

Professional Women's Club of Covington and the Covington Chamber of Commerce, it was restored and preserved as part of Alleghany County's history.

It can be reached from I-64 by taking exit 10 to Route 60 and traveling one-half mile east or by taking Route 60 west from Covington.



4. Humpback Bridge, Virginia's oldest standing covered bridge, is part of a wayside on Route 60.



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This material, with color photographs of the bridges, is available at www.VDOT.Virginia.gov

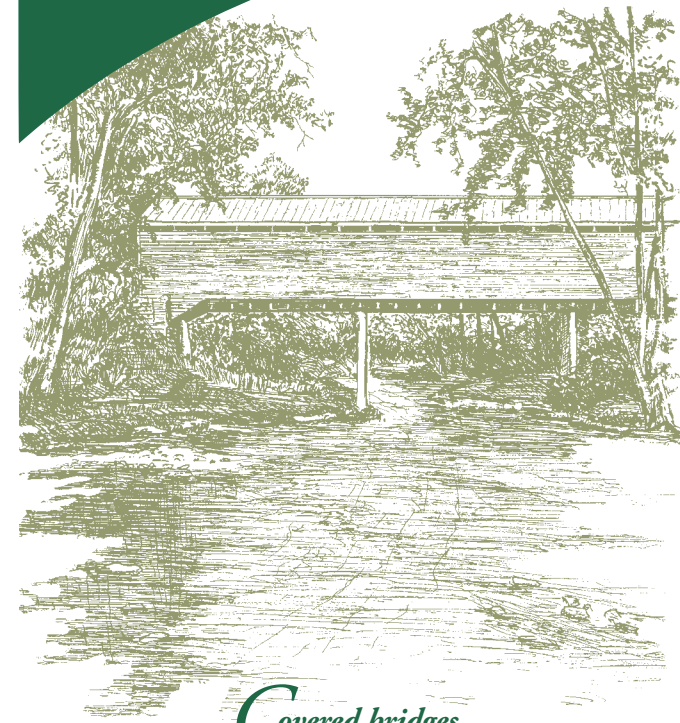
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5 In Giles County north of Route 460 are two circa 1916, modified Howe trusses built over Sinking Creek. **Sinking Creek (Clover Hollow) Bridge**, a 70-foot span maintained by Giles County, was left in place for the property owner when a new bridge was built in 1949. It is located just off Route 601 between Route 42 and Route 700. A 55-foot span, known as **Link's Farm (Bradley) Bridge**, stands on private property nearby.

Also in Giles County is the **C.K. Reynolds Covered Bridge**, which remains on private property. The **Biedler Farm Bridge** in Rockingham County also remains on private property.



5. The Sinking Creek Bridge, also known as Clover Hollow Bridge, stands near its successor in Giles County.



Covered bridges.
In memory or imagination, they conjure up sights and sounds of days gone by. One can almost see a barefoot youth with a fishing pole or hear the hollow sound of horses' hooves - the staccato pace of a proud trotter ahead of a polished buggy - or the slow methodical beat of a draft team pulling a farm wagon. These bridges offered welcome shade from the summer sun and a place of shelter during a sudden shower.



In Virginia, covered bridges began to dot the countryside nearly two centuries ago. Spanning rivers and streams, their number grew to the hundreds. Eventually though, they gave way to their vulnerability to flood and fire, and to the technology that replaced the wooden peg with the metal bolt and the broad timbers with narrow steel. By 1900, the overhead steel truss bridge had become the engineers' design of choice.

Relatively few covered bridges survived into the early years of the 20th century. Most of them reflected the evolution in design of three pioneers in the annals of bridge construction: Theodore Burr, who patented the Burr arch bridge in 1817; Ithiel Town, who patented the Town lattice design in 1835; and William Howe, who in 1840 patented a design that combined iron uprights with wooden supports.

Today in Virginia, only eight covered bridges built before the mid-1920s are known to still stand. Five have been preserved as landmarks and three are on private property.

You are invited to visit these picturesque structures that span time as well as water and wonder what stories they might tell, if only they could talk. But covered bridges never tell, which made them such a trusted refuge.

(The names of covered bridges on public property appear in **bold italics**. Those in *italics* are on private property, so please do not trespass on those lands.)

