

*Georgia's  
Romantic  
Bridges*





**ONCE GEORGIA** had some 250 romantic “kissing bridges” crossing her waterways. However, time, nature and vandals have taken their toll on these structures that sheltered many a lover’s kiss and many a thief’s clandestine deed. Now only 18 remain.

In 1958 there were between 77 and 85 of these structures in the state; 10 years later this number had been reduced to 28. Now there is a real effort to preserve these relics of the road.

Watson Mill Bridge, spanning Broad River between Madison and Oglethorpe Counties, is an example of this effort. Restored in 1973 by the Georgia Department of Transportation, using antique hand tools, the bridge is the central attraction for a Department of Natural Resources state park.

Several explanations have been offered as why these bridges were covered. One said they were covered to keep horses from shying when they crossed over them. Another suggested the reason was to offer refuge to travelers who were caught in sudden downpours. Still another offered the explanation that the cooling shade offered by the shingled bridges gave the horse a respite from the hot sun. Undoubtedly young lovers found it a secluded place for a kiss, hence the nickname.

But the real reason was more practical; the covering protected the main structural timbers from the weather, adding more life to the bridge. In the late 18th century, Timothy Palmer, a bridge designer, patented a covered bridge which he calculated would add forty years to the spans. However, he wasn’t the first with the idea. Covered bridges may have been built in Babylon as far back as 780 B.C.

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Spanning the decades as well as rapid rivers and sluggish streams, these covered bridges are rich in history and folklore. Ghosts of 10 thousand yesterdays flutter through their dusty oaken passages.

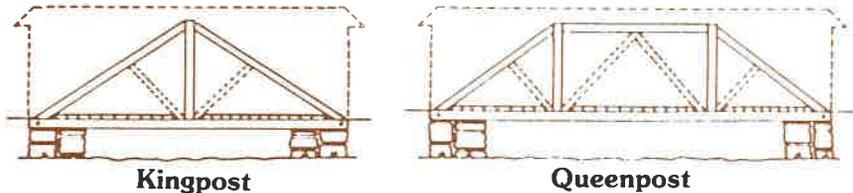
Many local legends have sprung up around the various bridges in the state. Some of them are gruesome tales of highway robbers and assassins who hid in the rafters then sprang down upon their victims. Other tales talk of love and courting. One bridegroom told his new wife, as they entered a long covered bridge late one evening, "Keep talking to me, my love, and pray that the horse doesn't lose his way."

Customs, revolving around hopes and dreams, have sprung up about these quaint structures. One says a wish will come true, if it is made before a shiny new penny, dropped through a crack in the floor, hits the water. Another tells a young woman, that if she makes a daisy chain and strings it across the entrance, the first young man that comes through and breaks the chain will be her future husband.

Although only two extant covered bridges were built prior to 1870, these types of bridges have special significance in Georgia's Civil War history. Andrews' Raiders, a Union sabotage group that Walt Disney portrayed in "The Great Locomotive Chase," didn't come South just to steal a train, but to burn covered railroad bridges over the Etowah and Oostanaula Rivers and 11 smaller bridges over Chickamauga Creek.

Georgia's covered bridges have other distinctions. Coheele Creek Bridge in Early County is the southernmost covered bridge in the United States. Also Sautee Creek Bridge (or Stovall Mill) in White County was featured in the movie "I'd Climb the Highest Mountain."

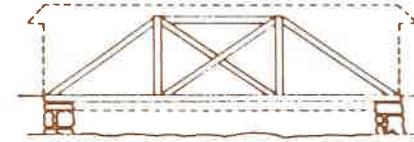
Covered bridges have gone by other names too. Among them are the "shelter bridge" and the "tunnel across the creek." In 1832 the first one in Georgia was built across the Chattahoochee River on the Alabama line at Columbus. This was of the "Town lattice" design, by far the most popular style of Georgia's early bridge builders, probably because they could "build them by the mile and cut them off by the yard."



Four other types were designed and all are seen in Georgia's remaining structures. These are kingpost, queenpost, Warren truss and the Long (or Howe) truss.

