

DREIBELBIS STATION BRIDGE
National Covered Bridges Recording Project
Spanning Maiden Creek, Balthaser Road (TR 745)
Lenhartsville vicinity
Berks County
Pennsylvania

HAER PA-587
PA-587

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

DREIBELBIS STATION BRIDGE

HAER No. PA-587

LOCATION: Spanning Maiden Creek, Balthaser Road (TR 745), Lenhartsville vicinity, Berks County, Pennsylvania
UTM: 18.425521.4489704, Hamburg, PA Quad.

STRUCTURAL TYPE: Wooden covered bridge, Burr arch-truss

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1869

BUILDER: Simon Dreibelbis and Charles Kutz, Berks County, PA

PRESENT OWNER: Berks County, PA

PREVIOUS USE: Vehicular and pedestrian bridge

PRESENT USE: Vehicular bridge, 3-ton weight limit

SIGNIFICANCE: Local craftsmen Simon Dreibelbis and Charles Kutz built the Dreibelbis Station Bridge in 1869. It is a 172' long, single span bridge with a double Burr arch-truss. One of only five covered bridges remaining in Berks County, it is still open to traffic and well maintained by the county. It is significant for its sturdy truss and for its portal decoration. The Dreibelbis Station Bridge's original, decorative portals are excellent examples of the stepped, false-front aesthetic that was customary for bridges in this area.

HISTORIAN: Sarah Marie Rose Dangelas, 2002

PROJECT INFORMATION: The National Covered Bridges Recording Project is part of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a long-range program to document historically significant engineering and industrial works in the United States. HAER is administered by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, a division of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The Federal Highway Administration funded the project.

Chronology

1839—A January freshet washes out the bridge at this site.

1869—The Dreibelbis Station Bridge is constructed.

January 23—local citizens petition to build the bridge at Dreibelbis mill

May 22—commissioners call for proposals

June 8—bids received

October—bridge is completed

1874—A station for the Schuylkill and Lehigh Railroad is established nearby.

1876—SR 143 is laid out perpendicular to the bridge and along Maiden Creek.

1968—Substantial repairs to the bridge's ends and abutments are made.

Introduction and Significance

The Dreibelbis Station Bridge spans Maiden Creek in Greenwich Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania. Local craftsmen Simon Dreibelbis and Charles Kutz built the bridge in 1869. It is a 172' long, single span bridge with a double Burr arch-truss. One of only five covered bridges remaining in Berks County, it is still open to traffic and well maintained by the county. It is significant for its sturdy truss and for its portal decoration. The Dreibelbis Station Bridge's original, decorative portals are excellent examples of the stepped, false-front aesthetic that was customary for bridges in this area.

Description

The Dreibelbis Station Bridge is composed of a 172' Burr arch and a sixteen-panel multiple kingpost truss (see Appendix A, Illustration 1).¹ The panels are each 10.5' wide (see Appendix A, Illustration 2). The bridge is probably built of local white pine, the favored lumber in the region.² The bridge is warped, bowed longitudinally. The top chord on the upstream side uses five members to make the length of the bridge. On the downstream truss, four members make up the top chord. These are joined with a tension splice and bolt assembly. Some also have a shear key. The chord members are 10" square. The laminated bottom chords are composed of two 8" x 14" timbers joined with bolts at each post and by the floor beams, which are notched to sandwich the chord members together and act as tie beams connecting the lower chord on each side.

The lower chords are notched around the posts. At the top chord, the posts are notched and probably mortised, and secured with wooden pegs (treenails). The end posts are cut wider (about 14") at the top chord and narrower at the bottom (about 9 1/2"). Conversely, the center king-post on each side is narrower at the top chord and wider at the bottom (see Appendix A, Illustration 3). The posts at their base above the chord are hewn so as to create a seat for the diagonal braces, which rest there in compression. At the top of each post, a similar hewing allows the top of the diagonal to meet the post (see Appendix A, Illustration 4). Opposite the diagonal brace on each post, a check brace joins the post to the top chord via mortise and tenon, where the tenon part is the end of the brace member.

