

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

LISTED ON:  
VLR 03/18/2010  
NRHP 06/24/2010

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 Blackford Bridge  
other names/site number Pucketts Hole Bridge; Bridge 6096; DHR 083-0060

2. Location

street & number Chestnut Road (Route 652) not for publication n/a  
city or town Lebanon vicinity X  
state Virginia county Russell code 167 zip code 24266

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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      statewide x locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] Date 5/6/10  
Signature of certifying official  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

- building(s)
district
site
x structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: buildings (0, 0), sites (0, 0), structures (1, 0), objects (0, 0), Total (1, 0).

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Transportation Sub: Road-related (vehicular bridge)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: closed Sub: not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Pratt through truss

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
roof n/a
walls n/a
other steel, wood

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

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)

- x 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.
x 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.
x 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)

Transportation
Engineering

Period of Significance 1889-1946

Significant Dates 1889, 1946

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder Groton Bridge and Manufacturing Company

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 #

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

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

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

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**10. Geographical Data**  
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**Acreage of Property**   N/A  

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

Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
1 <u>17</u> <u>410036</u> <u>4091217</u>	2 <u>17</u> <u>410040</u> <u>4091171</u>	3 <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u>	4 <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u>

\_\_\_ 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 Michael J. Pulice, architectural historian

organization Virginia Department of Historic Resources date January, 2010

street & number Roanoke Regional Office telephone 540-857-7586

city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24013

=====  
**Additional Documentation**  
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Commissioner, Virginia Department of Transportation

street & number 1401 East Broad Street telephone                     

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23219

**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 existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET****Pucketts Hole Bridge  
Russell County, VA**Section 7 Page 1**7. Description****Summary**

The original Blackford Bridge, now called Pucketts Hole Bridge, is located in central Russell County, in the Alleghany Mountains of southwestern Virginia, where it crosses the Clinch River on local Route 652. In 1946, the bridge was moved 4.3 miles (linear distance) southwest from its original location over the Clinch River, on State Route 80 at Blackford. The bridge structure, built 1889, is a two-span through truss measuring over 220 feet long and 13 feet wide, with a deck (roadway) width of 11.2 feet.<sup>1</sup> Each of the spans measures approximately 110 feet. Except for deck and abutments, most of the main structural components appear to be early, if not original fabric. The single pier and end abutments are concrete, constructed when the bridge was moved to its present location in 1946. The original pier at the Blackford location was built of stone (a photo is found in the DHR file 083-0060).<sup>2</sup>

**Location and Setting**

Pucketts Hole is marked on USGS maps as a place where the northerly flowing Pucketts Branch joins the Clinch River, at a southerly bend in the meandering river. There Route 652 crosses the river via the Pucketts Hole Bridge, traveling north-south and terminating .32 miles south of the bridge, at a T-intersection with Route 640. The river's elevation above sea level is 1,750 feet, with surrounding hilltops reaching well over 2,000 feet. The location is amidst a remote, mostly forested area, broken by occasional pastures and a few modest houses dotting the landscape. 1½ miles to the southeast is the ridge top of River Mountain, at 3,200 feet. The nearest population center is the Town of Lebanon, the Russell County seat, nearly six miles to the southwest.

**Bridge - Detailed Description**

The following detailed description of the bridge is excerpted from Virginia Department of Transportation documents: Carrying Route 652 over the Clinch River, Bridge 6096 is a two-span, single-lane, steel Pratt through truss consisting of a pin-connected superstructure of channels and latticing with die-forged and loop-welded eye bars, supported by reinforced concrete abutments and a central concrete pier. Roller bearings at the pier end of each span and sliding plate bearings at the approach ends allow for span expansion and contraction of the superstructure. Spaced 13 feet, 1 inch on centers, each truss consists of seven panels, measuring 15 feet, 9 inches in length and 17.0 feet in height, top to bottom chord. The top chords and end posts are built-up members consisting of paired channels with cover plates at the top and laced on the underside. The verticals consist of channels with lacing bars; and the diagonals consist of loop-welded eyebars. Lateral-rod bracing with turnbuckles connects the top chords. Lacing extends across the top of the portal and covers the portal bracing. The vertical clearance at the portal varies from 12 feet, 6 inches at the side to 14 feet, 7 inches at the center. The floor system of each span consists of six 14.5-inch-deep built-up I-beams with 14.5-inch deep webs; six 9-inch-deep stringers (single channels, back-to-back single channels, I-beams, and H-beams) spaced 2 feet apart; and a timber plank deck. Lateral bracing below the deck consists of rods with turnbuckles. The metal handrails consist of simple 2-pipe side railings supported by posts.<sup>3</sup>

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**Pucketts Hole Bridge  
Russell County, VA**

