

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 Secrest Ferry Bridge  
other names/site number Owen County Bridge #9 Gosport Bridge 119-244-30036

2. Location

street & number CR 450 E over the west fork of the White River N/A ☐ not for publication  
city or town Gosport ☒ vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county Owen code 119 zip code 47433

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 36CFR 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.)

Patricia R. Roberts  
Signature of certifying official/Title

4-23-96  
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 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:

☐ 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

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Secrest Ferry Bridge

Owen IN

Name of Property

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  
☐ 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 (vehicular)

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: Pedestrian-Related

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Pennsylvania through truss

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE, CONCRETE  
 walls  
 roof  
 other METAL: Iron

**Narrative Description**

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

Secrest Ferry Bridge  
Name of Property

Owen IN  
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.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

## 9. Major Bibliographic 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

TRANSPORTATION

### Period of Significance

1903

### Significant Dates

1903

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Lafayette Engineering Company

Vincennes Bridge Company

### Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Commissioners' archives, Monroe and Owen counties

Secrest Ferry Bridge  
Name of Property

Owen IN  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property < 1

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 527850 4353520  
Zone Easting Northing  
2

3  
Zone Easting Northing  
4

☐ 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 Jane Wampler Stouder/ Rick Bray  
organization date 10-1-95  
street & number 129 E. Micheltorena St. #1/909 Knightstown Rd. telephone 805/966-7255;317/392-615  
city or town Santa Barbara/Shelbyville state CA/IN zip code 5 93101/46176

## 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 County Commissioners of Monroe and Owen Counties  
street & number Court House telephone 812/829-5024, 333-3550  
city or town Spencer/Bloomington state IN zip code

**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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Secrest Ferry Bridge  
Owen Co., IN

*Section 7 – Architectural Description*

The Secrest Ferry Bridge has changed relatively little since the Lafayette Engineering Co. built it in 1903. The company was formed in 1901 at Lafayette, Indiana. The firm designed and erected bridge superstructures and built substructures. However, the company did not have manufacturing capability and had to subcontract its truss fabrication.

The bridge sits on cut stone abutments, which also include subsurface concrete, according to county commissioners' records from the time of construction. The south abutment sits against a steeply-sloped bank while the north abutment is built up from a low-lying flood plain. The road sits on a built-up causeway that gently slopes the road down to the flood plain level. Part of the causeway next to the abutment is protected by a cut stone wing wall.

The single-span bridge still spans an impressive 316 feet across the White River between Owen and Monroe Counties. The bridge, the longest highway Pennsylvania truss span in Indiana, eliminated the requirement for a pier in the center of the flowing white river. It is also one of the longest single-span iron bridges in Indiana. Its Pennsylvania (Petit) trusses have an arched upper chord rising more than 30 feet high. According to James Cooper's *Iron Monuments to distant Posterity*, the bridge also has an extra two-panel section on each side, making it a 16-panel rather than the usual 12-panel Pennsylvania truss.

The truss is pin-connected at all of its connections. The primary verticals are made from laced channels. The secondary verticals are alternately laced channels and laced angles from their intermediate connection with the diagonals up to the upper chord. These verticals are metal bars from the same intermediate connection to the floor stringers (they do not connect with the lower chord). The diagonals are die-forged eyebars that run from the upper chord to an intermediate connection with the secondary vertical. In a second piece, they go from this same intermediate connection to the lower chord.

The bridge deck is 18.2 feet wide and has a 15.8 foot roadway with 15 feet of overhead clearance. The bridge currently has a corrugated metal floor with an asphalt overlay. It is posted with a three-ton load limit. The bridge appears to have its original railing with a decorative latticed "X" pattern.

The Secrest Ferry Bridge's Pennsylvania trusses are unusual in that they are not subdivided by a horizontal strut midway in the panels between the upper and lower chords. The bridge is also



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unusual because only the primary verticals intersect with the lower chord. The secondary verticals connect with and support the floor stringers. This also results in an unusual lower lateral bracing system (the Xs under the floor) with very heavy members forming an X between intersections of the primary verticals and the lower chord. The crossing at the center of each X is accomplished with a very heavy square where all four legs of the X are connected.

The bridge still seems to be in relatively good condition. The steel trusses show a layer of rust and need to be cleaned and painted. In a few places, the top lateral braces (the Xs visible when looking up from the bridge floor) are broken. And, according to county bridge structure inventories, the bridge's stringers (the beams under the floor) are deflected and heavily rusted. The floor's asphalt overlay is slightly buckled and broken in places.

