

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Burnsville Bridge  
other name/site number: N/A

. Location

street & number: Old Bridge Street not for publication: N/A  
city/town: Burnsville vicinity: N/A  
state: WV code: WV county: Braxton code: 007 zip code: 26335

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_ statewide  locally.  
(\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.)

William C. Garner 2.9.95  
Signature of Certifying Official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau Date

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. (\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of Keeper	Date of Action
___ entered in the National Register ___ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
___ determined eligible for the National Register ___ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
___ determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
___ removed from the National Register	_____	_____
___ other (explain): _____	_____	_____

Burnsville Bridge  
Name of Property

Braxton County, WV  
County and State

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**5. Classification**

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**Ownership of Property:**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)       object
- district
- site
- structure

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	TOTAL

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**      0

=====

**6. Function or Use**

=====

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: road-related  
(vehicular)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Transportation: pedestrian-related

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

=====

**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification:**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Pratt through truss

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Foundation stone

Walls \_\_\_\_\_

Roof \_\_\_\_\_

Other Steel Superstructure

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**  
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Burnsville Bridge  
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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is: N/A

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Transportation

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1893 - 1944

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Variety Iron Works Company

Cleveland, Ohio

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**  
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**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of Repository: Braxton County Courthouse

Burnsville Bridge  
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**10. Geographical Data**  
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Acreage of Property: \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>529767</u>	<u>4300565</u>	2	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
3	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

\_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====  
**11. Form Prepared By**  
=====

Name/Title: Thomas Lee Crutchfield; Laura Belle Crutchfield

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: April 1, 1994

Street & Number: Box 244 Fulton Telephone: (304) 853-2597

City or Town: Burnsville State: WV ZIP: 26335

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**Additional Documentation**  
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Burnsville Bridge  
Name of Property

Braxton County, WV  
County and State

=====  
**Property Owner**  
=====

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

Name: Town of Burnsville

Street & Number: Main Street Telephone: (304) 853-7911

City or Town: Burnsville State: WV Zip: 26335  
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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Burnsville Bridge  
Braxton County, WV

DESCRIPTION

The bridge being nominated is an example of a Pratt through truss bridge. It consists of two truss spans and one girder span. Truss span No. 1 has a span of 44 feet with supports placed at the panel points. Truss span No. 2 has a span of 138'-3" with floor beams space 19'-9". Two girder spans at 59'-3" each are the main load carrying members for truss span No. 2. Span No. 3 consists of a series of girders with a span of 23'9".

The structure is supported on two stone piers and one stone abutment. The deck consists of a 4" timber deck with a 2" wearing surface. The overall deck width is 13'-9" with a 2'-9" sidewalk on the downstream side. The roadway width between curbs is 10'-0".

The bridge is constructed of steel except for a few minor details. It was shipped by railroad from Variety Iron Works Company of Cleveland, Ohio to Weston, West Virginia in 1893. Later that same year it was brought from Weston to Burnsville, West Virginia by wagons.

Supports were added in 1965 to reinforce the bridge due to increased vehicular traffic.

The immediate setting of the bridge remains much as it was in past decades. Though only a short distance from busy Interstate 79, the Burnsville Bridge still serves the community as a pedestrian walkway. Various citizens and community groups, including the Lions Club, continue to express interest in the structure's preservation.

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Burnsville Bridge  
Braxton County, WV

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Burnsville Bridge is significant as the only surviving metal truss bridge in northern Braxton County, West Virginia. A once common structure in the rural American landscape, the "gridirons", or metal truss bridges, have rapidly disappeared from the nation's byways due to increasing pressures from traffic loads, traffic volumes, and safety considerations. The Burnsville Bridge survives as an excellent, well-preserved example of a patented Pratt through truss, the most popular metal truss type found in late 19th century America. The bridge is eligible, therefore, under Criterion C. Under Criterion A, the bridge derives local significance as the only transportation link for many decades between the two halves of Burnsville, a small late 19th-century oil and gas boom town bisected by the Little Kanawha River. To promote faster and more efficient transportation within the town, the county commission authorized construction of the bridge in 1892; it was completed in 1893. Thereafter, during its period of significance, 1893-1944, the bridge served as the trusted, dependable link between the eastern and western halves of the town.

America produced a large variety of metal truss bridges. Designs for these structures were peddled to county commissioners throughout the state by bridge company salesmen from West Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and other states. These companies sold bridges through catalogues, offering plans or the complete "kit" of a pre-fabricated bridge to be erected on the site by the company's crews or local workers. In the early twentieth century, Sears, Roebuck and Co. and Montgomery Ward would offer houses by mail in the same fashion.

Builders and engineers borrowed the technology for metal truss bridges from earlier American covered bridge wood truss designs. Covering wooden bridges protected the deck and truss work from weathering. Many engineers, however, switched to iron or to some combination of iron and wood when iron became a feasible building material in the mid-nineteenth century and to concrete when that became practical and economical in the early twentieth century. Today, we use steel as the strongest and at the same time most economical material.

