

STATE LEVEL HISTORIC DOCUMENTATION
SMITH CROSSROADS BRIDGE

Location: County Route 13/1 over Sleepy Creek, in Morgan County, West Virginia.
USGS Stotlers Crossroads Quadrangle

Date of Construction: 1917

Builder: The Concrete Steel Bridge Company, Clarksburg, West Virginia.

Present Owner: West Virginia Department of Transportation
Division of Highways
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, Building 5, Room A-110
Charleston, WV 25305

Present Use: Bridge

Significance: The Smith Crossroads Bridge is significant for its association with Frank D. McEnteer, a pioneer of reinforced concrete construction in West Virginia.

Project Information: The project has been undertaken due to the poor condition of the bridge. Future deterioration of the bridge could result in its closure, thus effectively closing Morgan County Route 13/1. This documentation was undertaken in May 2023 in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the West Virginia Department of Transportation and West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office. These measures are required prior to replacement of this National Register eligible structure. The bridge is scheduled for replacement in 2026.

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The Smith Crossroads Bridge carries County Route 13/1 (Spriggs Road) over Sleepy Creek in central Morgan County. Sleepy Creek is a tributary of the Potomac River. The bridge is located approximately 440 feet to the southeast of the intersection of Winchester Grade Road and Spriggs Road. The bridge has an average daily traffic of 260 vehicles in 2022.

The Smith Crossroads Bridge was commissioned by the Morgan County Court in 1916 and built in 1917 by the Concrete Steel Bridge Company of Clarksburg. The structure is a two-span, reinforced concrete deck arch bridge supported on full-height reinforced concrete abutments and a solid reinforced concrete pier. The pier has a decorative nose cap and the solid parapets are incised with a geometric pattern. The overall length of the bridge is 112-feet, 8.5-inches, while the width is 16-feet, two-inches. Plaques embedded in the inside parapets at center read: "1916/MORGAN COUNTY COURT/J. H. PHILLIPS, PRES./J. W. SWAIM COMR./B. E. DAWSON "M. S. HARMISON CLERK." and "and "THE CONCRETE STEEL/BRIDGE COMPANY/DESIGNERS AND BUILDERS/CLARKSBURG W. VA."

Early native tribes in the central Appalachian region were the Huron, the Tuscarora, and the Mingo.¹ Prior to the Revolutionary War, the land that would become Morgan County was part of the Northern Neck Proprietary, a vast tract that was granted to several English noblemen by King Charles II in 1649. The land eventually came to be owned entirely by Thomas, the 6th Lord Fairfax, who divided it into smaller tracts. In 1747 Lord Fairfax moved to Virginia and managed his property from his home and office near present day Winchester.² The Fairfax lands were seized by the state of Virginia in 1779 and although Fairfax's heir, Denny Martin, attempted to regain control through a decades long legal battle, any land not already granted became the property of the Commonwealth of Virginia after a Supreme Court decision in 1816.³

With abundant springs fed by underground aquifers prevalent due to the karst topography, the area that would become Morgan County became a destination for health-seekers from the eastern seaboard seeking the curative effects of mineral water or simply escaping humid summers for the cooler mountain climate. The mineral springs at Bath developed into a popular resort by the 1770s and the town was incorporated in 1776.⁴ George Washington was part of a surveying party in the 1740s and returned to the springs at Bath throughout his life.

Morgan County was established in 1820 from Hampshire County and Berkeley County. It is bordered to the east by Berkeley County, to the north by the Potomac River and Maryland beyond, and to the south and southwest by Frederick County, Virginia and Hampshire County, West Virginia. The county seat, Bath (typically called by its post office name of Berkeley Springs) is located in the northeast section, not far from the Potomac River. The county has one other incorporated community, Paw Paw, and numerous unincorporated communities.

¹ Dr. Robert Jay Dilger, History of Morgan County, Director, Institute for Public Affairs and Professor of Political Science, West Virginia University, October 2, 2002.

