

87 Mount Orne Covered Bridge

Connecting Lancaster, New Hampshire and Lunenburg, Vermont

The Mount Orne Covered Bridge can be found spanning the Connecticut River between Lancaster, New Hampshire and Lunenburg, Vermont. It is located west of New Hampshire Route 135 on South Lancaster Road, which is west of Lancaster Village. You may also hear the bridge being referred to as the Lunenburg-Lancaster Covered Bridge, the Mt. Orne Covered Bridge or the Mt. Orne Station Covered Bridge.

Construction of the Mount Orne Covered Bridge began in 1911, with each town (Lancaster and Lunenburg) contributing \$2,500 to the reported overall \$6,678 price tag for the bridge. However, the Mount Orne Covered Bridge was not the first bridge constructed at this location. The first bridge was built during the 1860s or 1870s by the Union Bridge Company. At that time, the original bridge was



operated as a toll bridge until a log jam destroyed it in 1908. After the original bridge was destroyed, a ferry service served as the connection between Lancaster and Lunenburg until the Mount Orne Covered Bridge was built in 1911.

The Mount Orne Bridge consists of two spans, each supported by two flanking Howe trusses constructed of wood and iron. The Howe truss's combination of wood and iron is important in the evolution of bridge trusses because it

represents a key step in the progression from wood trusses to iron and steel trusses popularized in the 20th century. Each of two spans of the bridge are almost equal in length, 133 feet for the east span, and 134 feet for the west span; combined they measure an overall length of 267 feet. The roadway of the bridge measures 15.5 feet and the bridge is posted for six tons.

Despite being just over 100 years old, the Mount Orne Covered Bridge has had its share of damages and repairs. In 1969, a truck carrying highway salt fell through the road deck and landed on the ice beneath the bridge. After some careful negotiating of the truck, disengaging it from the bridge, lowering it to the ice, turning right-side up and loading it onto a flatbed, the truck was removed from the site. In 1983, the Mount Orne Covered Bridge was closed for 12 weeks, from July to November, to allow for a rehabilitation project funded by the State of New Hampshire at a cost of \$133,000. The bridge was rededicated on November 23, 1983.

In June 2010, the driver of a tractor trailer relying on poor directions, slammed into the bridge's upper lateral bracing and caused extensive damage. An inspection following the crash revealed the bridge's additional structural problems that were unrelated to the crash. In order to fix the structural problems, the bridge was closed to both vehicular and pedestrian traffic for over nine weeks. This most recent rehabilitation project was completed ahead of schedule (the project was originally expected to take 15 weeks) and under budget at a cost of \$160,000 instead of \$225,000.

The Mount Orne Covered Bridge was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

Sources:

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