The arches are paired, with two sets of concentric arches on each truss side (see Appendix A, Illustration 1). The arch timbers are 6" thick and 14" wide, making for a sturdy looking structure. There are five timber segments to each arch. These are secured with a lap joint and bolt assembly through the posts. The segments of the upper arches are never spliced at the same post as are the segments of the lower arch. In the last two truss panels on each end, wooden spacers force the arches to flare away from the posts

¹ There is an additional empty panel (shelter panel) over the roadway at the ends of the truss.

² Fred J. Moll, "Berks County Covered Bridges," *Historical Review of Bucks County* 67, no. 2 (2002): 79-80; Harry E. Mitchell, Jr., "The Covered Bridges of Berks County," *Historical Review of Berks County* 13, no. 1 (1947): 7. Moll also notes that the wood used for this bridge was from nearby Schuylkill County, and was prepared at Dreibelbis Saw Mill, see Fred J. Moll, "The Dreibelbis Covered Bridge," *Historical Review of Berks County* 48, no. 2 (1983): 55.

the required distance to sandwich the lower chord. Otherwise, the arches meet the posts directly and are bolted to them with staggered bolts, two on each arch (see Appendix A, Illustration 2).

At the point where the arches meet the deck, they are tied with iron rods to the bottom chord (see Appendix A, Illustrations 5 and 6).³ A metal plate and bolt assembly attaches the rod to the arch. Underneath the bridge, the rod is put in tension with a two-by-four placed against the bottom of the lower chord and the bottom of a plank below the adjacent floor beam. The threaded end of the rod allows the tension to be adjusted with a nut.

At the abutments, the arches butt against a concrete slab added to the structure in 1968 (see Appendix A, Illustrations 7 and 8).⁴ At that time, the county had the arch ends replaced where they were rotting against the rock face. The restoration at that time changed the abutment face to concrete and reinforced the arches with additional wood members between the arches.

The road deck is 15" from the top of the bottom chord. It is made of irregularly spaced longitudinal planks nailed to another layer of longitudinal planks, which are on top of transverse floor beams that sit on and act as ties for the lower chord. A guardrail runs the length of each side, but is cut out where it would meet the arches. On the arches, the lack of a guard railing has allowed scrapes and cuts from too-wide vehicles.

There are sixteen panels in the upper lateral bracing system, plus one empty panel at each end, corresponding with the truss panels. Tie beams are notched over the top chord at each post. The tie beams are also suspended from the ridge pole via a wooden board, called a cat. A sway brace mortised into the beam and then into the inside face of the posts further supports each tie beam from below. Lateral roof braces form X's (one sitting on top of the other) and are joined at their ends to the tie beams with mortise and tenon.

The roof is sheet metal. The eaves extend about 2' from the truss and about 8" from the siding. There are two windows that run the length of each side of the bridge (see Appendix A, Illustration 9). One is at the eaves and the other is about 4' above the deck.⁵ The opening rises about 16" and is topped on the exterior with a small awning.

The horizontal clapboard sheathing is carried on vertical 3" x 3" posts bolted at their bottom ends to a 2" x 4" board running along and atop the floor beams. At the top, the

³ It is not known whether this is original.

⁴ This work is marked in the abutment by "1968" stamped into the east abutment face.

⁵ Moll notes that this window was added to the bridge after the turn of the twentieth century. Fred J. Moll, *Covered Bridges of Berks County, Pennsylvania* (Reading, PA: Reading Eagle Press, 2001).

posts hang from the roof rafters. The clapboards are slightly irregular in size, but generally measure 1" x 10". The siding is painted barn red.⁶

A stepped false front over the gable end, which is a regional convention, decorates the portal faces (see Appendix A, Illustration 9). The false front employs horizontal planks, while vertical planks form the portal's sides. All of this is painted red. Each portal has four signs attached. In the tympanum there is a name plaque, a hex sign, and a height limit.⁷ On the right side of each portal is a weight limit sign. The vertical clearance is 12', and the opening is 16'-5" wide. Cut stone wing walls at each entrance are enveloped in concrete.⁸ They also have a concrete cap that predates the 1968 restoration of the abutments.

