NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

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 an 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 Champ's Ford Bridge

other names/site number Decatur County Bridge #124 031-266-15028

2. Location

street & number CR 100S over Clifty Creek, 2 miles west of Burney N/A☐ not for publication

city or town Burney ☒vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Decatur code 137 zip code 47240

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be consider significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources
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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:)

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 in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: road-related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: road-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: stone arch bridge

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: limestone
walls STONE: limestone
roof
other

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

Champ's Ford Bridge
Name of Property

Decatur County, IN
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the 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, 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.)

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significant within the past 50 years.

Areas of significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ENGINEERING
TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1904 - 1958

Significant Dates

1904

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Mathews, Joseph

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(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 if 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:
_____

Champ's Ford Bridge
Name of Property

Decatur County, IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	614250	4352900
2			
3			
4			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shawn Edward Niemi, Graduate Assistant

organization Ball State University Center for Historic Preservation date October, 2008

street & number 650 W. Minnetrista Blvd. telephone 765/213-3540 Ext. 228

city or town Muncie state IN zip code 47303

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 0r 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Decatur County Commissioners

street & number 150 Courthouse Square telephone 812/663-2546

city or town Greensburg state IN zip code 47240

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance to the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.)
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding the burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Section 7 – Narrative Description

Champ's Ford Bridge, built in 1904, is located in Decatur County, approximately 2 miles west of Burney, Indiana. It has been designated Bridge #124 by the Decatur County Commissioners; however, early documentation refers to the bridge simply as the "stone arch bridge across Clifty Creek."[1] It spans Clifty Creek along CR 100S in an east-west alignment. The bridge was originally built to handle local traffic, linking area residents to Burney and the Columbus, Hope & Greensburg railroad. The bridge is approached gently from the east and more steeply from the west. The bridge sits in a shallow depression with a few scattered farms nestled among the neighboring rolling hills.

The bridge is constructed of Indiana Laurel limestone as a four-arch, segmental design (photograph 1, 2, 3 and 4). The segmental ring arches are formed of individual rough-face limestone blocks. Beginning with the easternmost arch, the next two progressively increase in height. The succession is broken with the fourth and westernmost arch that is noticeably shorter (photograph 5). The ring arch springs to support rough-face limestone spandrels laid in ashlar coursing, which contain the infill and contemporary bituminous deck.

The bridge is 118 feet in length and 17.3 feet wide.[2] The spandrels each are 2 feet wide, making the total width nearly 21.3 feet. The site's approach dictated the use of wing walls, each approximately 11.5 feet long (photograph 6). Finally, a coursed, rough-faced, ashlar limestone retaining wall extends east from the northeast wing wall a distance of 110 feet gradually tapering to its terminus (photograph 7).

The span rests on two abutments and three piers. The three piers support the convergent ring arch system and spring from a limestone footing (photograph 8 and 9).

The flat spandrel sits atop the ring stone arches. The downstream spandrel above the western three arches is higher than the eastern arch. This is accomplished by a downward step or tiered transition on the downstream side (photograph 10). The upstream spandrel is visibly distinct above the outermost arches, but is nearly absent from both the center two arches (photograph 11).

Atop the spandrel, the coping is made of large thick limestone slabs. Approximately half of the coping is missing on the eastern portion of the downstream spandrel. More severe on the upstream side, only a small portion of coping remains above the westernmost arch (photograph 12). The cap or copping is slightly wider than the wall, producing an overhanging lip facing the

[1] Decatur County *Commissioners Record,* Book 20: 1904-1905, 36.

[2] "Structure Inventory and Appraisal Report, Decatur County, Bridge #124," 2005 (accessed at Decatur County Highway Garage).

stream side. As a result, when viewed from below, a shadow line is created from the reveal adding dimension to the otherwise flat surface of the spandrel.

