

**O**ne summer, many years ago, we planned a photo expedition to the Great Northwest to capture various waterfalls, lakes, and rivers on film. What we didn't realize was the entire area had suffered a severe drought for several months. Needless to say, pictures of lakes with 200 yards of mud shoreline did not appeal.

Frustrated, we picked up a book called *Oregon for the Curious* and thumbed through its pages. We discovered a chapter on covered bridges which indicated that several bridges were in our local vicinity. So we packed a lunch, film and camera and

days knew how to build a barn, so they didn't have any trouble building a bridge. Some believed the builders covered the bridge to keep the taxpayers from seeing the shoddy workmanship under the wooden shell. Others felt that the bridges were designed for travelers caught in storms.

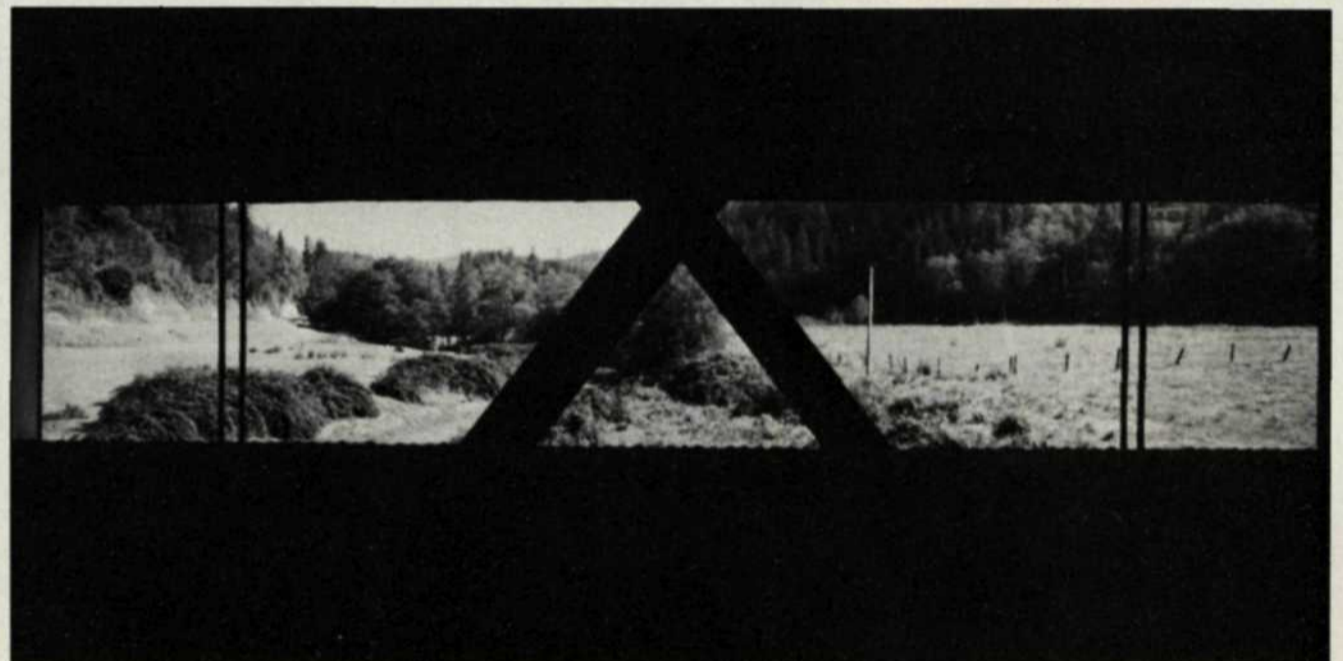
The actual truth to it all is that the bridges were covered to protect the wooden trusses that held the bridge together. If the trusses were left to the sun, wind, and rain, the life expectancy was about ten years. When they were covered, their life span increased tenfold. Covered bridges became a part of

scout out shooting angles for the best lighting and composition. Usually one end is in sunlight and the other in shade, so if we want to shoot the shaded end in the sun, we either spend the entire day, or return later in the day.

New concrete and steel replacement bridges next to the covered bridges tend to cramp our style a little, but we look at them as challenges. Trying to keep ugly telephone wires out of the photos makes life even more exciting. Placing people and cars in and near the bridge can do two things to the photos. On the positive side, we like the feeling of size, perspective, and personal involvement, but the photo is immediately dated. The photo without people and cars can be used for stock

# COVERING COV

## Drift Down Time to Nostalgic Subjects of Wide-Angle Proportions



made our first covered-bridge safari.

