

THE BRIDGES OF

Washington County
MARYLAND



Hagerstown - Washington County
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Burnside Bridge
at Antietam National Battlefield

An Amazing
Legacy in Stone:

The Bridges of Washington County Maryland

In the late 18th Century, for all practical purposes our Appalachian Mountains marked the western boundary of our country. In those days we in Western Maryland lived in the "Wild West," or so at least the folks in Baltimore and Philadelphia may have thought.

George Washington knew our region well as a surveyor and from his service with Braddock in the French and Indian War. As President, he proposed a series of national roads whose avowed purpose was defense: the efficient movement of troops to quell Native American uprisings, foreign invasions, or farmers unhappy with taxes on corn whiskey. Then with Thomas Jefferson in the White House, the program moved briskly ahead. The road west from Cumberland to Wheeling was called The National Pike, today's Route 40. The vital link joining our region with Baltimore and Cumberland was often called "The Bank Road," because many sections were paid for by bonds underwritten by the banks of the era. The banks then sold the bonds to canny investors who knew the value of efficient transport to our local agriculture and industry.

Then as now, better roads meant more business... and business traffic. The new roads crossed innumerable streams, which had to be forded. This was most unsatisfactory, very unsafe, and a sure way to get wet, or worse.

Although the original military planners would have been satisfied with plank bridges along the new roads they had reckoned without the practical and industrious western Marylanders. Through their elected representatives, they made it clear that they had tired of losing valuable shipments, animals, and the expense and inconvenience of maintaining and replacing wooden bridges every couple of seasons.

With unassailable logic they asked, "Why build temporary wooden bridges when we have so much limestone, rugged granite, sandstone, slate, and even beautiful marble in our own quarries?" They got their way.

Throughout the 19th Century one magnificent stone bridge after another was built. This local bridge-building boom, which was to give Washington County more beautiful stone bridges than any other similar jurisdiction in the United States, seemed to peak just in time for the Civil War. Both sides crossed and re-crossed the bridges to maneuver against each other throughout the war. But our bridges soldiered on long after peace came to the nation.

Today, 18-wheelers speed across stone arches where once horse and mule-drawn wagons of Confederate and Federal forces rolled. But other historic bridges now lie in forest shadows, crumbling along once busy streams.

They still draw admiration, if not of travelers and soldiers, of fishermen, of hikers, kayakers, and canoeists. Restored, many of our bridges will continue in daily service to our region for generations to come. Others will be preserved as monuments, rather than as key parts of our infrastructure. Sadly, some will be lost to time, the elements, and a changing countryside.