The bridge has a high degree of integrity. The original craftsmanship is readily apparent and dominates the bridge visually. Most strikingly, the bridge lacks parapets or a neoteric railing system (photograph 13). According to Decatur County officials, several accidents have occurred in recent years where automobiles have gone over the bridge on the upstream side. As a result, damage was imparted to the pier nosing.[3] Further damage resulted from severe flooding during June 2008, which resulted in substantial loss to original fabric of the western pier nosing and portions of the upstream spandrel (photograph 14 and 15).[4] The contemporary bituminous paving is a necessity of vehicular use, although not original to the structure. Although some limestone blocks have weathered with age and repointing is needed, the bridge is in overall good condition.

[3] Tim Ortman, Decatur County GIS Coordinator, personal correspondence with author, 11 April 2008.

[4] Damage is evident when contrasting preliminary photos taken in April 2008 to photos taken in September 2008.

Section 8 - Statement of Significance

Champ's Ford Bridge, built in 1904, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The bridge's association with transportation is substantial, as it once supported traffic to the important trade center of Burney, Indiana. The Champ's Ford Bridge is also eligible for listing under Criterion C as a representative example of stone arch bridge construction from the turn of the 20th century in Indiana. It embodies masonry design and construction methodology indicative of the time. The period of significance is 1904 to 1958, since the bridge has served its rural location in the same capacity ever since its construction.

Indiana Roads

Following statehood in 1816 and the relocation of the state capitol from Corydon to Indianapolis in 1821, it became evident that Indiana needed a system of roads connecting the interior.[5] In 1821, state legislation defined a program for funding and construction of a series of state roads to meet this need.[6] Among these, an old Indian trail leading to Indianapolis and passing through Middletown, Indiana, was developed and became the Lawrenceburg State Road.[7] Several years later, the road became part of the more extensive Michigan Road.

Planning for the Michigan Road began in 1828, with a vision of connecting the Ohio River and the Great Lakes.[8] It was defined as three sections: 1) connecting Madison, Indiana, on the Ohio River to the centrally-located Indianapolis, 2) joining Indianapolis to Logansport in the north central area of the state, and 3) linking Logansport to Michigan City on Lake Michigan. Begun in 1830, construction continued into the 1840's. Upon completion, the road was over 260 miles in length.[9]

After its completion, the Michigan Road proved regionally significant as a means of transportation. Acting as a conduit for settlement, emigrants entered from the southern entryway, traveled north along the road, and disseminated east and west.[10] Once settlement had occurred, the Michigan Road then proved an important avenue for moving crops and other

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[5] Marsha Poucher Beal, *History of Road Development Knox County, Indiana, from 1840 to 1860,* dissertation (Ball State University: 1994), 8.

[6] Ibid., 10-12.

[7] Ibid., 12.

[8] Ibid., 17.

[9] Ibid., 18.

[10] Geneal Prather, "The Building of the Michigan Road" (master's Thesis, Indiana University, 1941), 133.

wares. It was used by interior settlers to move crops and merchandise to northern or southern waterways.[11] St. Joseph County local historian, Judge Timothy E. Howard, remarked that road was "one of the most important public improvements known in the history of Indiana."[12] The Michigan Road was the closest major road to the Burney vicinity, located about seven miles northeast of the town.

In general prior to 1850, most roads throughout the state were simple dirt roads. The construction and maintenance of these roads was left largely to locals within immediate proximity to the roads. It had been assumed by local governments, that since the local farmers and mill operators livelihood depended upon the quality of the adjacent roads, they would be more apt to ensure their proper upkeep.[13] However, the quality of local roads varied greatly, even with local officials requiring "a certain number of days of labor or a cash equivalent on road and bridge upkeep each year."[14]

Following the pattern of other states, the Indiana General Assembly of 1849 passed legislation leading to a time of rapid expansion for Indiana roads. The legislation permitted road construction through private undertakings, thus removing some of the burden from the public sphere.[15] Consequently, private companies charged a toll for travel over their roads in order to offset maintenance costs.[16]

Early examples of privately maintained roads tended to be planked. The planking offered some consistency versus the often rutted earthen roads, but it was likely susceptible to freeze-thaw cycles creating constant upkeep. As a result, planking was rather short lived and supplanted by other less costly and more consistent paving methods.