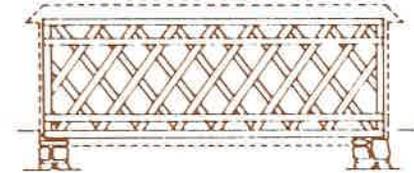
The simplest design was the kingpost which consisted of a centerpost that connected the apex of a triangle with the midpoint of the base timber. The two compression pieces slanted downward and outward toward each shore. Because of the length limitations on the compression pieces, this truss was limited to small bridges.

To overcome this problem, the queenpost adapted the principles of the kingpost truss by changing the apex of the triangle to a horizontal beam and connected to two vertical tie posts. By putting a cross "X" instead of an inverted "V" in the middle of the queenpost, a stronger design resulted. This stronger design was called the Warren truss.



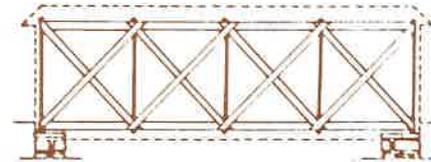
**Warren Truss**

Ithiel Town designed a truss in 1820 that consisted of a crisscross lattice of slanting upright planks held between horizontal timbers spliced lengthwise to form the girders which spanned the stream. The lattice was pinned at the points where one plank crossed another with wooden pegs, and the whole assembly formed a rigid structure of great strength.



**Town Lattice**

By the 1830's Col. Stephen H. Long introduced a panel truss which consisted of a series of crossed beams between upright posts. By 1840 this design was improved upon by William Howe who substituted iron rods for Long's wooden tension posts.



**Long or Howe Truss**

Whether they are the last vestiges of a simpler age or simply the remnants of pioneer artisan craftsmanship, Georgia's romantic bridges are a part of her heritage and should be preserved.



Two bridges have been moved from their original locations and are preserved in parks, (Stone Mountain and Callaway Gardens) a third on original location is the main attraction of another park, but the remaining 15 are on county roads. The Georgia Department of Transportation has county maps (for 50 cents each) that show the location of these bridges. They are located in Banks, Bartow, Cobb, DeKalb, Early, Forsyth, Franklin, Harris, Madison/Oglethorpe, Meriwether, Oconee, Upson, Walton and White.

## *Lowry Bridge*

(Euharlee Creek)

