

# THE BRIDGER



The Vermont Covered Bridge Society Newsletter – Issue #86

Melanie Schropp, Editor

## Events

### Fall 2021 All Members Meeting

Given the current state of the COVID-19 virus and its Delta variant, we have decided to pass on having an in-person fall meeting this year. We look forward to getting together in person in the spring of 2022. In the meantime, stay safe and get your vaccination.

There is always the possibility of holding a Zoom meeting this fall. If you would be interested in attending an online meeting, please send an email to [vermontcoveredbridgesociety@gmail.com](mailto:vermontcoveredbridgesociety@gmail.com).

### NSPCB Meeting – July 25, 2021

The National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges held its July meeting at the Scott Covered Bridge in Townshend in July. There were 22 people in attendance. The guest list included Heidi Clawson, from the Townshend Historical Society, and State Historic Preservation Officer Laura Trieschmann. Bridge builder Arnold Graton and his wife, Meg Dansereau, were also in attendance.

The weather was warm and sunny; it was a perfect day and setting for spending some time on a covered bridge. Normal business was conducted, budgets were approved, and then time was allotted for entertaining new business. The 2022 NSPCB calendar was available for sale. There was also a raffle held for

a large covered bridge quilt that had been donated to the society.

It was good to reconnect with our fellow Bridgers from the national society.



*NSPCB Meeting, July 25, 2021, photo by Bob Watts*

## Membership Update

- Reported by Dan Monger, Chair

For those VCBS members who are receiving this newsletter with the mailing label marked in red, this indicates that you are behind in your membership dues. Membership fees are due in January. Annual members who are more than one year behind in their dues need pay only for the current year to return to good standing. Members who do not respond will unfortunately be purged from the membership list.

**President:** Joe Nelson, P.O. Box 267, Jericho, VT 05465 email: [jcarlnelson@yahoo.com](mailto:jcarlnelson@yahoo.com)

**Vice President:** Steve Miyamoto, 8 Ridge Rd., Essex Junction, VT 05452, email: [spmiyamoto@comcast.net](mailto:spmiyamoto@comcast.net)

**Secretary:** Sarah Pierce, email: [srahpierce@yahoo.com](mailto:srahpierce@yahoo.com)

**Treasurer:** Dan Monger, 26 Lake Street, Tunkhannock, PA 18657 email: [teelmonger@ptd.net](mailto:teelmonger@ptd.net)

We now have 148 members, including:

- 1 Student
- 47 Individual Yearly
- 24 Family Yearly
- 44 Single Lifetime
- 29 Couple Lifetime
- 3 Business, Organization, or Municipality

Of our membership, 68 (45.9%) are residents of Vermont, 22 (14.6%) are residents of other New England states, 57 (38.5%) are residents of states outside of New England, and 1 (.7%) is international.

The VCBS wishes a very happy birthday and happy anniversary to:

### September

- 04 Richard St. Peter
- 09 Tom Walczak
- 10 Gordon & Priscilla O'Reilly
- 11 Dan Monger & Cathleen Teel
- 17 Doris Taylor
- 23 Susan Komeshok
- 25 Bonnie Shultz

### October

- 09 Erwin & Virginia Eckson
- 11 Trish Kane
- 20 Phil Pierce
- 21 Arnie & Melanie Schropp
- 22 Ellen Everitz
- 28 Joyce Soroka

### November

- 04 James Crouse & Jane Porter Gresham
- 13 Bruce Wagner
- 16 Dan Monger
- 18 Cheryl Cullick
- 22 Marikka Guay
- 25 Richard & Gloria Davis

Please note: If I have neglected to include anyone, please send me an email at [teelmonger@ptd.net](mailto:teelmonger@ptd.net).

## Media Update

- Reported by Steve Miyamoto

### Social Media

We have a new weekly feature on Facebook, called "This Day in Vermont Covered Bridge History." I have been going through newspaper archives online and collecting Vermont covered bridge events. These are published almost daily. The newspaper archives cover a date range from around the mid-1800's to the present. Check it out if you get a chance.

Edwin Loveland continues to expand the Vermont's Covered Bridges Facebook group. We currently have over 1,500 members.

More lost covered bridges are being identified. I have been working with Todd Clark to identify lost and previously unknown covered bridges in the state. Todd's work focuses on identifying lost bridges in Vermont. So far, Todd has confirmed a number of new Vermont bridges and has also been able to update missing information. This information is passed along to Bill Caswell, who maintains the Covered Spans of Yesteryear website. You can check out that website at [www.lostbridges.com](http://www.lostbridges.com).

