

FINAL

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 Wilson Bridge
other names/site number Old Royster Ford, Carroll County Bridge #121

2. Location

street & number .6 miles west of C.R. 450W, on C.R. 300N over Deer Creek N/A not for publication
city or town Delphi vicinity
state Indiana code IN county Carroll code 015 zip code 46923

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.)

C. St D-SAPO 4.30.01
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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

Wilson Bridge
Name of Property

Carroll IN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property		
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.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: Road-related

TRANSPORTATION: Pedestrian-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Pratt-through-truss

foundation CONCRETE

walls

roof

other METAL: iron
ASPHALT

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

1897

Significant Dates

1897

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Lafayette Bridge Company

Smith, Craver

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Wilson Bridge
Name of Property

Carroll IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	532070	4493200
	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 Benjamin James Bruxvoort Lipscomb and Susan Rae Bruxvoort Lipscomb

organization Carroll County Bridge Coalition date 09-01-00

street & number 103 1/2 E. Columbia Street telephone 219-967-3012

city or town Flora state IN zip code 46929

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 _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ 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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Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Wilson Bridge, Carroll Co., IN

Section 7 – Description

Wilson Bridge is a 122-foot long, fourteen-foot high, pin-connected Pratt Through Truss span, set in a pristine section of the Deer Creek valley, several miles outside Delphi, Indiana. Driving in from either direction, bridge and valley come upon one suddenly. One sees the woods, then makes a sharp turn into them and commences a sharp downhill course, soon losing all view of the adjacent farmland. Mature forest now surrounds one on all sides, dominated by boxelder, sycamore, and sugar maple, with some black cherry and chinkapin oak. After a further, gentler curve in the road, one encounters the bridge.

The bridge's portals are braced A-frames, and are decorated year-round by a local family. Cast-iron nameplates at the top of each portal record the bridge's manufacturer and year of construction: Lafayette Bridge Company, 1898.

Each truss is divided into seven seventeen-foot panels. The top chord and endposts of each truss consist of paired channels, riveted to plate on the outer side and to battens on the inner side. Each truss's lower chord consists of seven sets of paired eyebars, one per panel. Each intermediate vertical is a laced pair of channels, with paired eyebars forming the hip-verticals. Paired eyebars also provide each set of diagonals. A cylindrical eyebar with a turnbuckle supplies counter-bracing in the third and fifth panels, and adjustable pairs of eyebars cross the fourth, central panel. There are six struts bracing the top chords of the two trusses, creating five panels; eyebars crossing each panel provide lateral bracing. Decoratively latticed guardrails run the length of each truss.

The floor system is as follows: the original beams, which are all present, are rolled Is. Additional Is have been welded to these beams to reinforce them. The stringers, not original, are likewise rolled Is. The deck is asphalt on a corrugated steel pan. Wilson Bridge is sixteen feet wide.

Based on the age and manufacture of the bridge, the channels and plates are likely steel, but the rods and beams could be of wrought iron. No definitive test has been conducted. The original stone abutments--now encased in concrete--still support the trusses.

The bridge has undergone few significant alterations since its construction. Two eyebars from the lower chord have been replaced, one each in the Southeast and Northwest end panels. One eyebar from the Northeast hip-vertical has likewise been replaced. As already noted, extra beams have been added to reinforce the deck, which was probably once timber. The stringers are not original. Virtually all the truss members are original, and while they show surface rust and could use a paint job, they exhibit little deterioration. The only significant rusting is at the bearings and along the top chords.

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Section number 7&8 Page 2

Wilson Bridge, Carroll Co., IN

The setting bears a second mention, for it contributes much to the value of the bridge. Never having been more than selectively logged, and isolated as it is, the area surrounding the bridge is not merely beautiful--it appears more-or-less exactly as it would have in the nineteenth century. Standing on the bridge, looking West, one sees ahead and to one's right a tall shale cliff, with a few medium-large sugar maples and sycamores clutching to the side. The creek is shallow, with pebbly sandbars scattered near the banks. No recent development is visible in any direction.

Section 8 – Statement of Significance

Wilson Bridge meets two of the National Register criteria of significance, criteria A and C. It is an instance of a type of bridge, the Pratt Through Truss, which is increasingly rare, and it was manufactured by a once-prominent regional firm, the Lafayette Bridge Company, whose work is rare and becoming more so. In 1898, when it was built, the bridge participated in three state and regional trends: the heyday of metal bridges, the twilight of river fords, and the growing role of local government in the provision and maintenance of transportation infrastructure. Finally, it lies in and contributes to the ethos of a part of the Deer Creek valley long regarded as significant by area residents.

