

COVERED BRIDGES
~ of ~
LEHIGH VALLEY



« Covered Bridge Tour »

**A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF SEVEN
LEHIGH VALLEY COVERED BRIDGES**

THE ROMANCE OF COVERED BRIDGES

The history of covered bridges in Pennsylvania can be traced back to European roots. The first covered bridge is thought to have been built in the mid-1300s between Germany and Switzerland. German immigrants brought the idea and design to this country. Covered bridges usually were named after the builders, local residents or nearby businesses, which often were working gristmills along the waterways in the vicinity of the bridges.



Why were the bridges covered?

To quote an old Pennsylvania carpenter, “To keep them dry – not the travelers, not the horses or the wagonloads of hay, nor the sweethearts halted in the shadows, but the plank roadways.” Builders in

Maryland and Virginia expressed their reasoning differently, “Our bridges are covered for the same reason that our belles wear hoop skirts and crinolines – to protect the structural beauty that is seldom seen, but nevertheless appreciated.” Some say bridges were covered to resemble barns, making horses less hesitant to enter.

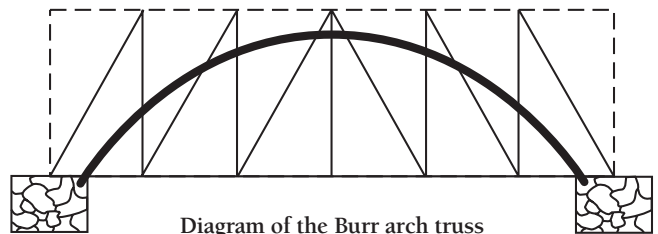
Covered bridges have a romantic quality that we associate with times when life moved more slowly. The shade they provided made them a natural place to pause from the summer’s heat. Pausing was for some a chance to steal a kiss – hence, their nickname “kissing bridges”!

By day, the sides of covered bridges served as the first billboards for dispensers of quack medicines, for political hopefuls, religious zealots, undertakers or anyone with an urgent message. The appeal of covered bridges for early advertisers was very different from their appeal to us today. Admirers love the beauty and tranquility of the bridges and want them to endure for years to come. The covered bridge represents a part of our past that can never be replaced.

THE BUILDING OF PENNSYLVANIA’S COVERED BRIDGES

The bridges found in this rich, rolling farm country were often built in the tradition of barn-raising, where neighbors joined together to build a barn for a new family or to build a bridge that would serve the common good. Some bridges were constructed by mill owners and others were built by bridge companies that raised money by selling shares and later by charging tolls.

Nineteenth-century architectural ingenuity came to the fore in the design of covered bridges. Many forms of support systems were devised, but the most popular were the large arches known as the Burr truss. In 1804, Theodore Burr patented a wooden-span trussing system. The Burr arch truss combined great reinforced arches with multiple kingpost trusses. These trusses tie directly into the bridge abutments. The abutments are the stone walls at either end of the floor planking, which tie the bridge into the banks of the stream. The stone walls that are anchored in the water and support the bridge between the abutments are the piers.



The wing walls are the low walls extending at an angle for a distance of 20 to 40 feet, depending on the surrounding topography and the roadway leading into the bridge. Most of the stone wing walls of remaining bridges have been capped with cement and painted white, creating a sweeping entrance inviting travelers to come in.

Please note: The length of each bridge included with its description represents the span of the floor planking between the supporting stone abutments at each end. The roof and outer wooden covering can add another 12 to 20 feet to the overall length. Some covered bridge enthusiasts also include the wing walls in their measurements. It is not unusual to see several different lengths of a bridge in print, depending on the method used in measuring it.

ABOUT THE LEHIGH VALLEY COVERED BRIDGE TOUR

Of the slightly more than 200 covered bridges still standing in Pennsylvania, seven excellent examples are community treasures in Lehigh Valley. Five of these, which are open for traffic, often are taken for granted when crossed by busy travelers every day. The Lehigh Valley Covered Bridge Tour will offer you an opportunity to journey back in time to a quieter, more idyllic way of life.

The Lehigh Valley Covered Bridge Tour is approximately 50 miles long. Please plan to spend several hours for a leisurely drive, which will allow time for taking photos and enjoying the scenic beauty surrounding the bridges. A number of inviting spots are accessible along the way for picnicking and for painting or sketching the bridges.



The Covered Bridge Tour signs and the written directions will guide you along the route. The weight limit and height restrictions are marked on the entrance of each bridge and also are listed in this brochure. Passenger cars, vans, SUVs, small pick-up trucks, motorcycles and bicycles are suitable vehicles to cross the bridges. Please take this information into consideration when planning your tour.

It is important to be aware that the covered bridges cannot accommodate the height and weight of full-size motor coaches.