### Website

In the near future, we will have an option for joining the VCBS online. All the groundwork is in place and some preliminary programming has been done. The goal is to have this available by fall. We will keep you updated.

## Editor's Note

I assumed the role of newsletter editor for the VCBS with the publication of the Fall 2017 issue of *The Bridger*. For the past four years, I have collected submissions from our officers and bridge watchers and assembled the newsletter with little change to the format. Since the purpose of our newsletter is to communicate with the membership, I thought this would be a good time to seek input from our members. I am interested in what you like and what you think could be improved in our newsletter. Do you like the arrangement of information? Can you easily find what matters most to you? If you would like to share your thoughts and suggestions, you can email me at [mschropp@att.net](mailto:mschropp@att.net).

## Publicity Update

- Reported by Steve Miyamoto

Our Publicity Chair, Edwin Loveland, has unfortunately suffered a health setback and is recovering at home. We wish him a speedy recovery. If you would like to send him get well wishes, you can email Edwin at [ncassady5@gmail.com](mailto:ncassady5@gmail.com).

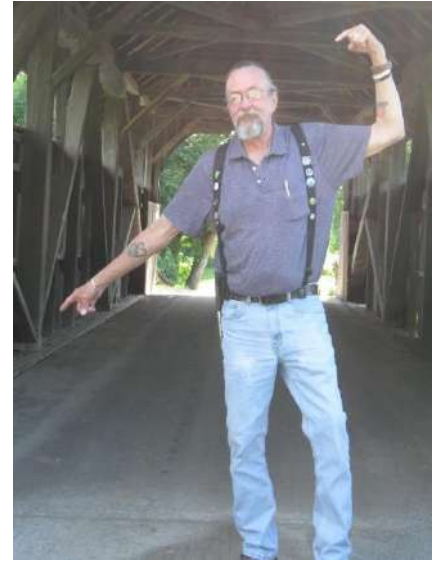
### New Cling Sticker

Edwin has been working on a new cling sticker, which will be available for purchase in the near future. The sticker is based on the VCBS logo and will sell for \$3.95 each.



### VCBS Patch Program

Edwin continues to move the patch program along. He recently got permission from the town of Hartland to post the patches on their bridges. These will be installed on the bridges in the near future.



*Publicity Chair Edwin Loveland*

## Quilt Donation

Elaine Nordmeyer has donated a covered bridge quilt to the VCBS. Here is the story of the quilt:

"We moved/retired to Vermont 26 years ago. I have always been endeared with the charm of this state, and the covered bridges represent the craftsmanship of years past.

I live in a 1790 house near the Hubbardton Battlefield and have nine wooden painted Revolutionary War soldiers and Native American fighters as well on the side of our old barn and a wooden barn quilt on the front.

Now that I am retired, I took up quilting, stained glass, gardening, and collecting antiques. After visiting several covered bridges, I realized they were all made of lumber which had turned gray over the years. Color is a part of life and something we all appreciate, so when I took a class making a covered bridge quilt, I realized that I needed to choose colors to make the quilt images look more interesting.

I love this quilt and have stored it these many years, but now I feel it should be shared with others. That is why I decided to donate it to – what else but the Vermont Covered Bridge Society.



Elaine Nordmeyer  
Hubbardton, VT

## Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Resource Center

by Trish Kane, Collections Curator

I am writing today with an opportunity for covered bridge enthusiasts and historians. As you can imagine, the Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Resource Center gets many duplicate copies of newsletters in the collections that come in, which the center has no place to store. I would like to offer them to other covered bridge enthusiasts and historians who might like to complete their personal collections with issues they may be missing. With that being said, I have included listings of duplicate newsletters the center has:

- Connecticut River Valley Covered Bridge Society Bulletin
- Connecticut River Valley Covered Bridge Society Newsletter
- National Society – Covered Bridge Topics
- National Society – Newsletter

- Ohio Historic Bridge Association – Bridges and Byways Newsletter

If you are interested in any of these newsletters, please let me know as soon as possible. I will fill requests in the order they come in to me. All I ask is that you pay the postage (media mail) and make a small donation to the center. Once I receive your request, I will bundle them and get back to you with shipping costs.

## In Memorium

**Euclid Farnham**, a member of the Vermont Covered Bridge Society since August 2000, passed on Monday, June 21, 2021, after a struggle with Alzheimer's disease and pancreatic cancer.

A lifelong resident of Tunbridge, Euclid was an author and Tunbridge historian. When the third annual VCBS meeting was held in Tunbridge, Euclid hosted the meeting and made all the arrangements for a catered dinner. He also served as a VCBS bridge watch chair and "bridge-respondent." Euclid served as Master of Ceremonies at the opening of the new Mill Covered Bridge in July 2000. To read the complete obituary, follow this link: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/vnews/name/euclid-farnham-obituary?pid=199278751>.