In September, 1897, J.D. Wilson and several dozen neighbors petitioned the Carroll County commissioners to build a bridge at the "old Royster ford." This crossing of Deer Creek had been popular for many years, as indicated by its representation on both the 1874 county atlas and the 1876 state atlas. Robert Royster had owned the land to the East of Deer Creek for many years prior to 1874, by which time Wilson had also established a farm on the West side of the creek. In November of 1897, the county commissioners reached a decision and began advertising for bids on a new bridge. Craver Smith and James M. Peirce, well-known county masons and contractors, secured the contract for the masonry on the abutments. Wilson, who oversaw the work, certified the satisfactory completion of the stone abutments by year's end, at which time the commissioners contracted with John C. O'Connor, another county resident, for the earthen approaches. Although the new span was in place by April, 1898, the fill to the east was not yet complete--according to a complaining petition--in 1901.

The Lafayette Bridge Company, a prolific regional firm, beat out Wabash Bridge with a \$2,499 bid to assemble the superstructure. The firm designed a Pratt Through Truss for the old Royster Ford site. By the time of its construction in 1898, this sort of Pratt truss was the tried-and-true bridge type for well-traveled roads. Father and son Caleb and Thomas Pratt devised their through truss in 1844, and it became a springboard for numerous improvements in truss design. The Pratts' design was one of the first trusses designed to be built either entirely of iron or from a combination of iron and wood. While the Pratts recognized the superior stability of the earlier Howe truss with its grid and web of diagonals, their design permitted greater economy of materials. By placing diagonal rods in tension and verticals in compression, the Pratts also created a truss type that was far more "determinate"--that is, it made it easier for engineers to calculate potential stresses on particular members.

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Wilson Bridge, Carroll Co., IN

At least ten different firms built Pratt truss spans in Indiana. Lafayette Bridge Company no doubt had a competitive advantage bidding on the Wilson Bridge project, being just one county away. LBCo was founded in 1889 and produced bridges under the Lafayette name until 1900, when U.S. Steel bought out the company. LBCo had strong ties to the Monon railroad; they designed many of that railroad's bridges during the 1890s. They were also a known quantity to the Carroll County Commissioners. The firm had planned and built one of the most impressive bridges in the Wabash Valley, the Main Street Bridge in Lafayette, in 1895. They had also designed the Dayton Road Bridge for Carroll County back in 1891. Both have by now been demolished.

Examples of Lafayette Bridge Company spans are becoming increasingly rare, even in the firm's home region. Available research shows that as of 1987, Tippecanoe County (the firm's home county) had no surviving Lafayette Bridge Company spans; Montgomery County, three; Boone, two; Clinton, five; Warren, one; and Fountain, none. It is believed that most of these bridges are now gone. Wilson Bridge is the only remaining LBCo span in Carroll County. It is a good example of this once-important bridge builder's work.

Wilson Bridge is also a classic example of a late-nineteenth-century Pratt Through Truss, exhibiting all major characteristics of the type. Here again, such examples are increasingly rare. In 1987, when Dr. James L. Cooper inventoried Indiana's metal bridges in his *Iron Monuments to Distant Posterity* (from which the data in the previous paragraph is also drawn), there were seven Pratt Through Trusses left in Carroll County. Today, there is only one: Wilson Bridge. This drastic reduction conforms to statewide and regional trends. In addition to exhibiting the major characteristics of its type, Wilson Bridge is a particularly well-preserved bridge, retaining virtually all its original truss members along with its distinctive, decoratively latticed guardrails.

If the foregoing were not enough to establish Criterion C National Register significance for Wilson Bridge, one could simply appeal to the latest criteria for National Register eligibility approved by the Indiana Department of Historic Preservation and Archaeology. These state that any bridge over a century old is automatically deemed to be historically significant. There are, of course, excellent reasons for such a default judgment. In this respect, too, Wilson Bridge is in a small and shrinking class.

