

# The Bridger



The Vermont Covered Bridge Society Newsletter

SPRING, 2004

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**The VCBS Spring All Member Meeting Set    NSPCB 50th Anniversary Safari June 4 & 5  
Vermont History Expo 2004 to be Held    VCBS Meets Legislators with VANPO  
VAOT Historic Bridge Committee Proceedings    Three Mile Bridge Effort Gets An 'Arch'  
Comstock Bridge Revisited    Poland Bridge Rehab Progress  
Cooley Bridge Re-siding Near Completion    Jay, NY Covered Bridge Gone  
Covered Bridge Community News Notes    Letters -- Bulgaria & Alaska Bridges  
Membership Column    President's Column**

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## The VCBS Spring All Member Meeting Set

The Annual VCBS All-member meeting will be held in Rutland, Vermont on Saturday June 12th from 9:30AM to 3:00PM. This event will be hosted by VCBS life member Robert Cassidy. Robert has reserved the Fox Room in the Rutland Free Library. He will be speaking about Rutland County's historic covered bridges. Further details about the meeting will be shared by letters to the membership when the planning is complete.



Cover of Rutland Historical Society  
2003 Calendar

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## NSPCB 50th Anniversary Safari June 4 & 5

Safari weather will soon be here and we are ready to go! We will be visiting at least 8 of the Concord, New Hampshire area Historic Covered Bridges.

**June 4th:** Early arrivals will meet at Alans Restaurant on N. Main Street Route 3) in Boscawen, NH for an ice cream social at 6:30 PM followed by covered bridge slides by Ken Olson at 7:15PM. The cost will be \$5.00.

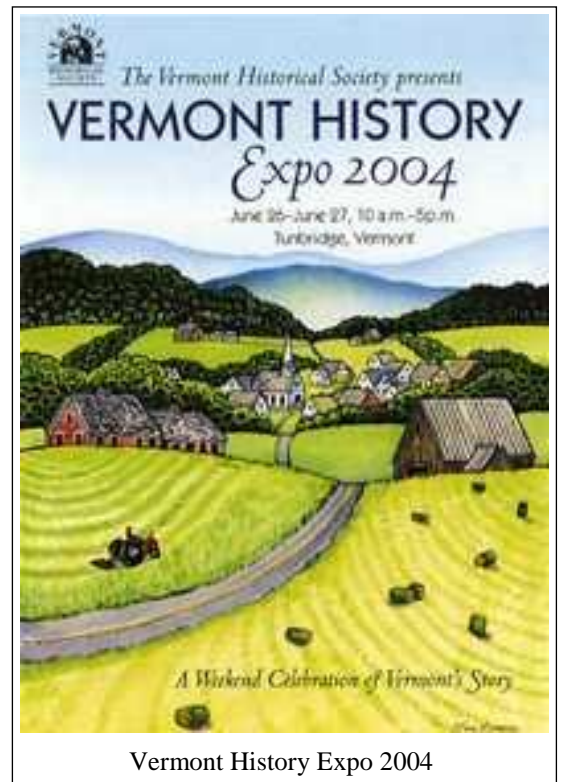
**June 5th:** We will meet at 8:15AM at the Horace Chance Masonic Lodge in Penacook, NH located on Route 3 south of Alans Restaurant. We will get the itinerary for the day and leave at 9:00AM. We will have lunch along the way. We should arrive back at the Masonic Lodge between 4:00 and 5:00PM. The Order of the Eastern Star will serve a chicken dinner with trimmings before our evening program.



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## Vermont History Expo 2004 To Be Held

The Vermont Historical Society Expo 2004 will be held June 26 and 27, 2004 at the Tunbridge Fair Grounds. Friday June 25th will be the setup day. The VCBS will occupy booth #2 in Floral Hall. We will continue with the display of our map of bridges-gone and bridges-existing as the main focus of our booth. Suggestions are welcome for additions or changes. Contact Irene Barna at [ibarna@middlebury.edu](mailto:ibarna@middlebury.edu) or (802) 388-0247.



