

# THE BRIDGER



The Vermont Covered Bridge Society Newsletter – Issue #75

## Events

### Vermont Covered Bridge Society Spring Meeting

The spring meeting will likely take place around April or May. The time, place, and speaker will be announced in the spring issue of *The Bridger*, which will be distributed in early March.

### Loss of Butte County, California Bridge to Camp Fire

by Dan Monger

On November 10, 2018, VCBS members received sad news from Bill Caswell and James Crouse about the destruction of the Honey Run Covered Bridge [05-04-01] in California's ongoing Camp Fire in Butte County. The fire erupted before 6:30 a.m. on November 8, 2018, and has claimed 79 lives, with 700 people still unaccounted for as of November 20. Along with the historic death toll, 9,899 homes and 367 commercial buildings have been destroyed. Paradise, a town of 27,000, has been 90% destroyed. To date, the fire has burned 149,500 acres. Residents as far as 170 miles away are experiencing unhealthy air quality. While the cause of the fire is under investigation, Pacific Gas and Electric Company reported a power failure close to the time the fire ignited.

There are now nine covered bridges remaining in our third largest state, according to the 2009 edition of "World Guide to Covered Bridges," edited by David W. Wright. The Honey Run Covered Bridge was built in

1886, shortly after gold was discovered in the county. It connected Paradise Ridge to Butte Creek Canyon, crossing over Butte Creek. It was built by the San Francisco-based American Bridge and Building Company at a cost of \$4,300. The wooden bridge was constructed using Ponderosa Pine for the compression timbers. The beams were sheathed on both the tops and sides with sheet metal. It was reinforced with steel cables to handle loads of 1,500 pound. Pratt-style trusses were used in three unequal spans of 30, 128, and 80 feet, with a center portion of the bridge being five feet higher than its two sides. Twin cylindrical concrete-filled metal piers provided the foundation. In 1901, over a ten-day period, a crew of six men added a three-tiered cover.

The Honey Run Covered Bridge Association was formed in 1965 by residents Harley Johnson and Dr. Merritt Horning, following the near destruction of the bridge from the collision of a delivery truck. Butte County decided to build another bridge a few yards upstream rather than repair the existing bridge. It was the only three-span Pratt-style truss bridge remaining in the United States. Lost, but not forgotten.



*Honey Run Covered Bridge*

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For those VCBS members who received this newsletter with the mailing label marked in red, this indicates that you are behind in your membership dues. 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 don't respond will be purged from the membership list.

### Heartfelt Birthday and Anniversary Wishes to:

December	27 Dan Brock	February
01 Terry and Jane Shaw	28 Anthony and Pat Daniels	02 Bill Caswell
06 Priscilla O'Reilly	30 Gloria Davis	07 Richard (Rick) Cyphers
08 Mark Dawson	31 Jan Bramhall	12 Joe and Ruth Nelson
20 Lyn Whiston		12 Robert Cassidy
22 Richard Davis	January	14 Richard Howrigan
23 Ed Barna	05 Aida Cyphers	21 George Longenecker
24 Dave and Marikka Guay	12 Jim Patch	24 John Weaver
25 Ann Ovitt	15 Dan Castellini	26 David Guay
26 Virginia Brackett	29 Bill Jeffrey	
27 Steve and Susan Miyamoto		

### Vermont Covered Bridge Society Nineteenth Annual Fall Meeting Middlebury, Vermont Saturday, September 29, 2018

The nineteenth annual spring meeting of the Vermont Covered Bridge Society was held in Middlebury, Vermont, on Saturday, September 29, 2018. The meeting was held at the new addition to the Middlebury Congregational Church – a new venue which is equipped with many video and electronic features.

Fourteen people were in attendance when Vice President Joe Nelson called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

#### Minutes of the eighteenth annual spring meeting

A combined meeting with the NSPCB, which was scheduled to be held in Quechee, Vermont, was not held because of icy roads. The speaker scheduled for that meeting was Devin Colman, State Architectural Historian, who was to speak about Nichols Montgomery Powers, 19<sup>th</sup> century Vermont covered bridge builder.