Keep in mind that we are not history buffs, just photographers looking for dramatic subjects to photograph. We found ourselves taking so many pictures of that first bridge that we realized covered bridges offered dramatic shape, composition, lighting, and color. As we moved on to the next couple of bridges, it just kept getting better and better.

### WHY COVERED BRIDGES?

There are a great many old wives' tales as to why there are covered bridges. Among the most common tale is how the roofs keep the snow off, so the steeper the better. Or did you hear the one about the bridges being built to resemble barns to make the horses comfortable? Besides, everybody in those

the communities, hosting funerals, weddings, hangings, church meetings, liquor stores, bulletin boards, and poker parties. Of course, we can't forget the classic scenes of the kids fishing and swimming near their favorite covered bridge.

### PHOTO TIPS

Because of the size and location of most covered bridges, we found ourselves using wide-angle lenses (24-35mm) in order to get the whole bridge into frame, without backing into rivers, blackberry bushes, or angry farmers. The second most important lens is some kind of macro or macro-zoom that allows one to move in close and shoot various details in and around the bridges.

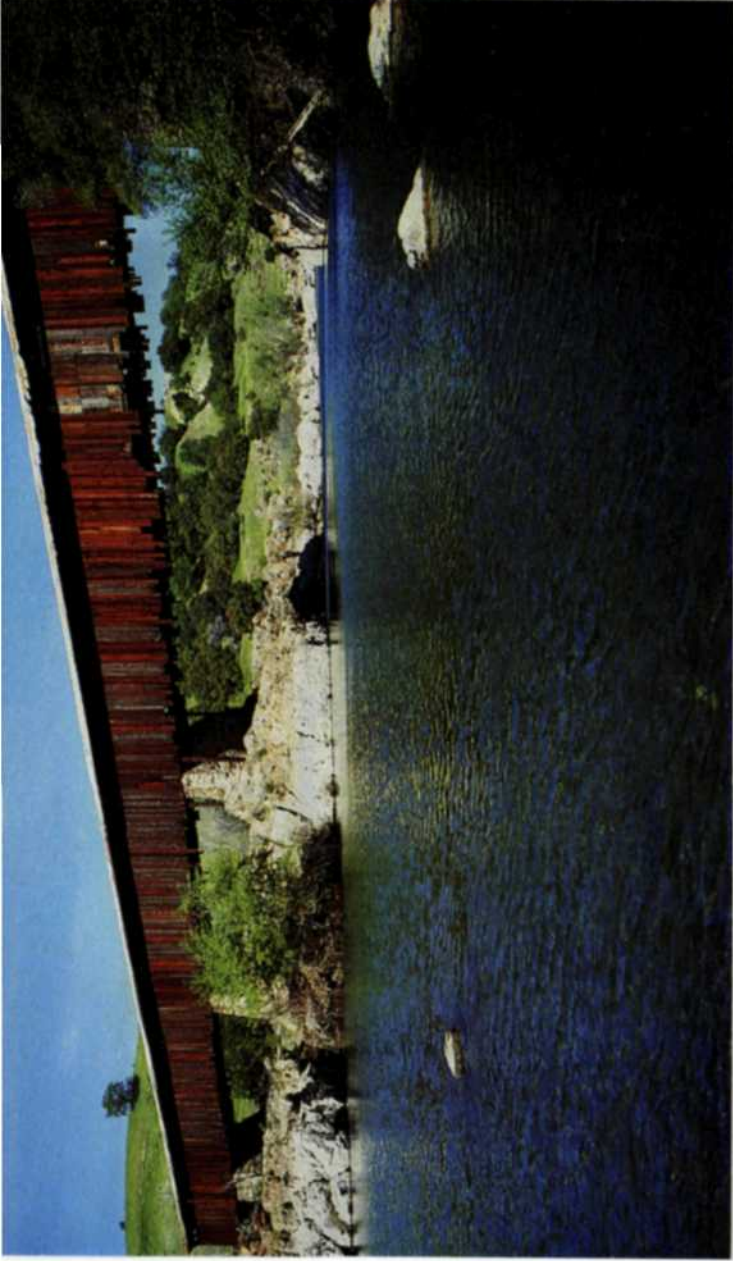
When we first approach a bridge, we

photography for years to come, while the other may enjoy only limited sales.

