

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Campbell's Covered Bridge  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 123 Campbell Covered Bridge Road not for publication \_\_\_  
city or town Gowensville vicinity X  
state South Carolina code SC county Greenville code 045 zip code 29356

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally X statewide \_\_\_ locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- \_\_\_ determined eligible for the  
National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the  
National Register
- \_\_\_ removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ other (explain):

Campbell's Covered Bridge  
Name of Property

Greenville County, South Carolina  
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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
1	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed

in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Transportation

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Subcategory: Road-Related

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Vacant/Not In Use

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Subcategory: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

None

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone, Concrete

walls Wood

roof Metal (Galvanized Steel)

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- a owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- b removed from its original location.
- c a birthplace or a grave.
- d a cemetery.
- e a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- f a commemorative property.
- g less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering  
Transportation

**Period of Significance**

1909-1959

**Significant Dates**

1909

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Willis, Charles Irwin

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

**S.C. Department of Archives & History,**  
**Columbia, S.C.**



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Campbell's Covered Bridge, built in 1909, is located in rural north Greenville County, South Carolina, near Gowensville, and crosses Beaver Dam Creek on Campbell Covered Bridge Road. This wooden bridge with a metal roof is 35' long by 12' wide.

It sits on a rock foundation with a concrete cap, as masons supplemented existing rock formations on each side of Beaver Dam creek as load-bearing abutments and partial foundations. Concrete was poured atop the rock formations, and 12" x 12" heart-of-pine sills were mounted on the concrete cap with 4.5" iron rods. Once the two trusses were in final position, they were braced or tied in place for the remaining construction of the bridge decking, sides and roof. Buttresses were then built at each end of the bridge and at the center point of each truss. They rested on the main timbers carrying the floor load and extended three feet past the sides of the bridge to provide stability along the weak axis of the truss.

Campbell's Covered Bridge is a four-span Howe truss bridge with counter braces. The two outer spans are 9' long and the two inner spans are 8' long. Each truss is 4" x 8", and each counter brace is made from 2" x 8" pine boards nailed together in an interlocking pattern. Vertical tie rods called kingposts, made from 1" diameter iron rods, are in between each span, tying the top and bottom chords together. This method of truss construction absorbs and transfers a passing vehicle's weight to the rock abutments on each end of the bridge.

The builder, Charles Irwin Willis (1878-1966), allowed the truss ends to follow the natural lay of the land and built the rest of the bridge to fit; as a result—and according to Willis's design—the bridge is neither square nor plumb.<sup>1</sup>

The siding of the bridge consists of 1" x 6" pine boards with 1" battens covering the joints. Siding covers the three wooden buttresses that jut out on each side of the deck, forming a triangular shape and sheathed with cedar shakes. A gable roof of five-V galvanized steel covers the structure. The bridge is open at both ends, with a gap at the top between the siding and roof to allow for air circulation. The deck is made from 2" x 6" pine boards. The trusses are exposed on the interior of the bridge.

In 1951, Pleasant Hill Road was rerouted, and the historic roadbed was renamed Campbell Covered Bridge Road. It remained a gravel-over-clay road until it was resurfaced by tar and gravel in 1987. In 1964, the bridge siding, deck, and roof were repaired and the bridge was painted, most likely for the first time. Local traffic continued to use the bridge, but most traffic used the rerouted Pleasant Hill Road instead. In 1984, Greenville County closed the bridge to all vehicular traffic.

Retaining walls were built and the dirt was dumped up against each end of the bridge, in effect creating two dead end roads. By 1990, the bridge needed renovation once more; worn or rotted boards were replaced with fresh rough-cut pine boards and the tin roof was replaced with a galvanized steel roof.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Martin Flynn, *Campbell's Covered Bridge* (Greer, S.C.: The Greer Citizen Press, 1992), pp. 4-11.