TREASURER'S REPORT – April 14, 2018  
– Reported by Neil Daniels, Treasurer

#### INCOME STATEMENT

January 1, 2017 – December 31, 2017

Income:	
Donations	\$462.00
Dues	495.00
Events and Sales	13.00
Total Income	\$970.00

Expenses:	
<i>The Bridger</i>	\$392.00
Events	50.00
Office and Postage	292.00
Publicity (brochures)	115.00
Total Expenses	\$849.00
	(Gain \$121.00)

#### BALANCE SHEET

Union Bank Statement	January 2017	\$7,893.00
	December 2017	8,014.00
		(Gain \$121.00)

#### SAVE-A-BRIDGE FUND

Value January 1, 2017	\$7,194.00
Value December 31, 2017	8,014.00
Funds to transfer in prior 2017	2,919.00
Voted in 2017	470.00

NOTES: Both accounts cash, no fees charged,  
VCBS is 501C3

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Membership Committee

- Reported by Dan Monger, Chair

Current membership – 138, with no increase  
Brochures printed – 2,500, at approximate cost of \$800,  
distributed to 19 Vermont Welcome Centers

### Historical Committee

No report

### Communications Committee

- Reported by Joe Nelson, Chair

Joe complimented two of our VCBS members for the jobs they are doing for the group. Steve Miyamoto, Publicity Committee Chair, for the fantastic job in electronic communications, and Melanie Schropp, editor of *The Bridger*.

### Bridge Watch

No report

### Publicity Committee

- Reported by Steve Miyamoto, Chair

Social media is the primary outreach.

*Internet* – The VCBS website has been completely redesigned. Information is still there, but in a new format.

*Facebook Group* – Different from Facebook, 340 members currently active. This is an open group. The posting person does not need to be a VCBS member.

Of the approximately 100 covered bridges in the state, Steve has posted two different bridges each week, including photos. A hashtag to post information or photos is available for anyone who wants to post.

*The Bridger* – The previous editor, Wendy, had set up a Twitter account, which is still in existence and is the same as Instagram.

Viewers are not focusing on Vermont, but Steve is programming Vermont. Twitter and Instagram have different audiences.

### Live Streaming

Steve reported that the VCBS meetings are now being live-streamed.

## OLD BUSINESS

No old business reported

## NEW BUSINESS

### Needs:

- Events Committee Chair – sites of meetings and setup of committee
- Treasurer – Neil Daniels would like to retire from this long-held position
- Secretary – Irene Barna wants to step down from this long-held position

### 251 Club

Dan Monger has been working toward combining events with the 251 Club, which has only one meeting each year.

*Vermont Magazine* advertised the Vermont Covered Bridge Society. *Vermont Magazine* Publisher/Editor Phil Jordan donated space in the May/June issue to advertise the VCBS. We thereby gained four new members. Our board of directors will vote on buying space in future issues of the magazine.

A question was asked if anyone has reached out to Senators Pat Leahy or Peter Welch. Dan Monger replied that Jim Jeffords was involved with the VCBS. He asked whether anyone has reached out to Leahy, Sanders, or Welch. Is there any point in doing this on a national level? Joe Nelson responded that the governor is on the mailing list for the newsletter.

A move to adjourn was made at 10:35 a.m. by Tom Carpenter, which was seconded by Dan Monger.

## PRESENTATION

Vermont Architectural Historian Devin Colman spoke on his research about Pittsford-born covered bridge builder Nichols Montgomery Powers. We were fortunate to have Devin present his excellent and well-researched program that had been anticipated since the combined VCBS/NSPCB meeting that was cancelled in the spring.

## NEXT MEETING DATE

No meeting date was set. The VCBS Board of Directors will discuss the viability of having two meetings each year at a meeting in the near future. At that time, a date will be determined and announced in a future issue of *The Bridger*.

Respectfully submitted,  
Irene Barna, Secretary

# Publicity Update

by Steve Miamoto

In an effort to reach out to members who could not attend the fall meeting, we live-streamed the meeting. The process was successful, but our use of a webcam caused the quality of the program to be poor. We purchased a small camcorder to improve the audio/visual quality of future meetings. We used YouTube live-streaming, which allowed us to archive the streams for future use. We will be using the chat option to give remote participants the ability to ask questions, give input, and potentially vote on matters that arise during the meetings.

Our new website continues to grow. News items are being added. I am also adding a feature documenting the “lost bridges” of Vermont. This shows visually where all the lost bridges once stood and uses the data from the Covered Spans of Yesteryear website. Thanks to Bill Caswell for allowing us to use this information.

