

BRIDGES TO THE PAST

If you need to get from one side of a river to another, the obvious way to do it is to cross a bridge. But the question still remains, why did the builders cover them? Most people think it was to keep snow from getting on the bridge. This was not the case. In fact, in winters past, snow was spread on the floor of the bridge so that sleighs could travel through. The real reason for the covering was to protect the framework of the bridge from the winds and rain that cause weakening and decay.

Vermont has more covered bridges than any other state in New England with over one hundred bridges still in use. But did you know that three other states have more covered bridges than Vermont? Ohio comes in first, Pennsylvania second, and Indiana third!

Money to build a bridge was raised by the town either through taxes or through a specially authorized lottery. Other bridges were built as toll bridges. The person or persons who put up the money to build the toll bridges hoped to make their money back in travel fees.

There are as many stories about bridges as there are bridges to tell stories about. There are plenty of bridge tales of murderers, robbers, ghosts, lovers, and tricksters. One funny story is about a farmer whose wife asked him again and again to get some new clothes because the ones he owned were so old. The farmer went to market to sell his garden produce. He did so well at the market that he bought a new suit to please his wife. So as not to get them dirty on the dusty road home he put the bundle in the back of his wagon and headed back to his farm. When he reached the covered bridge near his house he decided to change into his new clothes. He took off his coat and pants. They were so ragged that he tossed them into the river. Then, reaching for his bundle, he discovered it was gone and had to ride home with nothing on but a shirt. He surprised his wife all right.

