

**CONNECTICUT RIVER BRIDGE
07 CHARLESTOWN – SPRINGFIELD**

NH Bridge ID: Charlestown 135/052

CARRYING: NH 11
PRESENT NAME: Cheshire Bridge
DATE BUILT: 1931
LAT/LONG: 43.260534,-72.42739

CROSSING CHRONOLOGY

- c.1760 Ferry established
- 1804 Cheshire Bridge Corporation chartered, first bridge constructed
- 1833 Second bridge, covered Town truss
- 1896 Third bridge, 3-span pin-connected steel Pratt truss
- 1930 Fourth bridge constructed, riveted steel Pratt truss
- 1993 Bridge rehabilitated

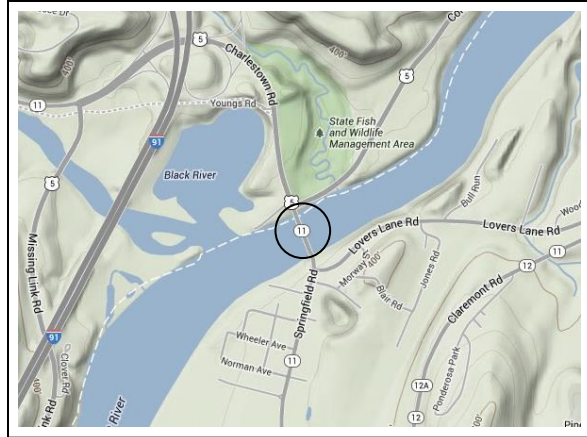


FIGURE 1: Cheshire Bridge, built 1930, rehabilitated 1993. Downstream side from Vermont (Historic Documentation Company Inc. 2012).

CROSSING HISTORY

Ferry crossing: Simon Olcott obtained a charter to operate a ferry at this crossing around 1760.

First bridge: The Cheshire Bridge Corporation received its charter in 1804, taking over the crossing right and probably building the first bridge at this site soon afterward. The company's charter prohibited the construction of another bridge for three miles in either direction, thus ensuring a crossing monopoly for the company's proprietors. As late as 1970, the bridge toll was still being collected, several decades after practically all other bridge tolls on the Connecticut between New Hampshire and Vermont had been removed.

Second bridge: The second bridge, a three-span covered bridge of Town lattice truss design, was built in 1833. The abutments and piers were built of granite. The length of the bridge was stated at the time as being 506 feet. A description of the bridge made by the builders detailed its features, including

On the upstream side of each pier, and united with it, is an inclined plane of granite, and capped with oak timber, bolted to the stone work, to receive and break the ice, and other obstructions, which may float against them. . . . The bridge is to be lighted in the day by six dead lights in the sides, and six glazed sky-lights in the roof; and in the night by large lamps, suspended from the center of the beam overhead.

The contractors for building the timber covered bridge were Isaac Damons and Lyman Kingsley of Northampton, Massachusetts, while local mason Isaac Silsby supervised construction of the substructure. The bridge was replaced in 1896.

Third bridge: In 1896, the Springfield Electric Railway Company, the operators of a six-mile electric streetcar line connecting Charlestown and Springfield, purchased the covered bridge. The streetcar company took down the timber-frame superstructure, replacing it with a three-span steel Pratt truss bridge that used one lane for the electric railway line and one for wagon (later auto) highway traffic. The Berlin Iron Bridge Company acted as contractor for construction of the bridge. The new structure used the existing stone piers and abutments from its predecessor, although the design made it necessary to raise the substructure about six feet in height, as can be seen in a remarkable set of photographs of the construction that survive from 1896. The overall bridge was reported as extending for 473 feet.

Fourth bridge: According to historian James Garvin, the present bridge dates to 1930. Erected for the electric railway company by contractors McClintic-Marshall Company of Pittsburgh, PA, it is a three-span steel Pratt truss structure that is 489 feet in length. The spans are of varying length, being 154 feet, 169 feet and 166 feet. The bridge underwent a \$1.7 million rehabilitation in 1993. The NHDOT bridge inventory made following the 1993 work records the substructure as being built of reinforced concrete. It is not clear from the document whether or not the piers and abutments were entirely rebuilt as part of the 1993 project (addition of reinforced concrete may have been an element of the 1930 construction).