The creek was low at the time of the author's visit, but it is nearly as wide as the distance between abutments, and it travels downstream to the southeast. There are old houses on both banks and the surroundings are heavily wooded, creating a quiet location that is not heavily traveled. Many of the cars that did travel over the bridge did so as tourists, snapping photos or videotaping the bridge as they drove over it. These tourists may have been participating in the Covered Bridges of Berks County Driving Tour or the area's Hex Sign Tour.

Covered Bridges in Pennsylvania

With about 225 examples, Pennsylvania boasts more extant covered bridges than any other state or foreign country. At one point, historians speculate, the state had 1,500 covered bridges. Pennsylvania also claims the first proper covered wooden bridge in the United States; well-known bridge designer Timothy Palmer built the Permanent Bridge in Philadelphia over the Schuylkill River in 1805.⁹

The state's earliest bridges were primarily stone arch bridges. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, several important patent designs and examples had proven the strength and resourcefulness of covered wooden trusses. Timber bridges quickly became more popular since they were less expensive to construct, called for materials that were readily available, could span greater widths, and required skills that local builders and carpenters already had. Roofs and siding covered the bridges to protect the wooden truss members and joints from the elements, thereby considerably increasing their life spans. The height of the covered wooden bridge era was the 1870s and 1880s.¹⁰ Pennsylvanians have been

⁶ The bridge was not always painted red. This practice probably started in the early to mid twentieth century.

⁷ While a name plaque has historically been present on Berks County bridges, the hex sign is a relatively recent addition. According to covered bridge historian Joseph Conwill, this is perhaps due to a 1960s fad: "Mel Horst's circa-1960 photography shows the bridge without the hex sign."

⁸ The concrete was added around 1969.

⁹ For an account of this bridge, see Richard Sanders Allen, *Covered Bridges of the Northeast* (Brattleboro, VT: Stephen Greene Press, 1957), 13.

¹⁰ In the 1840s, after Howe and Pratt patented their designs, builders began in earnest to incorporate more and more metal in their covered wooden trusses.

worthy stewards of their covered bridges, as evidenced by the number of these structures that have survived to the twenty-first century.

History of the Bridge Site

The area surrounding the Dreibelbis Station Bridge sustained milling (grist, saw, oil, clover) and farming. The bridge lies on the border of the townships of Greenwich and Windsor, and the nearest town is Lenhartsville to the north. The bridge probably received its name from its proximity to Manasses Dreibelbis' well-established saw mill and clover mill. Morton L. Montgomery, in his 1886 history of Berks County, notes that the previous bridge near or on this site washed away in the January freshet of 1839.¹¹

Construction of the Bridge

A county bridge in southeastern Pennsylvania in the nineteenth century typically began with a petition from local citizens interested in having a bridge constructed. The petition was presented before the Court of Quarter Sessions where it had to be first approved by appointed viewers, meant to be impartial, and then by the court and grand jury. If the courts agreed to the expenditure, the local newspapers printed a notice soliciting bids for the bridge's construction. The county commissioners reviewed the bids and awarded the contract to one bidder, which was usually, but not always, the lowest. Upon completion, the commissioners were notified, and they then petitioned the court to appoint another team of viewers to inspect the bridge. If all was according to contract, the court was obliged to disburse the balance due on the contract price.¹²

The contract letting for the Dreibelbis Station Bridge is complicated and somewhat mysterious in that four of the men who were awarded the contract to build it withdrew their bids. The motives for this remain a question. As usual, a petition was set before the Court of Quarter Sessions on January 23, 1869 by local miller Manasses Dreibelbis and Samuel Fisher. A summary of the court's actions was then placed on record in the Road Books in May of 1869:

At the Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace, Held at Reading in aforesaid county on the 23rd day of January AD 1869 before the judges of the said Court, the petition of divers inhabitants of the townships of Windsor and Greenwich, was presented to the County setting forth that a bridge is much wanted on the Maiden creek on lands of Samuel K. Fisher on the west and on the east of lands of Manasses Dreibelbis at the place where the public highway from Lenhartsville to Virginville crosses the said creek between the townships aforesaid and praying the court to appoint proper persons to view and locate the same. Whereupon the court upon due consideration did appoint

¹¹ Morton L. Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania*, Vol. 1. (Philadelphia: Everts, Peck and Richards, 1886), 30-31. See also "Destructive Flood," *Berks and Schuylkill Journal*, 2 February 1839, noted in Moll, *Covered Bridges of Berks County*, 95.