Vermont History Expo 2004

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## VCBS Meets Legislators With VANPO

by Joe Nelson

**February 12, 2004** - The Vermont Covered Bridge Society received an invitation from VANPO to join them at their Nonprofit Visibility Day held at the State House in Montpelier on February 12.

VANPO, or **Vermont Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations**, was formed in 1998 to "... increase the influence and organizational capacity of nonprofit organizations in Vermont through collaboration, education, and advocacy. VANPO exists to support all nonprofit organizations in their efforts to remain viable, serve the community, provide a quality workplace for their employees and make vital contributions to Vermont."

VANPO sponsors, for a fee, training and workshops teaching fund-raising, grant writing, project management, networking, and other nonprofit basics for individuals and for organizations. Members of VANPO qualify for discounts.

Nonprofit Visibility Day was organized to give nonprofits an opportunity to become familiar with Vermont's democratic process and for participant's to meet with their legislators.

Terry Shaw, VCBS Director for Legislation Watch, and I accepted the invitation to participate in the program. The cost to the VCBS was travel expenses to Montpelier and a parking fee.

## **Notes From VANPO's Non Profit Visibility Day in Montpelier, 2/12/04**

by Terry Shaw

Joe Nelson and Terry Shaw arrived at the Statehouse at 8 AM on February 12th and were greeted by Michael Gaito, and Katherine Long, of VANPO, Member Services Coordinator and Director of Public Policy, respectively.

After signing in and visiting with other non-profit attendees, Terry ran across Rich Westman, the appropriations committee chairman; both he and Joe were invited to lunch by Rich. At about the same time Joe met up with an old IBM working associate, Frank Mazur, chairman of the House Committee on Transportation. Since Frank's committee was to discuss bridges at an 11 am meeting, he invited both Joe and Terry to attend.

At 9:00AM Governor Jim Douglas came by and spoke briefly with both Joe and Terry about the VCBS.

At 9:30AM all headed for coffee and pastries with Senator John Campbell, the Senate Majority Leader, who spoke about current legislative issues.

At 10:00AM Steve Kimball of Kimball, Sherman, and Ellis spoke about lobbying – the subtleties, the pitfalls and rewards.

At 11:00AM Joe and Terry attended the Transportation meeting chaired by Frank Mazur that dealt with a report on the status of interstate bridges, town highway bridges and a bridge program outlook. The outlook program is looking to maintain or improve the number of restricted bridges. J.B. McCarthy, structural engineer, presented the report.

At 12:00PM Joe and Terry met with Rich Westman, who answered many questions regarding how VCBS should proceed to ask for matching money for projects, how to go about placing signage to identify covered bridge locations, and what to do about increasing penalties and fines for bridge desecration or destruction. We will be meeting with Rich once again this spring, after the legislature finishes its business.

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## **VAOT Historic Bridge Committee Proceedings**

**Historic Covered Bridge Committee Notes of February 11, 2004  
for Cedar Swamp (Station) Covered Bridge (#8) in Salisbury and Cornwall  
By Susan Scribner**

Present at Meeting: Committee members J.B. McCarthy, Warren Tripp, Scott Newman, Eric Gilbertson, Nancy Boone and Sue Scribner. Also in attendance were Mr. Ed Peet, the Cornwall Selectboard Chair, Mr. Don Shall from the Cornwall Historical Society, Mr. Joe Nelson representing the Vermont Covered Bridge Society, VTrans Historic Preservation Specialist Scott Gurley, VTrans project manager Roger Whitcomb, VTrans project engineer Mike Lozier and project technician Gaston Roy. Project manager Roger Whitcomb and project engineer Mike Lozier provided an overview of the bridge and its current condition through a PowerPoint presentation.