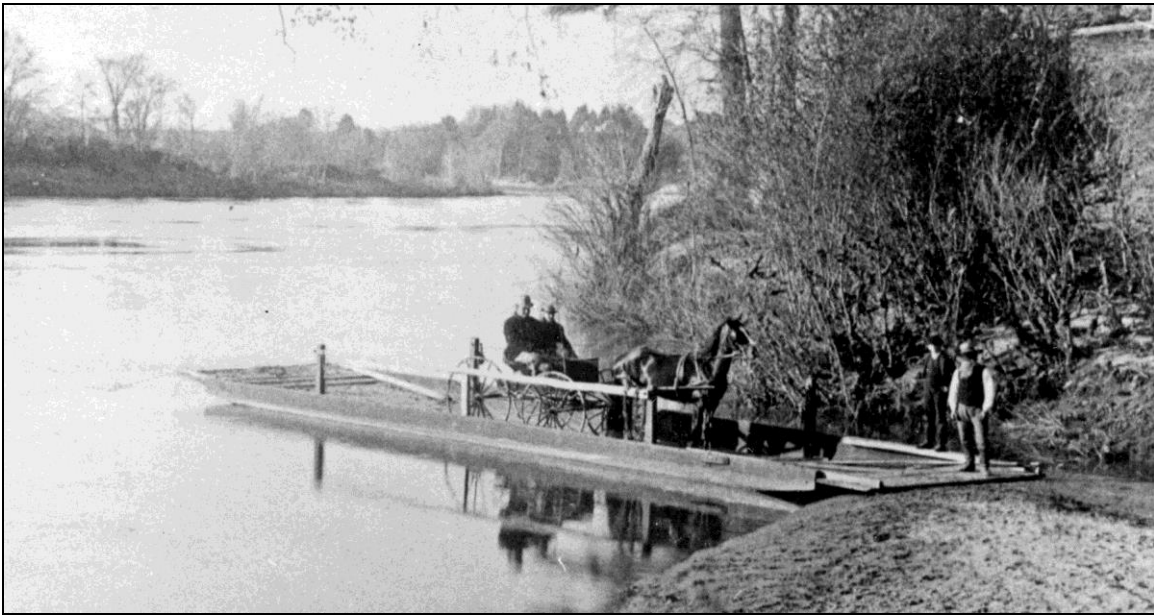


FIGURE 2: Charlestown ferry, established c.1760, undated photo (Charlestown Historical Society).

