

Covered bridges are beautiful historic bridges that once dotted the American landscape. Although covered bridges weren't invented in the United States, Americans began building them in the early 19th century.

The concept of covering a bridge for protection originated in ancient China around 2,000 years ago, with the first known examples being made of wood. Covered bridges became more prevalent in medieval Europe, with the Kapellbrücke in Switzerland, built in 1333, being one of the oldest surviving examples.

The primary purpose of the cover was to shield the wooden trusses and decks from snow and rain, preventing rot and decay and significantly extending the bridge's lifespan. The cover also provided shelter for weary travelers, kept horses from being spooked by the water below, and served as a meeting place for community events.

Covered bridges became widespread in the United States during the 19th century, a period when wood was the primary building material. By the 1870s, there were more than 10,000 covered bridges in America, most of which are built between 1825 and 1875.

American builders developed sophisticated truss designs, such as the arch truss patented by Theodore Burr and the lattice design by Ithiel Town, that improved structural integrity and load-bearing capacity.

By the early 1900s, the building of covered bridges decreased drastically due to the invention of steel, iron and concrete which were used to build bigger, wider and stronger bridges. To make way for these modern bridges, many covered bridges are demolished, moved to another location or abandoned.

The first covered bridge in America is built by Timothy Palmer when he put a roof on the new Schuylkill Permanent Bridge in Philadelphia. The longest covered bridge in history is built across the Susquehanna River in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and burned in 1872.

Hyde Hall Bridge is built in Cooperstown, New York. The bridge still exists today and is considered the oldest covered bridge in America, built in 1825.

The transition to iron and steel for bridge construction in the mid-19th century reduced the need for covered bridges, as metal structures didn't require protection from the weather.

While modern traffic loads and bridge designs made many covered bridges obsolete, they are now cherished as historical landmarks and romantic symbols of the past, with many preserved for their cultural significance.

## **RK Mass-2 Covered Bridge Challenge Ride**



Join in for the search for Covered Bridges during your journeys during the riding season. All riders can participate in the search for Covered Bridges around New England (and beyond) and earn a Red Knights "Searching for Covered Bridges" patch.

Out riding by yourself? Riding with a few buddies or with a group? See a Covered Bridge? Stop and get a picture with you and/or your bike with the bridge and document the when and where on the official Challenge Ride application..

Over the course of the riding season you must visit and document six (6) Covered Bridges to receive the patch.



More than 1,000 covered bridges once populated the New England States. There are now close to 200 with Vermont boasting the most with over 100 covered bridges still standing. While over 15,000 covered bridges were constructed throughout the United States, it is estimated that roughly 800 still exist.

Here are some New England Covered Bridges (not a comprehensive list):

Albany Bridge, Albany, NH - Allen Hollis Bridge, Woodstock, NH - AM Foster, Cabot, VT - Arthur A. Smith Covered Bridge, Colrain, MA - Ashuelot Bridge, Ashuelot, NH - Babb's Bridge, South Windham, ME - Bennett Bridge, Lincoln Plantation, ME - Bests, West Windsor, VT - Bissell Bridge, Charlemont, MA - Black River, Irasburg, VT - Blow-Me-Down Bridge, Cornish, NH - Bog Bridge, Andover, NH - Bowers, West Windsor, VT - Bull's Bridge, Kent, CT - Burkeville Carlton Bridge, Swanzey, NH—Comstock's Bridge, East Hampton, CT - Contoocook Railroad Bridge, Contoocook, NH - Cooley, Pittsford, VT - Coombs Bridge, Winchester, NH - Creamery, Brattleboro, VT - Dalton Bridge, Warner, NH - de Farm, Ferrisburgh, VT - Depot, Pittsford, VT - Gold Mine Bridge, Norwich, CT - Gorham, Pittsford, VT - Green River, Guilford, VT - Hemlock Bridge, Fryeburg, ME - Henry, Bennington, VT - Hitchcock-Cormier, Rockingham, VT - Huckleberry Hill Bridge, Avon, CT - Kidder Hill, Grafton, VT - Lord's Creek, Irasburg, VT - Montgomery, Waterville, VT - Old Covered Bridge, Sheffield, MA - Paper Mill, Bennington, VT - Quinebaug River Bridge, Sturbridge, MA - Red, Morristown, VT - Sawyers Crossing Bridge, Swanzey, NH - Sunday River Bridge, Newry, ME - Swamp Meadow Bridge, Foster, RI—Swift River Bridge, Conway, NH - Trout Brook Bridge, Alna, ME - Union Street, Woodstock, VT - Upper Falls, Weathersfield, VT - West Cornwall Covered Bridge, West Cornwall, CT - West Dummerston, West Dummerston, VT - West Swanzey Bridge, Swanzey, NH - Williamsville, Newfane, VT - Windsor-Cornish, Windsor, VT - Yankee Barn Bridge, Grantham, NH

## Red Knights Massachusetts Chapter 2 Covered Bridge Challenge Ride

Submit this application (with \$10 application fee for solo rider or \$15 for rider and pillion) with pictures of you and/or your bike at six (6) different Covered Bridges visited during the riding season and receive a "Searching for Covered Bridges" patch (While supplies last).



Rider: \_\_\_\_\_ Pillion: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Location of Covered Bridge	Date of Visit
(1) _____	_____
(2) _____	_____
(3) _____	_____
(4) _____	_____
(5) _____	_____
(6) _____	_____

*(Application fee is \$10 for solo rider, or \$15 for Rider and Pillion)*

Mail completed application **AND** pictures of you and/or your bike at each of the Covered Bridges to: Robert Laford c/o RK Mass-2 | PO Box 221 | Petersham, MA 01366  
treasurer@rk-mass2.org

Covered bridges can be visited *anywhere* not just in Massachusetts or New England.  
(If a group of riders are together, only one bike need be in the photo)