

January – February – March, Winter 2008

Newsletter

National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges Incorporated



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TEMPORARY NEWSLETTER EDITOR for Winter and Spring 2008: Please send news to the *Topics* editor, Joseph D. Conwill, P. O. Box 829, Rangeley, ME 04970. This is a temporary assignment, and a new *Newsletter* editor is expected for the Summer 2008 issue.

SOCIETY MEETINGS for 2008

Sunday, March 23 at 1:00 pm at the Plymouth Church, 87 Edgell Road, Framingham, Massachusetts. The program will be a slide show from the Philippe Bonnet Collection in the society archives.

Sunday, April 27 at 1:00 pm at the Plymouth Church, again. The program will be a continuation of the Philippe Bonnet slide show. Come see how our covered bridges looked half a century ago.

NEWSLETTER DATES

The next newsletter is scheduled for April 2008. Therefore, anyone wishing to submit photos, articles, etc. should send them by **March 15, 2008**. Newspaper or magazine articles should include source information and details (such as name of publication, date, etc.) so that proper credit may be given. **THANK YOU!**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow Members, Greetings!

At the same time, let me express the hope that all of you have had Happy Holidays, and that the year 2008 shall find each and every one of you in good health, and enjoying many of the wondrous things that life has to offer.

The President's Message this quarter will be fairly brief, due to the press of much other business.

The Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting this year was held on its traditional date, that is to say, on the fourth Sunday of October, a happy arrangement since all our other meetings take place on a "fourth Sunday"

as well. Recently however, this meeting has usually been scheduled for the third Sunday of October, but with the change from daylight saving time to standard time now occurring a couple of weeks later than formerly, there is no longer any reason not to take advantage of the traditional date. In other words, unless the United States Congress should decide, for considerations peculiar unto themselves, to grant us several fewer weeks of "Summer Time," the Annual Meeting of the National Society shall henceforth be scheduled for the fourth Sunday of October. An additional advantage of the above mentioned date is that members of the New York State Covered Bridge Society will no longer have to choose between going to their October meeting, which is held on the third Sunday of the month, or, should they be so inclined, of coming to our Annual Meeting.

In respect to this year's Annual Meeting specifically, it was well attended, doubtlessly due to interest in or curiosity about the recently "discovered" Chinese Covered Wooden Bridges. Ron Knapp, who has been for over forty years an indefatigable researcher into all manner of things Chinese, gave a wonderful talk on the subject, and was kind enough to respond to questions afterwards. I believe everyone had a good time; I know I certainly did. One thing is sure: we all left the meeting much better informed than we had been when we first arrived. By the way, I highly recommend Ron Knapp's book on the subject of Chinese Covered Bridges, which book is entitled, *Chinese Bridges: Living Architecture from China's Past*. This work will be available in the Spring, and further details as to how to purchase it will be included with the Spring issue of *Topics* and the *Newsletter*.

Elections and Appointments for 2007-2008: One of the functions of the Annual Meeting is to afford members a chance to elect the officers of the Society for the coming year. It is also the occasion on which whoever is elected President of the Society makes the various appointments necessary so that the Society can carry out its mission. Without further ado, the following slate of officers was elected for 2007-2008:

President	David W. Wright	Recording Secretary	Joye Olson
1 st Vice President	Wilbar M. Hoxie	Corresponding Secretary	
2 nd Vice President	Roger L. Easton	and Statutory Agent ...	Christine Ellsworth
3 rd Vice President	Richard Roy	Treasurer	David Topham
Director (3 year term)	Joseph S. Cohen	Financial Secretary	Joan Topham

I made the following appointments for 2007-2008:

Editor, <i>Topics</i>	Joseph D. Conwill
Editors of the <i>Newsletter</i>	Joseph D. Conwill (two issues), then Lynn Graton
Engineering Consultant	Wilbar M. Hoxie
Director of Computer Programming	Roger L. Easton
Official Historians	Richard Roy, William Caswell
Assigning of <i>World Guide</i> Numbers to Existing Bridges	Dan Brock
Committee to Assign <i>World Guide</i> Numbers to Former Covered Bridges	Dan Brock, Richard Roy, David W. Wright
New <i>World Guide</i> Committee	David W. Wright, Dan Brock
Mailing Chairman	Richard Roy
Production Assistants Thereto	Reuben and Nancy Adams
Membership Chairman	Pauline Prideaux
Hospitality Chairman	Dan Brock
Acquisitions and Sales; Ways and Means; and Guide Salesman	June Roy

