

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FINAL

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 Snow Hill Covered Bridge

other names/site number Johnson Fork Covered Bridge

2. Location

street & number Snow Hill Road over Johnson Fork N/A not for publication

city or town Rockdale  vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Franklin code 047 zip code 47060

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. Kalkbrenner*

1-27-95

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:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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:)

Snow Hill Covered Bridge  
Name of Property

Franklin County, Indiana  
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)

TRANSPORTATION: road-related

**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 CONCRETE

**Narrative Description**

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

Snow Hill Covered Bridge  
Name of Property

Franklin County, Indiana  
County and State

**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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENGINEERING

TRANSPORTATION

**Period of Significance**

1895-1945

**Significant Dates**

1895

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Butts, William

Horn, John

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

Snow Hill Covered Bridge  
Name of Property

Franklin County, Indiana  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	6	6	8	5	1	8	0	4	3	5	4	8	9	0
Zone		Easting					Northing							

3 

Zone		Easting					Northing							

See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Beverly Metze

organization N/A date September 7, 1994

street & number 3051 Snowhill Road telephone 812-637-1864

city or town West Harrison state IN zip code 47060

#### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

#### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Franklin County Commissioners

street & number 459 Main Street telephone 317-647-4631

city or town Brookville state IN zip code 47060

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Snow Hill Covered Bridge, 1895, is located in Whitewater Township, Franklin County, in the extreme southeast corner of the county, only 1 3/4 miles from the Ohio-Indiana border. The bridge is also known as Johnson Fork Covered Bridge; this is how county commissioners records refer to the structure. Area residents have long since used the name Snow Hill. Surrounding terrain is gently rolling and the bridge spans Johnson Fork, which merges with Whitewater River about 2 miles south of the site. The bridge carries Snow Hill Road across the stream and joins it to Johnson Fork Road on the east bank.

The Howe Truss type bridge rests on stone abutments with wingwalls. Additionally, the west abutment was partly reinforced with concrete in 1929 and in 1987, concrete piers which reduce the effective span were placed about 10 feet from the abutments.

Snow Hill Bridge is an 8 panel, 75 feet long Howe Truss structure. True to the Howe Truss formula, paired diagonal wood members slant in one direction while the sandwiched single member slants diagonally in the other direction. All double diagonals slant westward. Overhead X-braces are single members linking each top chord to the opposite top chord. A similar web of X-braces on the under side of the bridge links the bottom chords. Both top and bottom chords are composite members formed of sandwiched planks held together by iron nuts and bolts with washers.

The use of iron joining bolts and tie rods is common in the Howe Truss, and Snow Hill Covered Bridge is no exception. Paired vertical iron bars mark the upper and lower meeting points of the doubled and single diagonals (the division point between panels). Iron nuts and washers joining the verticals to the upper and lower chords allow the bridge to be adjusted if necessary. The vertical bars provide support in tension. Iron bars also link the top chords overhead, and the bottom chords underneath. Iron shoes are used to anchor the diagonal braces.

The gable roof has a slight overhang and the exterior walls are covered with vertical board and batten siding. The siding does not extend to the eaves, leaving an open clerestory across each flank of the bridge. Portals are plainly detailed, with a portion of the wood board and batten siding wrapping around to the first three or

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**Snow Hill Covered Bridge  
Franklin County, Indiana**

so feet of the interior "walls". The upper corners of the portal opening are rounded. Portals have been painted white, while the flanks are barn red. Dates 1885 (incorrect) and 1987 (rehab date) are crudely painted in black on each portal gable end.

Since construction in March 1895, Snow Hill Covered Bridge has been altered several times. In 1928, openings were cut into each side for automobile traffic visibility. An elderly local farmer tells an anecdote that in 1929, he helped build a concrete abutment on the Snow Hill side of the bridge to strengthen the stone abutment. Mostly due to the openings cut through in 1928 exposing the trusses to the elements, but aggravated by missing siding and a deteriorated roof, the bridge had deteriorated by the 1980s. A truck carrying a bulldozer disregarded load limit signs and damaged the bridge in crossing in 1986. In the same year, the bridge was deemed unsafe and closed to traffic. With much community support, a restoration project was initiated. Several sections of lower chords had to be replaced. Six diagonal braces were replaced, and the contractor had to recast two of the iron diagonal member shoes. The flooring was replaced. Originally, it was a wide plank floor, now the floor is of 2" X 4"s laid on edge. The siding was repaired with wood which matched the original poplar siding. A new asphalt shingle roof was installed. The abutments were sandblasted and repointed. New concrete piers were installed about 10 feet in from the abutments, increasing the load limit of the bridge to 12 tons. Lloyd Brown was the contractor for the repairs and Jim Barker of AECON Engineering was the engineer.