VCBS website Lost Bridges:  
[http://www.vermontbridges.org/lost\\_covered\\_bridge\\_our\\_state\\_map.shtml](http://www.vermontbridges.org/lost_covered_bridge_our_state_map.shtml)

COSY website: <http://www.lostbridges.org>

Promotion of the VCBS continues on social media. We have four social media presences: a Facebook page, a

Facebook group, an Instagram account, and a Twitter account. These accounts can reach the VCBS membership and beyond.

The Facebook page, Vermont Covered Bridge Society (@vermontcoveredbridgesociety), has accumulated over 700 “likes.”

The Facebook group, Vermont’s Covered Bridges (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/386732861799546/>) is very active and has grown to over 350 members since it was started in March. We have a lot of regular participation. Weekly features include a tour of the state’s bridges in a year’s time on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Trivia Tuesday asks trivia questions about Vermont covered bridges. Throwback Thursday takes a look at lost bridges that once existed in the state.

The Instagram account (vermont\_covered\_bridges) publishes the same weekly information as the Facebook group but reaches a different audience.

The Twitter account (@vtcoveredbridge) again publishes the same information as the Facebook group and the Instagram account but in an abbreviated form, once again reaching a different audience.

I was asked a question at the fall meeting that needs some input: “How do you reach out to people who don’t use social media?” I need some ideas here. Please send me some thoughts on how to share news and events other than by social media and the website. Please forward your thoughts to [spmiyamoto@gmail.com](mailto:spmiyamoto@gmail.com).

## Two VCBS Leaders Stepping Down

by Joe Nelson

After nearly 19 years of service to the Vermont Covered Bridge Society, two of our leaders are stepping down for health reasons.

Treasurer Neil Daniels has turned over his books to me, and I will act in his stead until a new treasurer is confirmed by the board of directors. The duties of treasurer include collecting and receiving all money due to the Society and depositing it in a bank in the name of the Society. The treasurer is elected by the membership for a term of two years and is a member of the Board of Directors.

Those wanting to submit funds to the Society or seek reimbursement for committee expenditures can mail VCBS Financial Accounting Forms and receipts to me at VCBS, P.O. Box 267, Jericho, VT 05465. If you need assistance, contact me at [jcarlnelson@yahoo.com](mailto:jcarlnelson@yahoo.com).

Secretary Irene Barna will continue on limited duty until she is replaced. Volunteers will fill in for her as needed. The duties of secretary include taking and keeping minutes of the annual meetings and assisting at

the annual meetings with parliamentary procedure. The secretary is elected by the membership for a term of two years and is a member of the Board of Directors. The secretary can appoint a Recording Secretary as needed.

Members who want to apply for either of these positions may contact VCBS President William Carroll at [wcarroll@crocker.com](mailto:wcarroll@crocker.com) or at 5 Fox Hollow Road #301, Lenox, MA 01240.

## A Covered Bridge Tour – Route 100 in Northern Vermont

There are six covered bridges scattered along the roughly 30 miles of Route 100 between North Troy and Route 15. The countryside varies from mountain to farmland. The bridge sites lead seekers off the beaten path, deep into Vermont's Northeast Kingdom and through some of the state's most picturesque villages.

### Troy

Troy was organized in March 1802 as Missisco, named for the river Missisoi, as it was then spelled. The Indian name for the Missisquoi River is *Azzastaquake*, describing a river that turns back on itself. The name Missisquoi, a corruption of Masseepsque, meaning *the place of arrow flints*, actually applied only to the Missisquoi Bay area, not the river. Settlement began in 1796, when several men from Peacham, Vermont, came to explore the area. The first settler arrived in 1797.

The town name was changed to Troy, not in honor of the ancient city told of by the Greek poet Homer, but to honor Troy, New York. It seems that Vermonters who were in debt to New York creditors were at risk of imprisonment when they crossed the state line. Some Vermonters from Missisco, arrested for debt in Troy, were released on bail put up by one Benjamin Smith. In gratitude, they named their town after his.

### School House Bridge – 1910

[WGN 45-10-03]

Barn red, the 92-foot School House Bridge stands at a bend in the Missisquoi River, next to a ford and a sandbar. At low water, a viewer can walk out onto the bar to within a hundred feet of the span.



