

Woolen Mills Bridge On Factory Street Over Lake Creek In Cooperstown



The people of Cooperstown have a great bridge in their midst. Based on the remains of a builder plaque on one end of one of the trusses, I've concluded that the bridge was built in 1889 by the Massillon Bridge Company of Massillon, Ohio. See below for photograph of plaque.

The only words on the bridge plaque are the very hard to read "BRIDGE COMPANY". There is also a circle with a number in it. The number looks like an "89" and I thought it safe to assume it means 1889. I remembered seeing a builder plaque before that was consistent with the remains of what is affixed to this bridge and found the match at Douglas Coulter's **Massillon Bridge Company Page**.

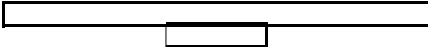
The plate attached to this Cooperstown bridge is of the style used by the Massillon Bridge Company in the late 1880's. A **photograph of a similar plaque from 1887** illustrates what one of these plaques looks like when whole and shined up.

So unless somebody came along and attached the Massillon Plate to this bridge sometime over the years, I think we know where the bridge came from. (Of course Venango County might have all of this information on file. I didn't ask.)

Clicking small photos usually provides enlargements and information



Remains of Builder Plaque On Truss



The beauty of an old bridge often begins in the details. This close up shot of the remains of the Massillon Bridge Company builder plate from 1889 reveals plenty of this bridge's character. The plate is affixed sideways on the end of one of the bridge's trusses. It took me a very long time to determine that the obscured letters spell the words *BRIDGE COMPANY* and that what is inside of the circle are the digits *8* and *9*.



Closer Look At The Numbers In The Circle photo copyright © 2002 Daniel Alward

FACT SHEET *

PENNDOT DISTRICT: 1

COUNTY: VENANGO

OWNER: VENANGO COUNTY

PENNDOT DISTRICT: 1

COUNTY: VENANGO

OWNER: VENANGO COUNTY

MUNICIPALITY: COOPERSTOWN

LOCATION: SOUTH PART COOPERSTOWN BOROUGH

FACILITY CARRIED: TR 372 (WOOLEN MILLS ROAD) (Actually, the bridge is on Factory Street. The name Woolen Mills comes from some historic mills that were once in the immediate vicinity.)

NAME/FEATURE INTERSECTED: TR 372 OVER LAKE CREEK

TYPE: PONY TRUSS

DESIGN: PRATT

MATERIAL: METAL

#SPANS: 1

LENGTH (feet): 73

WIDTH (feet): 16

YEAR BUILT: 1889

DESIGNER/BUILDER:

NATIONAL REGISTER STATUS AT TIME OF SURVEY: Previously Not Evaluated

SURVEY NATIONAL REGISTER RECOMMENDATION: Not Eligible

COMMENTS: The 1889, skewed, pin connected, single span, 73'-long, Pratt pony truss bridge is supported on ashlar abutments with flared wingwalls. The traditionally composed bridge is stylistically similar to 60 7217 0522 3041 (**the Dotter Road Bridge**), a pony truss bridge that was built by the Smith Bridge Company. The built up floor beams are original. The bridge has no innovative or distinctive details, and it is an example of what by 1890 had become the standardized design for pony truss bridges. The bridge is not historically or technologically significant.

I wonder if the main reason this bridge was not recommended eligible is because the evaluators could not determine the builder. Otherwise how is it explained that this bridge is compared to the **Dotter Road Bridge**, which is rightfully considered significant, yet this bridge is listed as not significant? Trying to narrow down which bridges to recommend for the National Register had to be difficult.

The two bridges *are* very similar. The most noticeable difference is in their settings. This one is a town bridge surrounded by grass. **Dotter Road** is a country bridge surrounded by forest and within sight of a stone arch bridge and a concrete arch bridge. If I had to pick just one of those two bridges to save, **Dotter Road** would be my pick also, based on it's setting.

But I don't want to pick, nor do I have to! I'm in love with both bridges! This Cooperstown bridge at least has local significance. It occupies a proud spot, easily visible from a distance. I hope Venango County will keep it maintained and usable for a long time to come. Take a look above for our conclusion that this bridge was probably built by the Massillon Bridge Company.

* The data in this FACT SHEET is a subset of the data found in the **Pennsylvania Historic Bridge Inventory and Evaluation** database (data circa 1997). That survey evaluated bridges for potential eligibility to the **National Register of Historic Places**. In the database, MUNICIPALITY is most often given as a township name, but could be a borough or city name. COMMENTS here are generally taken directly from comments in the database, although they may be summarized. Additional comments, if any, added by Venangoil.com are in **orange**.