NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Darlington Covered Bridge
other names/site number 054-152-30016

2. Location

street & number County Roads 500N and 500E over Sugar Creek N/A ☐ not for publication
city, town Darlington ☒ vicinity
state Indiana code IN county Montgomery code 054 zip code 47940

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
☐ private	☐ building(s)	0	0 buildings
☒ public-local	☐ district	0	0 sites
☐ public-State	☐ site	1	0 structures
☐ public-Federal	☒ structure	0	0 objects
	☐ object	1	0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official — Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
TRANSPORTATION; Road-related

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
TRANSPORTATION: Pedestrian-related
OTHER: Scenic attraction

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Howe Truss

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: limestone
walls WOOD: weatherboard
roof ASPHALT
other METAL: iron
CONCRETE

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Darlington Covered Bridge, 1868, is located one (1) mile west of Darlington, Indiana. It spans Sugar Creek in a north/south direction. The bridge sits in a wooded area and is approached from either end by a very scenic curved road.

The bridge covers a span of approximately 166 feet. The outside width of the bridge is 22 feet. The inside road way is 17.3 feet in width. The height from the floor (road way) to the square is 12.6 feet. The side walls are covered with 1" x 12" poplar with a 4" batten strip and painted white. The roof is black asphalt shingles over wood shingles.

The builder of the bridge was Richard Epperson, a prominent contractor in Montgomery County in the 1860's. He was the superintendent of construction for Joseph Kress, the bridge contractor.

The bridge spans Sugar Creek on a north/south axis from an abutment of rough cut native limestone on each bank. The truss design is a Howe Truss (William Howe from Massachusetts) which is an improvement over the Long Truss (Col. Stephen H. Long) in that it used vertical tension rods of iron.

The top chord is constructed of 5" x 10" and the bottom chord is built of 5" x 11". They consist of four (4) timbers bolted together with blocks forming a space of approximately 1" between the timbers. The compression timbers consist of a pair of 6" x 9" slanting one way and a 6" x 6" slanting the opposite, thus forming the cross of "X" in the truss. Two vertical 1½" diameter iron rods complete the tension between the top and bottom chords. These are located between panels. All timbers are yellow poplar.

The floor of the bridge is wooden blocks 2¼" thick by 5 3/4" x 3½" laid on edge grain. This floor may have been added during the 1930s as a WPA project. (Many other covered bridges in Indiana had similar floors installed as WPA projects). These are laid on top of 2½" x 8" oak planks which rest on 4" x 12" oak floor joist. The chords, both top and bottom, are stablized by 6" x 6" poplar timbers in the shape of an "X".

[X] See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
ENGINEERING
TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance
1868 - 1940

Significant Dates
1868

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Smith Bridge Company/Kress, Joseph/
Epperson, Richard

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Darlington Covered Bridge is significant under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion C, this bridge has statewide significance. It is one of twenty-three remaining Howe Truss covered spans in the state, and it is the fourth oldest example in Indiana. Only two covered bridges now stand in Montgomery County; the Deers Mill Bridge on SR 234 is an example of the more common Burr Arch Truss. Locally, the Darlington Covered Bridge has importance under Criterion A, since it was the result of a community effort to provide a vital transportation link for Darlington.

The Howe Truss, as represented by the Darlington Bridge, was a dramatic improvement over the Long Truss. William Howe borrowed the concept of diagonal members from the Long and Town Trusses. He improved this design by introducing vertical iron rods which both strengthened and lightened the truss. The Howe Truss, patented in 1840, has often been cited as a significant step towards all metal bridge design. The Darlington Bridge is a type 3 Howe Truss, patented in August of 1846. (There are several recognized variations of the Howe Truss). The more conservative all wood Burr Truss (patented in 1817) was much more commonly used on Indiana bridges. This is probably because wood was inexpensive and easily available throughout Indiana.

According to information maintained by the Indiana Covered Bridge Society, the truss members for the Darlington Bridge were produced by the Smith Bridge Company of Toledo, Ohio. Robert W. Smith (1833-1898) first patented a Howe Truss variant in 1867, although his firm sometimes used the Howe Truss on projects. The Smith Bridge Company was established in Toledo in 1867. The company specialized in producing trusses which were cut, assembled, dismantled, and then shipped from Toledo to the site. The firm or its agents could then build the structure, or as the case was here, a local carpenter/builder could assemble the trusses and add a roof and sheathing. About 21 bridges were built in Indiana by Smith, as few as 12 may be extant today.