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## **8. Statement of Significance**

### **Summary**

The Blackford Bridge in Russell County, Virginia, a steel Pratt through-truss structure now known as the Pucketts Hole Bridge, is historically significant for its engineering and construction. Constructed in 1889 by the Groton Bridge and Manufacturing Company of Groton, New York, it is an unusually old example to have survived with substantial integrity of design and materials. The Virginia Department of Transportation suggests it is the oldest remaining bridge in the Bristol District, which encompasses more than 7,400 miles of roads in 12 counties. The manufacturer is sparsely represented among Virginia bridges, and the design was unique or at least unusual for its time.<sup>4</sup> Pratt trusses are perhaps the most common types of metal truss bridges. The Pucketts Hole Bridge is also highly significant for its historic contributions to the growth of the area by serving as a key link in the local and regional transportation network while at its original location on Route 80 in Blackford. Its construction at Blackford was a milestone event in improving transportation flow to and from the nearby market and shipping town of Honaker. Thus the bridge is eligible under National Register Criterion A in the area of Transportation as well as Criterion C in the area of Engineering. As a property that has been moved from its original location, the bridge also satisfies Criteria Consideration B since it still retains its physical integrity and its association with decisive developments in the transportation history of the area. Moving metal truss bridges is a common practice and some significant historic bridges have been relocated from their original sites. The period of significance begins with the bridge's construction in 1889, and ends with its relocation from Blackford to Pucketts Hole in 1946.

### **Background**

The use of metal truss bridges to carry vehicular traffic did not appear in many parts of Virginia until the 1870s, though metal truss bridges had been used for railroad bridges before the Civil War.<sup>5</sup> Historic metal truss bridges are becoming increasingly rare in the U.S., however, as a number of them are lost or replaced every year. There were once many types and subtypes of truss bridges constructed by various manufacturers across the country. Each surviving structure is, in itself, a record of engineering and transportation from its respective time period. The advent of massive steel I-beams and other new technologies made the use of trusses obsolete for most bridges by the 1950s, and has provided for the construction of new replacement bridges, many of which are identical in form and appearance and devoid of nuance or character.

The Blackford Bridge was built in 1889 over the Clinch River, erected by the Russell County Board of Supervisors. They selected a metal Pratt Truss, a popular choice during final quarter of the nineteenth century, designed for crossing of rivers and streams. Such bridges were often sold by mail order catalog. The chosen manufacturer, the Groton Company, was founded in 1877 and built truss bridges in twenty-seven states before it was dissolved in 1920. Before the bridge was built, a ferry across the Clinch River was operated by David Black, for whom Blackford is named. As local populations grew, however, a bridge was sorely needed on the busy road, which led to fertile agricultural areas of Russell County such as Elk Garden, and beyond. The bridge helped link farmers to the railroad running through Blackford and the bustling town of Honaker less than three miles to the north. Farmers in the area raised livestock, corn, wheat, oats, rye, and tobacco all of which were shipped out from the Blackford Depot.<sup>6</sup>

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**Pucketts Hole Bridge  
Russell County, VA**

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The bridge was important to industrial development in the area, serving as a vital connection across the Clinch River. Increases in usage came incrementally. Early automobiles followed the horse-drawn wagons crossing the bridge. In the 1910s, the large, prosperous coal and timber companies in the area began using trucks to haul freight and supplies, relying less on the railroads, and increasing the bridge's work load substantially. The Clinch Valley Barite Company was also among the heavy industrial users of the bridge, which all the while continued to serve unfailingly. The growth of Honaker in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was due to it being the home of both the largest cattle shipping yard and largest lumber yard east of the Mississippi. Both industries relied heavily on all available means of transportation.<sup>7</sup>

Local entrepreneur Henry C. Stuart apparently played a major role in getting the truss bridge in Blackford. Two bridge (sign) plates were installed at each end of the bridge when the bridge was built. They were identically cast, with the names of commissioners H. C. Stuart and H. H. Dickenson, Commissioner of Transportation, on one side, and the Groton Bridge Company's name and the date the bridge was constructed, 1889, on the reverse side. In 1921, Henry Stuart helped organize and served as president of the Pay as-you-go Roads Association. Henry's Stuart's father founded the Stuart Land and Cattle Company, which greatly depended on the Blackford Bridge for shipping of their livestock. He moved to nearby Saltville in 1861 to operate the Preston Salt Works and supplied salt for the Confederate Army. Governor Stuart's uncle was Major General J. E. B. Stuart. Stuart Land and Cattle supplied beef, and also broke and trained horses for the Confederate Army. Governor Stuart became owner and operator of Stuart Land and Cattle Co. in 1893. It is one of the oldest businesses still in operation today in Russell County and according to some sources, the oldest cattle ranch in the United States continually managed by the same family.<sup>8</sup>

