

ANNUAL MEETING

Officers and Trustees will be elected
at 3:00 pm

Sunday, November 8
3:00 pm via Zoom

Find the zoom link on our website:
townshendvt.org

All are invited to attend our Annual Meeting via Zoom at 3:00. The brief business meeting will include a vote for Board Members and Officers. There will be a multi-media zoom presentation following the business meeting.

Townshend Stone Arch Bridge at State Forest Road Restored

Under the auspices of the Townshend Historical Society, the Stone Arch Bridge at State Forest Road was recently restored. Certified Master Mason, Michael Weitzner of Brattleboro, has done a magnificent job using dry stone techniques similar to the builder's original method of laying stone without cement.

The bridge was built at the turn of the century, and by 1975 the bridge was heading for possible demolition in order to widen State Forest Road from one lane to two lanes. Then the Southern Vermont Conservation Society kicked into high gear and was able to place the bridge on the National Register of Historic Places by 1976 with the hope of drawing attention to the stone arch bridges and prevent demolition.

A few years later the Townshend Highway Department by-passed the bridge and created a new two-lane culvert bridge for the roadway.

Although worn down over time, the arch itself was in good shape until August 2011, when Hurricane Irene flooded over the top gouging out a large portion of the roadway and the northwest spandrel wall. Almost nine years later, the repair is now complete.



This arch at State Forest Road rises 5' above the brook.

The \$18,000 project was funded by a lead grant of \$7,000 from The Windham Foundation; additional funding --plus in-kind gifts of labor and materials -- came from the Town and the Cemetery Commission.

While the major part of the repair was to the northwest spandrel wall, additional work included the northeast spandrel and a short wing-wall restoration with a built-in floodwater escapeway to prevent future washouts. Gravel was added to make the roadway level again and short parapet walls of granite were added at the sides of the roadway. The result is a sound and attractive bridge that would surely make builder, James Follett proud to see it.

***For further info on the Follet Bridges,
go to the Townshend Historical Society website:
townshendvt.org; choose the "Tours" tab & then
click on Stone Arch. Next click on the second item,
"Stone Bridge Tour."***



Michael Weitzner working at State Forest Road Bridge

The stone arch bridge on State Forest Road was constructed about 1900 by local Townshend farmer and self-taught bridge builder, James Follett. The bridge has just been restored --120 years later --by Master Stone Mason, Michael Weitzner.

Michael's fascination with dry stone began at an early age when he was introduced to it by his Swiss grandfather. Although born in Switzerland, he trained mainly in Great Britain for fifteen years, and then came to Brattleboro, Vermont in 1996 to form Thistle Stone Works. He now has over 20 years' experience in dry stone wall building and consulting throughout New England and beyond.

Speaking of his work in Townshend, Michael remarked that it was "a lovely place to work," and that the most challenging aspects of the project were dust from the road and the large number of biting insects. To protect the bridge from future flooding, he needed to reinstate an overflow ditch upstream by removing a large yellow birch tree. We are grateful for Michael's dedication to maintaining the original integrity of this historic landmark during the restoration process. Now that structure is restored to its former glory, it will surely serve as a landmark in Townshend for many generations to come.



Townshend Historical Society Board

President: Charles Marchant

Vice President: Robert DuGrenier

Treasurer: Lee Petty

Trustees: Heidi Clawson, Eileen Fahey



Taft Cemetery on Gale Lane, W. Townshend

Photo by John Herrick

A History of Townshend's Cemeteries

All of the eighteen cemeteries in Townshend fall into one of three categories: Town-owned, Town-maintained, and private. The Town-owned cemeteries were either established by deed or given to the Town. The Town-maintained cemeteries are ones for which the Town took over the care with permission of the adjacent land owner. Once that had been done for seven or more years without objection, these cemeteries in effect became Town-owned. The private cemeteries in town are maintained by the families that established them.

The Jacobs, Abel, Cronin, and Phoenix private cemeteries were all established in accordance with state statutes and approved by the Select Board. However, there is one private cemetery (Evans) with no official records.

In terms of financial responsibility, two cemeteries--Oakwood and Round Hill --have support funds that take care of their maintenance. These two cemeteries also have space for burials and the sale of these lots generates income for the cemeteries. The rest of the cemeteries in town are maintained by a vote at Town Meeting with a special article dedicated to cemetery care. Maintained by this annual vote are the following cemeteries: Maple Grove, Wiswell, Acton, Sanderson, Taft, Fisher, Fletcher, Brigham/Bixby, Howe, Bailey, and Twitchell.



Lee Burrington at home in West Townshend
Photo courtesy of Bruce Chapin

Tribute to a Doughboy: Private Lee Burrington

(This is a sequel to the WWI story about Raymond Wright in our Spring/Summer 2020 newsletter.)

“One hundred and two years ago, at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, the guns fell silent. The Great War was over. For four years, the world had been turned upside down with violence on an unimaginable scale. Of an estimated 9 million military deaths incurred, 53,402 were Americans” (*Orlando Sentinel* 11/11/1998).

In 1918, Lee Burrington, a “tall, rugged Vermonter, went off to France with a cigar in his mouth and a jaunty look on his face” to fight in WWI. His brother Harry stayed home at Camp Devens, MA. Harry never saw Lee again.

In a letter to his mother, received a few days before his death, Burrington reported how physically fit he was, not having had a day of illness since his arrival in France. However, Lee Burrington, a member of Company F, 302nd Infantry, died from illness while in Bordeaux, France at age 24. Prior to his enlistment, he had been employed at the National Acme Machine Company in Windsor, VT.

