



# The Old Stone Wall

Volume XI, Number 2

State of New Hampshire, Department of Cultural Resources  
Division of Historical Resources

Summer 2003

## SHELBURNE'S MEADOW BRIDGE THREATENED

James L. Garvin

One of New Hampshire's most significant metal truss bridges is imperiled. The state-owned Meadow Bridge over the Androscoggin River in Shelburne, built in 1897, is New Hampshire's only intact multi-span pin-connected bridge. When New Hampshire's bridges were scored for historical and engineering significance fifteen years ago, Meadow Bridge received 30 points, a score equaled only by Portsmouth's Memorial Bridge, a vertical lift bridge built in 1922.

Meadow Bridge was bypassed in 1984. Now, one pier of the bridge is being undermined by streambed scour. Two of its four spans are beginning a slow collapse, threatening the new bridge downstream. The New Hampshire Department of Transportation wants to demolish Meadow Bridge this summer, or else get a commitment from the Town of Shelburne to pay 20% of the cost of its rehabilitation. At a meeting on June 4, 2003, DOT offered to pay 80% of the estimated \$1.4 million cost of rehabilitation if the town agreed to raise its \$280,000 share of project costs.

But Shelburne is a community of only about 380 people. Hildy Danforth, chair of Shelburne's Heritage Commission, has calculated that the share requested of the town would be equal to "a tax of \$710 for each man, woman, and child in town." Even if Shelburne could find partners to help the community raise 20% of rehabilitation costs, current



*Meadow Bridge, Shelburne, NH.  
(Photograph by James McConaha)*

DOT policy would require the town to assume ownership of the structure and bear full responsibility for its future maintenance.

A meeting in Shelburne on July 8, 2003, brought together a number of potential partners in saving Meadow Bridge, including DOT commissioner Carol Murray and DOT director of project development David J. Brillhart. Those present agreed to commit themselves to finding the funds necessary for preservation of the bridge. They asked DOT to devise a plan to stabilize the failing pier in the immediate future, and to develop detailed options and cost figures for full rehabilitation of the bridge. With

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### View from the Solarium

If we had a list of endangered historic structures in New Hampshire, what would surely go to the top of this list are New Hampshire's historic metal bridges. As wooden covered bridges were destroyed by fire, or flood, or simply age and use, metal bridges often replaced them. Some were simple, some elaborate, but all were engineering and architectural masterpieces.

Perhaps no metal bridge would be more deserving of a place on the most endangered list than the Meadow Bridge in Shelburne. This 106-year-old bridge is one of the two most historically significant metal truss bridges in New Hampshire. Only five high truss pin-connected Pratt bridge spans are left in New Hampshire three are on the Meadow Bridge. Only three pin-connected Pratt low or "pony" truss bridge spans are left, and one is on the Meadow Bridge.

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## NH Farm Family Wins 2003 Steward of the Land Award



*View of the Stuart Farm, Stratham, NH.  
(Courtesy photo)*

**John and Lorraine Merrill of Stratham, New Hampshire**, have received the American Farmland Trust's 2003 Steward of the Land Award, the largest nationwide award for land stewardship. The Merrills were chosen out of 117 nominations from 41 states to win the \$10,000 prize, which was presented to them for their lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship, public education, policy activism and farmland protection. Read all about it (and see a couple of fine photos of three generations of Merrills and their farm) at <http://www.farmland.org/steward/2003steward.htm>.

The American Farmland Trust story doesn't mention it, but the Merrills' **Stuart Farm** has also been determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and Lorraine is an eloquent and persuasive advocate both for conservation and progressive agriculture, and also for historic preservation, at the local, state, and national levels. Many of our readers will also recognize Lorraine as the author of several NH Office of State Planning technical bulletins, including *Preserving Rural Character: The Agricultural Connection*, and OSP's new CD, *Achieving Smart Growth in New Hampshire*.

Congratulations, thanks, and best wishes to Lorraine and her family.

## New FEMA historic preservation web site

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has a new web site for its environmental, historic preservation, and cultural resources programs. Targeted to local and tribal governments to help them apply for federal disaster relief assistance, it is also a valuable guide to online historic preservation information for everyone else. Try it out at <http://www.fema.gov/ehp>. It can also be accessed from the DHR pages: go to <http://webster.state.nh.us/nhdhr/106helpful.html>, then to "US Department of Homeland Security..." (<http://www.fema.gov/ehp/toolkit.shtm#env2>).

