

# THE BRIDGER



The Vermont Covered Bridge Society Newsletter – Issue #81

## Events

### Vermont Covered Bridge Society Fall Meeting

October 17, 2020, 10:00 a.m.  
Visions of Vermont Art Gallery  
100 Main Street  
Jeffersonville, Vermont

The Vermont Covered Bridge Society's Annual Fall Meeting will be held on Saturday, October 17, celebrating the Society's 20<sup>th</sup> year, at the Visions of Vermont Art Gallery, hosted by members Terry and Jane Shaw.

The door will be open to the Sugarhouse Gallery next to the main gallery at 9:00 a.m. for set-up and socializing. Snacks will be served. The business meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m., and the speaker's presentation will begin at 11:00.

Lunch will be served at noon next door at the 158 Main Restaurant & Bakery to attendees paying their own way, followed by a guided covered bridge tour.

Further details of the meeting will be announced in the fall issue of *The Bridger*, which will be published in late August.

*NOTE: Please be aware that the event could be cancelled at a later date because of the coronavirus.*

## 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.

Membership cards were sent out to all members this spring. Overall, the response has been positive. Excluding the time involved, the cost was under \$250.00, or approximately one-third of the Membership Committee's annual budget. We welcome our members' input on whether this endeavor should become an annual event. If you are so inclined, please share your opinion by email at [teelmonger@gmavt.net](mailto:teelmonger@gmavt.net).

We now have 138 members, including:

- 1 Student
- 41 Individual Yearly
- 25 Family Yearly
- 43 Single Lifetime
- 25 Couple Lifetime
- 3 Business, Organization, or Municipality

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: [spmiamamoto@comcast.net](mailto:spmiamamoto@comcast.net)

Secretary: Sarah Pierce, 7 Polygraphic Lane, Apt 7n, North Bennington, VT 05257, email: [srahpierce@yahoo.com](mailto:srahpierce@yahoo.com)

Treasurer: Dan Monger, 148 Otter Creek Hwy., New Haven, VT 05472, email: [teelmonger@gmavt.net](mailto:teelmonger@gmavt.net)

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

May (additional to last issue)

14 Ann Marie Colton  
27 June Gendron

June

04 Charlie Elflein  
10 Ron & Marie Bechard  
20 Mark & Jan Bramhall  
27 Glen Hall  
27 Terry Shaw  
28 Bob Kane  
30 Lionel & Debra Whiston

July

04 Neil & Suzanne Daniels  
11 Marie Bechard  
11 Charles & Evelyn Lovastik  
16 Melanie Schropp  
20 Bob & Trish Kane  
28 Ray Gendron  
28 Jan Lewandoski  
28 Sandra Weaver

August

01 Irene Mele  
03 Joanna Titcomb  
08 Virginia Eckson  
08 Evelyn Lovastik  
10 Thomas Carpenter  
13 David Charkes  
17 Euclid & Priscilla Farnham  
18 Ed & Irene Barna  
28 Mark Bramhall  
29 Ray & Dolores Gendron  
30 Ada Jeffrey  
30 Robert McPherson

*Please note: If I have neglected to include anyone, please send me an email.*

## Publicity Update

- Reported by Steve Miyamoto, Chair

### New VCBS Website is Complete

The new website has been completed. It has taken a little over two years, but all of the content from the original website has been migrated to [vermontbridges.org](http://vermontbridges.org). The new website uses responsive design, which makes it mobile friendly. The site has been designed with a coordinated presentation of color and style to create a VCBS "brand."

### Social Media

We continue to build a following on Facebook. As we go to publication, there are 996 members in the Vermont's Covered Bridges Facebook group.

### News Items

I have started to use Mailchimp to send out emails to our membership. You will be getting these from time to time to receive important news items. My hope is that the information will be useful to you, but you are free to decline these mailings by selecting the unsubscribe option at the bottom of the email.

We have 53 covered bridge news items published in 2020 so far. Check out the Current News and Notes sections on the website. I am also working on providing

an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed for covered bridge news updates. This should be completed shortly. Once this is done, you can subscribe to the VCBS RSS feed to get email notifications of news items.

### Pollinator Project Resumes

Last fall we were contacted by Julia Parker-Dickerson about her efforts to make a pollinator garden near the Quinlan Covered Bridge in Charlotte. [http://vermontbridges.org/news\\_items\\_2019/vermont/quinlan\\_bridge\\_pollinator\\_garden\\_10-06-19.shtml](http://vermontbridges.org/news_items_2019/vermont/quinlan_bridge_pollinator_garden_10-06-19.shtml).



