

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 SOMERSET COUNTY THEMATIC RESOURCES

and/or common

2. Location

street & number

not for publication

city, town

various precincts in Somerset Co.

vicinity of

congressional district

12

state

Pennsylvania

code

42

county

Somerset

code 111

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

commercial

educational

entertainment

government

industrial

military

museum

park

private residence

religious

scientific

transportation

other:

4. Owner of Property

name

Multiple

street & number

city, town

vicinity of

state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

Somerset County Courthouse

street & number

city, town

Somerset

state

Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pennsylvania Inventory
of Historic Places

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date July 9, 1980

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 _____

Walter's Mill Bridge (38-56-05)

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Somerset County is located along the southern border of Pennsylvania and currently has ten wooden truss covered bridges remaining.

There are three King Post truss bridges, one Queen Post and six Burr arch bridges.

King Post:

Length

Packsaddle (38-56-02)	48 feet
Glessner (38-56-08)	90 feet
Trostletown (38-56-10)	104 feet

Queen Post:

New Baltimore (38-56-09)	86 feet 6 inches
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Burr Arch:

Beechdale, Burkholder (38-56-01)	52 feet
Walter's Mill (38-56-05)	60 feet
Shaffer's (38-56-11)	68 feet 2 inches
Lower Humbert (38-56-12)	126 feet 6 inches
King's (38-56-06)	127 feet 4 inches
Barronvale (38-56-03)	162 feet 3 inches

The Walter's Mill Bridge (38-56-05) was moved to save it from demolition. Its new setting is rural and similar in character to its original. As one of the oldest remaining covered bridges in the county, its preservation and registration is essential.

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 type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Somerset County's streams and rivers feed into three watershed areas, the Ohio, Susquehanna, and the Potomac. Today ten covered bridges remain in this southern tier county, in 1959 there were thirteen bridges. The county's oldest bridges, Barronvale and Walter's Mills are Burr arch truss bridges and date from 1830. The bridges portray a wide example of portal style and design. All have vertical siding and some have inside walls. All ten have horizontal tying beams just under the eaves.

Somerset's covered bridges are important as the remaining examples of a type and as a record of the early transportation history of the county.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Covered Bridges of Somerset County Thematic Resources
Somerset County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

2

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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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

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.