We make sure to dress accordingly when "covered bridgin'," because our expeditions take us under and around the bridges. Many of our best shots were not necessarily at the front or back of the bridge, and trips into the middle of the river gave us the angle that produced mirrored reflections.

### BEST FILMS

Because covered bridges move so slowly (that's a joke, son), we found we can use just about any film we desire. Our best results are from Kodak's Ektar 25 and Kodachrome 25, which allow for extreme enlargements with little or no grain. We usually use a tripod to avoid any camera shake and to ensure those razor-sharp images. The



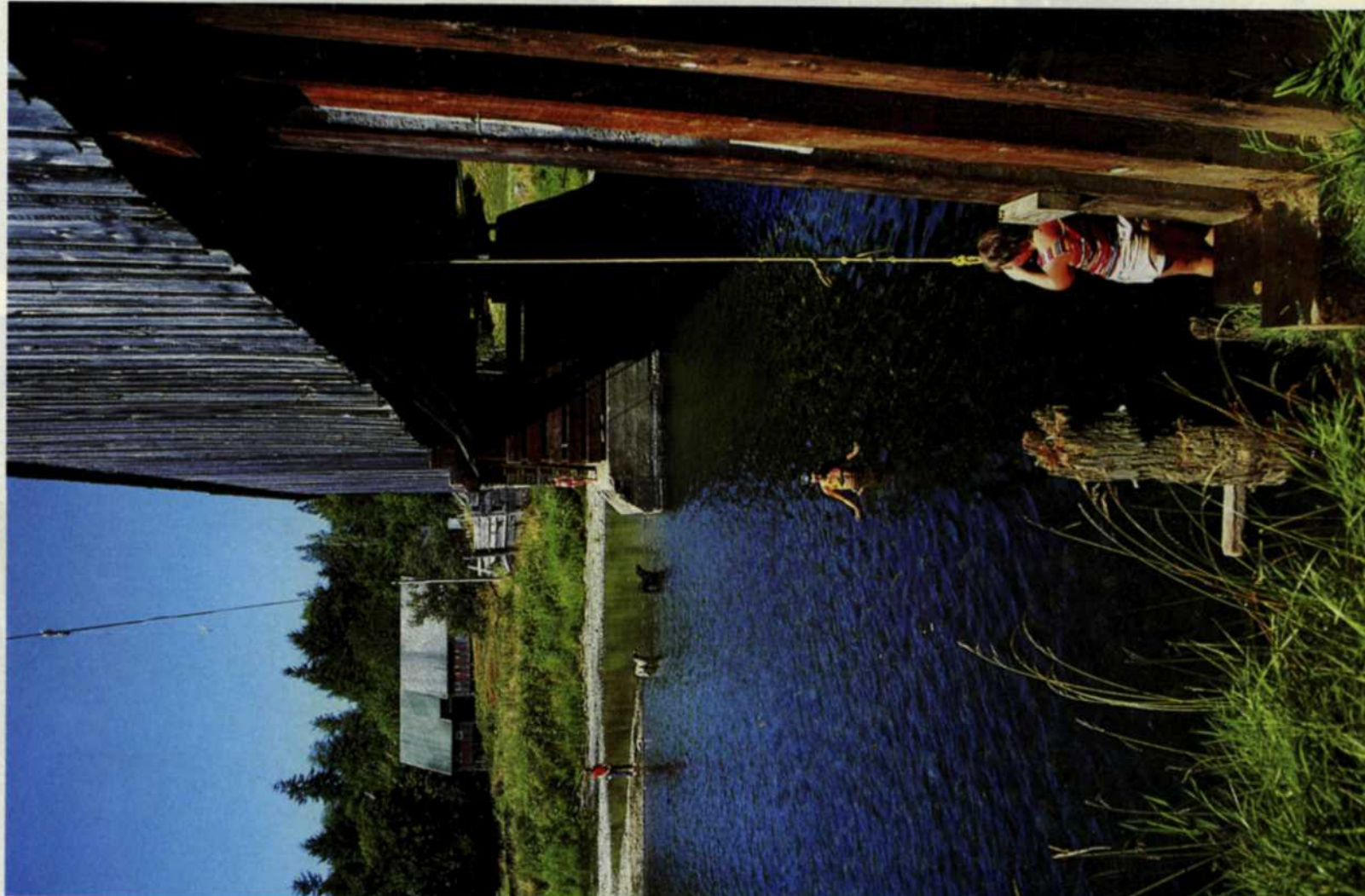
Knight's Ferry, Oregon



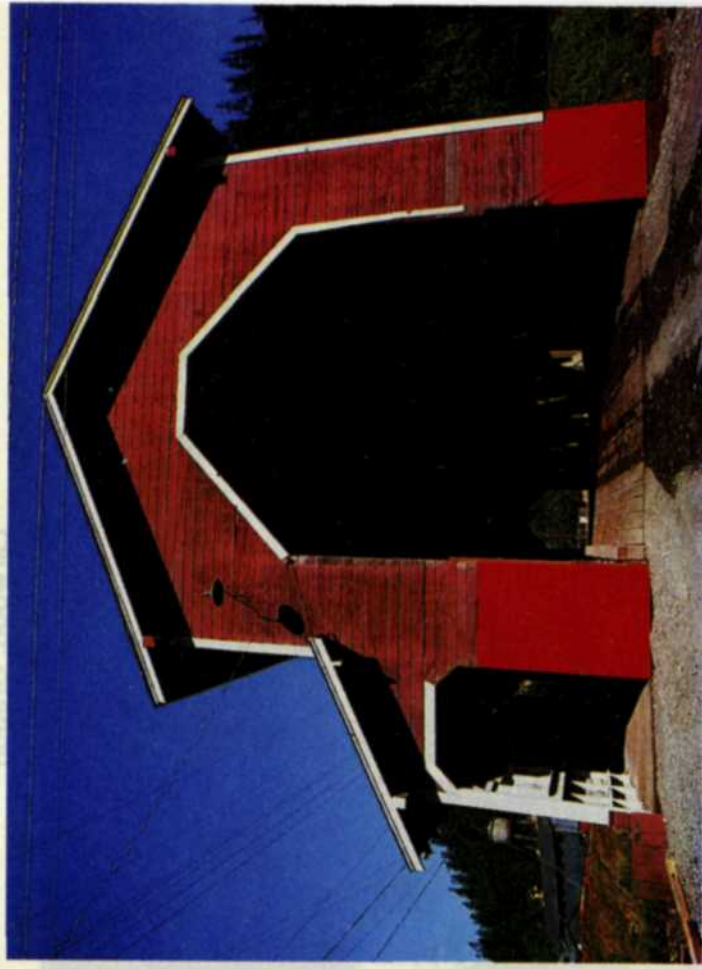
Elk City, Oregon, 1922

ALL PHOTOS BY AUTHORS

# ERED BRIDGES



Shimanek, Oregon



Office, Oregon, 1944

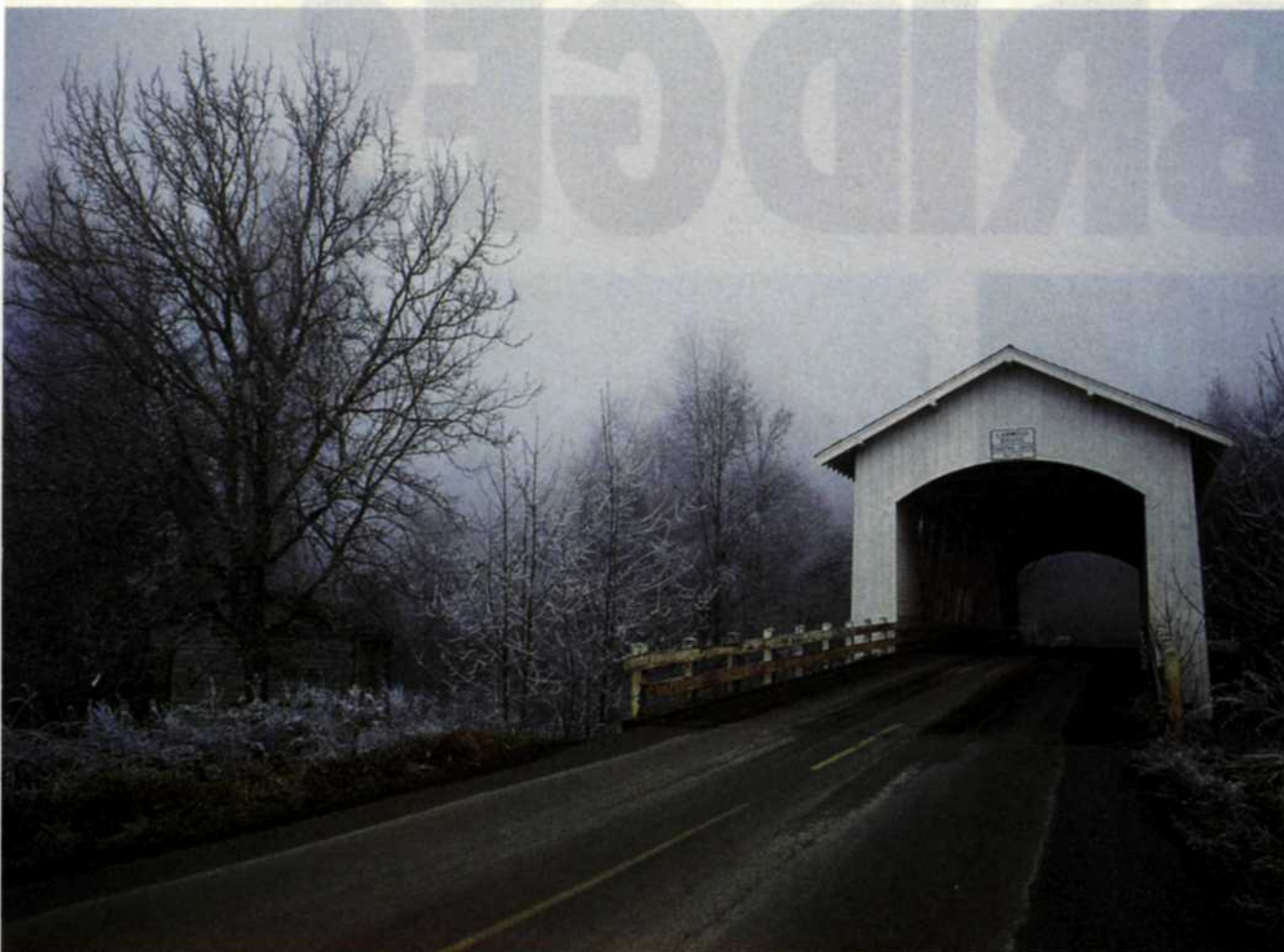
◀ Gray's River, Washington



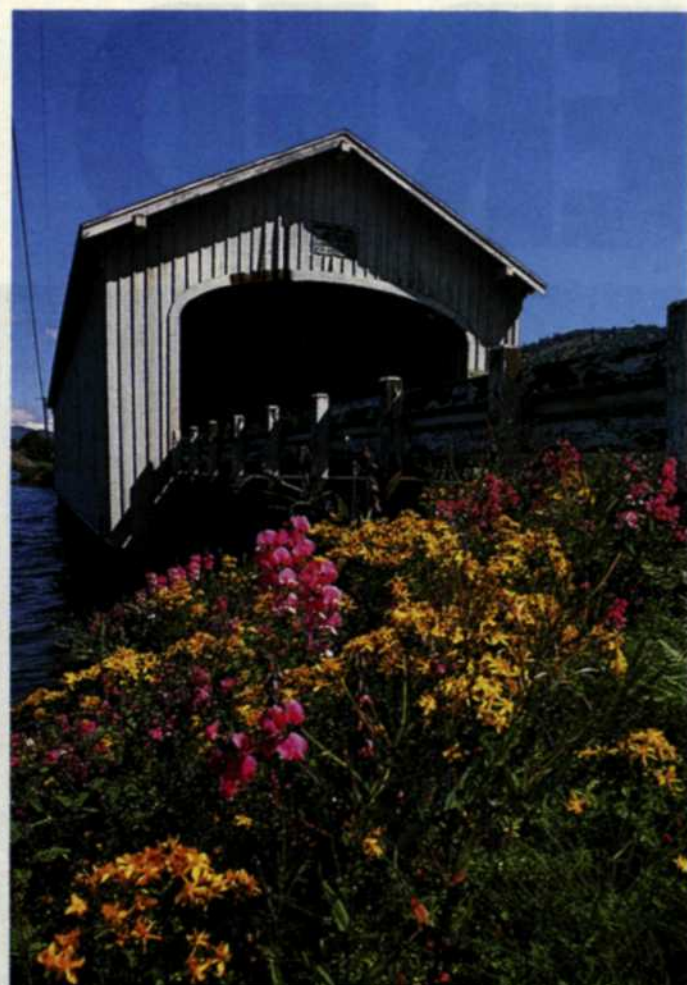
**Delta, Iowa, 1869**



**Gilkey, Oregon**



**Larwood, Oregon**



**Lowell, Oregon, 1945**



**Bridgeport, California**



**Lowell, Oregon**

## COVERED BRIDGE FESTIVALS

Several communities sponsor covered bridge festivals each year. **Indiana, Parke Covered Bridge Festival:** *October 13-22*, headquartered at Rockville, located in the extreme west central portion of the state