

**Vermont State Historic Preservation Office (VT SHPO)
Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP)**

End-of-Year Success Stories

Federal Fiscal Year 2024

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(October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024)

- 1. Preservation Tax Incentives/Review and Compliance: *Emerson DeWitt Warehouse, 47 Flat Street, Brattleboro***
- 2. Review and Compliance: *Ely Mine, Vershire***
- 3. Review and Compliance/Easement: *West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge, Townshend***

**1. Preservation Tax Incentives/Review and Compliance
*Emerson DeWitt Warehouse, 47 Flat Street, Brattleboro***

Vermont has a small but impactful Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit (RITC) program that supports a wide range of projects from multi-million-dollar housing re-developments to small-scale commercial rehabilitation efforts. Annually, the program oversees completion and certification of roughly a dozen projects, with more than half of those projects involving affordable housing. Vermont's many active non-profit housing developers typically couple the RITC program with additional funding streams, including Housing Tax credits, Community Development Block Grants through HUD, and other federal funding through lead abatement, and energy efficiency. The challenge of meeting the requirements of these varied funding sources, particularly those related to historic preservation and energy efficiency requirements, was highlighted by the successful adaptive use of the Emerson DeWitt Warehouse at 47 Flat Street in Brattleboro.

This four-story, brick warehouse was built c. 1900 as the Emerson & Son Furniture Storehouse. By 1906, the Brattleboro City Directory and Sanborn maps identified it as the DeWitt Grocery Warehouse, a use it retained through the 1950s. By the late 1970s the first floor of the building had been converted to use as a retail store for Sanel Auto Parts with continued upper-floor warehouse space. This use continued until 2011. By 2020, the building had come full circle and was providing overflow storage for Emerson & Sons Furniture. However, deferred maintenance and limited use meant the building had fallen into disrepair and the local non-profit housing developer eyed the potential to provide much-needed downtown apartments.

A contributing building in Brattleboro's Downtown National Register Historic District, the Emerson DeWitt Warehouse has a square plan, with flat roof, brick load-bearing masonry construction with heavy timber structural frame. Detailing is provided by brick corbeling at the cornice and the large multi-paned wood windows in segmentally arched openings with stone sills. The building was electrified and an elevator installed c. 1906. A fourth story was added c. 1920 and the front of the second floor altered to provide stylish offices. The first floor was adapted for retail use in the 1970s, resulting in the replacement of four arched windows on the façade with plate glass display windows. Yet because it has always been largely used for its intended use, the building retained a remarkable amount of historic integrity in design, workmanship, materials, and feeling.

Initial redevelopment plans called for the rehabilitation of the building into apartments on the upper floors with a co-working space on the ground floor. However, the project hit a snag when rising construction costs brought on by the pandemic caused the affordable housing developers to change course. An amendment proposed the addition of a fifth story to the building to increase the number of housing units, as well furring out interior walls 7¾" to insulate the exposed brick walls and a roof-topped solar array to meet energy

efficiency targets set by one of the project funders. Vermont SHPO staff worked with the project team and NPS to bring the project into alignment with the Secretary Standards. Ultimately, the fifth-story addition was removed from the project plans in favor of a new stair tower addition on the rear elevation of the building that provided a small amount of additional square footage for housing (a total of 15 units). The rooftop solar installation was approved after sightline studies concluded that it would be minimally visible from neighboring public streets, and the insulation strategy was refined to reduce its impact on the interior character of the building. Although the exposed brick walls were ultimately insulated, existing exposed ceilings were retained to maintain the “warehouse” character in the apartment units. Other important historic elements were also restored and preserved, including the exterior masonry, the historic windows on the building’s south and east elevations, and the hoist-way doors on the east elevation. The apartments were occupied by the end of 2023 with Part 3 certification finalized in June of 2024.

Meets State Plan Goal 1: Advocate for Historic Preservation

Objective: II. Educate the public that historic preservation is culturally, financially, and environmentally beneficial and worthwhile.

Actions:

- 1) Provide information about energy efficient features inherent to historic properties and current guidance on how to improve energy efficiency while still maintaining the historic integrity of the resource.
- 3) Foster Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit (RITC) and State Downtown & Village Tax Credit programs.
- 4) Promote successful historic preservation projects to influence perceptions about historic preservation.

