

Waterford Covered Bridge
Waterford, Pennsylvania

HABS No. Pa.-535

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 5-Pennsylvania

Reduced Copy of Measured Drawing

Historic American Buildings Survey
J. Howard Hicks, District Officer
134 East 10th Street, Erie, Pennsylvania

WATERFORD COVERED BRIDGE
Waterford, Erie County, Pennsylvania

Owner

The Township of Waterford.

Date of Erection

Between 1880 and 1890.

Architect

Richard Cross.

Builder

Richard Cross.

Present Condition

Fair.

Number of Stories

One, height 19'.

Materials of Construction

Oak, sandstone, tie rods of iron.

Other Existing Records

Information and personal recollections of Messrs. Velorus C. Barnes and R. L. Brotherton. Photographs and drawings.

Additional Data

Bibliography-Records of County Engineering Department.
Court proceedings in reference to bridges.

History of Erie County by Warner Beers and Co. 1884,
Chicago, Illinois.

A twentieth century of Erie County by John Miller,
historian. Published by The Lewis Publishing Co.,
Chicago, Illinois, 1909.

History of Erie County, Historical Publishing Company,
1925. Topeka-Indianapolis by J. E. Reed (John Elmer).

Nelson's biographical dictionary and historical reference
book of Erie County, 1896, from the press of Wilson,
Huaphrys and Co., Fourth Street, Logansport, Indiana.

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No matter what the date of a covered bridge, it is a relic of the early colonial days of the country, and especially so of northwestern Pennsylvania. With all the hard work which confronted the pioneers of western Pennsylvania, romance played a most important part in their lives. After they had hastily thrown rude logs over the streams that had to be crossed, (and the number of them is legion) their minds turned to improvement in everything that touched their existence. And better bridges were needed for the loads which increased from a few articles carried in arms to large wagon loads.

Strange to say, romance entered into the building of bridges. Of course if the pioneers had been asked the reason for a covered bridge, they would have stoutly protested that it was for the purpose of defence against the arrows of the lurking Indians. Young men of the early years before 1860 liked nothing better than to have their sweetheart beside them in a buggy and to have a covered bridge with its long, dark cavernous interior, appear suddenly around a turn of the road.

Covered bridges are fast disappearing from the landscape. Only here and there in some forgotten spot can one be found, and only then because funds are lacking to supplant them with a more modern type.

The Waterford covered bridge, or the Brotherton bridge as it was formerly called is located in Waterford Township, Erie County, Pennsylvania. It is almost at the Waterford station of the Philadelphia and Erie Railroad, which can be seen from the bridge. The road passing through the bridge crosses the railroad tracks and continues on past Hood's Corners. This road is a dirt road until it crosses the tracks when it merges with road 359. The bridge is built over the Le Boeuf Creek, the inlet to Lake Le Boeuf.

Mr. Velorus C. Barnes, who 'has been married sixty years', remembers when the bridge was built by Richard Cross during the 80's, and thought that it took about two months to build it.

It is the truss type of bridge, roof and sideboards for protection, all wood except the tie rods. Oak pins the size of a silver dollar or $1\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter, tapered and of lengths from 6" to 14" connect all joints of the side trusses. A unique feature is the overhead and floor bracings. The floor bracings each rest on a block 6" x 6" of wood. Several sets of lateral bracings cross each other in the center of the bridge and are held in compression by steel rods. The top is identical in

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construction, except that the timbers are smaller. The sides have crossed timbers 3" x 8". The outside of the bridge is covered with random width, vertical boards. The roof is covered with wooden shingles.

The bridge abutment is made up of sandstone foundation, large timbers are filled in with dirt. The direct load is taken by the timber construction. There is an ice or water retaining wall, made of sandstone on each end. The floor has 2" x 4" timber laid on edge. The bridge is in a very fair condition, except for a few minor and much needed repairs.

It was built for the Commissioners of Waterford township. Mr. R. L. Brotherton remembers the pins being brought to his father's dry kiln, but his recollection of the date was either 1882 or 1884. The Brotherton saw-mill was located very close to the bridge. The bridge has a length of clear span of 65' 6", an entire length of 87' 6" without approaches. The height is 19' and the width 18' 8" over all.

Not much of a bridge compared with the recently erected ones in California, but as interesting or perhaps more so because this type of bridge belongs to the past.

Annie Septe Baxter

Approved

Howard Hicks
District Officer

Rw. Dec 21. 36 T.J.W.