

CHESTER COUNTY'S
bv BRANDYWINE
VALLEY



HISTORY • BEAUTY • ARCHITECTURE • CHARM

CHESTER COUNTY'S
COVERED BRIDGES



Capture the essence of Chester County's Brandywine Valley.

Celebrate and enjoy the history, beauty, architecture, and charm of the region's many covered bridges — an intrinsic part of Chester County's landscape and heritage. With structures standing from as early as 1850 to those rebuilt with love and attention to details as recently as 2002, these unique architectural landmarks stand for our past and will be preserved for the future.

For a picturesque tour of the region, hop in the car, put the windows down, and follow this trail of bridges through every corner of Chester County. Discover the varied characteristics of Brandywine Valley's covered bridges, such as the "Burr" truss, step portals, and how bridges were named. Search for Chester County's three white covered bridges, the "two-span" bridge, the oldest, and the most photographed. Revel in the magic that unfolds throughout Chester County's beautiful countryside.

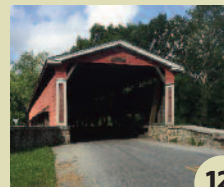
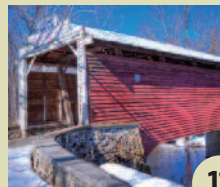
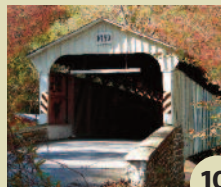
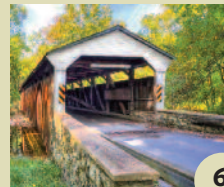
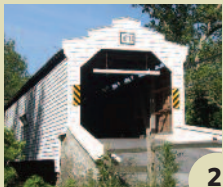
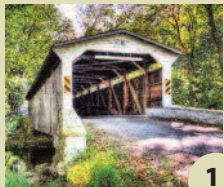
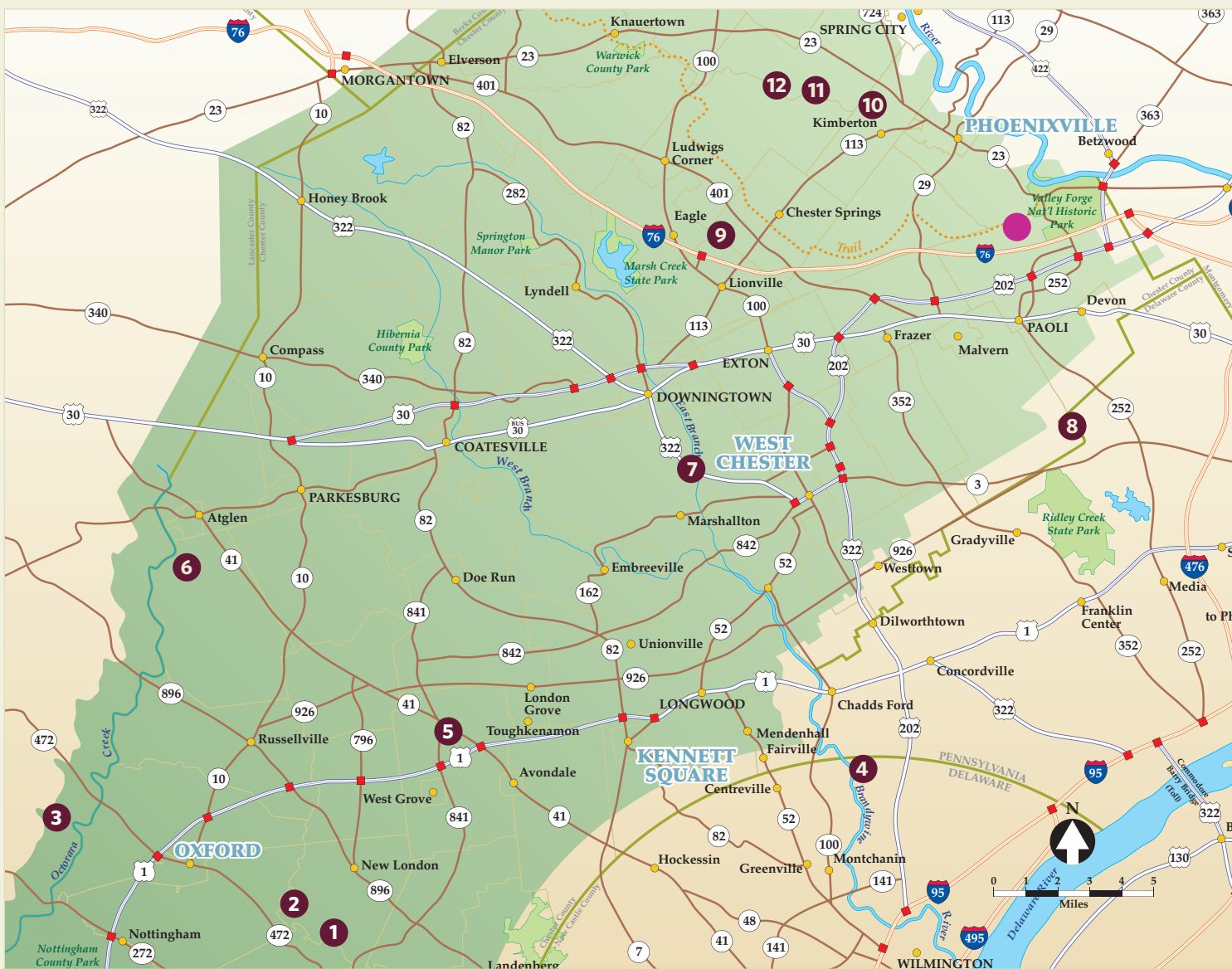
A Quick History...