Did you know...?

America's first covered bridge was the Schuylkill Permanent Bridge built to connect Philadelphia with the West. Originally envisioned to be a great stone arch bridge in 1800, the bridge company decided to build a wooden structure when work progressed too slowly. The best long-span wooden bridge builder, Timothy Palmer, was called in to finish the project. Upon completion of the 550-foot arch truss bridge, the company president declared it so impressive that it should be covered to protect the timbers – thence, it became the country's first covered bridge.

WHERE TO START

The tour starts at 7th and Hamilton Streets, Center Square, in Allentown. From Rt. 22: take the MacArthur Rd./7th St. South exit. Continue for two miles, staying to the right when approaching Center Square.

From I-78: take Exit 54 Eastbound and 54 B Westbound for Rt. 222 North/Hamilton Blvd. Continue on Hamilton Blvd. toward Allentown for four miles, staying to the right when approaching Center Square.





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START TOUR HERE



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BOGERT'S BRIDGE

Directions: From Center Square drive south on 7th St. to the second traffic light and turn left on Union St. After 1/2 block, turn right on Lehigh St. and proceed to the first traffic light. Turn right on Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. and continue for 2.2 miles to the second traffic light. Turn left on 24th St. (Oxford Dr.) and proceed 1.2 miles to Bogert's Bridge. Turn left at the traffic light to enter Lehigh Parkway and view the bridge more closely.

Length: 145 ft.
Built: 1841
Pedestrian traffic only
Owned by:
City of Allentown

The history of Bogert's Bridge dates back to the mid-1700s when the Bogert family moved into a log cabin next to the future site of the bridge. It is one of the oldest in the region and in the nation. The original structure, which spans the Little Lehigh Creek, was made entirely of wood and did not contain one nail or iron bond to hold the massive structure together. The bridge was built with cross planks in the Burr arch truss design, which was a factor in helping it withstand flooding and general disrepair resulting from traffic and age. In 1956, a truck structurally damaged the bridge. Local citizens subsequently saved the bridge from destruction, and the city closed it to vehicular traffic. Bogert's Covered Bridge is used for quiet recreation and is a historic attraction in Allentown's Lehigh Parkway. Many visitors return to try their luck at fishing in the Little Lehigh, one of the region's most recognized trout streams.

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MANASSES GUTH BRIDGE

Directions: Leave Lehigh Parkway and cross over Oxford Dr. at the traffic light onto Fish Hatchery Rd. Proceed for 1.2 miles to the intersection of Rt. 29 (Cedar Crest Blvd.). Turn right and follow Cedar Crest for 3.8 miles past I-78, Hamilton Blvd., Tilghman St., Rt. 22 and Crest Plaza Shopping Center to the traffic light on Walbert Ave. After the traffic light, continue on Cedar Crest for 1.1 miles past Huckleberry Rd. and down the hill. At the bottom of the hill, turn left on Iron Bridge Rd. and proceed for .8 miles to the Manasses Guth Bridge. Turn right to cross over the bridge onto Lapp Rd. (There is a parking lot immediately past the bridge.)

Length: 108 ft.
Built: 1858
Height and weight limits:
9 ft. 6 in. – 4 tons
Owned by: Lehigh County



This covered bridge is the first of five on your tour to cross over the meandering Jordan Creek. The original bridge that was built in 1858 was partially destroyed by fire and rebuilt in 1882. Local farmers and travelers forded the Jordan at this site prior to 1858. The builder of the original structure is unknown. The bridge was named after Manasses Guth, who lived in the adjacent stone farmhouse and was a descendant of Lorentz Guth, the first settler in the area in 1745. The Manasses Guth Bridge, which is at the eastern edge of Covered Bridge Park, is built with the Burr arch truss design, has lengthwise planking and rests on stone and mortar abutments with long wing walls capped with concrete.



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REX'S COVERED BRIDGE

Directions: Turn right on Wehr Mill Rd. and drive a short distance to the first stop sign. Turn left on Limekiln Rd. and continue for .8 miles to the traffic light at Rt. 309. Turn right and stay on Rt. 309 for .5 miles to the first traffic light. Turn left onto Kernsville Rd. and proceed 1 mile before turning right on Jordan Rd., which leads to the entrance of Rex's Bridge.

Length: 116 ft.
Built: 1858
Height and weight limits:
 9 ft. 6 in. – 4 tons
Owned by: Lehigh County

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WEHR'S COVERED BRIDGE

Directions: Continue on Lapp Rd. for a short distance to the intersection of River Rd. Turn left on River Rd. and proceed for .8 miles to Wehr's Covered Bridge.