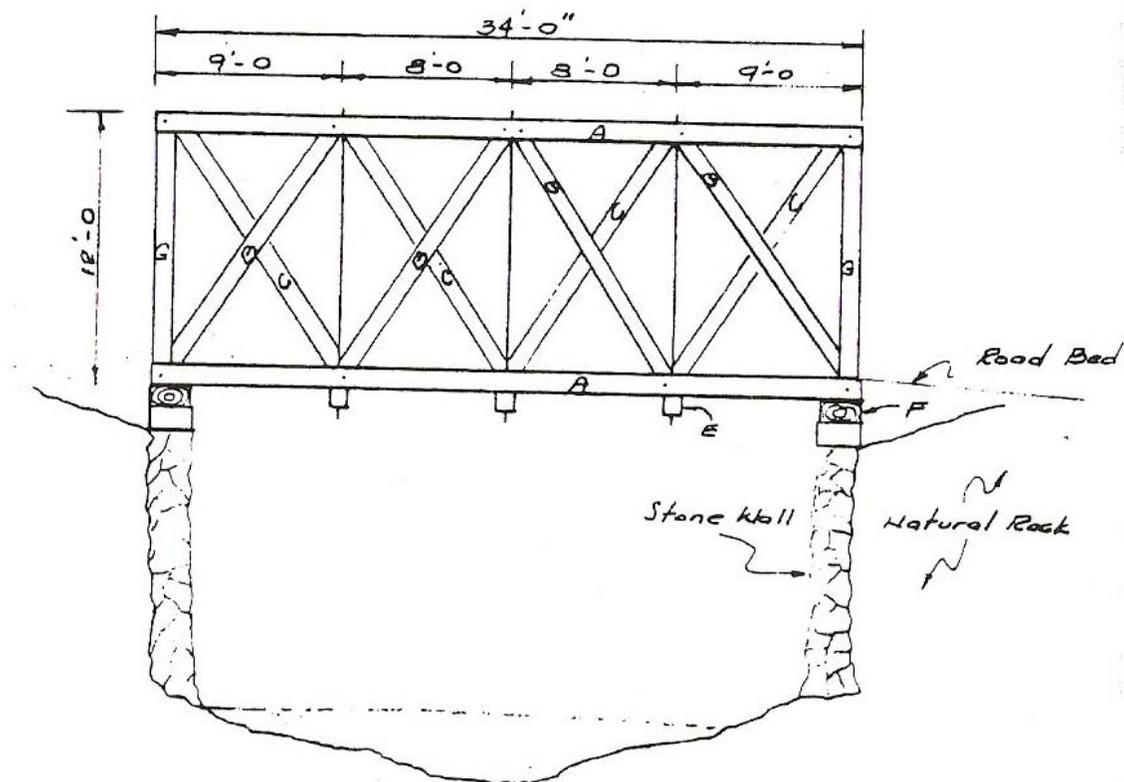
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Since the bridge weighed between 85,000 and 100,000 pounds, a 50-ton jack was used to lift the bridge off the foundation to replace the large sills at each end with new sills of pressure-treated lumber. Cracks between the pressure-treated pieces allow air to circulate, preventing any buildup of moisture in the future. The bridge was repainted at that time as well.



CUT AWAY VIEW  
MAIN TRUSSES

PARTS LIST

- A. 6-2x10 Pine Nailed Together
- B. 2-4x8 Pine
- C. 2-2x8 Pine
- D. 1" diameter Iron Rod
- E. 8x10 Pine
- F. 2-12x12 Pine Sills
- G. 4x10 Pine

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Campbell's Covered Bridge, built in 1909, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its role in transportation in early twentieth century Greenville County and the "Dark Corner" region of northwestern South Carolina, and under Criterion C as an excellent intact example of a Howe truss covered bridge and the only surviving covered bridge in the state.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

This bridge was one of four covered bridges built in this part of northern Greenville County in the first decade of the twentieth century; before that time, the only safe crossing over Beaverdam Creek was a narrow rock shoal. Morrow's Covered Bridge and McClain's Covered Bridge spanned the Middle Tyger River on Pleasant Hill Road and S.C. Highway 14, respectively, and a third unnamed covered bridge spanned the South Tyger River between S.C. Highways 101 and 253. Campbell's Covered Bridge was the largest and most sophisticated of the four.