**Dr. Robert Orr**, age 80, of Burlington, passed away peacefully at the McClure-Miller Respite House on May 20, 2021, after a five-year battle with cancer.

Bob practiced family medicine in Brattleboro and served as a medical staff member of Brattleboro Memorial Hospital. He helped establish the Brattleboro Area Hospice, serving as its first president and volunteer medical director.

Bob enjoyed writing. In addition to his published works, he entertained family and friends with periodic "News from Vermont" newsletters. To read the complete obituary, follow this link: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/brattleboro/name/robert-orr-obituary?n=robert-orr&pid=198813703&fhid=4950>.

**Raymond Paul Gendron** was born on July 28, 1937 and died peacefully on May 30, 2021, at Newport Health Care.

Ray graduated from the University of Vermont with a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering and worked as a bridge engineer for the Vermont Agency of Transportation. He enjoyed working on the Springfield I-91 bridge and was proud to be a part of building the interstate system in Vermont. To read the complete obituary, follow this link: <https://www.curtis-britch.com/obituary/raymond-gendron>.

**Miriam "Mim" (Goodwin) Wood**, age 91, passed away on May 17, 2021, surrounded by her family, after a struggle with Alzheimer's disease.

Mim devoted her life to historic preservation. Her life's vocation was working to record and preserve covered bridges. Mim was the foremost expert in Ohio covered bridge history, with her lifelong devotion creating a body of work, which is now in the archives of the Ohio History Center. She was a charter member of the Ohio Historic Bridge Association and served in leadership positions, including newsletter editor. To read the complete obituary, follow this link: [https://www.vermontbridges.org/news\\_items\\_2021/obituary/miriam\\_wood\\_05-23-21.shtml](https://www.vermontbridges.org/news_items_2021/obituary/miriam_wood_05-23-21.shtml).

## VTrans Historic Covered Bridge Committee Meeting

Fisher RR Covered Bridge, Wolcott, Vermont

May 20, 2021

This meeting was a follow-up to the February 18, 2021, meeting, which was outlined in the spring 2021 issue of *The Bridger*.

### Current Status/Summary of Project

#### Existing Truss – agreed

- Siding repairs
- Replace missing trunnels

- Fire retardant and insecticide to be applied

Bridge railing – agreed

- To match other LVRT railings, but with black posts

#### Substructure repairs – agreed

- Bridge seat replacements
- Back wall replacements

- Repair to concrete facing
- Repoint stone masonry
- Replace bracing/armoring members on piers

#### Trail approaches

- To be determined

#### Bridge deck

- To be determined

#### Disposition of existing rails (on and off bridge)

- To be determined

#### Memorialize bridge

- To be determined

#### Trail approaches to bridge

- Splitter island deemed not acceptable due to safety concerns
- Reset rails on the approach shoulders? Not desirable as this could lead to a tripping hazard
- Add rails as a lower handrail on the bridge rail? Not desirable

These last two proposals are not representative of the historic nature of the covered bridge. A final decision on how to proceed was not reached. There appeared to be agreement on leaving the approach rail and ties in place buried in the approach material. A proposal was made to construct an access trail from the west end of the bridge down to the parking area. This proposal received general approval as a needed improvement to the site.

#### Bridge deck

The current proposal includes a 12' wide bridge deck to be raised above the existing railroad rails. There is concern with snowmobiles and groomers damaging the new bridge deck. The following alternatives were proposed and discussed:

- Drag snow onto the bridge deck during winter months to cover and protect the timber deck
- Apply a sacrificial timber wearing surface during the winter months
- Apply a rubber matting to protect the deck

None of these options seemed to generate any solution. John Weaver, of the Vermont Covered Bridge Society, responded after the meeting and suggested the use of additional 1 ½-2" thick white oak planks placed on top of the new deck. Snowmobile traffic and groomers have caused issues with other covered bridges, and this species is very durable and will hold up longer to snowmobile traffic.

There is also a desire to have the finished deck surface be marked to identify the location of the old railroad rails. This could be accomplished by staining strips along the deck or attaching metal strips. It would appear that the staining may be easier to maintain. The strips would need

to be securely fastened and could be damaged by snowmobiles and potentially come loose and present a hazard. There was discussion about the current agreement with VAST relative to bridge and deck maintenance.