*Photo by Julia Parker-Dickerson*

Since that time, Julia has been in contact with the Master Gardener Coordinator at the UVM Extension Master Gardener program. There was quite a bit of activity over the winter. Work resumes this spring. Look for news as it becomes available. In time, this effort may be spread to other bridges around the state.

## Bridge Watch – Chelsea, Vermont

- Submitted by John Weaver

The Moxley Covered Bridge project received contractor bids in early April. The bids were submitted to the town of Chelsea. The scope of work consists of repairs to the bottom chord on the north truss, new sill beam and timber bearings at the east abutment, entire new floor beams and plank flooring for the bridge deck, and entire new siding on the north fascia of the bridge.



*Moxley Bridge, Photo by John Weaver*

## Tour the Lamoille River and the North Branch

by Joe Nelson

The northern Green Mountain watershed feeds an extensive system of rivers and streams with snowmelt in the spring and with summer and fall rains. The Lamoille River rises in Greensboro and loops and curls its way roughly seventy miles to Lake Champlain. The North Branch flows into the Lamoille some thirteen miles from its sources in Eden. Browns River curves down from Mount Mansfield and through twenty-two miles of rich bottomland. Black Creek flows north to the Missisquoi River Valley.

People came to these lush valleys starting in the late 1700's and soon settlements grew, dams were raised, mill wheels turned, roads were laid out, and bridges replaced fords. The towns and villages of Westford, Fairfax, Cambridge, Fairfield, Waterville, and Belvidere came to be.

Eleven covered bridges remain from the days of growth in this region. The oldest surviving bridge dates back to 1838, while the newest began service in 1897. Four are arch bridges, and the rest are queenpost.

In the Belvidere-Waterville area, the construction of the surviving bridges all came about within a few years of each other in the 1870's and 80's. There are similar patterns in other areas of the state, where the ages of the bridges cluster.

"There seem to be a lot of bridges from the late 1860's and early 70's around," said Jan Lewandoski, operator of *Restoration and Traditional Building of Stannard, Vermont*. "I have wondered whether those were years when there were bad floods and bridges were destroyed, or something else.

"A couple of things could have happened. The area was first settled in the late 1700's. The area was fully settled by the 1830's, and they had bridges over most of the rivers. Many bridges built then were at the end of

their useful lives by the middle 1800's, particularly if they were open bridges. Even if they were covered bridges, they may have begun to fail. So, by the middle of the century, a lot of the first generation bridges were being replaced. Most of the bridges you see today are on the sites of earlier bridges."

**Brown's River Bridge** [WGN 45-04-05] N44° 36.751' W073° 00.460'

The Brown's River Bridge stands beside Cambridge Road, just off Westford's village green on Vermont Route 128, a monument to the love of a community for their covered bridge.

It all began when the voters in Westford resolved in 1836 to build a single arch bridge over Brown's River for a cost not to exceed six hundred dollars. The bridge was originally part of the Vermont Market Road ordered built by the Vermont Supreme Court in 1827. Workers finished construction of the bridge in 1838, but the court's road project was never completed.

The ninety-seven-foot span was in service until a concrete and steel bridge bypassed it in 1965. After 127 years of continuous use, the old bridge could no longer handle modern traffic. In 1976, after years of abandonment, the townspeople and the reserve Seabee battalion from Burlington repaired the bridge for the National Bicentennial. The repair work did not include fixing the wooden arches, rotted where they met the stone abutments, so the old bridge sagged noticeably in the years that followed. It was closed to foot traffic in May 1987.

In February 1965, Westford resident Tom Kennedy called a special meeting to save the bridge. This led to the founding of the Westford Historical Society, which ultimately selected Graton Associates of Ashland, New

Hampshire, to do the first phase of the restoration. Because the bridge was in danger of collapse, Milton Graton advised that it be removed from the river before winter.

Work began in October. Graton raised the bridge on timber cribbing and built false work under it. A team of oxen pulled the bridge off the river on log rollers. Graton then used his tractor-trailer truck and the town's bucket loader to move the bridge uphill to the town garage property, while residents stood in rain and mud to watch the work. The National Geographic Society filmed the operation for a documentary on Milton Graton's life as a bridge restorer. Also filming the event was a crew from the America-How-Are-You TV series.

After Graton's restoration, the bridge remained next to the town garage until 1995, when the Westford Historical Society received a \$36,000 grant in federal funds from the Agency of Transportation to complete the project by replacing an abutment, moving the bridge back over the river, and landscaping the area.