Lee’s nephew Dan Burrington tells us that before the war “Lee was a daredevil! He would ride his Harley-Davidson off a ramp onto the inside walls of a farm silo and go round and round to the top and back!” This stunt was performed at some of the larger fairs where the silo circumference was somewhat larger than a normal silo. Nevertheless, quite a feat!

The quotations above are from The Orlando Sentinel, 11/11/1998, “A Tribute to Doughboys” by Dan Burrington



The Hescock-Burrington farm. Painting by Aldro Hibbard

Richard Lucier, another nephew of Lee Burrington, tells us that after living a year or two on the island in West Townshend near his grandparents, his family moved to Brattleboro (around 1949). However he came back most summers to help with the haying and to work on the farm for his grandparents, Martin and Emma (Hescock) Burrington.

Dick says that the farm had about 80 acres with the railroad tracks running on one side of the homestead and the old River Road on the other side. The RR went right behind the barn and there was an underpass for their 6 or 7 cows. Chickens were also raised for eggs and meat. During hay season --when the water was low --the family forded the river with a wagon to access their fields on the west side of the river.

Time to Join and Renew THS Membership for 2021 !

(Membership year runs January to December.)



Please mail your dues and updated info
in the enclosed envelope or on-line at
www.townshendvt.org using PayPal.



P.O. Box 202, Townshend, VT 05353



Note the embroidered images: a soldier near the center; a rabbit to left; a red dog to right (almost invisible) and a star

Civil War Crazy Quilt (From the home of Eris Howe)

Crazy quilts were created as early as 1840; however it was during the Civil War that they really became popular and the example above is definitely of that era with the appliqued soldier at the center. These type quilts were created as fund-raisers to aid military and veteran hospitals, and supported training of much-needed medical personnel which at the time was the purview of the U.S. Sanitary Commission.

During the Civil War this department was greatly underfunded so women held fairs to raise money in order that soldiers and veterans could be cared for by medical staff.

A Tribute to Marge Holt

After nearly two decades on the Historical Society Board, Marge Holt has retired. We're grateful for all of her good works, some of which include service on the Board as Secretary (writing up the Minutes, keeping the files in order, doing accessions); serving at our various Fair booths; hands-on work with the Town Hall Painted Curtains Restoration Committee; plus her able chairmanship of the *Stitch in Time* Book Committee. We will miss her dedication, insight, patience, and graciousness.

Hibbard Holiday Cards Available



West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge
Painted by Arlo T. Hibbard

10 cards for \$15; add \$3 for shipping

BLANK or with message:
*Wishing You the Peace of the Season
and a New Year of Hopes Fulfilled*

Stone Arch Bridge Restoration Update

The Follett Bridge on State Forest Road: Restoration completed in 2020. THS joins with the community in celebrating the successful completion of this first phase of its Stone Arch Bridge Preservation Project. The Windham Foundation, in October 2019, awarded THS a lead grant of \$7,000 toward the \$18,000 budget for the restoration of the Follett Bridge on State Forest Road (formerly called Negro Brook Bridge). Additional designated gifts, another smaller grant, funds from the Town's Stone Arch Bridge Reserve, and in-kind gifts of labor and materials from the Townshend Highway Department, Townshend Cemetery Commission, and community members completed the budget. In early June of this year, Certified Stone Mason Michael Weitzner, using dry stone masonry techniques similar to those used by the original builder James Otis Follett, started the restoration. By the end of the month his work was complete.



A fund-raising event for the West Townshend bridge

West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge:

Fundraising continues. While work on the Follett Bridge on State Forest Road progressed, THS also focused on raising funds to preserve the endangered and still-travelled-on West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge. \$164,900 of an estimated \$283,000 budget has been secured to date. The committed funds include \$26,900 in designated gifts, as well as tax dollars totaling \$138,000 voted at Townshend Town Meetings in 2018 and 2019.

Application has been made by the Town for a significant 2020 VTRANS Small Structures Grant which could, if awarded in full, complete the budget. Due to the pandemic, however, the budget for these State grants remains uncertain. Since the preservation work on this bridge must all be done at the same time, the total budget must be ensured before work can start.



The downstream side with the new granite parapet at State Forest Road

A USDA Rural Business Development Grant

was awarded to Townshend Historical Society in the amount of \$16,640 to support the **“Mapping, Marketing, & Interpretation of Townshend’s Historic Bridges.”** The goal is: to use signage and wayfinding to interpret Townshend’s six Stone Arch Bridges plus the Scott Covered Bridge; to employ digital means to spread the story of these historic treasures far and wide; to attract growing numbers of tourists to our area and, over time, to contribute to the growth of local rural businesses, creating jobs. It also promises to stimulate pride in Townshend’s history, to build community spirit, and to improve the quality of Townshend’s rural life and economy. The project budget will allow THS to hire the professional marketing firm, SIX, Inc., based in Saratoga, NY, to assist with design and implementation of interpretive signage and wayfinding, plus digital marketing strategies; with expansion of the THS website to add interactive historical resources about the bridges; and with marketing services. Vice President Robert DuGrenier and Treasurer Lee Petty will donate their services in-kind as Project Manager and Grant/Financial Manager, respectively.

We are currently seeking people willing to put their names into the running for a position on our Board of Trustees beginning in November 2020.

If you are willing to help in any way, please email us at info@townshendvt.org or contact any Board Member (see list in newsletter).

**THS will be ever so grateful
for your gift of time and
energy.**