#### Disposition of existing railroad rails

There appeared to be a general desire to keep the existing railroad rails in place and construct the new bridge deck and approaches over these rails. It should be noted that this will raise the grade of the bridge and approaches by 8-10 inches. No final decision was made on this issue, although there appeared to be more of a desire to keep the railroad rails on the bridge and potentially remove the rails from the approach.

#### Memorialize bridge

A proposal was made to develop a 24" x 36" plaque, outlining the history of the Fisher Bridge, to be on display in the parking area. Possibly, some photos or sketches could also be on display on the inside panels of the bridge. Kaitlin O'Shea, of VHB, will work on alternatives.

#### Bypass bridge

There was some discussion on the construction of a separate bypass bridge, around the Fisher Covered Bridge, to be located on the south side of the covered bridge. In other locations in Vermont, construction of a modern bridge adjacent to, or in the viewshed of, an historic covered bridge has been deemed as having a negative impact. This may or may not be the case at this site, pending further study.

#### Summary

Although there are several design issues yet to be resolved, it appears as though the historic covered bridge issues associated solely with the Fisher Covered Bridge have been addressed. The roof and trusses are in good condition, fire retardant and insecticides are being applied, along with a few trunnel replacements. Repairs are also planned for the abutments. The new bridge railing will allow visitors to view the trusses to gain an appreciation of the engineering for this rail covered bridge. The existing steel girders and timber deck will support all the rail trail live load with no attachment or additional loading applied to the covered bridge.

The VTrans Covered Bridge Committee would be glad to continue this discussion of the final details of the rail trail through this bridge, but it appears these issues do not have much effect on the historic covered bridge components. If any covered bridge members disagree, please respond. I would be glad to schedule an upcoming meeting, if necessary. In any event, the VTrans Covered

Bridge Committee would like to be kept current as to the final design of this project.

## Bridge Watch

### Warren Bridge, Warren, Vermont [45-12-12]

By Robert Durfee

Design of the repairs and improvements to the Warren Bridge was recently completed by engineers from DuBois & King, Inc., of Randolph, Vermont. Superstructure repairs include replacement of rotted stringers and bolstering beams, bearing blocks, and board siding. Superstructure repairs and improvements include concrete surfacing repairs to the west abutment, reconstruction of concrete bridge seats, stabilization of the southwest concrete wing wall, and the placement of riprap in from the abutments to prevent scour. Roadway improvements include installation of timber beam guardrail at the approaches, roadway apron repaving, and installation of roadway signage on the approaches to indicate bridge height restrictions. The town of Warren has secured funding assistance from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans).



The project went out for bid in May. Unfortunately, only one bid was received from Alpine Construction, LLC, of Schuylerville, New York, and that bid was 100% over the funding budget. The selectboard rejected the bid and will re-bid the

project when a more competitive climate exists from the contracting community in northern New England. *(photo by Dubois & King, Inc.)*

### Chisleville Covered Bridge [45-02-05]

by Philip R. Jordan, Sunderland, Vermont

June 15, 2021 – The Chisleville Covered Bridge was badly damaged last weekend by an oversized southbound vehicle. The Sunderland town clerk reported that the Vermont State Police have been in contact with the town road crew and are apparently investigating the incident.

By noon on August 12, the temperature in Sunderland had reached 89 degrees, but that didn't deter Sunderland road crew member Josh Corey and local carpenter /contractor Michael King from completing repairs to the Chisleville Covered Bridge. The two men made short work of removing, replicating, and replacing several broken rafters. They also replaced all of the boards broken around the south entrance, where a large vehicle had forced its way through. By 1:00 p.m., with fresh paint on those boards, the crew picked up the "bridge closed" signs and left. To this date, no one has come forth with information on who is responsible for the June incident. *(photo by Phil Jordan)*



### Scribner Covered Bridge [45-08-09]

by Catherine Judkins, Hyde Park, Vermont

In June, Catherine Judkins contacted Johnson Town Administrator Brian Story. She learned that the town planned to repair the roads leading to the Scribner Covered Bridge. The bridge, itself, was not damaged in the flood on October 31, 2019. The town is also attempting to obtain a grant for maintenance repairs on the bridge.

Catherine followed-up with Mr. Story in July. Road repairs to the approaches to the bridge should be completed this year. FEMA will reimburse the town for these expenses. The grants



they wrote have been submitted, but they have not yet been approved. If a grant is approved by this fall, as the town hopes, bridge repairs and maintenance could begin in the spring of 2022. *(photo by Catherine Judkins)*

### Millers Run Covered Bridge [45-03-06]

From WCAX3, published by AP, 8/13/21



“LYNDON, Vt. (AP) – Police in the Vermont town of Lyndon are looking for the driver of a truck that damaged the Millers Run Covered Bridge.