The grant would pay for 80 percent of the completion costs. The historical society worked four more years to raise the money through community fairs, ham suppers, and grants, to move the bridge to the river. Asked what drove the townspeople to make such an effort, Historical Society President Caroline Brown replied, "It must be pride of place. The bridge is one of Westford's few remaining treasures."

In August 2000, the Renaud Brothers Construction Company completed the restoration of the bridge where it stood next to the town garage, and reconstructed the failed abutment.

After almost 14 years off the river, the bridge began its final move on July 20, 2001, from the town garage property. The bridge was lowered onto the abutments, and the work was completed on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July. Now back in place, the 163-year-old bridge and pride of the village is in use as a park and for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross over Browns River.

## Fairfax

Fairfax had its beginnings in 1763 as a six-square-mile plantation granted to Edward Burling and sixty-four patentees by Benning Wentworth, Governor of New Hampshire, this in the name of King George III. None of the original sixty-four patentees ever settled in Fairfax.

Fairfax-by-the-Lamoille was richly endowed with fertile plains and an abundance of waterpower, but it was in a wilderness. Travel between settlements was difficult

much of the year, so the growing village had to be self-sufficient. An enterprising settler built a fulling mill on Great Brook. After that came a tannery, saw mills, a gristmill, a starch factory, a chair factory, and a carriage shop. With all of this industry, Great Brook came to be called Mill Brook.

Development also began early on the Lamoille River near Great Falls, said to be "considered the most valuable source of water power in Vermont." A cloth mill located there in 1824, a grist mill started business in 1850, and a woolen mill opened in 1864. An electric power station and dam came in 1903.

A lively competition for skills existed between settlements. In 1826, the town fathers offered a harness maker from a neighboring town the position of toll gatherer for the Lamoille River Bridge, serving what is now Route 104. With the job of collecting tolls came a rent-free house and plenty of time to make harnesses.

As in many of Vermont's river towns, the mills and bridges in Fairfax are vulnerable to flooding. The first bridge over the Lamoille at Fairfax, built in 1792, was destroyed by a spring freshet in 1814. The spring freshet of 1832 took its successor. The two-lane arch bridge replacement was lost to the massive flood of 1927. That flood also carried the several mills and the double bridge at Fairfax Falls over the Great Falls, and four covered bridges in town washed off their abutments. Only the Maple Street Bridge was salvaged and reset. The others were replaced with concrete and steel.

**Maple Street Bridge** [WGN 45-06-02] N44° 39.809' W073° 00.626'

To find the Maple Street Bridge, enter Fairfax village on Route 104. Turn onto Maple Street at the village's only traffic light. Maple Street is one way, so after crossing the bridge, continue to Hunt Street and turn right, pass the school building, and turn right onto one-way School Street to return to Route 104.

The town history says, "The covered Cross-x bridge over Mill Brook on Maple Street in the village was built in 1865." The terms *Cross-x bridge* and *ex bridge* are used in town records to describe bridges built "in the manner" of Ithiel Town's patented plank-lattice truss. With an inside clearance of 17 feet, the bridge is one of the widest in the state, probably to accommodate two-way village traffic. The Vermont Division of Historic Sites identifies the builders as Kingsbury and Stone.

The town historian recalled that when the bridge was returned to its abutments after being washed away

during the 1927 flood, "...it was replaced with its east end facing west." Because of the error, "...the bridge seems to be leaning." This last, the historian wrote, "is disputed by some."



Maple Street Bridge, Photo by Joe Nelson, Summer 1995

The viewer will notice a considerable amount of new timber in the overhead structure of the bridge. This came about in January 2002, when a local dump truck driver drove into the bridge with his dumper raised. He took out several tie beams and much of the structure supporting the roof. The bridge underwent major surgery, fortunately paid for by the truck driver's insurance company.

Work was also done in 1975, when the stone abutments were faced with concrete, and a metal roof was laid over the wooden shingles. In 1990-91, the bridge underwent timber restoration by Jan Lewandoski.

The bridge stands within walking distance of a high school, so the graffiti found there tends to be of a more refined nature.

## Cambridge

There are three principal villages in the town of Cambridge – Cambridge Center, Jeffersonville, and Cambridge Junction – and each prizes its own covered bridge: the Gates Farm Bridge in Cambridge; the Grist Mill Bridge in Jeffersonville; and the Cambridge Junction, or Poland Bridge, in Cambridge Junction. All of them are arch bridges based on the truss patented in 1817 by Theodore Burr.

