

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 12 1979
AUG 8 1979
DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

COVERED BRIDGES OF NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

STATE
Pennsylvania

CODE
42

COUNTY
Northumberland

CODE
097

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

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

thematic

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:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME*

Multiple

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Northumberland County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Market Square

CITY, TOWN

Sunbury

STATE

Pennsylvania

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

2/23/79

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

CITY, TOWN

Harrisburg

STATE

Pennsylvania

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE 1935
Bridge #7

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Central Susquehanna Valley is noted for its number of covered bridges, Northumberland County as of March 1979 has four wholly within the county and shares two with Columbia and two with Montour County.

The Northumberland Bridges are a fine collection with a full range of truss types and sizes from the nineteenth century.

The Rishel Covered Bridge is thought to be one of the oldest still standing in the United States with construction dates in some sources as c. 1812 but is more probably 1830. It is also the longest remaining covered bridge in the county. The Lawrence L. Knoebal Covered Bridge is unique with its attached covered walkway.

Covered Bridge Attributes

Name	Year	Truss	Length	Stream
Rishel	1830	Burr	109'	Shamokin
Richard's	1852	M. Kingpost & Queenpost	64'	S. Branch of Roaring Creek
Himmel's Church	1874	M. Kingpost	44'	Schwaben
Lawrence L. Knoebal	1874	Queenpost	40'	S. Branch of Roaring Creek

Bridge Inventory

1. KEEFER STATION COVERED BRIDGE WCB# (38-49-02)
#83 Northumberland County Bridge

Location: T 698 off 283 East of Sunbury

Stream: Shamokin Creek

Truss Type: Burr Arch

Builder: George W. Keefer

Year: 1888

End Post Length: 190'

Clearance: 10'3"

Width: 14'1"

Load: 3 Ton

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Description

This bridge is a single span covered timber truss bridge utilizing a multiple kingpost design with a double Burr arch. This bridge has a clear span of 93'6" between the stone masonry abutments and a total length of 109'. The roadway width inside the structure is 14'1" while the total structure width is 18'5". The floor consists of 3" longitudinal planks of varying widths. A vertical clearance of 12'3" exists at the center of the arched portal while 10'3" is the minimum clearance at the sides. The lowest timber member is 8'5" above the creek. Condition: Overall, Fair Condition.

Significance:

This bridge was built in 1888 by George W. Keefer near the farm of John G. Bright at a total cost of \$882.00. It utilizes a multiple kingpost design with a 2 member Burr arch straddling the timber truss members. This type of combined arch and truss bridge was patented by Theodore Burr in 1817 and was especially used for longer spans. This was the most common type of covered bridge erected in this area.

2. RISHEL COVERED BRIDGE
#2 Northumberland County Bridge
WCB# (38-49-05)

Location: T 573 off 49054 east of Montandon
Stream: Chillisquaue Creek
Truss Type: Burr Arch
Builder: John Shriner, Jr. and Zacheus Braley
Year: 1830
End Post Length: 110'2"
Clearance: 8'
Width: 17'3"
Load: 3 Ton

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Description

This bridge is a single span covered timber truss bridge utilizing a Howe truss with a two member Burr arch straddling the truss. The bridge has a clear span of 90'8" between the stone masonry abutments and a total length of 110'2". The roadway width inside the structure is 17'3", while the structure width is 20'2". The floor consists of 3" transverse planks of varying widths with a 2" longitudinal running boards on top. A vertical clearance of 11'3" exists between the floor and the timber frame portal. There currently exists a vertical clearance barrier of 8'0" to try to limit usage to cars or light trucks. From the streambed to the lowest timber member is an actual clear of 11'0". Condition: Bowing and leaning upstream but still serviceable and used daily.