on highway U.S. 39. Over 100 booths of crafts, homemade food, and entertainment at the command post with melodrama theater, antique show, Rotary Pancake Breakfast, quilt show, square dancing, and scarecrow and photography contests. Five routes for driving yourself or guided bus tours. Contact Parke County Tourist Center, P.O. Box 165, Rockville, IN 47872; (317) 569-5226 or 569-5372.

**Pennsylvania, Washington and Greene Counties' Covered Bridge Festival:** *September 16-17*, at Washington, located in the extreme SW corner on highway U.S. 70. Different events, food, entertainment, and crafts at seven bridges. A map to 35 local bridges is available from the Washington-Greene County Promotion Agency, P.O. Box 877, Washington, PA 15301; telephone (412) 222-8130.

More sources of information:

**Ohio:** *Ohio Covered Bridge Guide* (a fee is charged), from Southern Ohio Covered Bridge Association, 3155 Whitehead Rd., Columbus, OH 43204.

**Pennsylvania:** *Bucks County Covered Bridges Tour*, map to 13 bridges in NE section with history of each. Contact Bucks County Tourism Commission, 152 Swamp Rd., Doylestown, PA 18901; telephone (215) 345-4552.

**Virginia:** *Covered Bridges in Virginia*, map to six bridges with history of each. Contact Virginia Dept. of Highways & Transportation, Information Services, 1401 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219; telephone (804) 786-2964.