So what exactly is a covered bridge?

By definition, it's a bridge in which the trusses, sides, and roofs are all wood, creating an almost-complete enclosure across the water. While keeping you dry is a benefit, covered bridges were built that way to protect the structural integrity of the bridge — left exposed, a wood bridge may only last 10-15 years.

Covered bridges were built all around the world throughout the 19th century. Philadelphia lays claim to the first in the United States — a bridge built in the early 1800s that once spanned the Schuylkill River by 30th Street.

At their peak as many as 12,000 covered bridges existed in the U.S., but once more affordable and durable materials came into fashion, the number dropped, and quickly; there were less than 1,500 by the 1950s. Here in Pennsylvania 219 remain, the most of any state.



● Knox Bridge closed at time of publication

- 1. The Rudolph and Arthur Bridge | New London, PA**
The bridge was originally built in 1880 near the site of a paper firm owned by the Rudolph and Arthur families, hence the name. The bridge crosses over Big Elk Creek, and is still open to vehicle traffic today. The bridge is one of Chester County's three white bridges. GPS: N39 44 73, W75 52 93
- 2. Linton Stephens Bridge | New London, PA**
The Linton Stephens Bridge was built in 1886 by J. Denithorne & Son as a small footbridge. The bridge is named in honor of Linton Stephens, the then postmaster of the town of Hickory Hill. GPS: N39 45 23, W75 54 45
- 3. Pine Grove Bridge | Oxford, PA**
After two earlier bridges were destroyed by weather, the bridge standing today was built in 1884 by Elias McMellen and was a primary route between New York and Washington in the late 19th century. This bridge is the longest in Chester County, and is named after a nearby grove of pine trees. GPS: N39, 47 61, W76 02 66
- 4. Smith Bridge | Winterthur, DE**
Arsoned in 1961 and replaced with an open span, Smith was a "lost treasure" for 40 years. The new Smith Bridge was rebuilt in 2002. When searching for Smith Bridge, be sure to use the nearby First State National Historic Park as an indicator that you're getting close. GPS: N39 83 77, W75 58 66
- 5. Glen Hope Bridge | West Grove, PA**
The structure was built in 1889 by Menander Wood and George E. Jones and spans Little Elk Creek. In 1987 the structure was destroyed by a fire, but has since been reconstructed. The bridge can be found between Glen Hope Road and Blake Road. GPS: N39 43 62, W75 54 45
- 6. Mercers Mill Bridge | Christiana, PA**
The Mercers Mill Bridge connects West Fallowfield Township, Chester County, Sadsbury Township, and Lancaster County, and was built in 1880. It was named for Captain John Mercer, a farmer and mill owner on the Lancaster side of the bridge. GPS: N39 55 89, W75 58 89
- 7. Harmony Hill Bridge | West Chester, PA**
The bridge, built in 1872 by Edward Hall and Thomas Schull, is also known as Gibson's Bridge. It is a 78-foot-long Burr truss bridge and crosses over the east branch of the Brandywine Creek. GPS: N39 97 63, W75 68 13
- 8. Bartram Bridge | Newtown Square, PA**
This bridge spans the county line between Delaware and Chester Counties over Crum Creek. Built in 1860 and restored in 1970, Bartram Bridge has unique slanted plank portals, the only bridge in Pennsylvania with this unusual design. **Limited accessibility.* GPS: N39 59 19, W75 68 13
- 9. Larkin Bridge (Thomson Bridge) | Eagle, PA**
The original structure was built in 1854 by Menander and Ferdinand Wood, and was later rebuilt in 1881. The bridge is named for Jesse Larkin, owner of a grist mill not far from the bridge. The bridge was relocated in April of 2006 and is now a pedestrian-only bridge accessible only via a walking path. GPS: N40 04 95, W75 41 13
- 10. Rapps Dam Bridge | Phoenixville, PA**
This bridge was named for George A. Rapp and his sons, who operated a sawmill and a gristmill just south of the bridge. The structure was built in 1866 by Benjamin F. Hartman and spans French Creek. GPS: N40 08 29, W75 33 17
- 11. Kennedy Bridge | Kimberton, PA**
The original bridge was built in 1856 by Alex and Jesse King. However, a plaque inside the bridge reads "Built in 1856 by Len Kennedy and Jesse King... Refurbished in 1979...Destroyed by fire on May 10, 1986...Refurbished in 1987." When rebuilding, the constructors used bongossi, a non-flammable wood from Africa. GPS: N40 08 52, W75 34 58 (No parking available)
- 12. Sheeder Hall Bridge | Chester Springs, PA**
The bridge was built in 1850 by Robert Russell and Jacob Fox, and is the oldest covered bridge in Chester County. It was named for two well-known families that lived nearby. The bridge is easily recognizable as it runs across French Creek and has distinctive "step" portals. GPS: N40 04 86, W75 37 24