## The Big Bridge and the Little Bridge

The village of Cambridge once had two covered bridges: the 156-foot, two-lane *Big Bridge*, spanning the Lamoille River, and the 82-foot, single-lane *Little Bridge*, spanning the Seymour River, both serving Route 15. Long-time residents of the area recall the days when the village green extended from Little Bridge to Big Bridge along Route 15 and then to the banks of the Lamoille. All

of the big doings, like the Fourth of July celebration, were held there.

Farewell Wetherby built the double bridge in 1845, assembling the trusses in a field owned by the Gates family close to the chosen site. He erected the bridge over the river the following winter on false work supported by the ice. George Washington Holmes built the Seymour River span in 1897. Both builders employed a truss similar to that invented by Theodore Burr – the bridges each have the signature segmented timber arch.

In 1950, the state replaced the double bridge with a new span of concrete and steel, soon to become known as the *Wrong Way Bridge*. The project also diverted the Seymour River away from the highway, leaving Little Bridge unemployed and saving the State Highway Department the cost of building and maintaining a new bridge. The new river channel runs through Earl Gates's farm, closing access to sixty acres of his land. Access to the acreage was restored when the state moved the Little Bridge from its old crossing place to Gates's cornfield. The Highway Department gave the double bridge to the Shelburne Museum with the stipulation that the museum arrange to move it.

**Gates Farm Bridge** [WGN 45-08-04#2] N44° 38.745' W072° 52.346'

The Little Bridge has been standing in farmer Earl Gates's cornfield to the east of Route 15 near Wrong Way Bridge since the 1950's. That being so, Little Bridge became the Gates Farm Bridge. Standing in a flood plain, it fell on hard times and desperately needed maintenance. The state told Rex Gates, Earl's son, that the bridge was his to maintain. Gates retorted that the state erred when they diverted the Seymour River through his land – the state created the problem, so the state must maintain the bridge.



Gates Farm Bridge, Photo by Joe Nelson, Summer 1997

As the old bridge began to sag, the State Highway Department (now the Agency of Transportation) put

supporting posts under the stringers each spring. Before winter, the posts were removed and 80-foot steel beams were laid on each side of the bridge deck and tie-bolted to the chords below. The state made the swap twice a year because during the growing season, the farmer needed the full width of the roadway for his equipment, and the posts were vulnerable to ice and flotsam in winter and spring.

After years of seasonal submergings in high water, the ninety-seven-year-old structure failed. The old bridge was lifted off its abutments in the fall of 1994 and disassembled. The plan called for all structurally sound members to be saved, but damage was so extensive, eighty percent of the bridge was replaced. The work was done by Blow and Cote Construction of Morrisville. Agency of Transportation engineer Gilbert Newbury, trained in timber engineering, designed the replica bridge for the Maintenance Division of the Agency.

Because the bridge stands in a flood plain, it became necessary to raise the bridge structure out of reach of high water and floating ice. Newbury couldn't increase the height of the abutments because that would steepen the slopes in and out of the bridge, making it difficult for the farmer to get his equipment through. He couldn't build up the road because the U.S. Corps of Engineers frowns on bringing fill into a flood plain. Newbury solved the problem by raising the bridge on eighteen-inch white oak bolster timbers and hanging new floor beams under the chords by steel rods. This raised the trusses 1 ½ feet higher over the river, yet the new bridge floor remains at the top edge of the original abutment backwall, as before. While the floor system is exposed to high water, the floor is cheaper and easier to replace than the bridge trusses. Newbury attributes the floor suspension idea to that used in the Howe Truss of the Rutland Rail Road Bridge in Shoreham.

Viewers are advised that the approach to the bridge is by way of a sometimes-muddy road on private property and that the bridge is closed with a cattle gate.

**Grist Mill Bridge** [WGN 45-08-01] N44° 38.193' W072° 49.534'

To find the Grist Mill Bridge from Route 15, drive to the roundabout at Jeffersonville and exit to Route 108. Follow the village street to the intersection with a traffic light island, then bear left, continuing south on Route 108. Turn left onto Canyon Road a few yards past the building with the mill wheel on its front.

Little is known about the 97-foot Burr arch bridge crossing the Brewster River. The bridge serving Canyon

Road is called the Grist Mill Bridge, the Scott Bridge, the Alden Bryan Bridge, the Grand Canyon Bridge, and the Brewster River Bridge. No one knows who built it or when – oddly, there are no public records testifying to the events that led to the building of the bridge. The town records concerning these events could have been lost in flood or fire, but no newspaper accounts came down through the years either.



*Grist Mill Bridge, Photo by Joe Nelson, October 2004*

Snowplow trucks loaded with salt and sand and heavy emergency vehicles had been exceeding the bridge's posted weight limits for years because of the long detours around it. Rehabilitation of the span and the reposting of weight limits were in order.

