

57 Bath Covered Bridge

Pettyboro Road, Bath, New Hampshire

The Bath Covered Bridge, or Bath Bridge, was constructed in 1832 and spans the Ammonoosuc River. In 1832, the original cost was approximately \$2,900, for a covered bridge that was built 374.6 feet long, with a width of 24.6 feet to accommodate two lanes of traffic. An enclosed sidewalk is also present. The Bath Covered Bridge is listed in the World Guide to Covered Bridges, and was also listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

The Bath Covered Bridge is the fifth bridge to have been constructed at its site. A bridge was first constructed in 1794 for \$366.66, but was destroyed years later in a flood. The replacement bridge was built in 1806 for a cost of \$1,000. About twenty years later, the second and the third bridges were both destroyed by floods and replaced immediately in 1820 and 1824, respectively. Unlike the first three bridges, the fourth bridge was likely destroyed by fire during the late 1830s, as indicated by a discussion of stricter fire laws around buildings and bridges at the 1830 town meeting. By March of the next year, \$1,400 was set aside to build two stone abutments and piers and to purchase other building materials. A year later, in March 1832, an additional \$1,500 was used to complete construction. Records indicate that the bridge construction was completed soon after the allocation of additional funds.



The Bath Covered Bridge is an example of a variation of the popular Burr truss; a combination of an arch and a multiple kingpost truss design. At the time of its construction, the bridge was built with only two piers and three spans, instead of the four that are now present. In the 1920s, the bridge was elevated several feet in order to provide clearance for the growing size of railroad cars. During this process, laminated arches were added, and the wooden piers were probably added at this time as well. A number of repairs were completed between the years of 1939 and 1940, including readjusting the new corrugated metal roof. Almost thirty years later, in 1968-1969, the bridge floor was replanked and other minor repairs were made.

At one time, there was a speed limit for horse teams using the Bath Covered Bridge. A sign at the bridge's west portal prohibited riding horses across the bridge at a trot. The sign proclaimed: "One dollar fine to drive any team faster than a walk on this Bridge." At the time the law was in effect, it was thought that the impact of trotting horses could cause the bridge to fail. The bridge has remained in continuous use since 1832; serving active mills in its early days and now mainly serves residential populations. There is a load limit on the bridge of six tons, limiting its use to passenger cars.

In January of 2013, the Bath Covered Bridge began a \$2.9 million renovation to replace some of the rotted parts of the bridge, the truss and install new floor beams, a deck, siding and a metal roof.

Sources:

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