Back Issues of *Topics* Richard Roy
 Archivist and Official Photographer Joseph D. Conwill
 Web Master William Caswell
 Consultant for Timber Framing Timothy Andrews
 Nominating Committee Richard Roy, June Roy

Gremlins: Regardless of how careful one may be, and how watchful, sometimes, when one least expects or wants it, a gremlin will come along to work his mischievous ways upon whatever it is that one happens to be doing. This happened to me last quarter. Somehow or other, despite my very best intentions, I managed to spell Marianne Cohen’s name wrong in her obituary. I hereby apologize for this stupid error, first of all to Marianne’s many friends, but most especially to her family.

I was not, however, the only one to have been ambushed by gremlins last quarter. Our absolutely superb and almost always impeccably accurate Recording Secretary, Joye Olson, was also waylaid, and unfortunately, like me, not to no effect. In the minutes of our June 24th meeting at the Contoocook Covered Railroad Bridge, Joye has me stating that though we are a national society, our principal role is to be “a resource and a source of information about Covered Bridges and the preservation of same, not ...[to be] a source of funding.” That view was expressed at the June 24th meeting, but not by me. In fact, I should dearly love for the Society to be able to fund more Covered Bridge renovation projects than we do; unhappily, the Society’s financial resources are strictly limited, Covered Bridge repair and stabilization schemes increasingly expensive, and worthwhile Covered Bridge restoration projects few and far between. For those of you who would like to see the Society take on more Covered Bridge preservation work, I would suggest making regular contributions to the Eastman-Thomas Fund for Covered Bridge Preservation, and at the same time, actively encouraging others to do likewise. If only we disposed of more capital, we could do ever so much more good!!

In the meantime, Happy Bridging!

Sincerely, your President, David W. Wright

NEWS OF THE OLD COVERED BRIDGES

OREGON: Bill Cockrell is hard at work on an Arcadia “Images of America” book on *Oregon’s Covered Bridges* which will be out in April. He reports that the available archives on covered bridges of this state are so rich that it is a difficult job to narrow down the choices. Noted bridge engineer Chris Leedham of the Oregon Department of Transportation is providing many photos from that source. We eagerly await ordering details for the book, which is expected to sell at \$19.99.

Bill also notes that the Gilkey Bridge in Linn County will be repaired and returned to service in the spring after serious damage caused by a boom truck which tried to cross with its boom raised (37-22-04). On its way to the bridge, the boom took out several power lines over the road. After smashing about two-thirds of the way through the covered bridge, the truck swung around and became wedged in sideways. Damage includes most of the upper lateral bracing and also a bottom chord, a broken brace, and several bent truss rods. Repairs are expected to cost over \$200,000 and must wait for spring because it appears likely that scaffolding needs to be placed in Thomas Creek. Linn County’s engineering department is capable of doing the repairs, but is understaffed at the moment, so the work will be done by an outside contractor, the Oregon Bridge Engineering Company. This is at least the third U.S covered bridge to be damaged in recent years by

a boom or dump truck with its boom or bed raised (others are the Depot Bridge of Pittsford, Vermont, and the Leaman Place Bridge of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania).

Restoration is finishing up at the Ritner Creek Bridge in Polk County (37-27-01). The original style of arched portal is to be rebuilt. This bridge was bypassed and moved slightly aside in 1976, but until then was the last covered bridge in service on an Oregon state highway (Route 223). Work here is being done by KLM Construction of Puyallup, Washington, which recently did work on the Harris Bridge in Benton County (37-02-04). The company's construction superintendent is Myron Grow, and we wonder if he is related to the famous Utah bridge builder Henry Grow?

There is still much discussion of the future of the long-abandoned Chambers Railroad Bridge at Cottage Grove in Lane County (37-20-40). It has been in poor condition for decades and would be costly to restore, but is of high significance as the last fully-covered railroad bridge in the West. Meanwhile in the southern part of the state, work has begun on a new covered bridge at Wimer in Jackson County, to replace the old one that collapsed a few years ago (37-15-05), but the design will probably be different.