¹² For a more detailed description of this process, see Moll, *Covered Bridges of Berks County*.

...viewers...[who] did report that ...we have viewed the premises as directed by the within order and find a bridge necessary over the Maiden creek, where the public road from Lenhartsville to Virginville crosses said Maiden creek. We are however of the opinion that the bridge should be built about four hundred feet above the present ford, and should be a single span wooden covered bridge. The stream being one hundred and thirty feet wide, the east bank six feet and the west bank fourteen feet high, the bed of the creek is rock, and the banks are clay. The depth of the creek in common low water is about two feet and a half and in high water from twelve to fourteen feet deep. Such a bridge would cost about five thousand five hundred dollars (\$5500) to build and would be too expensive for the citizens of the townships of Windsor and Greenwich to bear. A plot of draft of the road and creek is herewith annexed. Which report having been read in the manner and at the time prescribed by law, the Court approved of and confirmed the same. And now to wit, May 26, 1869 the Court approve of and order and direct that the said report be entered on record.

George D. Stitzel		By the court	A. H. Sailer, ___
Daniel B. Kutz		viewers	
John G. Kaufman			

On May 22, May 29, and June 5, 1869, *Berks and Schuylkill Journal* published the following advertisement:

To Bridge Builders—Proposals will be received at the Commissioners' Office in Reading up to June 8th 1869, at 12 o'clock noon, for building two bridges, one across a branch of the Perkiomen Creek near Rush's Mill, in Hereford Township, Berks County, and one across the Maiden Creek at Dreibelbis Mill, Greenwich Township, Berks County. The plans and specifications of both bridges may be seen at said commissioners office.

Signed: Jacob Shartle
Ben Levan
Wm. S. Young
County Commissioners

The bids were opened as arranged on June 8. Thirteen men submitted proposals, ranging in cost from \$4,987.50 to \$7,500.00.¹³ Charles Stitzel, the lowest bidder, won the contract on June 11. A few days later, the commissioners changed the specifications of the bridge to add 15' to the length of the span.¹⁴ Perhaps because of this, Stitzel withdrew his bid, as did the three men who bid just higher than him.¹⁵ Eventually, the

¹³ County Commissioners' Books. See Moll, "The Dreibelbis Covered Bridge," 54.

¹⁴ Letter to Peter Albright, dated June 15, 1869, on file in the County Engineer's Office.

¹⁵ The bids for a bridge at Rush's Mill were also opened at the June 8 meeting. Coincidentally, according to notations in the commissioners' records, four men withdrew their bids from *this* bridge in the ensuing weeks. Among them was Charles Kutz. D. Dietrich also withdrew his bid. However, something must have happened after that, as Dietrich was eventually paid for its construction.

commissioners worked out a contract to build the bridge.¹⁶ The bridge must have been completed in the fall as it was paid for in full on October 20, 1869. In the county treasurer's 1869 account book, a page is dedicated to two new county bridges, the one at Dreibelbis and the one at Rush's Mill.¹⁷ The record shows that three payments were made for the Dreibelbis Station Bridge on "a/c [account] of contract." On July 7, Charles Kutz was paid \$3,000. On September 6, Simon Dreibelbis received a check for \$1,000. A final payment of \$2,000 was rendered to Charles Kutz to pay the balance on the contract "in full."¹⁸

The Builders

In Berks County, local carpenters were often the ones competing for bridge contracts. These men would have had experience with timber framing for houses and barns, but not necessarily with bridge building.¹⁹ The two men who were paid for the construction of the Dreibelbis Station Bridge—Charles Kutz and Simon Dreibelbis—were both local men. Whether or how they worked together has not been ascertained.²⁰