Meets State Plan Goal 4: Cultivate Pride of Place and Stewardship

Objective: II. Encourage responsible stewardship of archaeological and historic resources.

Actions:

- 1) Demonstrate best preservation practices in the care and maintenance of historic resources and showcase application of *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.



Figure 1: Dewitt Grocery, c. 1906



Figure 2: Emerson Dewitt Warehouse, c. 1981



Figure 3: Emerson DeWitt Warehouse, 2024

2. Review and Compliance

Ely Mine, Vershire

The Ely Mine in Vershire is one of three copper mines that comprise the “Vermont Copper Belt” or Orange County mining district. The Elizabeth Mine in Strafford and the Pike Hill Mine in Corinth constitute the other two. In 1808, iron sulfide mining began at Elizabeth Mine for the purpose of making copperas or green vitriol. It was used as a wood preservative, black felt dye, and farm animal delouser. This early mining and processing endeavor would set the stage for later copper mining from the same types of ores in the Vermont Copper Belt.

Until the 1840s, copper mining in the United States was limited by the bedrock in most of the settled areas of the country, which did not have the type of ore deposits conducive to easy reduction into pure copper. There was also a lack of technology, mining expertise, and transportation infrastructure. By the 1840s, however, favorable tariffs, expanding populations, mining innovations, and new immigrants with knowledge of metal mining made it feasible to profitably extract copper from the Copper Belt deposits. Understanding this, investors formally opened the Ely Mine in 1854.

For a time, the Elizabeth, Ely and Pike Hill mines cumulatively represented one of the largest producers the copper in the United States. Approximately 150,000,000 lbs of copper were ultimately extracted from the three mines while they were in operation, with approximately 40,000,000 pounds coming from Ely. The mine and associated village had well over 100 buildings and a population of approximately 1,200 people at its peak in the late 1870s. In addition to mine buildings and worker housing, there was a school, churches, and other ancillary businesses. The most notable building at the site was the copper smelter, which was constructed in 1867. Additions and expansions to the building resulted in it ultimately being over 700 feet in length. At the time, it was said to be one of the largest buildings in Vermont. Later, a stone flue extending over a quarter mile up the hillside was built to provide draft for the ore roasting furnaces, representing an enormous leverage of labor. It is a unique industrial structure among mines in New England.

Although during boom times mine worker wages were quite high, life was hard for the miners and their families. The presence of an enormous ore roasting operation on site meant that the valley was continually bathed in sulfurous fumes. Over time, all of the vegetation within a mile of the mine died. A newspaper reporter at the time wrote that:

"it is an ill-built, straggling little place, having practically but one street, and that street steep and crooked. The houses - few of which are at all attractive - are set down anywhere, in line, out of line, and the village has a woefully shabby look.... The country around the village is...completely destitute of vegetation and not a particle of color relieves its horrid blackness.... For some distance around all the vegetable growth is sparse and stunted. And pervading everything is a most beastly odor from the roasting beds, caused by noxious gases evolved from the ore by heat.... Altogether, the spot is the most utterly God forsaken in the whole world."

Moreover, just as there were boom times when the price of copper was quite high, there were also bust cycles. A series of ill-conceived and expensive initiatives by Ely Ely-Goddard, the Gilded Age grandson of the mine founder, followed by a precipitous drop in the price of copper resulted in many miners being fired and others not being paid for several months in 1883. The miners eventually revolted, resulting in what has been named the “Ely War.” The revolt lasted three days but was ultimately quelled by the local militia without violence. Although the mine remained open for some time after, the revolt presaged the rapid decline of the Ely Mine and the other mines in the Vermont Copper Belt, and they were ultimately shuttered.

The Ely mine was briefly reopened by George Westinghouse in 1900 principally for the purpose of copper processing experimentation. It shut down again in 1905 and most of the buildings were sold or demolished. The Ely Mine operated for the final time during World War I when copper shortages and the possibility of U.S. government contracts enticed a New York City company to set up a flotation mill at the mine solely for the purpose of extracting copper from the accumulated waste rock. When World War I ended and the price of copper fell, the mine closed for the last time.