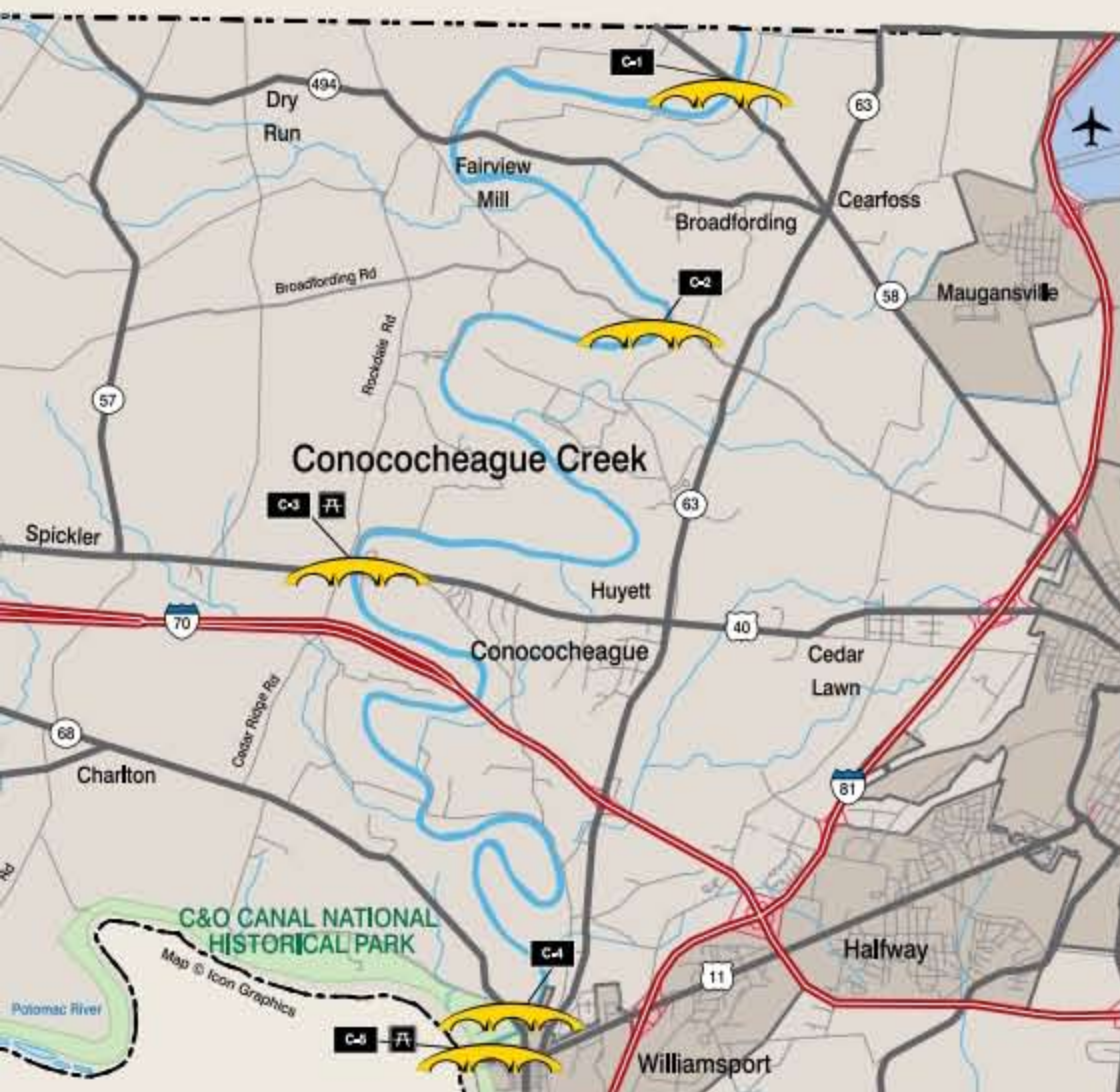
Please use this map to visit our amazing legacy in stone: our Washington County bridges. Like the elders of a lively family, they are a surviving gift that helps remind us who we once were, who we are, and to give us a firm foundation upon which to build our region's future.

Map Credits:
The concept for this project and the original color photographs are by Katherine Campbell Patterson, Dandelion Productions, Hagerstown, Maryland.

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Legend - Conococheague Creek

- Bridges
- Creeks
- Major Highways
- Bridge Labels
- Picnic Area

The Bridges of: Conococheague Creek



C-1 • Bridge at Price's Ford | 1822

Route 58, The Cearfoss Pike, West of Route 63, The Greencastle Pike
This beautiful 5-arch bridge, built by Lloyds of Philadelphia, has been long out of use and is in a state of disrepair. Horse-drawn flatboats brought the stone with which it was built, down the Conococheague from the quarry at the Solitday Farm. Confederate soldiers marched across on July 5th 1863, during their retreat from Gettysburg. Parking near this location is difficult, as both sides of the bridge are private property and Route 58 has very narrow shoulders where it crosses the stream on a modern bridge.



C-2 • Broadfording Bridge | 1829

Broadfording Road, West of Route 63

Like its upstream neighbor, this handsome bridge was built by The Lloyds Company of Philadelphia with stone quarried at the Solitday Farm. In the last decade, it has been restored to its former sturdy beauty to carry modern traffic on its original arches that stretch 220 feet, almost the length of a football field. Unique in design, it was built with two long and two shorter arches. Broadfording Road is a natural game path, used first by animals. It was already a well known "Indian" trail, when in 1747 it was improved as a colonial road by Peter Sluadebaker, founder of the largest wagon manufacturer in the world at the time. The remains of the original bridge are still visible on the western side.