Significance

The bridge was built in 1830 by John Shriner, Jr. and Zacheus Braley and used the Burr Truss design which was used for the first time in 1804 in Waterford, New York, and patented by its designer Theodore Burr in 1817. In this bridge the arch does not foot as much below the stringer as usual, but was probably modified due to the low clearance and the need to protect the arch from floating debris during floods. This however, does not seem to affect the strength of this bridge as it has survived many floods and though not capable of carrying large trucks, does an adequate job of carrying passenger vehicles on a day-to-day basis. The regionalized use of this type of structure, and the damaging floods of the 1830's through New England, probably make this structure the oldest covered wooden bridge in the United States and the oldest example of one of the most important timber truss designs in our history.

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3. HIMMEL'S CHURCH COVERED BRIDGE
#58 Northumberland County Bridge
WCB# (38-49-06)

Location: T-442 off 49010 Northeast of Rebuck
Stream: Schwaben Creek (Formerly Green Briar Creek)
Truss Type: Multiple Kingpost
Builder: Peter Keefer
Year: 1874
End Post Length: 44'
Clearance: 10'10"
Road Width: 15'
Load: 3 Ton

Description:

This bridge is a single span covered timber truss bridge utilizing a multiple king post design. The bridge has a clear span of 28'8" between the stone masonry abutments and a total length of 44'. The roadway width inside the structure is 13'6" while the total structure width is 16'. The floor consists of 3" transverse planks of varying widths. A vertical clearance of 10' exists between the floor and the timber frame portal. The lowest timber member is 4'8" above the stream.

Significance:

The bridge was completed in 1874 by Peter Keefer and used only a multiple kingpost design since the span was so short. There are no modifications of the basic design.

Condition: Lower chords on south side were recently repaired.
Overall, fair condition.

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4. RICHARDS COVERED BRIDGE
#17 Northumberland County Bridge
WCB# (38-49-07)

Location: T 804 off PA 487, East of Elysburg
Stream: South Branch of Roaring Creek
Truss Type: Multiple Kingpost and Queenpost
Builder: Obediah S. Campbell
Year: 1852
End Post Length: 64'
Clearance: 11'6"
Road Width: 11'9"
Load: 3 Ton

Description

This bridge is a single span covered timber truss bridge utilizing a sub-divided Howe type truss with a single queen post. The bridge has a clear span of 59'7" between the stone masonry abutments and a total length of 64'. The roadway width inside the structure is 11'9" while the structure width is 15'8". The floor consists of 3" transverse planks of varying widths. A vertical clearance of 11'6" exists between the floor and the timber frame portal. From the streambed to the lowest timber member is an actual clear of 7'11".

Significance

The bridge was built in 1852 by Obediah S. Campbell and used a sub-divided Howe truss with a queenpost added for increased capacity. The queenpost construction was commonly used for relatively short spans and was evidently used in conjunction with the sub divided Howe truss as a replacement for the steel tension bars incorporated into the original Howe truss design and patented in 1840 by William Howe, the Massachusetts Architect who patented it. It appears that the builder varied the truss to suit his individual preference as was commonly done with many of the patented trusses of this time.

Condition: Good; structurally sound considering age of wood and floods of the creek.

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5. KREIGBAUM COVERED BRIDGE
#60 Northumberland County Bridge
WCB# (38-49-12/38-19-32)

Location: T459 East of Elysburg
Stream: South Branch of Roaring Creek
Truss Type: Queenpost
Builder: George W. Keefer
Year: 1876
End Post Length: 62'1"
Clearance: 11'9"
Road Width: 13'8"
Load: 3 Ton
Condition: Overall, fair condition

Description

This bridge is a single span covered timber truss bridge utilizing a queenpost. The bridge has a clear span of 52' between the stone masonry abutments and a total length of 62'1". The roadway width inside the structure is 13'8" while the total structure width is 16'11". The floor consists of 4" transverse planks of varying widths with 2" longitudinal running boards on top. A vertical clearance of 11'9" exists between the floor and the timber frame portal. The lowest timber member is 7' above the stream.

