

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Possum Bottom Covered Bridge

other names/site number Jackson's Ford Bridge, Hillsdale Bridge

2. Location

street & number Ernie Pyle Park, U.S. 36 Not for publication

city or town Dana vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Vermillion code 165 zip code 47847

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patrick R. Rohlf 4-25-94
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:)	_____	_____

Possum Bottom Covered Bridge
Name of Property

Vernon County, IN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: road related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: scenic attraction

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Burr Arch Truss

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls WOOD: weatherboard

roof METAL: steel

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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 #

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

1876

Significant Dates

1876

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Daniels, Joseph J.

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository: Vermillion County Auditor's Office

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Continuation Sheet

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The Possum Bottom Covered Bridge was built in 1876 on the Bloomfield Road across Little Raccoon Creek, at what was then called Jackson's Ford. Later, a small community called Possum Bottom developed in the vicinity, and the bridge assumed that name. The bridge was moved in 1972 to its current location, just off of U.S. 36 at the Ernie Pyle Rest Park. The original site was about 2 1/2 miles east, near the intersection of U.S. 36 and S.R. 63 (see USGS map). It is a Burr Arch truss structure, one of four such bridges remaining in Vermillion County, all built by J.J. Daniels.

Descriptions of the bridge are taken for the most part from specifications as noted in a Special Meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of Vermillion County, July 24, 1876. At that time, J.J. Daniels' bid of \$4,000 for the bridge, foundations, rip rap, grades and approaches was accepted.

The foundations consisted of two abutments each on a platform 20 by 24 feet composed of "hardwood timber twelve inches thick of any width the trees will square", the bottom course of timber twenty feet long laid at right angles with the stream; the top course of timber twenty four feet long laid in line with the stream, the whole sunk in a pit not less than three feet deep below low water mark. On this platform the masonry was placed.

The two stone abutments were 100 feet apart, 21 long by five feet thick at the base, rose 13 feet high with a batten of 1/2 inch to the foot on the face and ends. Each abutment had two wings extending back at right angles with the ends fifteen feet from the face, said wings five feet thick at the abutment and four feet thick at the back or outer ends with a batten of 1/2 inch to the foot on the face. Additionally, each abutment was to have twenty yards of rubble rock placed about the foundation mixed with an ample quality of brush.

The bridge now rests on concrete abutments. The bridge was specified to be "fourteen feet between the Hubboards, covered with the best pine shingles, vertically weatherboarded with 1 inch lumber & joints battened & properly painted, and to be completed before November 1st" (a little over 3 months).

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**Possum Bottom Covered Bridge
Vermillion County, Indiana**

The structure is 108 feet on the truss, with 11 feet of overhang at each end for a total length of 131 feet. The posts are 7 3/4 by 9 inches. The diagonals are 7 3/4 by 6 3/4 inches. The arch ring segments are 6 by 12 inches. The floor beams are 4 by 12 inches. Lower chords are double 6 by 12 inch members four panels long, spliced with what Daniels called a double headed hook, and an iron strap bolted across the splice. The width between the hubboards is 14 feet and the width between the arches is 12 feet, four inches. As with other Daniels-built bridges, the trusses are joined at the top by X-braces and iron tie rods.

The bridge was still in service in 1972, when the four lane State Route 63 was built through Vermillion County. The bridge was moved to its current site, about 2 1/2 miles west of the original location in order to save it from destruction. It remains within Helt Township, and is in a similar landscape setting. The bridge now stands without its historic abutments due to the move, but it was placed so as to span a gully, giving the viewer the feeling of its original function.

Possum Bottom Covered Bridge was repaired in 1990 by the Indiana Department of Transportation in consultation with the Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology. A new sheet metal roof was installed, general structural repairs were undertaken, and the siding was repaired. Enough old siding was salvaged to cover the north wall, while new wood siding was placed on the south wall. Signs were placed nearby describing the bridge and its history. Since INDOT policy does not allow rest stops on any thoroughfares lesser than a state route, the park and bridge were donated to the county. The park is much used by the public.

Although the bridge has lost any potential significance under Criterion A as an important transportation link, Possum Bottom Bridge still retains its historic Burr Arch truss and identity as a good example of the work of J.J. Daniels.