## PBS series looking for history mysteries

"**History Detectives**" is a new PBS series with a team of historians and antiquities experts that investigates questions about recently discovered artifacts about which little is known, historic buildings whose past is puzzling, and family heirlooms with an unknown or partially known history. The show, which began broadcasting this summer, is intended to demonstrate the process of historical research and the links between local and national history. If you have an object or building you think fits this description please contact Fred Grinstein ([fredg@liontv.org](mailto:fredg@liontv.org)) or Ray Segal ([rays@liontv.org](mailto:rays@liontv.org)) at Lion Television (212-206-8633).

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## Commissioner's Corner

The New Hampshire Department of Cultural Resources is honored to bring an extraordinary exhibit to the State Library for the citizens of New Hampshire.

**Troubled Images: Posters and Images of the Northern Ireland Conflict** is currently on loan from the Linen Hall Library in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The Linen Hall Library is the repository for the Northern Ireland Political Collection, which contains over a quarter of a million items related to the activities of all parties to the thirty-year conflict and the ongoing peace process. The seventy posters on view represent a wide range of opinions on major events and individuals. The **Troubled Images** exhibit will be on display from July 18 to August 21, Mondays through Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. It has been awarded the prestigious Christopher Ewart-Biggs Literary Prize for 2003.

The Department of Cultural Resources exhibits in the Map Gallery showcase work by its Divisions of Libraries, Arts, and Historical Resources. The current show was preceded by **Unifying A Nation: World War II Posters from the New Hampshire State Library and Artists at Work, 1935-1942: New Hampshire Remembered**, featuring works by Nathaniel Burwash and Herbert Waters.

A future exhibit, **The Granite State House: The Inside Story**, is being prepared by the Division of Historical Resources. Long proclaimed "the oldest state house in the nation, in which the legislature still occupies its original chambers," the New Hampshire State House embodies many other distinctions. Each of its three major building campaigns introduced technological and artistic innovations and exemplified the finest architectural expression of the time.

The Department of Cultural Resources will continue to bring outstanding exhibits to the NH State Library. As a part of the State House complex, we see both an opportunity and a responsibility to show off our wonderful building and these important collections to the citizens of New Hampshire and to our visitors. We hope to touch many lives and to educate residents and visitors about the treasures that the department holds in trust for the people of New Hampshire.

Van McLeod  
Commissioner

## Curator's Report

*The Joint Legislative Historical Committee has voted to proceed with permanent labels for State House portraits.* Final fact checking is underway, and Correctional Industries will produce the labels on matte finish brass stock. The engraving will take approximately one year to complete. In the interim, State House portraits will be re-hung at a uniform height in order to mount labels below the bottom right edge of each portrait. Portraits too large for re-hanging will have their labels mounted beside their bottom right edge. The label positions and type face size will meet ADA requirements.

*A New Hampshire Civil War Memorials Commission has been formed pursuant to New Hampshire RSA 21-K:18, with State Rep. Robert Letourneau of Derry as Chairman.* The first project of the Commission is to raise funds for a monument to New Hampshire men and women who were a part of the Battle of Antietam, which took place in Maryland on September 16-17, 1862. The Commission feels the monument should memorialize all those who participated in the battle, whether as troops, medical corpsmen, battlefield nurses, or women volunteers. Several sculptors who responded to the initial Request for Proposals have been invited to produce scale models for the Commission's review. Fundraising will begin soon, so that the monument can be in place at Antietam National Battlefield by September 16-17, 2012.

*Persons desiring to make tax-deductible contributions to the NH Civil War Memorials Commission can do so by writing the Commission, c/o Hon. Robert Letourneau, Legislative Office Building Room 201, Concord, NH 03301.*

Russell Bastedo  
State Curator

## Recent State Listings to the National Register of Historic Places



*Abbie Greenleaf Library, Franconia NH. Listed June 13, 2003. (Photograph by Christine Fonda)*

**The Abbie Greenleaf Library** was built in 1912 as a gift to the town of Franconia by **Charles H. Greenleaf** and named in honor of his wife. Mr. Greenleaf was the builder and owner of the Profile House, one of New Hampshire's late 19<sup>th</sup> century grand hotels. He had a strong interest in the welfare of the town and wanted to build a library to enhance the attractiveness of the area and be of value to its citizens. Prior to the dedication of the Abbie Greenleaf Library, the town's library (established in 1880 with a hundred books and added to over the years) was housed in the general store and later in the village school.