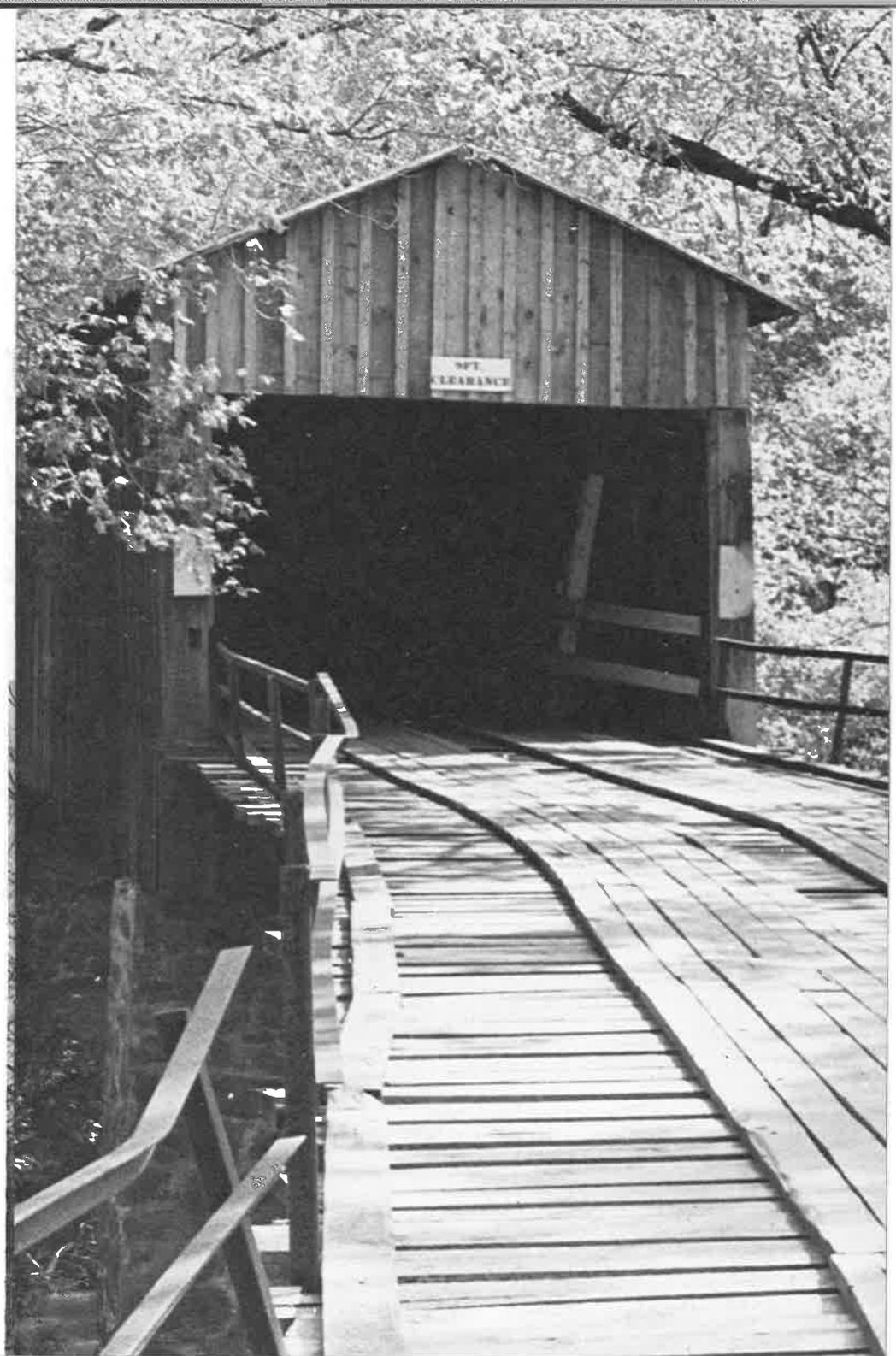
Bartow County

Date 1886

Town lattice

116 ft. long one span

From Cartersville go six miles west on Ga. 113 then two miles north on county road to Euharlee Creek on southern edge of Euharlee.



## *Kilgore's Mill*

(Apalachee River or Bethlehem Bridge)

Walton - Barrow Counties

Date: 1874

Town lattice

104 feet long one span

On the Walton - Barrow County

line eight miles north of Monroe

on a dirt road one and a half

miles west of Ga. 11. There is a

historic marker on Ga. 11

across the county line in Barrow

where you turn off Ga. 11.

Follow the paved county road

for approximately one mile then

turn left on dirt road for six-

tenths of a mile.



## *Stovall Mill*

(Sautee Creek)

White County

Date: 1895

Kingpost

33 feet long one span

Georgia's smallest covered

bridge is 12 miles north of

Cleveland on Ga. 75 for seven

miles then a right turn on Ga. 17

for approximately two miles,

then left on Ga. 255 for two

miles to Sautee Creek.



## *Stone Mountain Park Bridge*

DeKalb

(Formerly located in Clarke  
County over Oconee River in  
Athens)

Date: 1892

Town lattice

151 feet long 3 spans



## *Callaway Gardens Bridge*

Callaway Gardens Covered  
Bridge

Harris County

(Formerly over Wedadkee  
Creek in Troup)

Date: 1870

Town lattice

60 feet (originally 173 feet)

## *Auchumpkee Creek*

(Hootenville Bridge)

Upson County

Date: 1898

Town lattice

96 feet one span

This bridge spans Auchumpkee Creek and is located on Allen Road between U.S. 19 and U.S. 80 in the southern part of the county about one mile north of the intersection U.S. 19 and U.S. 80.



## *Coheelee Creek*

Early County

Date: 1883

Kingpost

96 feet two spans

From Blakely go southwest about nine miles to Hilton then two miles north of Hilton turn off Ga. 62 on to Old River Road. The bridge spans Coheelee Creek.

