

# The Bridge Road



The St. J and LC was known as the Bridge Route due to the six covered railroad bridges on its route. (The route map identifies locations and facts about each bridge. *The sixth bridge, located in Wolcott, was replaced in 1917 by Baltimore steel through truss, which remains in use.*) The route traversed farmland, small towns, picturesque stations, and at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century supported a tourist industry. However, for most of its life, local passenger and freight sustained the railroad.

Covered bridges were selected for many crossings due to the lower cost of construction compared to iron. By 1968, the railroad was struggling to keep up with the roadway truck competition. The light rails and covered bridges could not support the increased weight of the engines and freight. In a gamble to make the line profitable its multiple covered bridges were replaced by steel spans to increase the carrying capacity of the line. Only two of the lines covered bridges were spared. The timber deck structure of the Fisher Covered Bridge was removed and replaced with a steel girder and in Swanton, traffic was rerouted to the Central Vermont Railroad lines, sparing the three-span covered bridge.



Swanton Covered Bridge  
3 span, 369' long  
Built 1898, burned 1987



Cambridge Junction, Br 68  
113' span  
Built 1899, replaced 1967



Peck Bridge, Wolcott  
120' Town Lattice Truss  
Built 1906, replaced 1967



Fisher Bridge, Wolcott  
103' span  
Built 1908



Hardwick Covered Bridge  
98' double Town Lattice Truss  
built 1909, burned 1959

## Overview of the LVRT History

The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail occupies the 96-mile railroad corridor from St. Johnsbury to Swanton that began as a segment of the Portland and Ogdensburg Railroad-Vermont Division, which was constructed between 1869 and 1875. In 1916, the line, under new management was renamed the St. Johnsbury and Lake Champlain Railroad (SJ & LCRR); it was subsequently named the St. Johnsbury and Lamoille County Railroad (St. J & L.C.). Passenger service was discontinued in 1956. Its freight included asbestos, talc, limestone, gravel, grain, and feed. When it ceased full operation in 1972, it was known as the LCRR. In 1973, the State of Vermont purchased the railroad and renamed it the Lamoille County Railroad. The LCRR ceased operation in 1994. In 2002, the State of Vermont began converting the LCRR to the LVRT.



## Fisher Covered Bridge

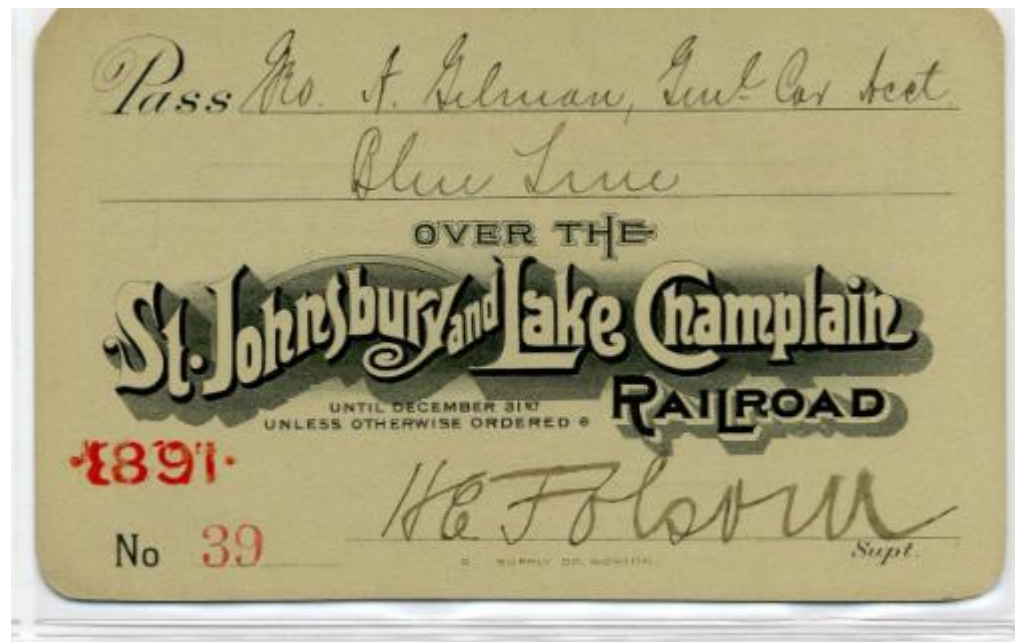
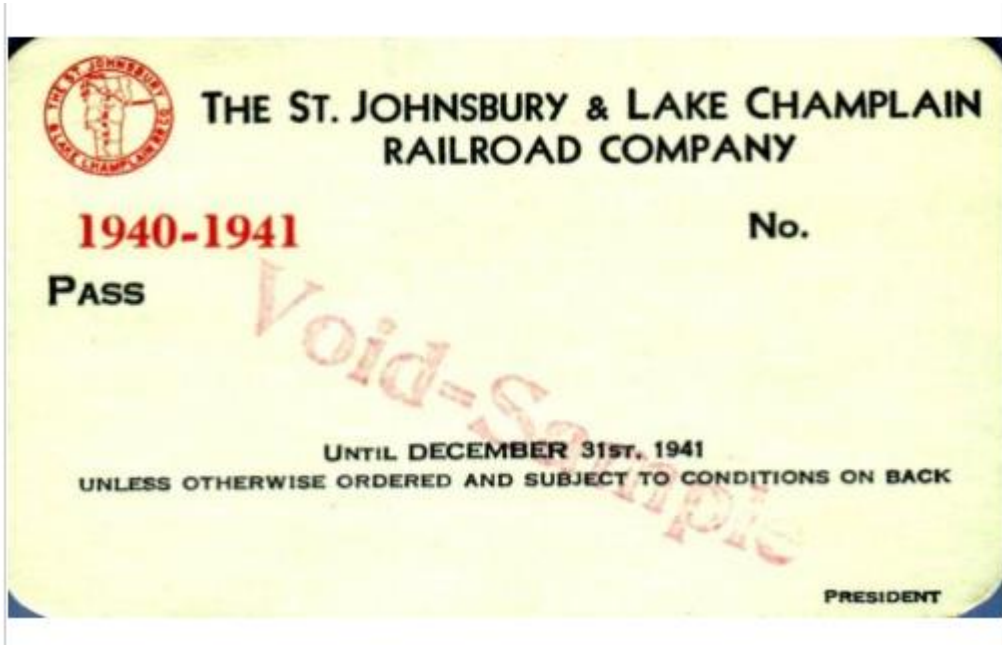
The 103-foot bridge was built by the Pratt Construction Company, founded by Willis T. Pratt, the inventor of the truss used in the Lincoln Bridge in Woodstock. The designers adapted the Town Lattice truss for the railroad and renamed it the Town-Pratt truss. This adaptation increased the lumber dimensions and doubled the web on each side.

Also known as the Chubb Bridge, a name derived from the Chubb family who historically lived nearby, the name Fisher Bridge comes from Christopher Fisher, whose farm was adjacent to the bridge at the time of its construction.

The Fisher Covered Bridge is one of two remaining railroad covered bridges in Vermont (the second is in Shoreham), and it was the last operational commercial railroad covered bridge in the United States, until the LVRR closure in 1994. Today it is one of only eight remaining railroad covered bridges in the USA. There are five in New Hampshire and one in Oregon.







Fisher Bridge, ca. 1952