The Abbie Greenleaf Library is an exquisite example of **Jacobethan Revival**, a late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural style very rare in New Hampshire. The style mixes late Medieval and Renaissance influences, taking its inspiration from English designs of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods (1558-1625). **William H. McLean** of the Boston firm of McLean and Wright was the building's architect. He and his firm were noted designers of public buildings including numerous libraries in New England. In New Hampshire these included libraries in Alstead, Franklin, Greenfield, Lancaster, Lebanon, and Wilton, as well as Franconia. In 1971 an addition designed by **Carter and Woodruff** of Nashua was constructed to the rear of the 1912 library to provide more space and facilities.

Christine E. Fonda  
National Register Coordinator

## VIEW FROM THE SOLARIUM

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In the late 1980's, all of New Hampshire's historic bridges were evaluated. A complicated ranking system was developed and all bridges were ranked, and those with a score of 16 were deemed eligible for the National Register. Only two bridges achieved a score of 30: the Memorial Bridge in Portsmouth and the Meadow Bridge in Shelburne.

***This is a bridge worthy of preservation.***

The Department of Transportation's current approach is to offer each town with an historic bridge 80% of the rehabilitation costs. The town would provide 20% of the costs and then assume both ownership and responsibility for the bridge, in perpetuity.

***Many historic bridges, and certainly one of the two most significant, should be the responsibility of more than one small town. These are historic treasures that not only belong to all the people of New Hampshire, but should be preserved and cared for by all the people of New Hampshire.***

While the towns should be partners maintaining surveillance, carrying out low level maintenance, and perhaps meeting some of the rehabilitation costs the State needs to retain title and responsibility for its preserved bridges. If it does not, there is little chance of saving the Meadow Bridge and others worthy of preservation.

James McConaha  
Director, Division of Historical Resources  
NH State Historic Preservation Officer

## SHELBURNE'S MEADOW BRIDGE THREATENED

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those figures in hand, the committee pledged to begin fundraising in earnest.



*Meadow Bridge, in its enticing natural setting; note the tipping pier between the two trusses.  
(Photograph by James McConaha)*

Shelburne's determination to save its well-loved bridge reflects the significance of the span. Meadow Bridge was a remarkable structure even when it was new. The Groton Bridge Company of New York constructed the bridge at a cost of \$10,000 in 1897. At that time, New Hampshire had only about ten multiple-span metal bridges, most of them across the Connecticut River. At 504 feet, Meadow Bridge surpassed all but one of these structures in total length.

The structure is composed of three high Pratt truss spans and one low Pratt truss span. All its truss members are connected by metal "pins"—large, threaded bolts—rather than by riveted gusset plates. Today, only ten pin-connected bridges survive in New Hampshire, several of them in abandoned and ruinous condition. Meadow Bridge is the sole intact example among New Hampshire's few surviving multi-span pin-connected bridges.

## A Short Story about Storm Drainage and a Stone Wall

U.S. Route 3 (Prospect Street) enters downtown Lancaster, New Hampshire through a hillside Victorian neighborhood. To control roadside erosion and stormwater, NH DOT District One installed a closed (underground) drainage system and rehabilitated the shoulders, curbs and sidewalks. Assistant District Engineer Richard Morneau reports that DOT needed a slope easement to work along one of the properties, an old field. There was a line of stones, a remnant of former field clearing, along the property line.



*The original line of stones along Prospect Street.  
(Photograph by Richard Morneau)*

At the property owner's request, DOT crew members used the stones to build a stone wall. The successful result of their special skills demonstrated how civic enhancements could be incorporated into what would otherwise have been a routine DOT project. Congratulations, District One!



*The stone wall constructed by the DOT District One crew.  
(Photograph by Linda Ray Wilson)*

State of New Hampshire • Department of Cultural Resources • Division of Historical Resources

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