INDIANA: Jackson Bridge in Parke County was officially re-opened to traffic on October 10, 2007 after a thorough restoration by bridge wright Amos Schwartz (14-61-28; see Roger Grover's photos of the work in progress in *Topics* for Fall 2007, page 15). Cost of the work was \$1.4 million.

Also in Parke County, there are plans to move the State Sanatorium Bridge (14-61-38) to the site of the former Adams/Jessup Bridge (14-61-06) which was lost to a flood in 1989. State Sanatorium Bridge has been abandoned for a long time and is in need of much work. The bridge dates from 1913 and originally was used as a service entrance to bring coal to the Sanatorium, according to the October 31 issue of the Parke County *Sentinel*. But there is no prospect of further service at the present site, and there has been vandalism in the area. The move has been planned since 2000, but was awaiting funding, which recently came through from the National Historic Covered Bridge Preservation Program ("Jeffords Bill"); the county will pay 20% of the cost. Meanwhile, since the loss of the Adams/Jessup Bridge, a concrete ford has served that site. County highway superintendent Randy Norman would like to keep the ford in place as an alternate route for overweight vehicles, while the state Department of Natural Resources wants it removed. Once this disagreement is resolved, hopes are that the work will begin in April 2008 and be completed by September 2009. If all goes as planned, this will be the third old historic covered bridge on the new site. The original Adams Bridge here (14-61-23) collapsed in 1969, and the nearby Jessup Bridge, then recently bypassed, was moved to the site and placed in service.

Over in Owen County, the recent restoration of the Cataract Bridge has received the Indiana Historic Preservation Award (14-60-01). Engineer Matthew Reckard of J. A. Barker Engineering, Inc. planned the work. Mr. Reckard has also done extensive research into the history of the Smith Bridge Company, builders of the bridge, which we hope will be published some day soon. We thank our faithful correspondent Roger Grover of Rockville for this Indiana news.

OHIO: The Newton Falls covered bridge has recently been renovated, reports Terry Miller. This is the famous bridge in Trumbull County with the outside sidewalk, rare outside New England (35-78-01). The sidewalk has been rebuilt new, but most of the rest of the old bridge is still there. The contractor who won the job found that he had seriously underbid, because there was more structural damage than had been foreseen. Unable at the time to get change orders approved, he quit. The job was later completed by the Righter Company, from Columbus, with Smolen Engineering offering administration and inspection service.

Total cost of the project was \$1,061,800, paid under a federal grant for which the County Engineers Association of Ohio had applied. The bridge was built in 1831, and the sidewalk was added in 1921, but the restoration aimed at the 1943 appearance of the bridge.

In Preble County, work was scheduled to begin in December 2007 to repair the Christman and Harshman covered bridges (35-68-12; -03). The projects are expected to take four months each, and the bridges are closed in the meantime. Beginning then in April 2008, repairs are scheduled for the Geeting and Warnke covered bridges (35-68-13; -14). Thanks to Trish Kane for this news.

KENTUCKY: Restoration work continues on the Johnson Creek Bridge of Robertson County (17-101-01), according to photos provided by Melissa Jurgensen. The bridge was supported from inside by steel trusses inserted under the roof. However, progress may temporarily stop for lack of funds. Application had been made through the Federal Highway Administration for a grant from the National Historic Covered Bridge Preservation Program (“Jeffords Bill”), but the bridge was not accepted in the 2007 list. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet has applied again, and hopes to receive funds in 2008.

SOUTH CAROLINA AND GEORGIA: Howard Rogers tells of photos of a previously unknown covered railroad bridge over the Savannah River between Augusta, Richmond County, Georgia, and North Augusta, Aiken County, South Carolina. It served the South Carolina Railroad and the photos show it during a flood in 1888. The portal has a partial set of decorative steps reminiscent of certain covered bridges in Berks County, Pennsylvania such as Kutz Mill Bridge. Source of the photos is an Arcadia “Images of America” book *Augusta, Surviving Disaster* by Misty A. Tilson, published in 2002; pages 27 and 124. Arcadia has published a vast number of books in this series, and many of them have the occasional long-lost covered bridge photo—surely there are more discoveries to be made. Mr. Rogers also notes a website (www.aretedesigns.com/Schultz) in which more photos can be seen; it appears there may have been two covered railroad bridges here.