General introduction to the bridge and its history. The bridge was built in 1865, spans 154 feet over the Otter Creek connecting the towns of Salisbury and Cornwall and is of the town lattice design as patented by Ithiel Town in 1820. It has the widest lattice spacing known of any town lattice covered bridges in Vermont at 5-foot spacing. It was constructed at a royalty of \$1/foot to provide Cornwall with a link to railway shipping in Salisbury. The bridge is currently posted for 3 ton with a 15-mile detour. The results of the McFarland-Johnson, Inc. report done for the bridge in 1995 has previously been shared with the towns; the report states that it is likely that the trusses could support an H20 loading if rehabilitated but it is presently limited by the floor system. In 1998 the Agency received concurrence from both towns to move forward with rehabilitation as recommended in the McFarland-Johnson, Inc. study. The Town of Cornwall, through their representative at the meeting, emphasized that it would like to see the carrying capacity increased to H20 loading. The Otter Creek floods at the bridge and the approach roads are closed for some periods of time each year.

Various repairs have been made to the structure over the years. The Agency oversaw a project in 1969 that involved various timber repairs and the addition of a pier at mid-span designed for H10 loading to level up the bottom chords and remove sag. In addition, the abutments were capped, re-pointed and/or faced and new treated shear beams were placed. In 1992, the towns hired Jan Lewandoski to rehabilitate the structure. Mr. Lewandoski's work included significant timber repairs such as replacing or sistering all broken/rotted chord and lattice members with spruce. Abutment bedding timbers were replaced with white oak and other miscellaneous repairs were done. Finally, a new standing seam roof was added to the bridge during the summer of 2002 through an Agency project with some roof sheathing replaced.

**Roof System** - It is the intent to salvage the new roof if possible. The bracing system will be analyzed for wind load and the existing rafters for snow load. If structurally adequate, members will be assessed individually for wear and replaced as needed with in-kind members.

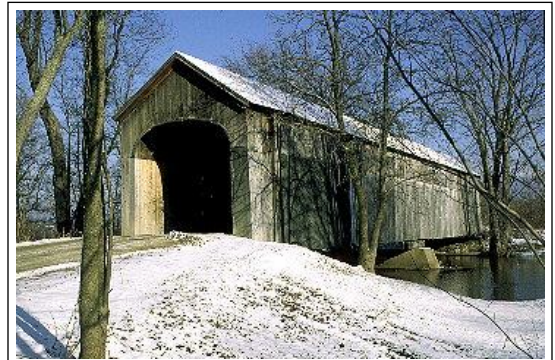
**Truss System** - Further condition assessment is needed. Some tails of the lattices do not appear to extend adequately below the bottom chord and some of the trenails are in poor shape. It appears that a significant amount of the bottom chords were replaced in 1992 as well as approximately one-third of the top chords. It is proposed that all members needing replacement be replaced in-kind.

However, the designers are still struggling with the modeling and structural analysis for this structure and it is not yet known if this will be feasible.

**Floor System** - The existing floor system consists of 3"x12" runner planks over 2"x6" diagonal flooring over 3"x12" longitudinal deck planking. The 4"x12" floor beams are at an unusual and varied spacing and there is 2"x6" lateral bracing. It was proposed that glulam deck panels be installed over 10 1/2"x15 1/8" floor beams at regular 5'-3 5/16" spacing. Eric Gilbertson stated that he would like to see if the present, irregular floor beam spacing will work if glulam members are used, even if member sizes need to be increased. It was proposed that running boards not be replaced but curbing was suggested inside the structure to both protect the structure and offer some refuge to pedestrians. New lateral bracing is proposed as well.

**Substructure** --The abutments are in pretty good shape and no major work is anticipated. Split or checked shear beams and blocking would be replaced. The pier will need to be analyzed for proposed loading considering existing scour condition. It was proposed that debris be removed at the upstream side of the pier.

**Approaches** -- It was proposed that either weathering-steel w-beam or steel-backed timber guardrail be used on the approaches. New pavement on both approaches was proposed as well as appropriate signing and miscellaneous drive and grading improvements. As well, stone fill for bank stabilization was proposed.



Salisbury Station Bridge  
Photo from *The Spanning Time - Vermont's Covered Bridges* by Joe Nelson 1997

**Siding** -- The siding is routinely damaged at the bottom by floating debris and ice and has been replaced many times. It is proposed that damaged members be replaced in-kind. The siding is not presently continuous in its height; this was discussed along with the probability that members the height of the bridge might not have been available at the time the bridge was built.