Rehabilitation was performed on the old bridge beginning in March 2004. It was completed in October of that year. The abutments are of interest in that they are of the original rubble-stone laid up dry. Bridge builders used rubble-stone, stone slabs, or cut stone to build abutments, and the original masonry of the east abutment can still be seen.

**Cambridge Junction Bridge** [WGN 45-08-02] N44° 39.052' W072° 48.875'

"Washington Holmes, its builder, would have no difficulty in identifying his span across the Lamoille River at Cambridge Junction," wrote Richard Sanders Allen in his *Covered Bridges of the Northeast*. "It looks today almost as it did when it was built. Located close to the railroad station, it was a favorite place to park a horse and rig while waiting for the train. A large sign board used to prohibit this practice, but unthinking souvenir hunters have taken it."

The Cambridge Junction Bridge is located off Route 15 on Junction Road, about a mile east of the rotary at Jeffersonville.

The 140-foot Burr arch structure, spanning the Lamoille River at Cambridge Junction, is known as the Junction Bridge, the Station Bridge, and the Poland Bridge. Built in 1887 by George Washington Holmes,

Jason French, and Roscoe Fuller, it once gave the towns west of the Lamoille River access to the railway station that contributed its name to the place. The abandoned St. Johnsbury and Lamoille County Railroad right-of-way, now a hiking trail, passes a few yards from the south portal.



*Cambridge Junction Bridge, Photo by Joe Nelson, Summer 2004*

In March 1993, the Agency of Transportation inspected the bridge and found it to be “seriously distressed...the truss significantly sagged,” so the bridge was closed. The report noted that this bridge is the second longest *single* span in Vermont, after the plank lattice Bartonsville Bridge. “It is possible the Cambridge Junction Bridge is the longest Burr arch in the U.S.”

Reconstructed between the years 2001 and 2004, the funds for the work on the bridge came from the \$10 million National Historic Bridge Program announced by Senator James Jeffords in August 2000.

The bridge was very nearly not built. The villages of Belvidere and Waterville were in favor of a bridge over the Lamoille to shorten the travel distance to the rail junction at Cambridge. Cambridge voters, however, could see no advantage to them and blocked the expenditure of tax dollars to build the bridge.

The impasse dragged on until Luke P. Poland of Waterville took up the cause. Poland, a lawyer, had served as Chief Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court, Representative to the State Legislature, then Senator from Vermont in Washington D.C., before retiring from office in 1884 and returning to Waterville. Judge Poland led Belvidere and Waterville residents in bringing suit against the town of Cambridge at the Lamoille County Court in 1885. A commission ruled in favor of the petitioners, and the court ordered the bridge built. The Cambridge voters stalled compliance until the spring of 1887. Poland did not live to use the bridge, dying in his hay field the following July, but his name remains connected with the bridge.

## East Fairfield

East Fairfield lies thirteen miles north of Jeffersonville by way of Routes 108 and 36. The town of Fairfield was founded in 1763, when New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth granted the land to petitioners in Fairfield, Connecticut. The Governor of New York granted the same land to another group of people in 1774. The first settler from Connecticut cleared land in 1787, and industry grew along the banks of Black Creek and the Fairfield River.

**East Fairfield Bridge** [WGN 45-06-03#2] N44° 47.170' W072° 51.725'

Find the East Fairfield Bridge by driving three miles east on Route 36 from the intersection of Route 108. As you enter East Fairfield village, pass New Road on the right and Mill Street on the left. Turn left .2 of a mile past Mill Street to Bridge Street.



*East Fairfield Bridge, Photo by Joe Nelson, summer 2009*

The small queenpost span crosses a millpond fed by Black Creek. The millpond once powered a gristmill, the foundations of which remain at the south end of the bridge. The dam, sluice, and foundations of a sawmill are visible just upstream. Above the sawmill, the old staging area can still be seen next to the creek. Logs were brought there by teams of horses, then rolled into the creek and pulled into the mill by drag chain. Toward the Bakersfield town line, there was a tub factory – where butter tubs, sugar tubs, and watering troughs were made – a fulling mill, tanneries, and a brick works, all of which are gone without a trace.

The East Fairfield Covered Bridge, renewed in 2009, stands pristine and ready to serve the community another 144 years. The original fabrics remaining in the bridge are the trusses, floor beams, and joists. The bridge once featured several stenciled advertisements and some posters.

