

97 Columbia Covered Bridge

Columbia Bridge Road, Columbia, New Hampshire

Located four miles south of Colebrook Village and west of Route 3, the Columbia Covered Bridge spans the Connecticut River, connecting the towns of Columbia, NH and Lemington, VT. The current bridge is the third version on the site, and was built in 1912 by Charles Babbitt, after the previous bridge was destroyed by fire in 1911. The towns of Lemington and Columbia shared the original building cost; however, since the low water mark on the Vermont side of the river denotes the State border, the State of New Hampshire owns and financially supports upkeep for the bridge. In 1981, the bridge was rehabilitated for \$143,000, and recently was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



The Columbia Covered Bridge is one of two remaining highway bridges in New Hampshire built with a Howe truss (the other is Mount Orne Bridge in Lancaster, NH), and both represent the last bridges created during the 90-year covered bridge era in New Hampshire. The Howe truss uses iron tension rods between crisscrossed wood compression members to provide the support for the bridge. The structure sits on stone abutments that were restored from the original bridge. The Howe truss was patented in

1840 by Massachusetts millwright William Howe, and with iron and wooden parts, represents the transition from wood to metal as the primary construction material for bridges. While the iron pieces helped with strength and longevity, the wooden materials kept costs down, and this lower initial cost made it an economically sound design choice.



The Columbia Covered Bridge is 146 feet in total length, and is 30.5 feet wide, containing a roadway that is 15.5 feet wide and has a vertical clearance of 13 feet. Vehicle traffic is allowed, with a posted six ton weight limit.

Sources:

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