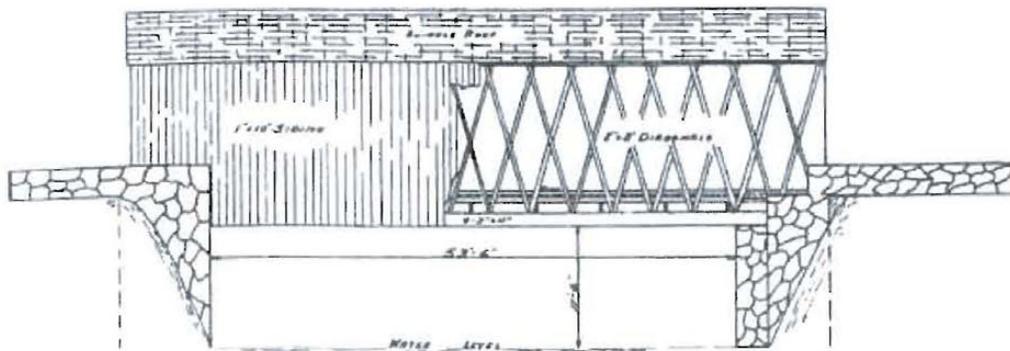




Plate 1: Wooddale Covered Bridge circa 1933.

PROJECT AREA HISTORY

The Wooddale Covered Bridge was associated with the industrial past of Red Clay Creek. The bridge was built around 1850 and spanned approximately 60 feet as it crossed Red Clay Creek (**Plate 1**). It was built to provide access to the nearby Delaware Iron Works and community of Wooddale. The bridge uses a truss design known as the Town Truss, which is characterized by crosshatched wooden sides and wooden pins located at each joint, and was invented in 1820 by Ithiel Town (Wilhelm 1992) (**Figure 3**).



These plans, prepared in 1939 by the Delaware State Highway Department, are the earliest known drawing of the Wooddale Covered Bridge

Figure 3: Ithiel Town Truss Design - Wooddale Covered Bridge

The bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1973 and was a contributing element to the Wooddale Historic District, which was listed in the NRHP in 1979. The historic district includes workers' houses, an owner's house and archaeological remains associated with the former iron works (**Figure 4**). The Wilmington and Western Railroad Historic District, listed in the NRHP in 1980, extends through the project area northwest of the bridge.

The first iron works on this location were opened in 1814 by Edward Gilpin, who operated a slitting mill and a rolling mill powered by water from the creek. The Wood family leased the rolling mill in 1826 and specialized in production of spades and shovels used for the construction of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. Alan Wood eventually purchased the property. In 1844, the mill changed hands again and evolved into the Delaware Iron Works. The Wilmington and Western Railroad initiated service in 1872, at which time the local train station and Post Office adopted the name "Wooddale" (Dorsey 1950) (**Figure 5**). The station was located between the railroad tracks and the Red Clay Creek southwest of what is now Fox Hill Road (Wilhelm 1992) (**Plate 2**).



Plate 2: Wooddale Covered Bridge (1933 photo) and possible train station at far right.
(Note: The current roadway serving the temporary bridge is located to the right, adjacent to the original roadway.)

In 1873, mill operations were hit hard by the depression and operation declined. The rolling mill was converted to a paper mill in 1891.