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HA-836  
OLD RAILROAD BRIDGE PILINGS  
Havre de Grace, Md.

c. 1866

These granite pilings are all that remain today of the first bridge across the Susquehanna at Havre de Grace; first a Railroad bridge, it later became an automobile bridge.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC **Pilings of the First Railroad Bridge across the Susquehanna River**

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER **Otsego St. at the Susquehanna River**

CITY, TOWN **Havre de Grace** CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT **6**

STATE **Md.** COUNTY **Harford**

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME **Maryland State Highway Dept.** Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER **State Office Building**

CITY, TOWN **Annapolis** STATE, zip code

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. **Harford County**

Liber #:   
 Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER **Main St.**

CITY, TOWN **Bel Air** STATE **Md.**

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN STATE

NA-236

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

All that remains of the first bridge across the Susquehanna River at Havre de Grace are the granite pilings (1866) The pilings, perhaps of Port Deposit granite, are about 20' above water level and about six feet wide. The wide sided are on the east and west with the narrow sides to the current, The pilings are constructed in two sections; a lighter colored more decorative clustered block surmounts a massive darker base. The piers extend all the way across the river.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) local history
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1866

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

These granite pilings are all that remain of the first bridge across the Susquehanna River at Havre de Grace. The evolution of the bridge over the years is interesting. In 1852 the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad began to investigate the possibility of bridging the river, since the crossing aided by a hand operated ferry or a steamboat was quite lengthy. In the winter of 1859 railroad tracks had been laid across the frozen Susquehanna. By 1866, a bridge with wooden spans was opened; the piers having been found able to withstand the pressure of water and ice. In 1873-75, the wooden spans were replaced with iron and a pedestrian walkway was added underneath the bridge. In 1909 the new bridge built by the Pennsylvania R.R. (who had absorbed the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore R.R.) was opened just north of the old bridge. When the new bridge was completed, the state required that the old bridge be reduced to the level of the riverbed for safe navigation. Since this was a costly project, the R.R. instead sold the bridge to some (less than 10) Harford County businessmen for \$100.00 a peice. The automobile toll bridge which resulted charged \$1.00 per vehicle; wagons still used the ferry. Passage on the brigde, regulated by a relay stick, was one way. After a slow start the bridge became, as the atomobile caught on, a huge financial sucess. In 1926, the State Highway Commision bought the bridge and converted it into a double decker vehicular bridge, thought to be one of the first in the country. In 1939 the Rt. 40 was built upstream to accomadate the in - creasing N.Y. to Washington traffic and the double decker bridge was closed; in 1943 it was dismantled and sold as scrap iron.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

M.H.T. inventory notes of interview conducted by Jean Ewing with Mr. and Mrs. G. Taylor Lyon at their house May 14, 71

The Harford Directory 1953 p. 150-151

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Marion Morton-Historic Sites Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Maryland Historical Trust

DATE May, 77

STREET & NUMBER

21 State Circle

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Annapolis

STATE Md.

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438

## Railroads

**W**HEN PETER COOPER, the former carriage builder and New York merchant, made the first trial run of an American railway train from Baltimore to Ellicott's Mills (Ellicott City) on August 28, 1830, inhabitants of Harford cheered the great event. This accomplishment demonstrated the superiority of steam over motive power of the horse-drawn vehicle.

Little did they know that the slow, two-hour journey of the Tom Thumb would be the beginning of a new era in transportation and that Harford County would be one of the first to profit by that bold and daring venture. In less than twenty years after the invention of the steam locomotive by George Stephenson, of England, in 1815, a railroad was on its way across the southern part of the county.