Beginning in the 1860's, gravel, then macadam, came to dominate road construction.[17] Early occurrences undoubtedly were restricted to toll roads or the streets in the more prosperous urban towns and cities.[18] As time went on, however, these paving systems would extend to even remote rural communities.

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[11] Ron Hamilton, "Michigan Road Was Important Link," *Over the Years: A Collection of Historical Articles Volume I* (Shelbyville, IN: R.K. Hamilton, 2004), 7.

[12] Prather, 133.

[13] Wayne E. Fuller, *RFD: The Changing Face of Rural America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1964), 177-179.

[14] James Cooper, *Iron Monuments to Distant Prosperity: Indiana's Metal Bridges, 1870-1930* (Greencastle, IN: DePauw University, 1987), 1.

[15] *History of Shelby County, Indiana* (1887: repr., Knightstown, IN: Eastern Indiana Publishing Co., 1968), 285.

[16] Beal, 204-208.

[17] Ibid., 50.

[18] Ibid., 276.

Paralleling rapid expansion of Indiana roads in the 1850's, two acts of legislation were passed in 1852 framing the context for bridge construction and repair. The first occurred in March, stating that "a company could build a structure wherever and charge whatever toll...county commissioners approved."[19] Following in May of 1852, a second act of legislation allowed township trustees provisions for constructing and repairing bridges. The trustees then were permitted to use treasury funds and even impose taxation as a means to bridge construction and maintenance. Other than an amendment in 1855, which shifted power from the township trustees to the county commissioners, the 1852 legislation guided bridge construction for the next half-century.[20]

However, it was not until the late 1870s similar legislation was adopted for road development. Until that time, the construction of roads resulted largely from requests made to the township trustees by local property owners. Recognizing certain inherent limitations within this provision, the Indiana General Assembly sought to streamline the process. As a result, they passed legislation which stated that the responsibility to build and maintain roads could be left to county commissioners.[21]

Coupled with the earlier legislation, several movements greatly impacted both road and bridge construction in Indiana and culminated in the closing days of the nineteenth century. They effectively reversed a trend which had begun in the mid 1850s, whereby road improvements had a diminishing role in the wake of rapid railroad expansion in Indiana.

The first of these resulted from steadily increasing agricultural and industrial production throughout the last half of the century and the recognition that well-maintained roads and bridges were vital to moving goods. This was demonstrated as early as 1876 when scientific experiments were conducted to determine the extra force required on various types of roads, ranging from earthen to stone to macadam. Subsequently, the information was promoted as a means to improve roads, thus facilitating the trafficking of goods. Jeremiah Jenks, a political scientist in support of road improvements, wrote in 1889, "...the character of a nation's roads is a good test of its civilization."[22]

During the early 1890's, another important step for road development resulted from the "good road movement." Surprisingly, a bicycling organization called the American League of Wheelman was instrumental, along with railroad officials, in lobbying for increased federal

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[19] Cooper, *Iron Monuments to Distant Prosperity: Indiana's Metal Bridges, 1870-1930,* 2.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Laura Thayer, "Collin's Ford Bridge," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 23 October 1994, 3 (accessed at Ripley County Historical Society, Versailles, Indiana).

[22] Jeremiah W. Jenks, "Road Legislation of the American State," *Publications of the American Economic Association* Vol. 4, No.3 (May, 1889), http://www.jstor.org (accessed 31 March 2008).

legislation designated toward better roads.[23] Though their combined efforts were somewhat limited, in 1896, an unrelated program forever changed road history in the United States. After 1896, as the result of the federally created rural free delivery (RFD) program, road construction was never the same, not just in the Indiana, but across the entire United States. Prior to the RFD program anyone living in the rural community and wishing to receive their mail had to visit the local post office that may have been located miles away. Moreover, it may require arduous travel over poorly maintained dirt roads. Therefore, it was not uncommon for some to delay the trek depending upon weather and other unfavorable circumstances.[24]

