

# Covered Bridge Society Leader's Summit

## Oxford, New York

### June 10 & 11, 2022

#### Attendees

**NSPCB:** Bill Caswell, Scott Wagner (wife Susan) and Mac McClaren

**New York State Covered Bridge Society:** Wayne Marshfield, Clay Converse, Victor Iwanow and Ron Knapp

**Indiana Covered Bridge Society:** Andy Rebman and John and Colleen Murray

**Ohio Historic Bridge Association:** Doug Miller and Terry Miller (wife Sara)

**Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Society of Pennsylvania:** Jim and Gloria Smedley

**Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Resource Center:** Bob and Trish Kane and Noel Rubinton

#### Introduction

This meeting was a follow-up to the gathering held in Oxford in August 2015. The goal is to provide information to the leaders of the various covered bridge organizations to help them in their roles and provide opportunities for the various organizations to work together on common challenges and goals. The NSPCB was represented by President Bill Caswell, Vice President Scott Wagner, Treasurer Gloria Smedley and Sue Wagner. NSPCB also provided funding for the printed materials, snack and beverages during the gathering.

After an introduction by Oxford's mayor Terry Stark, each attendee introduced themselves and told how they became interested in covered bridges. Some started as children while other's interest developed much later in life.



#### Celebrating History One Marker at a Time

**Zachary Finn, Research Historian & Grants Reviewer, William G. Pomeroy Foundation**

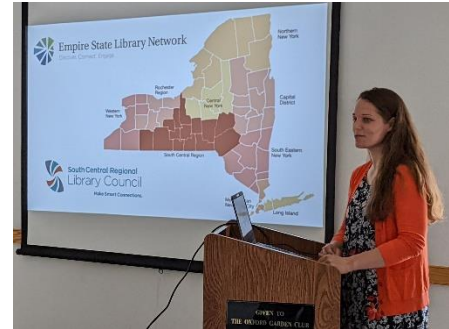
Any 501c3 organization is eligible for markers from the Pomeroy Foundation. They have a number of programs. The most beneficial to us is markers for items on the National Register of Historic Places. An organization can be granted up to 5 markers per award cycle (typically yearly). It could be either a cast aluminum marker on a pole or plaque on the structure. Visit their website (<https://www.wgpfoundation.org/history/>) for information on the application process. Deadlines vary throughout the year. They provide the complete marker. The owner is responsible for planting it. They must also receive permission from the property owner. Other programs are available which require primary source documentation to prepare the narrative of the sign. Go to [hmdb.org](http://hmdb.org) to see info on historic markers from many different sources.



## On-Line Digital Collections

### Claire Lovell, Digital Services Librarian, South Central Regional Library Council

Claire's presentation centered around the NY Heritage program which works with small organizations within NY state to provide means to make their collections available online. They have a subscription to ContentDM which provides a structure for adding the photos and metadata associated with them. Associated organizations either pay a fee to participate or tag along with a nearby paying group. It is mainly for historic photographs but has been tweaked by some organizations for cataloging items as diverse as gravestones and snowflakes. She showed an example of one group's collection. The main page described the organization and its collections. Clicking on one of the collection titles led to a page with more details of that particular collection. Then you could access specific items within the collection. Before starting the process, one needs to determine what types of metadata will be most useful and associate that with each image. Things to consider knowing that space and time to devote to the project can be limited – is it preferred to have everything accessible knowing that it may not all be well documented or to focus on the prime examples in the collection and describe them very well? ContentDM is expensive. Other less costly alternatives are not as well suited for the task, but could also work – SmugMug, WordPress, Flickr. Each has their strong points, but are they the right tool for the job? There is also a crowd-sourced research site, <https://www.zooniverse.org/>.



If anything were to happen to any one of the individuals who are devoting time to digitizing the collections of the various societies or any of the organizations disbands, that information could be lost. It needs to be stored in a repository that will outlive us. Since none of our organizations could afford ContentDM, it is best to hitch onto an organization which can afford it. Claire encouraged questions and offered additional support. She can be reached at: [clovell@scrlc.org](mailto:clovell@scrlc.org). Noel Rubinton and Trish Kane will soon be meeting with Claire to discuss opportunities for our covered bridge societies.

## Grant Writing

### Janna M. Rudler, Grants and Technical Services Manager Preservation League of New York State

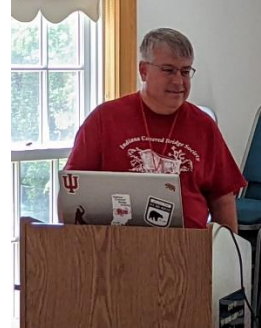
Janna noted the different types of designations and the different protections that each affords. A community designating a site or neighborhood as a local landmark or historic district offers protection by restricting what the owner can do with the property so the historic nature of the structure or neighborhood is preserved. Being listed on the state or national register provides protection from government action or any project that involves state and/or federal funds. However, it does not restrict the owner from altering the property. Groups should check with their state and local preservation offices regarding grants as each grant applications are specific to a certain need. For New York, she mentioned that the PreserveNY program offers small grants for engineering studies of structures needing work. The results of those studies can be helpful when applying for the larger grants needed to carry out the project. When applying for a grant, research the grantor and understand their interests and priorities. See what types of projects they have funded in the past. Fill out your application so it shows how your project fits into their interests and goals. Seek out local foundations which may be able to help with projects in their community.