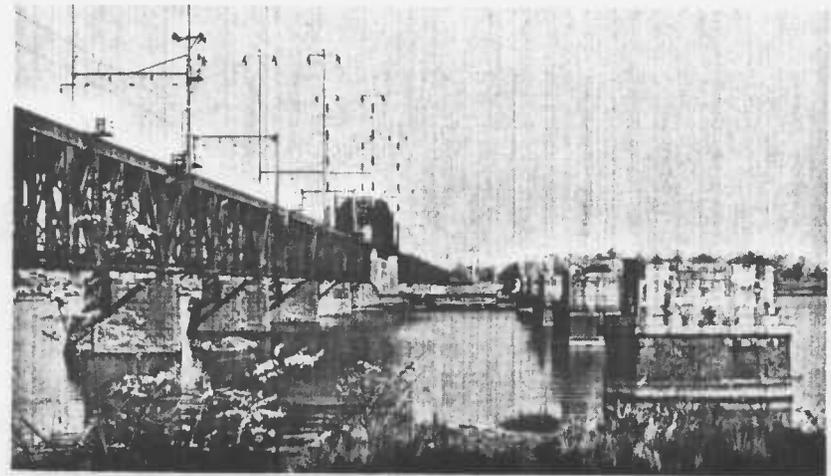
### Pennsylvania Railroad

Plans were begun for the new railroad to extend from Baltimore to Philadelphia, but the first step was a line from Baltimore to the Susquehanna River. The road known as the Baltimore and Port Deposit Railroad was started from Baltimore in 1834 and by 1836 it was completed as far as Havre de Grace. By 1838 a line called the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad had been completed to the north and the Baltimore and Port Deposit Railroad was taken into the corporation.

Many small streams along the route caused construction engineers little trouble, as by that date they could build short wooden bridges to carry the light trains. The Susquehanna, however, presented not only an engineering problem, but a financial one. Trains were therefore ferried across the river from 1838 to 1866. This proved to be difficult and slow, as the crossing sometimes required one-to-two hours.

By 1852 the freight and passenger traffic had increased to such an extent that engineers began plans for a bridge. It was not until 1866 that it was completed and ready for use. The first bridge was erected of wood but was gradually replaced with steel during the period from 1873 to 1878. This bridge stood the test of time from 1866 to 1939. Its unique history has been related in Chapter 9.

Many interesting stories are told of the difficulties encountered during the time the railroad had to use a ferry. Often in winter the ferry boats were frozen in at the dock and trains were delayed for hours, and sometimes for days. In 1852 the long, cold winter froze the Susquehanna River



*Photo by Dr. David C. Hodge*

**PIERS OF FIRST RAILROAD BRIDGE AT HAVRE DE GRACE**  
Built 1866. Used as road bridge 1908-1939.

to a depth of 2 to 3 feet, preventing all ferry service and leaving trains halted at the river's edge. Railroad officials overcame this perplexing situation by laying tracks across the ice, with trestles for inclines at either bank. Freight cars glided down the inclined rails to the ice and were pulled by teams of horses to the opposite shore. The horses pulled cars across the river by means of ropes in much the same way as a canal boat was pulled along the tow path. The cars were pulled up again by the train engines waiting on the opposite shore. During the several weeks from January 15 to February 29, approximately 1,300 cars with a total weight of 10,000 tons were hauled across the river. It is significant that none of the eight-wheeled cars that crossed this ice bridge was lost and there was no injury to person or property.

The P. W. & B. was absorbed into the Pennsylvania system in 1902. In 1908 the present bridge was completed and the original structure was converted to a highway bridge and remained in use until 1939. The Pennsylvania line from Philadelphia to Baltimore was electrified about 1930, receiving most of its power from the Philadelphia Electric Company, some of which came from Conowingo. It was one of the first railroads to convert entirely to electric power.

### Baltimore and Ohio Railroad

While the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was the pioneer in Maryland with its first railroad from Baltimore to Ellicott City, it did not extend its