VIRGINIA: Patrick County has received a \$227,000 grant to assist in rehabilitating Jack’s Creek Bridge (46-68-02) and hopes to receive another grant next year for Bob White Bridge (46-68-01), reports Trish Kane. She also sends news from Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New York as follows:

DELAWARE: The Ashland Bridge over Red Clay Creek in New Castle County (08-02-02) is receiving work to the tune of \$434,436. The report also mentions that the nearby Wooddale Bridge (08-02-04) is being rebuilt after flood damage in 2003. At the time, reports said that Wooddale Bridge had been *completely destroyed*. Can anyone tell us exactly what is going on here? Is this an all-new bridge?

PENNSYLVANIA: Four young men, plus a juvenile, were recently sentenced for their arson attempt in May 2007 on Knecht’s Bridge of Bucks County (38-09-02), which fortunately was unsuccessful. They also set fires at several other nearby locations. We are sorry to learn that two of them were volunteer firefighters. Prison terms vary according to previous criminal records, but they average one to two years, plus probation and community service. Drug use was a factor in inspiring the kicks spree. Although covered bridge arson is mainly committed by young people, it is hardly a failing of *this generation*. We have records of roughly two hundred arson attempts going back fifty-five years. The culprits who torched the Three Mile Bridge of Middlebury, Vermont, and the Billings Bridge of Rutland in 1952 may have been youths then, but by now they must be in their seventies.

NEW YORK: Beaverkill Bridge is now on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places (32-53-02), thanks to the diligent work of the group, Friends of the Beaverkill.

Meanwhile, the Jay Bridge in Essex County was officially re-opened (for pedestrian traffic) on October 14, 2007, after a long-awaited restoration—it had been closed for ten years (32-16-01). More than 200 people attended the re-opening ceremonies.

MASSACHUSETTS: The long-neglected Arthur Smith Bridge of Colrain has been replaced with an entirely new covered bridge, similar in appearance to the old one, but using only a few of the old timbers (21-06-03). We understand that the Burkville Bridge of Conway has received much modern reinforcement and that much of the old timber has been replaced (21-06-01).

In the early 1960s the picturesque Jewett Bridge of East Pepperell (21-09-01) was replaced with a covered bridge of modern design which, although well intentioned, was decidedly not an artistic triumph. It proved to be no engineering triumph either, and already needs to be replaced. Another modern covered bridge will take its place at a cost of *\$7.9 million* if this is not a misprint. Thanks to Trish Kane for the news.

NEW HAMPSHIRE: The three covered bridges of Bath will all be seeing work. The big bridge at Bath village began to sag because scour from flooding undermined one of the piers, exposing the timber cribbing under the stonework, which then began to rot (29-05-03). Swiftwater Bridge, which recently received a major overhaul, was later seriously damaged by overweight vehicles—probably gravel trucks from a nearby pit (29-05-02). And work is underway at the Haverhill-Bath Bridge of Woodsville, closed since being bypassed in 1999 (29-05-04). The scope of this project has been scaled back due to funding concerns, but this may be a good thing, as preservationists had feared major replacement of original timber here. James Garvin, who sends this news, notes that some of the floor beams at Haverhill-Bath Bridge show marks of an up-and-down saw, as do many of the roofer boards, indicating that they are probably original from the 1829 construction. It is rare to find these parts original, all the more so because this bridge is so old, and it is highly significant as the nation's oldest existing Town lattice truss.

Sawyer's Crossing Bridge of Swanzey will need some cosmetic work, as its portal was recently damaged—just after having been painted, notes Trish Kane (29-03-05).

MAINE: The Sunday River Bridge of Newry is frequently used for weddings in the summer (19-09-04).

NEW BRUNSWICK: The famous covered bridge on the Saint John River at Hartland, longest in the world, has been closed after a major structural problem was found (55-02-07). A temporary repair is expected to be made shortly after the new year, with more thorough work to be done come spring. The modern bridge on the Trans Canada Highway just north of town also needs work, but that project must wait until the covered bridge is again usable as an alternate route. Thanks to Trish Kane for this news.