Archaeology

After the final closure of the Ely Mine, trees slowly reclaimed the village area, while many of the mine archaeological remnants remained exposed, surrounded by an enormous amount of mine waste. The mine waste rock soon began to leach acids and heavy metals into the surrounding waterways, which impaired them to a significant extent. Because of this, the Ely Mine was eventually designated a superfund site by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Archaeologists conducted initial investigations of the mine in 2001 at the behest of the EPA. Following initial archaeological investigations, it was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 2002 for its significance in the history of the Vermont and United States copper industries.

In the intervening years, the EPA made plans for the remediation of the mine. Due to logistical and timing constraints at the Federal level, the EPA suggested that the funds for the archaeology data recovery be transferred to the State in the form of a grant. This would greatly expedite the archaeological data recovery process but would place the contracting and oversight in State hands. The Vermont State Historic Preservation Office worked closely with colleagues at the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VT DEC) to understand the site remediation plans and their impact to archaeological resources, design a data recovery plan, draft an RFP, and let the contract. In 2023/2024, archaeologists carried out archaeological data recovery in significant areas of the former mine site that will be destroyed during remediation under the supervision of Jess Robinson, State Archaeologist. In total 351.5 square meters of excavation were carried out at eight subsites across the former mine and village site areas and other areas were carefully documented using ground and aerial based photography and photogrammetry. A total of 25,639 artifacts were recovered and are currently being cataloged and analyzed at the Vermont Archaeology Heritage Center.

Although there is good documentation about the productivity of the mine and its copper output over time, there is limited detailed documentation about the industrial processes and equipment adopted or developed there. Similarly, there is very little recorded about the daily lives of the miners and their families. The archaeological investigations at Ely focused on learning more about these aspects of the mine. The final reports have not yet been completed, but preliminary results show the interesting ways that the miner's enriched their lives outside the mine, including the recovery of costume jewelry, religious iconography, dolls, gaming pieces and a variety of ceramic wares and food remains. Careful mapping and exaction of the industrial sites, meanwhile, revealed details about the extraction and enriching processes, what machines were used and how they were arrayed across the site, and how waste was deposited through time. The final technical report will be submitted to Vermont SHPO and the EPA in 2025, and a popular report will follow thereafter.

Meets State Plan Goal 1: Advocate for Historic Preservation

Objective: I. Improve the coordination of activities under the National Historic Preservation Act and the Vermont Historic Preservation Act.

Actions:

- 1) Assist state and federal agencies in fulfilling their stewardship responsibilities.
- 2) Evaluate state-owned properties to identify potential historic buildings, landscapes, and archaeological sites.

Meets State Plan Goal 4: Cultivate Pride of Place and Stewardship

Objective: II. Encourage responsible stewardship of archaeological and historic resources.

Actions:

- 1) Demonstrate best preservation practices in the care and maintenance of historic resources and showcase application of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.
- 3) Increase focus on care and management of collections and archives at the State-Owned Historic Sites and Vermont Archaeology Heritage Center.



Figure 5: Ely Mine Archaeology Investigations



Figure 4: Artifact Sampling from Ely Mine



Figure 6: Ely Mine Archaeology Investigations

3. Review and Compliance/Easement

West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge, Townshend

The West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge was constructed in 1910 by local farmer and self-taught stone mason James Otis Follett. Listed in the National Historic Register of Historic Places in 1977, it lies at the heart of the West Townshend Historic District. The bridge continues to carry single lane vehicle traffic today across Tannery Brook at the east edge of the village. It is one of six bridges constructed by Follett in Townshend, and with a span of 37 feet, it holds the distinction of being the longest. It was also the last bridge that he completed before his death in 1911. The bridge's single span is supported by a stone segmental arch constructed with rectangular blocks of granite and infilled with uncoursed dry-laid rubble stone.

In the spring of 2018, master stone mason Michael Weitzner was commissioned by the Townshend Historical Society to assess all six of Follett's bridges. He provided a comprehensive report outlining the condition of each bridge. The report found that while the West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge's stone arch remained structurally sound, its continued stability was threatened by damage to its foundation caused by inadequate drainage issues over its 100+ year history. This was further exacerbated by continued erosion, frost action, and, of late, vibrations from modern vehicular traffic.