The bridge was reopened to traffic in August 1987. Still in service after a century of use, Snow Hill Bridge retains its significant Howe Truss design and a good percentage of original members.

*Section 8-Statement of Significance*

Constructed in March of 1895, Snow Hill Covered Bridge is eligible under Criterion C as a fine example of a small scale Howe Truss timber bridge. The Howe Truss was rarely used on Indiana wooden

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**Snow Hill Covered Bridge  
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truss bridges; the more conservative Burr Arch type was the favorite of the most important builders. Only about 22 Howe Truss bridges are thought to stand in Indiana, giving this and other examples statewide importance. Under Criterion A, Snow Hill Bridge was an important passageway to Johnson Fork Road, which leads eventually to the Cincinnati area, the biggest market for local farmers.

Snow Hill Covered Bridge uses a Howe Truss to bear loads up to 12 tons (current rating). The concept of the Howe Truss was invented by William Howe in 1840. As was often the case with the empirical design process used by engineers in the early 19th century, Howe built upon the ideas of others. He borrowed the use of diagonal members from the Long and Town Trusses, but strengthened the resulting lattice work with vertical iron bars which also allowed members to be lighter. The Howe Truss has often been cited as a significant step towards all metal bridge construction. Indeed, it is interesting that the Snow Hill Bridge would have been erected using the Howe Truss as late as 1895. The 1890s were the heyday of the all metal truss bridge in Indiana, although a good number of traditional timber bridges continued to be built in rural counties of Indiana, where successful builders were able to convince county commissioners of the practicality of their designs.

One might also note that the Howe Truss was very popular in Franklin County. Nearly all known vehicular spans in the county were Howe Trusses; several were built in the 1890s. The only other remaining wood bridge in the county today, the Stockheugter or Enochsburg Bridge, is also a Howe Truss span. It would appear that the county commissioners favored the Howe Truss. Whitewater Canal Aquaduct is also in Franklin County (Whitewater Canal Historic District, NR, 6-13-73). Although not truly a bridge, but rather an aquaduct, it utilizes the Burr Arch Truss.

It would appear that Snow Hill Bridge was erected by local builders who had knowledge of the Howe Truss bridge type. According to County Commissioner's records, the substructure was

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Snow Hill Covered Bridge  
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started in October 1894 by John H. Horn, a local mason whose family owned property about one-half mile from the bridge on Snow Hill Road. William Butts, a local carpenter, erected the timber bridge with the help of area laborers. Work was complete in March 1895, the total cost being \$1,422.50. Neither man is thought to have built any other timber bridges. The name of the bridge comes from Lemuel Snow, a Revolutionary War officer and owner of the high ground west of the bridge (Snow Hill).

*Section 9-Bibliography*

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

Franklin County Commissioners Notes. Franklin County Courthouse, Brookville, Indiana, Volumes for 1894-1895, pp. 338, 366, 387-88, 398-99, 487-89.

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

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory. Franklin County Interim Report, 1978.

Sechrist, John. "Snow Hill Bridge Restored," Indiana Covered Bridge Society Newsletter, Volume 24, Number 4, October 1987, pp. 1-2.

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

*Section 10-Geographical Data-Verbal Boundary Description*

The Snow Hill Covered Bridge is located in Whitewater Township of Franklin County, Indiana, at UTM point 16 685180 4354890. The boundary includes the entire bridge, its right-of-way, superstructure, trusses, and any supporting piers, abutments, wingwalls, or anchored supports of the Snow Hill Bridge. Include



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**Snow Hill Covered Bridge  
Franklin County, Indiana**

10' of the approaches at the east and west ends of the bridge.

*Boundary Justification*

The boundary includes the bridge, its significant truss work, and enough of the immediate site to convey its significance in transportation and engineering.

SNOWHILL RIDGE  
JOHNSON FORD BRIDGE  
SNOWHILL & JOHNSON  
CORA LINDS  
FANKLIN CO, IND  
Zone 16  
E 685180  
N 4354890

