

HO-1097/BA-1220

Ilchester B. & O. Railroad Bridge

B. & O. Railroad over Patapsco River and Ilchester Road

Private

Description:

The Ilchester B. & O. Railroad Bridge has a single-span, six-panel Pratt through truss over the river, and it is set on quarry-faced ashlar piers. The bridge has riveted lattice box girders for the central posts and diagonal bracing of the two center panels, with riveted solid box girders for the top chord and inclined end posts. The bottom chords, hip verticals, and other diagonal bracing are steel rods with pin connections. There are lattice sway braces at the top of the posts and lattice top lateral bracing between them. The bridge has four stringers to support a double track, but is now only single-tracked. There is a plate girder pony truss west of the Pratt through truss, over Ilchester road, with a quarry-faced ashlar stone retaining wall at the west end and the remains of a timber raised siding on the north side of the western approach that was probably designed as a coal unloading ramp. The west face of the tunnel opening is brick with a round-arched opening that has brick voussoirs and a quarry-faced stone keystone. Above the arch is a brick panel with "19 - ILCHESTER - 03" in raised bricks.

Significance:

The Ilchester B. & O. Railroad Bridge replaces the stone Patterson Viaduct, which was built in 1830 and destroyed by the flood of 1868. Originally, a metal Bollman Truss bridge was built on the surviving abutments. At the turn of the twentieth century the B. & O. Railroad set about to remove problems from their main line, including straightening tight turns as much as possible. One of these problem areas was the crossing of the Patapsco River at Ilchester. Some of these improvements were in progress by early 1901, but the changes at Ilchester were delayed. These changes included the construction of a tunnel on the Baltimore County side of the river, the west end of which opens onto the bridge, and a new approach to the bridge on the Howard County side of the river. The American Bridge Company of New York was the builder of the Ilchester span. It is not known when the tunnel was completed, but the brick facing of the western opening has the date 1903.



## 7. Description

Inventory No. HO-1097/BA-1220

### Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

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There is a plate girder pony truss west of the Pratt through truss, over Ilchester road, with a quarry-faced ashlar stone retaining wall at the west end and the remains of a timber raised siding on the north side of the western approach that was probably designed as a coal unloading ramp.

The west face of the tunnel opening is brick with a round-arched opening that has brick voussoirs and a quarry-faced stone keystone. Above the arch is a brick panel with "19 - ILCHESTER - 03" in raised bricks.

## 8. Significance

Inventory No. HO-1097/BA-1220

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

**Specific dates** N/A **Architect/Builder** American Bridge Co.

**Construction dates** 1903

Evaluation for:

National Register

Maryland Register

not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

### Summary:

The Ilchester B. & O. Railroad Bridge replaces the stone Patterson Viaduct, which was built in 1830 and destroyed by the flood of 1868. Originally, a metal Bollman Truss bridge was built on the surviving abutments. At the turn of the twentieth century the B. & O. Railroad set about to remove problems from their main line, including straightening tight turns as much as possible. One of these problem areas was the crossing of the Patapsco River at Ilchester. Some of these improvements were in progress by early 1901, but the changes at Ilchester were delayed. These changes included the construction of a tunnel on the Baltimore County side of the river, the west end of which opens onto the bridge, and a new approach to the bridge on the Howard County side of the river. The American Bridge Company of New York was the builder of the Ilchester span. It is not known when the tunnel was completed, but the brick facing of the western opening has the date 1903.

### Significance:

The Ilchester B. & O. Railroad Bridge replaces the stone Patterson Viaduct, which was built in 1830 and destroyed by the flood of 1868. Originally, a metal Bollman Truss bridge was built on the surviving abutments, and it can be seen in an engraving in poet William Cullen Bryant's *Picturesque America*, published in two volumes between 1872 and 1874.<sup>1</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century the B. & O. Railroad set about to remove problems from their main line, including straightening tight turns as much as possible. One of the causes of these problems was the ever-growing length of railroad cars being used, which required more gentle curves or the cars would derail. One of these problem areas was the crossing of the Patapsco River at Ilchester. The changes, and their beneficial effects, were described by the *Baltimore Sun*:

<sup>1</sup> Joetta Cramm, *Howard County: A Pictorial History* rev. ed. (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company, 2004), p. 98.

