

**CONNECTICUT RIVER BRIDGE  
02 – HINSDALE-BRATTLEBORO**

**NH Bridge ID: Hinsdale 041/040**

**CARRYING:** NH 119

**PRESENT NAME:** Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge

**DATE BUILT:** 1920

**LAT/LONG:** 42.851759,-72.555685

**CROSSING CHRONOLOGY**

- 1735 First regular ferry established
- 1804 First bridge, wood trestle type
- 1820 Second bridge, wood arch structure
- 1831 Third bridge, covered wood truss
- 1857 Fourth bridge, covered wood truss
- 1862 Fifth bridge, reconstruction of one of the two spans
- 1869 Sixth bridge, a covered wood truss built by S.M. Waite. Previous bridge completely swept away
- 1903 Seventh bridge, 1-span pin-connected steel truss
- 1920 Eighth bridge, 1 span riveted steel truss

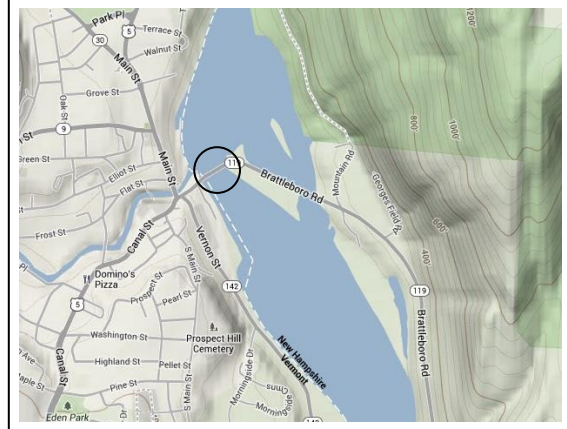


FIGURE 1: Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge, built 1920. Downstream side, from New Hampshire shore, with city of Brattleboro, Vermont in background (Historic Documentation Co. Inc. 2012).

## CROSSING HISTORY

**Ferry crossing:** A ferry of sorts operated across the river at Brattleboro as early as 1723 when Fort Dummer was first established. Its operation became more regular with the establishment of the Hinsdale fort and Shattuck's fort about 1735. Following the Revolution, James Hubbard petitioned the New Hampshire Legislature for the privilege to operate a ferry at the old Fort Dummer crossing, which was granted in 1786. Another ferry, known as Barretts Ferry was established about that time, crossing the branch from Hinsdale to the island and the main channel to Brattleboro in roughly the same location as the present bridges.

**First bridge:** The first bridge was built in 1804 by the Hinsdale Bridge and Sixth New Hampshire Turnpike Corporation, chartered in 1802. Frederick J. Wood, in his *The Turnpikes of New England* (1919), states that this company "appears to have been primarily a toll-bridge corporation, although it had authority to build about ten miles of turnpike through Hinsdale and Winchester to connect with a branch of the Fifth Massachusetts [Turnpike] which was built to the state line prior to 1806." The main bridge crossed the river to the island, with a much smaller bridge crossing the channel on the east side of the island known as "the creek" and later as "little river."

**Second bridge:** The bridge over the Connecticut was replaced in 1820 with a wood arch structure and in 1825 the "creek bridge" was erected, after having been swept away by ice the previous winter.

**Third bridge:** In 1831 both bridges were swept away and the main bridge replaced with what was referred to as a covered "X-bridge," suggesting a lattice truss. In 1844 the creek bridge was replaced with a covered lattice truss as well. The corporate name of the company owning the bridges was subsequently changed to "The Hinsdale Bridge Corporation," probably reflecting the relinquishment of any turnpike road the corporation had built. A surviving stock certificate issued by the Hinsdale Bridge Corporation for two shares of stock valued at \$100 per share, is dated the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1858.

**Fourth bridge:** In February 1857, as related by turnpike historian Wood, "the main bridge was swept away by immense masses of ice which had formed during the unusually cold winter and were brought down by a freshet. The bridge was deposited on the meadow near Vernon village. The pier in the middle of the stream was then carried away down to low water mark. The pier and bridge were rebuilt that year by Dexter Moore of Newfane."

**Fifth bridge:** The Connecticut River freshet of April 1862, regarded as the highest flood waters up until that date, destroyed the "little river" bridge which was rebuilt the following summer. The main bridge was seriously damaged and repaired, requiring the rebuilding of one of the two spans. The river inundated the island, sweeping away an entire farm complex and opening a channel down the middle that was eventually filled in when the water level dropped.