A surveillance camera shows the six-wheel box truck approaching the covered bridge from the south at 5:30 a.m. on Thursday. Boards can be seen falling to the ground as the truck drives through the bridge. After it went through the bridge, the driver can be seen exiting the truck, walking around it and examining the damage to both the truck and the bridge. The driver then gets back into the truck and drives off.

Trucks that are too large are a frequent cause of damage to covered bridges in Vermont.”

*Lyndonville Police photo from surveillance video*

### EDITOR'S NOTE:

On **2/4/21**, the Millers Run Covered Bridge was damaged by two Penske box trucks following each other through the bridge. *(from Caledonian Record-News)*

On **3/23/20**, the Millers Run Covered Bridge was damaged. Additionally, the truck was found to be 71,000 pounds over the posted weight limit. The driver, from Quebec, was fined \$12,259. *(from Caledonian Record-News)*

On **5/16/19**, the Millers Run Covered Bridge was damaged by an Upper Valley Produce truck. The \$56,175 repair cost was paid by the truck's owner and insurance company. *(from WCAX3)*

### Village Covered Bridge [45-12-14]

By Anita Larkin Ford, Waitsfield, Vermont

On May 28, 2021, an oversized Ryder rental truck entered and became wedged in the Village Covered Bridge in Waitsfield. Crews were able to remove the truck. The estimated damage has not yet been calculated.

July 17, 2021 – Lisa Loomis of *The Valley Reporter* is reporting that “the Waitsfield Select Board accepted the \$27,500 bid from Hoyt Construction to repair damage done to the Waitsfield covered bridge on May 28...” Plans for when the work will begin are still being worked out. The bridge was declared safe to use and remains open at this time.



*photo from The Valley Reporter*

## Tour Bennington County's Bridges

by Joe Nelson

Bennington County is home to five of the most picturesque bridges found anywhere. To the west of Arlington village stands the celebrated Bridge at the Green; to the east in Sunderland, the Chiselville Bridge. Further south by North Bennington are the Henry Bridge, the Silk Road Bridge, and the Paper Mill Bridge.

### Bennington

Named for Benning Wentworth, Royal Governor of New Hampshire, Bennington was chartered as a New Hampshire town in 1749 and settled in 1761. Blessed with rivers and streams fed by the Green Mountain watershed, Bennington flourished, and early industry prospered. Beginning with grist mills and saw mills, the valley villages

became home to paper and textile factories. With the growth of the communities came the ubiquitous wooden bridges to connect them. Of the many wooden bridges built before the coming of steel and concrete spans, only five remain.

### Bridge at the Green – 1852 [WGN 45-02-01]

Arlington Green is one of those picture-perfect New England town greens that artists and photographers seek out. Norman Rockwell, one of America's most popular twentieth century painters, once lived and worked nearby. The green is found off Route 313, four miles west of the junction with U.S. 7 in Arlington village.

Arlington Green lies across the famed Battenkill trout stream from Route 313, reached by an 80' plank lattice bridge that has been serving travelers since 1852. The Chapel on the Green stands beyond the bridge's south portal, its square tower rising among the trees.

The Bridge at the Green demonstrated the sturdiness of Ithiel Town's patented plank lattice truss. Swept off its abutments by a flood on the Battenkill in the early 1850's, it came to rest on its side, intact and still spanning the stream. Because it was the only bridge nearby that still crossed the river, people continued to use it, crossing over on the upturned side. After the bridge was disassembled and returned to its proper place, it was pinned to its abutments with iron rods to keep it from going astray again. Ultimately, cables were installed to give lateral support to the structure against wind and water.

The sturdiness of the bridge was challenged again in 2011 by Tropical Storm Irene. The upstream side was struck and bowed by a tree borne on the flooding Battenkill River. Found to be sound, the bridge was soon reopened to traffic.



*Bridge-at-the-Green, photo by Joe Nelson, 1997*

### Chiselville Bridge – 1870 [WGN 45-02-05]

The Chiselville Bridge, also much photographed and painted, lies one mile east of Arlington village, in

Sunderland. The Roaring Branch of the Battenkill lived up to its name when it destroyed the bridge spanning the millpond above Chiselville in 1869. The flood inundated the Sunderland flats and took a heavy toll on area roads and bridges.



*Chiselville Bridge, photo by Joe Nelson, 1997*

Because the Roaring Branch and its forks carry much of the runoff from the west face of the Sunderland portion of the Green Mountains, it was thought that a new bridge built at the original site would likely meet a similar fate. The following year, Daniel Oatman built a new plank lattice bridge atop the crags, 40 feet above a streambed in Vermont.