Charles Kutz owned a grist and saw mill below Kutztown. He married Eliza Schwoyer. Among other jobs, he served as Treasurer of Kutztown from 1857 to 1859.²¹ He also helped found the New Union [Lutheran] Church.²² By 1909 he had retired and was still living in Greenwich Township.²³

"S. Dreibelbis" is cited occasionally as receiving payment from the county for his bridge work.²⁴ This may be Simon Dreibelbis, or Solomon Dreibelbis, as both were active in the county. The builder of Dreibelbis Station Bridge, Simon K. Dreibelbis (1819-1890), was responsible for at least one other Berks County bridge.²⁵ He married Leah Strasser and

¹⁶ No evidence was found to explain why the four bids were withdrawn, nor was the final contract for the bridge.

¹⁷ The account book shows that Dietrich and Stein built the bridge at Rush's Mill for \$2,050. The county treasurer's account book is archived on microfilm at the Berks County Historical Society.

¹⁸ "Berks County Account Book for 1869," (Reading, PA), 34.

¹⁹ In some other counties, such as Lancaster County, local men actually became professional bridge builders and devoted their careers to that business. For example, Lancaster native Elias McMellen built a number of bridges in his and nearby counties. Likewise, the states of Indiana and Ohio produced several bridge building families and companies that nearly monopolized the building in certain areas throughout the height of the timber bridge era.

²⁰ In 1871, there were several payments from the county to "Kutz & Dreibelbis" for their work on Fisher, Dreibelbis, Virginville, and other county bridges. "Berks County Account Book for 1871," (Reading, PA), 15.

²¹ Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania* (1886).

²² Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania* (1886).

²³ Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania* 2nd ed. (1909), p. 1554.

²⁴ For example, "Berks County Account Book for 1870" (page 18) notes S. Dreibelbis' work repairing a bridge in Perry Township (\$14.65), and S. Dreibelbis and Co.'s repairs to Moselem Bridge (\$500.00).

²⁵ Moll, "Berks County Covered Bridges," 79.

had four sons. From 1840 to 1890, Simon ran a public house and hotel near Virginville, in Perry Township.²⁶ He was also a farmer in both Perry and Richmond Townships.

The Bridge Design

The Dreibelbis Station Bridge employs a Burr arch-truss. Theodore Burr (1771-1822) patented his first bridge design in 1806 and a second on April 3, 1817.²⁷ The 1817 patent drawing shows a multiple kingpost truss resting on stone abutments, superimposed with an arch whose ends are anchored to the abutment faces (below the lower chords) (see Appendix A, Illustration 10).²⁸ In Burr's design, the posts are in tension while the diagonal braces are in compression. The diagonals meet the posts with little need for mortise and tenon.

Although Burr built dozens of bridges, he is remembered more for the practicable design he patented and promoted. No doubt, much of its success was due to expediency. Burr wanted to reduce the need for complex carpentry/joinery. He "advocated merely butting suitably mitered ends to save much of the carpentry effort and expense."²⁹ The design also allowed for variation at the connections, in the proportions, and with the materials. The design's widespread repute and proven durability helped provincial carpenters successfully bid for and build economical, lasting bridges more or less in their own backyards. The Burr arch-truss became one of the most popular vernacular designs for wooden bridges in the U.S., its product varying slightly from builder to builder.

In Pennsylvania, more bridges use the Burr arch-truss than all other designs combined. There are 123 Burr arch-trusses in the state.³⁰ In Berks County, there were once about forty-eight covered bridges and nearly all were Burr arch-truss.

Pennsylvania covered bridge historian Fred J. Moll suggests that because the portal was one of the most visible parts of the bridge, it was there that a craftsperson could most easily exhibit a flair for design. It was also common practice in some places for the county to provide builders with specifications for the bridges. These instructions might cover everything from the species of timber to the paint color on the sides. In these cases, the portal was the only feature the builders could design themselves.³¹

The false-front portal on the Dreibelbis Station Bridge follows local tradition. The practice began in this area with the first covered bridge in the United States, the Permanent Bridge in Philadelphia (built 1805 by Timothy Palmer). Palmer hired local

²⁶ Montgomery, *History and Biographies of Berks County* 2nd ed. (1909), p. 499.