Consequently, between the fall of 1896 and the spring of 1897, 82 pioneer routes were selected in 28 states and the Arizona territory.[25] Early routes were at least twenty-five miles long and serviced at least 100 families.[26] Popularity for the program rapidly grew amongst farmers, and other test routes quickly followed. One example was described in 1897 by the *New York Times,* which highlighted test routes from four post offices in Delaware County, Indiana.[27] Later, tests were conducted that designated county-wide delivery. By the early months of 1903, Indiana had 14 counties with complete rural mail service.[28] It was later written, "...that RFD was the best thing the government had ever done for the farmers."[29]

In 1899, looking to expand the program, the Post Office Department stipulated that unless a route was passable year round, it would not be considered for rural mail delivery.[30] As a result, "farmers were out in force...building new bridges and culverts in order to secure new routes and maintain old ones."[31] So, by 1908, the program was linked to an estimated $72,000,000.00 of improvements to roads, culverts, and bridges nationwide through local, state, and federal endeavors.[32]

Indiana Stone Arch Bridges

Stone arch bridge construction has never dominated in Indiana. Instead, that distinction is shared between wood, steel and concrete. Wood construction largely occurred early in the 19th

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[23] Francis Parker, e-mail message to author, March 31, 2008; Fuller, 182.
[24] Fuller, 67-68.
[25] Ibid., 37.
[26] Ibid., 44.
[27] "Rural Free Delivery: A Post Office Experiment to be Tried in Indiana," *The New York Times*, 6 November 1897, http://www.nytimes.com/ (accessed 31 March 2008).
[28] Fuller, 69-71.
[29] Ibid., 17.
[30] Ibid., 182.
[31] Ibid., 71.
[32] Ibid., 184.

century.[33] This was then followed by the rise of iron and then steel truss systems in the late stages of the 19th century which carried well into the 20th century. Ultimately, they all gave way to the use of concrete, beginning in the early 20th century.[34]
Nonetheless, stone arch bridges were used locally in several areas of Indiana throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Dating back to the 1820's and 1830's, they were seen along such major highways as the National Road.[35] Here, they were likely used "to carry only…loads represented by horse drawn wagons and pedestrians."[36] In the 1870's, their role shifted when their true prowess was recognized as a means to support the newer, heavier trains associated with railroad expansion. While in a narrow thirty year window, between 1885 and 1915, they were effectively employed along roads mostly in counties where limestone was easily accessible.[37] However, by the mid 20th century, concrete bridge construction was so dominant that stone arch bridge construction was increasingly limited to ornamental structures in a park setting.[38]

Today, approximately 100 stone arch bridges have been identified across the state. Most of these occur in southeastern Indiana where the Blue or Laurel limestone formations are easily accessible. For example, Decatur and Ripley Counties respectively have forty-two and thirteen stone arch bridges. And, of these, even fewer have four or more arches, with Decatur having five and Ripley only two.[39] Their survival today is a testament to the craftsmen who "builded [sic] better than they knew."[40] This is ever apparent with what bridge historian James Cooper terms the "neglect to destruction" approach often with only "modest maintenance and repair" following World War II.[41] Regardless, in some instances the employed techniques of the masons have endured.

Indiana stone bridge builders used the same principles and techniques developed and mastered by the Romans hundreds of years ago.[42] Once the site was chosen, local craftsman tried to place the substructure of the bridge upon bedrock. If, however, this was not possible, a system of pilings or wooden rafts was used. This method was followed by the construction of timber falsework to support the overbearing load before the arch system was fully in place and able to support its own load.

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[33] Cooper, *Iron Monuments to Distant Prosperity: Indiana's Metal Bridges, 1870-1930,* 1.
[34] Thayer, 2.
[35] Ibid., 1.
[36] Archibald Black, *The Story of Bridges* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1936), 52.
[37] James Cooper, e-mail message to author, 2 April 2008.
[38] Thayer, 2.
[39] James Cooper, e-mail message to author, 24 March 24 2008.
[40] Black, 54.
[41] James Cooper, e-mail message to author, 2 April 2008.
[42] Thayer, 1.