Recognizing the historic significance of this resource, and the urgent need to complete repairs, the Townshend Historical Society took the lead in raising funds for the bridge's rehabilitation in partnership with the local municipality. The Vermont State Preservation Office provided early technical assistance to help define the scope of work for the rehabilitation project. This included: construction of wooden scaffolding to support the stone arch; removal of the existing roadway and non-historic concrete parapets and dismantling of the spandrel walls; reconstruction of the spandrel walls and wing walls using original material; laying a waterproof membrane over the restored structure, replacing the roadway over it, and re-grading to ensure correct drainage patterns; and installing improved catch basins, curbs and parapets.

The Town was awarded a prestigious Save Americas Treasures grant from the National Park Service, which was matched with a Historic Preservation Grant from the State of Vermont's Division for Historic Preservation and significant local funding. Additional consultation ensued as part of the grant requirements, including from the Vermont Agency of Transportation. Concrete parapets were replaced with granite curbing and a new metal parapet designed to be compatible with the historic bridge. The Town hired master mason Brian Post of Standing Stone, LLC to lead the rehabilitation effort. Post gathered a multi-state team of experienced masons to complete the work, which began in the spring of 2024. A bridge cam was installed to document the work and enable virtual visits to watch the work happening in real time. Work was completed in fall 2024. As part of the SAT funding, the State Preservation Office will hold a term easement on the bridge to ensure the continued maintenance and protection of this important historic resource.

The Vermont State Historic Preservation Office will be recognizing this project by granting the Townshend Historical Society and the Town of Townshend the 2025 Preservation Excellence Award.

Meets State Plan Goal 1: Advocate for Historic Preservation

Objective: II. Educate the public that historic preservation is culturally, financially, and environmentally beneficial and worthwhile.

Actions:

4) Promote successful historic preservation projects to influence perceptions about historic preservation.

Meets State Plan Goal 4: Cultivate Pride of Place and Stewardship

Objective: II. Encourage responsible stewardship of archaeological and historic resources.

Actions:

1) Demonstrate best preservation practices in the care and maintenance of historic resources and showcase application of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.



Figure 7: West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge Rehabilitation, September 2024

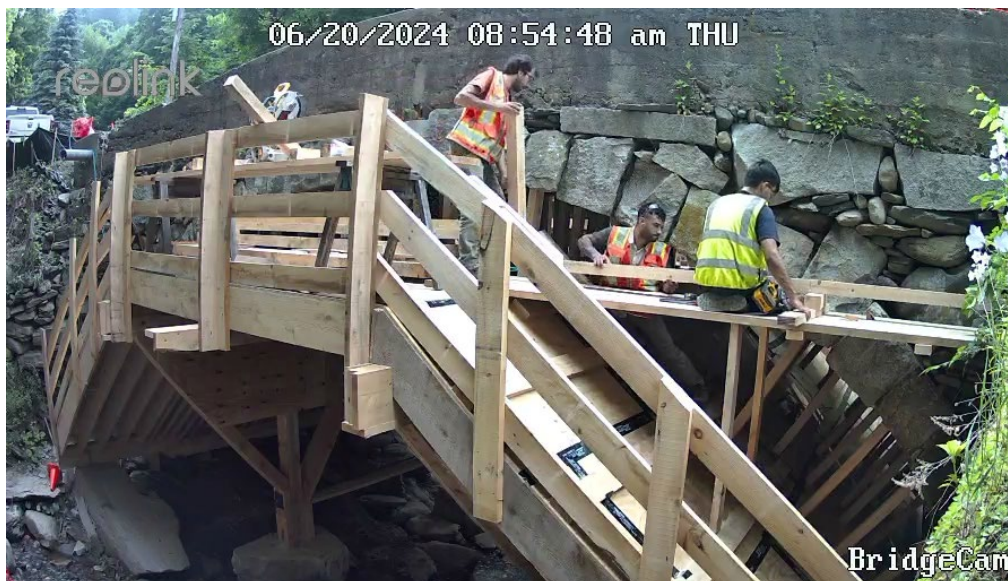


Figure 9: West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge Rehabilitation, From BridgeCam, June 2024



Completed Upstream View of Bridge and Wing Wall

Standing Stone LLC

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 (802) 245-4766

PROJECT
 PHOTO DATE

West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge
 11.04.2024

13

Figure 8: Rehabilitated West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge, November 2024