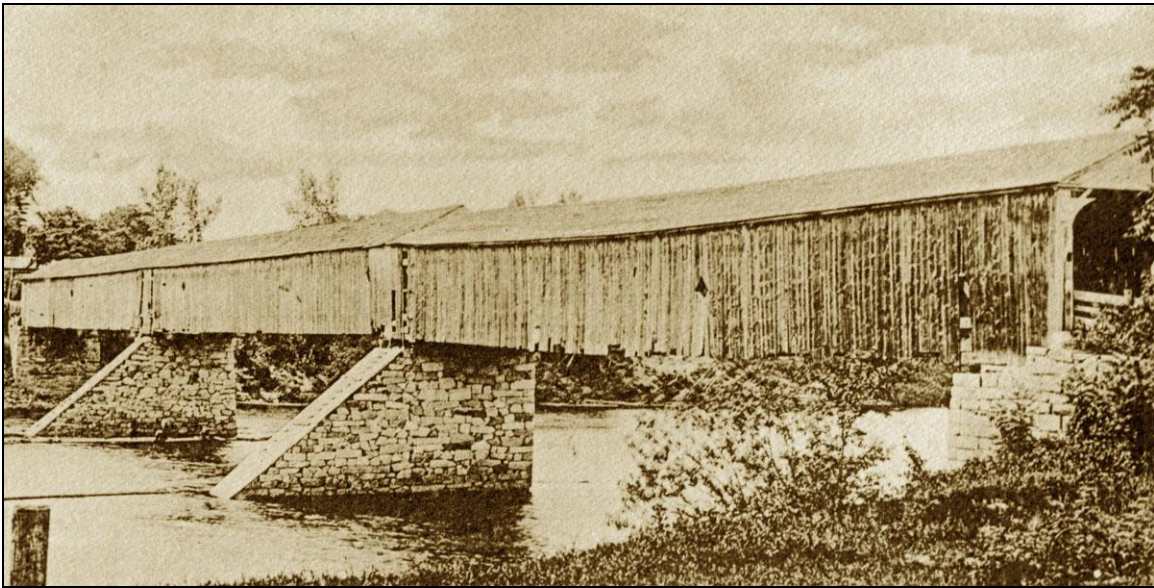


FIGURE 3: Cheshire Toll Bridge, Charlestown, a covered Town truss, built 1833, demolished 1896 (Cheshire County Historical Society).



FIGURE 4: Cheshire Toll Bridge, log jam against piers of 1896 bridge. Photo credited to O. E. Noyes, a Springfield tailor, probably taken c.1900 (Charlestown Historical Society).

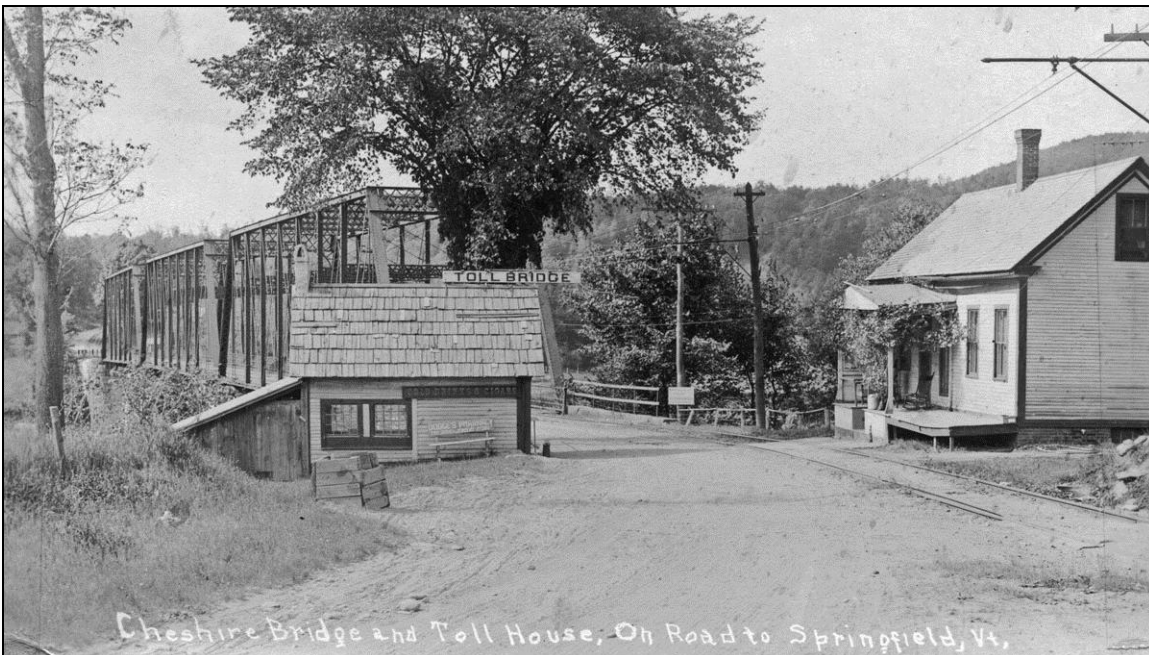


FIGURE 5: Cheshire Toll Bridge, pin-connected truss built 1896, replaced 1930, by Springfield Electric Railway Company. New Hampshire end shown in undated photo. Note toll house at right, small store at left (Charlestown Historical Society).

