

# ***A Brief History of Montgomery's Covered Bridges***

A version of this presentation was originally given as part of the Upper Missisquoi and Trout River Wild and Scenic Rivers program on Oct. 4, 2015. The bridges were Outstandingly Remarkable Values which contributed to the successful federal designation in the Fall of 2014.



When it comes to covered bridges Montgomery enjoys an abundance of riches. Why were they built? Why were there so many? Who designed and built them. How did they get their names?

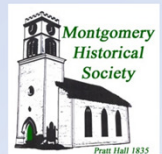
## **What is an Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORV)?**

To be eligible for Wild and Scenic designation, a river must be free-flowing and possess one or more outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs). To be an ORV the resource must be of local, state, regional or national significance. It must also be river-related such as: within about 1/4 mile from the riverbank, contribute substantially to the functioning of the river ecosystem, and/or owe its location or existence to the river.

Typically ORVs are recreational (fishing, canoeing, hunting, sightseeing...), historical/cultural, scenic/aesthetic, or natural history (wildlife, plants, water quality, geology...).

## ***October 1820...***

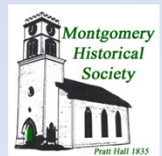
... a committee was appointed by the VT legislature to layout a Farm Market Rd between Wells River & Berkshire using the Hazen's Notch Rd.



Understanding Montgomery's location relative to the region's transportation system provides context. From the pre-revolutionary war Bayley-Hazen's Military Rd, now VT Route 58 or the Hazen's Notch Rd., to efforts to create a farm to market road in 1820, transportation was a key need and the bridges were a critical ingredient to safe, reliable travel.

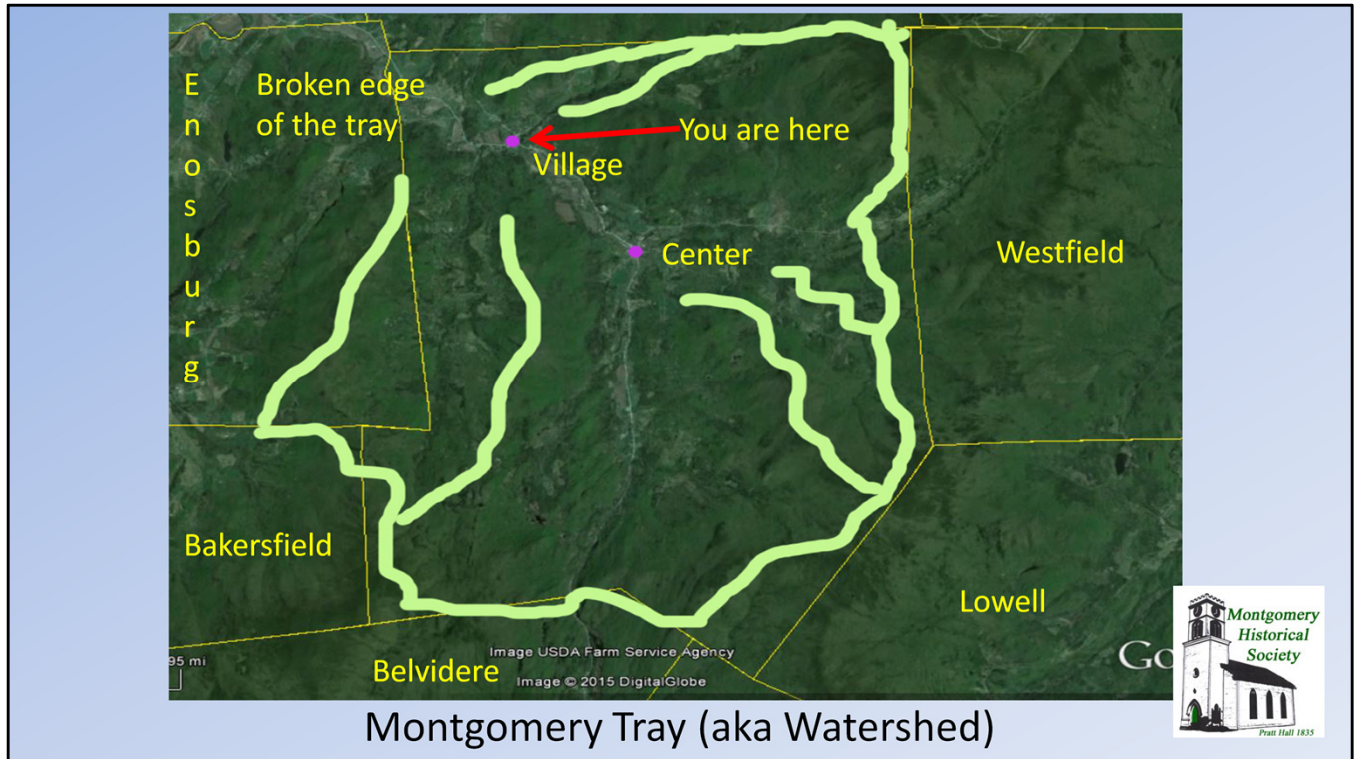
## ***N.W. Clapp in Abby Hemenway's 1871 History of Franklin County....***

“Montgomery is ... surrounded by mountains and hills on all sides, except the NW corner which affords passage by the Trout River, forming in the aggregate a not very bad facsimile of **a tray with one end broken out.**”



Another key to understanding our covered bridge story is Montgomery's topography which was noted early on. An early essay by N.W. Clapp described Montgomery as a tray with one end broken out. Water collected on the tray and exited the broken lip of the tray.



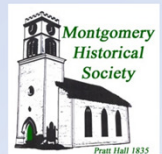
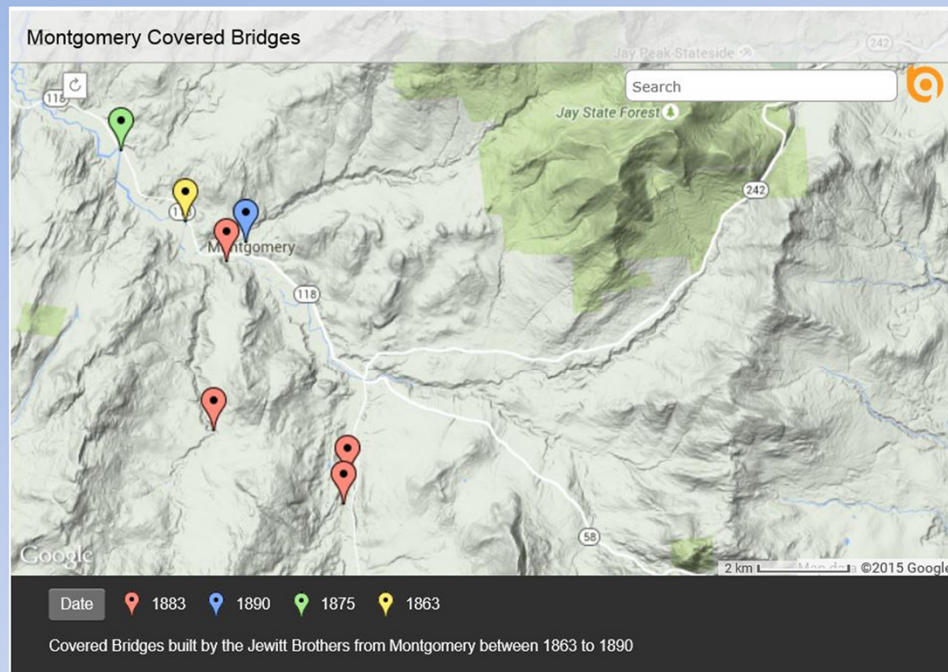


It's a bumpy tray though.

This is imagery of Montgomery with the ridges highlighted.

