

Covered Bridges of Chester County

1. McCREARY'S BRIDGE

Also known as Black Run Bridge. An 80 ft. span with a 16 ft. roadway over Black Run in West Nottingham Township, on road leading from Fremont to Kirk's Mills. First bridge built in 1860, present yellow painted structure built in 1889 by George E. Jones at a cost of \$2,116.00. Named for Hiram McCreary, owner of a large grist and saw mill near the entrance. Marked plainly inside is the number, 4½. None other bears the half mark. (*Burned 1967*)

2. PINE GROVE BRIDGE

Inter-county bridge on road leading from Oxford to Oak Hill. Three bridges have spanned the Octorara here. First built in 1816, destroyed by a storm; second in 1846, destroyed by ice; present structure in 1884 is 2 spans of 204 ft. with 15 ft. roadway, built by Elias McMellen for \$3,450. The name was suggested by the large number of pine trees in the nearby woods. Jonathan Webb owned iron works here. William Pennock in 1844 established a rolling mill. In early days a very important bridge on a National Highway for stage coaches between N.Y. & Wash. Only 2 span standing in county.

3. BELLBANK BRIDGE

Inter-county, 112 ft. long, 15 ft. roadway over Octorara Creek on Chester and Lancaster Co. line, on road from Homeville to Union Church. First built 1850. Was main road from Phila. to McCall's Ferry on Susquehanna River. Burned July 13, 1860. Present built by Rob't Russell, 1861. Struck twice by lightning. Named for Col. James Patterson Bell who owned about 1200 acres here and harnessed the Octorara to turn the wheels of his paper mill. Near here Barbara Fritchie was born.

4. MERCER'S BRIDGE

Inter-county, 85 ft. span, 15 ft. roadway over Octorara Creek on line of Chester-Lancaster counties. On road leading from Steelville to Christiana. Built in 1880 by J. B. Carter for \$1,652.50, one half to be paid by each county. Mercer's Bridge took name from Mercer's Dam, which powered two flour mills operated by Captain Mercer.

5. RUDOLPH and ARTHURS BRIDGE

At Rudolph and Arthurs Paper Mill, New London Township line. On road leading from Hickory Hill to Kemblesville. An 80 ft. span built by Menander W. Wood and Richard T. Meredith, 1880. Cost \$2,334. This bridge was damaged by June flood of 1884 and again in 1915.

6. LINTON STEVENS BRIDGE

On road between Hickory Hill and New London, over Big Elk Creek, where East Nottingham, Elk and New London townships come together. Is 102 ft. span. A saw and grist mill once stood there. Named for Linton Stevens who was a merchant and postmaster at nearby Hickory. Burr type, built in 1886.

7. GLEN HOPE BRIDGE

A covered wooden bridge over Little Elk Creek at Anderson's Ford in Elk Township. On the road leading from Chrome to Lewisville. Was built in 1889 by George E. Jones and Menander Wood at a cost of \$1,767. The 65 ft. span has a shingle roof, is painted white and is in good repair.

8. SPEAKMAN BRIDGE NO. 1

South of Hepzibah Church, below Coatesville, Speakman Bridge No. 1 spans Buck Run Creek in East Fallowfield Township. On the road leading from Rokeby to Youngsburg. Built in 1881 at a cost of \$1,938. On Rte. 15068, is used by steady stream of traffic. Beside bridge are ruins of an old mill. Originally was a paper mill, later grist mill, used by Jonathan Speakman, who operated it for a number of years.

9. MORTONVILLE BRIDGE

In 1876 this covered bridge was built at Mortonville. It is 106 ft. long, 16 ft. wide. Built by Menander Wood and John Williams for \$2,702. Took name from the Morton family who settled here in 1840, when they bought 320 acres of land along Brandywine. Sold in 1939 to Mr. Pratt. Stands beside new road but is privately owned.

10. GIBSON BRIDGE

A 78 ft. span, 14 ft. wide, over East Brandywine Creek near old trolley station beside Rte. 322 from West Chester to Downingtown. Built in 1872 at cost of \$2,366. Named for George Gibson, local farmer.

11. LARKIN BRIDGE

South of Milford Mills over Marsh Creek in Upper Uwchlan Township. A 60 ft. span, 14½ ft. wide, on road leading from Downingtown to Milford Mills. Built in 1854, rebuilt in 1881 by M. and F. Woods at a cost of \$893.

12. BARTRAM BRIDGE

Inter-county bridge in Willistown township on a line of Delaware Co. Stands at side of Goshen Rd. A 60 ft. span extending over each abutment 10 ft. making total length 80 ft. by 18 ft. wide. Built in 1860 by Ferdinand Wood, near residence of Israel L. Bartram. Closed to traffic in 1941. On portal in faded letters are words: LINCOLN, Save Union and Congress. Cost shared by each county.

13. KNOX BRIDGE

A 66 ft. span, 13 ft. wide, over Valley Creek at the head of Valley Forge Dam. Built for \$843 in 1851; washed away in July 1865. Present bridge built by R. Russell for \$1,179. Named for Philander C. Knox, U.S. Att'y. Gen. 1853-1921 and Sec'y. of State under President Taft. Knox estate adjacent to the most often painted and photographed bridge in Chester County.

14. RAPPS BRIDGE

Over French Creek at Rapps Mill in E. Pikeland Twp. on the road from Emery's Shop to Kimberton. Built in 1866 for \$3,595.50. 106 ft. long, 14 ft. roadway, 2 spans. County Commissioners names carved on marble stone in wing wall. Very fancy cornice adorns each end of bridge. Built by Benjamin F. Hartman.

15. KENNEDY BRIDGE

Over French Creek at Kennedy's farm on line of East and West Vincent Twps. On road from Kimberton to Seven Stars. Built 1856 by Jesse King and Alex Kennedy for \$2,149. 96 ft. long.