QUÉBEC: Emery Sicard Bridge, at St-Maurice de Dalquier (now part of the City of Amos) in the Abitibi region, has been closed due to structural damage (61-01-22). Residents are faced with a long detour through downtown Amos to get to the other side of the Harricana River, and we hope repairs will be made soon. A local farmer has the majority of his hay fields on the other side of the bridge from his farm; the river is one of the largest in the area and is not fordable.

Elsewhere in Québec, the *pont Rouge* of Ste-Agathe de Lotbinière recently received repairs to the tune of about \$140,000 and is once again open for traffic (61-44-01). The bridge spans Palmer River in a scenic site over a waterfall. The McDermott Bridge of Eaton is closed, and we have no news on proposed repairs, but it appears to have been suffering from a damaged chord for a long time (61-18-06). Perreault Bridge, the big 495-footer over the Chaudière at Notre-Dame-des-Pins in the Beauce region, has been beautifully restored as part of a recreational trail coming out from nearby Ville St-Georges (61-06-01).

Bad news from Matane—the Coulée-Carrier Bridge was destroyed by a flood over the night of November 16-17, 2007 (61-42-03). The Gaspé Peninsula has seen much flooding recently, and the bridge had already been damaged by high water two years ago. It was bypassed over thirty years ago and was not in service. There were plans to move it to a more secure location in Matane, but funds had not yet been raised. The Transports Ministry was eager to see it gone, because if it went out in a flood, it might damage or destroy the adjacent modern bridge. We have not heard what did happen to the modern bridge, but at any rate, the covered bridge is now gone. This was the longest single span covered bridge existing in Québec, at 178' total length. Thanks to Gerald Arbour for Québec news.

CHINA: As noted above in the President's Message, Professor Ronald G. Knapp of the State University of New York at New Paltz spoke on Chinese covered bridges at the NSPCB Annual Meeting. He has surely seen more of these structures than any other Westerner or, for that matter, than nearly any Chinese citizen. He believes that the estimate of 3,000 covered bridges in China may be overstated, but says there may well be over a thousand. Nearly all are for foot traffic only, as they are in remote places where powered vehicles are not used. Some of them are of stone, and those are not covered bridges of the American or European type. The main reason why Chinese bridges are covered is to add solidity; architectural thought emphasizes a heavy roof as a means of tying a structure together and holding it down. The bridges have an important cultural place in the regions where they are found.

Professor Knapp attended a large conference in China on covered bridges last September; also attending were Terry Miller and his wife. Efforts are underway to have several Chinese counties designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site for historic wooden bridges.

NEWS OF NEW COVERED BRIDGES, SOCIETY BUSINESS, AND OTHER SUBJECTS

PROGRESS REPORT on what will be America's newest covered bridge—and also the **BIGGEST, LONGEST, AND HIGHEST ABOVE WATER** (news sent by Donald Wiech): The building of the newest covered bridge in Ashtabula County, Ohio is finally coming to reality. This bridge was being talked about at the dedication of the Netcher Road covered bridge in 1999. As we can see it has taken a long time for this project to come to reality. Many factors have come into play. One of the most important is the financial aspect. This is a big project, because the road is being relocated. The old road went down into the valley, where the Ashtabula River was once crossed by the Crooked Gulf covered bridge (35-04-01) which was gone in 1948. In order to acquire the funds, an application was sent for around seven and a half million dollars. Also the county and the state had to contribute funds. So this is a huge undertaking.

To receive the funds, environmental studies had to be done. This had to be a tedious and time consuming project because some of the valley had to be filled with dirt to straighten out the approach to the new bridge. New piers and abutments have been built on this new alignment. The piers are seventy-five feet above the riverbed and are an impressive sight to behold. The bridge is going to handle two-way traffic at a length of 600 feet. For anyone interested in directions to the new bridge site, they are as follows. From either direction on Interstate 90, exit on Ohio Route 11 and proceed north. Exit at the first exit, Seven Hills Road.