Brooks and streams' mini watersheds form in between each pair of lines and ultimately form the Trout River which flows out of the northwest corner towards the Missisquoi.

Many bridges were needed.



## Montgomery Tray (aka Watershed)

This is essentially the same view with the locations of the current covered bridge locations plotted.

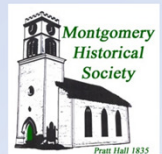
3 bridges span the Trout River (at least 6 used to)

3 are over feeder streams (South Branch, Black Falls and West Hill brooks)

Hectorville is no longer there but is a pretty spot to visit..

## ***N.W. Clapp in Abby Hemenway's 1871 History of Franklin County....***

“Jay mountain, on the east, is by far the most lofty of the range-- the Peak ranging next to Camel’s Hump in the State, in altitude. It is sometimes **resorted to by pleasure-seekers**, but the distance is found to be too far from civilization and carriage roads to have the pleasure amount to much”.



As an aside Mr. Clapp went on to describe Montgomery’s Jay Peak area as an area “sometimes resorted to by pleasure seekers”...

## ***N.W. Clapp in Abby Hemenway's 1871 History of Franklin County....***

“Jay mountain, on the east, is by far the most lofty of the range-- the Peak ranging next to Camel’s Hump in the State, in altitude. It is sometimes **resorted to by pleasure-seekers**, but the distance is found to be **too far from civilization and carriage roads to have the pleasure amount to much**”.



Although the pleasure didn't amount to much because it was too far from civilization.

## ***Early Montgomery History***

1780 – Granted & 1789 - Charter Approved

1793 - First Settlers (Clapps)

1802 - First Town Government

Antebellum - Hill Farms, Sheep and Fledgling Dairy and  
Timber Industry

Civil War – 103 Montgomery men served in the Civil War.

-- Estimated 37% of 18-45 year old males

-- 20% died

1870 – 1920 - The “Golden Years”



This timeline shows the milestones in the early history of Montgomery.

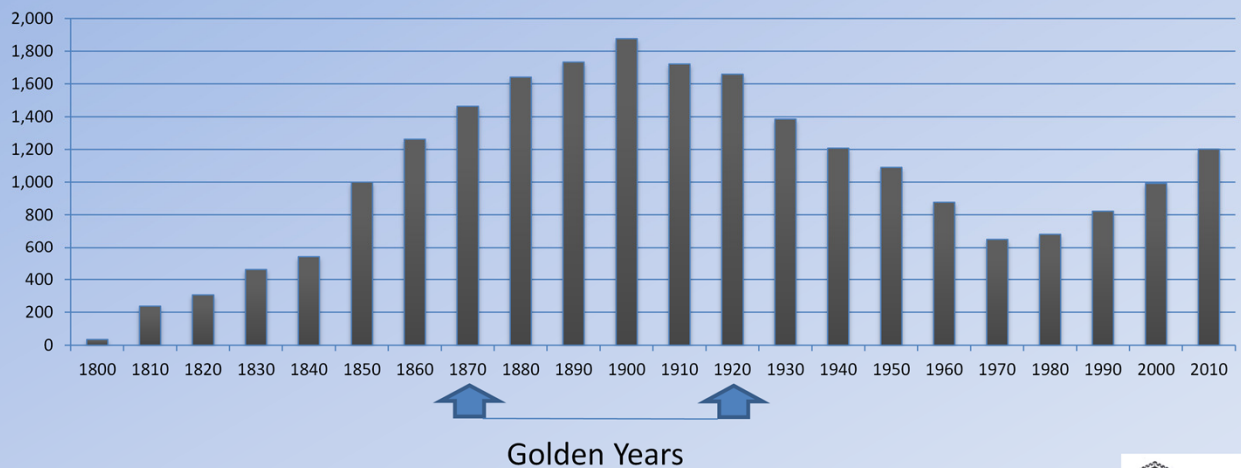
Montgomery experienced steady growth until the Civil War, with a mix of farming, sheep, and logging.

But after the Civil War things really took off and this was the period when most of the bridges were built.

The local economy became largely timber related in the so called “Golden years”.



## Montgomery's Population



Montgomery's population reached its apex in 1900 with 1,876 people, making it the 6<sup>th</sup> largest town of 15 in Franklin County

And even though it lost population over the next 20 years, other county towns lost more and Montgomery was actually the 5<sup>th</sup> largest town by population in 1920.

## ***Post Civil War Episcopal Church Renovations***



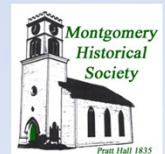
During this period there were many outward signs of prosperity.

For example, the Episcopal Union Church was closed for 2 ½ years for an expansion.

Gothic features, a bell and clock were added. As were stained glass windows and furnishings.

## ***1873 Montgomery Businesses Included:***

4 tub factories	1 molding, finishing &
2 grocery stores	church furnishing shop
3 general assortment stores	5 blacksmith shops
2 taverns	11 saw mills
6 churches	2 millinery shops
1 grist mill	2 doctors / 1 doctress
1 hardware store	1 undertaker
1 furniture shop	2 sextons
1 tannery	6 carriage makers
1 sash, door, and blind factory	1 machinist
Spruce gum, wooden trays, and shingles	



8 years after the end of the Civil War business was booming, again mostly related to the timber industry and supporting services.

This a just partial listing.



## ***1883 Montgomery Businesses Included:***

4 tub factories <b>7</b>	1 molding, finishing & church furnishing shop
2 grocery stores	5 blacksmith shops <b>8</b>
3 general assortment stores	11 saw mills <b>10</b>
2 taverns	2 millinery shops
6 churches <b>8</b>	2 doctors / 1 doctress
1 grist mill <b>2</b>	1 undertaker
1 hardware store	2 sextons <b>4</b>
1 furniture shop	6 carriage makers
1 sash, door, and blind factory	1 machinist
<b>23 Carpenters/builders</b>	Spruce gum, wooden trays, and shingles
<b>7 Shoe / boot makers</b>	
<b>5 Coopers</b>	

10 years later even more. (shown in red)

This reflects an abundance of raw materials, water power, and a rail transshipment point nearby in E. Berkshire for easy shipment of finished goods.



“ twenty men and teams were constantly required just to haul the products of the various mills to the railroad in East Berkshire”

Source: “History of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties” 1891, cited in “Montgomery VT: The History of a Town” by Sara Taylor and W.R. Branthoover

8 years later still booming...

**And in order to access the raw materials and ship out the finished products they needed many bridges**

This shows the area in Montgomery Center at the intersection of Route 118 and 58, looking north towards the Baptist Church and Sylvester’s Market.

The yellow arrow indicates the Highway Bridge.



June 1897 - Total yearly butter tub production in Montgomery was estimated at over 1.5 million tubs per year. The highest of any town in the U.S.

Source: St. Albans Daily Messenger

Six years later...