Residents of Puckett's Hole, in the Chestnut Ridge area, had no bridge until the Blackford Bridge was moved there. The bridge was dismantled into sections and transported down river by barge to its new, quieter location in 1946. Location, however, is not a factor in the significance of the structure. Moving metal truss bridges was not an uncommon practice and some significant bridges have been relocated from their original sites. Now off the beaten path, the bridge escaped being destroyed and replaced for more than a half century. In 1997, the bridge numbered among only 245 surviving metal truss bridges in the state, a number that has decreased somewhat since then. Moreover, it was one of only eight in-service metal truss bridges under VDOT purview, constructed before 1890, that had survived.<sup>9</sup>

The old truss bridge has become well known landmark and a local tourist attraction in Russell County, known for its interesting structural features and antique character. In recent years, Pucketts Hole has been popularized by the annual Honaker Redbud Festival and the canoe race that is among the festival's highlights. Though it suffered from long-term deferred maintenance, the bridge remained in vehicular use until the summer of 2009, when a new, modern, non-descript, steel and concrete bridge was completed next to it. Since then the old bridge is closed to traffic and awaiting its fate, as yet unknown.

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**Pucketts Hole Bridge  
Russell County, VA**

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Endnotes

1. In a “through” configuration, traffic travels through the truss superstructure, which is cross-braced above and below.
2. Lucas, Kalli. Virginia Department of Transportation documentation. 17 September, 1993, in DHR file 083-0060.
3. Virginia Department of Transportation documentation. P.A.C. Spero and Company consultant’s report, January, 1994; in DHR file 083-0060.
4. Lucas, 1993.
5. Miller and Clark, *Survey of Metal Truss Bridges in Virginia*, 7. Miller, personal communication with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2 February, 2010.
6. Fuller.
7. Pulice and Kern; Fuller.
8. Fuller.
9. Miller and Clark, 16.

**9. Bibliographical References**

- Fuller, Diane. “From Blackford to Puckett’s Hole: 120 years of service to Russell Countians”; unpublished paper, 2009.
- Miller, Ann B., and Kenneth M. Clark. *Survey of Metal Truss Bridges in Virginia*. Charlottesville: Virginia Transportation Research Council, 1997.
- Pulice, Michael and John Kern, “Honaker Commercial Historic District, Russell County, Virginia” National Register nomination, 2009.
- Virginia Department of Transportation documentation from 1993 and 1994, located in Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Pucketts Hole Bridge (Bridge 6096) file 083-0060.
- Website: *Bridge Basics - A Spotter's Guide to Bridge Design*. [<http://pghbridges.com/basics.htm>.] Accessed 1/14/2010.

**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries for the Pucketts Hole Bridge are defined by the dimensions of the bridge itself, as erected at its current site: approximately 225 feet long and 13 feet wide.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries for the Pucketts Hole Bridge are defined by the overall footprint of the bridge itself as erected at its current site because the significance of the structure is embodied in its design and construction. The boundaries do

not include the 1946 concrete abutments or any portions of the surrounding land.

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**Pucketts Hole Bridge  
Russell County, VA**

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**Photographs**

All Photographs taken August 11, 2009.

