

# 2020

# PENNSYLVANIA AT RISK

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*Pennsylvania At Risk* puts statewide focus on a building's plight, promotes local action, and rallies statewide support for historic preservation.

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# Meadows Road Bridge

THREAT: DEMOLITION

MEADOWS ROAD AT SAUCON CREEK / LOWER SAUCON TOWNSHIP / NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

*A beloved and historic stone bridge provides an important connection to the past — and to two sides of a township. Locals want to see it repaired instead of replaced.*



## History

Your ancestor might have mailed a postcard featuring this picturesque rubble fieldstone bridge over the Saucon Creek. Painters such as Walter E. Baum and Fred Bees set up easels to paint its four arches. But more than being a long-standing part of the scenic landscape, the Meadows Road Bridge (built 1858) is the oldest bridge in Lower Saucon Township. In all of Northampton County, it is one of the oldest surviving bridges and is one of only two examples of a four-span stone arch bridge. Early stone arch bridges predate covered bridges and represent the only technology available to the early settlers for longer, permanent spans. By the 1860s, Northampton County bridge construction primarily used iron span technology.

County records for 1860 show Levi S. Moyer to be the wealthy owner of a nearby gristmill (built 1829) that still stands today. The bridge connected farmers to the mill, just as today it connects local citizens to offices and retail from one side of Lower Saucon Township to the other.

In 1976, when the County announced plans to replace the bridge, several local citizen groups wrote letters requesting that the bridge be saved. The public outcry and support for preservation of the existing bridge led the County to withdraw its plans for replacement.

## Threat

The bridge was closed due to safety concerns when a county inspection in April 2018 determined that the structural integrity of the bridge was compromised. The bridge is currently in line for planned rehabilitation or replacement by Northampton County (determination pending).

## Change

Preservation Pennsylvania will submit a historic resource survey form (HRSF) to the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC) requesting evaluation of the bridge for National Register eligibility. As in 1976, a demonstration of public sentiment will show Northampton County that this bridge matters to local residents who used it every day before its closure. The bridge is part of the local identity, and the preference would be to solve the problems with the existing bridge rather than demolish and replace it.