Length: 128 ft.
Built: 1841
Height and weight limits:
 9 ft. – 10 tons
Owned by: Lehigh County

Wehr's Bridge is located at the western end of Covered Bridge Park, where it crosses over the Jordan Creek. In 1862, Ephraim Sieger built a stone gristmill on the north bank of the Jordan, and the bridge became known as Sieger's Covered Bridge. After several owners, the mill was sold to William Wehr, and the bridge eventually was named Wehr's Covered Bridge. The present concrete dam near the bridge that supplied power for the gristmill was built in 1904 and replaced the original wooden dam located a short distance upstream. The mill was torn down in 1951, and today locals refer to the general area surrounding the bridge as "Wehr's Dam." Wehr's Bridge, which was built in the Burr arch truss design, shares its claim to antiquity with



Bogert's Bridge. Families enjoy picnicking and quiet recreation in the nearby park, and the Jordan is a popular trout stream at this point. With its scenic setting, Wehr's Bridge is a favorite with photographers and artists, often used as the background for wedding photos.



Records indicate that at one time seven gristmills were established along the Jordan Creek, which rises near the base of the Blue Mountain and runs into Lehigh Valley, where it empties into the Lehigh River. While Rex's Bridge is located close to Kern's Dam and the former Kern's Mill, there is no evidence there was a mill next to this bridge. It is believed that the bridge was named after the Rex family, who were local landowners in the vicinity. The structure is built in the Burr arch truss design, and the high arches can be seen through the side openings. Rex's Bridge has a floor of lengthwise planking over crosswise planking, and the original stone wing walls have been covered with cement and painted white.



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GEIGER'S COVERED BRIDGE

Directions: After passing through Rex's bridge, continue for 1 mile to the first intersection where Jordan Rd. bears right. Stay on Jordan Rd. for .3 miles to the next intersection. Turn right on Packhouse Rd. and proceed to the entrance of Geiger's Covered Bridge. Cross through the bridge and make a U-turn to stop at the clearing along the road for a better view of the bridge.

Length: 112 ft.
Built: 1860
Height and weight limits:
9 ft. 6 in. – 4 tons
Owned by: Lehigh County

Geiger's Bridge is located on the eastern side of the Trexler-Lehigh County Game Preserve, and its high fencing is visible along the road. The bridge's name may have been taken from the family of Jacob Geiger, who settled in the area after immigrating from Wurtenburg, Germany in the 1700s. Upon approaching the entrance of the bridge, its unusual stepped portal design that distinguishes it from other bridges is immediately noticeable. At one time, a pipe, through which water was pumped from the Jordan Creek to nearby orchards and farms, ran from end to end across the bridge. Remnants of the cement foundation and pumping apparatus still remain on the side of the bridge. Built with Burr arches, the bridge has a floor of lengthwise and crosswise planking. The stone wing walls have been painted white, and one on the south side of the bridge has been shortened due to the topography.

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SCHLICHER'S COVERED BRIDGE

Directions: Return through Geiger's Bridge and retrace the route to the intersection of Jordan Rd. and Rhueton Hill Rd. Turn right on Rhueton Hill and continue for .8 miles to Game Preserve Rd. Turn right and enjoy a scenic drive for 1.4 miles past the entrance of the Game Preserve to reach Schlicher's Covered Bridge.

Length: 108 ft.
Built: 1882
Height and weight limits:
8 ft. 2 in. – 3 tons
Owned by: State



Schlicher's Covered Bridge is sometimes called the "deer pen bridge" since it is surrounded by Trexler-Lehigh County Game Preserve. The Game Preserve was established in 1906 as a reservation to raise and protect bison, elk and deer. Deer often can be seen grazing along the road near the bridge. The builder of the structure is unknown, and its name possibly came from local landowners. Schlicher's is the newest and shortest bridge in Lehigh County and is the fifth and last covered span crossing the Jordan Creek. Built in the Burr truss design, the structure has red vertical siding with a white interior and white horizontal siding around the low entrances. Like Lehigh Valley's other covered bridges, Schlicher's Bridge has a slate roof. Rebuilt in 1995, the bridge has stone abutments reinforced with concrete and wing walls capped with cement.





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KREIDERSVILLE COVERED BRIDGE

Directions: After viewing Schlicher's Bridge (bridge is under repair and not accessible to vehicular traffic) make a U-turn when safe, continue .9 miles on Game Preserve Rd. Turn right on Mill Creek Rd.; continue 2 miles on Mill Creek Rd. Turn right on Rt. 309 South; continue 2.1 miles on Rt. 309 South. Turn left on Sand Springs Rd. continue on Sand Springs Rd., continue on Sand Springs Rd. for 2.2 miles to the Village of Ironton. Turn left on Mauch Chunk Rd. (Main St.) and drive .6 miles to Rt. 329. Turn right and proceed for 2.2 miles to the traffic light in the Village of Egypt. Follow the road up the hill for .6 miles and cross over Rt. 145 at the traffic light. Continue on Rt. 329

for 1.2 miles through the Village of Cementon to Northampton and turn left at the traffic light on Main St. Proceed for 2 miles on Main St. going straight at the next traffic light and bearing right at the curve after the light. At the intersection in the Village of Kreidersville, continue straight for .3 miles and turn right on Covered Bridge Rd.

