

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

II-11

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

EXTRA
COPY

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 18). 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 Potter's Covered Bridge
other names/site number Potter's Bridge, Potter's Ford Bridge, 057-464-30011

2. Location

street & number Allisonville Road at White River N/A not for publication
city, town Noblesville X vicinity
state IN code IN county Hamilton code 057 zip code 46060

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> 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 Indiana Department of Natural Resources Date _____
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.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

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

1871-1941

Significant Dates

1871

1938

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Josiah Durfee & Company

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	6
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5	8	5	2	3	0
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4	4	3	6	0	8	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

An area of Noblesville Township, Hamilton County, Indiana centered on the above UTM point, including the right of way of Potter's Covered Bridge, its superstructure, abutments, piers, wing walls and fieldstone piers to the south. Extending from the furthest points of the wing walls, include 20' of the approaches on the north and south banks of White River.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the Howe Truss structure and its historic stone abutments, piers, wing walls, and fieldstone piers.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sandi Elliott

organization Noblesville Preservation Alliance date April 1991

street & number 1263 Clinton telephone 317-773-6403

city or town Noblesville state Indiana zip code 46060

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Potter's Covered Bridge, built in 1871, is located two miles north of Noblesville (Hamilton County), Indiana. It spans the West Fork of the White River in a north-south direction. The bridge sits in a suburban/rural wooded area about three miles from the presumed location of the first log bridge across White River, built by the Delaware Indians.

The Howe Truss bridge has overall dimensions of 260' in length, 22' in width, and 20' in height (to the apex of the gable). The road bed width is 18'. Interior height (from deck to top of X-braces) is 13'. The structure rests on limestone abutments with wing walls at either end, and, in the center, a coursed, rough-faced limestone pier. Exterior walls are clad in vertical board siding. The siding does not reach to the eaves, leaving an open clerestory space across both walls. Gable ends have vertical wood siding.

The deck of the bridge consists of 3" planking resting on 4" by 12" sleepers of oak. Massive joists and X-shaped braces span between the lower chords (photo 10). Using the typical Howe Truss, Potter's Bridge has lower chords consisting of four 5" by 12" members joined by iron bolts with spacing blocks. The upper chord is formed of two 5" by 10"s with a 10" by 10" member sandwiched in the middle, joined without spacing by bolts. The upper chord appears to be of oak. The characteristic X-shaped bracing is formed by two 8" by 7" members slanting one direction and a single 6" by 6" member slanting diagonally the opposite direction sandwiched between these.

The bridge is built of two structurally independent spans meeting at the central pier. In order to increase rigidity, the slant direction of the parallel members varies every 65' (photo 9). Starting from the south portal, the paired timbers slant to the north, then to the south, then again to the north, and finally once again to the south. The 65' mark falls at the center of each span, where the compression load would be the greatest. 4" by 6" X-shaped braces and iron bars link the upper chords. All truss members are Michigan pine. Heavy vertical iron bars (1 1/2" diameter) bolted into the upper and lower chords provide tension support.

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Typical of a Howe Truss bridge, both north and south portals cantilever forward on triangular braces. There is no ornamentation on the portals. The gable roof has rafters nailed at the ridge line with no intermediate support. Wood shingles are visible underneath the black asphalt shingle roof.

Throughout its 100 years of continuous use by vehicular traffic, Potter's Bridge has needed several major rehabilitations. In 1937, the State of Indiana planned to abandon the bridge, but area farmers protested. The bridge was repaired by Hamilton County. The stone abutments were rebuilt. Siding and roofing were replaced. The decking supports (joists and sleepers) were replaced or, in some cases, braced by sistering in new lumber. Timbers from the nearby Strawtown Covered Bridge, a nearly identical Howe Truss span, were used to replace defective members. The Strawtown Bridge had been demolished in 1935. A new cornerstone commemorating the rehabilitation was installed. In 1938, the bridge was rededicated.

In 1959, Vernon & Waugh Construction Company of Cicero, Indiana was hired to shore up the bridge. Three layers of flooring were removed. Some of the sleepers were replaced with oak brought from southeastern Ohio. Some siding was repaired or replaced, and the roof was resingled. Also, at this time, the original cornerstone was found. It had fallen from the abutment on the south end into the river bank. Both the 1871 and 1937 cornerstones were set into fieldstone piers flanking the south portal (photos 1 and 7). These two cornerstones are counted as contributing objects.

After 100 years of service, Potter's Bridge was closed to vehicular traffic in 1971, and a new concrete bridge was erected to carry State Route 37A across White River. Now owned by the county and maintained by the parks department, the bridge was repaired once again in 1980. At that time, it received a fresh coat of paint, concrete work on the abutments to prevent spreading, bollards in front of both portals, and security lighting. Currently, the bridge needs maintenance work. Roofing has completely worn through in several areas, the flooring is deteriorated in some spots, and graffiti is a constant problem.

A practical structure which has seen many years of hard use,

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Potter's Covered Bridge meets National Register Criteria A and C. Under Criterion C, Potter's Bridge has statewide significance. It is one of only 22 remaining Howe Truss covered bridges in Indiana, and it is the ninth oldest example in the state. Potter's Covered Bridge is the only remaining wooden covered span in Hamilton County. Potter's Bridge has local significance under Criterion A; from 1871 until well into the 1900s, it provided an important transportation link between agricultural areas of Hamilton County and the primary local market, Noblesville.

The Howe Truss, as represented in Potter's Bridge, was a dramatic improvement over the Long Truss. William Howe borrowed the concept of using diagonal members from both the Long and Town Trusses. Howe improved the 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. Howe produced several variations on his truss invention. Potter's Bridge uses the usual type of Howe Truss with two parallel diagonals and paired iron verticals. The Howe Truss was the second most common wooden bridge type in Indiana. More common, and today, more plentiful is the Burr Truss (patented in 1817). Hamilton County once had at least 7 covered bridges, 5 of which were Howe Truss spans. Local carpenter and contractor Josiah Durfee built these 5 spans.

Potter's Bridge is now the only example of Durfee & Company's bridge contracts. Durfee also built the Hamilton County Sheriff's House and Jail (NRHP, 5-10-78) in 1876. Durfee is thought to have imitated the widely-copied Howe Truss design rather than assembling trusses which were pre-cut (many Indiana bridges were assembled from truss "kits" produced by out-of-state bridge companies).

The bridge quickly became an important transportation link to Noblesville. Founded in 1823, Noblesville was the county seat and primary settlement in the county. The west fork of the White River isolated Noblesville from northern and western townships. Potter's Bridge provided a direct route into town from the north. Noblesville developed into an important commercial center, fueled by advent of the Peru and Indianapolis Railroad in 1851 and the

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Potter's Bridge still retains enough integrity to merit National Register listing. Especially important are the truss configuration and members, which have remained basically unaltered.

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natural gas boom of the late 1880s and 1890s. Local farmers found a ready market for produce and dairy products at the county seat and Potter's Bridge provided access to that market regardless of the season. The bridge crossed White River at Potter's Ford. William A. Potter (1838-1873) and his wife Sarah Elizabeth (daughter of Richard F. Lytle, who deeded her the land) was a farmer there.

The Hamilton County Commissioners' Record of 19 October 1870 states that "(We have) contracted the bridge to have two stone abutments, one stone pier, double track, pine chords, pine shingles, 246 feet in length at cost of \$13,000., 1/3 paid as the work progresses, 1/3 1st of April next, 1/3 1st of April 1872, to be completed on or before the 1st day of June next, and a bond filed for \$5,000. for faithful performance of the contract."

The project was accepted by the County Commissioners on 12 April 1871 with "the entire work being found fully up to the specifications in all its parts and contract, and discharged for the liabilities under the bond and contract. The bridge is as good a job of work as the best in the county." \$316.66 was allotted for extras.

In 1938, Potter's Covered Bridge was rededicated. Local farmers and citizens had protested the proposed closing of the bridge by the state, and convinced county officials to repair the bridge and maintain it as a historic landmark.

Closed to vehicular traffic after a nearby concrete bridge was erected in 1971, Potter's Bridge is maintained as a pedestrian walkway and for its scenic and cultural value.

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Barthold, John. Underwood, IN., President, Indiana Covered Bridge Society. Telephone interview, February, 1991.

Borden, Stephen L., and John M. Dierdorf. "Historic American Buildings Survey, Potter's Bridge, Noblesville, Indiana, Hamilton County." student project, College of Architecture and Planning, Ball State University, Muncie, In., August 18, 1971.

Campbell, Frank S. The Story of Hamilton County, Indiana. Noblesville, Indiana, 1962.

Comp, T. Allan, Jackson, Donald. "Technical Leaflet #95-Bridge Truss Types," American Association for State and Local History, 1977.

Demaree, Herald Jr., Atlanta, Indiana, cemetery research of William Potter, Telephone interview, February, 1991.

Gatewood, Arthur Jr., Noblesville, Indiana, author of Indiana Covered Bridge location guide, Telephone interview, February 1991.

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

Hamilton County Commissioner's Record. "In the Matter of Building a Bridge at Potter's ford on White River," 19 October 1870. Also minutes for 12 April 1871.

History of Hamilton County Illustrated. Chicago: Kingman Brothers, 1880.

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory. Hamilton County Interim Report. 1978. (note: update in process of publication due in 1991)

"Landmark: Bridge over Troubled Waters," Noblesville Daily Ledger, July 20, 1988, p. 12.

Sechrist, John. Indianapolis, Treasurer, Indiana Covered Bridge

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Society. Telephone interview, February, 1991.

Times. March 11, 1946. (Noblesville paper)

Weber, Wayne. Covered Bridges in Indiana. Midland, MI: Northwood
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