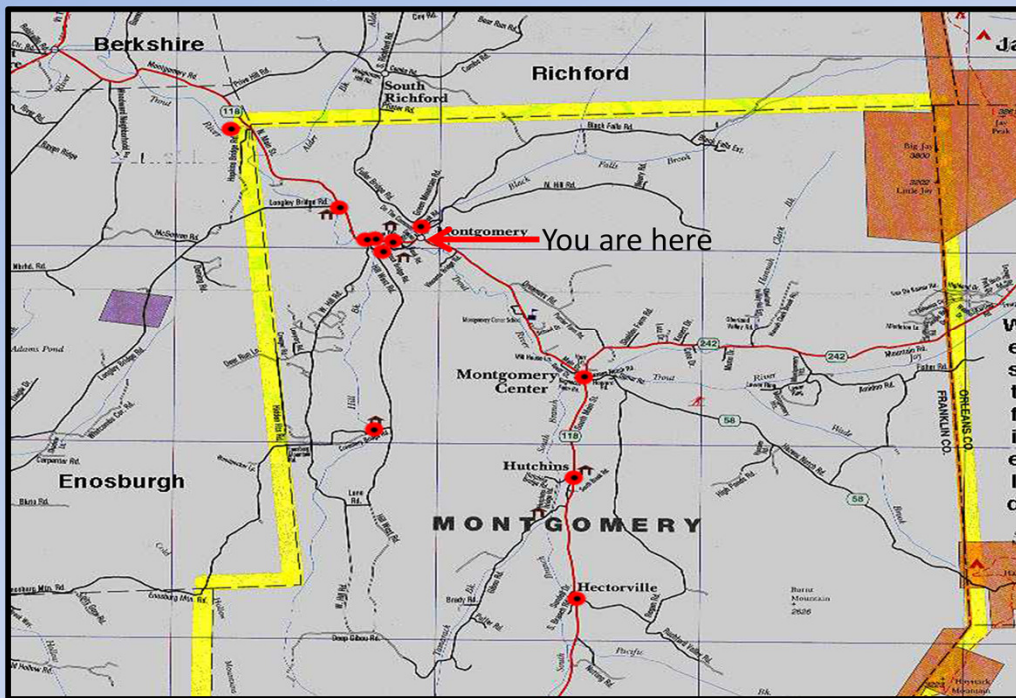
Butter tub production was peaking, most produced at the Hutchins mill south of the Center and the Nelson and Hall Mill just up the Hazen's Notch Rd.

The New Nelson and Hall tub mill on Route 58 burned and was rebuilt in the early 1900s. The new mill had electricity, and according to the St Albans Messenger, 65 men could make 600,000 tubs/yr. By comparison the Hutchins mill, shown above, had 150 men making 800,000/yr. The Hutchins mill burned in 1914.

The yellow arrow indicates the Hutchins Bridge.



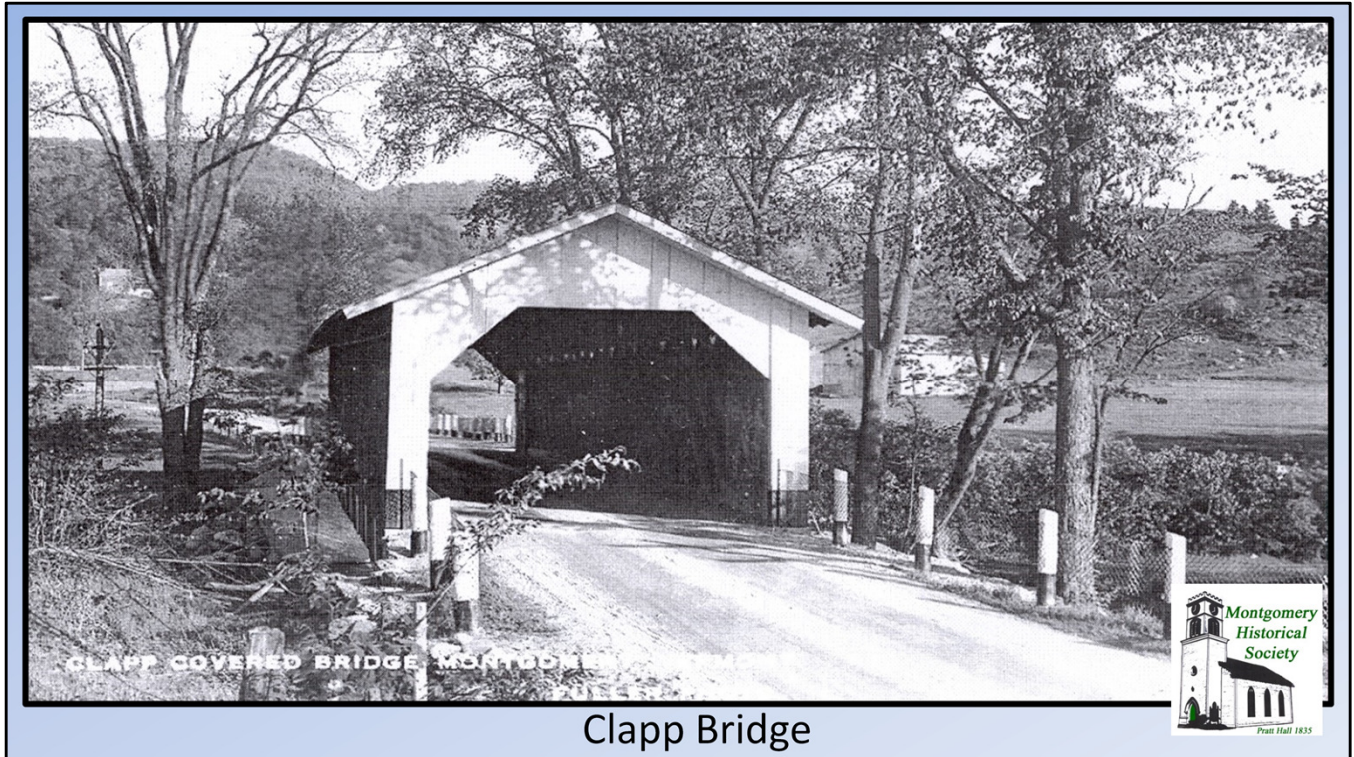
## Bridge Locations circa 1945



Depending who you talk to there were between 11-13 covered bridges at one point in time.

This map shows the location of 11 circa 1945. Any place the road crossed a brook was a potential site though.

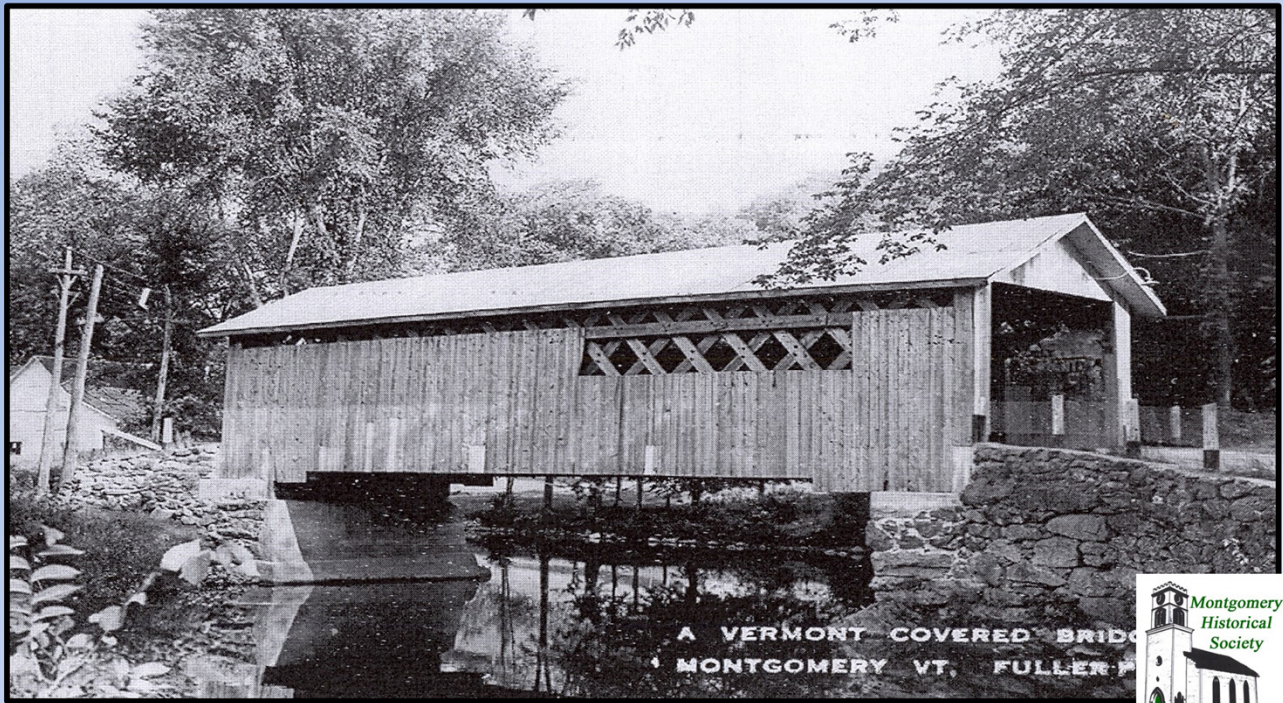
The next series of pictures are of these 11 sites.