The Secrest Ferry Bridge was bypassed and closed to vehicular traffic in 1990 by a modern bridge built a respectable distance to the west of the current span. If the county commissioners honor their commitment to regularly inspect and maintain the span, Owen and Monroe counties will preserve an area landmark and an impressive piece of engineering.

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Secrest Ferry Bridge  
Owen Co., IN

*Section 8: - Statement of Significance*

The Secrest Ferry Bridge is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of transportation and under Criterion C for its engineering. In the area of transportation, the bridge provided an easy and safe link between Gosport and Spencer, the county seat, and Gosport and Bloomington, the county seat of Monroe County. In the area of engineering, it is the longest Pennsylvania truss highway bridge in Indiana and one of the longest single-span iron bridges in the state. It includes several other design features that make it an unusual example of its type.

Secrest Ferry Bridge was an important link between Owen and Monroe counties. The bridge was built to provide a safe crossing of the White River for the Gosport and Bloomington public highway (which also passed through the neighboring town of Stinesville) and the Gosport and Spencer public highway, which furnished Gosport with an important link to its county seat. Secrest Ferry Bridge is also important for its role in the continuing evolution of transportation systems. It replaced a ferry crossing that was only passable during low water and was itself bypassed recently by a newer bridge.

The history of Secrest Ferry Bridge began on 4 September 1894, with a petition stating that "public convenience" required a bridge across the White River between Owen and Monroe counties. This first attempt to get the bridge constructed was rescinded on 3 March 1895. A second attempt was presented to both sets of county commissioners in September 1901. This time, the petitioners made a stronger case, stating that a suitable bridge "for wagons and other vehicles" was a necessity because "there being no way to cross the river at said point or near thereto only by fording, which can only be done when the river is low and then such fording is attending with great danger." The river crossing, also known as Secrest Ferry, was at the intersection of two important public highways.

The new bridge was to be constructed about a mile and a half south of Gosport. At this time, there already existed a wooden covered bridge over the White River at Gosport, just east of the town (this bridge was destroyed by arsonists in 1955). Although closer to Gosport, the older bridge was not located on the main routes between Gosport and other large cities, and caused travelers to go an extra nine or ten miles to reach the junction of these highways.

As a result of the second petition, the commissioners of both Owen and Monroe counties met in joint session in 1901 and appointed officials to oversee bids and construction of the bridge. The cost was estimated at \$11, 142 and the board of commissioners agreed to split the cost, with

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Secrest Ferry Bridge  
Owen Co., IN

Owen County paying 2/3 and Monroe county paying 1/3 of the total. The commissioners advertised for bids, but received none. They decided to advertise again. When the board met three months later, it discovered that the advertisement had never appeared. Finally, the Lafayette Engineering Company bid on the project, at a cost of \$11,140. The board of commissioners inspected and approved the finished bridge on 28 December 1903.

Secrest Ferry Bridge is also an important representative work of engineering because it was one of only eight Pennsylvania (Petit) truss bridges remaining in Indiana in 1987. There are probably still fewer remaining today. Another Pennsylvania truss bridge in Owen County (Freedom Bridge) is scheduled for replacement in 1997.

In his book *Iron Monuments to Distant Posterity*, James Cooper refers to the Pennsylvania truss as "the third and final modification of the Pratt truss." Each modification allowed for greater spans. Edward F. White, an engineer and construction superintendent for Secrest Ferry Bridge, solved the problem of constructing a costly pier in the middle of the White River by eliminating the need for it. The advanced engineering and span capabilities of the Pennsylvania truss allowed him to design a 316-foot single-span bridge stretching from one bank to the other. The bridge also has some other unusual engineering features that are described in Section 7.



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Secrest Ferry Bridge  
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***Section 9 – Bibliography***

Cooper, James L. *Iron Monuments to Distant Posterity: Indiana's Metal Bridges, 1870-1930*. Indianapolis: Pierson Printing, 1987.

Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record Inventory. "Owen County Bridge #9." Washington, 1984.

Monroe County Commissioners' Archives. Books S & U (1894-1903).

Owen County Commissioners' Archives. Books 18 & 19 (1899-1904).

***Section 10 – Geographical Data***

Verbal Boundary Description:

Boundary consists of the bridge itself, its abutments and the ground on which they rest, and the approaches on either end extending fifteen feet from the actual beginning of the structure.

Boundary Justification:

Boundary encompasses the entire structure.





