

# Covered Bridges In Southwest New Hampshire

Nothing demonstrates the charm of New England villages like a covered bridge. They represent the inventiveness and know-how of our forefathers. We are fortunate to have seven covered bridges here in the Monadnock Region!



**Location:** Winchester, NH - South of N.H. Route 119 in the Upper Village of Ashuelot on Bolton Road over the Ashuelot River in the Town of Winchester.

**Style of Bridge:** Town lattice truss patented by Connecticut architect Ithiel Town in 1820 and 1835.

**Year of Construction:** 1858, extensively renovated in 1999.

**Original Cost:** \$4,650

**Structural Characteristics:** The bridge is 169'0" long and made up of two spans of 77'0" and 77'3" in length. It has an overall width of 28'6" and has a maximum vertical clearance of 11'7". There are sidewalks on both sides of the bridge. The structure is currently posted for six tons.

**Maintained By:** Town of Winchester

**Historical Remarks:** The Ashuelot covered bridge is considered by local historians to be one of New Hampshire's most elaborate covered bridges. The original purpose of the bridge was to transport wood across the river for use by the Ashuelot Railroad. The railroad had a station in the village of Ashuelot. This structure has also been called the Village Bridge or Village Station Bridge. Some sources credit Nicholas Powers as the builder. The Ashuelot Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



**Location:** Winchester, NH - West of N.H. Route 10, one-half mile southwest of Westport Village on Old Westport Road over the Ashuelot River in the town of Winchester. Take Coombs Bridge Road off Route 10.

**Style of Bridge:** Town lattice truss

**Year of Construction:** 1837

**Original Cost:** Unknown

**Structural Characteristics:** The bridge has a length of 106'6" with a clear span of 101'9". It has an overall width of 17'8" with a roadway width of 14'3", and a maximum vertical clearance of 11'0". The abutments are unmortared stone. The bridge is posted for six tons.



**Maintained By:** Town of Winchester

**Historical Remarks:** The bridge was named after its original builder and owner, Anthony Coombs. The Coombs Bridge once played an important role in both the social and commercial development of the area. Although it is not a necessary transportation link today, it is still convenient to students and tourists near N.H. Route 10. Extensive repairs were made by the town in 1964 and the bridge was reopened the same year. The bridge was rehabilitated in 1971 at a cost of \$13,340. Today, the bridge is in need of major repairs. In 1984, state officials recommended bypassing the bridge using existing town roads. Such a bypass would require significant improvements to local gravel roads in both Winchester and Swanzey and would result in a considerable detour for residents of this section of both communities. The Coombs Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



**Location:** Swanzey, NH - East of N.H. Route 10 on Westport Village Road near Westport Village over the Ashuelot River in Swanzey.

**Style of Bridge:** Town lattice truss

**Year of Construction:** 1862 - The bridge was rebuilt in 2001.

**Original Cost:** \$1,850.64

**Structural Characteristics:** The bridge is 142'3" long with a clear span of 123'3". It has an overall width of 20'9" with a roadway width of 17'1" and a maximum vertical clearance of 11'6". It is reinforced with four iron turnbuckle rods. The bridge is posted for six tons.

**Maintained By:** New Hampshire Department of Transportation

**Historical Remarks:** The bridge name originates from the Slate family who lived on

a farm along the river north of the bridge. It is the third bridge on this location, the first having been built around 1800. In 1842 William Wheelock was halfway across the bridge with a team of four oxen when the bridge collapsed dropping both driver and animals into the river. Although no one was hurt, Wheelock engaged an attorney from Keene to seek damages from the town. The second bridge was damaged by a snow plow in 1987 and was repaired at a cost of \$2,000. The Slate Bridge was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. On March 8, 1993, the Slate Bridge was destroyed by fire. The current bridge was rebuilt in 2001 at a cost of \$900,000.



**CARLTON BRIDGE - NH #7**

**Location:** Swanzev, NH - East of N.H. Route 32 on Carlton Road, one-half mile south of Swanzev Village spanning the South Branch Ashuelot River.