Photographer: Michael J. Pulice

Location of digital images: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

Subject: Pucketts Hole Bridge, Russell County, Virginia

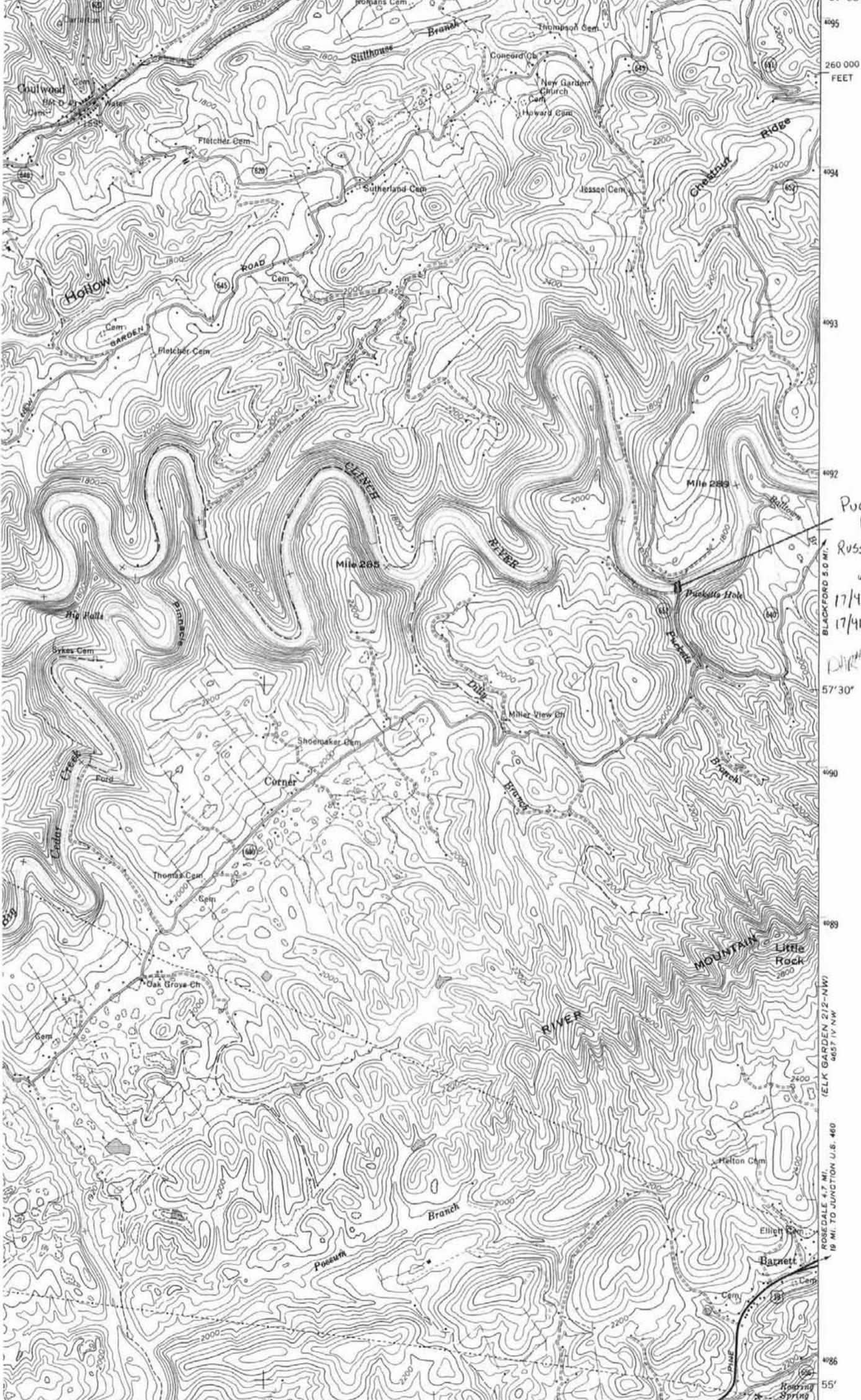
1. Bridge facing northeast
2. Bridge facing north
3. Bridge facing north-northwest
4. Bridge facing northwest
5. Underside of bridge deck

STATES  
EY AUTHORITY  
YS DEPARTMENT

LEBANON QUADRANGLE  
VIRGINIA-RUSSELL CO  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC) 205-NE

4658 11 SW  
(HONAKER)

SE (IN 204-SE) 406 5.7 MI. TO VIRGINIA 80 407 2'30" 408 970 000 FEET 409 410 HONAKER 2.8 MI. 82°00'



37°00'  
260 000  
FEET  
4095  
4094  
4093  
4092  
4091  
57°30'  
4090  
4089  
4088  
4086  
55'

Puckett's Hole  
Bridge  
Russell Co. VA  
UTMS:  
174100364091217  
174100404091171  
DN#083-0060

BLACKFORD 5.0 MI.  
ELK GARDEN 212-NW  
6657 IV NW  
ROSEDALE 4.7 MI.  
19 MI. TO JUNCTION U.S. 460

MCW - READ - 3/8/10

Members

**RUSSELL COUNTY**

James A. Gillespie  
County Administrator

Mike Puckett, Chairman  
Danny L. Brown, Vice Chairman  
Jon Bowerbank  
Robert J. Keene  
Ernest "Shy" Kennedy  
Bill Wampler



P. O. Box 1208  
Lebanon, Virginia 24266  
Phone (276) 889-8000  
Fax (276) 889-8011  
russellcounty@bvunet.net

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

March 1, 2010

Mr. Marc Christian Wagner  
Manager, National and State Registers Program  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
2801 Kensington Avenue  
Richmond, Virginia 23221

**Re: Puckett's Hole Bridge, Russell County**

Dear Mr. Wagner:

The Russell County Board of Supervisors endorses the efforts of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to present the nomination of Puckett's Hole Bridge to the Virginia State Review Board and the Virginia Board of Historic Resources for recommendation to the National Register of Historic Places and for inclusion in the Virginia Landmarks Register.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely,

C. Michael Puckett  
Chairman