After 103 years of service, the bridge's age and the modern traffic it handled made the original construction unsafe, so in 1973, the Agency of Transportation strengthened the bridge. The structure now consists of an independent slab roadway, supported by three steel beams and a concrete pier. The trusses put in place by Oatman to support the roadway now support only themselves and the roof's winter snow load.

While the Chiselville Bridge, high on the crags, was made safe from floods, it features cables similar to those at the Bridge at the Green to brace it against the winds blowing down from the mountains that come howling through the Roaring Branch River gorge.

## North Bennington

North Bennington's three covered bridges cross the Walloomsac River, where it flows parallel to Route 67A. This stretch of highway connecting North Bennington and Bennington can be extremely congested, so it is wise to avoid visiting the bridges during rush hours. Once you cross one of the three bridges, though, the less busy back roads reach all of them.

The Henry Bridge, westernmost of the three, serves River Road. River Road leaves the south side of Route 67A, where that highway bends sharply east. Silk Road is served by the easternmost bridge, while the Paper Mill Bridge in the middle is accessed by Murphy Road.

## Henry Bridge – 1989 [WGN 45-02-02#2]

The appearance of the Henry Bridge is striking with its red paint and white trim. Open ports along both sides of its 125-foot length expose the plank lattice truss, giving the bridge a natty look. A signboard in the gables reads, “c1840,” but the bridge you see today is a replica built in 1989 by the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

The bridge, named for a family long in residence nearby, crosses the Walloomsac River below a dam and a large millpond. The spot is an historic one – the crossing here has been important since early colonial times, and it served as a setting for one of the Green Mountain Boys’ bloodless victories over New York authorities.

The first Henry Bridge became known as the strongest in New England when the Burden Iron Company of Troy, New York, began operations in the 1860’s on a neighboring piece of land containing iron ore. The company strengthened the span by adding another set of plank lattice trusses to each side to support ore wagons.

Logically, the additional trusses did not strengthen the bridge but merely added to the weight of the span. The company’s structural engineering expertise apparently stopped at the “more must be better” school of thought. The town of Bennington removed the extra trusses from the old Henry when restoration began on its three covered bridges in 1952. The replica has a single set of trusses, as the original builder intended.



*Henry Bridge, photo by Joe Nelson, 1997*

The Vermont Agency of Transportation posted a sign by the replica bridge that captures some of the history of the area.

### *Henry Covered Bridge Across the Walloomsac River*

*This quiet spot was once a major river crossing. Traffic between southwestern Vermont and New York State crossed here until a railroad was built in 1852. Troops marched from Manchester, Vermont to the battle of Bennington in 1777 and teams and stages transported freight and passengers.*

*The original Henry Bridge was built c. 1840. In the late 1860’s and ‘70’s heavy wagon loads of iron ore were hauled over the bridge from the Burden Iron*

*Company mine on Ore Bed Road to its washing works on Paran Creek in North Bennington. A succession of water-powered mills was located next to the bridge on the south side.*

*The last was a gristmill operated into the 1920’s by Bertine T. Henry, one of the area’s many descendants of the Irish born William Henry (1734-1811).*

*This bridge is supported by Town Lattice trusses. The design, patented in 1820 by Connecticut architect Ithiel Town represented a great technological leap forward from the earlier heavy timber King Post, Queen Post, and Burr truss styles. Carpenters with saws and drills could assemble a lighter, stronger, web-like truss from mill-sawn planks, secured with wooden trunnels (pegs).*

*Bridges were covered to protect the structural skeleton from moisture, helping to preserve the bridge. This bridge, built in 1989 by the State of Vermont Agency of Transportation is a replica replacing the deteriorating original bridge built c. 1840.*

*Two other covered bridges, the Paper Mill Covered Bridge and the Silk Road Covered Bridge, cross the Walloomsac River within two miles upstream.*

## The Standoff at the Bridge

In July 1771, word was received that a New York sheriff and his posse were on their way to take possession of disputed property in the Bennington area. The settlers prepared a reception – about six men awaited the posse at the bridge over the Walloomsac near William Henry’s homestead, while many more men hid in the woods and fields around the bridge. When the advance party of the posse reached the bridge, they were allowed to meet with Mr. Breckenridge, a Green Mountain Boys leader, to plead their case. After the main body of the posse arrived, the settlers at the bridge informed the sheriff that they would not leave their land voluntarily. When the sheriff ordered his posse to advance, the hidden men stepped forward with muskets ready. The sheriff quickly concluded that discretion was the better part of valor, and the posse retreated over the bridge. The bridge was also used in 1777 by troops on their way to the Battle of Bennington.