C-3 • Wilson's Bridge | 1819

Route 40, The National Pike, West of Route 63

Wilson's Bridge was the first of the stone bridges built in Washington County. Its purpose was to carry the state-chartered, privately funded "Bank Road" over Conococheague Creek to join the National Road at Cumberland, providing a pivotal link between the eastern seaport cities and western markets and suppliers. Silas Harry contracted with the county to build this 210-foot, five-arch span at a cost of \$12,000. It was considered a "modern marvel" upon completion. Its design and very fine workmanship served as a model for the 30 more bridges that quickly followed. Today, it is a popular fishing and picnic spot, with easy accessibility, convenient parking and a boat ramp.



C-4 • The Conococheague Bridge | 1829

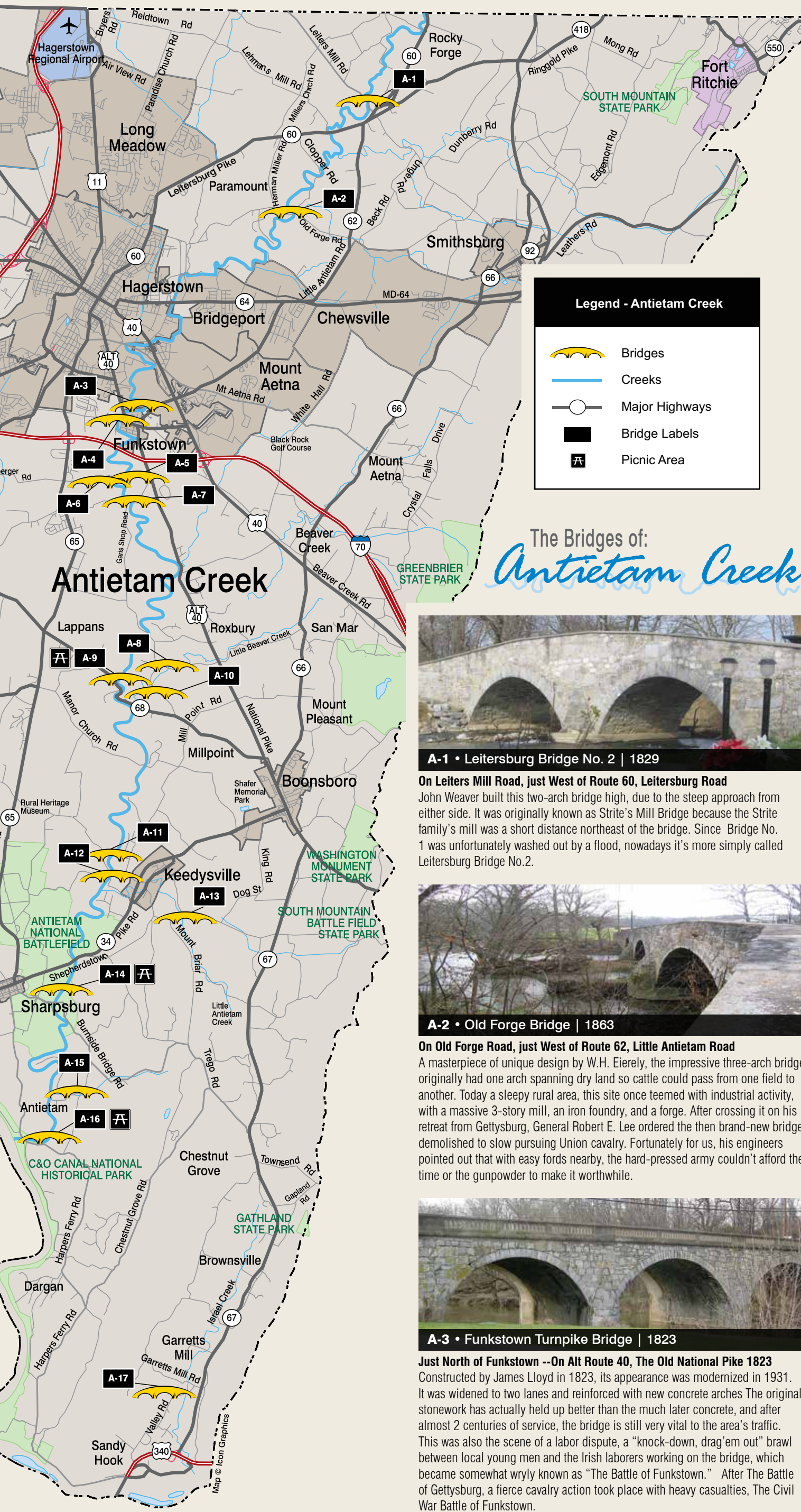
In Williamsport, West of Route 63, North on Route 68, Clear Spring Road
During the Civil War, this bridge marked one of the most strategic crossings in Washington County. As you cross this bridge, with its sturdy arches holding up as well to 18-wheelers as they did to the mule-drawn wagons of the Confederate and Union Armies, you'll see the same beautiful view of Williamsport as glimpsed by General Robert E. Lee, General Stonewall Jackson, and many times by the famous Confederate cavalryman, General J.E.B. Stuart. Less than a mile away the creek joins the Potomac, as it flows under the Conococheague Aqueduct.