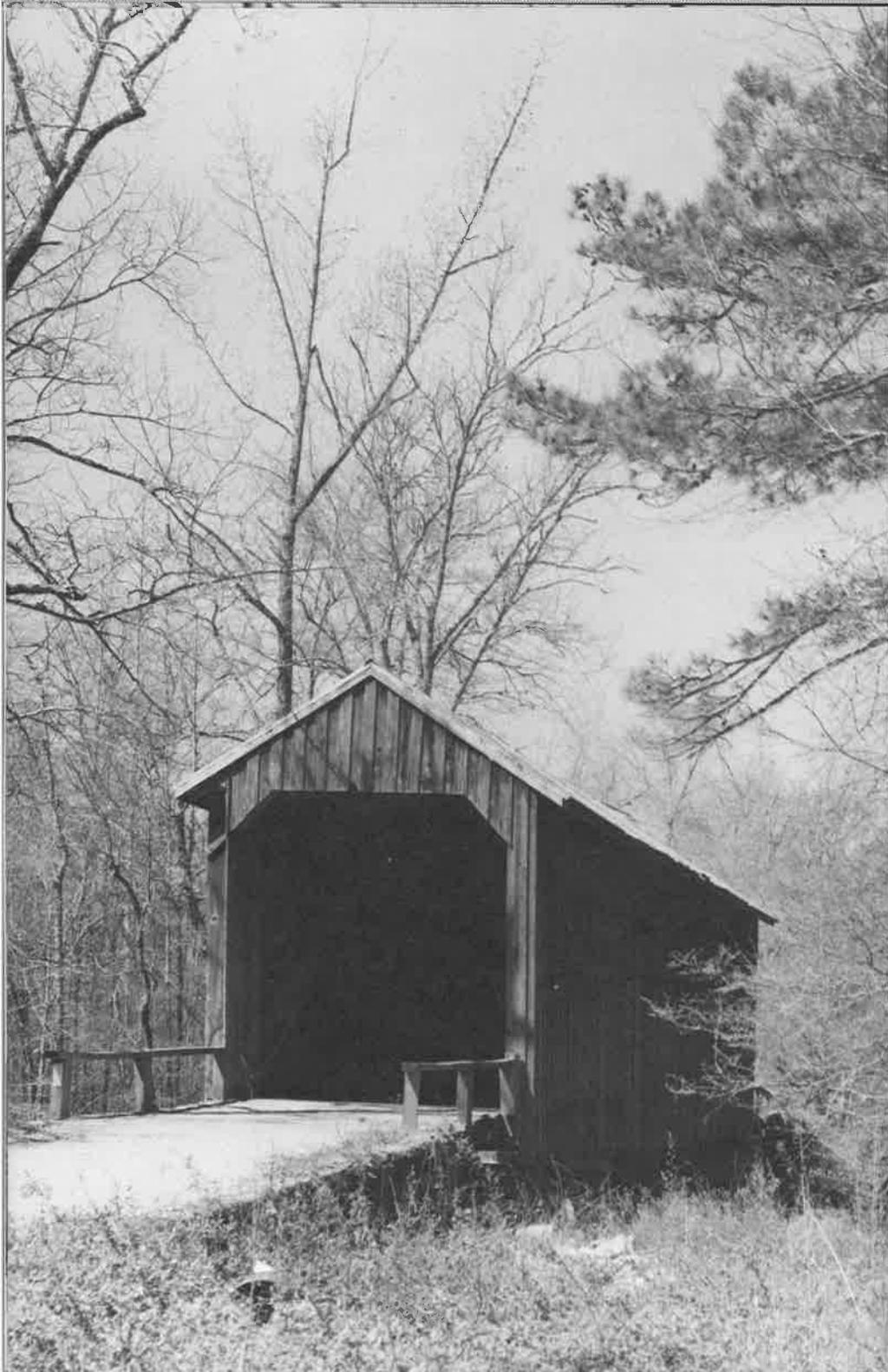




## *Watson Mill State Park*

From Comer go south two miles on Ga. 22 to signs indicating Watson Mill State Park, then turn onto county road for two and a half miles to bridge over South Fork of Broad River.

(Broad River Bridge)  
Oglethorpe - Madison Counties  
Date: 1885  
Town lattice  
236 feet long four spans



## *White Oak Creek*

(Alvaton Bridge)  
Meriwether County  
Date: 1880

Long truss  
80 feet long one span  
From Alvaton go east on Ga.  
362 for one and a half miles, turn  
south on Joe Alexander Rd. for  
one and a half miles, then west  
on Covered Bridge Road.



