioners decided to bring the structure back to its foundation, and they awarded the contract to George Lemon of Marion, Indiana. After removal of the roof and siding,



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Lemond used a winch, rollers, and a team of horses to return the wandering bridge to its original site. At this time each abutment was raised by three feet, and the roof and siding were replaced.

Covered bridges were developed in the nineteenth century to prolong the life of exposed wooden structures. Through proper care, a covered bridge could last well over a hundred years. The Cumberland Bridge preserves an important stage in bridge building techniques. The Howe Truss is a link between the earlier all wooden structures and the iron truss structures which reached their height at the turn of the century. The Howe system used vertical iron rods which added to the bridge's strength while reducing the weight required. The rods also made it possible to keep the frame aligned by tightening or loosening the tension. This combination of iron and wood was a basic step in the development from all wood to all iron bridges.

Records indicate that over 600 covered bridges were constructed in Indiana from 1820 to 1922. Of these only 102 are still standing. The Cumberland Bridge is the only remaining covered bridge in Grant County, and it is significant to the state as a surviving example of an element in the transportation system of the nineteenth century.

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Whitson, Rolland L. Centennial History of Grant County, Indiana, 1812 to 1912.  
2 vols., Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1914.