

## BRIDGES TO THE PAST

by Michael E. Snyder

In 1850, the Board of Public Works of Virginia was accepting bids for the construction of the major bridges for the Staunton to Parkersburg Turnpike. Its members were growing weary from listening to the claims and puffery of bridge builders from all over the East.

Finally, a tall gaunt man with long, black hair stepped forward. He was tired from the difficult 250-mile journey to Richmond from Beverly, then the county seat of present Randolph County, West Virginia. Quickly he assembled a model bridge which he had carried over the mountains. Then placing two chairs face to face, he set his bridge on them, climbed upon it and walked its length. "Gentlemen this is all I have to say," were the only words he spoke.

Needless to say, this astonishing feat plus his low bid saw the contract awarded to Lemuel Chenoweth, who went on to become West Virginia's most distinguished covered bridge builder.

Today, two of his covered bridges are still in service. One, while not a part of the Parkersburg Pike contract, was built during the same period. It is the wide-arch bridge his brother Eli and he erected across Buffalo Creek at Barrackville in 1852. The other, built in the same year, is one of America's most famous covered bridges, the storied, twin-barreled Philippi bridge. It

was here on June 3, 1861, that a small garrison of Southern soldiers, some of them billeted in the bridge itself, were surprised by Northern cannon fire. The Confederates were driven from the town in the skirmish known by history as the first land battle of the Civil War.

The covered bridge, while not an American invention, really came into its own on this side of the Atlantic at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Shortly afterwards, the first sizeable covered bridges appeared in what is now the state of West Virginia. They were massive spans, completing important links in the James River and Kanawha Turnpike. The first, built at Gauley Bridge, stretched 480 feet across the Gauley River. The second spanned the Greenbrier River at Caldwell for a distance of over 422 feet.

Most citizens welcomed these important milestones, but the local Gauley ferry boat operators were not so enthusiastic. In less than a year's time, they had burned the new bridge down. The guilty parties were imprisoned, but this did not stop the bridge from being burned and rebuilt twice more. Finally in 1861, it was burned by retreating Confederate forces to cut off Union pursuers and never rebuilt again. Today only the stone piers remain.

All told, there were hundreds of covered bridges erected in West Virginia, many while the region was still a part of the Old Dominion. Harrison County was one of the leading counties with the largest number. Fifty-seven of these familiar edifices graced

its streams and rivers. Not all of them existed at once, however. In 1888, a disastrous flood removed most of the bridges of the West Fork River, including every bridge in the city of Clarksburg. Today, Harrison County still reigns as covered bridge king with four of the cherished landmarks remaining.

West Virginia's pioneer bridge builders, just as all covered bridge builders, didn't cover their bridges to protect travelers, or to prevent horses from shying at the sight of water or to keep off snow. The main reason, pure and simple, was that the roof and siding protected the supports and trusses from the elements. Floor planking was not so important as it was easily replaced. By protecting the wooden supports, the lives of the bridges were extended for many extra years.

However practical and true this may be, most who can remember the horse and buggy, remember far more pleasurable things about covered bridges. It was here that children played, the cool dust of the bridge floor tickling their bare feet on hot summer days. It was a fishing platform and a shelter from sudden showers. Another treat was watching two teams meet midway in a bridge. After a tongue-lashing someone had to back all the way out of the bridge--no small feat for a spirited team and four-wheel carriage.

It was a place where Sis's beau could steal a kiss while driving her home. It was always a handy place to hold a church social. And late at night it was a dark and mysterious grotto where

goblins were ready to pounce upon breathless youngsters. Here too, the traveling circus could post its colorful banners informing folks far and near that the circus was coming to town. The forerunners of Madison Avenue found it a handy structure to paint and post advertisements for such exotic products as Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil, Tutt's Hair Dye and Simmons Liver Regulator.

The covered bridges had their dark side too, quite literally in fact. Within the dark confines, more than a few passersby forfeited their purses to robbers. It was also a favorite meeting place for young bucks to defend injured prides through the old and tested art of fisticuffs.

Fortunately, these incidents are far outnumbered by the nostalgic remembrances of a chapter of Americanna that still lives on in West Virginia. While war, fires, floods and just plain old age have taken their toll of Mountain State covered bridges, 21 of these old fellows are still standing. Most of them are in everyday use. The Philippi bridge still serves busy federal highway traffic, 24 hours a day; quite a record for a structure built 113 years ago!

