

# West Virginia's Covered Bridges



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## Barrackville – 1853 - Marion

West Virginia's intent to capitalize on what it had learned by putting to further use the skills perfected during Philippi restoration efforts was evidenced in mid-1990 when the governor announced an ambitious program, estimated at \$3.5 million, to restore the state's remaining covered bridges. At a November 1990 public meeting in Barrackville, Dr. Emory Kemp, WVU presented preliminary plans for restoring the turn-of-the-century look of the remaining structures, beginning with the Marion County span built by Lemuel and Eli Chenoweth in 1853 as part of the Fairmont-Wheeling Turnpike.

In 1991 an Acrow panel-type bridge had to be installed inside the 20-foot-wide, 146-foot-long multiple-kingpost Burr arch truss because of its deteriorating condition, and a \$1.3

million upstream replacement began carrying Marion County 21 traffic over Buffalo Creek in 1992. Finally, in late 1997, Governor Cecil Underwood announced that design of a project for the bridge, which had suffered many delays, was back on track, with restoration to “get started before there is any more deterioration of this historic structure.”



At the beginning of 1998, Orders Construction Company, Inc. of St.

Albans was awarded a nearly \$1.5 million contract to restore the Barrackville Covered Bridge by replacing rotted truss members with wood to match the original, installing a new wooden floor system and repairing the roof, all work aimed at returning the structure to its appearance in the original time period of its construction. Restoration also included siding, which had been added after the structure’s original time period, but did not include a previous sidewalk, since the bridge now serves pedestrians only. An autumn 1999 ribbon-cutting ceremony officially reopened the restored structure.

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## Carrollton – 1856 - Barbour

Another Philippi-area span that once served as part of the Middle Fork Turnpike, the covered bridge at Carrollton carries Barbour County 36 over the Buckhannon River on a span 16 feet wide and 140.75 feet long. The bridge was built by Emmett and Daniel O’Brien in 1856 at a cost of \$2,928 for abutments and \$1,891 for the superstructure, which used the patented Burr Arch type and consists of two multiple Kingpost trusses. In 2002, Hoke Brothers Contracting of Union, WV completed renovations on the bridge at a cost of



\$389,609.



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## Center Point – 1889 - Doddridge



This 12.5-foot-wide, 42-foot-long Long truss built in 1889 by John Ash and S.H. Smith crosses Pike Fork of McElroy Creek just east of WV 23 in Doddridge County. No longer carrying traffic, the bridge underwent \$353,697 worth of renovations by The Righter Co., Inc. of Columbus, OH in 2002.

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## Dents Run – 1889 - Monongalia



Nearly 13 feet wide and 40 feet long, this bridge was completed in 1889. W.A. Loar built the abutments and William and Joseph Mercer built the superstructure, using a kingpost truss. The bridge is located on Monongalia County 43/3 north of US 19 near Westover. A contract for repairs to the trusses, new floor beams and deck installed was awarded to Hoke Brothers Contracting, Inc. of Union, WV for \$185,684.

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## Fish Creek – 1880 - Wetzel



Located on Wetzel County 13 near Hundred, this kingpost truss is 12.75 feet wide and 36 feet long and still carrying traffic. Few details of its 1880 or 1881 construction are known. Lone Pine Construction, Inc. of Bentleyville, PA completed renovation of the bridge in 2001 for \$218,409.

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## Fletcher (Ten Mile Creek) – 1891 - Harrison



Built by Solomon Swiger in 1891 at a cost of \$1,372, this multiple-kingpost truss is 12.25 feet wide and 58.25 feet long and carries Harrison County 5/29 over the Righthand Fork of Ten Mile Creek north of US 50 near Maken. Allegheny Restorations & Bldrs, Inc. of Morgantown, WV received \$375,964 for rehabilitation work including substructure work, timber repairs to truss members,

deck, siding and roof repair.

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## Herns Mill (Milligan Creek) – 1884 - Greenbrier



Still carrying the traffic of Greenbrier County 40 across Milligan Creek near Lewisburg, this 10.5-foot-wide, 53.75-foot-long queenpost truss bridge was built in 1884, by order of the county court, at a cost of \$800.