*School House Bridge by Joe Nelson*

The bridge is of special interest because of its three pairs of *flying buttresses* and because of the low roofline. The height of the plank-lattice trusses on this bridge are only nine feet, eight inches, one to two feet shorter than usual, leaving insufficient space for getting hay wagons through had the conventional interior bracing system been used. The external buttresses provide the required lateral bracing to resist wind forces and to keep the trusses aligned.

The trusses are of comparatively light construction. The lattice planks measure 2 inches by 9 inches, versus the usual 3 inches by 10 or 11 inches, and the web crossings are pinned by one treenail, where two are normally used. Further, three sets of chords strengthen the span rather than the usual four: the upper secondary chords were not installed. The chords consist of only one plank on each side of the webbing instead of the usual two. On the positive side, the chord planks are twice the thickness of those used in other plank lattice bridges, measuring at least 6 inches. Where other lattice bridge chords use two planks on each side of the web, staggered and pinned to gain length, the chords in the School House Bridge are joined end-to-end using a

peculiar E-shaped splice block, secured with bolts. Also on the positive side, the web spacing is on 29-inch centers instead of the customary 36-inch center.

Using just one treenail at the web intersections “may be a weakness,” read an Agency of Transportation inspection report, “since some compression lattice members are buckling away from the tension members with gaps developing between the two.”

The Vermont Division of Historic Sites used a bridge build date of 1910 in the application for inclusion of the bridge on the National Register of Historic Places. The name of the builder is unknown.

According to Richard Sanders Allen’s research, there were formerly three similar single-pin buttressed bridges in the towns of Troy and Westfield. Phil Ziegler, in his *Sentinels of Time, Vermont’s Covered Bridges*, tells us that the School House Bridge collapsed in 1958 and was later rebuilt. The bridge also survived a fire on an unknown date. The structure shows signs of the sandblasting done to remove the char.

School House Bridge stands on Bayou Road, 1.1 miles from the junction with Route 101. Bayou Road leaves the east side of Route 101, 1.1 miles north of the junction of Routes 242 and 101, just south of where Route 105 joins Route 101.

To see a spectacular waterfall, pass through the bridge and turn left onto River Road. Drive 1.2 miles to Big Falls, where the gorge and cataract can be viewed from atop a rock pinnacle.

To continue the tour to Coventry, retrace Bayou Road to Route 101 and go south 4.1 miles to Route 100 at Troy village. Take Route 100 east to Coventry 10 miles, passing the junction with Route 105 and taking Route 14.

## Coventry

Chartered by the state of Vermont to Major Elias Buel, Ira Alan, and 59 others in 1780, Coventry was named after Buel’s birthplace in Connecticut. At the first town meeting, held in 1803, it was voted that each inhabitant should work on the roads four days in June and two days in September. This practice was not at all unusual in the early years of the nation. In cash-poor communities, taxes and other debts were paid *in kind*, meaning produce and labor were accepted as a medium of exchange.

In the fall of 1805, the first public roads were laid out. Until that time, the roads were paths cut through the woods no wider than what was needed for a single team, and not always that wide. The roadway was cleared of trees, but stumps, stones, and mud holes remained for the traveler to avoid as best he could.

The town grew along the Black River. By 1840, there were two sawmills, a grist mill, a clothier works, a tannery, and a starch factory. Things were going so well that around that year there was a movement to make Coventry the shire town of Orleans County. The name of the town was actually changed to Orleans in 1841. The effort failed, and the name was changed back to Coventry in 1843.

When it was found that there was no room for a town to match the grant issued on November 4, 1780, to Major Elias Buel, he was given a “flying grant” to locate an unowned town-sized piece of land. The grantees settled for three widely separate tracts to make up the equivalent of one town: a part of Coventry, a part of what is now Newport, and the triangular Huntington Gore called Buel’s Gore. The Gore’s best year occurred in 1840, with a population totaling 18, outnumbered by 3,500 sheep.

## Black River Bridge – 1881

[WGN 45-10-02#2]

On Saturday night, November 1, 1997, Vermonters lost an irreplaceable treasure; arsonists destroyed the state’s last working Paddleford-truss covered bridge. The 86-foot span was one of three Paddleford-truss bridges surviving in Vermont and the only one supporting regular daily traffic. This bridge and the Lord’s Creek Bridge, off Covered Bridge Road, north of the village of Irasburg, are believed to have been built by Jon D. Colton of Irasburg. A third Paddleford structure, the Sanborn Bridge, built in 1869, by unknown craftsmen, is located in Lyndonville.