In a broader sense, Wilson Bridge is part of the movement to improve road transportation in Indiana. When Wilson Bridge was built, there were no automobiles in Carroll County, or anywhere else. It will surprise some, then, that its construction was part of a great flourishing of infrastructure projects in the state. Indiana is not as rich in natural waterways as most states to its East; this made railroads and road improvements a popular priority in the second half of the nineteenth century. Beginning around 1850, there was a boom in road-surfacing projects, fed by intense public demand for improvements. Much of this was accomplished through private enterprise. A great many of Indiana's improved roads, even as late as 1900, were maintained by charter companies which recaptured their investment through

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Wilson Bridge, Carroll Co., IN

tolls. In the 1850s, the Indiana state legislature passed a series of bills that empowered local officials (at first township trustees, then later county commissioners) to build and repair bridges, and to levy money and labor toward these purposes. At first, publicly funded bridges faced strong competition from private toll bridges. By the 1870s, though, when metal began to succeed timber as the material of choice for bridge fabrication, major shifts were underway in the planning and manufacture of bridges. Large bridge-building companies sprouted around the region--factory operations which built bridges to order. Simultaneously, responsibility for bridge planning shifted predominantly to county officials. The men of each county, working in groups under the supervision of locally appointed authorities, provided labor for road and bridge improvements as these were increasingly committed to the public trust.

With this brief history in view, the contextual significance of Wilson Bridge is apparent. The Royster Ford was a well-traveled crossing, upgraded on popular demand to a metal bridge. The Carroll County commissioners, exercising authority, which had lately fallen to them, put the project out for bids and later took responsibility for handling complaints about the structure. Large portions of the project were completed by local crews under the supervision of local contractors, the lone exception being the bridge superstructure, which was manufactured by a newly prominent Indiana firm, located thirty miles away. All of this occurred at the height of the metal bridge boom, which lasted from the 1880s until about 1915.

Apart from these associations, the bridge's setting contributes to Wilson Bridge's case for National Register significance. Wilson Bridge lies on a very old route connecting Flora and Camden to the Carroll County seat, Delphi. This road, whose irregular contours are determined by a number of small creeks (including Deer Creek), is presently home to a large community of conservative Mennonites, who use traditional methods to farm the small parcels cut up by the creek valleys and who still use horse-drawn carts for transportation.

The creek valleys have long been the object of affectionate regard by county residents. In late 1945 and early 1946, for instance, both Delphi newspapers published editorials praising the beauty of the section of the Deer Creek valley between Delphi and Camden--the section crossed by Wilson Bridge--and calling for its establishment as a memorial to Carroll County veterans. The expressed concern of the authors was that the look of the place should be protected from disruption, in order that future generations might have the pleasure of seeing it and knowing that it had looked much the same to their grandparents. "In our opinion, there is nowhere to be found a more beautiful spot than this land--rolling hill and valley, along Deer Creek.... The beauty of it has been extolled in the columns of this paper on numerous occasions," wrote *The Delphi Citizen* on January 10, 1946. "The boys fought to conserve America," wrote *The Delphi Journal* on November 29, 1945. "We must not let it be washed away from under their feet by denuding the land of its trees on marginal land along our streams." The movement to designate the valley a war memorial never achieved its aim, but these editorial remarks reflect the popular sentiment of the time, a sentiment that took into account Wilson Bridge as one of the places where visitors could view the valley. The slender members and open design of Wilson Bridge make it

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Wilson Bridge, Carroll Co., IN

ideal for its setting, in that they permit long views of the creek from the road. Wilson Bridge's immediate setting, where it functions almost exactly as it did at the turn of the century--as a conduit for traffic between Camden and Flora and Delphi, and traffic from nearby farmers and area sightseers--contributes powerfully to its significance.

Section 9 -- Bibliography

"A Fitting Memorial," *The Delphi Citizen*, January 10, 1946, p. 6, c.1.

"A Living Memorial for Carroll County Servicemen," *The Delphi Journal*, November 29, 1945, p. 6, c. 1.

Bridge nameplate.

Carroll County Commissioner's Record, 19: 485, 512, 556; 20: 16.

Cooper, James L. "Historic Bridge Survey," (Delphi, 1998).

Cooper, James L. *Iron Monuments to Distant Posterity: Indiana's Metal Bridges, 1870-1930*. Greencastle, IN: Historic Bridge Books, DePauw University, 1987.

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory. *Carroll County Interim Report*. Indianapolis: Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, 1981.

Section 10 -- Geographical Data -- Verbal Boundary Description

This nomination includes Wilson Bridge, its superstructure, abutments, underpinnings or other supports, the trusses, deck, and 20' of the approaching road on either side. Wilson Bridge carries Carroll County Road 300 N over Deer Creek.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the significant resource and its immediate environment.

VILLAGE
#2100E
CARROLL CO. IN
U4M
16 532070 4935000

T. 25 N.
3665 II SW
(DELPHI)
T. 24 N.