A \$543,932 restoration of the Herns Mill Covered Bridge, completed in 2000 by Grandview Construction, Inc. of Beckley, included installation of steel beams to support the timber roadway in addition to replacement of timber roof trusses, the metal roof and wooden exterior siding.

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## Hokes Mill (Second Creek) – 1899 - Greenbrier



This 12-foot-wide, 81.5-foot-long Long truss, built in 1899 carries Greenbrier County 62 over Second Creek. While originally costing only \$200, renovations in 2001 by Allegheny Restoration & Bldrs, Inc. of Morgantown, WV totaled \$391,646.

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## Indian Creek – 1903 - Monroe



One of the most photographed in the state, this Monroe County span is located not far from the Laurel Creek Bridge, north of US 219. Owned by the county historical society and open to pedestrians, it was part of the White and Salt Sulphur Springs Turnpike. A Long truss built in 1903 by Ray and Oscar Weikel (ages 16 and 18 years old) and E.P. and A.P. Smith, it is more than 11.5 feet

wide and 49.25 feet long. There are six covered bridges in West Virginia with this truss engineering -- Philippi, Hokes Mill, Sarvis Fork, Statts Mill, Center Point and Indian Creek. The completed bridge cost Monroe County only \$400 and was used continuously for about 30 years.

The interior of the Indian Creek Bridge contains notes and plaques from previous visitors. Now only pedestrians use the bridge, which also houses antique vehicles from the 1900s, adding to the history of this unique structure.

In spring of 2000, the bridge was rehabilitated by Hoke Brothers Construction, Inc. of Union, WV in 2002 at a cost of \$334,446. Renovations included timber roof trusses, a new glue-laminated timber deck, new wooden exterior siding and a new roof of split shakes.

Indian Creek Bridge is a tribute to the ingenuity and hard work of two young builders who had a vision of what transportation could be in Monroe County.

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## Laurel Creek (Lily Dale) – 1912 - Monroe



West Virginia's smallest covered bridge is just over 13 feet wide and just under 24.5 feet long and still carrying traffic. Built by Robert Arnott in 1912 at a cost of \$365, the queenpost truss carries Monroe County 219/11 near Lillydale. The bridge was renovated in 2000 by Hoke Brothers, Inc. of Union, WV for \$248,692.

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## Locust Creek – 1870 - Pocahontas

The most remote of all of the state's covered bridges, this 13.5-foot-wide, 113.75-foot-long Warren double-intersection truss near Hillsboro once carried vehicles on Pocahontas County 31.

R.N. Bruce was hired by the county court to build the bridge for \$1,250 plus \$75 for extra labor on the abutments. Completed in 1870, the Locust Creek Covered Bridge continued in service for 120 years until it was replaced in 1990 by an adjacent span to carry vehicular traffic.



In November 2001, using special covered bridge funding provided in the TEA-21 federal highway program, a \$406,936 renovation contract was awarded to Orders Construction Company, Inc. of St. Albans that included removal of previously installed temporary supports and replacement of all materials necessary to restore it to a single-lane pedestrian structure.

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## **Milton (Mud River) – 1876 - Cabell**



Perhaps the most “well-traveled” of West Virginia’s covered bridges is the Milton Bridge.

Also known as the Mud River Covered Bridge, this 14-foot-wide, 208.5-foot-long Howe truss bridge was built in 1876 by R.H. Baker and served vehicular traffic on Cabell County 25 until deterioration limited its use to pedestrians only in 1985. A new bridge was constructed upstream in 1991 and the

covered bridge was closed even to pedestrians in March 1996.

In December of that year, Orders Construction Company, Inc. of St. Albans was awarded a \$224,840 contract to secure the historic structure until plans for its restoration could be completed. Only a short time before the 1997 flooding that could have destroyed the bridge, the contractor stabilized and moved it—without roof, floorboards or siding boards—to a less flood-prone site on County 25 about a mile southeast of its original location, where it could be stored. Here, on the old approaches of another former covered bridge, the James River and Kanawha Turnpike’s original crossing of Mud River, the bridge was expected to be rebuilt in 1998, using the abutments from the crossing’s original covered bridge as well as stone from the Milton site to maintain the historic aspects of both.