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Allen, Robert Sanders. Covered Bridges of the Middle West. Brattleboro, VT: S. Green Press, 1970, p. 126.

Beckwith, H.W. History of Montgomery County, Indiana. 1981

Condit, Carl W. American Building. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

Custer, Mrs. Frank. "Covered Bridge Past to Present," Lafayette News, April 11, 1942.

Gould, George E. Indiana Covered Bridges Thru the Years. Indianapolis: Indiana Covered Bridge Society, Inc., 1977.

[X] See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- [ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- [ ] previously listed in the National Register
- [ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
- [ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- [X] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: Less than one acre

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	16	517590	4439550
B			
C			
D			

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description: An area of Franklin Township, Montgomery County, Indiana, centered on the above UTM Point, including the right of way of the Darlington Covered Bridge, its super structure, abutments, piers, and wingwalls. Extending from the furthest points of the wingwalls of the bridge, include 20' of the approaches on the north and south banks of Sugar Creek.

[ ] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the Howe Truss structure and its historic stone abutments, piers, and wingwalls.

[ ] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Nancy Carol Crull
organization: Darlington Community Association, Inc date: October 1989
street & number: Box 366 telephone: 317/794-4818
city or town: Darlington state: Indiana zip code: 47940

*U.S.GPO:1986-0-223-918

The roof is formed with 2" x 6" rafters covered with 1" wide poplar sheeting. Old wooden shingles can be seen through the cracks. Modern black shingles have been nailed over the wood shingles. At each end of the bridge there is a 1' overhang gable with the sides of the bridge opening built at a slant angle. There is a horizontal open space between the roof and walls for ventilation. In the 1970s, two (2) square windows were added to each side of the structure.

Historically, the bridge had only the two limestone abutments - one at each bank of the creek. In later years (date unknown), a concrete pier was added in the center of the structure. The original wooden shingle roof was also covered more than once with modern shingles in order to better preserve the structure.

The Darlington Covered Bridge was closed to vehicular traffic in 1974. It is accessible to pedestrians and has been maintained for its historical and scenic importance. The bridge and its massive trusses have remained basically unaltered over the past 122 years.

The bridge was built by Joseph Kress, contractor, and Richard Epperson, the construction superintendent. Kress was a resident of Montgomery County. He was primarily a masonry contractor. While Kress often bid on abutments and piers, this is the only bridge he is known to have built.

In 1867, forty-six community-spirited men began a fund raising campaign to raise the necessary funds to begin the construction. They were successful in collecting the sum of $1,585.00 to start the project. The Montgomery County Commissioners voted to pay the balance in installments totaling $9,415.40 to Joseph Kress.

The site was chosen because of its solid slate foundation in Sugar Creek. This site has been used for many years as the ideal spot for fording the creek. It is believed to have been formed many eons ago being part of the Mississippean Sea which later became the drainage basin of the Mississippi River of which Sugar Creek is now a part.

The covered bridge proved to be a real asset for economic development of this area. It was the connecting link for other rural areas to the heart of this community. According to local history, there were four mills located at this crossing; a flour mill, sawmill, flax seed mill and a carding mill. The last mill ceased operation in 1942 - only its foundation still remains. The bridge has stood since 1868 over Sugar Creek and was the main northwest entrance to the town until 1974 when a new concrete bridge was built. The Darlington Covered Bridge has withstood 122 years of constant use, floods, and weather. The community of Darlington is seeking financial assistance to maintain this landmark structure, so that it may be passed on to future generations.

Bibliography (continued)

Gronert, Ted Sugar Creek Saga. Crawfordsville, IN: Wabash College, 1958, pp. 13, 61, 122, 276, and 339.

History of Montgomery County, Indiana. Indianapolis: A. W. Bowen & Co., 1913.

Indiana Covered Bridge Society. Current files on Indiana Covered Bridges.

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory. Montgomery County Interim Report. Indianapolis: Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, May 1986.

Montgomery County Commissioners Records, 1865-66. Montgomery County Courthouse, Crawfordsville. (Several versions concerning the bridge have been published by Robert Stwalley and Tessie Wisehart Stwalley, great graddaughter of the first donor to the Bridge Building Fund in 1867. One version was published in the Crawfordsville Journal-Review March 1, 1978, p. 12.)

Montgomery Magazine. November 1977, P. 17,

Sechrist, John. Phone interview with Paul Diebold. 28 March 1990.