

Bollman Truss Bridge

National Historic Landmark Nomination



The twin spans of the of the Bollman Truss Bridge at Savage Maryland. In the background is the textile mill that the railroad spur served. (Michael Caplinger, 1999)

Background

At Savage, Maryland, just south of Baltimore, stands the last example of a *Bollman truss* bridge. The bridge was fabricated ca. 1868 by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Originally erected at another location on the B&O, it was relocated to this spot ca. 1887 to carry an industrial spur across the Little Patuxent River. Wendel Bollman, a Baltimore and Ohio civil engineer, patented this type of cast- and wrought-iron truss in 1852. It is a *suspension truss* and was the first standardized, massed-produced type of iron bridge. Over 100 were built along the B&O Railroad. After ca. 1885, no more Bollman trusses were built and those in existence were slowly replaced or destroyed by floods, except for this sole survivor. It is now a pedestrian bridge and the focal point of a public park. It received National Register of Historic Places status during the early 1970s.



Looking north into the bridge portal. (Michael Caplinger, 1999)

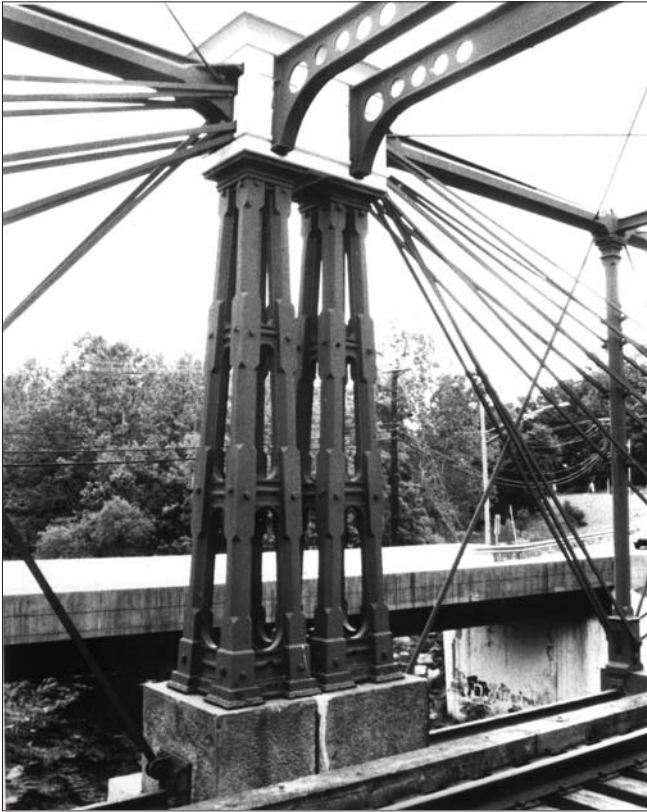
Scope

The National Park Service's National Historic Landmark (NHL) program recognizes sites, structures, etc., that exhibit "transcendent" significance to major themes in American history. Representing this highest level of Federal recognition are fewer than 3,000 NHLs that include such engineering structures as the Golden Gate Bridge and Hoover Dam. Through a Historic American Engineering Record-sponsored project, in 1998-99 IHTIA historian Michael Caplinger completed and submitted an NHL nomination for the bridge.

Results

In 2000 the Secretary of the Interior accepted the recommendations of the NHL review committee and designated the Bollman Truss bridge at Savage, Maryland, a National Historic Landmark.

Principal Investigator: Michael W. Caplinger



Cast-iron end towers and part of the wrought-iron diagonals. The diagonals run the length of the bridge and are the defining trait of Bollman trusses. (Michael Caplinger, 1999)



A portion of the lower chord, floor beams, and cross bracing. (Michael Caplinger, 1999)