The oldest covered bridges are the Philippi and Barrackville bridges, built in 1852. Most of the others date back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Many West Virginia covered bridges were built or designed by some of the foremost bridge designers of their day. The Gauley and Greenbrier bridges previously mentioned were built by

James Moore, a pioneer in covered bridge construction. Another figure, Lewis Wernwag, who could best be called the Frank Lloyd Wright of his day, designed a number of the bridges of the Staunton-Morgantown Pike. Earlier, he had created national attention with a mammoth single span bridge at Philadelphia, appropriately called the "Colossus." It spanned the Schuylkill River for a distance of 304 feet in a single graceful arch.

The last standing bridge which he designed was the beautiful Cheat River Bridge in Preston County. It was preserved in its mountain setting as a state relic to the delight of thousands of sightseers and picknickers. Last year a fire destroyed it in twenty minutes. Again, only the stone foundations remain.

A final note about the old German, Wernwag. In 1824, he moved to Harpers Ferry and built an experimental industrial village on an island at the mouth of the Shenandoah River which he called Virginius. One of the buildings he constructed for the town was a tiny red brick firehouse. In this same firehouse 16 years after Wernwag's death, John Brown tried to stand off the United States Marines under Colonel Robert E. Lee. The rest is history. It remains in Harpers Ferry keeping its lonely vigil overlooking strange Virginius Island.

Nineteen of the 21 remaining bridges are still in use, maintained by the State Road Commission. Three of them have undergone extensive repairs in recent years to assure continuous service.

These are located at Carrollton in Barbour County; Brushy Fork Creek in Harrison County; and at Milligan Creek, northwest of Lewisburg. Only two bridges are not in use, one near Cairo, the other near Union.

Twenty-one remain, loyal servants to the end. They await your pen, ink, brush or camera. Autumn is perhaps the time to see them at their best. Surrounded by a rainbow of colors, they stand as they have for generations past, and hopefully, for generations to come. West Virginia's covered bridges--our familiar friends from the past.



PHILIPPI, W. VA.  
SCENE OF FIRST LAND BATTLE OF  
CIVIL WAR

This Bridge Erected 1852 Serving Both North and South  
in Passage of Troops and Supplies Across Mountains into Virginia



COVERED BRIDGE  
HEIGHT 12' 4"  
WIDTH 10' 4"

BRIDGES TO THE PAST - West Virginia

The Philippi bridge, built in 1852 still serves a busy federal highway. This twin-barreled bridge was the scene on June 3, 1861 of the first land skirmish of the Civil War.



## "FALL FUN FEST"

By Bill F. Hensley

Square dance enthusiasts from all over the nation will converge upon this tiny mountain resort village early in September for eight full days of western-style square dancing. The setting for the event is in the heart of the largest wilderness area in eastern America.

Called "Fall Fun Fest," the colorful event, now in its 17th year, climaxes the square dance fever that sweeps the Great Smoky Mountains and Blue Ridge Mountains during the summer months.

More than 500 persons will participate in this year's Fun Fest which begins Saturday afternoon, Sept. 4, and runs through the 12th. A chartered jet airliner will bring more than a hundred dancers from California, while others will arrive from all parts of the United States by automobile, train and bus.

Dancing begins each morning, sometimes before breakfast, and it's "swing your partner" all day and often until the wee hours of the following morning. Dancers occupy every corner of Fontana's large recreation hall and frequently the dancers and musicians move the big "hoe-down" outdoors to a large, paved parking lot if more space is needed.

A highlight of each day's activity is the "Idiot's Party" which begins at midnight and lasts until about 2 a.m. At this session, the dancers are uniquely attired in pajamas and assorted nightwear for a final fling before calling it quits for the day. Music for dancing is provided by the Fontana Ramblers, a four-piece band that features a fiddle, banjo, guitar, and bass fiddle.

At least a dozen dancers will be enjoying this year's Fun Fest for the 17th consecutive year, and probably a hundred or more will be

attending for the fifth or sixth time. The public is invited to participate and those persons who do not join the dancing watch the intricate western-style figures from the sidelines.