²⁷ The patents were lost in the US Patent Office fire of 1836.

²⁸ Reconstruction drawing as the original was lost in the US Patent Office fire of 1836.

²⁹ J.G. James, "The Evolution of Wooden Bridge Trusses to 1850 (Continued)," *Journal of the Institute of Wood Sciences* 9, no. 52 (1982): 171.

³⁰ Benjamin D. Evans and June R. Evans, *Pennsylvania's Covered Bridges, A Complete Guide* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993).

³¹ Wayne M. Weber, *Covered Bridges in Indiana* (Midland, MI: Northwood Institute, 1977), 12.

carpenters Adam Traquair and Owen Biddle and sculptor William Rush to design and decorate the housing for his landmark bridge.³² We do not know why Biddle chose to use a false front, but certainly the aesthetic caught on. Subsequent bridges all over the region adopted this technique of finishing the portals.

Within Berks County, portals had been conscientiously decorated at least since Lewis Wernwag and Isaac Nathans' ca. 1814 Harrisburg Covered Bridge in Reading spanning the Schuylkill River.³³ They had the portal decorated with wooden allegorical sculptures.³⁴ False-front portals were purely aesthetic elements that aimed to decorate the gable end of the bridge by adding a wall flush against the gable edge and extending above it. Moll writes that "of the forty-six or more covered bridges built in Berks Co. between the years 1814 and 1885, all but one have proved to have had a false front portal."³⁵

Subsequent History of the Bridge and Site

The new Dreibelbis Station Bridge was constructed 400' north of the existing ford. Therefore, the existing road would need to be re-laid if the new route was to be of any use. On June 23, 1869, before the bridge was even finished, a petition was submitted regarding the public road from Virgenville to Lenhartsville, which "has become useless, inconvenient and burthensome...in consequence of a county bridge [Dreibelbis] about being erected twenty perches north."³⁶ The road was subsequently relocated and the old one vacated.

In 1947, in an article on the county's covered bridges, Harry E. Mitchell, Jr. mentions that "many of the [Berks County] bridges have a marble tablet set in the center of the gable on which is inscribed the name of the bridge, the date it was completed, the name of the builder, and the names of the county commissioners."³⁷ Perhaps this tablet was the sign that Lymaster Seiling made for the bridge in 1870, for which the county paid \$48.³⁸

In 1874, the Schuylkill and Lehigh Railroad laid tracks along the east bank of the Maiden Creek. A station was built near Dreibelbis Station Bridge. Little remains of Dreibelbis Station or the railroad tracks today, but for a while, it put the area on the map. In 1876, the road that is today SR 143 was proposed and surveyed.³⁹ This new road ran parallel to the Maiden Creek on the west bank.

By the mid-twentieth century, the ends of the arches had rotted so much that they were nearly useless. The county hired contractor Anthony Genovese of Lancaster in the fall of

³² Allen, *Covered Bridges of the Northeast*, 13.

³³ Fred J. Moll, "Berks County False Front Portals," *Covered Bridge Topics*, (Summer 1985): 12.

³⁴ Richard Sanders Allen, *Covered Bridges of the Middle Atlantic States* (Brattleboro, VT: Stephen Greene Press, 1959), 57.

³⁵ Moll, "Berks County False Front Portals," 12. The exception was the Pleasantville Covered Bridge.

³⁶ "Road Books Volume 5," (Berks County Courthouse Records Office, 1869), 375.

³⁷ Mitchell, "The Covered Bridges of Berks County," 7-8.

³⁸ "Berks County Account Book for 1870," (Reading, PA), 18.

³⁹ "Road Books Volume 5," 701.

1968 to replace them with concrete and set them upon new concrete shelves added to the face of the original stone abutments.⁴⁰ According to the county engineer, the “truss bearings [were] strengthened with concrete,” “the wood deck [was] replaced,” and “the end beams [were] replaced on new concrete bridge seats.”⁴¹ The following summer, the county covered the cut stone wing walls with a layer of concrete.