² Riddel, 48.

³ Ibid., 48.

⁴ Jeanne Mozier, "Morgan County" e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia, 03 June 2013, web, 11 July 2022.

Berkeley Springs was incorporated in 1776. Always a destination for tourists visiting the mineral baths, the town grew into a local commercial hub after the arrival of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad to Morgan County in the early 1840s. Industries included a tannery, a hosiery plant, a large canning factory, cold storage facility, and a silica quarry located north of town. In the late 20th century, the historic mineral springs are operated as a state resort by the state of West Virginia, and Berkeley Springs has returned to its roots as an arts and heritage tourism destination.

Early transportation in Morgan County was via the Potomac River and local roads. The Winchester Grade Road was first incorporated as the Winchester and Berkeley Springs Turnpike in 1839.⁵ Other turnpikes through the county include the Morgan and Hampshire Turnpike, incorporated in 1851, and the Morgan and Frederick Turnpike, also incorporated in 1851. The turnpikes were supplemented by local and county roads already in use. The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad was built through Morgan County in the early 1840s, reaching Cumberland, Maryland by 1842. A spur line to Berkeley Springs was built in 1886.⁶

Outside of Berkeley Springs, much of Morgan County is agricultural. Sleepy Creek cuts a wide valley between Cacapon Mountain to the west and Sleepy Creek Mountain to the east as it meanders north from its headwaters near Bloomery, eventually meeting the Potomac River. Peach and apple orchards were prevalent in the 19th and mid-20th century. Rural Morgan County now consists of mostly low-density rural residential development, farmland in the Sleepy Creek valley, and vacation homes.

The Smith Crossroads Bridge is located in a rural area of Morgan County known as Smith Crossroads. Smith Crossroads is about five miles south of Berkeley Springs, the county seat. The area is not an inhabited community and is named for the intersection of Spriggs Road (County Route 13/1) and Autumn Acres Road (County Route 26) at a sharp curve in the Winchester Grade Road (County Route 13).

Reinforced concrete single- and double-span arch bridges were built throughout the United States between the 1890s and the 1920s. This bridge type was among the most commonly used in West Virginia due to its economic use of materials and low maintenance requirements.⁷

The Smith Crossroads Bridge is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. This double arch bridge has a continuous span design, representing an innovation in the engineering of concrete bridges. It was designed and constructed by the Concrete Steel Bridge Company of Clarksburg, WV, an engineering firm whose work is distinguishable on the state level. The Concrete Steel Bridge Company was a pioneer in the construction of reinforced concrete bridges and was awarded many projects throughout the state. The company specialized in shorter span bridges of 50 to 100 feet, many of which were single or double arches.

The Concrete Steel Bridge Company is regionally significant in West Virginia for its association with engineer Frank D. McEnteer. McEnteer was born in 1882 in Reynoldsville, Pennsylvania and attended Harvard University for an engineering degree. In 1911, McEnteer moved to Clarksburg, West Virginia to supervise construction of the Palace Furniture Company building, the first multi-story reinforced concrete building in the state. McEnteer was a consulting engineer for the York Bridge Company

⁵ Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1839, page 90.

⁶ Jacqueline Hovemale, "Berkeley Springs Train Depot" National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2000.

⁷ Historic Context for Common Historic Bridge Types, 3-65 to 3-66.

before founding the Concrete Steel Bridge Company in 1914. The firm went on to design and construct notable reinforced concrete bridges in West Virginia including the Fourth Street Bridge in Clarksburg and the Alderson Bridge in Greenbrier County. The Concrete Steel Bridge Company dissolved during the Great Depression due to financial difficulties. McEnteer spent the 1930s working for the West Virginia State Road Commission. During World War II, he served as the chief engineer of construction for the US armed forces in the Middle East. Following the war, McEnteer returned to Clarksburg and opened a consulting firm, which he ran until his death in 1957.

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