

PH0660434

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JAN 16 1978
DATE ENTERED	MAR 8 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

Covered Bridges of Washington County

AND/OR COMMON

Buskirk, Rexleigh, Eagleville, and Shushan Covered Bridges

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

various locations in County

CITY, TOWN

New York

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

29th

STATE

New York

VICINITY OF

CODE

36

COUNTY

Washington

CODE

115

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
 - UNOCCUPIED
 - WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
 - YES: UNRESTRICTED
 - NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

Thematic Group

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Multiple Ownership (see continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the County Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Washington County Office Building

CITY, TOWN

Fort Edward

STATE

New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources

DATE

1976

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Office of Parks and Recreation

CITY, TOWN

Albany

STATE

New York 12238

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 type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The wooden covered bridge as a structural type is represented in Washington County by four extant examples built during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Situated on streams flowing southwest into Washington County from the Green Mountains of nearby Vermont, the covered bridges at Eagleville, Shushan and Rexleigh span the Batten Kill, while the Buskirk Bridge spans the Hoosic River. All four bridges remained open to traffic into the twentieth century. The Eagleville and Rexleigh spans are temporarily closed while undergoing stabilization and repair. Bypassed as the result of road realignment in 1963, the Shushan Bridge is presently being preserved as a local history museum on its original site. The Buskirk span continues in its original use as a vehicular bridge.

The four covered bridges are similar in scale, materials, and workmanship. The Shushan and Eagleville structures incorporate the patented Town lattice truss, consisting of top and bottom chords of laminated wood plank, and a web of diagonal wood planks connected by wood trunnels at each point of intersection. The spans at Buskirk and Rexleigh employ the patented Howe truss, with paired diagonal timbers, single timber counters, and multiple vertical iron rods defining each truss panel. The diagonals and verticals are connected to the upper and lower chords by means of cast-iron bearing blocks. The decks of all four bridges consist of wood planks laid on longitudinal stringers and transverse beams supported by the lower chords. The bridges are all sheathed in vertical board siding, and three are covered by wood shingle roofs attached to nail strips. The Rexleigh Bridge is unique among the four spans for its slate roof.

The four covered bridges have all been periodically re-sheathed and re-roofed during their long use as transportation structures. Recent flood damage to the west abutment and some truss elements of the Eagleville Bridge has necessitated temporary closing of the bridge while stabilization and repair work were completed. The Rexleigh Bridge is also closed to traffic pending emergency stabilization of its undermined south abutment and deteriorated lower chord. Grants-in-aid assistance has been requested for this repair work.

The Eagleville, Shushan, Rexleigh, and Buskirk spans are the only extant wooden covered bridges in Washington County, and have been identified as such as part of the on-going Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources.

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 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 1850, 1858, 1874 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Various

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The four extant covered wooden bridges of Washington County represent a significant concentration of a relatively rare type of transportation structure once common throughout New York State. Erected by local builders according to the patented Town and Howe truss designs, the wooden spans at Buskirk (1850), Shushan (1858), Eagleville (1858), and Rexleigh (1874) together illustrate the adaptation of standard engineering designs to the specific practical problems of rural bridgebuilding during America's "wooden age."

The covered bridges of Washington County helped to stimulate and direct the development of this rural area during the nineteenth century. Few roads linked the widely scattered population of Washington County, and hilly terrain characterized by meandering streams such as the Batten Kill and the Hoosic dictated the need for reliable, dry crossings on the few principal arteries which existed. An economy based largely upon agriculture and local, water-powered industries required sound bridges on vital market routes. These conditions together with improvements in standard engineering designs for timber bridges brought a wave of wooden bridge construction and replacement to Washington County beginning about 1840.

Local builders, using abundant native timber for construction materials, erected a number of roofed bridges based upon two principal designs: the plank lattice truss patented by Ithiel Town (1820), and the timber and iron truss patented by William Howe (1840). The Town truss type is represented in Washington County by the bridges at Buskirk and at Rexleigh. The Buskirk Bridge, erected to replace an earlier Burr arch truss across the Hoosic, was constructed in 1850 by a builder from nearby Greenwich. The Buskirk span is presently maintained under joint agreement by Washington and Rensselaer Counties, and is perhaps the earliest Howe truss bridge surviving in New York State.

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Covered Bridges of Washington County, Washington County, NY

CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER #8 PAGE 2

Built in 1874 to serve the small mill community of Rexleigh on the Batten Kill, the Rexleigh, Howe truss bridge is a later example of its type. Constructed of standard sawed timbers, iron tension rods, and cast-iron bearing blocks embossed with the name of their manufacturer, "R. Comins, Troy, N.Y.," the Rexleigh Covered Bridge appears to be a rare surviving example of this type of prefabricated nineteenth-century bridge construction.

The ease of construction afforded local builders by the Town lattice truss explains its popularity in Washington County. At least eleven Town truss bridges are known to have spanned the Batten Kill during the nineteenth century. Of these eleven, only two examples remain in Washington County. The Eagleville Covered Bridge, erected by local builder Ephraim Clapp in 1858, has recently been stabilized and returned to vehicular use following flood damage in 1977. The Shushan Bridge, also built in 1858 by Milton Stevens, has survived as the result of local preservation efforts. Open to the public on a seasonal basis, the Shushan Covered Bridge presently houses a local history collection of artifacts. Both the Eagleville and the Shushan bridges are significant as typical examples of the Town lattice truss design as constructed in New York State during the nineteenth century.

The increasing rarity of wooden truss highway bridges surviving in New York, the unusual concentration of four such structures in a single county, and the social and engineering significance of these transportation structures all contribute to the historic significance of this thematic group.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet No. 1.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre *presumably each bridge 1/4*

UTM REFERENCES

Buskirk	A	1,8	6,2,7,7,8,0	4,7,5,7,1,5,0	B	1,8	6,3,4,6,3,0	4,7,7,2,0,4,0	Shushan
		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	
Eagle-	C	1,8	6,3,7,2,4,0	4,7,7,1,2,2,0	D	1,8	6,3,3,7,1,0	4,7,7,6,8,4,0	Rexleigh
ville									

*LEBOVICH
2/3/78*

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See inventory forms.

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

For Buskirk Bridge

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
New York	36	Rensselaer	083
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Raymond W. Smith, Historic Preservation Program Assistant

ORGANIZATION NYS Parks and Recreation

DATE

Historic Preservation Field Services

December, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Empire State Plaza, Agency Bldg. #1

518-474-0479

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Albany

New York 12238

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

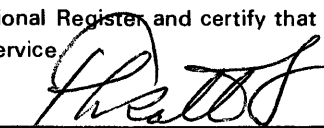
NATIONAL

STATE XXX

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



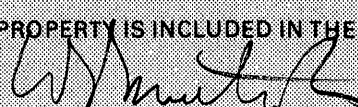
TITLE Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation

DATE

1/5/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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



DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

3-8-78

ATTEST:



KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

3-7-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography ITEM NUMBER #9 PAGE 1

Allen, Richard S. Covered Bridges of the Northeast.
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Niles, Grace G. The Hoosac Valley. New York, 1912.

Raymond, R.W. Covered Bridges of Lower Washington County.
Cambridge, 1970.