Before the renovation, the town had worked hard to keep the bridge in use. Repairs were made in the early 1940's, and the span was reconstructed in 1967. In the winter of 1973-74, using the ice to support staging, Selectmen Bernard Conner, Francis Howrigan, and Howrigan's son Michael did some much needed repair work. The ends of the truss braces supporting the queen posts had decayed, and the north side of the bridge needed to be jacked up and strengthened. Truss rods were put through the frame of the bridge to prevent it from spreading. Despite all of the effort, the bridge was closed to traffic in 1987, and its condition deteriorated rapidly. Work on the floor in the early 1990's allowed the bridge to be reopened for foot traffic, but vehicles were blocked from entering by posts barring the portals.

### Waterville and Belvidere

The covered bridges of Waterville and Belvidere seem to share a kinship. All of them span the same stretch of the North Branch of the Lamoille River, all of them were built in mature communities, likely replacing older bridges, and local carpenter-members of the two communities using the same resources and stores of knowledge probably built them. All five of the Waterville-Belvidere bridges use the queenpost truss, a truss the carpenters were familiar with as it is often used in barns.

The descendants of the craftsmen who built the bridges, showing more than a little faith in the workmanship and engineering savvy of their forefathers, have frequently tested the old bridges with prodigious loads. The Jaynes Bridge handled countless crossings until finally a truckload of gravel was too much. The nearby Lumber Mill Bridge swallowed a snowplow. The Montgomery Bridge strained and burst under a load of asphalt road patch.

These happenings foretold the coming of the ubiquitous I-beam. Steel beams began to appear in the 1960's and 1970's as the old bridges were strengthened to support modern commercial traffic. The decks of the Church Street Bridge, the Dallas Montgomery Bridge, the Jaynes Bridge, and the Lumber Mill Bridge are all supported by steel beams. While the original trusses no longer support the roadways, these historic bridges remain well worth visiting.

### Waterville

The town of Waterville, originally chartered as *Coits Gore* in October 1788, was first represented at the legislature in 1829 by Luther Poland, forebear of Judge

Luke Poland, the champion of the bridge at Cambridge Junction in 1885.

As the name implies, Waterville was a mill town – three or four large woolen factories and an equal number of other mills were located here. One of the woolen mills, described by contemporaries as “mammoth,” was built and run by John Herrins of Ireland. John Herrins began manufacturing flannel at a rate of 374,000 yards per year. Thirty-two male and nineteen female workers operated 2,000 spindles and 20 looms. It burned in the winter of 1853, and another woolen factory, also owned by Robert Herrins, burned in December 1860.

That same year, Osgood McFarland, Jr. ran a starch mill, producing 30 tons of potato starch per year, and a sash factory, which turned out 50,000 window sashes annually.

**Church Street Bridge** [WGN 45-08-13] N44° 41.397' W072° 46.268'



*Church Street Bridge, Photo by Joe Nelson, winter 1995*

The view through Church Street Bridge, up Church Street toward the village, frames the Waterville town hall. The setting in the middle of a New England village makes the little bridge a favorite of photographers and artists.

The Church Street Bridge or Village Bridge features board and batten siding and rounded portals, differing from its more austere sisters. The date of build and the name of the builder are unknown. Robert Hagerman, in his *Bridges of Lamoille County*, guesses the date to be sometime around 1877. That date is also used by the Vermont Division of Historic Sites in nominating the bridge for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The Agency of Transportation lists the date as 1895.

A truck went through the deck in the winter of 1967. When the bridge was repaired in the following year, the

roadway was made self-supporting with the addition of four steel beams.

The 60-foot queenpost truss span crosses the North Branch of the Lamoille River in the center of the village of Waterville, just to the west of Route 109.

**Montgomery Bridge** [WGN 45-08-14] N44° 42.344' W072° 45.618'

The Montgomery Covered Bridge's surroundings are park like and especially attractive in the fall. To the north, the river flows through ridges of bedrock. On the west bank upstream, a boulder reminiscent of an upended mill stone perches among the trees on the stream's edge. The bridge crosses the North Branch of the Lamoille River 1.2 miles north of the village of Waterville, next to Route 109. The 63-foot queenpost truss bridge is named for the Dallas Montgomery farm it serves. It is also known as the Lower Bridge in reference to the Upper Bridge, or Jaynes Bridge, upstream. This may be the bridge referred to by the *Cambridge Transcript* when it reported in November 1887 that the Potter Bridge had been completed.



Montgomery Bridge, Photo by Joe Nelson, summer 1995

The bridge was reconstructed with a self-supporting roadway in 1971 after a truck loaded with asphalt collapsed the deck.