In the 1970s, the county engineer investigated damage to the arches from too-wide farm equipment. This damage is still visible along the roadsides of the truss. In August of 1977, an overloaded vehicle damaged the bridge and broke three floor beams, which were immediately replaced.⁴²

The county engineer keeps the Dreibelbis Station Bridge in good repair. It is a notable stop along local hex sign driving tours and the Covered Bridges of Berks County Tour. The residents in this area have long worked to preserve their covered bridges and respect their workmanship. In 1922, the county highway department bypassed the Lenhartsville Covered Bridge (built 1868) with a concrete span. Instead of tearing down the abandoned wooden bridge, the town of Lenhartsville preserved it “as an historical exhibit.”⁴³ Although the bridge has since disappeared from the landscape, the move by the townspeople to save the bridge from demolition in 1922 speaks of an early effort to honor the historic vernacular inheritance of the region.

⁴⁰ There are several large format pictures of this work on file with the county engineer. The east abutment has “1968” inscribed in the concrete.

⁴¹ Papers in the Dreibelbis Covered Bridge file in the County Engineer’s Office.

⁴² The work was contracted to E.R. Stuebner, Inc. The three beams were all together on the east end of the bridge.

⁴³ Mitchell, “The Covered Bridges of Berks County,” 11.

Appendix A, Illustrations



Illustration 1: South truss.
Field photo courtesy of author.



Illustration 2: A single truss panel. Field photo courtesy of author.



Illustration 3: Center kingpost. Field photo courtesy of author.

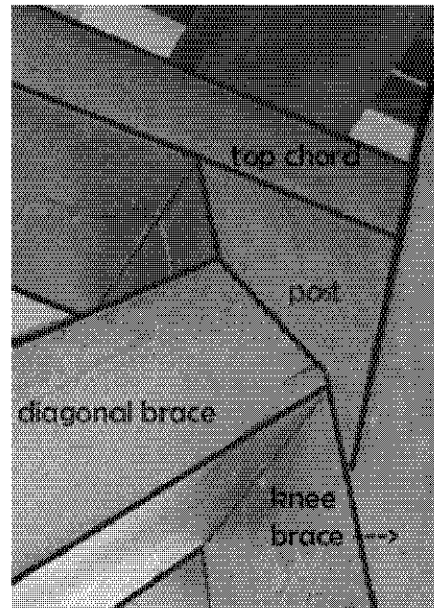


Illustration 4: Connection of brace and post. Field photo courtesy of author.

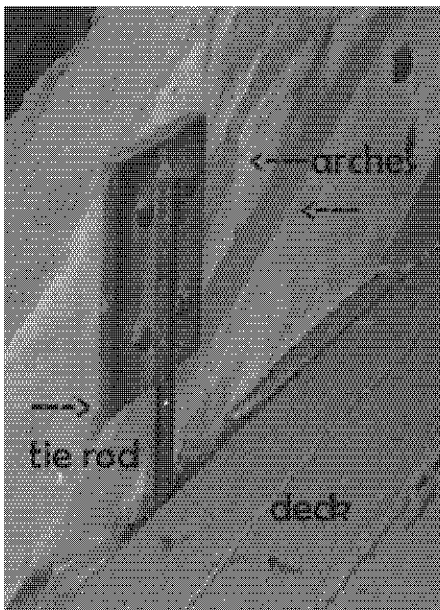


Illustration 5: Tie rod at the arch. Field photo courtesy of author.