**Miscellaneous** -- The Town of Cornwall is concerned about fire. Various detection and retardant measures were discussed at the meeting and will need more input from the towns. Warren Tripp relayed that we are pursuing a research project on the bridge to measure deflections which will hopefully help develop new distribution factors. Nancy Boone asked if we could wait until the research has been completed before moving forward with design details but, as this is not expected to be completed until sometime this summer, the timing will not work.

It appears that quite a bit of further analysis is required and another meeting is anticipated. The project engineers were looking for input on direction of the project early on and their efforts to date were acknowledged and very much appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Scribner  
Chair, Historic Covered Bridge Committee

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### **Three Mile Bridge Effort Gets An 'Arch' Tilford, 94, seeks funds for span** by John Flowers

**Middlebury, Vt. Jan. 1, 2004** - It was a frigid winter's night in 1933 when the leaders of Middlebury College's Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity gave Arch Tilford a flashlight and told him to count all of the planks in the Three Mile Bridge.

"They said, 'Don't try to fool us, because we know how many there are,'" Tilford recalled of his taskmaster's admonition.

Tilford dutifully counted the more than 1,300 planks in the 150-foot long covered span that once crossed the Otter Creek, connecting Three Mile Bridge Road with Morse Road, which intersects South Street intersection.

"That was my first acquaintance with Three Mile Bridge," Tilford said on Monday, more than 70 years after his fraternity initiation.

Alas, he has not been able to renew that acquaintanceship for more than a half-century. That's because Three Mile Bridge was destroyed in an Aug. 24, 1952 arson fire that remains shrouded in mystery to this day.

Tilford, now 94, told Middlebury selectmen last Tuesday that he is launching a fund-raising crusade to finally replace the Three Mile Bridge with a more modern span that would help move traffic through Middlebury on another much needed crossing of the Otter Creek.

An account of the fire featured in the Aug. 29, 1952, Addison Independent points to a theory that the arsonist may have torched the bridge in an effort to force officials to replace it. The bridge was erected in 1836, and had been closed by selectmen due to structural concerns only a short time before it was set ablaze.

"Ironically, if the arsonist intended to force the town into constructing a new bridge, this act boomeranged, for it is now estimated that cleaning the debris from the bed of the Otter Creek will cost about \$2,000," the Independent article stated.

Local residents declined to replace Three Mile Bridge at an estimated cost of \$50,000 at the time. They instead elected to plan for a replacement span closer to the center of town, a tack that voters affirmed several times during the ensuing 50 years. Still, Middlebury has not yet been able to make an "in town bridge" a reality.

That said, Tilford is hoping to make Three Mile Bridge a reality again this time as a more modern, double lane span, a project he knows will cost at least \$2 million in today's dollars. The cost, and bureaucratic red tape could be substantially reduced by keeping the state and federal authorities out of the rebuilding process, he said.



Three Mile Bridge  
Photo from The Covered Bridge Herbert  
Wheaton Congdon 1946

"If you take federal money, you get 1,000 regulations," Tilford said.

That's why Tilford is hoping to privately raise the Three Mile Bridge money. He'll be reaching out primarily to fellow Middlebury College graduates. College officials have given Tilford permission to make his pitch through the upcoming April issue of the Middlebury College alumni magazine.

In his article, Tilford will ask alumni to give money that would be gathered through the town and invested in municipal bonds.

"Gradually, we'll gather enough money where we can say, 'We will now build that bridge,'" Tilford said.

Tilford realizes that substantial fund raising is not the only hurdle he will have to cross. The town-owned approaches to the bridge are flooded during certain wet periods of the year, a problem that will either have to be corrected at additional expense, or result in the span being closed at times.

Town officials are nonetheless offering their encouragement to Tilford in his quixotic bridge bid. He's already garnered some seed money from a couple of the college's heaviest hitters--President John McCardell Jr. and Vermont Gov. James Douglas, who is a Middlebury College graduate. Both men have given \$500 to the project, according to Tilford, who also chipped in \$500.