The Black River Bridge, built in 1881, served Coventry Road, just south of Coventry village. Also known as the Coventry Bridge, Lower Bridge, or Orne Bridge, it spanned the Black River at a bend near a swampy shore, crossing the Irasburg town line.



*Black River Bridge by Joe Nelson*

Busy beavers work only a few feet from passers-by. In the spring, ducks land in the wet fields off to the north. The town periodically renewed the bridge's nicely rounded and scrolled portals, but to little avail – trucks passing through quickly demolished the work.

The Black River Covered Bridge replica opened on November 29, 1999. With the sturdy timber used in the construction and the liberal application of fire-proofing chemicals, the new bridge can be expected to stand up well against time, traffic, and vandals. The first person to cross the bridge was Roy Ingalls, a long-time Irasburg Selectman, who drove his pickup truck through with Governor Dean as passenger.

All of Vermont's covered bridges are unique, and each has a quirk of its own. The replica's designer, John Weaver of VTrans, pointed out that the original bridge was constructed with a 14-panel truss, the number of counties in the state. Vermont, of course, was the 14<sup>th</sup> state to enter the union. Panels are those spaces between the vertical posts in the truss.

The arsonists, two 21-year-olds, were caught in June 1998 and charged with second-degree arson. On January 26, 1999, they were sentenced to pay \$23,000, Irasburg's share of the \$434,000 cost to rebuild the bridge, with the state paying the rest.

To find the Black River Bridge, leave Route 14/Route 5 on westbound Main Street. Follow Main Street to a large white frame church fronted by a civil war monument. Drive to the right of the church to Covered Bridge Road, and you will find the bridge. Cross the bridge and continue on, taking the right-hand forks as you come to them. You will come around to the white frame church again by way of Heermansmith Farm Road.

To go on to Irasburg and the Lords Creek Bridge, leave Coventry on Route 14, south 4.2 miles to Route 58. Turn left on Route 58 and drive 1.6 miles through Irasburg to

Covered Bridge Road. Drive north for .6 mile to the bridge.

## Irasbrg

The town of Irasburg was granted to Ira Allen by the Vermont General Assembly in February 1781. Ira Allen was the son of *the* Ira Allen and the nephew of Ethan Allen, both famous land speculators. A certain number of proprietors were needed to form a new township – usually 62 men in all. According to historian E. P. Colon, when the Allens wanted a new township granted, they collected a few genuine names toward the required number, then created the rest by inventing people from distant places. The Allens paid the state the first grantee dues and afterward bought up the claims of the fictional people. Ira Allen resided in Irasburg from 1814 until his death in 1866.

## Lords Creek Bridge – 1881

[WGN 45-10-01]

The Lords Creek Bridge in Irasburg is John Colton's other surviving Paddleford truss bridge. Built in 1881, it spanned Lords Creek until it was replaced in the late 1950s. The old bridge was acquired by the LaBonds and moved to the family farm where it crosses the Black River. Still known as the Lords Creek Bridge, it provides access to the farmer's fields. There is a cattle gate stapled to the west portal.



*Lords Creek Bridge by Joe Nelson*

The 48-foot bridge is in very poor condition. The siding and gable end sheathing is stripped off, and some of the bracing on the south side is pulled loose. In this open-sided condition, the structure is ideal for studying the mechanics of Peter Paddleford's truss.

Continue the tour by returning to the junction of Routes 58 and 14. Take Route 58 east nine miles to Lowell. At Lowell, drive south 14.2 miles on Route 100 to

North Hyde Park and the Route 100C junction. The Scribner Bridge serves Rocky Road, leaving Route 100C to the southeast, three miles from the junction with Route 100.

## Johnson

Land for what was to become Johnson was first granted to a man named Brown. He had planned to name the town Brownsville, but he and his family were captured by Indians in 1780 and taken to Canada. When the charter fees were not paid, the grant went to Samuel William Johnson in 1782. When the town was chartered 10 years later, Johnson's name was chosen.

The village grew at the confluence of the Lamoille and Gihon Rivers and, possessing good water power, soon became a thriving mill town. With the water power era long past, Johnson continues to be known as the home of Johnson Woolen Mills.