Truss bridges traditionally possess a variety of truss forms. Trusses present a series of triangles that act together to form long structural units which support the weight put on them by wagons, people or cars. The triangles have vertical, horizontal and diagonal members (metal



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Burnsville Bridge  
Braxton County, WV

rods or timber pieces); the top horizontal member is called a compression chord, so that force is pushed in toward the center of the member, while the bottom horizontal members are called tension chords and resist forces pulling away from the center toward both ends. The verticals and diagonals can be either in tension or compression, depending on the configuration of the truss. For example, a roof truss in a house has the rafters in compression and the bottom tie in tension.

Most truss types were patented by some ingenious engineer or carpenter, so part of studying the history of bridges involves looking through years of patent records to understand what was so "unique" about that particular invention that made someone think it would either improve bridge design or protect designs developed by individual bridge companies.

The Burnsville Bridge is a well-preserved example of a Pratt truss. Caleb and Thomas Pratt patented in 1844 a common nineteenth-century design for metal truss bridges. A Boston architect, father Caleb encouraged Thomas' interest in mathematics and construction and supported his education at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. After college, Thomas served with the Army Engineers before joining the engineering staffs of a series of New England railroads. Moving beyond wood, Pratt developed a truss which could be made of iron.

The Pratt truss appears little different from the standard Howe, one of the preferred trusses for covered bridges, except that the major function of the key web member was reversed. By subjecting the diagonals mostly to tension, Pratt reduced the danger of buckling in the longest web members. Pratt continued the Howe truss' reliance on substantial intermediate verticals. The greater distinction in size and function between the verticals and the diagonals enhanced the dominant appearance of the grid.

Most Pratt through trusses have the standard chords, inclined endposts, diagonals, and counters of a typical pinned structure. A rectangular eyebar hangs in tension from the pin where the endpost and top chord connect and supports the initial floor beam. In contrast, the other or intermediate verticals are expected to help stabilize the top chord. They are subject therefore to compression and must be designed to resist buckling.

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Burnsville Bridge  
Braxton County, WV

HISTORY OF THE BURNSVILLE BRIDGE

"This contract made this 10th day of August, A.D. 1892, by and between The Variety Iron Works Company Bridge Manufacturers of the City of Cleveland, State of Ohio, party of the first part, and The County Court of Braxton County, West Virginia, by J.B. Norman and H.S. Perrine duly authorize by law to act for and in behalf of said County Court, agree to erect and complete the superstructure for a metal Highway Bridge over the Little Kanawha River at Burnsville, Braxton County, West Virginia." Thus in 1892, began the process of acquiring a bridge to span the Little Kanawha River in the community of Burnsville, that had become a "beehive" of the oil and gas boom.

Today, one hundred and two years later, one can find at the Braxton County Courthouse in the County Clerk's office, a dusty old Record's Book of the minutes (written in long hand) of The County Commission 1892-1893. In this record are recorded the names of the early leaders of the Burnsville Community, who had petitioned the Court for a bridge that would serve the citizens of this growing community. The town (not incorporated until 1902) had been founded shortly after the Civil War by a Captain John Burns. At this time, the only means of crossing the river was by ferry.

The Court awarded the contract to the Variety Iron Works of Cleveland, Ohio, to build the superstructure for \$3,600.00. The bridge (steel) was shipped by rail to Weston, and then brought to Burnsville by wagons. The structure is 140' in length, consisting of two truss spans and one girder span truss; one span is 44' with supports at the panel points. The second truss span has a span of 138'. There are two stone piers, and one abutment support the structure; deck width is 13'-9". It is an excellent example of bridge engineering of the late 1800's. Levies collected in 1892, 1893 and 1894 paid in full for the structure.

Through the next century, the bridge played a major role in the life here. With the wagons that were pulled by oxen and horses, the span was the link that was needed for progress. Even with the coming of the automobile, the bridge stood firm. Great floods came and rose to the surface of the flooring. School children scurried across to the Academy of learning that stood on the hill above the village. Parades of World War I Veterans passed over the bridge and again in 1945, returning World War II Veterans passed over the bridge in Armistice Day Celebrations. All walks of life used the bridge. Children raced from one side of the town to the other to follow the procession of the circus.

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Burnsville Bridge  
Braxton County, WV

Perhaps the most noted personage to cross the bridge was Charles Wayland Bryan (1867-1945), the brother of William Jennings Bryan. Charles Wayland Bryan, who was Governor of Nebraska (1923-25; 1931-35), visited Burnsville in 1924, the year he was nominated by the Democratic Party for Vice President of the United States.

As the mist rises from the river on a cool October morning, and the leaves race before the wind, the steel trusses of the old superstructure still rise in lofty salute as it has done over the past one-hundred years. The bridge stands as a silent witness as the Little Kanawha River continues to wend its way under the wooden floor. The exact inscription and date that was placed there so long ago continues to stand out as if in pride, and lends a dignity that it had served its people for over a century.

Above the town on a grassy knoll is a cemetery; many of the founders and early citizenry sleep there. They made their final trip over the bridge. The bridge is a story of the town.