"I don't think you have any opposition. Middlebury selectboard Chairman John Tenny told Tilford last Tuesday. "Although we may be skeptical of your ability to raise enough money through donations, we would love to be shown that this could be done."

Middlebury Town Planner Fred Dunnington estimates a new Three Mile Bridge could be used by approximately 1,000 vehicles each day, primarily as a convenience for folks traveling in the southwestern part of town. By contrast, the previously planned in-town bridge connecting Main Street with Cross Street was slated to carry 13,000 vehicles daily, according to Dunnington.

But in this era. Dunnington said the bridge conversation should focus on one bridge or the other. Both should still be considered. "I believe there should be multiple ways to get around," Dunnington said. Though advanced in years, Tilford is committed to seeing his project through. "I expect to live to see the bridge." Tilford said.

[First published by the Addison County Independent, Middlebury, Vt. Thursday, Jan.1, 2004; © copyright 2004. Our thanks to the folks of the Addison County Independent for their permission to post this article, and our thanks to Don Shall for bringing this article to our attention - Editor]

## Comstock Bridge Revisited

**February 2, 2004** - Reopened on Thursday, November 13, 2003, Montgomery's newly refurbished Comstock Bridge appears to be passing its first winter back in service in good form. The span, built by Savanna and Sheldon Jewett, was first opened in 1883 next to the mill works of John Comstock, miller, grain dealer, and manufacturer of carriages and sleighs.



During the winter months when the sun favors the southern horizon, the Comstock Bridge spends much of its day in the shadow of West Hill.

Photo by Joe Nelson, February 2, 2004

## Poland Bridge Rehab Progress

by Joe Nelson

**February 20, 2004** - Work is going forward on the Poland Bridge as the siding is applied, the downstream side being nearly completed. When the siding is finished the oak runners will be installed and the roofing put on. The camber appears to be holding at very nearly last weeks measurement of 14 3/4 inches.



The siding is nearly complete on the downstream side.

Photo by Joe Nelson, February 20, 2004

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## Cooley Bridge Re-siding Near Completion

by Bob Cassidy

**February 26, 2004** - Yesterday I received a phone call from my brother informing me work has resumed on the Cooley Bridge. I drove to the bridge late this afternoon and found the residing of the bridge has been progressing well for the past couple of days. During the day the bridge is closed to traffic, but the bridge is reopened for traffic by early evening.

The upstream side of the bridge has been completely resided with new freshly painted red hemlock boards. The downstream side has been partly resided. Work should be done in a few days. The work crew has done a great job of repairing the bridge while keeping its historical character intact.



Cooley Bridge, downstream side

Photo by Robert Cassidy, Feb 26, 2004

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## Jay, New York Covered Bridge Gone

by Richard Wilson

**February 9, 2004** - As of today the bridge is totally down. There are just a few timbers lying around, and the machinery. At this point the whereabouts of the bridge is unknown.



Jay, NY Bridge, Photo from [www.coveredbridgesite.com](http://www.coveredbridgesite.com)

## Covered Bridge Community News Notes

### Start Date Set for Buskirk Bridge Rehab (WGN 32-42- 02)

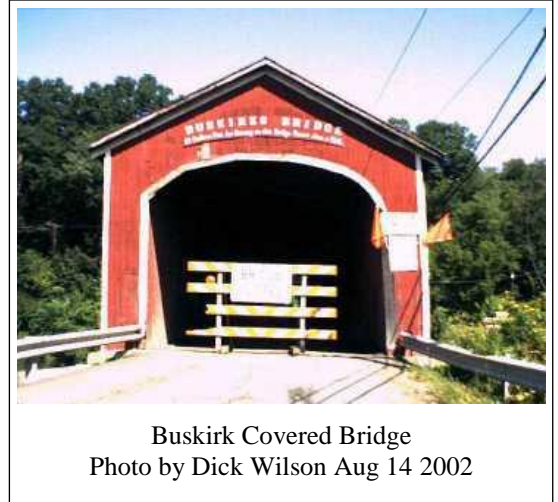
**Buskirk, NY** - Rehabilitation will begin on the Buskirk Covered Bridge in March, 2004. The work will be done by Alpine Construction of Stillwater, N.Y., the low bidder.