C-5 • The Conococheague Aqueduct | 1834

In Williamsport, at the foot of West Potomac Street, West of Route 63
Eleven aqueducts built from Georgetown to Cumberland, carried the C&O Canal over streams and rivers. In 1923 Captain Fred Meyers' mule-drawn canal boat collided with the upstream wall, which collapsed. Captain Fred jumped to safety. But it was the beginning of the end for not only the aqueduct, but the entire C&O Canal. Having survived fierce artillery bombardment by Confederate artillery and Capt. Meyers' accident, the battered, patched-up aqueduct and the entire canal were finally shut down by the Great Potomac Flood of 1924. Williamsport was seriously considered by George Washington as our new nation's capital. Today, this site is maintained by the National Park Service, and is easily accessible by car, with ample parking, picnic areas, and well marked and maintained trails along the C&O Canal. Plaques and signs point out the site's importance in our history for visitors of all ages.

THE BRIDGES OF WASHINGTON COUNTY MARYLAND



The Bridges of: *Antietam Creek*



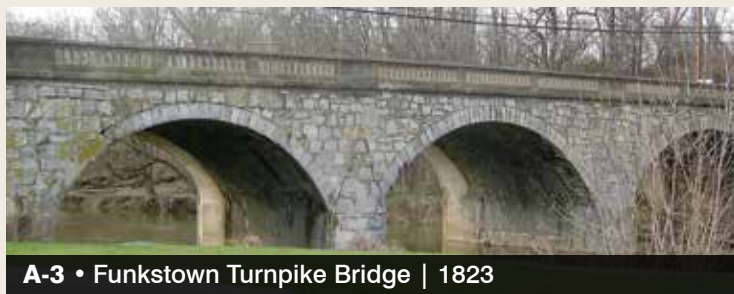
A-1 • Leistersburg Bridge No. 2 | 1829

On Leisters Mill Road, just West of Route 60, Leistersburg Road
John Weaver built this two-arch bridge high, due to the steep approach from either side. It was originally known as Strite's Mill Bridge because the Strite family's mill was a short distance northeast of the bridge. Since Bridge No. 1 was unfortunately washed out by a flood, nowadays it's more simply called Leistersburg Bridge No. 2.



A-2 • Old Forge Bridge | 1863

On Old Forge Road, just West of Route 62, Little Antietam Road
A masterpiece of unique design by W.H. Eierey, the impressive three-arch bridge originally had one arch spanning dry land so cattle could pass from one field to another. Today a sleepy rural area, this site once teemed with industrial activity, with a massive 3-story mill, an iron foundry, and a forge. After crossing it on his retreat from Gettysburg, General Robert E. Lee ordered the then brand-new bridge demolished to slow pursuing Union cavalry. Fortunately for us, his engineers pointed out that with easy fords nearby, the hard-pressed army couldn't afford the time or the gunpowder to make it worthwhile.