(NPS Form 10-900)

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Burnsville Bridge  
Braxton County, WV

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Braxton County Commission. Minutes of the County Commission 1892-1893.
- Crutchfield, Laura Belle. "The Story of a Bridge," Journal of the Braxton Historical Society. Vol. 22, No. 2, June, 1994, pp. 3-4.
- Cooper, James L. From Monuments to Distant Posterity. Indiana Department of Highways, 1987, pp. 55-58.
- Darnell, Victor. Directory of American Bridge - Building Companies 1840-1900. Washington, D.C. 1984.
- West Virginia Department of Highways. Bridge Inspection Report Bridge No. 04-NO215-0.01. William Galyean, Engineer. 1985.

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Burnsville Bridge  
Braxton County, WV

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The bridge is located .06 miles west of S.R. 5/11 (Main Street). The boundary is inclusive of the bridge and abutments. The perimeter line of the boundary is that of the bridge superstructure and the water line beneath.

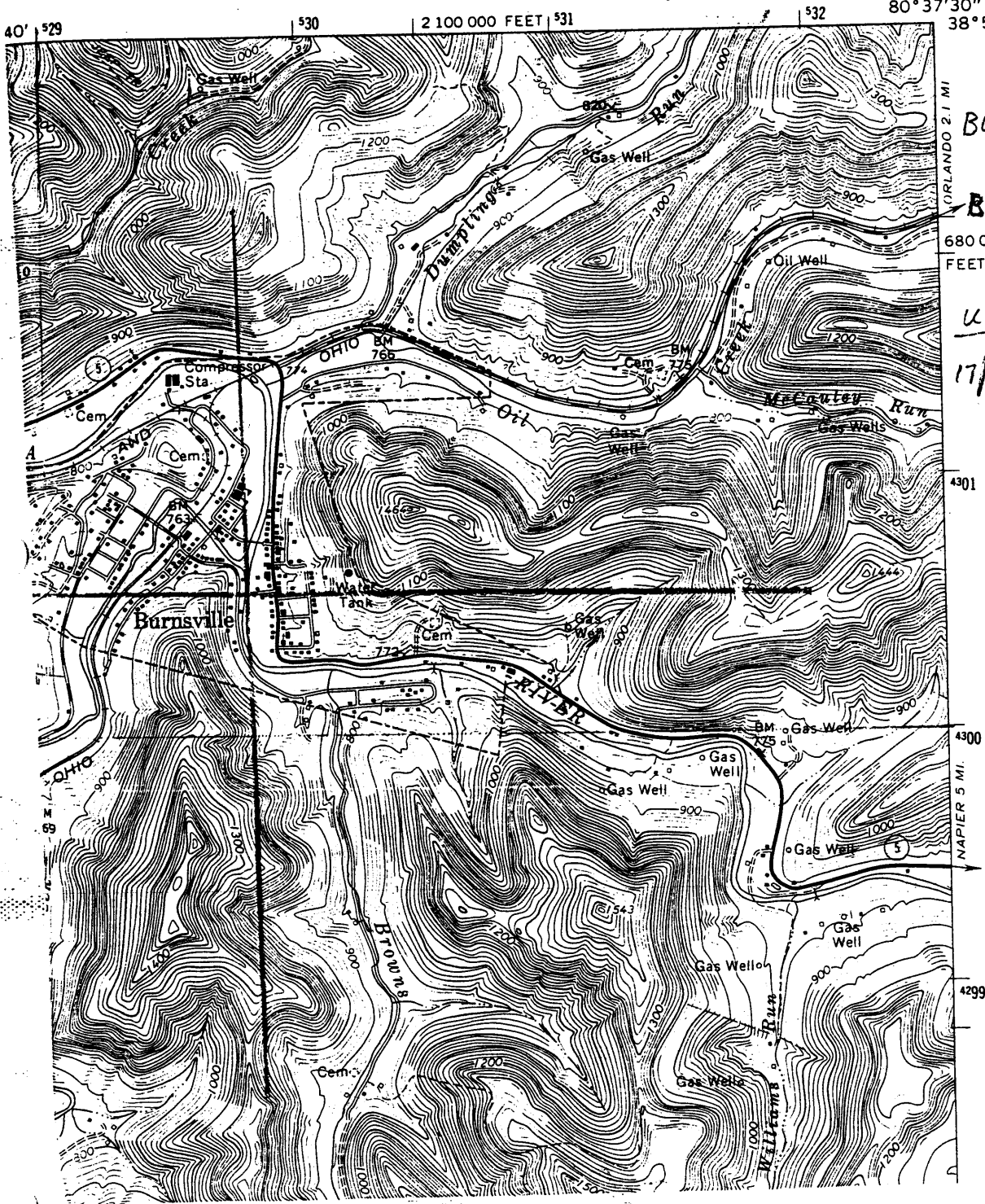
VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Burnsville Pratt through truss bridge.



BURNSVILLE QUADRANGLE  
WEST VIRGINIA  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)  
SW/4 BURNSVILLE 15' QUADRANGLE

4861 / NE  
(PETERSON)



BURNSVILLE  
BRIDGE  
BRAXTON CO.,

680 000  
FEET W.V.

UTM:  
17/529767/4300565

IRLANDO 2.1 MI

4301

4300

NAPIER 5 MI

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