The construction contract, let for just under \$1.8 M was approved by the Washington County Board of Supervisors on November 21. Eighty percent of the cost will be paid through a federal transportation improvement grant with the state contributing 15 percent. Rensselaer and Washington counties will fund the balance.

Because the rehabilitated bridge will be required to support fire trucks, glulam will need to be used to replace the lower chords of the bridge to attain a load rating of 25 tons.

The Buskirk Covered Bridge was closed to traffic on August 14, 2002 when a severe structural defect was discovered in one of the beams that supports the bridge during a routine annual inspection of the bridge. Washington County engineers closed the bridge until repairs could be made.

The 164-foot bridge was built in 1880 using the Howe truss. The bridge spans the Hoosic River serving County Road 103, connecting Rensselaer and Washington Counties.



Buskirk Covered Bridge  
Photo by Dick Wilson Aug 14 2002

[Thanks to John Dostal for forwarding the news clipping that was the basis for this article - Ed.]

### Zumbrota Covered Bridge Festival

#### Dear Friends of Covered Bridges:

The Zumbrota Covered Bridge Festival will be held June 19, 2004 at the Covered Bridge Park in Zumbrota, Mn. Many activities are planned for adults and children. But the Zumbrota Covered Bridge Society will have a "special" celebration in honor of their 40th anniversary. The society was formed in 1964 by Alma Swanson. This event is a yearly activity and brings people from many areas to see the Art Show as well as the items that the Covered Bridge Society has for sale. We welcome everyone from far and near to attend. Please stop at the bridge we want to meet you.

Zumbrota Covered Bridge Society  
11371 Hillcrest Dr. N.  
Champlin, MN 55316



### Bulgaria's Only Covered Bridge!

December 25, 2003

Hi Joe,

I was going thru my files and found these pictures taken by me, in 1993, of the only covered bridge in Bulgaria. It is located in Lovech, a small town in central Bulgaria. It is not listed in the World Guide, so I guess it's not authentic. The bridge has various shops inside and is not open to cars.



Merry Xmas and Happy New Year,  
Tom Keating

## More on Bulgaria's Only Covered Bridge

January, 31, 2004

Hello Joe,

I continue to visit and enjoy your website. I located more info on the Lovech covered bridge. The information is taken from "Bulgaria: A Travel Guide" by Philip Ward, p.128. "The first covered bridge was built in 1848 over the river Osum. The third, reconstructed in 1931, follows the design and proportions of Kolyo Ficheto's masterpiece of 1874, which burned down in 1925. Although I spent 2 months in Bulgaria, I was only in Lovech for about 30 minutes. I am attaching scans of it.



Lovech, Bulgaria Bridge.  
Photo by Tom Keating, Dec. 2003

Tom Keating

## Alaska's Schooner Bridge to be Replaced

January 28, 2004

Dear Joe,

Thought you would be interested in a paragraph that appeared in the February 2004 issue of "Alaska" magazine.

*"One more covered bridge in Alaska, spanning the Kenai River at Schooner Bend, is about to be replaced by a modern steel and concrete span. The Schooner Bridge is the last of five covered bridges that once spanned streams on the Bureau of Public Roads system in Alaska, three of them on the Seward end of the Kenai road network and one across Mendenhall River near Juneau. Usually used only in damp climates, the shed-like covers on the old wooden bridges were built to keep moisture out of the wooden truss-joints." -- alaskamagazine.com*

The above paragraph was written in 1954.

Happy Bridging,  
Ann Ovitt [VCBS Life Member]

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*Membership*

by Trish Kane, Membership Coordinator

As I write this column, there is still plenty of snow on the ground, but I know spring is just around the corner, and we are more than ready for fresh air and warm sunshine.

Please join me in welcoming the following new members to the Vermont Covered Bridge Society: George & Tina Conn, Malvern, PA; Jim Judycki, Barre, MA; J.A. Petrello, Mayfield Heights, OH; Ken & Shirley Ries, Hertford, NC; G. Robert Salvi, Somerville, MA; John Thorn, Deerfield, MA; and Ken and Ruth Walker,

Chester, VT. A warm welcome to each of you. Special thanks to Rae Laitres and Helga Maguire for converting their memberships from Individual to Life, and to Ed and Irene Barna for converting to Life-Couple.