But in February 2001 bids were once again taken to move the 125-year-old structure—this time to a location with greater opportunity for pedestrians to experience its unique link to the transportation of the past. The bridge’s new home is over a pond at the site of the Pumpkin Festival and Cabell County Fair near Blenko Glass and a popular ball field in Milton. Ahern & Associates, Inc. of South Charleston was awarded a \$900,000 restoration contract, which allowed the bridge to be moved as it was and called for new concrete abutments to be encased in the stone from the original site, truss repair, installation of a stainless-steel roof and addition of wooden siding to resemble the original.

That October, the restored structure was dedicated at the fairgrounds site in a ceremony that also recognized the continuing efforts of individuals such as the late John Brunell, Highways’ Covered Bridge Program project manager, who worked hard to save these historic structures.





## **Philippi – 1852 - Barbour**



Though extremely versatile, wood has one obvious disadvantage - it burns. In early February 1989, the Philippi Covered Bridge, West Virginian's oldest covered bridge nearly burned down when the spark of a car set off a stream of gasoline that had run back downhill from the overflow at a local filling station to

the bridge, destroying 60 percent of its yellow poplar timbers, siding and roof, particularly on the west span.

On September 16, 1991, two years and seven months after fire nearly destroyed it, the Philippi Covered Bridge was returned to service when then Governor Gaston Caperton cut the ribbon officially reopening West Virginia's premier wooden structure.

According to legend, Lemuel Chenoweth had convinced members of the Virginia Legislature to award him the contract to build the Tygart Valley River span by placing a wooden model of his masterpiece between two chairs and standing on it.

Completed in 1852 by builder Henry Hartley at a cost of just over twelve thousand dollars, the double-barreled 286-foot Long truss continued to serve US 250 traffic through floods and other natural disasters until the accident.

The successful return of the historic span to its original appearance—work that set standards for future renovation of the state's remaining covered bridges—was the result of a cooperative effort involving the governor, the Division of Highways, West Virginia University, foresters and local restoration fund-raising groups.

An ardent supporter of restoration, Caperton brought the president of the Senate, the speaker of the House and other state officials to the site to almost immediately after the fire to assure local citizens that efforts would be successful.

"Repair whatever we can and replace when we must" was the rule of restoration coordinator Dr. Emory Kemp, WV professor and head of its History of Science and Technology graduate program, who was aided by "meticulous research" by Carl Tiderman of Alderson-Broaddus College in returning the bridge to Chenoweth's original design, with horizontal siding, a red roof and other touches not previously seen by anyone now living.

Under the watchful eye of Kemp, who had restored other historic spans in West Virginia, Virginia and New England, a 38-man crew was formed, filing with epoxy the pieces of the bridge that remained or shaping and joining new wood using old tools and ancient construction methods such as wooden pegs. Work, done under three supervisors whose former skills included construction, carpentry and cabinet-making, included discovery of nine minie balls first lodged in the beams during the Civil War's first land battle in 1863.



The yellow poplar needed for restoration, estimated at \$100,000, was donated through state Forestry Association Director Dick Waybright, with contributions from the US Forest Service, Westvaco, J.C. Lumber and Allegheny Wood Products.

Located by Georgia-Pacific personnel near Grassy Creek in Nicholas County and Bolair in Webster County, the logs—at least 15 inches in diameter on the small end, with eight required to be 56 feet long and the others from 34 to 44 feet—were harvested by Bess, Harry Vance and Dunsmore Brothers logging companies and loaded onto three tractor-trailers owned by Bennett Logging and Ruckman Trucking for transport to the Belington Industrial Park. There, at a special sawmill set up by Ricotelli Fencing and Ware Lumber, the 56-foot-long 7x10-inch-thick beams were milled by Simpson Lumber Company, with Dingess Lumber manufacturing the structural members shorter than 20 feet.