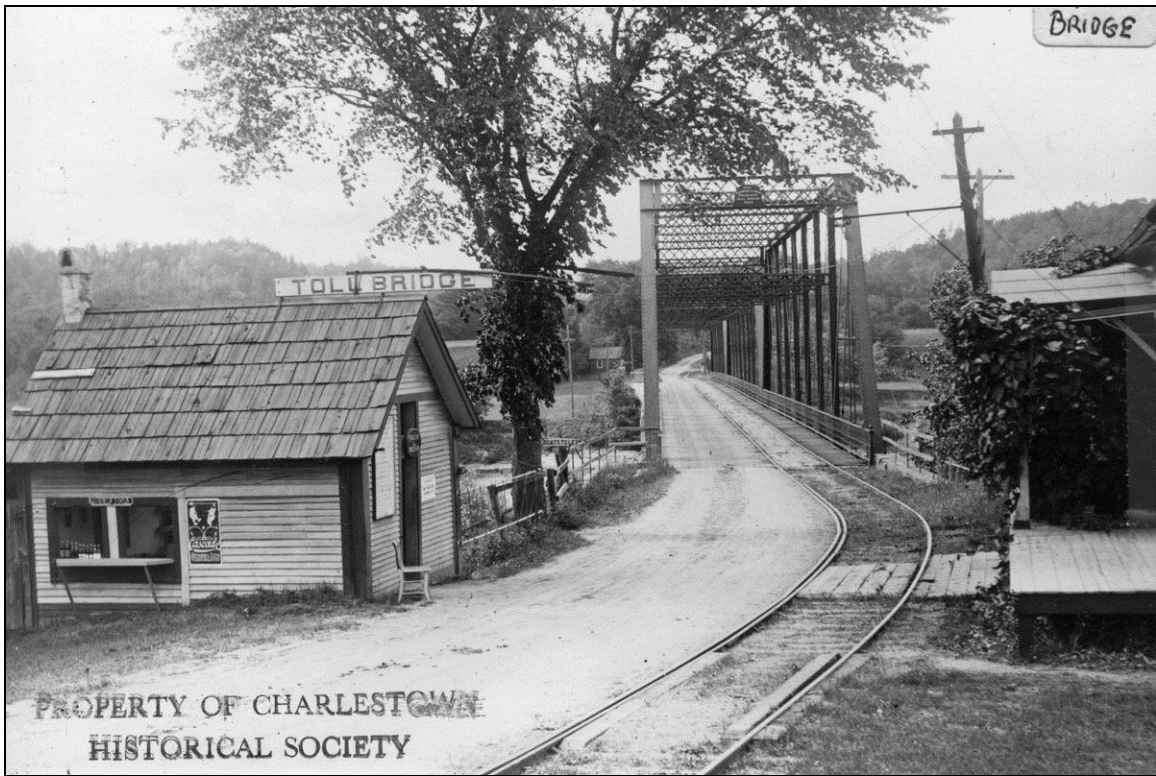


FIGURE 6: Cheshire Toll Bridge, 1896 truss, New Hampshire end shown in undated photo slightly later than photo in Figure 5 (Charlestown Historical Society).



FIGURE 7: Cheshire Toll Bridge, built 1930 and presently in service. New Hampshire end shown in 1941. Compare to photos in Figures 5 and 6 and note widened approach, removal of store, alterations to toll house and new toll booth (NHDOT 1941).



FIGURE 8: Cheshire Toll Bridge built 1930, and presently in service. Vermont end shown in 1941 (NH DOT 1941).



FIGURE 9: Cheshire Toll Bridge, New Hampshire end, shortly before the toll was permanently lifted on July 1, 2000 (Charlestown Historical Society).



FIGURE 10: Cheshire Toll Bridge, New Hampshire tollbooth, shortly before the toll was permanently lifted on July 1, 2000 (Charlestown Historical Society).

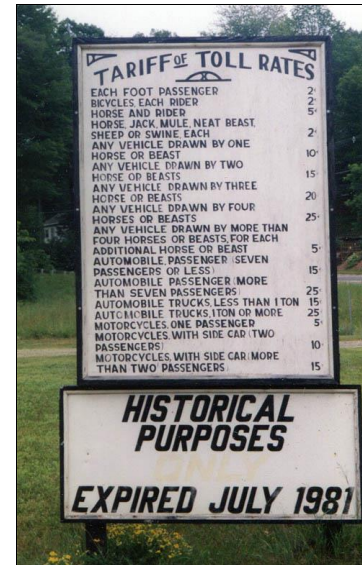


FIGURE 11: Old toll rate sign from Cheshire Bridge, standing near bridge, now located in Charlestown Historical Society (Charlestown Historical Society).

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