No longer there

Crossed the Trout River





Comstock Bridge

Still There

Spans the Trout River



Creamery Bridge

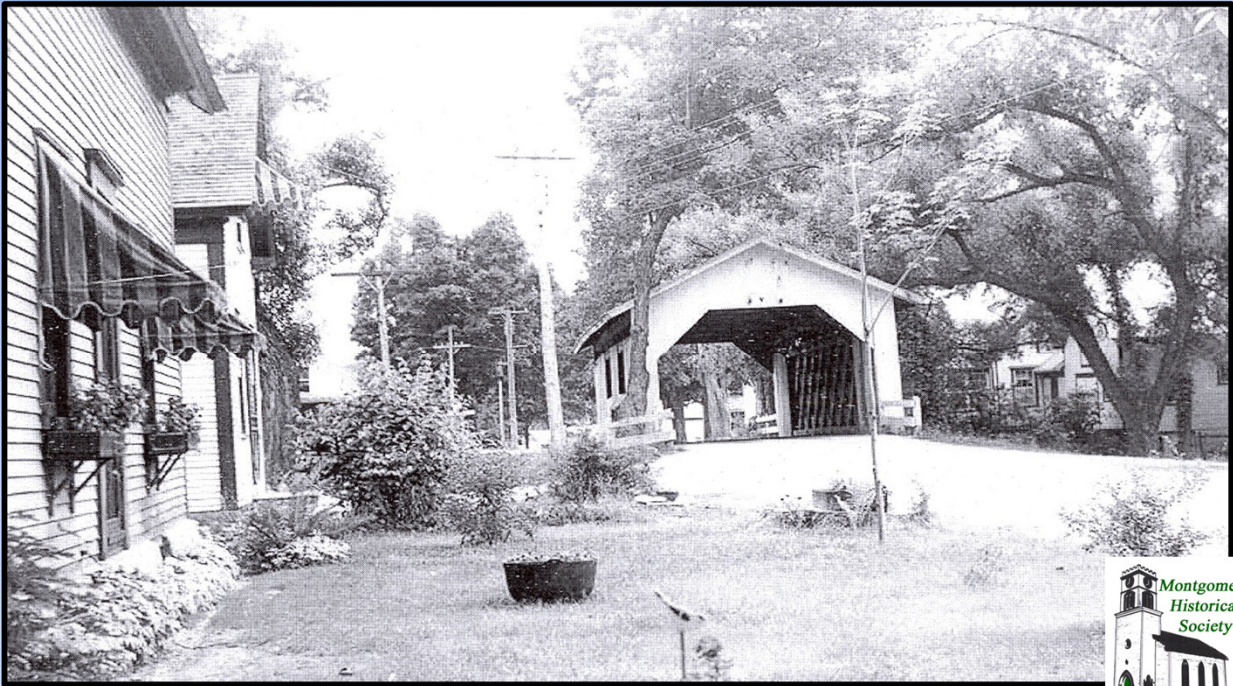


Still there

Spans the West Hill Brook

Close to Jewett Bros. mill / farms





Fuller Bridge

Still there

Spans the Black Falls brook (formerly called the Mill Brook)



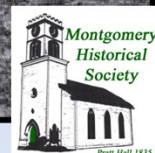


Highway Bridge

No Longer there

Spanned the Trout River

Notice the advertising and the electrical street lamp over the entrance.