The states of Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Oregon, Tennessee, Vermont, and West Virginia have multiple covered bridges remaining. Contact the state's Office of Tourism in their capital cities for current information.

If an historic bridge (of any type) in your area is endangered, you may wish to write to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., Washington, D.C. 20036, requesting Information Sheet No. 36, entitled "Saving Historic Bridges." □

## HOW LONG WILL SHE POSE?



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# BRIDGES

only problem we have encountered when using tripods is that you need to watch for cars when on the bridge or near the roads. When taking photos inside the bridge, we use faster films because of the low light levels.

## BRIDGES IN YOUR AREA

We found the best source of information on covered bridges is a favorite bookstore. Look in sections dealing with local history, travel, and bridges. If that doesn't get the ball rolling, then take a visit to local historical societies, libraries, your chamber of commerce, and tourist bureaus in your state. We suggest the bookstores first, because they would have more recent listings of the covered bridges still standing. Covered bridges are disappearing at such a tremendous rate that you shouldn't be surprised if a bridge you find listed no longer exists!

If you're interested in a listing of all of the covered bridges in the U.S., there is a book printed about once every ten years which lists all the bridges

still standing. As of the 1980 printing, 893 were still standing. If you would like a copy, contact: Richard Capwell, 526 Power Rd., Pawtucket, RI 02860. Include a \$5 check made out to the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges. This book is divided according to state and county, and lists the nearest town, stream, bridge name, road, number of spans, length, year built, and even the type of trusses used in construction.

## LET'S GO COVERED BRIDGIN'

We find that a variety of state, county, and city maps are extremely important in tracking down some of the more elusive bridges. We like to think of our trips as treasure hunts with the covered bridge as the prize. We have been on some trips where the roads have physically been moved, and other times where the bridge had been dismantled and moved to a new location. We try to mark three or four bridges on the map and design a photo safari that leads us from one bridge to the next. We always bring picnic lunches so that between photo sessions we can enjoy a little solitude, maybe try our hand at fishing, but mainly relax and drift back in time. □