**Sixth bridge:** A freshet in 1869 destroyed the main span, which was rebuilt by S.M. Waite. The east abutment was washed away and rebuilt 40 feet back from its original location, requiring lengthening the east span by the same amount. In 1888, the towns of Hinsdale and Brattleboro joined together to purchase the property of the Hinsdale Bridge Corporation for \$15,000, freeing the crossing. In the late 1890s the bridge was reinforced with wood arches.

**Seventh bridge:** In August 1903 the main bridge was torn down to make way for a new steel truss bridge built at a cost of \$43,434.68. The larger timbers were salvaged and used for the false

work supporting the trusses during their erection. According to *Hinsdale, New Hampshire*, the Hon. Lemuel Franklin Liscom (1841-1916) “was active in securing the erection of a new iron bridge, a 320 foot single span over the Connecticut opposite Brattleboro and was its Inspecting Engineer. He drew specifications for the super and substructure.” Photographs indicate the bridge was a Pennsylvania through truss similar in design to the present bridge but with pin connections rather than the more modern riveted gusset plate connections used on the later bridge.

**Eighth bridge:** The 1903 truss bridge was replaced in 1920 by a 330-foot-long Pennsylvania truss designed by John Storrs of Concord, NH and built by the American Bridge Company. This is one of two single-span Pennsylvania truss bridges in New Hampshire, the other being the 352-foot span between Piermont and Bradford, Vermont.

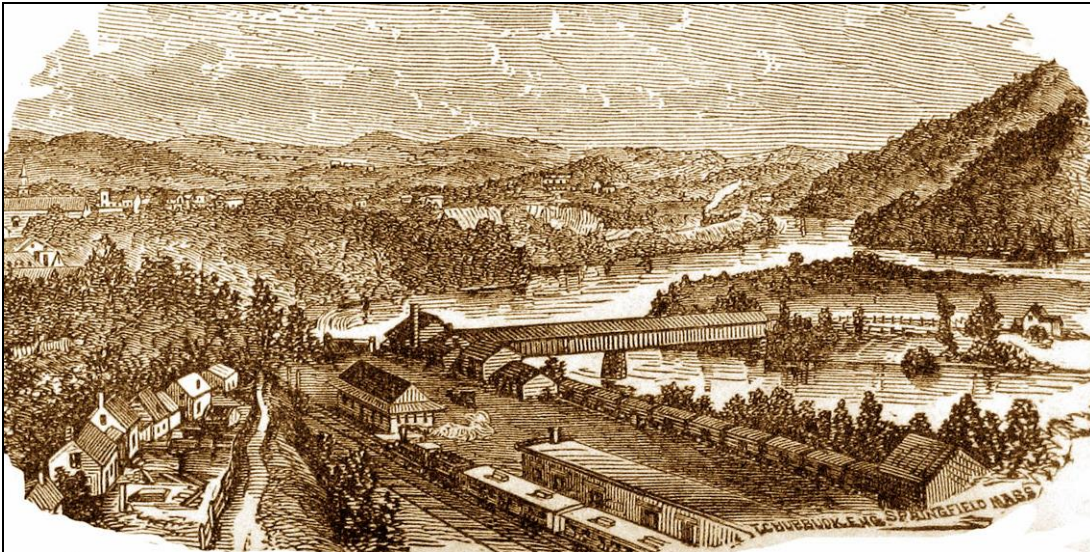


FIGURE 2: Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge, a woodcut probably depicting the 1857 bridge (Bacon 1906).