Turn right and proceed to the stop sign. Turn left and go across the railroad traces, and continue straight to the bridge.

EVENTS: Postcard collectors, mark your calendars for **Saturday, October 18, 2008**. Wayne Siefert, organizer of the Bucks County (Pennsylvania) Covered Bridge Festival, has extended an invitation for a covered bridge postcard show and sale to be part of the event. Note that the date is different than the one originally announced. Duplicate postcards will be available from two fabulous collections, the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges, and the Richard Donovan/Trish Kane Collection. There will be a beautiful indoor location for the show, with plenty of tables. There may be someone offering covered bridge patches as well. If you have duplicate postcards to sell, and would like to reserve a table, please contact Trish Kane as soon as possible (bobtrish68@frontiernet.net) or by mail at 167 Williams Road, Sherburne, NY 13460; telephone (607) 674-9656 after 5:00 pm. There will be a small set up fee of \$15 to help cover expenses. Buyers are no doubt tired of paying the exorbitant prices on eBay so you will probably make many sales.

ATTENTION COVERED BRIDGE PATCH COLLECTORS: Bob and Trish Kane have compiled an extensive list, by state, of approximately 450 covered bridge patches known to exist. This list includes small, colored photos as well as specific information such as city/town identification, measurements, and colors on each individual patch. For collectors who would like to inventory their personal collections, there is also a place to indicate whether or not you have the patch in your collection, and the amount you paid for it. This is soon going to press in book form, but first the Kanes would like to be sure it is as accurate as possible. If you are a collector of covered bridge patches, and would like to offer your assistance, please contact them as soon as possible (for address see the notice just above). They hope to have the book available to the public in the spring. Special thanks to Clyde Bradley from Pittsburgh, Pa. and to Jim Ward from Milan, Ohio for sharing their knowledge and expertise.

UNION COUNTY, OHIO is planning a Covered Bridge Festival for Saturday, September 6, 2008. Various events will take place in Marysville, North Lewisburg, Plain City, and several other communities. To help raise funds, 2008 calendars are for sale at \$15 showing the county's covered bridges. There is also a set of seven new postcards selling for \$2 postpaid. Contact Sue Spencer, 15600 Harmon Patrick Road, Richwood, OH 43344, or by email (Robertsrichwood@aol.com). Or call (800) 642-0087, or look on the Web (www.coveredbridgefestival.com).

RED BRIDGE BEER: This brand has a covered bridge on the label. It is brewed by Anheuser-Busch from sorghum, rather than from wheat or barley. The covered bridge is an artist's conception, and it has a cupola on the roof. Historic covered bridges *almost never* had cupolas. A few railroad bridges had them to let smoke escape; the only old highway bridge that comes to mind with a cupola was the Hartford Toll Bridge in Connecticut. But two recently built and well-publicized covered bridges have had them, and as a result the public idea of what a covered bridge looks like is changing. It will not be a surprise to see old authentic covered bridges "retrofitted" with cupolas soon, in the mistaken belief that this was an historic feature, just as bridges have been fitted up with decorative wagon wheels, fake barn doors, and other paraphernalia in recent years. We thank Kenneth H. Mauer for telling us of Red Bridge Beer, and he also sent news on:

RUSTIC ROADS: Wisconsin has declared four new "Rustic Roads" and one of them includes the Smith Rapids covered bridge over South Fork Flambeau River in Price County near Fifield (49-51-01, tentatively). The bridge was built in 1991 using a Town lattice truss, but it is not traditional in that it uses glue-laminated

timber. However, the covering is very attractive, and unusually well-proportioned for a modern covered bridge. The portals have a simple entry with diagonal upper corners, and the portal sides are not fat and chunky as is the case with so many recent bridges (and a few old ones that have received recent repairs—McGee’s Mills, Pennsylvania is an especially horrible example). Even the roof overhang at Smith Rapids somehow looks “just right.” The builders of this new, and in some ways non-traditional covered bridge could give a useful lesson in aesthetics to certain of our contractors back East. (But about that glu-lam, boys—we know you don’t have any red spruce timber in northern Wisconsin, but could you have used select structural white spruce to build a truly traditional bridge, while still maintaining your loading specs *and* those nice slim portals?) Not far from the bridge is an old timber logging dam, also included in the Rustic Roads network.