## *Big Red Oak Creek*

Meriwether County  
Date: 1840

Town lattice  
116 feet 1 span  
The 116 feet is covered but the  
span is 412 feet.  
From Woodbury go north on  
Ga. 83 about three miles, turn  
east on Slaton - Striblins Road,  
then north on Huel Brown Road  
to bridge which spans Big Red  
Oak Creek



## *Big Clouds Creek*

(Howard's Bridge)

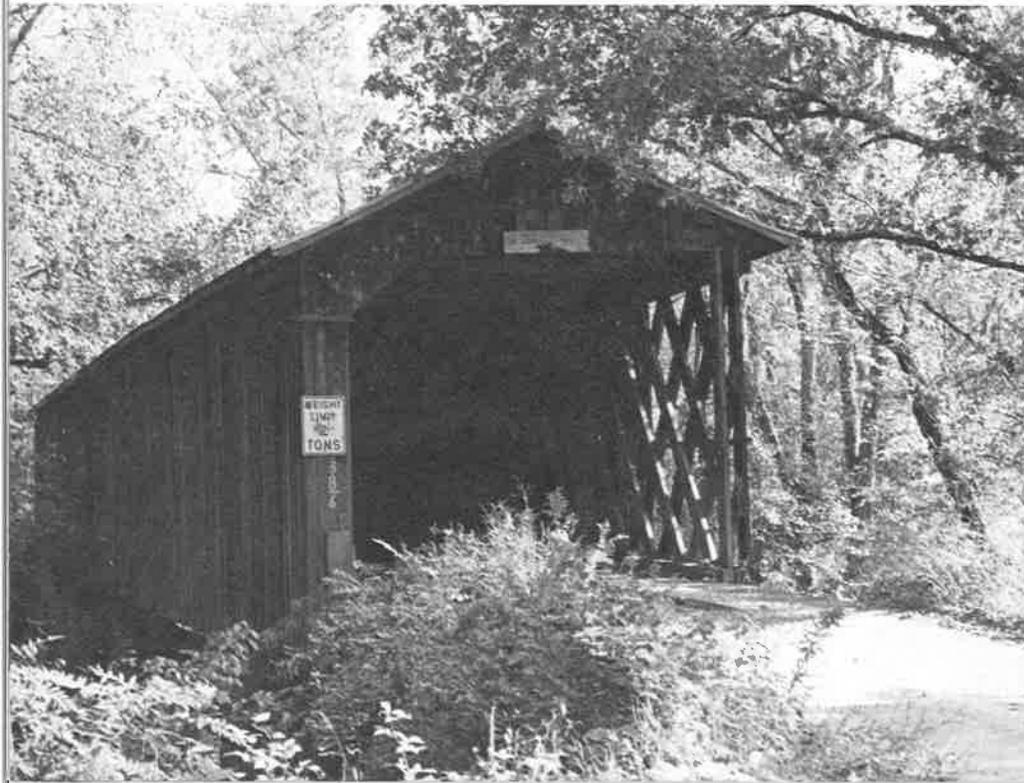
Oglethorpe County

Date: Unknown

Town lattice

168 feet long two spans

From Lexington go north on Ga. 22 for seven miles then turn left onto a dirt road across from Mount Pleasant Church; go about a quarter of a mile to the bridge over Big Clouds Creek.



## *Cromer's Mill*

(Nails Creek)