Once completed, the arch system transfers the vertical force of the deck laterally from the crown through the haunch and ultimately distributes it to the piers or abutments. Indiana bridge historian James Cooper points out, "You always need the line of pressure to go through the center portion of the ring stones."[43] Thus, this allows for maximum dispersion of compression forces. Similarly, Archibald Black wrote:

> For stone arch construction requires sufficient depth and curvature to provide a "wedging" effect when all of the arch stones are in place. Indeed, if the arch stones are carefully fitted, a well designed stone arch would support itself and carry its load without the necessity of cement to fasten the stones together.[44]

Adding to this, James Cooper notes that construction is "easiest to guarantee and manage in the semicircle (form)."[45] He goes on to suggest that although the local stone masons were adept at their trade, it was more empirically based rather than scientific. He also proposes, "that segmental and elliptical rings come later than semi-circular ones - that there are special design/construction issues here, especially for the artisanal masons ubiquitous before the age of professionalization."[46] In support, he adds, "Segmental and elliptical rings require more figuring and stronger substructures, given the direction of thrust at the springing."[47] As a result, it is understandable for the greater occurrence of the semicircular design.

Despite their endurance, some stone arch bridges possess an innate weakness only later realized. Stemming from a cost saving measure, whereby, an orientation perpendicular to the stream required fewer materials, it is not uncommon to encounter a curve leading to or a T-intersection terminating the approach of a bridge. Seemingly, this was of little concern when horse and buggy were commonplace. However, as time went on and the automobile came to dominate, many of the bridges were lost over the years, not only to neglect, but because contemporary standards called for wider decks and safer approaches.[48]

Champ's Ford Stone Arch Bridge

The Champ's Ford Bridge was built in 1904 two miles west of Burney, Indiana in Clay Township, Decatur County. Lying in a rural setting surrounded by a scattering of neighboring

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[43] James Cooper, e-mail message to author, 2 April 2008.
[44] Black, 57.
[45] James Cooper, e-mail message to author, 22 March 2008.
[46] James Cooper, e-mail message to author, 21 March 2008.
[47] Ibid.
[48] James Cooper, e-mail message to author, 2 April 2008.

farms, the bridge acted as an important feature on the Hope-Burney pike.[49] Burney quickly increased in prosperity and gained stature after the opening of the Columbus, Hope and Greensburg Railroad (C.H. & G.) beginning about 1886.[50]
Burney is an example of just how important a railroad was to an otherwise rural community. In essence, the town grew from nothing, solely as a result of its location along the nearly nine mile stretch of the C.H. & G. Even though it was the last town platted in Clay Township in 1882, it quickly grew to become the largest town in the township.[51]

> Burney is another one of the hustling towns of this county. It is situated on the B.H. &G. railroad, and although comparatively new, it is a swift, growing, little town with a present population of about three hundred souls. It has a large school building, two churches, Baptist and Methodist, and a large flouring mill, one of the best in the country, besides the stores, shops, etc.[52]

Burney's dominant role within the township lasted for fifty years following construction of the C.H. & G. in 1886. Some of the other businesses that burgeoned as a result of the town's location along the railroad were a "blacksmith shop, grain elevator... livestock shipping point...implement dealership...sawmill..."[53] Obviously, many of these businesses were focused on serving the needs of local farmers. The railroad's importance to Burney was further noted in *History of Decatur County, Indiana* with the statement, "[it] runs east and west through this township and gives the inhabitants of this locality a ready outlet for their produce to the leading markets."[54]

In an effort to improve accessibility to Burney and other important areas throughout the county, specific attention was given to the betterment of roads and bridges. For example, local sources note:

> The roads have done a great work in the development of the material interests of the county and if giving the citizens of the county means of travel, not only for pleasure, but also they served as a great aid in bettering the facilities for placing the products of this county on the different foreign markets.[55]

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[49] Decatur County *Road Record 2,* 1890-1912, Decatur County Auditor's Office, Greensburg, Indiana, 357.
[50] Decatur County Historical Society, *Decatur County History: Decatur County, Indiana* (Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Co., 1984), 64.
[51] Decatur County Historical Society, 64.
[52] "Live Burney, What Our Representative Has to Say of This Thrifty Little City," *Greenburg New Era*, 20 February 1895, vertical file - Burney, Greensburg Public Library, Greensburg, Indiana.
[53] Decatur County Historical Society, 64.
[54] Ibid, 116.
[55] Ibid, 392.