A-3 • Funkstown Turnpike Bridge | 1823

Just North of Funkstown --On Alt Route 40, The Old National Pike 1823
Constructed by James Lloyd in 1823, its appearance was modernized in 1931. It was widened to two lanes and reinforced with new concrete arches. The original stonework has actually held up better than the much later concrete, and after almost 2 centuries of service, the bridge is still very vital to the area's traffic. This was also the scene of a labor dispute, a "knock-down, drag'em out" brawl between local young men and the Irish laborers working on the bridge, which became somewhat wryly known as "The Battle of Funkstown." After The Battle of Gettysburg, a fierce cavalry action took place with heavy casualties, The Civil War Battle of Funkstown.



A-4 • Funkstown Bridge No. 2 | 1833

On East Oak Ridge Road in Funkstown East of Alt Route 40
Funkstown's second bridge was built in 1833 and is notable not only for its beauty, but for its unique design. Three arches grow progressively longer as they march up the hill to the west. Its builder, George Weaver, also artistically combined rounded and pyramidal arches on the downstream side of his creation, which like its upstream neighbor still carries heavy traffic, although it has never been widened. Plans for its preservation, while accommodating increased traffic, are under way. With parking nearby, the bridge is a good a base for a tour of Funkstown.



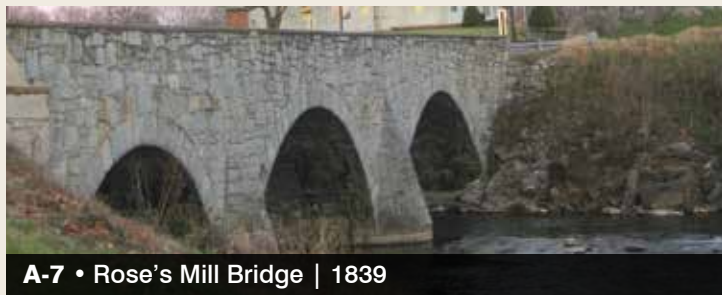
A-5 • Claggett's Mill Race Bridge | 1841

South of Funkstown --On Poffenberger Road, West of Alt Route 40, The Old National Pike
This graceful one-arch bridge spans the mill race, and was probably built by the Claggett family without county funding. At one time, there were dozens of these small bridges in the county built by mill owners. This one echoes the style of arch and keystone used on the C&O Canal structures.



A-6 • Claggett's Mill Bridge | 1840

South of Funkstown --On Poffenberger Road, West of Alt Route 40
Built by John Weaver at a cost to the county of \$2800, its graceful lines and beautiful stone work complemented the famous Claggett estate, "Valentia," whose centerpiece mansion still stands. This industrious family was among the very first in the valley to introduce agricultural machinery. The estate's agricultural and milling operation was so successful that the Claggett Farm with upwards of a hundred workers in its fields and mills, actually set grain prices throughout the region.



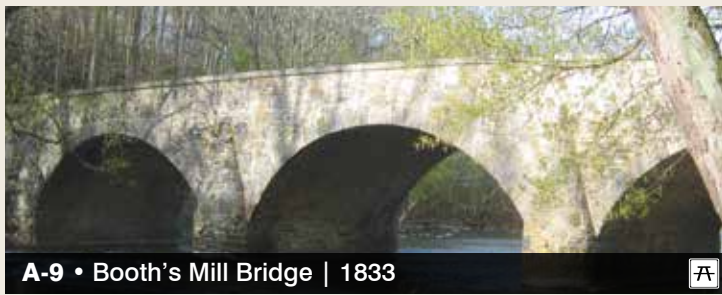
A-7 • Rose's Mill Bridge | 1839

On Garis Shop Road, West of Alt Route 40, The Old National Pike
John Weaver built this three-arch bridge at the site of a large mill complex, known today by its original name, Rose's Mill, although for much of its working life it was called Shaer's Mill. The design of this bridge was unusual in that the western-most arch accommodated the mill race outlet, called the flue. The approaches to the bridge were also widened to include a "drive-through" wagon loading floor below the actual mill.