The Johnson millworks have been in continuous operation since 1816. They are known for their hunting clothing, particularly the familiar red and black plaid woolen outfits that keep the wearer warm even when soaking wet.

The original deed provided water privileges from the milldam sufficient to run a fulling mill, to nap and shear, to cut dye wood, and to dress cloth. Boosters advertised the mill as "Built on the Gihon that runneth westward from Eden," and, because the enterprise also owned a gristmill, they crowed that they "fed the hungry at one end of the dam and clothed the naked at the other!"

## Scribner Bridge – c. 1919 [WGN 45-08-09]

The Scribner Bridge is small, with pleasing proportions in a quiet setting north of Johnson village. It stands before a cluster of farm buildings at the edge of wide fields cut by the Gihon River. Stream-side trees mark the flow of the river off in the distance.

The bridge is named for a family who once worked the adjacent farm. It is also called the Mudget Bridge after a family who lived nearby. There is evidence that the bridge is used to cross cattle to and from the field, so watch your step.

The bridge is unique for its truss, the only one of its kind in Vermont. A modified queenpost arrangement without internal bracing, it employs iron rods instead of wooden posts to support the bottom chords and floor beams. The timber dimensions are comparatively

massive for the size of the crossing. The horizontal members are 10 by 11 inches, and the diagonal members are 10 by 10 inches. The truss is only one-third the height of the sidewalls. Each horizontal member supports three full-height posts, which in turn support the plates under the bridge roof. It is believed that the span began life as an open bridge. An Agency of Transportation Covered Bridge report cites the year of construction as approximately 1919.



*Scribner Bridge by Joe Nelson*

Reconstructed in 1960, the structure consists of an independent timber deck roadway supported by four steel beams. The original stone abutments were replaced with concrete.

Drive through the bridge and continue south to Sinclair Road. Turn right to return to Route 100C. During mud season, maple syrup time, the viewer will find a sugarhouse in full smoke and steam. Turn left onto Route 100C and proceed one mile to the Power House Bridge.

The fields here, surrounded by stone fences remind this writer of a story lost among the books in the Vermont Historical Society Library in Barre, Vermont. Father and son were picking stone out of their newly cultivated field, loading a stoneboat to be dragged to the stone fence they were building:

"Pa, where did all this stone come from?"

"Glacier brought 'em!" growled Pa.

"I don't see no glacier. Where's it at?"

"Gone back to get more stone!"

## Power House Bridge – 1870

[WGN 45-08-08#2]

The Power House Bridge was originally known as the School Street Bridge. It was built in 1870 to extend School Street across the Gihon River, but when the village constructed an electric power plant upstream in



the 1890s, it became the Power House Bridge. The 73-foot structure is a queenpost truss with massive timbers.



*Power House Bridge by Joe Nelson*

The bridge was reconstructed in 1960 and again in 1993 because the bridge was developing a decided sag. A self-supporting stringer bridge replaced the bridge floor, leaving the trusses to support only themselves and snow load. The truss was renovated with much of the original timber replaced. Unfortunately, the bridge continued to sag and was closed again in 1995 for further work. Reopened, the bridge resumed serving as a popular shortcut to Johnson State College and the elementary school.

Then on March 8, 2001, at 5:00 p.m., the bridge collapsed under a roof-load of heavy wet snow. The top structure crashed down onto the self-supporting bridge deck, the trusses thrown outward and into the Gihon River. Rescue crews rushed to clear the debris from the still-standing bridge deck, not knowing if anyone was trapped beneath it. Fortunately, no one was.

Historically, the bridge-owning towns hired a person each year whose job was to “snow the bridge,” putting snow on the bridge floor to accommodate sleighs. The towns also hired a person to see that the bridge roofs were kept clear of snow, but the practice died out when most bridges became roofed with metal, since metal roofs tend to shed snow. The Power House Bridge used wooden shingles which tend to retain snow load.

Blow and Cote, contractors from Morrisville, pulled the timbers and debris out of the river for sorting and hauling. In examining the salvage, this writer observed three kinds of damage to the joints between the rater plates and the tie-beams:

- 1) The tenon was pulled out of the mortise, breaking the pegs holding them together;
- 2) The relish was broken out of the mortise, leaving the pegs intact in the tenon;

- 3) The relish on the tenon was pulled out, leaving the mortise and pegs intact.