Though the railroad connected Burney to the two county seats of Columbus and Greensburg, the roads and bridges allowed those residing on the outskirts and in rural areas to transport their commodities to the railroad for distribution.

A similar emphasis was given to the construction of bridges as a way to further facilitate access to important trade stations. One such example was the Champ's Ford Bridge. Prior to the bridge's conception, the current configuration of roads meant a detour of this area by 15 additional miles.[56]

However, little is known concerning many of the details surrounding the plans and specifications of the Champ's Ford Bridge.[57] It is known, that as late as January 28, 1904, a letting was posted in the *Greensburg New Era* for "the construction of two Stone Arch Bridges in said county as follows. A Stone Arch Bridge across Clifty Creek two miles northwest of Burney in Clay Township..."[58] Accordingly, the commissioners received and opened the bids on 2 February 1904 for "a four-arch stone bridge across Champ's ford, two miles west of Burney".[59] As a result, "J(oseph) M. Mathews, of Letts, was on Tuesday awarded the contract for the construction of the four arch stone bridge at Champ's ford, two miles west of Burney, for $3176."[60]

Subsequently, Merritt Dorsey, the Supervisor of Construction testified that sufficient construction had occurred by 5 September 1904 to award a partial payment to Joseph Mathews in the sum of $1000.00.[61] This was followed on 3 October 1904, with Merritt Dorsey again testifying, this time to the fact that the bridge was completed and that Joseph Mathews was entitled to the remaining payment of $2176.00. Also, it was recorded that Joseph Mathews received an additional payment of $300.00 for a "retaining wall," which was beyond the scope of the original contract.[62]

Although, no evidence has been found concerning the source of the limestone building material, visual evidence leads one to believe that it was derived from two small quarries located

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[56] Decatur County *Road Record 2,* 1890, 357.

[57] Despite a seemingly exhaustive search of primary and secondary sources, the author was unable to find further documentation concerning the Champ's Ford Bridge construction. Depositories searched include: Decatur County Courthouse, Decatur County Library, and the Decatur County Historical Society.

[58] "Notice of Letting Contract For The Construction of Stone Arch Bridge," *Greensburg New Era,* 28 January 1904, 2.

[59] "County Commissioners," *Greensburg New Era,* 4 February 1904, 3.; "Notice of Letting Contract For The Construction of Stone Arch Bridge," *Greensburg New Era,* 28 January 1904, 2.

[60] "Commissioner's Court," *Greensburg New Era,* 4 February 1904, 2.; Decatur County *Commissioner's Record Book 20* 1904-1905, 36, Decatur County Courthouse, Greensburg, Indiana.

[61] Decatur County *Commissioner's Record Book 20* 1904-1905, 285, Decatur County Courthouse, Greensburg, Indiana.

[62] Decatur County *Commissioner's Record Book 20* 1904-1905, 322, Decatur County Courthouse, Greensburg, Indiana.

adjacent to the bridge itself. The first is a large quarry-like depression, located southwest of the bridge. Partially filled with water today, the dimensions of this area are approximately 210 feet by 75 feet with the long axis running parallel to the stream and perpendicular to the bridge. Again filled seasonally with water, a second and smaller depression is located northeast of the bridge adjacent to the retaining wall. This area is approximately 50 feet by 75 feet.[63] Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the immediate availability of the limestone was preferred, since it was an extremely laborious and costly venture to transport the limestone blocks necessary for this or any bridge. Given its location and smaller size, it is hypothesized the smaller area provided limestone for the 75 yard retaining wall, whereas the larger "quarry" was likely used for the bridge itself.

