

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED OCT 1 1976
DATE ENTERED

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 **

Sacketts Brook Stone Arch Bridge

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

01645 500

(Town Highway #43) across Sacketts Brook
0.25 mile east of Putney Village.

CITY, TOWN

Mill (or "High-Low-Biddy") Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Putney

VICINITY OF

Vermont

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Vermont

50

Windham

025

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Town of Putney

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Putney

VICINITY OF

Vermont

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Putney

Vermont

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey

DATE

1976

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Montpelier

Vermont

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

The Sacketts Brook Stone Arch Bridge carries Mill or "High-Low-Biddy" Road (Town Highway #43) across Sacketts Brook at the bottom of a steep-sided, wooded ravine, 0.25 mile east of Putney village. A mason and intuitive engineer from nearby Townshend, Vermont named James Otis Follett constructed the bridge in 1906 at a cost of \$1,560. One of eleven extant stone bridges built by Follett, the Sacketts Brook bridge remains unaltered and structurally sound, and continues to carry local traffic.

The Sacketts Brook Stone Arch Bridge consists of a single span supported by a stone segmental arch. At its base, the arch extends about 29 feet; it rises about 12.5 feet above the surface of the brook. The overall width of the arch between faces is 15.5 feet, giving the roadway only one travel lane for modern vehicles. At its south end, the bridge is attached to a massive stone abutment with flared wing walls, which is about three feet wider and appears to have been built for an earlier bridge on the site. The north end of the bridge is abutted by earlier wing walls, which flare from the faces of the bridge.

The arch itself is built of large rectangular blocks of granite which are roughly pitched and mortared into mostly regular courses; the keystone on each face projects slightly beyond its vertical plane. The spandrels of the arch are infilled with partly coursed, irregularly shaped granite blocks, the joints of which display mortar of uncertain origin. At least three courses of similar masonry extend the full length of the bridge above the top of the arch, carrying in turn the gravel road surface. Makeshift log guardrails have been added to the sides of the roadway. The older abutments and wing walls are built of partly coursed rubble stone laid dry.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" 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 1906

BUILDER/ARCHITECT James Otis Follett

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sacketts Brook Stone Arch Bridge holds primary significance for being the work of an intuitive engineer, a farmer and mason from nearby Townshend, Vermont named James Otis Follett. The masonry arch applied by Follett in 1906 to carry a town highway across Sacketts Brook represents a highly unusual structure among rural secondary road bridges in Vermont, especially for having been built after the turn of the twentieth century when iron and steel had almost completely displaced wood and stone in bridge construction. The Sacketts Brook bridge together with nine other extant stone bridges and culverts built by Follett in Putney and Townshend constitute probably the largest group of such related structures in the state. (An eleventh bridge built by Follett--and the only one with two arch spans--survives in Walpole, New Hampshire.)

Born in East Jamaica, Vermont in 1843, James Otis Follett lived and worked most of his life on a farm in Townshend. Among other public activities, he served that town for several years as road commissioner, being responsible for the maintenance and improvement of its public highways. During the 1890's, Follett seems to have shifted his vocational emphasis from farming to masonry. The first known entry of payment to Follett for the construction of a "stonebridge" appears in the Townshend town records in 1894. Thereafter, Follett built one or two bridges almost every year until his death in 1911, creating substantial yet inexpensive structures to meet the needs of at least three small rural towns. Additionally, he constructed foundations for buildings and abutments for wood covered bridges, including, in 1900, a center pier for the famous Holland Bridge (demolished in 1952) across the West River in Townshend.

The total number of bridges built by James Otis Follett is not known definitely. A grandson, Robert Follett of Ascutney, Vermont, estimates that he may have built about forty bridges. Entries in the Putney and Townshend records list payments to Follett for a total of about twenty bridges and culverts built on public highways in those two towns. The Putney records list payments for seven structures between 1902 and 1908; three arch bridges, including the Sacketts Brook bridge, and one flat-topped culvert are known to survive.

Although Follett lacked formal training in engineering, apparently he did consult a popular engineering text of the period, A Treatise on Masonry Construction by Ira Osborn Baker. A copy of the ninth edition, published in 1899 and apparently used by Follett, remains in the possession of the Follett family. The book describes methods of constructing stone arch bridges; however it is not known to what extent Follett actually depended on the book in his work, for he built at least four bridges in Townshend prior to the publication of his copy of the Baker text.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Derry, Anne. James Otis Follette (sic), Bridgebuilder. Unpublished manuscript prepared for Graduate Program in Restoration and Preservation of Historic Architecture, Columbia University, New York, New York, 1975.

DeWolfe, Edith, Lura H. Frost, Edith I. Gassett, et al., eds. The History of

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	702375	47160800	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
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

Hugh H. Henry, Historic Sites Researcher

ORGANIZATION

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

STREET & NUMBER

Pavilion Building

CITY OR TOWN

Montpelier

DATE

September 20, 1976

TELEPHONE

802-828-3226

STATE

Vermont

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

William B. Pinney

William B. Pinney

TITLE

Director/State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

Sept. 20, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

W. Montefeltro

DATE

12/10/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Whatever the source of his skill, Follett succeeded in building durable and handsomely crafted bridges. Some of them, including the Sacketts Brook bridge, now carry truck loads which Follett could not have imagined, yet it has not been necessary to alter or reinforce them significantly. None of his bridges is known to have failed structurally; floods have destroyed some of them by undermining their foundations. Complementing their structural integrity, the Follett bridges possess distinctive aesthetic qualities in their individual variations of the arch form and stone material.

Currently the greatest general threat to the surviving Follett bridges is inadequate maintenance, both of the active and disused ones. In the case of a bridge across Fair Brook in Townshend, actual demolition is now being considered rather than repair of its somewhat deteriorated structure. The indifferent treatment of the Follett bridges derives partly from their inconspicuous locations on back roads, which tends to keep them from becoming more widely known and appreciated by the public. The Sacketts Brook bridge, in particular, receives little attention owing to its nearly hidden location at the bottom of a steep-sided ravine on a lightly traveled road across a brook polluted by paper mill wastes.

Taken together, the surviving bridges constructed by James Otis Follett constitute a highly representative and intact record of the work of an extraordinary native builder. At the same time, the bridges belong among the last of their kind in Vermont. In response to the outstanding nature of these historic resources, the Historic American Engineering Record plans to conduct field surveys and systematic recordings of the remaining bridges. The Follett bridges deserve immediate public recognition and careful preservation to ensure the continued survival of this unique legacy from late nineteenth century rural Vermont.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Putney Vermont 1753-1953. Putney, Vermont: The Fortnightly Club, 1953.

Notes from interview of Robert Follett, Ascutney, Vermont by Michele Frome on
9 July 1976.