



West Townshend Bridge needs repairs
Photo by Andy Snelling

**Vote “Yes” on Article X
to Save
West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge**

Town Meeting, 2/5 2019, Article X: To see if the Town will vote to raise \$88,000 by taxation, to be held in a reserve account for the repair of the stone arch bridge on back Windham Road contingent upon the successful award of grant funding.

The cost of repairs to the W. Townshend Bridge is estimated to be \$283,000. The Townshend Historical Society (THS) has asked the Select Board to submit an application for a VTrans Small Structures Grant, which could bring as much as \$175,000 to the project. A potential grant from the VT Division of Historic Preservation could bring another \$20,000. **These are both matching grants.** The \$88,000 requested in Article X is a required match for the grants. And, most important, it would prove the Town’s support for the bridges they own, which is key to securing the grants.

Michael Weitzner, Master Stone Mason, completed a “Conditions Assessment” for the West Townshend stone arch bridge in the Spring of 2018. Built by

Townshend resident, James Follett in 1910, the bridge has been standing for 108 years. It stands to reason that repairing a stone arch bridge that could last another 100 years –at a cost of \$88,000 to the Town –is a better choice than building an expensive new cement bridge that would only last 60 years at the most.

Weitzner outlined a list of urgent emergency repairs for the bridge. THS successfully persuaded the Select Board to complete these before winter to stabilize the bridge until major repairs can be done.

In November, we hosted a public talk on the Townshend Stone Arch Bridges based on the professional and detailed photos from Weitzner’s assessment report. The program is available for viewing via BCTV. The talk was followed by a lively Q&A session where attendees expressed great interest in seeing these bridges preserved for future generations.

We are working to save the historic Follett Stone Arch Bridges because they are monuments to human ingenuity, a source of local pride, as resources for the purpose of attracting tourists to the area, and as practical transportation access for the West Townshend community.

Please vote “Yes” at Town Meeting on March 5th.

For further information about the vote, please call Charles Marchant (365-7937) or any board member.

Townshend Historical Society Board
President: Charles Marchant
Vice President: Robert DuGrenier
Secretary: Marge Holt
Treasurer: Lee Petty
Trustees: Heidi Clawson, Eileen Fahey

The Peaked Mountain Schoolhouse

Interview with Winnifred Lawrence
by Rose-Marie Steiner Tarbell Lyman

Part II My parents, Fred and Pauline Lawrence, came from Windham. . . . When we moved to the Wolff place I worked for Muriel Follett*. . . in the winter time; I borrowed a pair of snowshoes from Rob and snowshoed over if I didn't ride the horse.

Another thing while we [lived] here at the schoolhouse, there was no running water, no electricity. We got our water down the road here, right across from the driveway up to the barn. . . . Dad would bring the water up, two pails at a time on a sap yoke; you know what those are?



Sap yoke

He would make three trips per day to the spring, carrying a total of 6 buckets of water for household needs.

Orison Follett [for whom Dad worked] was a cattle dealer and he picked up calves and cows that people wanted to sell through the week. Every Monday morning he took them to Bellows Falls to go on the train to the market. So, it was nothing to set [sic] here in the house with everything closed, and hear calves blatting over there. He'd have forty, fifty calves maybe down there. Then my dad had cows of his own. He had a lot of milking to do. Follett had around forty, fifty head, I guess, besides the young cattle and so forth. Dad also had milk from his own cattle and he brought it to the house. They had a small separator; cream was taken to Rob Holbrook's Creamery, down on Route 35 where the Swans now live. That was another thing that helped Dad with the money because he didn't get big wages on the farm.



Cream separator

At that time, [1920's] what he got for working for Orison Follett was \$25 a month plus a place to live and firewood. He would cut his own firewood as he was helping to cut firewood for the Folletts. He didn't make money; the cream was a little extra. When he had a cow that was no longer good to milk, he would sell that and get a little money. He had around four cows, maybe two or three heifers. He always had a driving horse.



Rob Holbrook house, barn, & creamery

He did a lot of haying, helping the Folletts hay. There were two big fields out behind the cellar hole up on the side hill. One side way over was pretty rough for a mowing machine . . . so Dad would mow it by hand with the scythe. Mother would take the pitchfork and shake out the windrows to help it dry. With a scythe it clusters up. Then she would help him rake it. The summer my brother was a baby, I remember when we would bring him down and put out a blanket and us girls would watch him while she was raking the hay helping Dad. Then Dad would take his horse and a small lumber wagon that he had and bring the hay into the barn. It wasn't easy in those days. I don't know what people would do today if they had to go back to those things.

