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## SILK ROAD COVERED BRIDGE

Originally called the Locust Grove Bridge or the Robinson Bridge, it is named after past nearby residents. Built in 1840, presumably by Benjamin Sears, it is the oldest remaining covered bridge in Bennington County. It was restored in 1991 by Gilbert Newbury, and again after it sustained damage from Tropical Storm Irene in 2011, which damaged and destroyed many other Vermont bridges.

From parking areas north of the bridge, a small path leads down to the river bank. The stone foundation (abutments) of the bridge and the underside of the bridge bed can be viewed from the path. If a car passes while you are exploring under the bridge, you will hear the sounds of the vehicle passing over the wooden flooring.

Traditionally, the planks and floors of covered bridges were positioned crosswise to the road. This produced an iconic clacking noise as wagons and vehicles passed through. Now, floors are often replaced with lengthwise planks which make passage smoother on modern tires.

From inside the bridge, visitors can see Atlantis-style trusses that are present in all Bennington County covered bridges.



period, the bridge fell into disrepair. It was closed to traffic in 1986 due to weathering and structural instability, and a temporary metal bridge was built along its western side. The covered bridge was repaired and reopened in 2000.

Exploration at the site of the bridge is limited. You are free to explore the bridge itself, but much of the surrounding area is private property and access is restricted. A short walk down a forest path leads to a great view from the river on the bridge's western side. Take your first right when exploring this path to find a popular photography site.



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## THE HENRY COVERED BRIDGE

This has been an important river crossing for hundreds of years before a bridge was constructed. This site saw generals marching to victory at the Battle of Bennington, and was the location of the original standoff between what would become the Green Mountain boys, and a posse led by a sheriff to take back the land as the property of New York. The resistance that started here and at James Breckenridge's farm grew until Vermont declared its independence in 1777.

Originally named after L Nathan Henry, who bought the adjacent land, the first Henry Bridge in

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## PAPER MILL VILLAGE COVERED BRIDGE

Built by Charles F. Sears in 1889, this bridge is named after an adjacent paper mill, originally established in 1790. Also called the Bridge at Bennington Falls, at over 125 feet long, this is the longest covered bridge in Bennington county. It was repaired extensively in 1952.

The paper mill used the falls for power until around 1958, before closing in the 1990s. During this

Note: Explore bridges carefully and use appropriate caution concerning inattentive drivers, changing weather, uneven walkway conditions, and water hazards. Carry out all trash and respect private property laws.



this location was built in 1840 and stretched 117 feet. As the iron industry grew in the area, additional trusses were added in an attempt to strengthen the bridge for loads of iron ore. In reality, the additional supports only added weight, and were removed in 1943.

Repairs resulted in a complete overhaul of the bridge in 1989, with entirely new timbers. Miscommunication between state agencies led to a complete disassembly of the old bridge, so none of the original timbers remain. Instead of the traditional use of Vermont oak and spruce, the current bridge is built of southern pine.

The bridge is easily explored at road height, but has no path to the river at the bridge. Waters Park is located nearby, to the north east of the bridge. This affords a nice view of the bridge from the riverbank. Educational signage is located near the south west corner of the bridge and in the park.



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### CHISELVILLE COVERED BRIDGE

Historically called the Highbridge, due to its unusual height; or the Roaring Branch Bridge, after the waterway it spans, the current name comes from the chisel and tool factory that once operated at the base of this gorge.

The first town lattice-style covered bridge in this area was built after the original log stringer bridge proved unsafe. This replacement was closer to the river, and was destroyed in a flood in 1869.

In 1870, Daniel Oatman built his second replacement bridge high on the cliffs, 40 feet above the river – the highest bridge in the county – to avoid similar damage. His plan was successful, as the 117-foot-long bridge survived the catastrophic flood of 1927.

In 1971, two heavy trucks, crossing simultaneously, damaged the bridge. Steel girders and a concrete pier were added in 1973 to support the center, rendering the trusses essentially superfluous. Today,

the bridge floor is paved continuously into the road rather than utilizing a traditional wooden bed.

Park at the north end of the bridge near the state historic preservation plaque. Take the short path to into the woods, where three smaller paths to your right diverge toward the river. The first two are steep and require climbing skills. The third path affords a more gradual incline to the riverbank. All afford dramatic views of the bridge, pier and cliffs from below.



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### ARLINGTON GREEN COVERED BRIDGE

This 80 foot bridge, built in 1852, is also called the West Arlington Bridge or the Bridge at the Green. This is one of the most well-known and most photographed bridges in the area.

Located in a picturesque portion of the Batten Kill River, near Norman Rockwell's home and workplace-turned-bed and breakfast, the bridge has been properly maintained and is well loved by local residents.

Susceptible to strong winds in the area, the bridge was blown off its foundation in the 1850s, but it was so well-constructed that locals were able to use the bridge temporarily even while it was turned on its side. It was taken apart and reassembled on its original foundations and secured in place with iron rods. When the bridge was hit hard enough by a river-swept log to bow the bridge during Tropical Storm Irene in 2011, the extra supports originally added to help the bridge withstand the wind kept it from being knocked downstream. It was closed temporarily for repairs and reopened in 2012.

Spanning a local swimming hole (with rope swing) and a river popular for kayaking and other sports, the bridge is easily accessible from the water. A ramp leads down to a small beach at the southwest corner of the bridge, and a wide portion of the concrete abutment offers a dry place to sit under the bridge and listen to cars driving over the wood supports above. Norman would have approved!

Note: Explore bridges respectfully and use appropriate caution concerning inattentive drivers, changing weather, uneven/wet pathways, and water hazards. Carry out all trash and obey private property notices.

## PORTALS TO THE PAST EXHIBIT

### HISTORIC COVERED BRIDGES TOUR

**1**

#### SILK ROAD COVERED BRIDGE

*About 1 mile / 10 minutes*

Intersection of:  
Silk Rd and Bridge St

Nearby address:  
27 Bridge St  
Bennington VT 05201

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#### PAPER MILL VILLAGE COVERED BRIDGE

*About 2 miles / 10 minutes*

Intersection of:  
Murphy Rd and North Bennington  
Rd (VT Rt 67A)

Nearby address:  
1477 North Bennington Rd  
North Bennington VT 05257

**3**

#### THE HENRY COVERED BRIDGE

*About 3 miles / 10 minutes*

Nearby address:  
1338 Murphy Rd  
North Bennington VT 05257

**4**

#### CHISELVILLE COVERED BRIDGE

*About 20 miles / 25 minutes*

Nearby address:  
412 Sunderland Hill Rd  
Sunderland VT 05250

**5**

#### ARLINGTON GREEN COVERED BRIDGE

*About 25 miles / 30 minutes*

Nearby address:  
3587 River Rd  
Arlington VT 05250