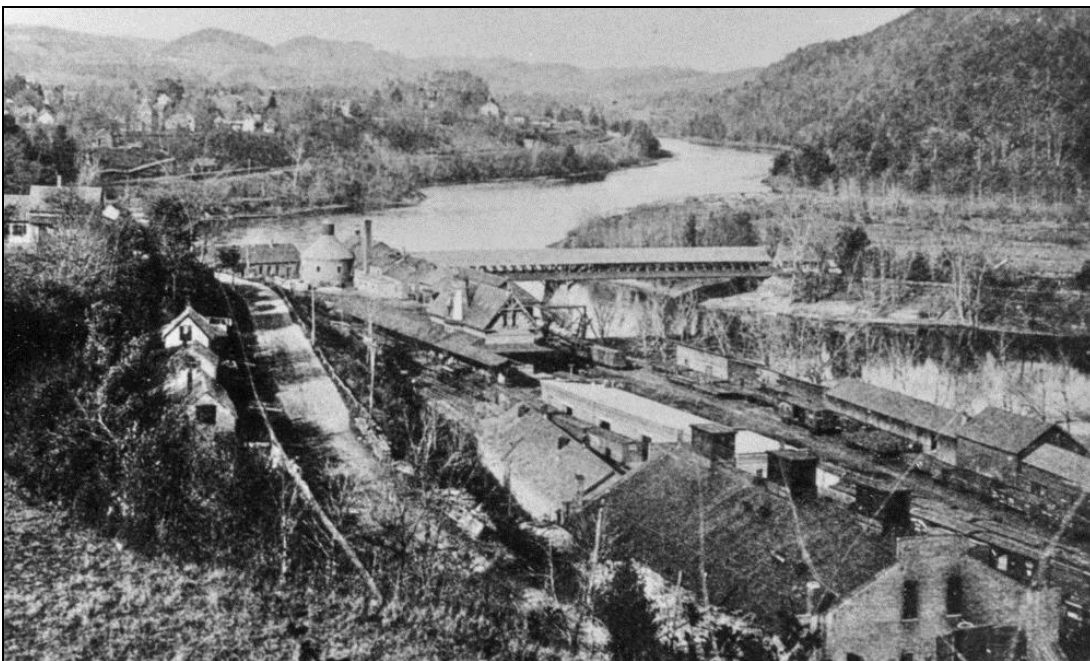


FIGURE 3: Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge. c.1865 (Cheshire County Historical Society).

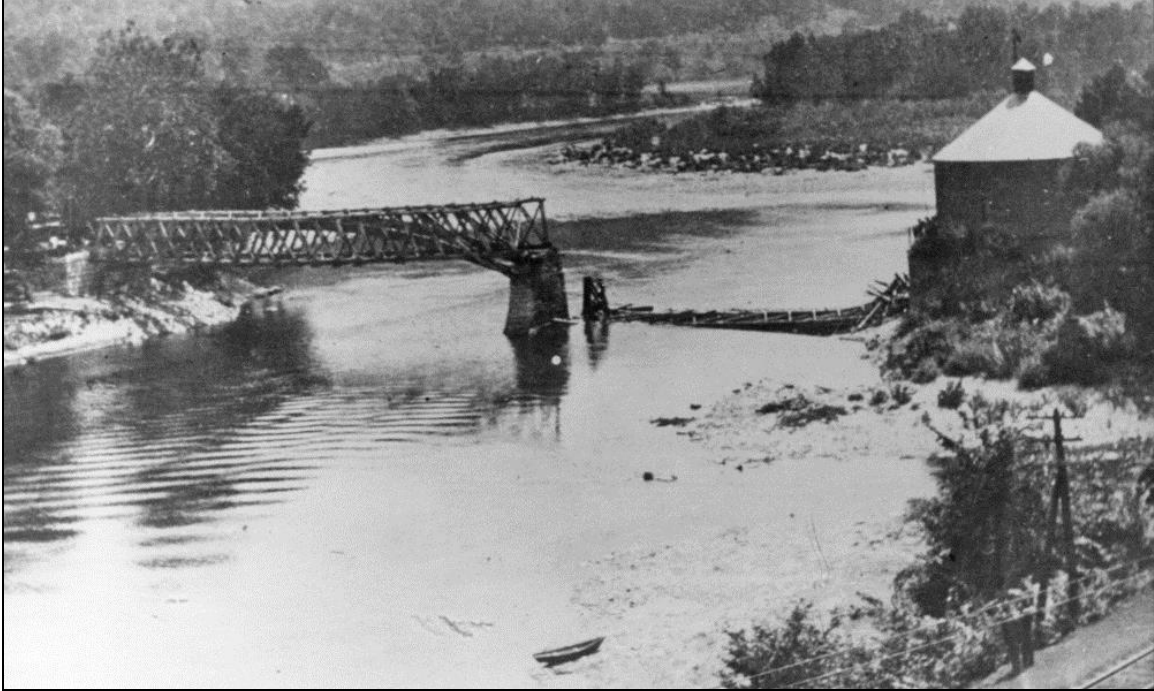


FIGURE 4: Hinsdale-Brattleboro wood truss bridge, showing west span in river, possibly following 1869 flood (Cheshire County Historical Society).



FIGURE 5: Hinsdale "Little River" Covered Bridge over east channel during high water event sometime between 1903 and 1920. Note truss over main channel, built 1903, in background (Cheshire County Historical Society).



FIGURE 6: Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge, built 1920, looking toward Hinsdale (NHDOT 1941).



FIGURE 7: Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge, built 1920, looking toward Brattleboro (NHDOT 1941).

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