

63 Samuel Morey Memorial Bridge

NH Route 25A, Fairlee, Vermont & Orford, New Hampshire

The Samuel Morey Memorial Bridge, spanning the Connecticut River between the towns of Fairlee, Vermont and Orford, New Hampshire, is a steel “tied through arch” bridge with a 432-foot span and 85-foot arches. As the only one of its kind between Vermont and New Hampshire, opposite ends of both arches are tied to each other below the bridge deck, transferring the active and inactive loads of the bridge into vertical stresses, instead of relying on the abutments to counteract the thrusts of the arches. The “through arch” refers to the fact that the base of the arch is below the bridge deck, but the top of the deck is built above the arch, so the deck passes through the arch.



The bridge location has seen several renditions over the past 200 years, beginning with the first bridge in 1800-1802. In 1854, a wooden Town (or lattice) truss covered bridge was erected and served well until severely damaged by flood waters in 1936. John H. Wells, an award-winning bridge engineer, began designing a replacement bridge with a conscious effort to leave the channel unobstructed by eliminating the need for bridge supports that would otherwise be located in the river channel, and to elevate the bridge deck above high water levels.

Once designed, the American Bridge Company, a fabricator of steel bridge components, prepared fabrication and erection drawings of the Bridge at its Elmira, New York plant and then began shipping steel via the Boston & Maine Railroad to Fairlee, Vermont. The Hagan-Thibodeau Construction Company, based in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, was awarded the Bridge’s construction contract for the amount of \$209,360.53. Construction of the new bridge began very quickly—just a week after the contract was awarded in 1937. During this same period, the Vermont and New Hampshire State Legislatures worked to pass simultaneous acts to officially name the structure The Samuel Morey Memorial Bridge. Morey was an early inventor in harnessing steam and gas power, successfully operating a steamboat near the location of the current bridge in 1793. Just one year later the bridge was completed and dedicated in June 1938.

The Samuel Morey Memorial Bridge was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1997. Rehabilitation work began in 2002 and was completed in 2003, followed by rededication in May 2003. The Bridge’s current color of sage green is thought to be a close match, if not identical match, to the Bridge’s original paint color from 1938.

Sources:

National Register of Historic Places. Samuel Morey Memorial Bridge.. Town of Fairlee/Town of Orford. Orange County/Grafton County. Vermont/New Hampshire. Reference # 97001523. <<http://www.crj.org/heritage/N13-5.htm>>

“Samuel Morey Memorial Bridge.” *Projects*. Odyssey Contracting Corp. Web. Accessed 3 May 2013. http://www.odysseycontracting.com/index_files/orfo.htm

“Samuel Morey Memorial Bridge Rededication.” *Orford History*. Orford, New Hampshire. Web. Accessed April 29, 2013. <http://www.orfordnh.us/history/bridge-rededication.html>