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What is known as the Ilchester improvement is the building of a new line 4,500 feet long from a point a short distance west of Orange Grove to a point a short distance west of Ilchester, and the abandoning of the present line between these points. The new line will save 1,000 feet in distance. The present curves have a radius of 375 feet, while on the new line the curve radius will be 2,865 feet and the major portion of the line on tangent. A double-track tunnel 1,400 feet long is part of the improvement.<sup>2</sup>

Some of these improvements were in progress by early 1901, but the changes at Ilchester were delayed due to problems in acquiring the necessary new right-of-way. These changes included the construction of a tunnel on the Baltimore County side of the river, the west end of which opens onto the bridge, and a new approach to the bridge on the Howard County side of the river. It was expected in April 1901 that 150 men would be employed on the tunnel. With the men working night and day, it was expected to take 15 months to complete all of the work at Ilchester.<sup>3</sup> In May 1902 the *Baltimore Sun* reported:

The new tunnels were opened in narrow 10 or 12 foot shafts, only sufficient for elbow room for the drillers. An explosive of 60 per cent glycerine [sic], the highest power available, was used in blasting. Automatic steam and compressed-air drills were employed to bore the holes. In the Ilchester borings, in some places 100 feet below the top of the hill, two sets of drills were put to work, one at each end. The two openings came together the other day with wonderful precision, without the deviation of an inch sideways or up or down. . . .

Altogether there are cuts and fills of half a mile at Ilchester . . . . A new bridge at Ilchester is also necessary, and all these are in course of construction, being mammoth steel affairs.<sup>4</sup>

Completion of all of the improvements on the line was expected to take another year.

Blasting at Ilchester resulted in a personal injury law suit by Stephen Kerger, who claimed to have been hit by flying debris. This proved less of a problem for the railroad than a strike in March 1903 by the International Association of Bridge and Structural Iron Workers against the American Bridge Company of New York. American Bridge was the builder of the Ilchester span. They refused to pay workers more than \$3 per day, but the wage scale for structural workers called for \$3.50 per day, soon to be

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<sup>2</sup> "Improving the B. and O.," *Baltimore Sun*, 9 February 1903, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> "Railroad Betterments," *Baltimore Sun*, 28 February 1901, p. 9. "Large Force of Men at Work on the Ilchester Tunnel," *Baltimore Sun*, 1 April 1901, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> "Tunnels under the Hills," *Baltimore Sun*, 5 May 1902, p. 9.

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raised to \$4.00. This was apparently part of a larger movement within the building trades in general regarding wages and the recognition of their unions. Though the workers walked off the Ilchester job, a temporary agreement was reached and the bridge was completed in April 1903. Work on the tunnel seems to have continued through this period, and one laborer, 32-year-old William O'Hara of Scranton, Pennsylvania, was killed by falling rock while working in the tunnel in June 1903. It is not known when the tunnel was completed, but the brick facing of the western opening has the date 1903.<sup>5</sup>

The bridge has a single-span Pratt through truss over the river and a plate girder pony truss over Ilchester road, with a raised siding on the north side of the western approach that was probably designed as a coal unloading ramp.

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<sup>5</sup> "Stone from Blast Hit Him," *Baltimore Sun*, 12 September 1902, p. 8. "Likely to Affect Baltimore," *Baltimore Sun*, 7 March 1903, p. 1. "Ironworkers go Out," *Baltimore Sun*, 10 March 1903, p. 12. "Strike Still Threatens," *Baltimore Sun*, 21 April 1903, p. 7. "Caught under fall of Rock," *Baltimore Sun*, 9 June 1903, p. 7.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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See footnotes

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of surveyed property unknown  
Acreage of historical setting unknown  
Quadrangle name Ellicott City Quadrangle scale: 1:24000

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundaries consist of parallel lines 30 feet north and south of the center line of the tracks, and parallel lines 100 feet east of and 200 feet west of the center line of the river, which encompasses all of the historic structures at the site.