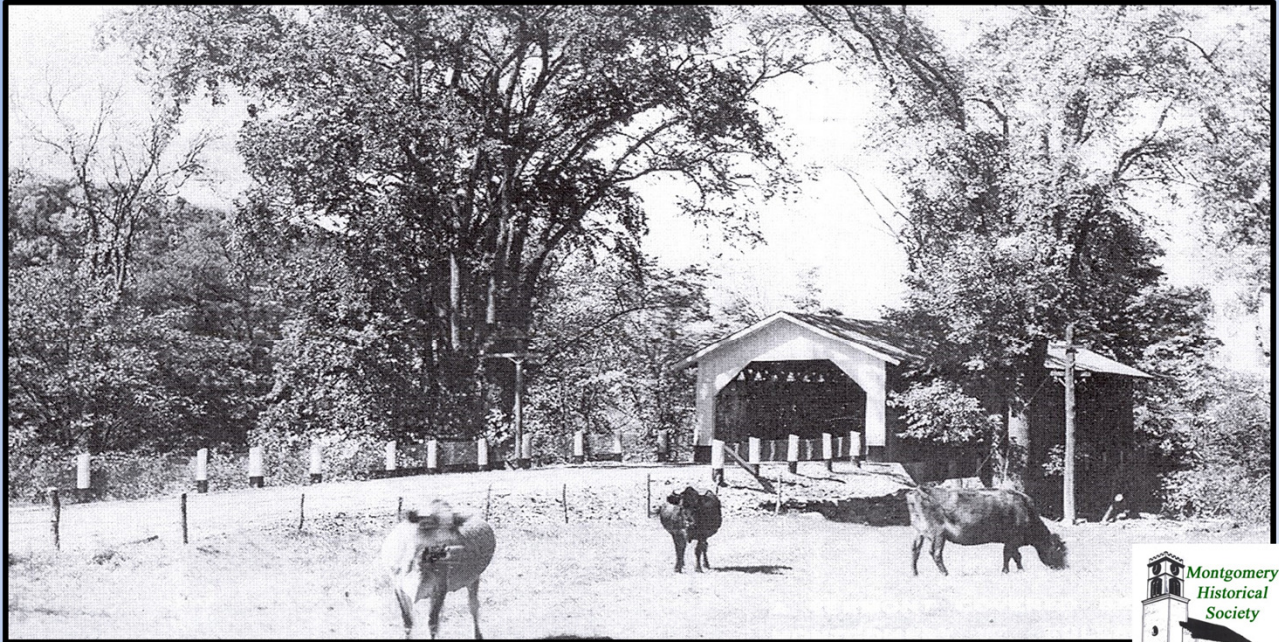


Hutchins Bridge

Still there

Spans the South Branch brook

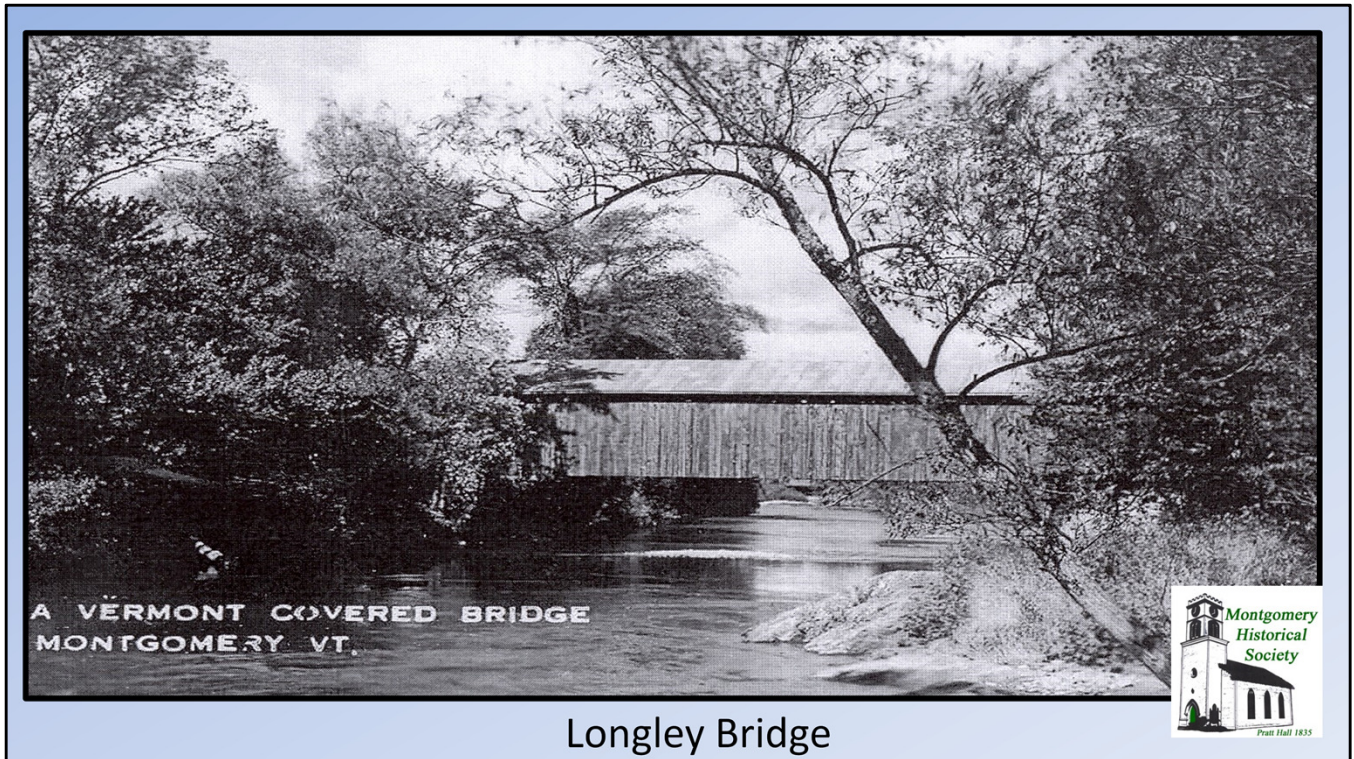




Levi's Bridge

No longer there

Spanned the West Hill Brook.



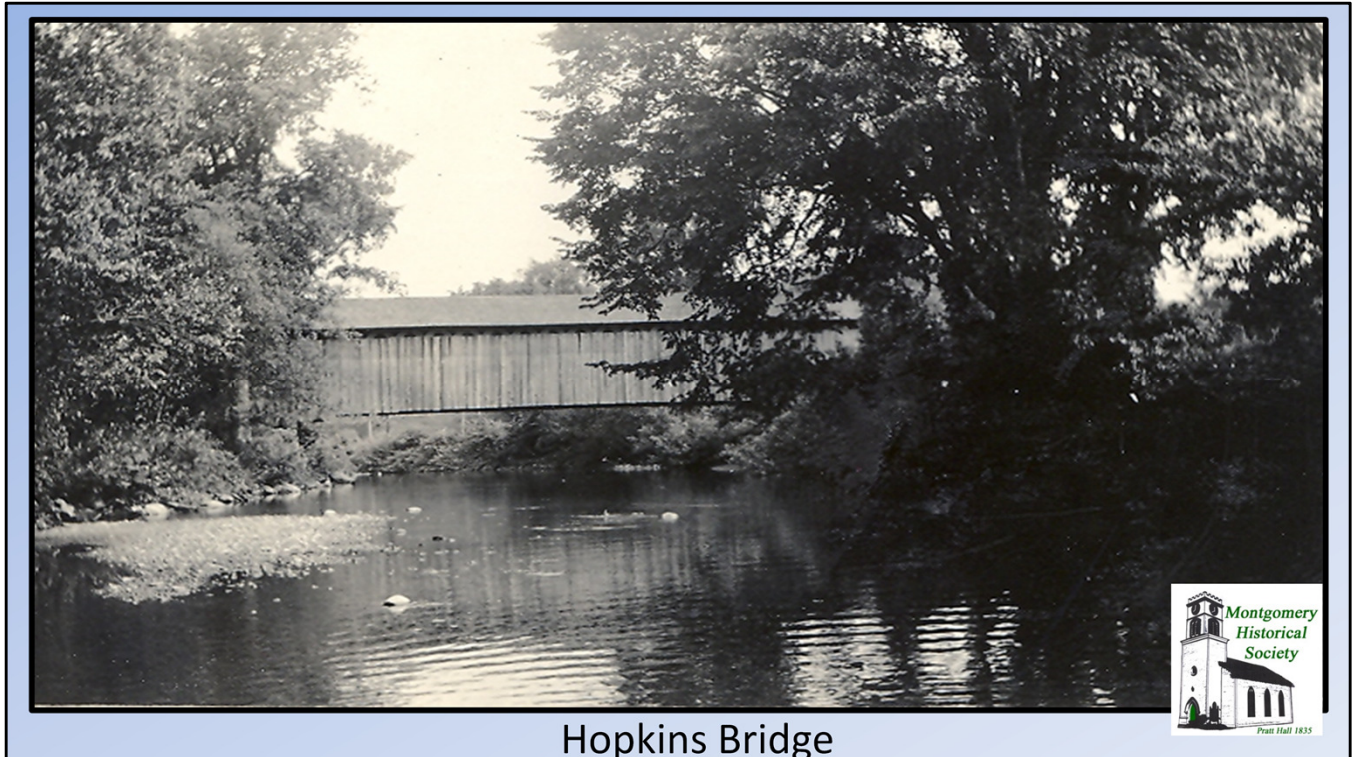
Longley Bridge

Still there

Spans the Trout River

It's now closed to traffic and is due for major renovation in the 2016-2017 timeframe.