*Author of *New England Year*



Eris & Elaine Howe at Lake Seymour, 1948

Eris M. Howe, Strong and Self-Reliant

Eris Howe, a “native Vermonter and a woman with a fiercely independent spirit,” passed away in 2018 at the age of 90. She was a lifelong resident of the West River Valley, living most of her life at the Howe family homestead on Windham Hill Road in West Townshend (*Brattleboro Reformer*).

After graduating as valedictorian at Leland and Grey HS, Eris says that she applied for a job at a bank. However when she asked her teacher, Mrs. Kearley for a reference, what she got was a thumbs down. Mrs. Kearley told the bank manager that Eris was an “outdoor girl” and would not do well in an office situation. Nevertheless, Eris got a job at the American Optical Company in Brattleboro for several years. Ironically, Eris later worked for 30 years as a bookkeeper and office clerk for Martha Kearley at Kearley Fuel Company. Following her retirement from Kearley, Eris continued to work for fifteen more years as a substitute mail carrier.

“Eris loved her animals and had a deep appreciation for nature and the beauty of the land. Her dogs were her companions, and for many years she cared for her beloved horses and especially enjoyed riding on Turkey Mountain to pick blueberries. Many of those blueberries made their way into the muffins and desserts served at her favorite Valley restaurant, the Dam Diner. Eris built many a stone wall, and each spring reveled in tapping the maple trees near her home, boiling the sap into syrup which she shared with family and friends” (*Brattleboro Reformer*).

The Old Mill in Harmonyville

Charles Willard, descendant of three generations of “mill men,” built the mill in 1880 to saw out lumber for construction of bridges for the new railroad coming through the valley. His equipment consisted of a portable engine, a bench saw, and a planing machine. After this humble start, Willard’s Mill by 1923 employed 43 workers in the manufacture of brush handles, carriage spokes and home furnishings. It was also the location for the Windham County Creamery. Rebuilding the mill after a devastating fire in 1923 brought improvements such as steam equipment that generated electrical power for several homes in Harmonyville at a time when electricity was not yet generally available to the public.



Willard’s Mill & Creamery

The next owner, Arthur G. Burbee, added a second floor to the Windham Lumber Co. and specialized in making chairs, at one time employing 60 workers. Stories about Arthur Burbee portray “a truly ingenious man” according to town resident, Everett Childs. When the supply of energy was not sufficient, Burbee hitched up a tractor next to the mill and with the use of pulleys and belts used the tractor to produce more energy. When that proved insufficient, Burbee attached a truck to provide even more power.

The mill was bought by Lawrence Lisle in 1946 and renamed Townshend Furniture Company. In 1976 Norman & Junellen Lott took over the company which specialized in reproductions of antique furniture and furniture for ski lodges and chalets.

2006 brought a change to the mill building when it was purchased by Sonic Circus Inc, specializing in all aspects of audio production equipment. Owner David Lyons has given a new look and purpose to this historic Townshend landmark.



Scott Bridge, west bank.



P.O. Box 202, Townshend, VT 05353

Scott Covered Bridge Presentation

by VT Covered Bridge Society on April 6, 2019

John Weaver, a VTrans engineer and design reviewer for the rehab of Scott Covered Bridge, will talk about the history and revitalization of Scott Bridge. The talk will take place in Middlebury Congregational Church Addition at 30 North Pleasant St. (at corner of Route 7), during the VCBS Annual meeting. All are welcome to attend the annual meeting at 10am and to hear the free bridge talk at 11:00.

Become a Member in 2019!



Members are our mainstay...

Please send your 2019 dues in the enclosed envelope today.

Special thanks to those of you who have already joined!

Self-Guided Maple Sugar Tour

March 24, 2019 11am-4pm

(Weather permitting.)

- #1 Taft Hill Farm, 1657 Back Windham Rd.
- #2 Meadows Bee Farm, 4980 Windham Hill Rd
- #3 Charlie Marchant, 961 Rte. 35 (Grafton Rd)
- #4 Mitchell Putnam, 555 Rte. 35 (Athens Rd)
- #5 Bensch Mt. Maple, Rt. 30, Newfane/Townshend

**Visit West Townshend Country Store
for Maple Syrup Tasting.**