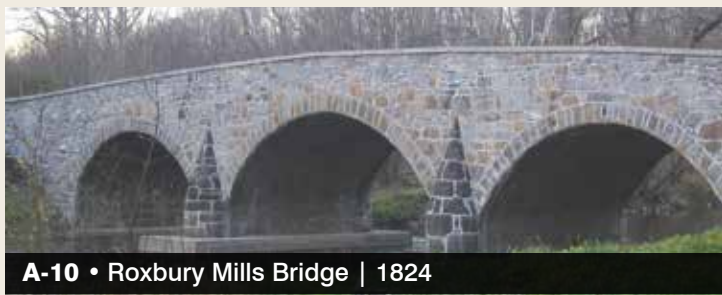
A-8 • Devil's Backbone Bridge | 1824

Over Little Beaver Creek --On Route 68, just West of Alt Route 40, The Old National Pike
In 1824 the Washington County authorities contracted for no less than four stone bridges. This beautiful span was built by Jabez Kenny. It spans the ford that General Braddock's redcoats, colonial militia, and their Indian allies used to cross Little Beaver Creek in 1755 during the French and Indian War. The bridge needs substantial maintenance to remain in operation and its future role in the county's road grid is in question. Plans are under discussion.



A-9 • Booth's Mill Bridge | 1833

On Route 68, Lappans Road, East of Route 65, The Sharpsburg Pike
Built by Charles Wilson to replace a wooden bridge near a powder mill, it was also known as the Delamere Bridge because it is near Delamere Mansion where the Reverend Bartholomew Booth was the headmaster of a boys school attended by the sons of many noted Revolutionary War figures, including Benedict Arnold! The Reverend Booth was also Vicar of All Saints, today's St. Johns Episcopal Church in Hagerstown. The bridge is surrounded by a park, with picnic facilities, and convenient parking. Canoe and kayak rentals are available.



A-10 • Roxbury Mills Bridge | 1824

On Roxbury Road, West of Alt Route 40, The Old National Pike
The forcefully flowing Antietam reminds us that most of our bridges were built at the site of natural fords. They made natural meeting and market places, and soon water-powered mills were built. Increased traffic would soon lead to the need for a bridge, and then a better bridge. The Ford; The Mill; The Bridge: an early industrial triad. It's a sequence we see all along the Antietam. Roxbury was originally a sawmill, then a grist mill, and finally a distillery! The beautifully restored bridge still serves our road system but alas, the distillery is no more.



A-11 • The Hitt Bridge | 1830

On Keedysville Road, just west of Keedysville
The Hitt Bridge, a graceful three-arch, 105-foot span with a high center arch was built by Silas Harry for John Weaver at a cost of \$1,413.66. Samuel Hitt constructed a successful mill at this site, which functioned well into the 20th Century. The site of another ford used by General Braddock in 1755, it was also a key route to The Battle of Antietam known as The Upper Bridge. After the fighting, nearby houses and barns became makeshift hospitals, treating wounded soldiers from both sides.



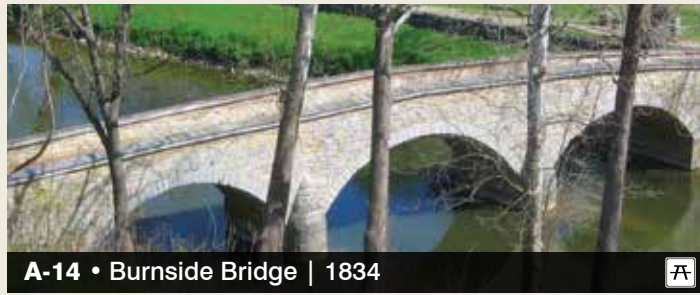
A-12 • Pry's Mill Bridge | 1858

Over The Little Antietam, On Keedysville Road, in Keedysville
The site of a bridge since the 1830's, this two-arch bridge was finished in its present form for the county at the cost of \$1650.00. The bridge appears very much as it always has, with just a single narrow lane to carry traffic. Both grist and sawmills operated at nearby Pry's Mill, also becoming makeshift hospitals after The Battle of Antietam. Its unusual cutwaters are shaped like a ship's bow facing upstream, with the more rounded "stern" downstream. Along the south side of the road, one of the largest of the old mills is now a beautiful private residence.