In comparison to the bridge, even less is known about Joseph Mathews. To date the only documentation of a Joseph Mathews in Sand Creek Township, the township of Letts, in an 1880 United States Federal Census form and a 1910 United States Federal Census form. The latter records his occupation as "contractor, Bridges."[64]

Still in use today, the bridge stands as a testament to its engineering and craftsmanship. It has survived in good condition and is one of only five stone arch bridges remaining in Decatur County with four or more arches.[65] The lack of contemporary safety features such as a guardrail system combined with the lack of parapet walls does little to deter its use by locals.

However, these same concerns are adding to its deterioration. First, given its narrowness in relation to today's modern farm equipment, some have taken it upon themselves to push sections of the coping over the edge so that farm equipment may more easily pass. Also, several accidents have occurred where vehicles have gone over the edge, damaging sections of the pier nosing.[66]

The Champ's Ford Bridge is significant for its association with transportation development in Decatur County, Indiana as an important contributor to local traffic in the county—providing access to the C.H. &G Railroad in Burney, Indiana. Additionally, the bridge is an exceptional and increasingly rare example of stone arch bridge construction dating from the early 20th century in Indiana.

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[63] Google Maps, http://maps.google.com/?ie=UTF8&ll=39.319832,-85.674557&spn=0.00271,0.005&t=h&z=18 (accessed 21 April 2008).

[64] "Joseph Mathews," Ancestry.com, http://www.ancestry.com/ (accessed 22 February 2008).

[65] Cooper, e-mail message to author, 24 March 2008.

[66] Tim Ortman, Decatur County GIS Coordinator, personal correspondence with author, 11 April 2008.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary includes Champ's Ford Bridge, its superstructure, abutments, wing walls, deck, and portions of Decatur County Road 100 South over Clifty Creek. Specifically, the north boundary is a line 5' north of but parallel to the northeast wing wall of the bridge; the south boundary is a line connecting but not ending at a point 5' south of the southern most point of the southeast wing wall with a point 5' south of the southern most point of the southwest wing wall; the east boundary is a diagonal line connecting but not ending at a point 5' east of the southeast corner of the northeast wing wall to a point 5' north of the southeast corner of the southeast wing wall; the west boundary is a line running through a point 5' west of the west edge of the southwest wing wall and a point 5' west of the west edge of the northwest wing wall.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the significant resource and its immediate environment.

The following information is the same for photographs 1 – 15:

1. Champ's Ford Bridge
2. Decatur County, Indiana
3. Shawn Niemi
4. 4 September 2008
5. Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology (DHPA), 402 West Washington Street, Room W-274, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Other information for individual photographs:

Photograph 1
6. View looking south at north/upstream elevation.
7. 1 of 15

Photograph 2
6. View looking west at east approach.
7. 2 of 15

Photograph 3
6. View looking north at south/downstream elevation.
7. 3 of 15

Photograph 4
6. View looking east at west approach.
7. 4 of 15

Photograph 5
6. View looking northeast, depicting the progressive rise of three eastern arches.
7. 5 of 15

Photograph 6
6. View looking north at southwest wing wall.
7. 6 of 15

Photograph 7
6. View looking south at retaining wall projecting from northeast wing wall (heavy vegetation masks ashlar limestone).
7. 7 of 15

Photograph 8
6. View looking north at central pier.
7. 8 of 15

Photograph 9
6. View looking northwest at western abutment and westernmost pier.
7. 9 of 15

Photograph 10
6. View looking west-northwest at tiered spandrel and copping.
7. 10 of 15