## The Paper Mill Bridge–1889 [WGN 45-02-03#2]

The Paper Mill Bridge spans a millpond, making a striking reflection on the clear, still water. The low, rambling mill buildings lining the shore share the reflection. The bridge is handsome in red paint and white trim, and the open ports along both sides of its 125-foot

length expose the plank lattice truss and bathe the interior with a quiet, warm light.

Built in 1889, a temporary single-lane iron span bypassed it in the 1980's. The old bridge continued to serve pedestrians and cyclists until 1995, when the town closed it to all traffic. A Vermont Agency of Transportation inspection had found it to be critically deteriorating and on the verge of collapse. The inspection team recommended that the bridge be rehabilitated for modern traffic. The original bridge was then demolished and replaced with a replica in the year 2000.



*Paper Mill Bridge, photo by Joe Nelson, 1997*

The casual viewer might notice the Paper Mill Bridge bears a family resemblance to the bridge on Silk Road. That both were restored in 1952 and are maintained by the town of Bennington explains part of this. Under the paint and trim, however, the fundamental similarity of the structures suggests that father and son built the originals – according to the Vermont Division of Historic Sites (see below).

### **The Silk Road Bridge—c.1840**[WGN 45-02-04]

The Silk Road Bridge crosses the Walloomsac River in a suburban setting. Well maintained and in daily use, it is believed to have been built by Benjamin Sears, circa 1840. Gilbert Newbury of the Vermont Agency of Transportation restored it in 1991.

Open ports along most of its 90-foot length expose the web of plank lattice trusses. On bright days, the interior is traced with geometric shadow patterns, changing with the hour and with the season.

Mr. Newbury relates that during the restoration, the crew befriended a young boy who often came to watch the work with his grandfather. The crew foreman etched the boy's initials and date into the top of a treenail and helped the boy drive it into place. The treenail can be found somewhere in the western truss.

The span has also been known both as *Locust Grove Bridge* and *Robinson Bridge*. There was another bridge named Robinson that crossed the Walloomsac in sight of the old Governor Robinson mansion. That bridge was

reputed to have been haunted, but it and its resident spirits disappeared long ago.



*Victorian Village Bridge, photo by Joe Nelson, 1997*

“From 1790 onward,” says John Spargo in his book, *Covered Wooden Bridges of Bennington and Vicinity*, “if not from an earlier date, there was always a bridge at this point. When the present bridge, anciently called Robinson Bridge and more recently Silk Bridge, was built, or by whom, is not known. It is probable that it was built around 1840 and that Benjamin Sears was the builder. His son, Charles F. Sears, once told the present writer that he believed his father built Robinson Bridge or was employed on its building.”

#### **What's in a Name?**

Did the Algonquian tribes who once inhabited the region first give the name to Bennington's river? Not according to two stories found in the library of the Vermont Historic Society.

“At first the name of the stream was spelled Walloonsac,” wrote Alexander B. R. Drysdale in his *Bennington's Book* (1927). It was so called, Drysdale wrote, in honor of an eccentric Dutchman named Van Vetchen Van Der Spiegel, who lived on the banks of the river below Bennington. The Dutchman raised rabbits known as Walloon hares. He used to sell them door to door to the settlers, carrying them about in a sack. Supposedly, he became known as Walloon-sack Van Der Spiegel, and the stream he lived near was called Walloonsack's River.

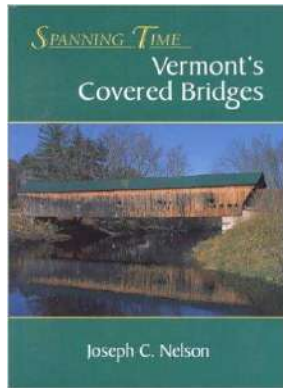
The other name-source comes from John and Caroline Merrill in their *Sketches of Historic Bennington* (1898). According to the Merrills, Walloomsac comes from the Dutch word Wallumschaik, *chaik* meaning “scrip or patent.” The name Walloomsac then comes from “Wallum's Patent,” the name of a grant issued by New York on June 15, 1739, about ten years before the charter under New Hampshire.

The second explanation seems reasonable, but the first is more entertaining.