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## 11. Form Prepared by

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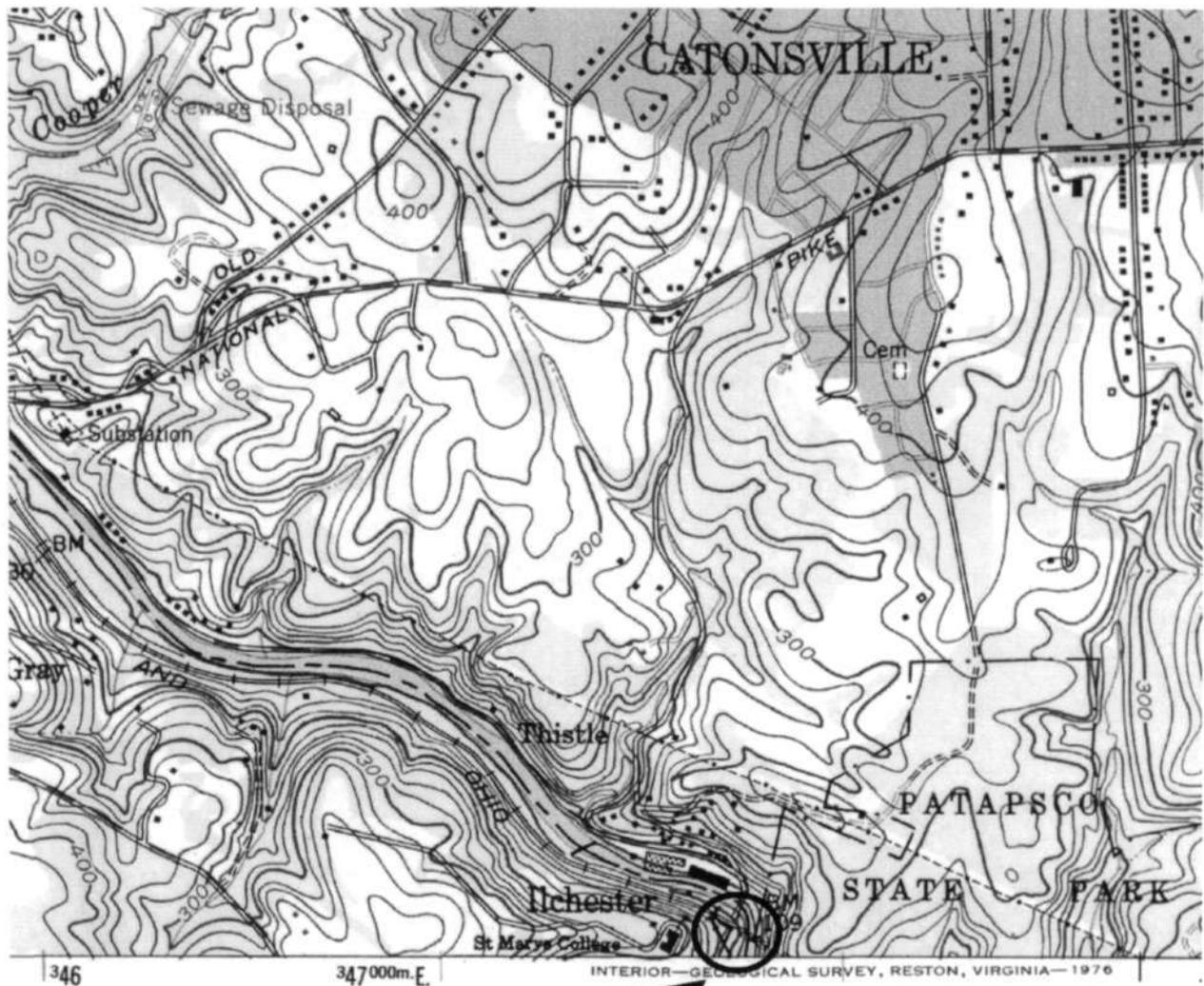
name/title	Ken Short		
organization	Howard County Department of Planning & Zoning	date	September 2012
street & number	3430 Courthouse Drive	telephone	410-313-4335
city or town	Ellicott City	state	MD

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The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties 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  
DHCD/DHCP  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
410-514-7600



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

HO-1097/BA-1220  
 Ilchester B. & O. Railroad Bridge  
 B. & O. Railroad over Patapsco River and Ilchester Road  
 Ellicott City quad

HO-1097 /BA-1220  
Ilchester B. & O. Railroad Bridge  
B. & O. Railroad over Patapsco River and Ilchester Road  
Howard County, Maryland  
Ken Short, photographer

Photo Log

Nikon D-70 camera  
Epson Premium paper  
Epson Photo Black UltraChrome ink cartridge

HO-1097\_2012-05-08\_01

Pratt truss from north

HO-1097\_2012-05-08\_02

Plate girder and Pratt truss from west



HO-1097 / BA-1220

Ilchester B. + O. Railroad Bridge

B. + O. Railroad over Patapsco River and Ilchester Road

Howard County, Maryland

Ken Short

2012-05-08

MD SHPO

Pratt truss from north

1 of 2



HO-1097 / BA-1220

Elchester B. + O. Railroad Bridge

B. + O. Railroad over Patapsco River and Elchester  
Road

Howard County, Maryland

Ken Short

2012-05-08

MD SHPO

Plate girder and Pratt truss from west

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