

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only  
received MAR 24 1980  
date entered JUN 27 1980

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic LAWRENCE COUNTY COVERED BRIDGES THEMATIC RESOURCES

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district \_\_\_\_\_

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Lawrence code 073

**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 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 type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Lawrence County, Lawrence County Commissioners

street & number Court Street, Lawrence County Courthouse

city, town New Castle \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Pennsylvania 16101

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lawrence County Courthouse

street & number Court Street

city, town New Castle \_\_\_\_\_ state Pennsylvania

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Pennsylvania Inventory Of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg \_\_\_\_\_ state Pennsylvania

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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**

Lawrence County has only two covered bridges remaining today. Both of these structures are located in the eastern part of the county.

The Bank's Bridge crosses Neshannock Creek in Wilmington Township northeast of New Castle. This bridge was built in 1889 and is the most recent of the two Lawrence County covered bridges. It uses the Burr arch trussing system and has interior portal walls similar to Bucks County covered bridges.

The McConnell's Mill bridge is located in Slippery Rock Township and crosses Slippery Rock Creek. Built in 1874 this bridge uses the Howe truss.

<u>Name &amp; Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Truss</u>	<u>Length</u>
McConnell's Mill    36-37-01	1874	Howe	96.5'
Bank's                36-37-02	1889	Burr	121'

# 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 invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** \_\_\_\_\_ **Builder/Architect** \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Bank's and McConnell's Mill covered bridges are the sole representative of a period of American bridge building remaining in Lawrence County. The northwestern section of Pennsylvania during the 19th century was a large producer of lumber but the bridge technology in this area went from primitive log crossings to iron spans and skipped the covered bridge stage most common in the rest of Pennsylvania. This upper Ohio River watershed area even during the height to the covered bridge period probably had no more than 15 or 20 of these wooden spans.

The few covered bridges that were built were notable, however, in the experimental use of the less common truss types. At Irvine, Warren County over the Brokenstraw Creek the little used Long truss developed by Colonel Stephen H. Long was used. The Kidd's Mill Bridge, Mercer County uses the little known Smith truss developed by Robert J. Smith of Ohio. This bridge is fortunately still standing. Indiana County has only 4 covered bridges remaining 3 Town truss and 1 Howe truss bridge.

Lawrence County probably had not more than a handful of covered bridges. The Breakneck bridge crossed the Slippery Rock Creek just south of the McConnell's Mill bridge. A double bridge known as the Black Bridge was once located at New Castle. The only remaining bridges are the Bank's and McConnell's Mill.

The Bank's bridge is a typical Pennsylvania style Burr arch bridge and has interior portal walls similar to the covered bridges of Bucks County.

The McConnell's Mill bridge is another of the less commonly used trussing systems. Built in 1874, the McConnell's Mill bridge used the Howe truss developed and patented by William Howe in 1840. Only four bridges using the Howe truss exist in Pennsylvania today.

<u>Name &amp; Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Length</u>
McConnell's Mill, Lawrence Co. 36-37-01	1874	96.5'
Kintersburg, Indiana Co. 36-32-05	1877	62'
Shade Gap, Huntingdon Co. 36-31-01	1889	65'4"
Thomas Mill, Philadelphia Co. 36-51-01	1855	78'

The 2 remaining Lawrence County covered bridges are rare survivals of the use of wooden truss technology in an area where the wooden truss was a rare and little used bridge building technique.

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Lawrence County Covered Bridge  
Lawrence 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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Lawrence County Covered Bridges  
Lawrence County

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.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

County Bridge Records, Lawrence County Courthouse.

Allen, Richard Sanders. Covered Bridges of the Middle Atlantic States. Brattleboro, VT: Stephen Greene Press, 1959, p. 73-79,

## 10. Geographical Data **UTM NOT VERIFIED**

Acreeage of nominated property .14 **ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED** Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_ Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

McConnell's Mill, Portersville, Pa. Bank's, New Castle North, Pa. Quad

A	1 7	5 6 9 8 2 0	4 5 3 3 6 4 0	B	1 7	5 5 9 9 6 0	4 5 4 8 8 4 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Acreeage is calculated by adding 20' to each length and 10' to each width to include abutments.

A:  $(96.5' + 20') \times (15' + 10') = 116.5' \times 25' = 2912.5 \div 43,560 = .06$

B:  $(121' + 20') \times (15' + 10') = 141' \times 25' = 3525 \div 43,560 = .08$

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 Susan M. Zacher

organization PHMC date December 11, 1979

street & number Box 1026 telephone 717-783-8947

city or town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Ed Weintraub*  
ED WEINTRAUB, Director

title Office of Historic Preservation

date 3/10/80

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*Carol D. Skelton*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 6-27-80

Attest: *William H. Hoffman*  
Chief of Registration

date 6-27-80