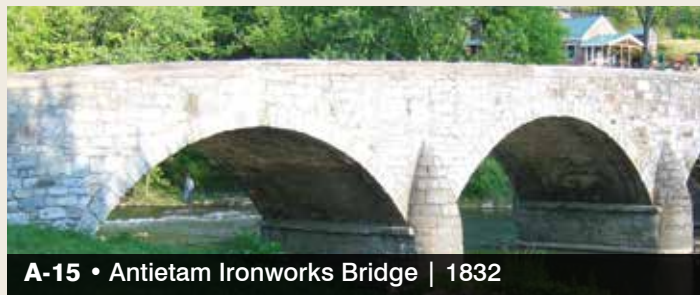
A-13 • Felfoot Bridge | 1854

Over The Little Antietam --On Dog Street in Keedysville, East of Route 34, Toward Route 67
George Burgan built this Bridge over the Little Antietam Creek at "Felfoot," a land grant that was originally surveyed in 1734. It has squared pilasters at the outside of each arch- corner, seen in no other bridge in the county. The large barn on the east side, built by Sir John St. Clair in 1754, was a major French and Indian War supply depot for General Braddock's forces.



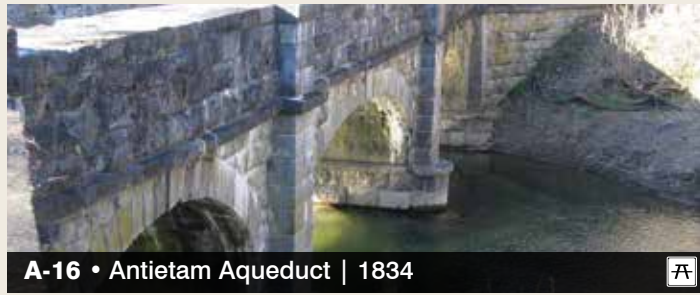
A-14 • Burnside Bridge | 1834

Antietam Battlefield National Park, South of I-70 on Route 65 (The Sharpsburg Pike)
The Burnside Bridge was built at a cost of \$2,300 by John Weaver and was originally called the Rohersbach Bridge. In 1862 it gained lasting fame during The Battle of Antietam. A small force of Confederate riflemen held General Ambrose Burnside's entire Army Corps at bay for over four hours, giving reinforcements from Harper's Ferry time to reach General Lee. Every year thousands of visitors from all over the world cross the authentically restored 125-foot bridge, with its sand-and-gravel roadbed and wooden parapets. A large, carefully maintained sycamore "Witness Tree" overlooks the bridge, one of 16 "living witnesses" to momentous events on this and other Civil War battlefields.



A-15 • Antietam Ironworks Bridge | 1832

On Harper's Ferry Road, South of Sharpsburg, off Route 34
Built by John Weaver, this is the only four-arch bridge spanning Antietam Creek. Once this was the area's largest industrial complex, Frederick Forge and Furnace Works, later known as the Antietam Iron Works, producing pig iron, nails, tools, hinges, farm implements, and all the other iron commodities necessary in the thriving economy of the region. The Civil War battles that swirled around it were not the first on these fields. This was the traditional battleground of the Catawba and Delaware tribes, fighting for domination of the region's rich resources.



A-16 • Antietam Aqueduct | 1834

Just West of the Antietam Iron Works Bridge, on Canal Road
Both this and the Conococheague Aqueduct were built in 1834. The project cost many lives when a cholera epidemic swept the work camps of the immigrant Irish laborers, who built most of the canal, including its eleven aqueducts. Easy access and convenient parking gives a spectacular view across the Potomac. It also makes a good starting point for hikes along the canal or river. Once a year it is crossed by the many runners of the JFK Memorial 50-mile event.



A-17 • The Israel Creek Bridge | 1875

South of Boonsboro, off Route 67 on Valley Road, off Garrett's Mill Road
The Commissioners of Washington County inspected and accepted this handsome one-arch bridge over Israel Creek in April of 1875, authorizing payment of \$590.00 to its builder, John Martin. Built toward the close of our region's remarkable era of stone bridge-building, it is well worth a visit. Parking is convenient and it is easy to approach on foot. Today a beautiful and quiet rural neighborhood, this part of scenic Israel Creek was the site of a busy mill. A short distance upstream the original miller's house still stands, a beautifully restored historic home.



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