PERSONAL: We are saddened to learn of the death in July 2007 of Yvonne (Fellows) Perrault, formerly of Goffstown, New Hampshire. Members will recall her cheery presence on Covered Bridge Safaris. Following the death of her first husband, she married Frank L. Perrault and moved to Kennewick, Washington. Also in July, we lost Dorothy (MacNaughton) Dobie, past president of the Connecticut River Valley Covered Bridge Society. And, Conrad Nagengast passed away recently; he was active in trying to start a covered bridge society in his home state of California. We extend our sympathies to their families.

UPDATE ON COVERED SPANS OF YESTERYEAR PROJECT by Bill Caswell: A new year is here and it’s time to compile the 2008 Calendar of Covered Bridge Events for the Covered Spans of Yesteryear website. This listing includes society meeting dates, festivals, and other covered bridge events, along with society newsletter deadlines and membership renewal dates. Please help us make this list as complete and accurate as possible by sending information to Trish Kane (bobtrish68@frontiernet.net) and don’t forget to support your local societies by attending their meetings and events.

Updates to the website this quarter include enhanced information for a number of Ohio and Pennsylvania counties; see our “What’s New” section for more details. Information has been added about former covered bridges in Alabama, California, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia, from Richard Sanders Allen’s notes in the NSPCB Archives.

If you would like to offer pictures of the former bridges in your area, and have the ability to scan them, please contact me. There is much territory still to cover, and any assistance will be greatly appreciated. At this time we are especially interested in data and pictures from the southeastern states. Email is the most effective way to contact me (bill@lostbridges.org).

ANNOUNCING NSPCB’S OWN WEBSITE: For the past few years, member Joe Nelson has been hosting NSPCB information on his own website (<http://www.vermontbridges.com>), and we owe a debt of gratitude to Joe for providing this service. We are excited to announce that the society now has its own website (<http://www.coveredbridgesociety.org>). It is intended as a supplement to the Newsletter with current information about upcoming meetings and bridge news. It will also provide prospective members with information about the society, as well as membership applications. It contains an archive of past newsletters, information about items for sale, links to other covered bridge related sites, and copies of meeting minutes. Bill Caswell, from Concord, New Hampshire, has taken on the challenge of designing and maintaining the website. He is currently developing a section about bridges in the process of being restored or rehabilitated, and jobs needing financial assistance. If you would like us to promote your covered bridge fund-raising activities on the website, send the details (bill@lostbridges.org). There is also a contact form on the website to send along your comments and suggestions.