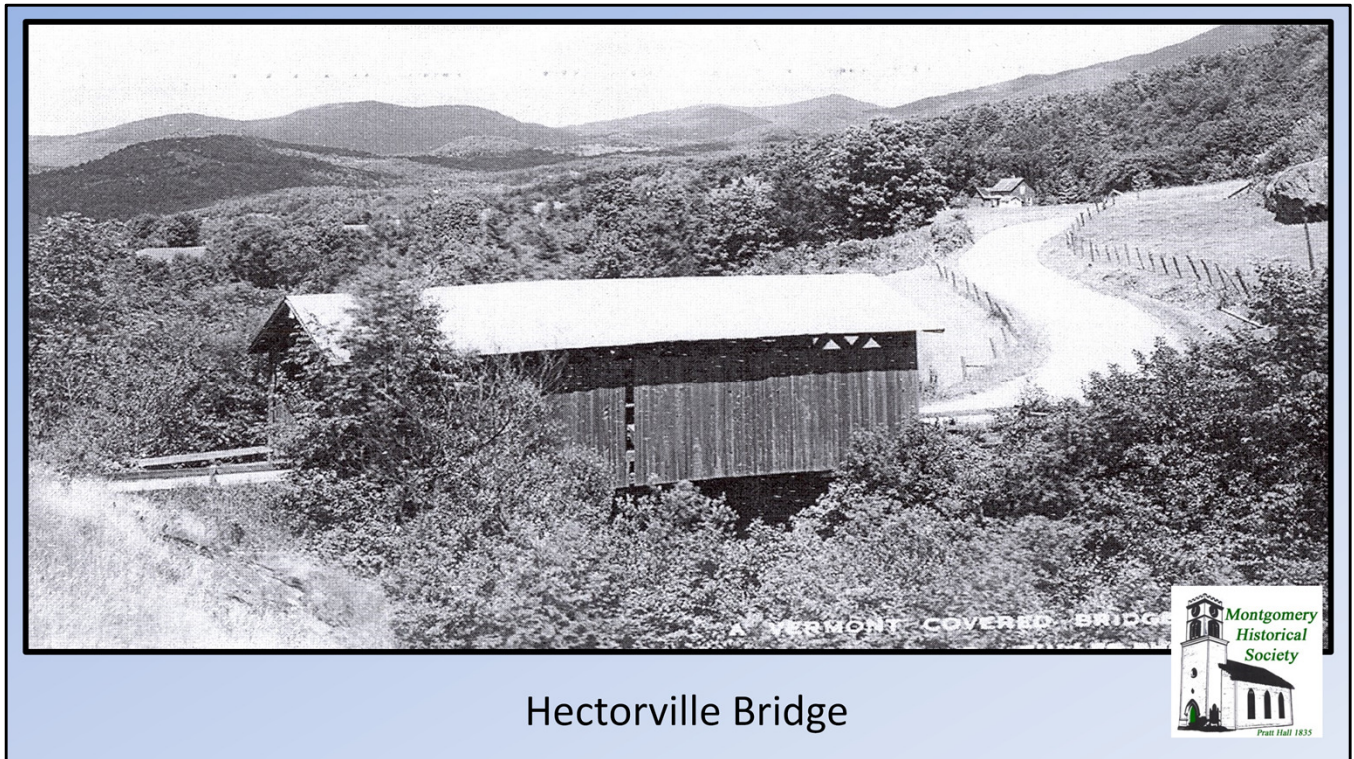


Hopkins Bridge

Still there

Spans the Tout River

Just in Enosburg, built by the Jewett Bros.



Hectorville Bridge

No longer there

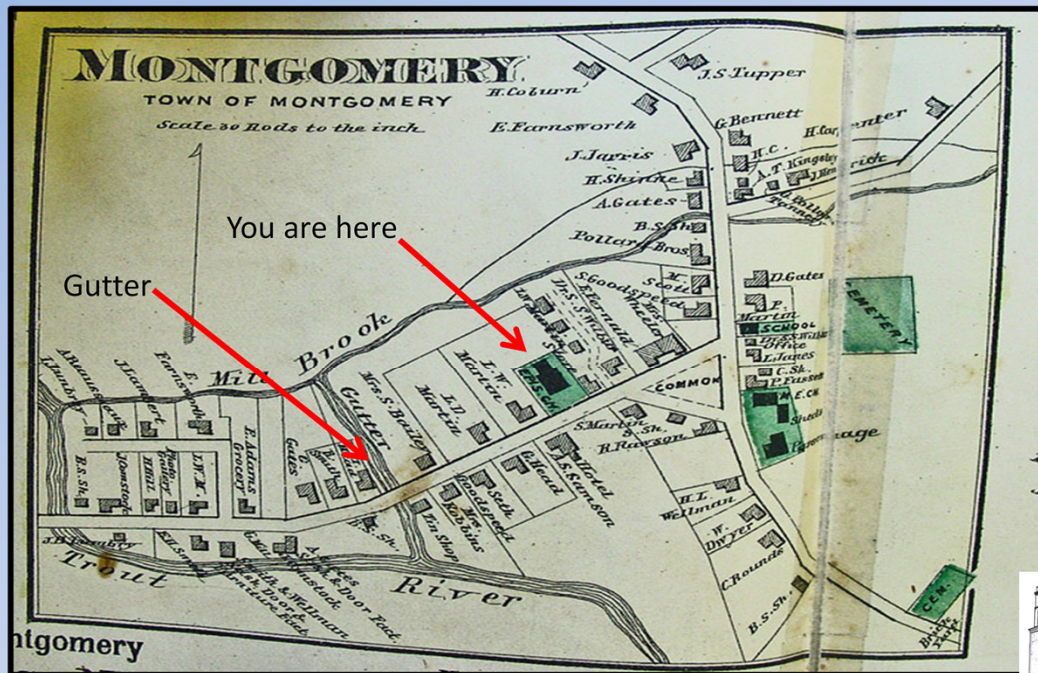
Spanned the South Branch brook

May have been relocated from the Village "gutter".

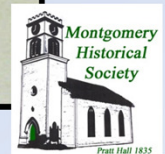
Bypassed with a concrete bridge in part to allow more modern and heavy logging vehicles access to the Gibou area of Montgomery.

Hec Committee working to resurrect.





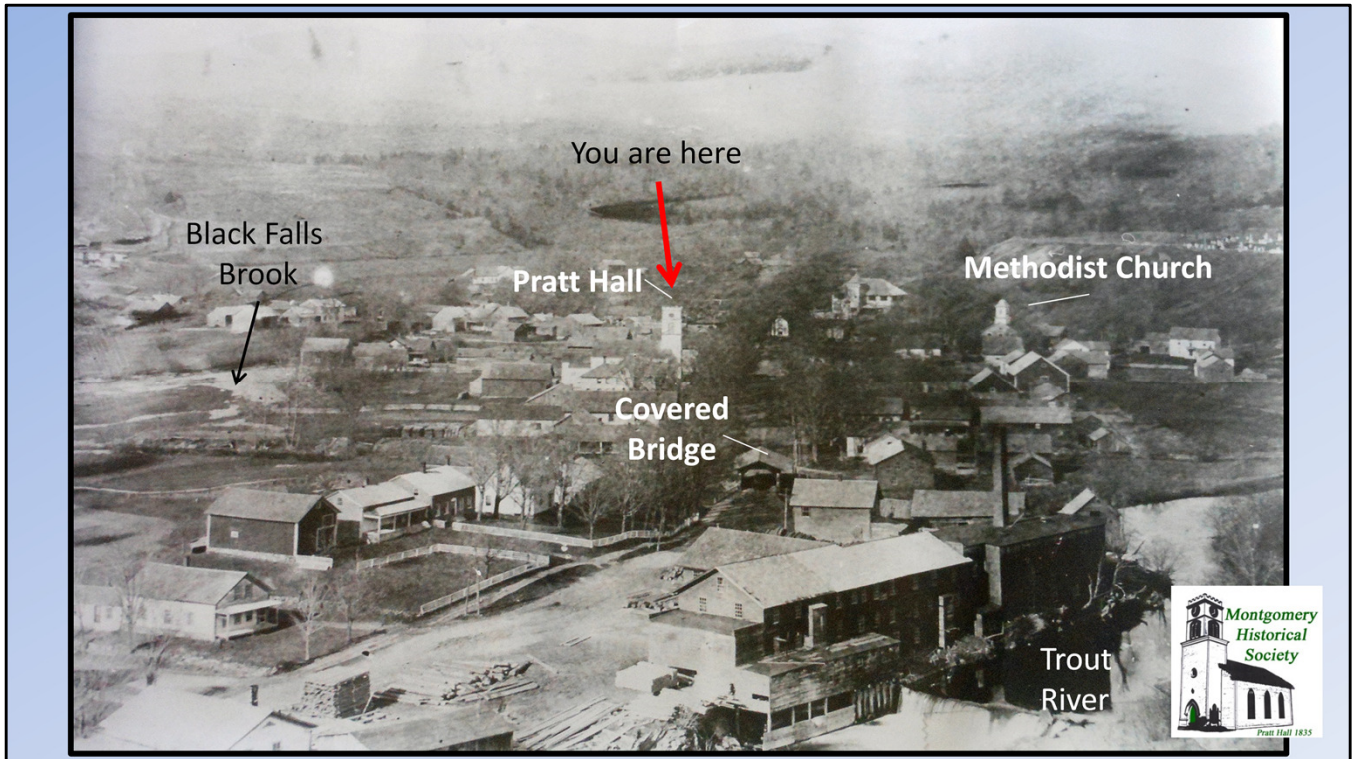
1871 Beers Map of Montgomery Village



This is a map of the Village area circa 1871.

