

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	SEP 28 1979
DATE ENTERED	NOV 29 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

*THE* COVERED BRIDGES OF COLUMBIA AND MONTOUR COUNTIES

AND/OR COMMON

*Thematic Resources*

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

11

STATE

Pennsylvania

CODE

42

COUNTY

Columbia/Montour

CODE

037/093

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thematic	<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

Multiple

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Columbia County Courthouse/Montour County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

35 West Main Street / 28 Mill Street

CITY, TOWN

Bloomsburg / Danville

STATE

Pennsylvania

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1972-74

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

CITY, TOWN

Harrisburg

STATE

Pennsylvania

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT       DETERIORATED  
 GOOD             RUINS  
 FAIR              UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Of the twenty-eight covered bridges of Columbia and Montour Counties, one is shared by Montour and Northumberland Counties and three are shared by Columbia and Northumberland Counties. All four of these bridges were nominated with the nomination known as, Covered Bridges of Northumberland County. They will be mentioned and included in this nomination merely to present the total picture of these two counties. They are:

#### Columbia/Northumberland

1. Lawrence L. Knoebel (38-49-13, 38-19-39)
2. Krickbaum (38-19-32, 38-49-12)
3. Richards (38-19-01, 38-49-07)

#### Montour/Northumberland

1. Gottlieb Brown/Sam Wagner/Rishel (38-47-01, 38-49-11)

The majority of the bridges (<sup>25</sup>24) are evenly divided between the Queenpost truss type and the Burr arch truss type. The remaining truss types include one Kingpost, and three Warren. A comparison of their lengths, types and dates of construction can be seen on the following chart.

YEAR	QUEENPOST	BURR	KINGPOST	WARREN
1846	Rohrback (64'4") 38-19-31			
1847		Rupert 185'4" 38-19-33		
1849		Stillwater (151') 38-19-21		
1850	E. Paden (75') 38-19-11	W. Paden (112') 38-19-12  Davis (87'1") 38-19-16  Hollingshead (116'10") 38-19-34		

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YEAR	QUEENPOST	BURR	KINGPOST	WARREN
1856	Wagner (56'5") 38-19-15			
c1860	Snyder (60'2") 38-19-14			
1865		Parr's Mill (84'3") 38-19-29		
1870		Riegel (107'3") 38-19-29		
1871		Welles Hess (126') 38-19-13		
1875		J. <sup>H</sup> Wess (105'2") 38-19-10		
		Patterson (81'8") 38-19-26		
	L.Knoebel (40') 38-19-39, 38-49-13			
1876	Jud Christie 55'10" 38-19-25			S.Eckman 65'2" 38-19-08  Krickbaum 62'2" 38-19-32 38-49-12
1880			Richards (68'8") 38-19-01, 38-49-07	

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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YEAR	QUEENPOST	BURR	KINGPOST	WARREN
1881	Shoemaker (49') 38-19-06  Kramer (50') 38-19-23  Creasyville (44'6") 38-19-36	Gottlieb Brown 86'8" 38-47-01, 38-49-11		
1882	Furnace (100'10") 38-19-20, 2 spans			Johnson 60'9" 38-19-37
1884		Wanich (98'9") 38-19-18		
1886	Fowlersville (40') 38-19-05			
1887	"Y" (76') 38-19-22			

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The procedure for planning and building a new bridge in these two counties was as follows: A petition was presented by the inhabitants of a township; then, arrangements were made for appointed viewers to inspect the site and decide if a bridge was necessary. The Grand Jury's approval was sought, and if granted, a bridge letting was scheduled for bids on a contract. The successful bidder was given a completion date (from 1870 a performance bond was also required). When a structure was built, the workmanship was inspected and payment was made in accordance with the progress of construction.

Of the twenty-eight bridges nominated here the builder is known for 26 of them.

# 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The twenty-eight covered bridges of Columbia and Montour Counties are the largest best preserved (after Lancaster County) group of the wooden covered bridges in Pennsylvania. Each bridge offers a unique example of the art of wooden engineering with examples of every truss type, except Town truss, ever used in Pennsylvania. These bridges meet the National Register criteria in the areas of engineering and transportation. These bridges were needed to facilitate travel and as a link in the commercial transportation system of the counties.

An unusually large number of creeks and streams flow through Columbia County, winding their way either north or south on route to the Susquehanna River. It is easy to believe that, in 1914, the county had over two hundred bridges to keep in repair. Even then many of the smaller ones were being replaced by concrete and iron structures which did not require so much maintenance. Today Columbia County is left with 26 old, wooden, covered bridges.

Montour County has fewer streams, with Chillisquaue Creek being the principal tributary. Consequently, not as many bridges were built, and, only two are still standing today.

The river bridges over the Susquehanna at Catawissa, Danville, Bloomsburg, and Berwick began their existence as wooden covered bridges of extraordinary lengths. Even the railroad bridges began as lattice-work wooden structures, but were soon replaced by trestles.

Bridges were needed to facilitate travel, when a complex network of roads took shape in the early history of the county, especially between fast-growing towns. At first, open wooden bridges were popular, but their short life span of ten or fifteen years was impractical; and those that did not rot away, were often removed by floods.

The routes to and from the saw mills and grist mills, most often near creeks of good size, were always busy. In Orange Township, a bridge was requested over Green Creek near James Patterson's saw mill "at or near the flat log crossing." Many of the remaining bridges bear witness to this traffic: The Hollingshead, Parr's Mill, Krickbaum, and Jud Christie in Columbia, and the Keefer, near Geringer's mill in Montour. Such bridges were named for nearby businesses, residents, or towns.