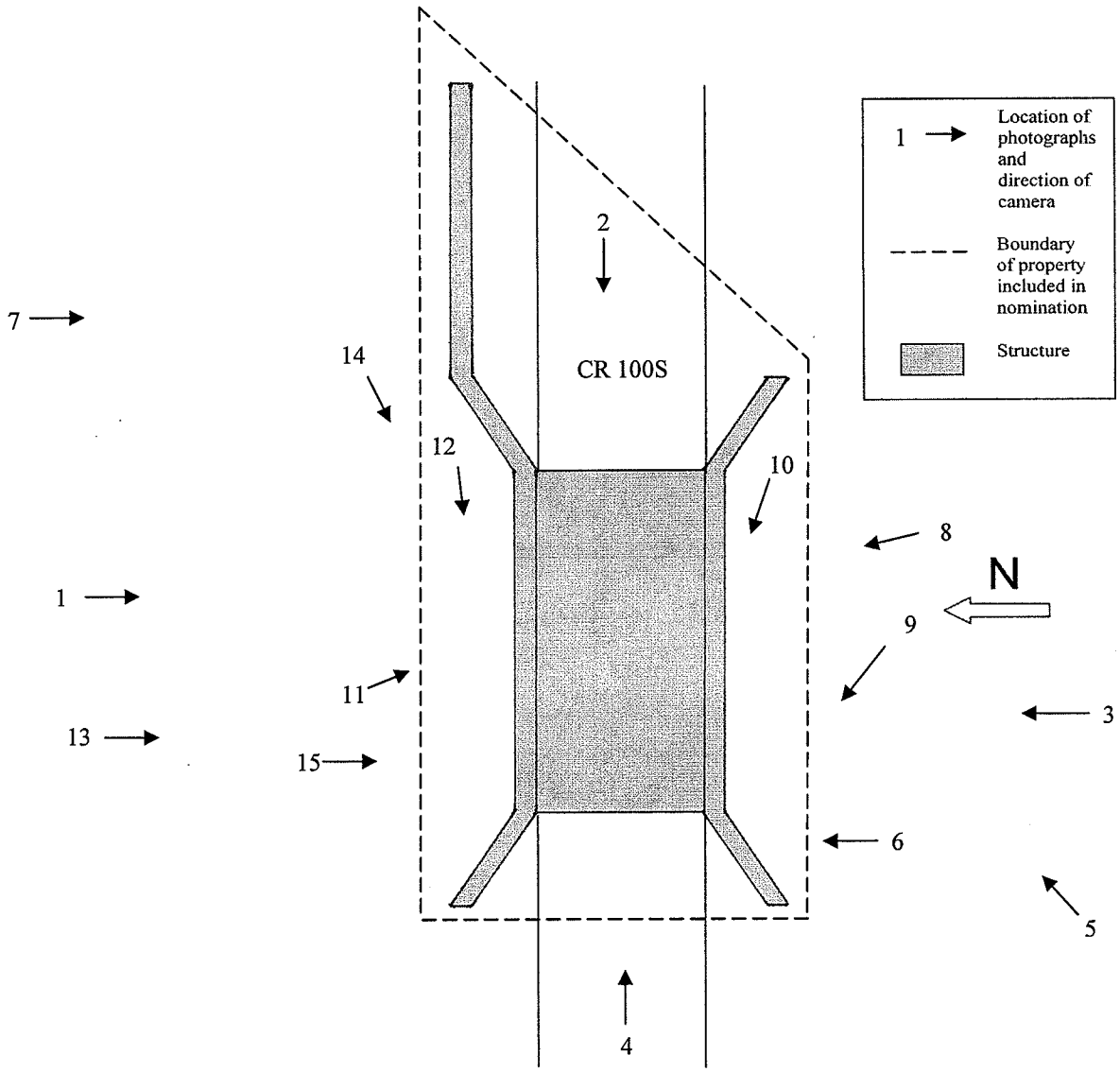
Photograph 11
6. View looking south-southeast at absence of spandrel above left center arch (upstream side).
7. 11 of 15

Photograph 12
6. View looking west-southwest at remaining coping along upstream spandrel.
7. 12 of 15

Photograph 13
6. View looking south at upstream spandrel without a parapet wall.
7. 13 of 15

Photograph 14
6. View looking west-southwest at pier nosing damage.
7. 14 of 15

Photograph 15
6. View looking south at westernmost pier nosing damage.
7. 15 of 15


1 Location of photographs and direction of camera
Boundary of property included in nomination
Structure
CR 100S
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Champs Ford Bridge, Decatur Co., IN photo # 1

Champs Ford Bridge, Decatur Co., IN photo # 5