Under local businessman Fred Crouch, the Philippi Restoration Committee initiated numerous fund-raising projects, including the sale of limited-edition 9x12-inch prints of the bridge by Webster Springs artist James Moran, obtained individual donations totaling \$20,000 from throughout the United States, including \$500—its largest cash gift—from Lemuel Chenoweth's granddaughter in Michigan.

Following completion of major restoration efforts, a contract was awarded to install a new deck, sidewalk, handrail system and scour protection for the bridge pier and repoint the stonework. This final step brought the cost of restoration efforts to approximately 265 times the original price to build the span.

The state's intent to capitalize on what it has learned by putting to further use the skills perfected during restoration efforts were evidence in mid-1990 when Governor Caperton announced an ambitious program, estimated at \$3.5 million to restore the state's 17 remaining covered bridges.

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## **Sarvis Fork (Sandy Creek) – 1890 - Jackson**



Built by R.B. Cunningham and G.W. Staats in 1890, this Long truss bridge carrying Jackson County 21/15 over Left Fork of Sandy Creek near Sandyville was dismantled and relocated 1924. The 11.75-foot-wide, 101.25-foot-long span also received some repairs in 1979.

In 2000 a \$598,233 renovation contract was awarded to R.C. Construction Company & Sons, Inc. of Cutler, Ohio, to make the Sarvis

Fork Covered Bridge more closely resemble the original by replacing the floor system with timber decking on steel stringers, installing a stainless steel roof and replacing wooden siding where necessary. The bridge continues to serve traffic today.

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## **Simpson Creek (Hollens Mill) – 1881 - Harrison**



A 14.25-foot-wide, 75-foot-long multiple-kingpost truss, this covered bridge built for \$1483 by Asa Hugill in 1881 once carried the traffic of Harrison County 24/2 near the northern edge of Bridgeport.

Washed out by a flood, the structure was transported approximately half a mile below its original site in 1999 to its present setting in a park near Highways' District Four (Clarksburg-area) headquarters, where it now serves pedestrians.

Some renovations were done when the Simpson Creek Covered Bridge was damaged by a falling tree, but in 2002, using special covered bridge funding provided in the TEA-21 federal highway grant program, Allegheny Restoration and Builders, Inc. of Morgantown completed a \$380,072 contract to replace deteriorated wood in its structure and siding.

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## Statts Mill – 1888 - Jackson



Originally crossing Tug Fork of Big Mill Creek in Jackson County, this 11.25-foot-wide, 97-foot-long Long truss bridge was built in 1888 by Henry Hartley at a cost of \$1,788.35.

As part of a 1982 flood control project, the Statts Mill Covered Bridge was relocated to the Cedar Lakes FFA-FHA Conference Center near the Fairplain Interchange off I-77, three miles from its original site, in 1983. Reconstructed across one of the conference center's ponds at a cost of \$104,000, it now serves campers and other pedestrians at the center.

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## Walkersville – 1903 - Lewis



Built by John Sprigg for \$567 in 1903, this 12-foot-wide, 39.25-foot-long queenpost truss bridge carries vehicles on Lewis County 19/17 over Right Fork of West Fork River.

Limited renovation was done in 1984, but in August 2002 a major restoration contract was advertised to replace the wooden siding and some deteriorated structural members on the Walkersville Covered Bridge. A \$230,859 contract was awarded to Allegheny Restoration and Builders, Inc. of Morgantown and restoration was completed two years later.

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## North Central Cluster



### CENTER POINT

(Doddridge County)

Located on private land over Talkington Fork, this bridge can be reached from U.S. 50, west of Salem, by taking secondary route 23. Drive 10.2 miles to Pike Fork Road 10 and turn right to see the bridge.



### SIMPSON CREEK

(Harrison County)

Located near Bridgeport, take I-79 exit 121 (Meadowbrook Road). Turn toward Meadowbrook Mall on secondary route 24 and drive .4 of a mile. The bridge will be on the left.



### FLETCHER

(Harrison County) Built across Ten Mile Creek, this bridge is located off U.S. 50 west of Clarksburg. From U.S. 50, take Marshville exit 5 and drive

1.6 miles. The bridge is on the left.



### DENTS RUN

(Monongalia County)

Located near Morgantown, take I-79 exit 152 (Westover), turn south on U.S. 19, and drive 3.2 miles to Sugar Grove Road. Turn right and drive .7 of a mile. Looking to the left, watch carefully for a gravel road that turns over a slight hill. Take a left down the hill and drive .1 of a mile.



### BARRACKVILLE

(Marion County) Built across Buffalo Creek, this bridge is located northwest of Fairmont off U.S. 250. Turn onto secondary route 250/32 to the town of Barrackville. The bridge is on the north end of town.

# West Vi Covered

## North Central Cluster



### FISH CREEK

(Weitzel County) Near the town of Hundred, this bridge is located at the junction of U.S. route 250 and secondary road 13. This bridge can clearly be seen while driving on route 250.



### WALKERSVILLE

(Lewis County) Built across the right fork of the West Fork River, it can be reached from I-79 south of Weston. Take exit 91 (Roanoke), drive south on

U.S. 19 for 13 miles to Big Run Road 19/17 south of Walkersville, and turn right.



### PHILIPPI

(Barbour County) Used during the Civil War by Northern and Southern troops, this bridge is still in service. It spans the Tygart River at the junction of routes 119 and 250 at Philippi.



### CARROLLTON

(Barbour County) From the junction of U.S. routes 119 and 250 in Philippi, take 119 south 6 miles to secondary 38 (Carrollton Road). Turn left and drive

.7 of a mile to the bridge over the Buckhannon River.



# Virginia's Bridges

## Western Cluster



### STAATS MILL

(Jackson County) From downtown Ripley, at the junction of U.S. 33 and secondary route 21, take 21 south for .9 of a mile to a small sign on the right, "Cedar Lakes FFA-FHA camps, Staats Mill." Turn left and drive 1.7 miles to Cedar Lakes.



### SARVIS FORK

(Jackson County) From downtown Ripley, at the junction of U.S. 33 and secondary route 21, take route 21 north for 10.9 miles to Sarvis Fork Road 21/15. Turn right and drive .2 of a mile to the bridge spanning Sandy Creek.



### MILTON

(Cabell County) From I-64 take exit 28 (Milton) and drive .5 of a mile toward Milton to U.S. 60. Turn right onto U.S. 60 west and drive 2.1 miles to the second stop light in Milton. Turn left onto East Mud Road 25 and drive .2 of a mile to the bridge.

## Southeastern Cluster



### LOCUST CREEK

(Pocahontas County) From the southern end of Hillsboro in Pocahontas County, drive south 2.2 miles on U.S. 219 to Locust Creek Road 20. Turn left and drive 3.3 miles to a stop sign. Turn right to the bridge.



### HERNS MILL

(Greenbrier County) From the junction of U.S. routes 219 and 60 in downtown Lewisburg, take U.S. 60 west to Bungers Mill Road 60/11. Turn left, drive .2 of a mile to Hems Mill Road 40, and turn left. Drive 1 mile to the bridge.



### HOKES MILL

(Greenbrier County) From the junction of U.S. routes 219 and 60 in downtown Lewisburg, take U.S. 219 south 9.2 miles to Hokes Mill Road 62. Turn right and bear to the left as you drive on the narrow, paved road for 7 miles to the bridge.



### LAUREL CREEK

(Monroe County) From the four-way stop sign in Union, drive south on U.S. 219 approximately 3.2 miles to Lilleydale Road on the right at Salt Sulphur Springs. Turn right and drive 3 miles on Lilleydale Road until it forks. Take the right fork, Laurel Creek Road 219/11, and continue 1.4 miles to the bridge.



### INDIAN CREEK

(Monroe County) From the four-way stop sign in Union, drive south on U.S. route 219 for approximately 5 miles. The covered bridge can now be clearly seen on the right hand side of the road while driving along route 219.