A man made gutter, large ditch or canal, used to connect the Black Falls (Mill) brook and the Trout River and was probably used to move logs to the mill on the Trout River. A covered bridge spanned the gutter.

We believe this bridge was moved to the South Branch brook and became the Hectorville bridge.



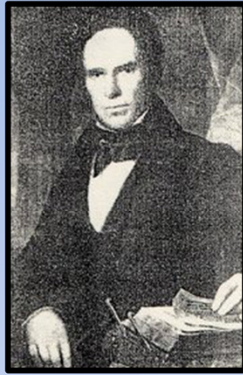
Here is a picture of the area shown on the map. The gutter ran from the left to the Trout River on the right.

The area behind the dammed up Trout River was euphemistically referred to a "Lake Goodspeed".

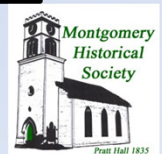
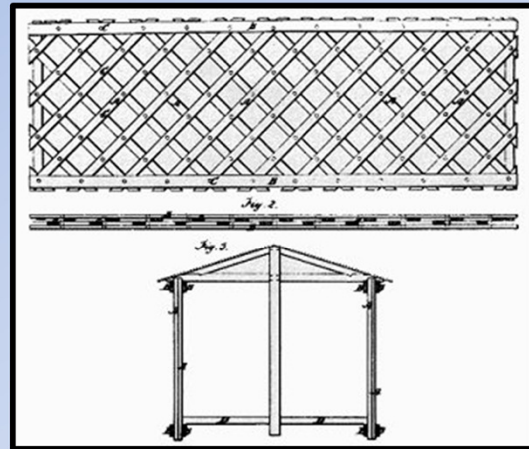
The bridges were moved and re-used. They normally were named by the family, area, structure or geographic feature nearby. Over time a bridge could have two or three names.



## *All bridges use the Town lattice design*



- Ithiel Town patented the design in 1820
- Charged \$2.00/foot royalty fee
- Relatively cheap & easy to construct



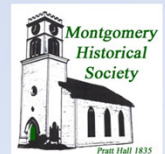
All the bridges use the same design, Ithiel Town's lattice truss.

Ithiel Town also designed and built other buildings including the state capitals in CT, SC, and IN.

Most people feel the bridges were covered to protect the expensive timbers used to construct the trusses, floor and roof regardless of design.

## ***Montgomery Covered Bridges' Jewett Brothers...***

- Family of 13 kids, 10 boys (Mother born in Ireland Margret O'Connell, Father Samuel)
- Lived in and around Montgomery. Clustered in the Hill West / West Hill area
- All listed as Farmers/Farm laborers in the various censuses  
Savanard listed as a "lumber manufacturer" in 1900.  
Savanard bachelor until he was 53, married his 60 year old cousin in 1904. Widowed 2 years later.
- Built buildings (1889), Loggers, Mill Operators, and Real Estate



All the bridges were built by the Jewett brothers, principally Sheldon and Savanard.

Not a lot is known about them. They came from a large family and lived mostly in the Hill West / West Hill area.

In most of the census they identified themselves as farmers.

Savanard actually moved to NH at one point and worked in a shoe factory.

## ***The Jewett Brothers and Sisters***

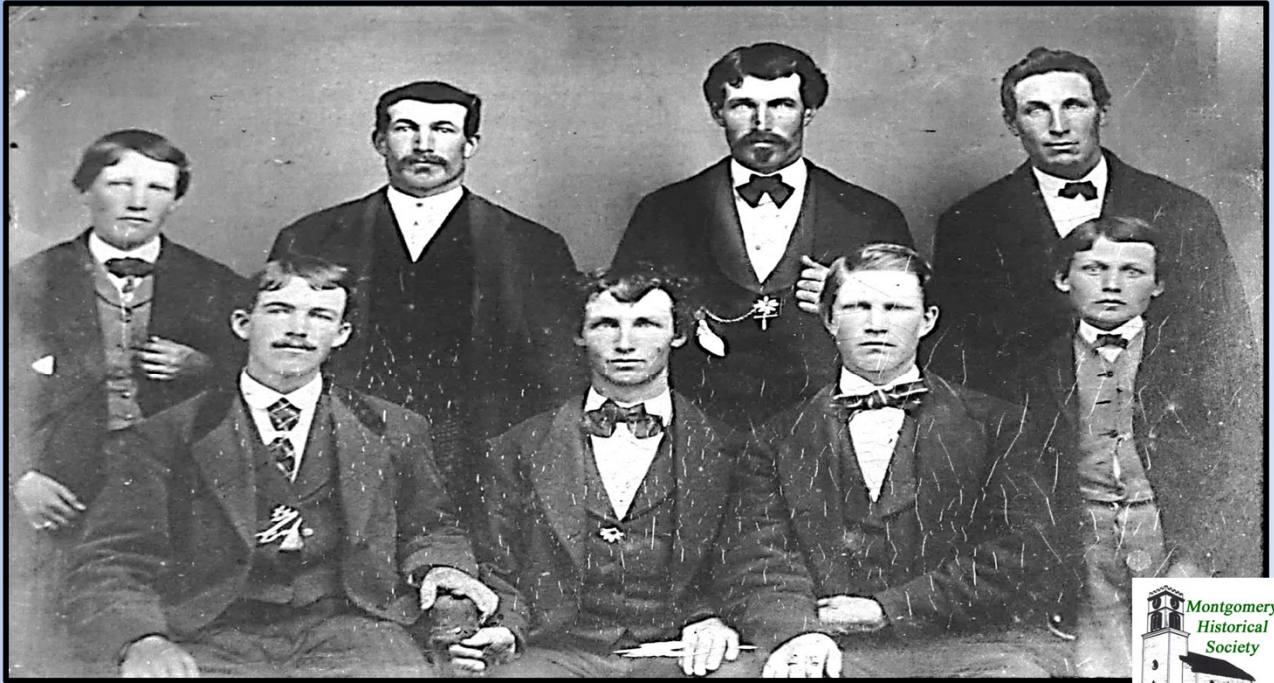
<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth-Death</u>	<u>Age at Death</u>
John	1840-1864	24
Sheldon	1842-1889	47
William	1846-1916	70
Savanard	1848-1925	77
Bramon	1850-1911	61
Giles	1852-1929	77
Samuel	1854-1925	71
Alfred	1856-1882	26
Oscar	1857-1880	23
Eldora	1858-1882	24
Andrew	1860-1930	70
Orlinda	1862-1930	68
Mary Jane	1867-1940	73



This is a list in birth order of the 13 Jewett kids.

Margret had 9 sons in a row!

Four children died in their 20s.



Back Row L to R: Samuel, William, Savanard, Sheldon  
Front Row L to R: Bramon, Giles, Alfred, Oscar circa 1875



This photo shows 8 of the 10 boys.

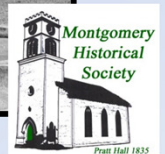
Savanard and Sheldon are back row, right.

This photo was likely after the Civil War and before 1889.

They certainly look prosperous, don't they.