16. SHEEDER (HALL) BRIDGE

Over French Creek in East Vincent Twp. at point where Birch Run empties into French Creek at Henry Hall's. On road leading from Red Hill Cannery to Birchrunville. 116 ft. span. Built 1850 by R. Russell and Jacob Fox for \$1,564. Named for Henry Sheeder who came from Germany and established forge on bank of Creek to make steel. Paper and saw mills operated under same name also.

17. SPEAKMAN BRIDGE NO. 2

Mary Anna Pyle Bridge, or Speakman Bridge No. 2, spans Buck Run in West Marlboro Township. On road leading from Doe Run Village to Mortonville. Is a 75 ft. span with a 15 ft. roadway. Built in 1881 at a cost of \$1,938. It is known as one of Chester County's twin bridges. This is now privately owned, being on the Buck and Doe Run Farms of the King Ranch.

Ask About Other Chester County
Brochures:
ANTIQUE
SELF-GUIDED TOUR
CHESTER COUNTY-COLOR
HOTEL - MOTEL - RESTAURANT

ABOUT COVERED BRIDGES

There are in America today some 2000 covered bridges; some still in use, others hiding out their declining years just beyond their modern replacements. Thirty-three states cherish these romantic links with a more leisurely past. Pennsylvania leads with 390 followed by Ohio-349, Indiana-174, Oregon-149 and Vermont (the so-called "Covered Bridge State") with 121. Of Chester County's original 100 covered bridges only 17 remain.

Why were they covered? To keep the water out of the wood-pegged joints? To keep the roadway dry? To strengthen the entire structure? To give the bridge a barn-like appearance because farm animals, singly or in droves, frequently balked at crossing bridges where they could see the moving water? To keep the snow off—despite the fact that old records list men hired to "snow the bridge" so sleighs could cross? Take your choice. The actual reason might well be that these bridges were created by builders of barns who merely built barns over streams using the same wooden-pegged construction principles.

Many quite different types of stress supports were used on these 19th century bridges built of abundant white pine, a wood that was light in addition to being worm and weather resistant. Theodore Burr, of Connecticut, invented the use of solid, hewn timbers to form a continuous arch anchored in abutments at the shoulders of the bridge. When sawed planks became more plentiful, the solid Burr Arch was replaced by laminated ones, spliced at random.

Pennsylvania's Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Society honors this early builder. Headquarters are in Harrisburg and anyone interested may join.

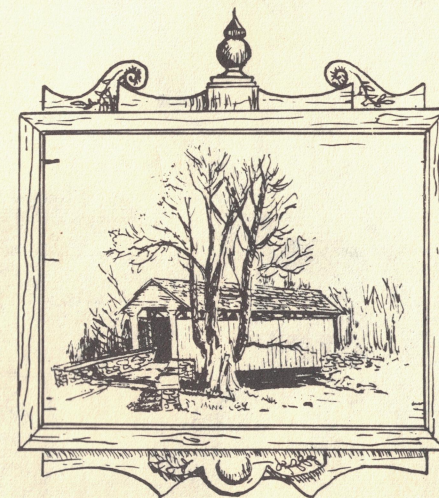
Chester County's covered bridges have special construction numbers as well as names. McCreary's over the Octorara has the unexplainable one of 4½! Places, local associations or builder's names link these attractive reminders of our yesterdays to history or folklore. They were sometimes called "Kissin' Bridges" because it was considered all right to kiss one's sweetheart while passing slowly—so very slowly—through that delightful dimness. For those without sweethearts or desires for more material things, they became "Wishing Bridges" because what one wished while passing through the bridge always came true.

The barnlike walls and sturdy interior arches were fair game for advertisers, evangelists bent on saving souls, circuses or local businesses. Many surviving examples add interest to a covered bridge exploration, particularly for the photographers.

It is certain to be an adventure to locate Chester County's covered bridges. Each is located in its area but not always on its exact road. Go to the area, find the stream and ask local residents for more specific directions if needed. The Elk River bridges may prove elusive but a little persistence will bring rich rewards. Each bridge has its own characteristics; no two are alike. Most people agree that Rapp's Dam and the Valley Forge Knox bridges are among the most beautiful to be found anywhere.

Chester County

Pennsylvania



HISTORICAL COVERED BRIDGES

CHESTER COUNTY TOURIST PROMOTION BUREAU
ROOM 108 NORTH WING
COURT HOUSE
WEST CHESTER, PA. 19380

CHESTER COUNTY AND HER COVERED BRIDGES

Chester County has seventeen covered bridges. Loss by fire and removal by the State has greatly reduced the number in the last ten years. Four of our bridges are over a hundred years old. Sheeder (Hall) is the oldest. The Pine Grove Bridge at 204 feet is the longest in the County. Four of our bridges are shared with neighboring Counties.

The Covered Bridges of the County come under the care of the County Engineer and kept in a good state of repair. Many Societies have been formed to protect these bridges and some of these societies are active in the County.

The beauty of these bridges is captured time and again by the photographer's lens and the artist's brush. They are truly an asset to the County's beauty and historical background.

- 1 McCreary 1889
- 2 Pine Grove 1884
- 3 Bellbank 1861
- 4 Mercer Ford 1880
- 5 Rudolph & Arthur.. 1880
- 6 Linton Stevens... 1886
- 7 Glen Hope 1889
- 8 Speakman No.1... 1881
- 9 Mortonville 1876
- 10 Gibson 1872
- 11 Larkin 1881
- 12 Bartram 1860
- 13 Knox 1865
- 14 Rapps 1866
- 15 Kennedy 1856
- 16 Sheeder Hall.... 1850
- 17 Speakman No.2... 1881

Roof Top Marks Exact Location

