



Covered Bridges of Somerset County  
Somerset County  
Zone 17 E677400 N4432500  
Glessner Covered Bridge  
38-56-08

# 38-56-08      **Name:** Glessner Bridge  
**Location:** 2 miles NW of Shanksville, 1/2 mile W of L.R. 55068, Adjacent to B&O RR Spur in  
**UTM: Zone 17**      **N 4432500**      **E 677400**      **Acreage:** Stony Creek Tp.  
**Owner:** Somerset County      .05      on T565

**Stream:** Stony Creek  
**Truss Type:** Multiple King-Post  
**Builder:** Tobias Glessner  
**Year:** 1881

**End Post to**  
**End Post Length:** 90'  
**Clearance:** 11'

**Road Surface** Timber  
**Width:** 12'  
**Load:** 3 Tons

**Distinguishing Features:** This long multiple kingpost truss bridge has a tin covered gable roof. Its vertical plank siding only reaches halfway up the side walls. Its portals have inside walls of vertical planking.

**Condition:** Good

Part of  
Covered Bridges of Somerset County TR

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

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

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received  
date entered

**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**

**USE THIS COPY  
FOR DUPLICATING**

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 12

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Somerset code 111

**3. Classification**

|  |   |   |  |  |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Category</b>                              | <b>Ownership</b>                          | <b>Status</b>   | <b>Present Use</b>                     |  |
| <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. 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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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 |
|--------------------------|------------------|

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"/> 1400-1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic    | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation           | <input type="checkbox"/> law                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture            | <input type="checkbox"/> economics              | <input type="checkbox"/> literature                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input type="checkbox"/> architecture           | <input type="checkbox"/> education              | <input type="checkbox"/> military                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> art                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce               | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy                |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-     | <input type="checkbox"/> communications         | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government       |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> religion                  |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> science                   |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture                 |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> social/<br>humanitarian   |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                   |
|   |   |   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)           |

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.

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

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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 is 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

(11/78)

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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

Covered Bridges of Somerset County Thematic Resources  
Somerset County

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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

County Bridge Records.

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

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .5

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

|   |                          |                          |                          |   |                          |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | B | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   | Zone                     | Easting                  | Northing                 |   | Zone                     | Easting                  | Northing                 |
| C | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | D | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | F | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| G | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | H | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|       |      |        |      |
|       |      |        |      |

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Herb Berman, Vice President / Susan M. Zacher

organization Historical & Genealogical Society of Somerset Co. / PHMC

street & number Box 533 / Box 1026 telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Somerset / Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

## 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

title ED WEINTRAUB, Director  
Office of Historic Preservation

date 11/21/80

For HCERS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration