**Form No. 10-300**  
**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**  
**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**  
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

### 1 NAME

**HISTORIC**  
Ponakin Bridge

**AND/OR COMMON**  
Ponakin Bridge

### 2 LOCATION

**STREET & NUMBER**  
Ponakin Road

**CITY. TOWN**  
Lancaster

**STATE**  
Massachusetts

**CODE**  
025

**CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT**  
2nd

### 3 CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>DISTRICT</em></td>
<td><em>PUBLIC</em></td>
<td><em>OCCUPIED</em></td>
<td><em>AGRICULTURE</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>BUILDING(S)</em></td>
<td><em>PRIVATE</em></td>
<td><em>UNOCCUPIED</em></td>
<td><em>COMMERCIAL</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>STRUCTURE</em></td>
<td>BOTH</td>
<td><em>WORK IN PROGRESS</em></td>
<td><em>EDUCATIONAL</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>SITE</em></td>
<td>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</td>
<td>ACCESSIBLE</td>
<td><em>PRIVATE RESIDENCE</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>OBJECT</em></td>
<td>IN PROCESS</td>
<td>YES: RESTRICTED</td>
<td><em>RELIGIOUS</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BEING CONSIDERED</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td><em>GOVERNMENT</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>INDUSTRIAL</em></td>
<td><em>TRANSPORTATION</em></td>
<td><em>SCIENTIFIC</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>MILITARY</em></td>
<td><em>OTHER</em></td>
<td><em>OTHER</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

**NAME**  
Town of Lancaster

**STREET & NUMBER**  
Town Hall

**CITY. TOWN**  
Lancaster

**STATE**  
Massachusetts

### 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS,ETC.**  
Worcester County Registry of Deeds

**STREET & NUMBER**  
2 Main Street

**CITY. TOWN**  
Worcester

**STATE**  
Massachusetts

### 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

**TITLE**  
Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth

**DATE**  
1975

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS**  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

**CITY. TOWN**  
294 Washington Street, Boston

**STATE**  
Massachusetts 02108
The Ponakin Bridge is a single span Post through truss constructed in 1871. The bridge serves automobile traffic crossing the north branch of the Nashua River in Lancaster. Originally on the main route from Lancaster to Lunenburg, the bridge is now on a winding country road. It is now approximately 400 feet from a by-pass highway constructed in 1965.

The eight truss paneled structure has a span of 100 feet and width of 20 feet. The vertical end posts are riveted in sections. The bridge is typical of Post trusses with pinned end diagonals in compression and diagonal dual eye bars extending two panels in tension. Secondary tension rods running between the dual eye bolts extend across one panel. Struts connecting each side hip are riveted; top lateral diagonal cross bars provide additional bracing. Floor construction consists of three inch deck planking supported by transverse cross timbers atop wood stringers which in turn rest on riveted cross floor beams. Floor beams are attached at the panel points. Abutments are 20' granite blocks.
The Ponakin Bridge possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship and is associated with major transportation routes and the development of Lancaster. The bridge also possesses significance in being the only remaining pure version of a Post truss known to the Historic American Engineering Record.

In 1871 the town of Lancaster contracted with Watson Manufacturing Company, Builders of Patterson, New Jersey to construct a new bridge replacing the last in a series of wooden bridges that had been there since the seventeenth century. That year the Ponakin Bridge was built for the sum of $5981 following the design of Simeon S. Post which was patented c. 1866. S.S. Post was a well known New Hampshire born civil engineer "whose work in addition to bridge design and building included surveys and construction of railroads, particularly the New York and Erie. He was the originator of the system of railroad baggage checking universally adopted and drew the first design for making railroad time tables. He was also a founding member of the original (1852) American Society of Civil Engineers." The Post truss bridge was distinguished by compression members that incline toward the center of the bridge. The Post truss bridge was a major bridge form in the second half of the nineteenth century and was the most frequently used bridge form for the transcontinental railroad. Other important Post truss bridges include the Union Pacific Railroad's crossing of the Missouri River at Omaha. Two and one-half miles in length, this bridge was the largest on the line. The Missouri River crossing of the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad was also a Post patented bridge with a span of 256'. Despite the truss' popularity, The Ponakin and the nearby Atherton Bridges (NR-eligible) are the only known surviving examples in the country. Taken together, the bridges comprise a unique pair of structures representing an important era in American engineering.

The town of Lancaster has demonstrated its commitment to upkeep of the bridge through town-funded repairs over the years. The load limit today is four tons, and trucks and heavy loads are excluded from crossing the bridge.
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Allen, Richard S., Iron Bridges on S.S. Post's Patent

Marvin, Abijah P., History of Lancaster 1652-1879, Lancaster, 1879

Town clerk and selectmen's records
Correspondence with Donald Jackson, HAER

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: approx. ½ acre

QUADRANGLE NAME: Clinton, MA

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

A 1 9 2 7 9 2 4 5 4 7 0 5 4 8 0

B 1 9 2 7 9 2 4 5 4 7 0 5 4 8 0

C 1 9 2 7 9 2 4 5 4 7 0 5 4 8 0

D 1 9 2 7 9 2 4 5 4 7 0 5 4 8 0

E 1 9 2 7 9 2 4 5 4 7 0 5 4 8 0

F 1 9 2 7 9 2 4 5 4 7 0 5 4 8 0

G 1 9 2 7 9 2 4 5 4 7 0 5 4 8 0

H 1 9 2 7 9 2 4 5 4 7 0 5 4 8 0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Ponakin Bridge is located on Ponakin Road where the road crosses the Nashua River.

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: Elizabeth T. Durfee with Phyllis and Lee Farnsworth

Inventory Coordinator

Lancaster Historical Commission

ORGANIZATION: Massachusetts Historical Commission

DATE: June 29, 1979

STREET & NUMBER: 294 Washington Street

TELEPHONE: 617-727-8470

CITY OR TOWN: Boston

STATE: MA 02108

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE:

DATE: 7/18/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION