

HAER Documentation of Massachusetts Historic Bridges

AHS Senior Historian Bruce Clouette, Ph.D., has recorded dozens of engineering features for the federal Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a permanent archive of historic bridges, dams, power plants, and other structures maintained by the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Among these are four historic bridges in Massachusetts:

- Cooper Street Bridge, spanning the MBTA railroad tracks in Wakefield (HAER No. MA-132), an early (1903) example of reinforced-concrete construction. At the time, local officials wanted to increase pedestrian safety, particularly for schoolchildren attending a newly enlarged Greenwood School nearby.
- Lovett Bridge, Cook Street over the Mumford River, Douglas (HAER No. MA-133). Recorded in 1994, this 1908 steel-beam bridge typifies early 20th-century town-highway construction. Pre-fabricated corrugated arches simplified the pouring of the concrete deck, and the decorative lattice railing was an inexpensive way for local highway officials to get a more attractive bridge.
- Hastings Bridge, Campground Road over former Boston and Maine Railroad, Sterling (HAER No. MA-83). For reasons of economy, the Boston & Maine Railroad continued to use timber bridges, particularly the Howe truss, for highway overpasses into the early 20th century.
- Adams Street Bridge, spanning the Neponset River between Boston and Milton, MA (HAER No. MA-131). The bridge, a combination of a 1765 stone-slab structure and 1847 stone arches, was recorded in 1996.



HAER documentation consists of a technical description of the bridge and an assessment of its significance in the history of engineering and the evolution of local and state transportation systems. Archival research (e.g., town-meeting minutes, railroad company records) is required, and the professional photographer must receive detailed direction from the historian in order to make a complete visual record of the bridge, its distinctive details, and its setting. In each case, the project required adherence to HAER's strict requirements for substance and formatting. Clouette coordinated directly with Massachusetts Department of Transportation bridge historian, Stephen Roper, in preparing the documentation.