Nearly all of the dancers are colorfully costumed. The men wear cowboy shirts, trousers and boots while the women appear in full-skirted dresses over bouffant petticoats and be-ruffled pantaloons. Some of the petticoats contain as much as 75 yards of material. Dresses may range from a simple calico to elaborately embroidered costumes of expensive design.

It isn't unusual for some of the more enthusiastic dancers to arrive with nine or ten costume changes for the week's participation.

Not all Fun Fest participants spend the entire time dancing, however. Many take daily breaks for other recreational activities, including fishing, tennis, horseback riding, swimming, boating or hiking mountain trails. Others relax by playing bridge or rocking on the big front porch of the Recreation Hall while enjoying mountain breezes and vistas.

With accommodations for 1,300 guests in 300 cottages and a 56-room lodge, Fontana Village is one of North Carolina's most popular resorts. It is located on N. C. Highway 28 within the Nantahala National Forest at the boundary of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Visitors to the Fontana area find that it contains some of America's most beautiful virgin forests. Countless varieties of flowers, shrubs and trees can be found in an ever-changing series of beautiful woodlands. Sharing the beauty are many species of wildlife, including an abundance of ruffed grouse, wild turkey, black bear, deer and wild boar.

The Village is situated on the 34-mile-long lake created by Fontana Dam, highest in the TVA system. Fontana is 95 miles southwest of Asheville, largest city in the Western North Carolina mountains. Nearby are Bryson City (34 miles) and Robbinsville (20 miles).

The tradition of square dancing survives from pioneer days in the Great Smokies and Blue Ridge Mountains. Dances are held nightly at many North Carolina resorts and are enjoyed by visitors and residents alike. A number of festivals featuring folk music and dancing, as well as sports and handicrafts, are held throughout the year.

Western North Carolina has many festivals which commemorate historical events or display pioneer artifacts, but at Fun Fest the actual spirit of colonial times comes alive as the peaks surrounding the little mountain village echo to the strains of old-timey music and dance calls.

Because of its regular square dance programs, including Fun Fest, Fontana is widely known as a square dance center. In addition, it has an outstanding reputation as a family resort for relaxation and outdoor sports.

Fontana has scheduled a Folklore Festival from Sept. 18, a Square Dance Swap Shop Festival from Sept. 25 - Oct. 2, and a Rebel Roundup Square Dance Festival Oct. 28-31.

Fun Fest this year will be another colorful and carefree event for its participants. With plenty of dancing for the young and old, it promises to be a real "swinging" event.

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FALL FUN FEST -- FONTANA VILLAGE, NORTH CAROLINA

"Fall Fun Fest," now in its 17th year, will bring square dance enthusiasts from all over the nation in early September. The 1965 events will start September 4 and run through the 12th.

Fontana will also be the scene of other festivals during the fall season.

## FALL FUN IN NEW YORK STATE

By Joseph A. Constantino

For thousands of knowledgeable holiday seekers, Fall is THE season for touring New York State. Not only are the highways and by-ways of the state dressed in their colorful best, but there is an extra bonus package that includes reduced accommodation rates, less crowded roads and resorts and a round of exciting events ranging from the New York World's Fair to the gay Grape Festival.

The technicolor tide of changing foliage that sweeps through the state during mid-September through October is in itself a major attraction. This is the time of ripening apples, rosy red and yellow, filling the air with fragrance. Grapes are ready in the Finger Lakes and in the Hudson Valley for harvesting, much of their tart sweet juices destined to become New York State's fine wines and champagnes.

Usually beginning in the forested Adirondack Mountain region in mid-September the foliage change spreads southward through the Catskills and down the Hudson Valley. By mid-October the brilliant Autumn setting has spread its riotous hues of yellow and bronze, scarlet and gold across the state to Niagara Falls and Long Island. The whole State is ablaze with glorious color and on the roadside stands are bottles of golden cider, shining red apples and orange pumpkins.

There are numerous places to view the colorama but these are a few of the real "highpoints."

-- Atop Whiteface Mountain, reached by an 8-mile motor road plus an elevator ride to the summit.

-- A ride on the double chairlift at Whiteface Ski Center (operating on weekends only during the autumn colorama season). Other

chair lifts in the Adirondack region are at Gore Mountain at North Creek, McCauley Mountain at Old Forge, Big Tupper lift at Tupper Lake.