## *Savanard Jewett's farm on West Hill*

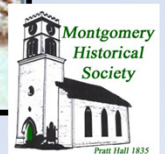


This next few slides are Jewett family photos.

## *Savanard Jewett's farm on West Hill*



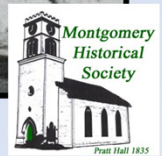
## *Jewett Family circa 1899*



William is standing, far right with the rifle.



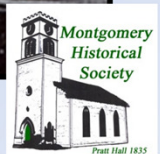
## ***Bridge Under Construction***



This photo shows Savanard and William on what we believe is the Comstock Bridge under construction.



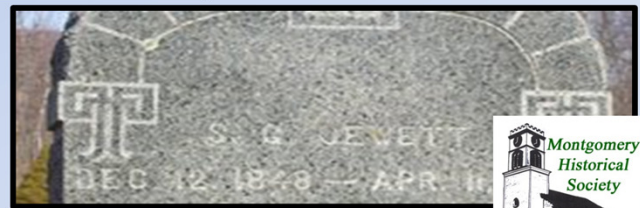
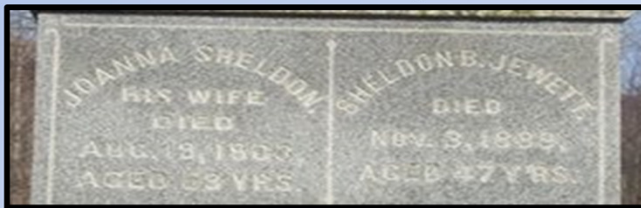
## ***Bridge Under Construction***



We believe this is their crew working on the Comstock Bridge.

## ***Sheldon & Savanard are Buried Next to Each Other In Montgomery Village Cemetery***

Photos by Barb Destromp,  
[www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)

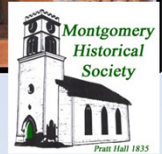


Sheldon and Savanard are buried next to each other in the Montgomery Village cemetery.

## *Table Made by Savanard Jewett*



Reverse Painted &  
Gold Leaf Glass Top  
w/ Fish and Water Motif



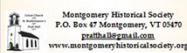
This is a game table made by Savanard for his nephew, Gordon. It passed to Duane and Parma Jewett. It is reverse glass painted with a water and fish motif.





Sheldon and Savanard Jewett (back row right) built all of the remaining covered bridges in our area. They operated a sawmill on West Hill which enabled them to mill the wood to their specific requirements. Hemlock was the wood of choice because of its strength and durability. The design of the bridges, based on local Town's lattice truss, accommodated the weight of snow, wagons loaded with butter tubs, and logging vehicles.

The brothers started by positioning the main bearing beams across the stream onto a pier foundation on each end. Next the trusses were moved into position and the top beams tied. Finally the roof was secured. They were enclosed, to protect the massive beams from the weather.



Montgomery Historical Society  
P.O. Box 47 Montgomery, VT 05470  
prath@sigmail.com  
www.montgomeryhistoricalsociety.org

#### A Community Effort

Founded in 1973, the Society through the generosity and hard work of its members, bought and restored St. Bartholomew's, the former Episcopal Church. Built in 1855, its stained glass windows, original interior, and clock tower remain a community treasure.

Renamed Pratt Hall, the church now serves as a venue for concerts, speakers, and other community events. It also houses a growing collection of artifacts from Montgomery's past. We:

- preserve Pratt Hall, & historical artifacts, structures & memorabilia.
- provide a venue for local exhibits and for artists & artisans to share their talents;
- sponsor programs that assist in preserving town history & culture;
- award scholarships annually to Montgomery students.

Membership is welcome, as are donations of any kind. For more information please visit our web site or write the Board of Directors at either of the addresses (USPS or email) above. Tours are available by appointment.

"Montgomery Vermont: The History of a Town" by Sara Taylor and W.R. Branthover, is available from the Society. The Town Clerk's Office, Lantz & Automotive and from our web site.

*We are more than 200 strong...Join Us and Make History!!!*

## Montgomery's Covered Bridges 1863-1890

Montgomery is known as Vermont's Covered Bridge Capital. Our unique geography required many bridges, and as recently as the 1940s there were thirteen covered bridges within the Town's limits. Today there are six covered bridges within the Town's limits and one which straddles the town line with Enosburg, the most of any town in the country.



The "highway bridge" formerly at the intersection of Routes 118 & Rd 242.

Modern requirements for larger loads, better safety, and cheaper maintenance all contribute to the bridges' declining numbers. Still these beautiful structures serve us well and link us to our heritage. For many, they remind us of a time when life seemed slower and less complicated.

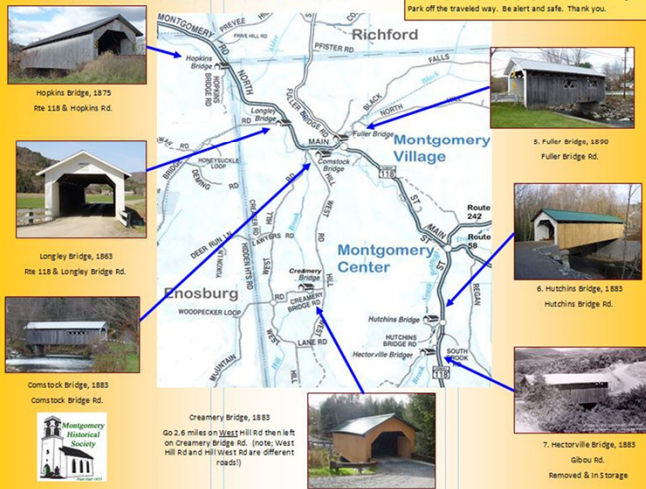
*The past is closer than you think...*



# A Covered Bridge pamphlet & map can be printed from our web site.

## MONTGOMERY'S COVERED BRIDGES

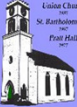
Please respect the private property around our covered bridges. Park off the traveled way. Be alert and safe. Thank you.






www.montgomeryhistoricalsociety.org

**Montgomery Historical Society**  
Montgomery, Vermont



Lisla Church  
St. Bartholomew's  
1801  
Pratt Hall  
1871



Covered Bridge Under Construction ca. 1887

Support  
Montgomery  
Historical Society.  
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**Hot News:**

- Concert by Woods Tea Company at Pratt Hall, Aug 22.
- West Wall Project Video now on YouTube
- Pratt Hall is available for tours by appointment.


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Pratt Hall	Montgomery History	Scholarship Info	Awards
Covered Bridges Trifold Info & Map	MHS YouTube Channel	History For Sale	TD Bank Affinity Program
Covered Bridges on Google Map	Other	Links	
VT Historical Society	League of Local Historical Societies	American Assn. State & Local Hist. Soc.	VT Book Of Days
Smithsonian	VT Div. for Historic Preservation	Preservation Trust of VT	Library of Congress

**This Day In History**

**"Son of Sam" Serial Killer Arrested (1977)**  
Between 1975 and 1977, New York City was terrorized by a serial killer later identified as David Berkowitz who called himself the "Son of Sam" in letters to police. After his arrest in August 1977, Berkowitz confessed to killing six people and wounding seven others in the course of eight shootings. Berkowitz later claimed that he was commanded to kill by a demon who possessed his neighbor's dog. Why did thousands of women in New York cut or dye their hair when the perpetrator was still at large? More... Discuss

Search Our Website

Write us at: [prathall@gmail.com](mailto:prathall@gmail.com)  
or  
P.O. Box 47  
Montgomery, VT 05470



Detail from Stained Glass Window

Links to covered bridges info, maps, & gps coordinates are at our Home Page

Any comment, corrections or additional information is welcome.