1 One of the best-known covered bridges is the 204-foot single-span Burr arch truss known as **Meem's Bottom** in Shenandoah County. Here it is possible to step back into the past, while less than a half-mile away the hum of modern-day traffic can be heard on I-81.



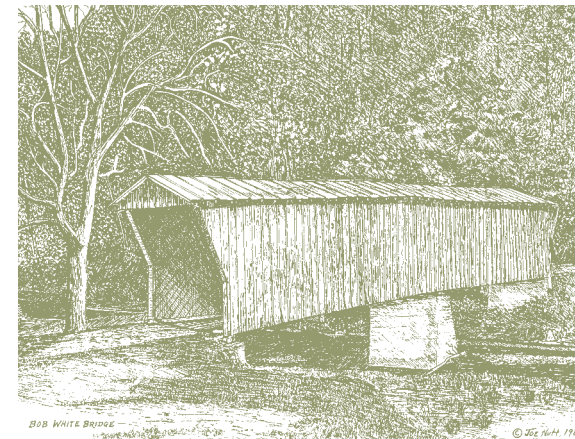
1. Meem's Bottom Bridge, virtually destroyed by Halloween arsonists, was carefully reconstructed using some of its surviving timbers.

The site takes its name from the Meem family that owned the Strathmore estate west of the Shenandoah River. This long span over the North Fork of the river carried traffic for more than 80 years before being burned by vandals on Halloween 1976. After salvaging the original timbers, the bridge was reconstructed and eventually undergirded with steel beams and concrete piers.

Succeeding at least two other bridges, the Meem's Bottom Bridge was built in 1894 from materials cut and quarried nearby for the massive arch supports and stone abutments, which extended 10 feet below the riverbed. Records show that one bridge was burned in 1862 as Stonewall Jackson went up the valley ahead of Union General John C. Fremont, prior to the battles of Harrisonburg, Cross Keys and Port Republic. Another was washed away in a flood in 1870.

The bridge is reached easily from I-81 at exit 269 between New Market and Mount Jackson, following Route 730 from the interchange four-tenths of a mile to Route 11, then north on Route 11 nine-tenths of a mile to Route 720 and west a short distance to the river. It also can be reached on Route 11 four miles north of New Market and about two miles south of Mount Jackson.

2 Patrick County boasts two covered bridges. **The Bob White Bridge** is an 80-foot truss over the Smith River near Route 8 south of Woolwine. Built in 1921, it served principally as a connection between Route 8 and a church on the south side of the river. Although it has been replaced with a modern bridge, visitors can still walk up to the Bob White Bridge, which was retained for its landmark value. It can be reached from Woolwine by traveling 1.5 miles south on Route 8, east one mile on Route 618 to Route 869, then south one-tenth of a mile.



2. Bob White Bridge served traffic for more than a half-century.

3 **Jack's Creek Bridge** also crosses the Smith River in Patrick County on Route 615 just west of Route 8 about two miles south of Woolwine. The 48-foot span, built in 1914, has been replaced by a modern bridge, too, but is being retained in the county. It can be seen from

Route 8 at its intersection with Route 615, or it can be reached by turning west two-tenths of a mile on Route 615.



3. Jack's Creek Bridge, a silent reminder of the past, stands near Route 8 in Patrick County.

4 In terms of seniority, the venerable **Humpback Bridge** lays claim to being the oldest of Virginia's remaining covered bridges. Located in Alleghany County, just west of Covington, it was built in 1857. It was part of the James River & Kanawha Turnpike (JR&KT), and it succeeds three other bridges at the site. It stretches over Dunlap Creek, which is a tributary of the Jackson River that joins the Cowpasture River near Iron Gate to form the James River. The first structure was built in the 1820s and was washed away by a flood on May 12, 1837. The second fell victim to the flood of July 13, 1842 and the third, as the annual report of the JR&KT company put it, "gave way" in 1856.

The 100-foot-long, single-span structure is four feet higher at its center than it is at either end, thus the name, "Humpback." Traffic across the bridge ceased in 1929 when it was replaced with a "modern" steel truss bridge. It stood derelict (and was even used by a nearby farmer to store hay) until 1954. That year, thanks to the fund-raising efforts of the Business and