

Western Merrimack County Covered Bridge Tour



Visit 6 covered bridges spanning the Contoocook and Warner Rivers in central New Hampshire. The driving part of this tour will take approximately 1 hour which does not include time spent at each bridge location. This tour begins and ends at the Warner Fall Festival location.



Directions from Festival Grounds to the Joppa Road Bridge

From the Festival site, head east towards Main Street. Turn right on Main Street. In 0.3 miles, turn right onto West Joppa Road. Travel 400' to the bridge.

The **Dalton or Joppa Road Bridge** (World Guide #29-07-05) was built over the Warner River by Joshua Sanborn in 1853. The bridge has an unusual truss system, having a Long truss ("X" shaped timbers supported by vertical posts) supplemented by a queenpost truss. It is one of the oldest standing covered bridges in use today. The Dalton Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Dalton or Joppa Road Bridge, Warner

Directions from Joppa Road Bridge to Contoocook Railroad Bridge.

From the Dalton Bridge, return to Route 103. Turn right on NH-103. In 1.1 miles, turn left onto I-89 South. In 2.7 miles, take exit 7 to NH-103 towards Davisville/Contoocook. In 0.3 miles, turn left onto NH-103 East. Travel 3 miles to the Contoocook Bridge.

The **Contoocook Railroad Bridge** (WG #29-07-07) spanning the Contoocook River was originally built when the Concord and Claremont Railroad laid its first track from Concord to Bradford, N.H. in the fall of 1850. Due to



Contoocook Railroad Bridge, Contoocook

increased traffic and heavier loads, that bridge was replaced by the current structure in 1889. The bridge washed off its abutments in 1936 when the Contoocook River flooded and again in 1938 from a hurricane. Only the bolted rails kept the bridge from washing downstream. After the flood water receded, the bridge was drawn back to its location and restored. From 1962 until 1990 a Contoocook merchant owned it and used it as a warehouse. In 1990 the bridge was given to the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources. It is the oldest covered railroad bridge still standing in the United States and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Directions from Contoocook Railroad Bridge to Rowell Bridge

Cross the highway bridge next the Contoocook Railroad Bridge, then turn right on NH-127 South (Maple St.). Travel 3.7 miles to the Rowell Bridge.

The **Rowell Bridge** (WG #29-07-08) over the Contoocook River was built by Horace Childs of Henniker with the help of his brothers Enoch and Warren to replace the previous bridge lost during a freshet in the spring of 1852. A short time after it was constructed, a herd of cattle, driven faster than they should have been, moved the bridge off its abutments. The structure was brought back and securely fastened in place. Around 1930, a central pier was placed under it to strengthen

the bridge, but under heavy loading, the bridge teetered. The top of the pier was removed and the bridge was found to function adequately without it. The Rowell's Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Directions from Rowell Bridge to New England College Bridge

Cross the Rowell Bridge and then turn left onto Clement Hill Road. At the top of the hill, bear left onto Kast Hill Rd. In 0.2 miles, continue straight onto NH-127 South. In



New England College Bridge, Henniker

0.7 miles, turn right onto US-202 West. In 3.5 miles, take ramp to NH-114. Turn left at the end of the ramp and travel 0.7 miles to the New England College campus. The bridge will be visible on the right.



Rowell Bridge, West Hopkinton

The **New England College Bridge** (WG #29-07-12) was built over the Contoocook River by Milton Graton and his son Arnold in 1972 using traditional methods. The Town lattice trusses were pulled across the river by a team of oxen. The bridge serves New England College as a footbridge across the Contoocook River.

Directions from New England College Bridge to Bement Bridge

From New England College, follow NH-114 North for 9 ¼ miles to NH-103. Turn left on NH-103 West and travel 0.2 miles where the bridge will be visible on the left.



Bement Bridge, Bradford

Bement Bridge (WG #29-07-03) is the third bridge at this location over the West Branch of the Warner River. It was built at a cost of \$500 in 1854. Tradition has it that Colonel Stephen H. Long, a Hopkinton native and a member of the U.S. Army Topographical Engineers, built the bridge entirely of hemlock. However, no evidence has been found to support or dispute the claim. Much of Colonel Long's bridge building experience came from his employment with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. While working for the railroad, he developed a plan for a new covered bridge truss that became nationally known as the Long truss. Long patented his design in 1830. The Bement Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Directions from Bement Bridge to Waterloo Station Bridge

From the Bement Bridge, return to NH-103. Turn right onto NH-103 East and travel 5.9 miles to Newmarket Road. Turn right onto Newmarket Road. Continue ¼ mile ahead to the bridge.

The **Waterloo Station Bridge** (WG #29-07-04)-over the Warner River is supported by a Town lattice truss. It was completely rebuilt in 1857 by Dutton Woods of Contoocook. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The bridge gets its name from the nearby Waterloo railroad station built for the Concord & Claremont Railroad. Passenger, express and freight service to Waterloo was discontinued in May 1941.



Waterloo Station Bridge, Warner

Prepared by the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges, Inc. – www.coveredbridgesociety.org. Photos by Scott Wagner, Jenn Caswell & Bill Caswell.