-- In the Catskill Mountain region Belleayre Mountain chair-lift operates during the color change season, while Mount Utsayantha near Stamford (3,365 feet) can be reach by auto to a lookout point. Other Catskill highpoints include the chair lifts at Hunter Mountain at Windham and the Sky Top Observation Tower at Lake Mohonk.

There's not a highway in New York State that does not share in Mother Nature's brilliant painting of the fields and forests along the way. Particularly appealing in the Fall is the Taconic Parkway, east of the Hudson River, and Palisades Parkway on the west side. The parkway leads to Bear Mountain State Park and Perkins Memorial Drive for a delightful view of the color-swept Valley. Route 17 through the Southern Tier counties of the state lead not only to such attractions as Corning Glass Museum and Allegany State Park, but offers breathtaking scenes of the Autumn colorama. The state park, largest in New York's system of parks, is a technicolor world of its own during the golden days of Fall, with a hundred miles of hiking trails to lure the outdoorsman.

Fall is the time, too, to tour the forts and battlefields on New York State. Saratoga Battlefield achieved historical immortality on September 19 and October 7 in 1777, when one of the decisive battles of the world was fought here. Visitors can make a free tour of the 4-square mile field in their autos. The park is open through November.

The setting around historic Fort Ticonderoga in the village of Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain is especially lovely during the colorful season. This fort played a major role in the history of North America, and remains open until mid-October.

Here are a few Autumn events that you might want to use as the focal point of your tours during the colorama season: Beginning September 15 and continuing through October 31, Sterling Forest Gardens near Tuxedo will be ablaze with its "Fall Festival of Chrysanthemums." On September 18-19, the "Double 500" World's Manufacturers championship auto races will be held at the race course at Bridgehampton on Long Island.

Topping the harvest season in the Finger Lakes vineyard country is the annual Grape Festival in the wine-making Village of Naples. Torchlight parades with gay floats, folk bands, dancing on the streets and a festival ball marks the September 24-26 event. An opportunity to visit the new hospitality room at the Widmer's Winery and tour of the premises is a highlight. The other popular Finger Lakes wineries at nearby Hammondsport, overlooking Keuka Lake, will also welcome visitors. These include Great Western, Hammondsport, Taylor and Gold Seal wine companies. Tourists may sample the vintages without charge. At Hammondsport, the Glenn H. Curtiss Museum of Local History remains open through October.

On September 27 through October 3, Watkins Glen will hold its Grand Prix Pageant complete with parade. The last three days (October 1, 2, 3) coincides with the 5th annual Grand Prix Road race of the U. S. It is the only race that counts toward the international championship for race drivers. The 110-lap, 253-mile race will bring the pageant week to a close.

A turkey shoot (contestants shoot at targets and get turkeys as prizes) will be held at Monroe in the Hudson Valley on October 17. In New York City on October 28, ceremonies commemorating the historic dedication of the Statue of Liberty on that date in 1886, will be held at the monument.



No visit to the Hudson Valley would be complete without a tour of the United States Military Academy grounds at West Point. From September into October, smart regimental parades of the Cadet Corps are held. Parades are scheduled for Monday, Tuesday and Thursday at 5:30 in the afternoons and on Saturdays at 12 noon unless there is a home football game (when it is an hour earlier). You may also visit the Academy's museum, Battle Monument and other points of interest on the 15,000-acre reservation. From Trophy Point on the Academy grounds, as well as the Storm King Highway just north of the Point, fall tourists get one of the most breathtaking views of the valley.

The great museums and the world's of symphony and songs in the large cities of New York State move into high gear during the Fall. Historic homes remain open well into the Fall or all winter for leisurely browsing. You'll find it hard to argue with those knowledgeable holiday seekers who maintain that Autumn is THE SEASON to tour New York State.

Attractions and resort communities of the state are listed in the colorful guidebook, NEW YORK STATE VACATIONLANDS. For a free copy write the State Commerce Department, 112 State Street, Albany, New York 12207.

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### FALL FUN IN NEW YORK

The familiar scenes of the harvest season are everywhere in New York State. Autumn foliage, fairs, and festivals are part of the lure of a fall vacation in the Empire State.