Significance

This bridge was built in 1876 by George W. Keefer on the road leading from Bear Gap to Catawissa Road and used only a queenpost design. The queenpost design is very old and is actually a kingpost with an extra longitudinal top chord and was used for spans slightly larger than what the kingpost could handle.

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6. GOTTLIEB BROWN COVERED BRIDGE (or Sam Wagner)
#70 Northumberland County Bridge

Location: T 594 off 49057 East of Potts Grove
Stream: Chillisquaue Creek
Truss Type: Burr
Builder: George W. Keefer
Year: 1881
End Post Length: 86'8"
Clearance: 13'
Road Width: 15'
Load: 3 Ton
Condition: Overall, Fair Condition

Description

This bridge is a single span covered timber truss bridge utilizing a multiple kingpost design with a double Burr arch. The bridge has a clear span of 74'9" between the stone masonry abutments and a total length of 86'8". The roadway width inside the structure is 14'3" while the total structure width is 18'6". The floor consists of 3" transverse planks of varying widths. A vertical clearance of 13' exists between the floor and the timber frame portal while the stream is 8'10" below the lowest timber member.

Significance

This bridge was built in 1881 by George W. Keefer near the old Gottlieb Brown Farm at a total cost of \$939.00 and utilized a multiple kingpost design with a 2 member Burr arch straddling the timber truss work on each side. This type of combined arch and truss bridge was patented in 1817 by Theodore Burr and was very popular for many years.

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7. LAWRENCE L. KNOEBEL COVERED BRIDGE
#38-49-13 - 38-19-39

Stream: South Branch of Roaring Creek
Truss Type: Modified Queenpost Truss
Year: 1875 (moved 1935-7)
End Post Length: 40'
Clearance: 11'5"
Width 15'
Condition: Good

The covered bridge at Knoebel's Grove, Elysburg, was built in 1875 over West Creek, near Benton. When road re-location by-passed the bridge in 1936, it was sold to Knoebel's Grove. Five men worked carefully for a week to dismantle the bridge. The timbers were then moved fifty miles to the Grove. Another week was required to rebuild it. No paint is used on the bridge and all repairs and supplementary construction are kept in harmony with the original structure. Wide boards were especially milled for the job. Wooden shingles are used for roof repairs. The underside of the bridge has been treated to protect against insects and dampness.

When the bridge was dedicated in 1964 by the Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Society of Pennsylvania, special tribute was paid to the Knoebel family for this preservation. With the consent of the family, the bridge was named the Lawrence L. Knoebel Bridge.

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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The covered bridge is a valuable Pennsylvania resource in the development of transportation and the various trussing systems used in bridges today. At one time Pennsylvania had over 1500 covered bridges and as of six years ago still had almost 300. Today the figure is closer to 200 but these remaining wooden bridges are an important link in the transportation history of Pennsylvania. The use of wood for bridges was a practical solution for spanning a waterway in a state where a major natural resource was lumber.

The Northumberland County bridges nominated here are the only remaining covered bridges in the county, in a county which as recent ago as 1972 had fourteen. Those bridges remaining are a fine collection of early bridges in the state, with one bridge considered by many writers to be the earliest remaining in the country. The trussing styles are representatives of all but two styles that were ever used in covered bridges in Pennsylvania,

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Covered Bridges of Northumberland County
Northumberland County

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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

Records of Northumberland County Bridge Engineers.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .38

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

QUADRANGLE NAME _____
UTM REFERENCES

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			
E			
G			

B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			
F			
H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(SEE CONTINUATION SHEET)

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

John W. Prosser, P. E.

ORGANIZATION

Northumberland County Bridge Engineers

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

2nd and Chestnut Street

TELEPHONE

717-286-7721 ext. 43

CITY OR TOWN

Sunbury

STATE

Pennsylvania 17801

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

TITLE

ED WEINTRAUB, Director
Office of Historic Preservation

DATE

6-4-79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

8-8-79

ATTEST

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

August 21, 1979