

Town of Chichester

54 Main Street, Chichester, NH 03258

Thunder Bridge

Today

Years Ago



Information about the bridge:

Current status: The Chichester Historical Society received a \$9600 Conservation License Plate Grant in Aug. 2004 to replace lost ornamentation (plaque, crestings and finials). This is a work in progress with tentative completion scheduled for spring 2005.

Known as: Depot Road Bridge, Pine Ground Bridge, Thunder Bridge

Location: Chichester, NH, on Old Depot Road crossing Suncook river; 43°15'20" N, 71°22'11" W

Manufactured by: Berlin Iron Company from East Berlin, Connecticut in 1887

Cost: \$1950 (Included materials, fabrication, shipping and erection)

Bridge type: Truss, parabolic, lenticular, Thru-bridge

Dimensions: 96 ft. span, 16 ft. width, approx. 14 ft. above water level, approx. 12 ft. road clearance to upper cross beams

Carrying capacity: 100 pounds/square foot design load, later restricted to 6 tons max. vehicle weight around 1968

Materials: Wrought iron for structural members, cast iron for plaques, crestings and finials, wood for road planking and railings

Surface protection: Aluminum-colored epoxy paint (Carbomastic 15) applied in 1981; original paint not known

Wording of plaque:

1887
BUILT BY THE BERLIN IRON CO
EAST BERLIN CONN.
DOUGLAS & JARVIS PAT. APL. 16 1878
APL. 7 1883

NOAH G. EDMUNDS

F. E. TOWLE

GEO. W. MURDOUGH

SELECTMEN

Closing of bridge: In 1978 for vehicular traffic, left open for pedestrians, bicycles, snowmobiles, etc.

Renovation: Replacement of 9" I-beams with channel sections in east panel for road bed support, new entire road bed planking, repainting of entire structure after sand blasting. Work completed in spring of 1981

Historical status: The bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on March 10, 2004 by the Department of Interior of the United State.

Project History

Since the submission of the 2002 C.I.P. form, the Chichester Historical Society has been working on the time line for Depot Road Bridge a.k.a. Thunder Bridge or Pine Ground Bridge. This East Berlin Works bridge was built in 1887 and spans the Suncook River. The bridge is now listed in the National Register of historic places (March 10, 2004). Two plaques, one on either end of the bridge note this designation. Wooden railings have been replaced where needed and painted by Historical Society members. Lumber was donated by Goosebay Lumber. An area of concern for safety on the northeast corner has been repaired and secured.

In April of 2004, the Historical Society applied for a Conservation License Plate Grant a.k.a. Moose Plate Grant. Grant approval was received in Aug. 2004 in the amount of \$9600. This money is being used to fund rehabilitation/restoration work for the cresting and plaque and replacement of missing ball and nut finials on the bridge. Work has been contracted to Cassidy Bros. Forge, Inc., Rowley, MA. Work is in progress with a completion date of early summer.

Two spring clean ups have taken place (2003 and 2004). The Boy Scouts assisted in 2003. A picnic table, purchased with the financial help of 3rd graders at Chichester Central School, is available for family picnics.

There is now \$20,000 in capital reserve funds for the preservation and painting of Depot Road Bridge. We will need to continue to have monies placed in capital reserve for this purpose.

Thunder Bridge Abutment Rework (Aug 24-25, 2006)



Over decades of use by horse-drawn wagons and later motorized vehicles and by exposure to rain and snow, the stone abutment which holds the road leading to the east side of Thunder Bridge, had taken its toll to the stability of the structure.

Stones had shifted outward and some rotated because the bank-run gravel backfill had been washed out from behind.

To prevent further displacement of stones and a possible collapse of a portion of the wall, the misaligned and out-of-plumb stones were reset by a crew composed of Ian Blackman, excavator operator and contractor Dennis Moore, and Bernd Reinhardt from the Historical Society.



Coarse crushed stones for stabilization and filter fabric for retention of fine materials to prevent washout were added to the backfill as it was put back and compacted behind the retaining wall after the realignment work of the stones was finished.



At the same time, settled threshold stones across the east side of the bridge entrance were re-leveled, even with the wooden planks of the roadbed of the bridge.



The work was accomplished on the 24th and part of the 25th of August 2006. The Historical Society likes to thank Ian Blackman for volunteering his time and know-how which will preserve one part of our town's history for future generations to enjoy.

Painting the Bridge (October 2007)



Thunder Bridge has survived the spring rains and enormous water flow beneath her supporting steel girders. The bridge received no damage although the north-west bank suffered some erosion that will need to be followed closely.

Clearly though, the bridge needed a fresh coat of paint to protect it from the continuous attack of the elements.

The bridge would remain sound without the paint, but, even a bridge needs a little "make-up" once in a while.



Now, is this not more respectful of the grand structure built so long ago?

Aluthane, a special paint for steel structures, was used because of its ability to bond over rusty steel and form a hard, abrasive resistant surface. This paint, although expensive, has proven to resist the weather over time and should prove very cost effective.

Four Sons Painting, a local painting company located at Kelley Corner, was hired to do the job. Although the surface area looks deceptively small, the paint needed to be applied to every surface which was a time consuming and detailed job. Even the planks that line the bed of the

bridge needed to be removed to paint the steel holding them.

Historical Society Erects Information Kiosk At Thunder Bridge



Bernie Reinhardt of the Chichester Historical Society has been busy at work constructing the pieces to form a kiosk for displaying information about Thunder Bridge and the historic site associated with it. The structure has a wooden shake roof and the gabled ends are covered with old lumber. Very solidly constructed and meant to reflect the construction style of the 1800s, this should last for many years. The Friends of Suncook River have generously donated \$150 and will have use of display space for information about the river.