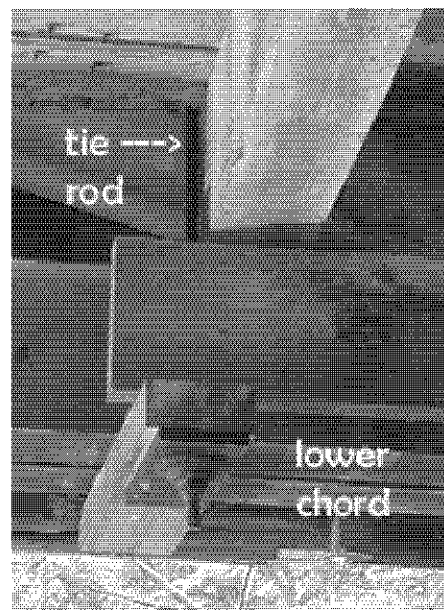


Illustration 6: Tie rod at the lower chord. Field photo courtesy of author.

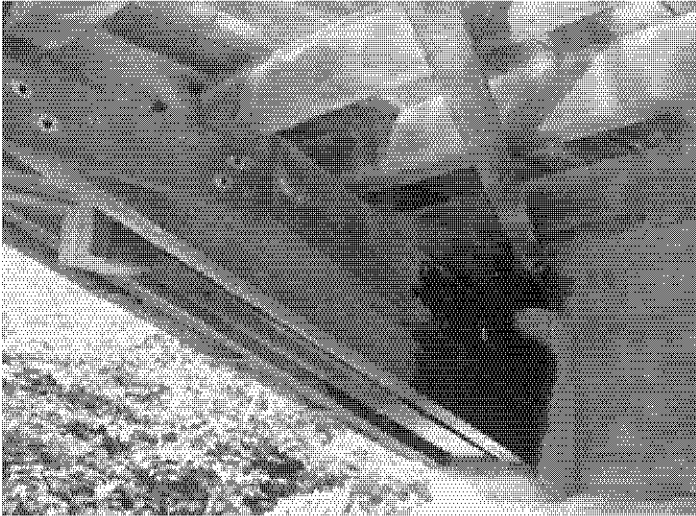


Illustration 7: The arches at the east abutment. Field photo courtesy of author.

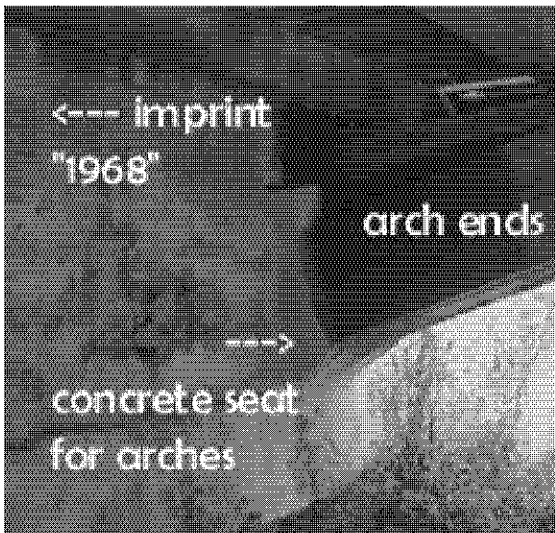


Illustration 8: The arches at the east abutment. Field photo courtesy of author.



Illustration 9: West portal.
Field photo courtesy of
author.

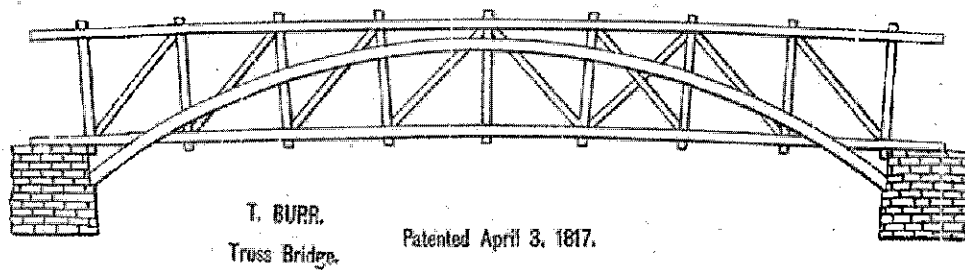


Illustration 10: Reconstruction of Burr's
patent drawing from 1817.

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Local Contacts/Historians/Societies

Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Society of Pennsylvania, Inc.

<http://www.tbcbspa.com/>

Berks County Historical Society www.berksweb.com/histsoc

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