**Jaynes Bridge** [WGN 45-08-15] N44° 42.722' W072° 45.391'

The Jaynes Bridge is a classic example of a northern Vermont covered bridge. The functional lines of the bridge, rural setting, winding road, and background of mixed hardwood and conifer trees provide something special to satisfy the viewer in any season.

A weathered sign on the west gable end proclaims this to be the "Kissing Bridge," a claim that is probably true, since many of Vermont's covered bridges enjoy that reputation. It is named the Jaynes Bridge after a family who lived and worked nearby. Located in Coddington Hollow, it has also been called the Coddington Hollow

Bridge, and it is also known as the Upper Bridge, as it is upstream of the Montgomery Bridge.

The bridge is located just off Route 109, about 1.7 miles north of the village of Waterville. The 57-foot queenpost truss spans the North Branch of the Lamoille River, serving Coddington Hollow Road and providing the only access to the farms and dwellings on the east bank of the river. The road continues another two miles to connect with the Long Trail, as it threads its way through the Green Mountains.

The build date and the names of the builders are unknown, but the Division of Historic Sites estimates the build date to be circa 1877. The wooden roadway was made self-supporting with four steel beams after a truckload of gravel broke through the original deck in 1960.

### Belvidere

Belvidere was one of five grants made by the state of Vermont to John Kelly of New York by a charter issued in November 1791. The town lies in the heart of the Green Mountains. Except for a few farms along the river valley, the terrain is suitable only for forest industries. The river, the North Branch of the Lamoille, was once named the Kelly River for the town's grantee.

In the 1800's, there were several saw mills active in all seasons, and the manufacture of shingles, lathe, butter tubs, and sap buckets was carried on. It was said in those years that every other man in Belvidere was a cooper – a maker of barrels and tubs. The villagers proudly bragged that no lawyer ever lived there.

There are three hamlets in the town: Belvidere Center, Belvidere Corners, and Belvidere Junction, the last named for an expected railroad that never came.

Belvidere is home to two covered bridges: the Lumber Mill Bridge and the Morgan Bridge. Both cross the North Branch of the Lamoille River. To find them, drive north 3.7 miles on Route 109 from Church Street in Waterville. Cross a small cement bridge and turn left onto Back Road. Drive .4 of a mile to the Lumber Mill Bridge. Cross the bridge and continue, bearing right at the first fork. Drive about .8 of a mile to the Morgan Bridge. Cross the Morgan Bridge to return to Route 109.

**Lumber Mill Bridge** [WGN 45-08-06] N44° 44.630' W072° 44.481'

The Lumber Mill Bridge, named for one of the mills that once lined the river here, is remarkable for its setting. There is a rocky ledge near its southwest corner with a cover of conifer trees. To the east, the river flows

through large stone formations worn smooth by the water. The shoreline is easily accessed for viewing the bridge from below and from the stone formations upstream. The foundations of the lumber mill can be seen along the river bank east of the north portal.

Look for the several holes four to eight inches in diameter in the bedrock near the bridge. One can only speculate on what made them.

The exact build date of the bridge is undetermined, but it is probably in the middle 1890's. The Vermont Division of Historic Sites assumes the year to be 1895. Lewis Robinson was the builder of the 71-foot span.



Lumber Mill Bridge, Photo by Joe Nelson, summer 1995

In 1971, a snowplow went through the bridge deck. When repairs were made soon after, the bridge was reconstructed with an independent timber deck roadway supported by four steel beams. The original trusses were repaired in 1995 by bridge restorer Jan Lewandoski and post and beam carpenter Paul Ide.

**Morgan Bridge** [WGN 45-08-07] N44° 44.613' W072° 43.690'

A stand of pines mutes the sounds of the busy highway above the Morgan Bridge. Lewis Robinson, Charles Leonard, and Fred Tracy built the 64-foot queenpost truss span in 1887. It is named for a family that owned the property across the road from the north end of the bridge.

An Agency of Transportation inspection report noted that the bridge has some unique design features. "The queenpost truss incorporates three small king rod trusses within the queenpost truss to help support the floor loads. Also, queen rods are positioned next to the queen posts. Two other short rods drop from near the bottom of the queenpost main braces as well. Another design feature includes double six-by-eight tie beams at

each queenpost, allowing for two tenons and two pairs of knee braces."

The bridge also features a five-foot gable end overhang at each end, unique among the queenpost bridges of the North Branch of the Lamoille, and it alone, in contrast to its neighbors, retains its original flooring, having no need for steel girders.

