

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD, PICKERING CREEK TRESTLE  
(Schuylkill Valley Division, Frazer Branch, Bridge No. 205)  
Pennsylvania Historic Railroad Bridges Recording Project  
Spanning Pickering Creek, south of Buckwalter Rd.  
Pickering  
Chester County  
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-521

HAER  
PA  
15-PICK,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

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Location: Spanning Pickering Creek, south of Buckwalter Rd., Pickering, Chester County, Pennsylvania.

USGS Quadrangle: Malvern, Pennsylvania (7.5-minute series).

UTM Coordinates: 18/454800/4439365

Date of Construction: 1883.

Basis for Dating: Secondary sources.

Dates of Alteration: 1897, 1913.

Designer: Pennsylvania Railroad.

Fabricator / Builder: Carnegie Steel Co. (Pittsburgh).

Present Owner: Norfolk Southern Railroad.

Present Use: Railroad bridge.

Structure Type: Riveted deck girder.

Significance: The Pickering Creek Trestle is significant as a high trestle with both horizontal and vertical curvature.

Historian: Justin M. Spivey, April 2000.

Project Information: The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) conducted the Pennsylvania Historic Railroad Bridges Recording Project during 1999 and 2000, under the direction of Eric N. DeLony, Chief. The project was supported by the Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) and a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC). Justin M. Spivey, HAER engineer, researched and wrote the final reports. Preston M. Thayer, historian, Fredericksburg, Virginia, conducted preliminary research under contract. Jet Lowe, HAER photographer, and

Joseph E. B. Elliott, contract photographer, Sellersville,  
Pennsylvania, produced large-format photographs.

### **Description and History**

The former Frazer Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad's Schuylkill Valley Division, heading south from Phoenixville, curves across Pickering Creek valley on a steel viaduct with an earth-fill embankment at its south end. These replaced a wooden trestle with an iron deck truss span over the creek, constructed for the Phoenixville & West Chester Railroad in 1883. The earlier company, incorporated on 8 March 1882, was consolidated into the Pennsylvania Schuylkill Valley Railroad (PSV) on 1 June 1883, which began using the line two months later. The Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR), which leased the PSV from its inception, fully absorbed that company in 1902.<sup>1</sup> Along with the PSV main line, the Frazer Branch helped the PRR compete with the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad in the coal and iron markets of the Schuylkill River valley.

The Frazer Branch served the nearby Phoenix Iron Company at Phoenixville, whose bridge division, Clarke, Reeves & Company, supplied the iron deck truss in 1883.<sup>2</sup> This was a 111'-0"-long span, with an extreme skew necessary to achieve the minimum distance between high stone piers placed parallel to the banks of Pickering Creek. The low bidder to replace the wooden trestle in 1896 came from the other end of Pennsylvania. In August of that year, PRR contracted with the Carnegie Steel Company of Pittsburgh for a new "soft, open-hearth steel" viaduct.<sup>3</sup> Although Carnegie constructed fourteen deck girder spans 30'-0" to 50'-0" long on steel trestle bents, they evidently did not replace the creek span, which was omitted from shop drawings. Stub bents atop the stone piers made up the difference in depth between the deck truss and adjacent girder spans.<sup>4</sup> In 1913, the railroad replaced the creek span with a deck plate girder, 9'-2-1/2" deep, on concrete pedestals.<sup>5</sup>

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Notes

1. Thomas T. Taber III, *Railroads of Pennsylvania: Encyclopedia and Atlas* (Muncy, Pa.: Thomas T. Taber III, 1987), 418; also Howard W. Schotter, *The Growth and Development of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company: A Review of the Charter and Annual Reports of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company 1846 to 1926* (Philadelphia: Press of Allen, Lane, and Scott, 1927), 205, 264.
2. Pennsylvania Historic Sites Inventory form, in correspondence files, Consolidated Rail Corp., Philadelphia, Pa. [transferred to Norfolk Southern Railway Co., Atlanta, Ga.].
3. Agreement No. 2346, "Carnegie Steel Co. Ltd. with the Penna. R. R. Co. for Pickering Creek Viaduct, Frazer Branch, Schuylkill Division, August 14th, 1896," Bridges - Schuylkill Division 1889-1898 folder, Box 747, Construction Contracts, Engineering Department, Pennsylvania Railroad Company, Acc. 1807, Hagley Museum and Library, Greenville, Del. Carnegie had bid \$0.0213 per pound.
4. Carnegie Steel Co., Bureau of Engineering, Bridge Division, "Bridge No. 205, Pickering Creek Trestle, Phoenixville Bch. — Sch. Div. — P. R. R.," dated 10 Sep. 1896, milepost 3.08, region/division/branch 101152, aperture card files, Consolidated Rail Corp., Philadelphia, Pa. [transferred to Norfolk Southern Railway Co., Atlanta, Ga.; hereinafter cited as Conrail aperture cards].
5. Pennsylvania Railroad, "Bridge No. 205, Pickering Creek — Phoenix. Br., Schuylkill Div., E. Pa. Div.," dated Jul. 1913, Conrail aperture cards.