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**Possum Bottom Covered Bridge
Vermillion County, Indiana**

Section 8-Statement of Significance

Possum Bottom Covered Bridge meets National Register Criterion C, as a good example of a Burr Arch truss covered bridge, and as a good example of master bridge builder J.J. Daniels' work. The bridge has statewide significance as one of only 57 remaining Burr Arch truss timber spans in Indiana. The bridge was originally located 2 1/2 miles east, but was moved in 1972 due to the construction of S.R. 63. Possum Bottom Bridge meets Criterion Consideration B because of site's compatibility and because the bridge retains its design characteristics.

J.J. Daniels, the builder, bid \$4,000 to erect the bridge, in competition with builders from some distance:

The Smith Bridge Co., Toledo, Ohio
The Cincinnati Bridge Co., Cincinnati, Ohio
McKey and Telani (sp?), Fort Wayne, Indiana
Indianapolis Bridge Co., Indianapolis
Danville Iron Wagon Works, Danville, Illinois
Oshorne & Ellet, unknown
J.J. Daniels, Rockville, Indiana

Daniels lived in adjacent Parke County during the mid to late 1800s and was one of Indiana's leading timber bridge carpenters. Born in Marietta, Ohio in 1826, J.J. Daniels settled in Rockville in 1861 and was primarily a bridge builder until 1904, the year of his last commission. He built about 60 timber bridges during his career. His closest rivals were the Kennedy family of Rushville and J.A. Britton, also of Parke County. All three leading Indiana bridge makers favored the Burr Arch truss. Most of Indiana's covered timber-truss spans are of the Burr Arch design.

The Burr Arch truss was patented by Theodore Burr of Connecticut in 1806 and 1817. Achieving redundancy by combining the kingpost truss with the compressive strength of the arch, the Burr Arch was a conservative and popular solution to spanning 100 foot or more distances. More of this type of bridge was built in Pennsylvania

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**Possum Bottom Covered Bridge
Vermillion County, Indiana**

and Indiana than in any other states. Daniels used the Burr Arch truss almost exclusively, but he experimented with the design by adding iron fittings and tie rods. The Possum Bottom Covered Bridge reflects Daniels' attempts to use the new iron technology to augment the basic Burr Arch truss.

Daniels' method of construction was to install stone abutments, with appropriate sloped surfaces or pockets to bear up at an angle against the arches, and then build a temporary platform on wood poles which had been driven into the river bed between the abutments. The trusses were then erected using block and tackle and then pinned or bolted in place. The kingpost trusses were built with a cant toward the center. Once the falsework or platform was removed, the kingpost trusses settled into place at a true horizontal. The arch rings were then added to the structure. The Possum Bottom Bridge was so built in a little under three months—from July 24, 1876 (awarding of contract) to October 20, 1876, when the County Commissioners accepted the bridge.

The bridge, now located about 2 1/2 miles west of its original site, is part of a popular park owned by the county. Nearby Parke County holds the annual Covered Bridge Fall Festival, and even though the event highlights bridges of Parke County, Possum Bottom Covered Bridge is featured during the festival as well.

Section 9-Bibliography

Biographical and Historical Record of Vermillion County, Indiana.
Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1888.

Gatewood, Arthur Jr. Indiana Covered Bridge Location Guide.
Fortville, IN: Indiana Covered Bridge Society, 1988.

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

Harvey, Max. Covered Bridges of Parke, Putnam, Vermillion,
Fountain, Montgomery, and Vigo Counties, Indiana.

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Section number 9 & 10 Page 5

**Possum Bottom Covered Bridge
Vermillion County, Indiana**

Wabash Valley Printing, 1964.

Ketcham, Bryan E. Covered Bridges on the Byways of Indiana.
Oxford, OH: Oxford Printing, 1949.

Vermillion County Commissioners' Record, 1876, pp. 233-235, 257.

Weber, Wayne. Covered Bridges in Indiana. Midland, MI: Northwood
Institute, 1977.

Section 10-Geographical Data-Verbal Boundary Description

An area of Helt Township, Vermillion County, Indiana, located at the given UTM point, including the Possum Bottom Bridge, consisting of the trusses, siding, roof, any superstructure, and any footings or foundations of the Possum Bottom Covered Bridge located in Ernie Pyle Park.

Boundary Justification

The Possum Bottom Covered Bridge was moved to its current site in 1972. The boundary includes the entire bridge at its new location, including the trusses, footings, and any superstructure elements. No approaches are included since the location is not original.