## Letters

*Dear Dan,*

*I just received my spring '20 issue of "The Bridger." It made my day as it's been a long winter but not a snowy or too cold one here. Today the temp. is 70° & blue skies.*

*I don't know if you ever had my birth date as it's not listed – it's May 15<sup>th</sup>.*

*Oddly enough as I write this, today is my late mom's 108<sup>th</sup> birthday (March 13, 1912). She was the person who was a big lover of covered bridges in our family. (I love them too!) She was an artist as well as my brother and myself, my dad a printer for many NYCity newspapers. His 108<sup>th</sup> birthday was January 9<sup>th</sup> 1912.*

*We never got to see a real covered bridge as my dad (the driver in my family) never took the back roads to New England. My mom and I begged but when we visited my grandparents who had built their house in Berkshire, Mass., it was a long trip in the 50's & 60's and he wanted to make good time! Every summer we went there to help build grandpa's house and one for my aunt. All done by family members and friends.*

*My family would be smiling now because I'm sharing my memories.*

*Anyway, I'll never get this in the mail if I keep writing!*

*Take care and have a nice spring!*

*Ann Marie Colton*

*P.S. On pg. 10 of your spring 2020 issue I noticed a story of 'East Georgia Bridge,' the name of Addison E. Colton – can you tell me anything about him and/or any "Coltons" of your area. Who were they and are there any existing Coltons in your area whom I can write to. I do a lot of my genealogy & would like to write to 'Coltons.' TY.*

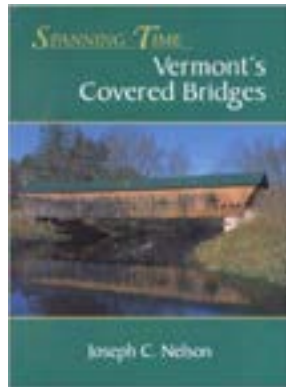
## Our Lending Library

The Society's library is closed until further notice. Anyone interested in a book, please contact Joe Nelson at [jcarlnelson@yahoo.com](mailto:jcarlnelson@yahoo.com).

# For Sale

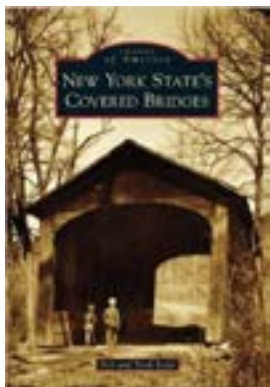
**Spanning Time: Vermont's Covered Bridges** by

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, [bob-trish68@frontiernet.net](mailto:bob-trish68@frontiernet.net).

**Visions of Vermont art gallery**, Jeffersonville, Vermont

at: <https://www.visionsofvermont.com/>

802.644.8183

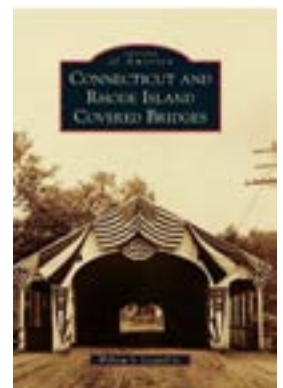
**A special sale** for the benefit of the Vermont Covered Bridge Society featuring the works of Eric Tobin. All proceeds of the unframed prints go to the VCBS. Sale of the framed prints will be shared 50/50. They are all Giclée on acid free paper. The glass is non-glare artists glass.

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

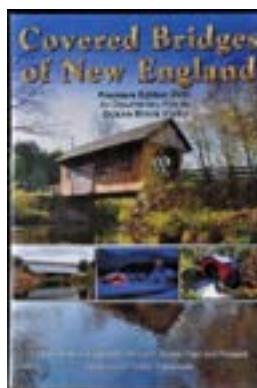


**Connecticut and Rhode Island Covered Bridges** .

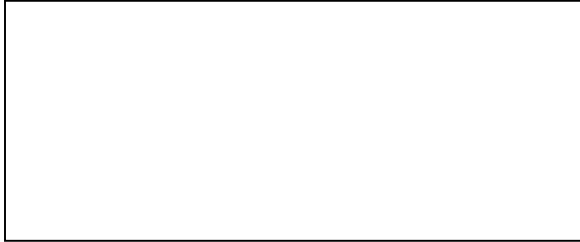
**Price reduced!** During their heyday in the mid- to late 1800s, more than 150 covered bridges dotted the landscape of Connecticut and Rhode Island. Since that time, floods, fires, and progress have claimed all but two of the historic structures. With over 200 images, this book provides insight into 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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(Business or Society please provide name of contact person)

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*(Memberships valid to the end of the current calendar year,*

*Dues and Donations will be used to promote preservation of Covered bridges.)*

Please make all checks for dues and donations payable to: The Vermont Covered Bridge Society.

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