## Cataloging and scanning photographs/postcards for preservation purposes

**Andy Rebman, President, Indiana Covered Bridge Society**

Andy Rebman, President of the Indiana Covered Bridge Society provided us with some insight on how he catalogs and scans photographs/postcards, documents and slides and what equipment and software he uses to accomplish these tasks for preservation purposes. Preparing these documents properly from the very start is imperative if you plan on creating an on-line digital collection. When he receives a new collection, the first step is to document what was received. He uses an Epsom V850 scanner and VueScan software to run it. VueScan provides support for scanners that may not be supported by the latest version of Windows. He uses PhotoShop and Lightroom for editing the photos and Recollector for cataloging them. Andy's presentation complimented Claire Lovell's presentation nicely. For additional information, Andy can be reached at [arebman311@outlook.com](mailto:arebman311@outlook.com).



## Rediscovering Theodore Burr

**Based on the Upcoming Book, *Theodore Burr and the Bridging of Early America*.**

**Ron Knapp, Retired Professor, SUNY New Paltz**

**Terry Miller - Retired Music Professor, Kent State University**

Theodore Burr and the Bridging of Early America presented by Ron Knapp and Terry Miller was next and a great presentation on Theodore Burr. Ron and Terry shared some surprising information they have uncovered about Burr's personal life and his bridges. Instead of working with information already available, they sought out original sources of information which showed a very different history than what we have previously known. For example, the Waterford Bridge over the Hudson River in New York which burned in 1909 has always been credited to Theodore Burr. Their research suggests that while Burr may have built the 1804 uncovered structure, it appears that the bridge was rebuilt in 1813 possibly by Reuben Field. This will be quite an interesting book which they hope will be published late in the year.



## Preserving Old Photographs and Documents

**Sarah Keen**

**University Archivist, and Head of Special Collections & University Archives  
Colgate University, Hamilton, NY**

Preserving Old Photographs and Documents – Our speaker was Sarah Keen, Colgate University Archivist who gave a very comprehensive presentation on what to watch out for when preserving important documents in our various collections. When obtaining collections, note that mold is a health hazard. While you can remove surface mold and store books in conditions that keep it dormant, you cannot get rid of it. Avoid exposing collections to natural light when possible. When storing newspapers which are acidic, put a plain sheet of paper or something else acid-free in between them as a barrier to protect other documents they come in contact with. One should be using cotton gloves when working with slides and negatives because fingerprints are difficult to remove from them. Glass plate negatives should be stored in special envelopes which fold closed to avoid damage caused by sliding them in and out of containers.



She encouraged attendees to go through their collections to see if any items need special attention now, rather than later. Sarah pointed out that it may be possible to apply for a grant to have someone assess your society's collection.

### **Tour of the Resource Center**

**Trish Kane, Collections Curator, Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Resource Center**

**Noel Rubinton – Syracuse I-School**

Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Resource Center – Trish Kane updated the group on the progress made by the student intern who was hired last summer through the generosity of Terry and Sara Miller. Colleague, Noel Rubinton updated the group on the partnership made with the I-School at Syracuse University. Students developed a comprehensive study for future plans for the Resource Center. The attendees were invited to visit the Center and explore the variety of materials available.



### **Organizing a Dinner on the Bridge**

**Andy Rebman, President, Indiana Covered Bridge Society**

Andy covered the whole process from planning and promoting the event to hosting to cleanup.

First - what kind of dinner are you planning? A simple dinner? Beer, wine or bourbon tasting event? Farm to table? How many? What is the capacity of the bridge? Where to park? Do you need power? Lights? Having a band? Ask local businesses to donate items to raffle. Look for a reputable caterer. Round up volunteers to help with the event. Assigned/reserved seating or let them choose?

During the event: Sweep the bridge. Set up tables & chairs. Recommend having an EMT at the event or available nearby. For large events ask local police for assistance with parking. Served meals preferred over an open buffet for portion control.



After the event: What to do with trash? Clean up bridge, leave it better than you found it.

### **An Introductory Guide to Covered Bridges – Open Discussion**

**Bill Caswell, President, National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges**

Bill distributed a draft of a booklet developed by the National Society for those with a new-found interest in covered bridges. Overall, the group was pleased by this much-needed offering. Attendees offered some great suggestions for alterations and additional content. Once complete, copies will be distributed to the covered bridge societies and a downloadable version will be available from the NSPCB website. Copies will also be made available to new members. The information in the booklet should also be made into a presentation that can be offered to groups such as historical societies and libraries. For more information or to make additional comments on the booklet, contact Bill at: [wscaswell@yahoo.com](mailto:wscaswell@yahoo.com).

## **Open Discussion**

### **The Future of Covered Bridge Societies**

The remainder of the afternoon was an open forum discussing the future of covered bridge societies, how to get younger people involved and other misc. topics. It was noted that we are not the only ones experiencing these challenges. Overall, there is less interest in attending group meetings. People are connected through social media and not by traveling to group gatherings. However, events such as dinners and picnics still draw an audience although not as large an audience as they did a generation ago.

Covered bridge displays at Pennsylvania Welcome Centers have been very popular. In the past, the NSPCB has discussed preparing a display for the Hookset (NH) Rest Area on the northbound side of I-93. This should be investigated more. Content from the introductory guide could be used when creating these displays.

There were also suggestions to target presentations towards groups outside the covered bridge community such as a presentation on railroad covered bridges to a railroad group or covered bridges in the Civil War to a Civil War group. Online or hybrid (combination of in-person and online) meetings provide opportunities for people who are not geographically near the meeting site to participate.

As a way to help support the Resource Center, there was a suggestion made that perhaps the covered bridge societies could donate a week's wages (15 hours) to keep the current student intern on for a few more weeks to assist Trish with the work the Center needs to get accomplished. Trish will get back to attendees with an amount. Societies wishing to do so can contact Trish for more details.

### **Summary**

The second Covered Bridge Summit was a successful event and attendees went home with loads of new information to share with their organizations plus more potential projects to follow up on. By working together we can pool our resources for the benefit of all.