We have four lucky winners to our Membership Renewal Contest, but before I tell you who they are, let me thank each of you who sent in your membership renewals by February 15th. It saves our officers so much time and postage expense when your memberships are paid on time. Out of 107 annual memberships, 55 renewed by the deadline. That means, of course, that 52 of you missed out on a great opportunity to win some really special prizes.

All of you folks with an annual membership please check the mailing label on this issue of the newsletter. If you see (03) next to your name, your dues are in arrears. While it is too late for you to participate in the drawing, you can still help fund our work in promoting the preservation of covered bridges. Now, for our drawing.

The slips were created by extracting the qualified member-names from the VCBS database and cutting up the printout. Each slip was folded, put into a box, and thoroughly shaken. Ruth Nelson took the box to Jericho Elementary School. The first child who arrived for her reading group got the honor of drawing the slips.

**The winners are:**

Spanning Time, Vermont's Covered Bridges - **Richard E. St. Peter, Newport News, VA**  
Covered Bridges of Vermont - **Henry Messing, Elmira, NY**  
One year free membership to VCBS - **Thomas E. Walczak, New Castle, PA**  
Covered Bridge Gift Basket - **John Thorn, Deerfield, MA**

Yours in Bridging,  
Trish Kane  
Membership Coordinator

**Upcoming Birthdays and Anniversaries:**

**March**

2 John Billie  
9 Mason King  
15 Ed Rhodes  
18 Priscilla Farnham  
23 Steve Miyamoto

**April**

13 Gary Krick

**May**

12 James Crouse  
17 Ron Bechard  
19 Mary Ann Waller  
22 Irene Barna  
23 Judy Marolewski  
31 Stephen & Joanne Baravella

# PREZ SEZ

This spring issue of the Bridger newsletter is coincident with the fourth anniversary-month of our organization. We are four years old! Happy Birthday to the Vermont Covered Bridge Society! In February 2000, the State of Vermont granted us our certificate as a non-profit corporation.

The Annual Director's Meeting will soon be held. Actual spring will soon be here to melt our snowdrifts, and our directors will have planned many of our activities for the year.

The directors will be asked to approve the \$500 pledge made by the attendees of our last Annual all-member Business meeting. The pledge was made to help preserve the Hectorville Bridge in Montgomery. The Directors will be asked to consider doubling the pledge.

We have pledged funds to preserve a covered bridge before—the money came from our general funds. The directors will be asked to authorize setting up a fund that will grow capital, the interest to be used to make grants to help preserve covered bridges in trouble.

The Directors will be asked if the VCBS should join the Vermont Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations (VANPO). VANPO offers fellowship with the 3000 other nonprofit organizations in Vermont, training in the nuts and bolts of grant writing and fund-raising, and heads-up concerning proposed state and federal legislation.

Old business will be dusted off and put forward. Bill McKone will persuade the state to set roadside signs directing visitors to covered bridges and to have a covered bridge celebration put on the Vermont State calendar permanently.

The Legislation-watch Committee plans to pursue seeing a law passed increasing the penalties in Vermont for damaging structures that are listed on the National Register of Historic Sites. Irresponsible thrill-seekers must be put on notice that the community will not tolerate the defacing or burning of our historic heritage.

Also on the Legislation-watch agenda is advocating the establishment of a state policy guiding the maintenance and restoration of covered bridges when they are not protected by the Historic Covered Bridge Preservation Plan written and agreed to by the Vermont Agency of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation. When a town provides its own funding and engineering, the town needn't follow that plan—historic preservation isn't usually high on their list of concerns.

Should anyone reading this column have something to add to the Directors agenda, please contact me.

Joe Nelson, President, VCBS



VCBS member Richard St. Peter of Newport News, Va. took this photo in Vermont when he toured here in December. He entered it in the Virginia Professional Photographers' annual print competition. It won Best Pictorial in the state.