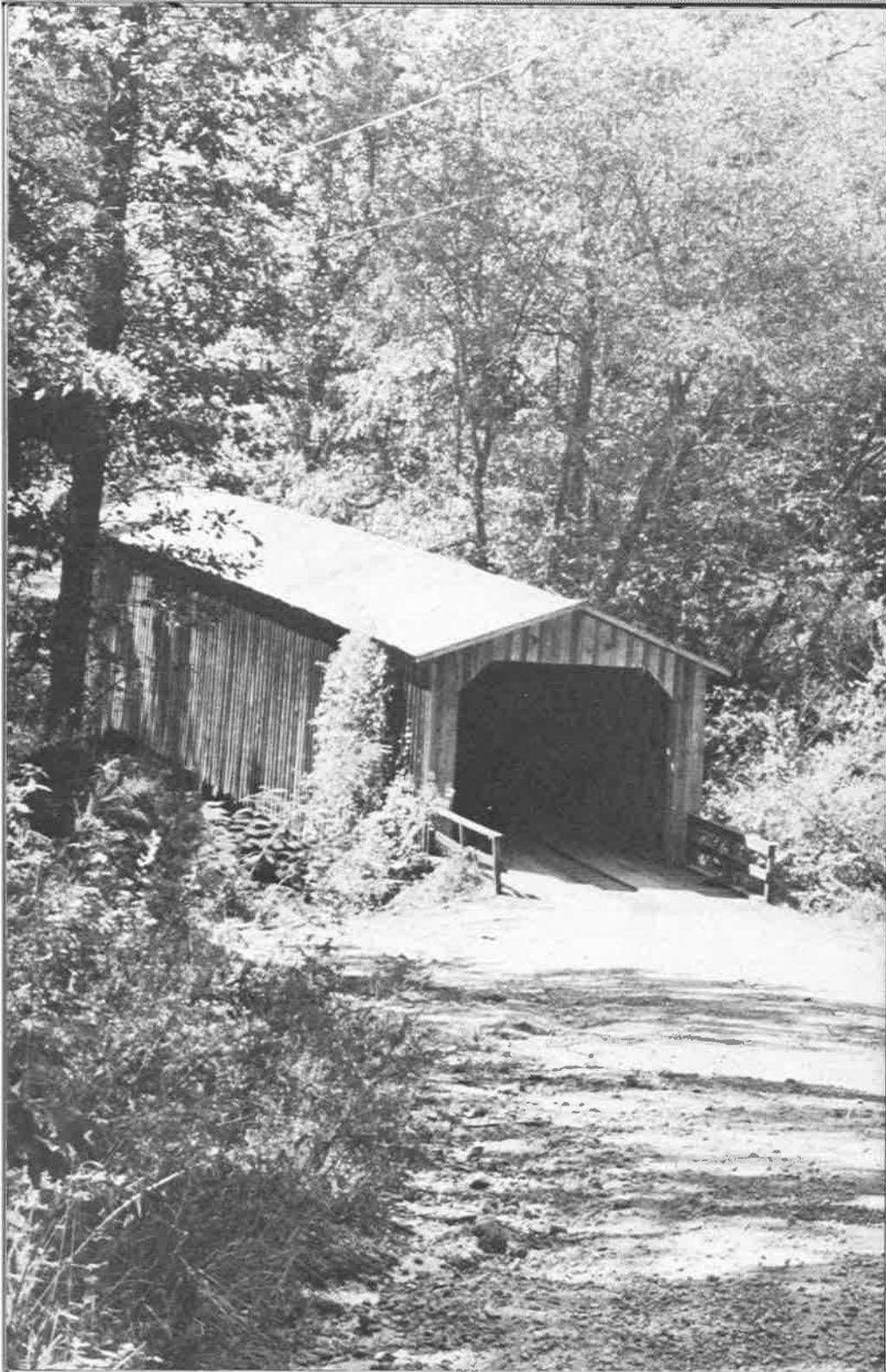
Franklin County

Date: 1906

Town lattice

132 feet - one span

Over Nails Creek on county road just east of Ga. 106 about eight miles south of Carnesville and a half mile north of Gordon Church.



## *Elder's Mill*

(Rose Creek)

Oconee County

Date: unknown

Town lattice

75 feet - one span

From Watkinsville go south on Ga. 15 for about 2 miles, until you see a small sign on right saying "Elder's Mill" then go down this road for three-quarters of a mile to Rose Creek.



## *Concord Bridge*

(Nickajack Creek)

Cobb County

Date: 1848 ? (1880)

Queenpost

133 feet long - one span

From I-285 take Ga. 280 toward Smyrna turn left onto Concord Bridge Road.





## *New Salem*

Banks County

Date: 1915

Kingpost

46 feet long - one span

Leave I-85 at Ga. 15, U.S. 441

exit and go south for one and a

half miles to Ga. 59 intersection.