Length: 100 ft.

Built: 1839

Pedestrian traffic only

Owned by: Allen Township

Kreidersville Bridge, which crosses over the Hokendauqua Creek, is the oldest covered bridge in Lehigh Valley and one of the oldest in Pennsylvania. It is the only remaining covered bridge in Northampton County and has been known as Hummel's, Koch's and Solt's Mill Bridge. Built in the Burr arch truss design with stone and mortar abutments and wing walls capped with concrete, the bridge is distinctive with no openings along the sides to light the interior. In 1959, local citizens rallied to save it from demolition to make way for a new concrete bridge, and it was taken over by the county after being restored by the PA Highway Department. Today it is owned by Allen Township and is maintained for quiet recreation. Every two years, the Kreidersville Covered Bridge Association holds a Covered Bridge Festival in early June in the park surrounding the entrance to the bridge.

To return: Reverse the route through Kreidersville and Northampton to the traffic light at Rt. 145. Turn left onto Rt. 145 South (MacArthur Rd.) and proceed approximately 7 miles, passing over Rt. 22, before reaching Center Square in Allentown.

FORMER LEHIGH VALLEY COVERED BRIDGES

There were numerous covered bridges scattered across Lehigh Valley that were either destroyed by nature or replaced with new construction. Of the three most prominent former bridges, two crossed the Delaware River and one spanned the Lehigh River.

EASTON-PHILLIPSBURG COVERED BRIDGE

In 1805, a covered bridge constructed by the foremost builder, Timothy Palmer, was opened to cross the Delaware River connecting Easton, Pa., with Phillipsburg, N.J. Over 500 feet in length, this three-span bridge withstood many floods and storms but could not stand up to the heavy demands of traffic in years to come. In the 1890s, with the inception of horseless trolleys, a decision was made to demolish the old bridge and replace it with a sturdier one made of steel. The new bridge opened in 1896, and after major repairs and renovations, the bridge is still used today and is known as the Northampton St. Free Bridge.

PORTLAND COVERED BRIDGE

Another notable covered bridge linking Pennsylvania and New Jersey was completed in 1860. One of the primary uses of the bridge in the early days was the movement of livestock from New Jersey to the Portland rail yards. The 775-foot Burr arch truss-type bridge withstood a number of storms and floods for almost 100 years but was washed away in the flood of 1955. That was the end of the longest covered bridge in the United States and the last one spanning the Delaware River. Today, a pedestrian bridge is built on the original piers, making it possible to walk from Portland, Pa., to Columbia, N.J., across the Delaware River.

BETHLEHEM COVERED BRIDGE

In 1794, the first uncovered wooden bridge crossing over the Lehigh River was opened, replacing the ferry service and improving the route for the stage line between Philadelphia and Bethlehem. This bridge remained in use until 1816 when it was replaced by a larger wooden bridge, which also was uncovered. The second bridge served the community until it was destroyed by a flood in 1841 and was replaced by the covered bridge. Built by the Bethlehem Bridge Company, the Old Bethlehem Covered Bridge was destroyed by flooding in 1862, rebuilt and used until the current Hill-to-Hill Bridge was built at a nearby site in 1922.

« Covered Bridges of Lehigh Valley »

EXPLORE THE BEAUTIFUL LEHIGH VALLEY

Positioned in the heart of the Northeast, Lehigh Valley, Pa., is conveniently located just 90 minutes west of New York City, 60 minutes north of Philadelphia and less than 3 hours from Washington, D.C.



MILES TO LEHIGH VALLEY FROM MAJOR EAST COAST CITIES:

| | | | |
|-----------------|----|------------------|-----|
| Philadelphia | 55 | New York City | 90 |
| Newark, N.J. | 70 | Baltimore | 135 |
| Harrisburg, Pa. | 75 | Washington, D.C. | 175 |

Lehigh Valley's covered bridges are only part of the beauty the area has to offer.

Within a compact radius, you will discover spectacular scenery, rich history, specialty shops, factory tours, unique museums and exhibits, historic celebrations, re-enactments and so much more.

Visit DiscoverLehighValley.com or call **1-800-MEET-HERE** for your free *Lehigh Valley Official Visitors Guide*, as well as more information on other Lehigh Valley driving tours and travel packages.



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