

Part of
Berks County Covered Bridges TR

Available at the National Park Service website
<http://www.nr.nps.gov/nrcover.htm>

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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OK

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

WERTZ'S COVERED BRIDGE

AND/OR COMMON

Red Covered Bridge

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

3/4 Mi NW of Gring's Mill Recreation Area adjacent to

Tulpehocken Road

CITY, TOWN

Tulpehocken Creek

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Bern & Spring Townships spanning VICINITY OF

6th

STATE

Pennsylvania

CODE

42

COUNTY

Berks

CODE

011

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

County of Berks

STREET & NUMBER

6th & Court Streets

CITY, TOWN

Reading

VICINITY OF

STATE

Pennsylvania 19601

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Berks County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

6th & Court Streets

CITY, TOWN

Reading

STATE

Pennsylvania

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

3/27/78

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

CITY, TOWN

Harrisburg

STATE

Pennsylvania

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 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

The Wertz's Covered Bridge (Red Covered Bridge) was built in 1867 by contractor Amandas Knerr for the County of Berks at a price of \$7,650.00. This single span bridge crosses the Tulpehocken Creek between Bern and Spring Townships and in the years between 1867 to 1884 crossed the Union Canal.

In past history, Berks County had over forty wooden covered bridges. Today Wertz's Bridge represents one of the five remaining covered bridges that exists in Berks. With a length of 165 feet, it is one of the longest single span covered bridge existing in Pennsylvania. It has a width of 16 feet and a height of 12 feet. Typical of most Berks County covered bridges, it is constructed with a Burr-Arch Truss. Theodore Burr, one of the most famous United States covered bridge engineers, patented this arch truss reinforced with Kingposts and supporting a level roadway in 1804. This bridge was constructed with primarily white pine lumber and was pinned with oak pins soaked in pine tar. The original roof was made of wooden shingles and the bridge was painted red. For the first quarter century of its existance it was a toll bridge and from 1867 to 1940 was owned by the County of Berks.

In 1940 to 1953 it was owned and operated by the State of Pennsylvania and in 1953 its ownership returned to the County of Berks. Today it is situated at its original location within the Berks County Park and Recreation Department's Tulpehocken Creek Valley Park system. No longer open to automobile traffic, the bridge is used by hikers, bicyclists and park visitors as an access point unto the County Park's five mile National Recreation Trail Union Canal towpath trail. In the future, the bridge will act as an educational interpretive structure and as a walkway entrance into the Berks County Heritage Center, an historical interpretive park which now includes the Gruber Wagon Works, and in the near future the Deppen Cemetery, the C. Howard Hiester Schuylkill and Union Canal Museum, the Bicentennial Eagle Memorial, the Bright's One-room Schoolhouse, and Hessian Revolutionary War Guard Huts.

The bridge is supported by two stone structured abutments. During the summer of 1975 various repairs were made to the bridge which included a fresh coat of red paint to the exterior, repairing various holes in the sides plus a new tin roof.

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

1867

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Amandas Knerr

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Abstract: The Wertz's Covered Bridge is one of the longest remaining single span covered bridges in the Commonwealth and played an important part in transportation in the County of Berks.

During its period of operation, Wertz's Covered Bridge was on a well travelled thoroughfare, and as was true of other covered bridges in Berks which spanned streams, provided immediate access to a mill. Being a vital transportation link, the bridge connected the Old Tulpehocken Road, the major route which paralleled the Tulpehocken Creek, with the Red Bridge Road, a roadway which was laid out as early as 1796. Even before the bridge was constructed in 1867, the local residents used the area where the bridge is presently located to ford the creek. So when the County of Berks chose this site fo the building of Wertz's Bridge, it was probably because of the existing heavy usage. Knowing that the bridge was a highly travelled structure a local merchant had his advertisement painted on the beams in the bridge. Dr. Reed's Common Sense Shoe Store, Reading, Pennsylvania, is an advertisement which still can be observed today.

It is easy to understand that both Wertz's Covered Bridge, which was travelled by farmers driving Gruber Wagons, and the Gruber Wagon Works, when open to visitors in the Berks County Heritage Center, will complement each other as significant transportation orientated structures.

The Wertz's Covered Bridge stands as a living memorial to the famous covered bridge designer and builder Theodore Burr, whose patented arch truss supports the bridge at present. Gradually through vandalism, natural disaster, obsolescence and neglect many of these wooden landmarks have passed into oblivion. But fortunately for this bridge is will be used in conjunction with the National Register property, the Gruber Wagon Works, in the Berks County Heritage Center, an interpretive park where their historical significance will be preserved.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .1

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 8	4, 1, 5, 0, 0, 0	4, 4, 6, 8, 0, 2, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated area encloses the actually span of the bridge (165') plus its stone abutments (204') plus a width of 16 feet. Total area nominated 204' x 16'.

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

Richard N. Pawling, Historian/Naturalist

ORGANIZATION

Berks County Park & Recreation Department

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

Box 272, R. D. #5

TELEPHONE

(215-372-8939)

CITY OR TOWN

Sinking Springs

STATE

Pennsylvania 19608

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*
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

DATE

6-21-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

WERTZ'S COVERED BRIDGE

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 1

Allen, Richard S., Covered Bridges of the Middle Atlantic States, New York, Bonanza Books, 1959, p. 108

Commissioners Minute Book (Oct. 25, 1858-74), (Chief Clerk's Office, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.). October 1, 1866, and December 23, 1867.

Mitchell, Harry E. Jr., "The Covered Bridges of Berks County," Historical Review of Berks County, October 1947, p. 6.

Moll, Fred, interviewed by Richard N. Pawling, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa., 11 A.M., February 16, 1978.

Montgomery, Morton L., Historical and Biographical Annals of Berks County, Pa. Chicago, Illinois, J. H. Beers and Co., 1909, p. 31.

Records of Bridges 1897, (Chief Clerk's Office, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa.) p. 68

"Statistics on Berks County Covered Bridges," Reading Eagle, March 8, 1914

Weaver, Ronald (Berks County Engineer), interviewed by Richard N. Pawling, Berks County Courthouse, Reading, Pa., 10:30 A.M., February 16, 1978.

on NR

1. Name of Bridge: **Wertz Mill (Red) Bridge**
(closed to vehicular traffic in 1959)
2. Location (Route number, Township or Borough): **T-602**
3. Creek located on: **Tulpehocken Creek**
4. Ownership (Borough/Township, County, State): **County of Berks**
- (→) 5. Construction date (circa) and builder, if known: **1869**
6. Specifics:
 - Trussing system: **Burr**
 - Number of spans: **one**
 - length: **200 ft.**
 - width: **15'-0"**
 - load capacity: **Pedestrian & bicycle traffic only**
 - height: **12'-0"**
 - type of deck: **wood plank**
 - condition: **Fair**
7. Bridge number if corresponds with World Guide to Covered Bridges:

If photo is available, please send also.



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

WERTZ'S COVERED BRIDGE

76°00'
40°22'30"

416000m.E.

BERNVILLE 8.9 MI.
PLEASANT VALLEY 5.3 MI.

418

57°30'

419

420

WEST LEESPORT (LEESPORT P
TUCKERT
5864
(TEA