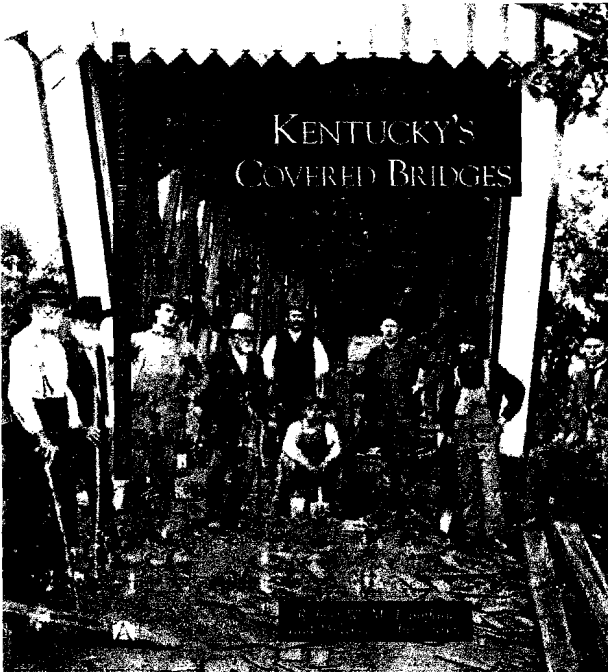
ARCHIVES: This winter the society has begun a project to scan our collections of photographic negatives for electronic backup storage and other uses. Highest priority is those on cellulose nitrate film base, which was used for nearly all photographs before about October 1950, except those on glass plates. Nitrate film is flammable, and was replaced by cellulose acetate "safety film." About fifteen years ago, the fad recommendation among archivists was to copy nitrate negatives onto safety film and destroy the originals. NSPCB did not think it good preservation policy to destroy originals. It turns out that the nitrate problem really involved *movie film* stored in large clumps in closed tins; as the film decayed, it produced a gas which served as a catalyst to speed up the process. When the movie film had disintegrated to powder, the residue had a very low flash point, easily reached in forgotten backroom storage shelves exposed to sunlight. There appears to be no problem with individual *still film* negatives stored in sleeves and envelopes from which any gas can slowly escape, and we are glad we did not follow the mistaken advice to destroy originals. Still, the films will deteriorate over the long term; much depends on past storage conditions. A certain very few of our negatives show deterioration serious enough to render them useless, though not dangerous. One of these was tested by placing it for five minutes on top of a hot wood stove. It did not ignite. Our oldest nitrate negatives are those of Basil Kievit (included with the Richard Sanders Allen Collection). These are about eighty years old and are still useful. It may well be that computer technology will continue its rapid rate of change, and that our nitrate negatives will still look essentially the same after the CDs onto which they have been scanned are totally obsolete. But, to be prudent we are scanning them, and the scans will make them more accessible to the public. Collections involved are, in order, Henry A. Gibson, Raymond Brainerd, Herbert Richter, Richard Sanders Allen, and George B. Pease. Nearly all of the Richter Collection is on safety film, but recent reports say that cellulose acetate decays in the long run too. It does not become flammable, but it seems best to scan these negatives also. The C. Ernest Walker negatives need further study, because many of them are already seriously decayed, due in part to improper processing, a problem the other collections do not have. The scanning work will probably require three to four winters to complete. The archivist would like to thank Bill Caswell for his advice on scanning, and for obtaining the necessary equipment.

We need to address the challenge of the society's large collection of 35mm color slides, a legacy of the Thomas era, and of Philippe Bonnet. Most of them are on Kodachrome, the longest-lasting color film, and are in good condition. Richard Roy has generously stored them at this house for many years, but he needs the room, and there is not space for them at the archives room in Westminster. Any suggestions?

GENERAL: Readers who are interested in old iron bridges will be pleased to learn that the Stratford-Maidstone Bridge on the upper Connecticut River between New Hampshire and Vermont has been sensitively repaired and placed back in service. This is an 1893 product of the Berlin Iron Bridge Company, but it is a Pratt truss, not one of their signature lenticular trusses. Berlin (or rather its successor firm) was involved in 1901 with the construction of the former covered Bridge Street Bridge on U. S. Route 2, between Lancaster and Guildhall. We have long wondered how a metal bridge firm came to build a covered Howe truss. Did they fabricate the parts themselves, or buy them from a subcontractor?

Sawmill technology has bearing on covered bridge history, as we have seen in the above report on Haverhill-Bath Bridge. Philip M. Wentzel sends news that Robinson Sawmill, a 19th-century water-powered mill, has just been restored to operation in Calais, Vermont. Like most existing mills, it is powered by an interior turbine rather than an exterior water wheel. It was originally an up-and-down sawmill, but the present circular saw was installed in 1876. The pond behind the mill dam is silting up, and this may stop its operation, but dredging the pond is a big project. The location of the mill is not given, but we assume it must be the one at the north edge of Kent's Corner.

POSTCARD TRADING, ANYONE? Larry Hess would like to trade postcards, and will send one back for each one sent to him. His address: 3255 Lefevre Road, Troy, Ohio 45373.



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Other Available Books from the Society Store

Covered Bridges of Vermont by Ed Barna. This is a book depicting all the covered bridges in Vermont in the year 1996. Postpaid \$17.00 (from June Roy)

Books by Joseph D. Conwill: *Images of America*, *Vermont Covered Bridges* and *Maine's Covered Bridges* They sell for \$19.99 each plus \$3.00 shipping and handling.

There is another excellent book on Vermont covered bridges called *Spanning Time: Vermont Covered Bridges*, by Joseph Nelson, who is the President of the Vermont Covered Bridge Society. For information contact the author at 2 Sugar Hill Road, Underhill, VT 05489 or on the Web (www.vermontbridges.com)

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