**Style of Bridge:** Queenpost

**Year of Construction:** Approximately 1789 - It was completely reconstructed in 1996.

**Original Cost:** 15 pounds

**Structural Characteristics:** The bridge has an overall length of 67'3" with a clear span of 60'3". It has an overall width of 16'6" with a roadway width of 12'4" and a maximum vertical clearance of 11'7". It has fully sheathed sides. The structure is posted for three tons.

**Maintained By:** Town of Swanzev

**Historical Remarks:** Town records indicate the original bridge at this site was constructed in 1789, however, the exact date has not been verified. The bridge was rebuilt in 1869, and again in 1996. According to local tradition, the bridge was built by local barn builders since the truss construction of the bridge is similar to that used in barns. When it was built, a wagon fully loaded with hay was used as a standard for the height and width of the opening. The Carlton Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



**THOMPSON BRIDGE - NH #5**

**Location:** West Swanzev, NH - East of N.H. Route 10 on Main Street over the Ashuelot River in West Swanzev.

**Style of Bridge:** Town lattice truss

**Year of Construction:** 1832

**Original Cost:** \$523.27

**Structural Characteristics:** The bridge is 136'10" long with clear spans of 64'0" and 63'6". It has an overall width of 25'6" with a roadway width of 16'7" and a maximum vertical clearance of 11'11". There is a sidewalk on the south side of the bridge. The bridge was posted for six tons until the fall of 1990 at which time it was closed to all traffic. It was subsequently reopened and is presently posted for 3 tons.

**Maintained By:** Town of Swanzev

**Historical Remarks:** The bridge was constructed by Zadoc Taft and is also known

as the West Swanzev Bridge. In 1973, when it was posted for a six ton load limit, school busses were allowed to cross the bridge, but only if empty. When a bus full of students came to the bridge, the students would get off the bus, walk across the bridge, and reboard the bus on the other side. In 1976, a new concrete and steel bridge was built nearby to carry heavy vehicles. This new bridge cost \$376,914.61. The Swanzev Historical Museum has a collection of historical material relating to all the covered bridges in town including a scale model of the West Swanzev Bridge. A highway committee was formed in 1990 to develop proposals for the rehabilitation of the town's covered bridges. The West Swanzev Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



**CRESSON BRIDGE - NH #6**

**Location:** Swanzev, NH - One mile north of N.H. Route 32 near the site of an old Indian community on Sawyer's Crossing Road in Swanzev. It spans the Ashuelot River.

**Style of Bridge:** Town lattice truss

**Year of Construction:** Built in 1859 to replace a bridge constructed prior to 1771. The bridge underwent major renovations in 1996.

**Original Cost:** 1771 - 53 pounds, six shillings.

**Structural Characteristics:** The bridge is 158'5" long with clear span of 61'6" and 77'3". It has an overall width of 21'0" with a roadway width of 17'2" and a maximum vertical clearance of 12'0". It has fully sheathed sides. The structure is posted for three tons.

**Maintained By:** Town of Swanzev

**Historical Remarks:** According to the History of Swanzev by Benjamin Read, this structure is also known by the name Sawyer's Crossing Bridge. The bridge was reconstructed in 1859 at a cost of \$1,735.94. The event was celebrated with a big dance held right on the bridge. Lanterns were hung from the rafters, a four piece orchestra played, lunch was served at midnight, and the dance continued all night. In 1953 the bridge was used by Arthur Godfrey as a tie-in with a Chesterfield cigarette Christmas carton. In response, Governor Hugh Gregg flew to New York to present Mr. Godfrey with an honorary deed to the bridge making him an owner. The Sawyer's Crossing/Cresson Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**COUNTY BRIDGE - NH #8**

**Location:** Hancock and Greenfield, NH - One mile east of U.S. Route 202, three and one-half miles west of Greenfield on the Hancock-Greenfield (Forest) Road. It spans the Contoocook River between Hancock and Greenfield.

**Style of Bridge:** Pratt truss (modified)

**Year of Construction:** 1937

**Structural Characteristics:** The bridge is 86'6" long with a clear span of 81'6". It has an overall width of 27'1" and a roadway width of 20'0" with a maximum vertical clearance of 13'9". It is posted for eight tons.

Courtesy of:



**Bridge photos by:**  
Arthur Boufford  
& Don Sykes

**For more information, visit:**  
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