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The commissioners were entrusted with the job of building and maintaining the county bridges. Their Minute Books convey the urgency in repairing damaged or worn bridges. Often a commissioner would leave the office at once to check a report of damages, notify the carpenters, and have the work completed quickly. Large repairs were described as "rebuilding." When a bridge had to be replaced, a contract was allotted. It is sometimes difficult to determine from the records when extensive repairs were made, and/or when a new bridge was erected.

The maintenance records began about 1870. The biggest repairs were installation of new flooring and roofs and filling around abutments.

In the second half of the century, whenever a new bridge was considered, or an old one rebuilt, a covered bridge was preferred. There were a variety of plans from which to choose (all types are described in great detail, accompanied by measured drawings, and preserved in Columbia County's Bridge Books). The contractors followed the commissioners exact specifications, except for the portal, which was not included in the plans and presumably was left to the builder's imagination. The portals of Columbia County's remaining bridges are not particularly distinctive, but in other regions they display the skill and artistry often associated with the folk artist. Montour's Keefer bridge has a unique portal consisting of a creative facade.

The Columbia County bridge records and the commissioners' minutes identify by name the contractors of almost every county-owned bridge. Montour County's records provide similar information, but are less comprehensive. The builders included prestigious men, politicians, speculators, contractors, school teachers, and, in most instances, farmers--to whom carpentry was second nature.

The year 1887 saw the last flourish of wooden covered bridges with six being built within the two county area. With the rapidly increasing cost of a wooden bridge and with the realization that iron and concrete made more substantial and durable structures, the era of the wooden covered bridges was quickly drawing to a close.

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The covered bridge is an important and significant historic structure in the Commonwealth of Pa. Not only does Pa. have the most extant covered bridges today, it probably had the most during the height of the covered bridge period 1830 to 1875. Estimates have been made that Pa. once had at least 1500 covered bridges. (Allen, 1959: 51). Not only is the sheer number important but Pa. had the first known U.S. covered bridge, as well as the prototypes for most of the major truss types.

The first US covered bridge was located in Philadelphia over the Schuylkill, built in 1800 by Timothy Palmer, a master carpenter from Newburyport, Massachusetts. From the completion of this first bridge, the age of the covered bridge was upon Pa. Not only was the truss types of Burr and others first tried out in Pa. but the covered bridge spread as the local carpenter adapted it to the local problem of crossing the numerous small streams and creeks throughout Pa. The covered bridge is also important in the history of bridge building. The early stone arch bridges were really only practical on smaller streams and then in areas with an abundance of good building stone. The peak of the stone bridge in Pa. can be seen in the Rockville Bridge over the Susquehanna River built by the Pa. Railroad and contains a quarter of a million tons of stone. The covered bridge was the transition from the stone to the cast-iron in most places.

Since the heyday of the covered bridge they have been rapidly disappearing through neglect, flood, arson and progress. Prior to the Agnes Flood of 1972, Pa. had 271 covered bridges, spread across 41 of its 67 counties. Since that time the number has been decreasing at a fast rate. Because of their importance, the state level National Register Review Committee as well as the Office of Historic Preservation have embarked on a covered bridge survey and registration project. A survey form and inquiry letter were developed and mailed to county bridge engineers, historical societies, members of the Society of Industrial Archaeologists, the Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Society and numerous others. To date we have information on approx. 3/4 of the 41 counties containing covered bridges. Our results to date show that the number of covered bridges is down about a third from the 1972 figure of 271. Just since beginning our survey, two bridges have been destroyed by arson and one by an overloaded truck. It is because of



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this rapid disappearance rate, as well as their significance to Pa. in the history of transportation that we intend to nominate as many as possible to the National Register of Historic Places. Because of time and the immensity of the task a thematic nomination covering the whole state is impossible. We are therefore nominating these structures on a county or two county basis. All bridges constructed after 1930 have been excluded unless the bridge has a significance of its own. Bridge construction dates and builders are not always readily available, therefore after exhausting the files of the bridge engineers, historical societies and the archives, we have been lenient with the bridges for which we could find no dates, mainly on the view that very few have been built in the last 50 years and that the registration of all of these fast disappearing resource is valuable. Moved structures have been included in our nominations for several reasons; firstly in all cases if these structures had not been moved they would have been destroyed, secondly they still retain their significance as examples of trussing types and while they have lost their location they still retain an integrity of location in a rural setting. Therefore we have tended to nominate every eligible covered bridge in each county.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Allen, Richard, Covered Bridges of Middle Atlantic States  
 Brattleboro, Va: Stepehn Greene Press, 1959, p. 61-72.  
Columbia and Montour Historic Transportation Study, June 1976. Columbia-  
 Montour Joint Planning Commission.  
The Covered Bridges of Columbia County, Pa., Columbia County Historical  
 Society, December 1974.

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.88 Total

\* .16 3 bridges nominated  
 with Northumberland Co.

QUADRANGLE NAME \_\_\_\_\_

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			
E			
G			

B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			
F			
H			

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Boundaries for all bridges are calculated by adding 20' to each length  
 and 10' to each width (15' used when width not known) to include  
 abutments.

### 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  
 Bill Pennesi / Susan Zacher

ORGANIZATION  
 Columbia County Planning Commission / PHMC

STREET & NUMBER  
 Columbia County Courthouse, 35 W. Main Street

CITY OR TOWN  
 Bloomsburg / Harrisburg

DATE  
 TELEPHONE  
 STATE  
 717-784-5444  
 Pennsylvania 17815/17120

## 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

*Ed Weintraub*

TITLE Ed Weintraub, Director  
 Office of Historic Preservation

DATE 9/24/79

### FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

ATTEST: *Kurtin J. O'Connell*  
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 11-29-79  
 DATE 11/29/79