Relish is a French term for the material between a peg or mortise and the end of a timber. The collapse was caused by the weight of the snow load pressing down on the rafters, turning the rafters into levers that forced the tie-beam joints apart. The bridge might have been able to support the snow load if collar ties or steel tie-rods had been used to augment the tie-beam connections.

Work to restore the bridge began on March 26, 2002, by Blow and Cote, Inc. of Morrisville for \$29,520.00 and was completed in June 2002. It was specified that the completed bridge resemble the bridge that collapsed, with the most visible change being a standing seam metal roof replacing the cedar shingled roof. The metal roof lets snow slide off freely, preventing overloading of the structure. Collar ties and steel tie-rods were also added.

The restored queenpost construction resembles that of the old bridge, but it carries only its own dead load. The new bridge continues to rely upon its self-supporting roadway to carry traffic load.

The townspeople, who almost universally mourned the loss of their bridge, swarmed the site, cleaning up the landscape and adding flower boxes to the six side ports.

Continue south on Route 100C for .3 mile to Route 15. Turn left, proceeding east 14.2 miles through the village of Wolcott to the Fisher Bridge.

## **Wolcott**

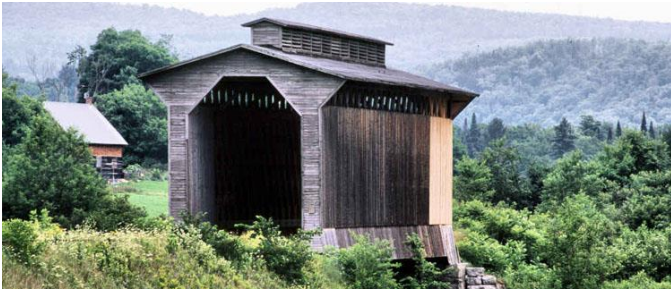
Chartered in 1781 by the Vermont Legislature, the town was named for Major General Oliver Wolcott (1726-1796) of Litchfield, Connecticut, one of the proprietors, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and a commander of 14 regiments during the Revolutionary War.

The first town meeting was held in March 1791. “They elected all of their best men to office,” wrote Henry Wiley for the Vermont Historical Gazetteer. “For all of the citizens in town were in office.” The next meeting took place in 1794, when there were but four voters remaining in town, so Thomas Taylor was elected town clerk, first selectman, and constable.

## **Fisher Bridge – 1908** [WGN 45-08-16]

At the time of this writing, the Fisher Bridge was functional, but the railroad has eased operations. The

tracks have been pulled up and the right-of-way has been changed to a hiking trail.



*Fisher Bridge by Joe Nelson*

The Fisher Bridge provided an example of government, business, and community working together to preserve private property in the interest of history. A marker put up by the Vermont Board of Historic Sites describes the bridge and why it is still there. "Fisher Bridge, Wolcott, Vermont. This bridge, spanning the Lamoille River on the St. Johnsbury & Lamoille County R.R., was the last railroad covered bridge in regular use in Vermont and one of a very few left in the U.S. Built in 1908, it's the only one remaining with a full-length cupola, which provided a smoke escape. In 1968, the bridge was scheduled for destruction to make way for a new steel span. It was saved by placing heavy steel beams underneath. This preservation was achieved with state

funds and with generous private donations raised by the Lamoille County Development Council."

The 103-foot bridge was built by the Pratt Construction Company, founded by Willis T. Pratt, the inventor of the truss used in the Lincoln Bridge in Woodstock. The designers adapted the Town Lattice truss for the railroad and dubbed it the Town-Pratt truss. The adaptation beefed up the lumber dimensions and doubled the web on each side.

The preservation work involved adapting the abutments and adding a mid-span pier, consisting of steel pilings driven into the riverbed. The original Town-Pratt truss no longer has a load-bearing function. The state provided the site with a small park.

According to Robert L. Hagerman in his *The Covered Bridges of Lamoille County*, the bridge served a 96-mile single track line between St. Johnsbury and Swanton. Engineering drawings of the bridge in the railroad's files carry the designation Chub Bridge, a name derived from a family who once lived in the area. The name in use, Fisher Bridge, is derived from Christopher Fisher, whose farm bordered the tracks and river crossing at the time the bridge was built.