# For Sale

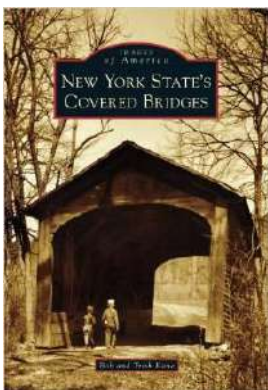
## Spanning Time: Vermont's Covered Bridges by

Joseph C. Nelson features 102 color photographs of Vermont's covered bridges in fifteen chapters, each a guided tour. The tours are complete with maps, commentary on the uniqueness of each bridge, and historic highlights about the towns and villages in which the bridges stand.



An appendix provides: A Summary of Vermont's Covered Bridges; A Covered Bridge Glossary; A Bridge Truss section, explaining how trusses work; Thumbnail biographies of people who designed and built the bridges; A Covered Bridge Reading List, for bridge and history buffs; A detailed Index. *Spanning Time: Vermont's Covered Bridges*: 7" x 10", 288 pages. Published by New England Press at P.O. Box 575, Shelburne, VT 05482. *Spanning Time* is available directly from the author for \$25.00, free shipping. For reviews of the book, go to [www.vermontbridges.com/bookreviews.htm](http://www.vermontbridges.com/bookreviews.htm). Send your check or money order to: VCBS, P.O. Box 267, Jericho, VT 05489.

## New York State's Covered Bridges - When one typically



thinks of covered bridges, New York is not the first state to come to mind, but New York once had over 300 covered bridges. Floods, fires and progress have claimed all but 32. Readers will enjoy seeing NY's current bridges, including the oldest existing covered bridge in the U.S., the Hyde Hall Covered Bridge, located in Glimmerglass State Park, and the world's longest single-span covered

bridge in the world, the Blenheim Covered Bridge, washed away by Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. This book also highlights the Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Resource Center in Oxford, NY, the first ever center of its kind specifically designed for covered bridge researchers. For a copy of the tour, contact Bob and Trish Kane, 167 Williams Rd., Sherburne, NY 13460, 607-674-9656, [bobtrish68@twc.com](mailto:bobtrish68@twc.com).

**Visions of Vermont art gallery**, Jeffersonville, Vermont at: <https://www.visionsofvermont.com/>

802.644.8183

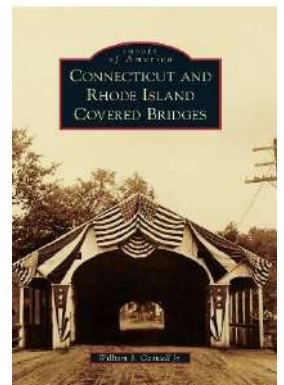
**A special sale** for the benefit of the Vermont Covered Bridge Society featuring the works of Eric Tobin. All proceeds of the unframed prints go to the VCBS. Sale of the framed prints will be shared 50/50. They are all Giclée on acid free paper. The glass is non-glare artist's glass.

- 10x12 \$125 unframed
- 16x20 \$175 unframed
- 16x20 \$550 Matted and framed
- 20x24 \$850 Matted and framed

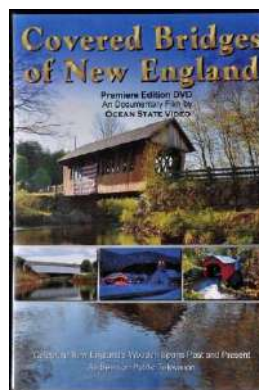


## Connecticut and Rhode Island Covered Bridges – Price reduced!

During their heyday in the mid- to late 1800s, more than 150 covered bridges dotted the landscape of Connecticut and Rhode Island. Since that time, floods, fires, and progress have claimed all but two of the historic structures. With over 200 images, this book provides insight into the covered bridge history of an area that has not been well documented in the past. To order your signed copy, send \$20.00 to Bill Caswell, 535 Second NH Turnpike, Hillsboro, NH 03244.



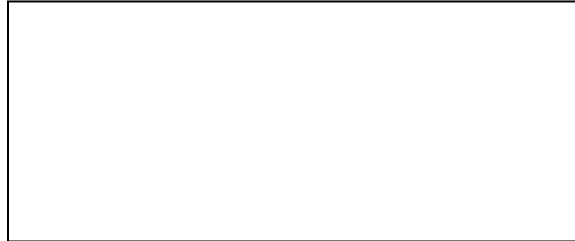
## Covered Bridges of New England —DVD Produced by



Ocean State Video of Rhode Island for Public Television. On Sale. Profits go to the Vermont Covered Bridge Society's Save-A-Bridge Program. For your copy, send \$20.00 plus \$2.75 shipping and \$1.20 Vermont sales tax to VCBS, c/o Joe Nelson, P.O. Box 267, Jericho, VT 05465-0267.



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