The construction of this bridge connected several rural communities and small towns in the immediate vicinity, so that a 25-mile trip which had once taken a full day before the bridge was completed could be made in about an hour afterwards.<sup>2</sup>

Charles Irwin Willis (1878-1966), an accomplished local builder in the northern part of Greenville County, built the bridge. Long and large timbers required for the bridge exceeded the capability of most sawmills, and had to be sawed by a nearby sawmill owned and operated by James M. Suddeth. When completed, the bridge was named for Alexander Lafayette Campbell (1836-1920), local landowner and millwright who lived at the site and operated a corn grist mill about 50 feet downstream from the bridge.<sup>3</sup>

William Howe, of Spencer, Massachusetts, patented his new wood and iron rod truss design in 1840, then extended the patent with improvements in 1850. His truss was the first to be designed using mathematical stress analysis. The truss consists of wooden upper and lower chords, which are linked together with sets of dual iron rods and wooden braces and counter braces. The braces and counter braces are butted against the chords on angle blocks. The iron rods are adjusted with large nuts.

The Howe truss design is the reverse of the more common Pratt truss design. In the Pratt design, diagonal members all slant toward the closest bridge end, so they are subject to compressive forces. This design requires large steel members, making it an uneconomical choice in many instances. The Howe truss,

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<sup>2</sup> Archie Vernon Huff, Jr., *Greenville: The History of the City and County in the South Carolina Piedmont* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), p. 270; Flynn, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Flynn, p. 11.

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originally designed to combine diagonal timber compression members and vertical iron rod tension members, was more efficient than the Pratt truss for building longer bridge spans carrying heavy loads. It was adopted by the railroad industry and eventually became one of the most widely used trusses for steel railroad bridges.<sup>4</sup>

Plans are underway for Campbell's Covered Bridge, the last extant covered bridge in South Carolina, to become the focal point of a new 15-acre passive park planned by the Greenville County Recreation District.

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<sup>4</sup> See, for background on covered bridge construction and the Howe truss system, Eric Sloane, *American Barns and Covered Bridges* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1954); Richard Sanders Allen, *Covered Bridges of the South* (Brattleboro, Vt.: The Stephen Greene Press, 1970); Donald C. Jackson, *Great American Bridges and Dams*, Great American Places Series (New York: Wiley, for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1988); and Brian J. McKee, *Historic American Covered Bridges* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press for the American Society of Civil Engineers, 1997).

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is shown as the black polygon marked "Campbell's Covered Bridge" on the accompanying Greenville County Plat for the Greenville County Recreation District, original in Greenville County Plat Map Book PLL 1063, Page 7-7.

The bridge crosses Beaver Dam Creek in a Northeasterly to Southwesterly direction on Campbell Covered Bridge Road

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary of the nominated property is restricted to the historic covered bridge and its immediate setting.

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The following information is the same for each of the photographs:

Name of Property: Campbell's Covered Bridge  
Location of Property: 123 Campbell Covered Bridge Road  
Gowensville vicinity  
Greenville County, South Carolina  
  
Name of Photographer: Dean Campbell  
Date of Photographs: 15 November 2008  
Location of Negatives: S.C. Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

1. Head on view, from the south, showing SC Historical Marker
2. Head on view, from the north
3. Angled view, from the northeast
4. Angled view, from the northwest
5. Full side view of the bridge, from the middle of the creek bed from the west
6. Close up view of one of two Howe trusses, showing criss-crossing wooden braces and vertical tie rods (Kingposts), which exemplify the unique Howe design
7. View of stone abutments with concrete caps on which 12 x 12 heart-of-pine sills sit to provide foundation support for the bridge, taken from the creek bed underneath
8. View of a tie rod brace and criss-crossing wooden braces, which provide flooring support, taken from the creek bed underneath
9. View of one of three buttresses, which extend three feet past the sides of the bridge to provide stability along the weak axis of the truss, taken from the creek bed underneath
10. Side view featuring the exteriors of two buttresses, taken from the creek bed underneath