## **VCBS Lending Library: A Learning/Pleasure Reading/ Research Source**

We are through that between seasons time when our fields are stark, browned, and uninviting. The snow is here, brightening our landscape and our covered bridges! Now is the time when we photographers will be out to catch our favorite subjects with the brilliance of a crisp snowy winter - a sunny day with sharp shadows and a subject in which one combines some blue sky and a bit of the water and ice running under our favorite covered bridge.

On the days not good for capturing our bridges with our lenses, we won't forget our lending library and the pleasure of curling up with a good book next to our fireplace. Librarian Warren Tripp has created a detailed book list complete with a description and critique of each book. Copies of the index are available by mail, or you may contact Joe Nelson for an electronic copy at [jcarlnelson@yahoo.com](mailto:jcarlnelson@yahoo.com), or go to <http://www.vermontbridges.com/whatis.vcbs.htm#item7>. A borrower can contact Warren Tripp, who will send the book by Postal Service Media Mail. Books are returned the same way.

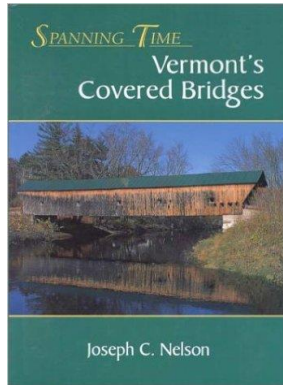
Send Warren the complete title of the book(s) you wish to borrow. He will respond with the mailing cost and mail the order when the fee is received. The borrower is then responsible to return the item(s) in a reasonable time, preferably no longer than two months. Contact Warren Tripp, P.O. Box 185, South Barre, VT 05670, [fftwbt@yahoo.com](mailto:fftwbt@yahoo.com), phone 802-584-3545.

And don't forget that Christmas is coming; visit our *For Sale* page for good reading and gifts for your friends and family.

# For Sale

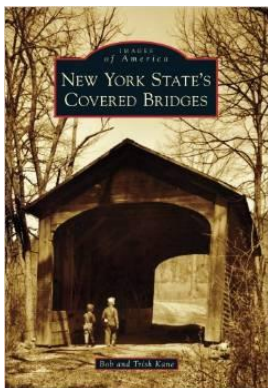
## Spanning Time: Vermont's Covered Bridges by

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 of Shelburne, Vermont. *Spanning Time* is available directly from the author for \$25.00 US, 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

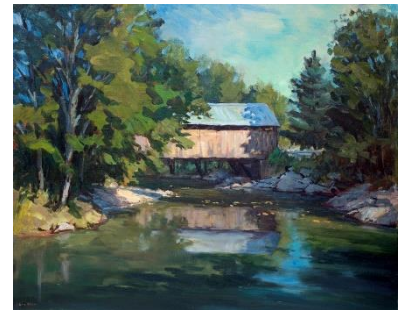
single-span covered bridge in the world, the Blenheim Covered Bridge, washed away by Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. This book also highlights the Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Resource Center in Oxford, NY, the first ever center of its kind specifically designed for covered bridge researchers.

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

802.644.8183

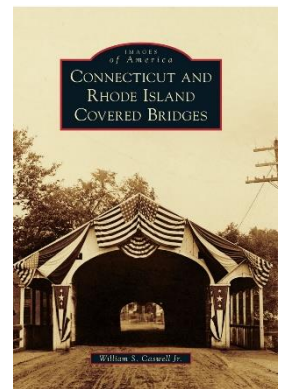
**A special sale** for the benefit of the Vermont Covered Bridge Society featuring the works of Eric Tobin. All proceeds of the unframed prints go to the VCBS. Sale of the framed prints will be shared 50/50. They are all Giclée on acid free paper. The glass is non-glare artist's glass.

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



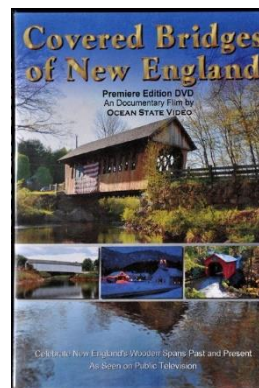
## Connecticut and Rhode Island Covered Bridges .

**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: \$20.00. Profits go to the Vermont Covered Bridge Society's Save-A-Bridge Program. For your copy send \$20.00 plus \$2.50 shipping to Joe Nelson, P.O. Box 267, Jericho, VT 05465-0267.





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