HA-836

~~HA-823~~  
 HAVRE DE GRACE, MD.  
 SE/4 HAVRE DE GRACE 15' QUADRANGLE  
 N3930--W7600/7.5

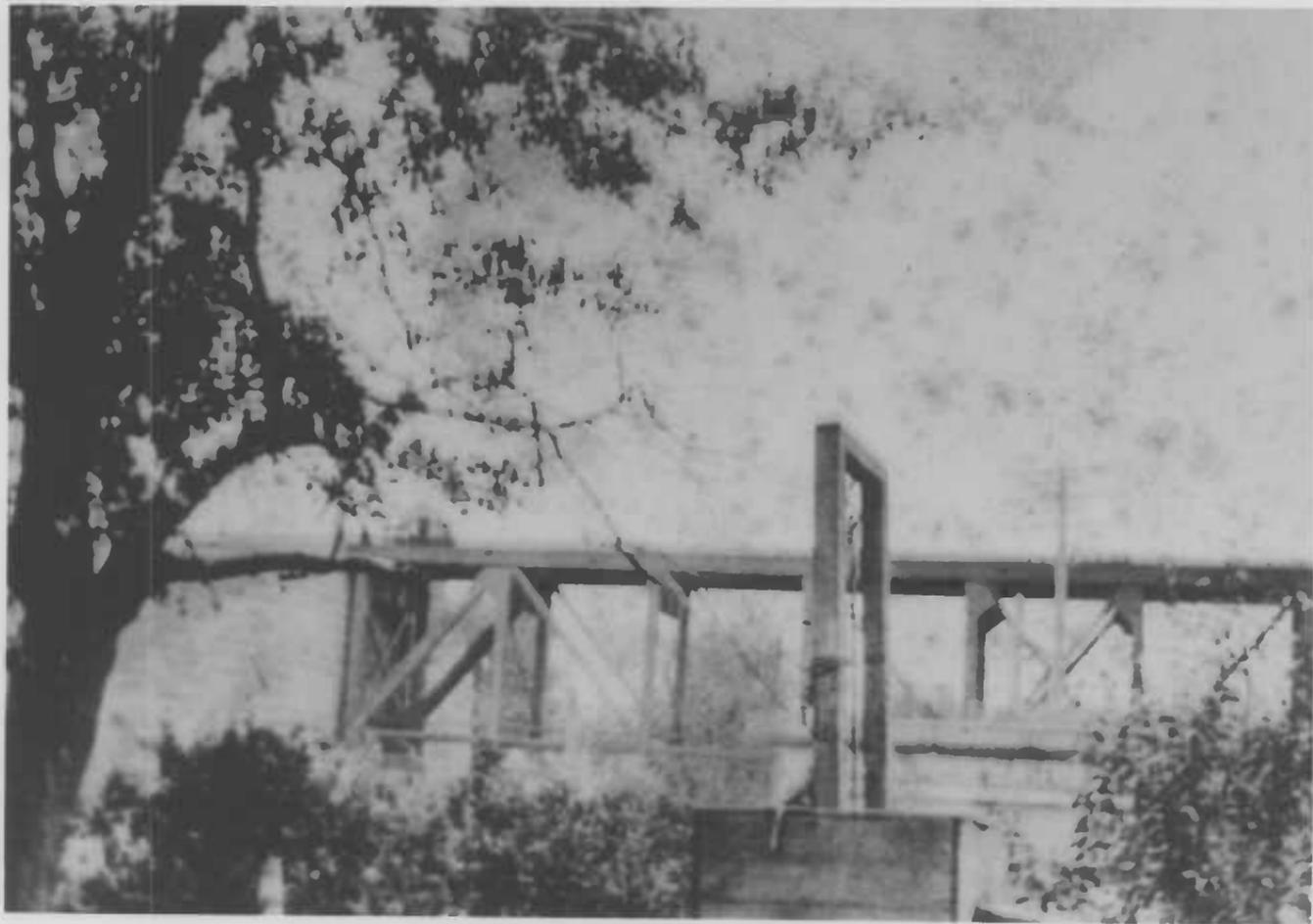
1953  
 PHOTO REPROD 1970  
 AMS 5763 II SE SERIES V833



BRIDGE PILING  
Otsego St.  
Havre de Grace

HA-836

MARION MORTON  
6/77



A3-HA790

HA-790 Abraham Jarrett Thomas House  
501 St. John Street  
Havre de Grace, MD

Well and (background) old RR  
crossing over Susquehanna.  
c. 1894-5 or early 1900's

Gift from: Mrs. Elise B. Deller  
1708 Chatham Road  
Camp Hill, PA 17011

October 27, 1984