Turn east on Ga. 59 for two and

a half miles then turn to S992 on

the right. The bridge is located

about a half mile down S992

over a branch of Grove Creek.



## *Poole's Mill*

(Settendown Creek)

Forsyth County

Date: 1906

Town lattice

90 feet - one span

From Cumming go seven miles

west on Ga. 20 to Ducktown,

then three miles north to Heard-

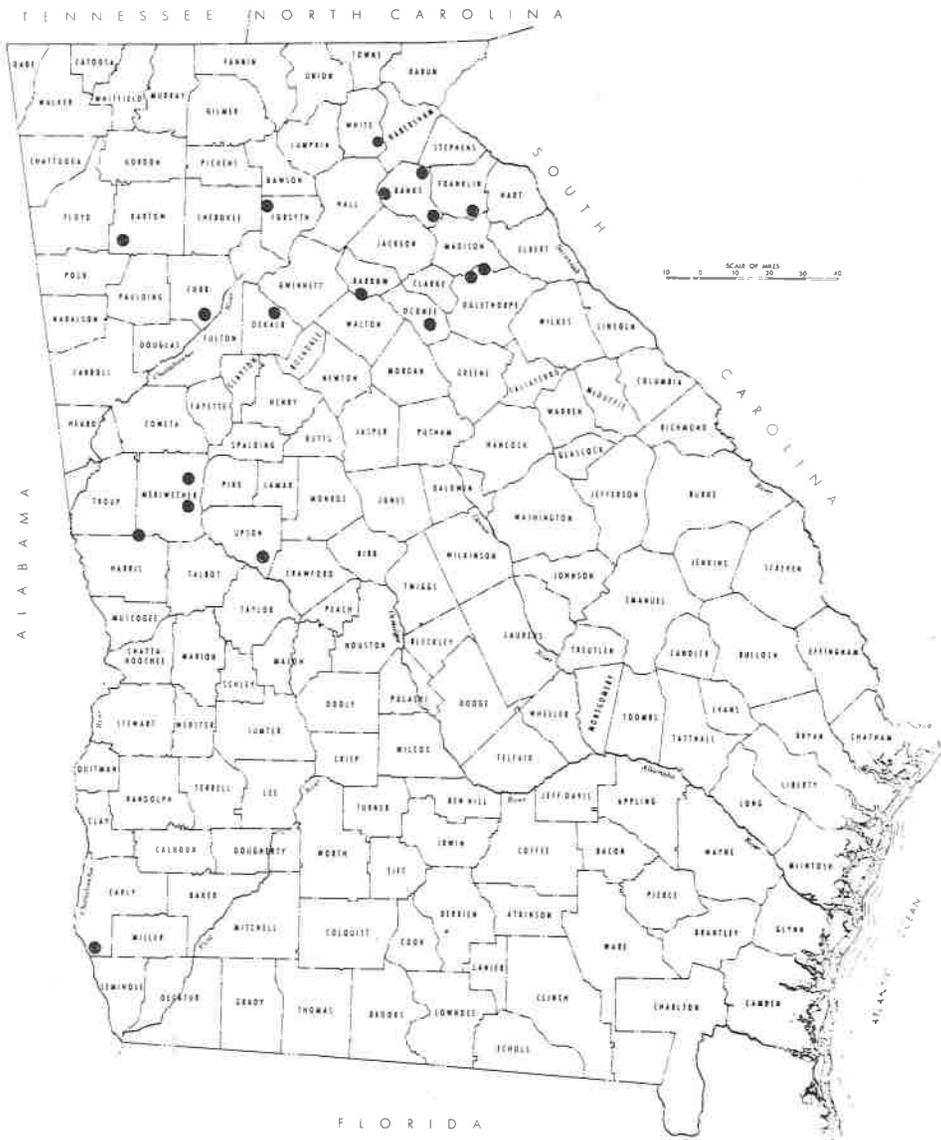
ville. Bridge spans Settendown

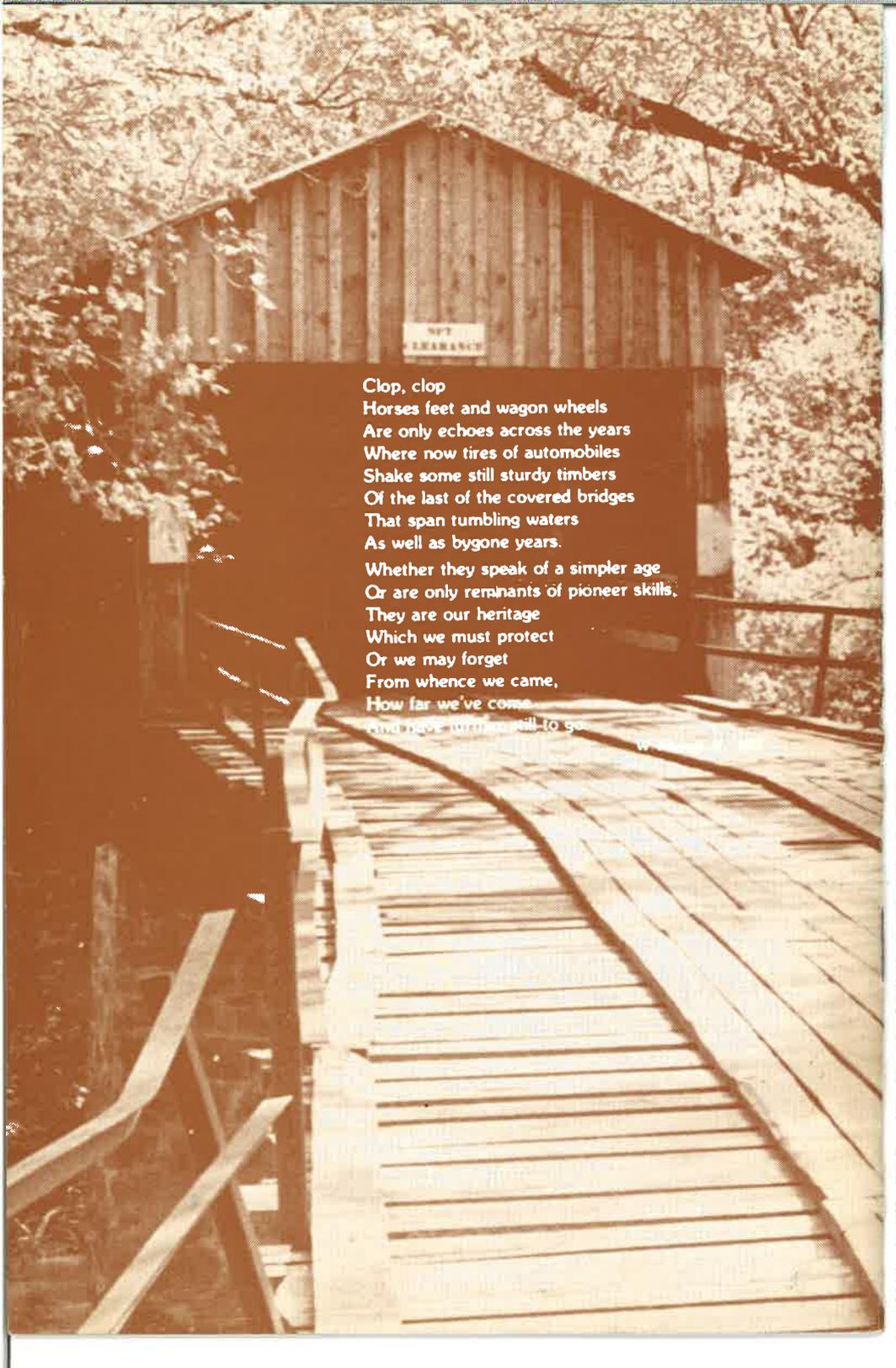
Creek one mile north of

Heardville on Poole's Mill Road.



# Locations of Covered Bridges in Georgia





NOT  
REARWARD

Clop, clop  
Horses feet and wagon wheels  
Are only echoes across the years  
Where now tires of automobiles  
Shake some still sturdy timbers  
Of the last of the covered bridges  
That span tumbling waters  
As well as bygone years.

Whether they speak of a simpler age  
Or are only remnants of pioneer skills,  
They are our heritage  
Which we must protect  
Or we may forget  
From whence we came,  
How far we've come

And how our future will to go