

BRIDGES TO THE PAST:

A Guide to the Historic Bridges of Laconia

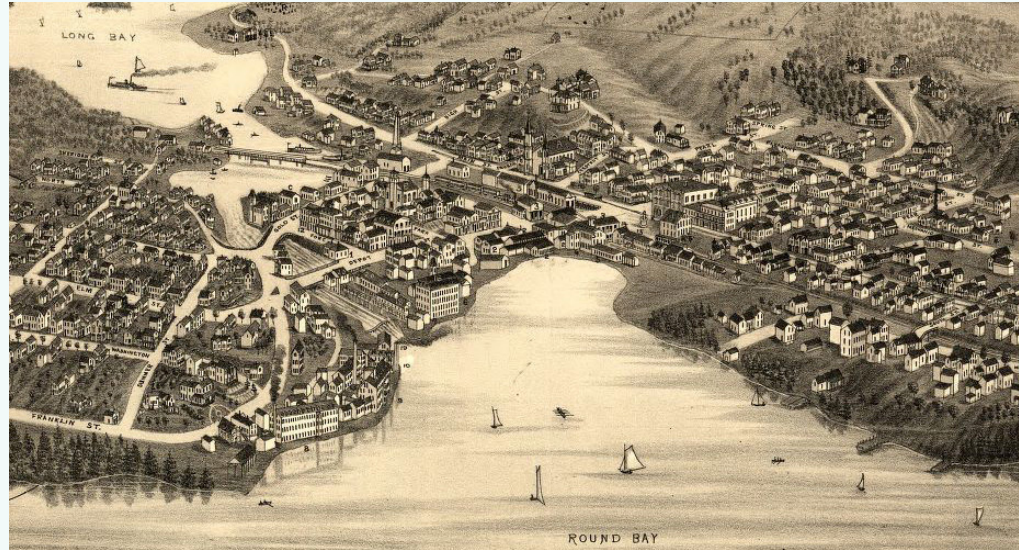
This document was produced in cooperation with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, US Army Corps of Engineers, the New Hampshire State Preservation Office, and the City of Laconia under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
Preservation Company and BaileyDonovan 2022

BRIDGES TO THE PAST:

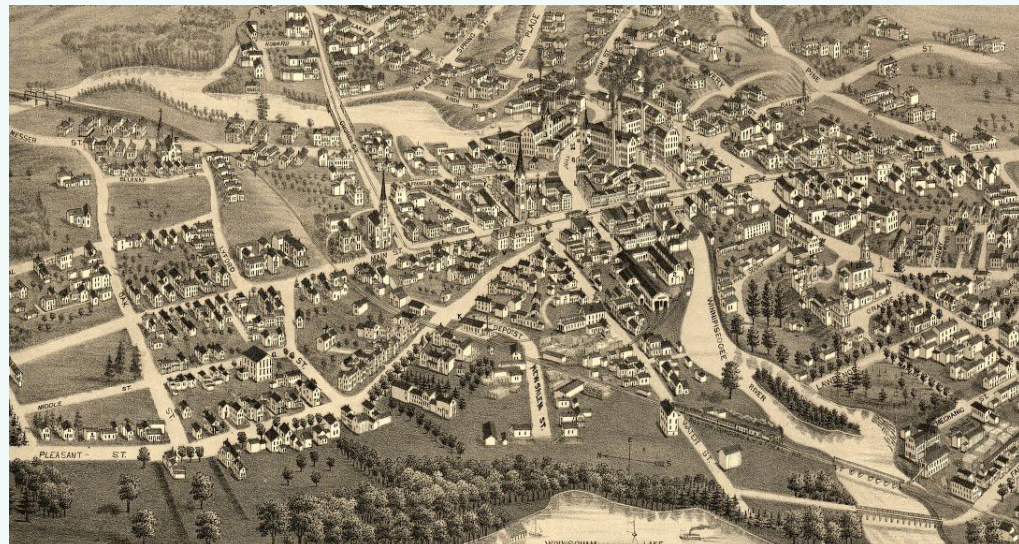
A Guide to the Historic Bridges of Laconia

Transportation in and around Laconia relies heavily on bridges, not only to cross many bodies of water, but also to support a network of railroads and highways. There are more than 25 bridges in the city, carrying motor vehicles, trains, and pedestrians. Fewer than half of the structures are historic—over fifty years old—and several of those are scheduled for replacement.

One old bridge was the Court Street Bridge that was removed in 2021. This guide was created by Preservation Company with support from Warren Huse, Laconia historian and author, in response to an agreement between the NHDOT, the US Army Corps of Engineers, the NH SHPO, and the City of Laconia as mitigation for the removal of that bridge.



Lakeport, 1883 (Library of Congress)



Laconia, 1883 (Library of Congress)

WHERE DO YOU FIND BRIDGES?

Water

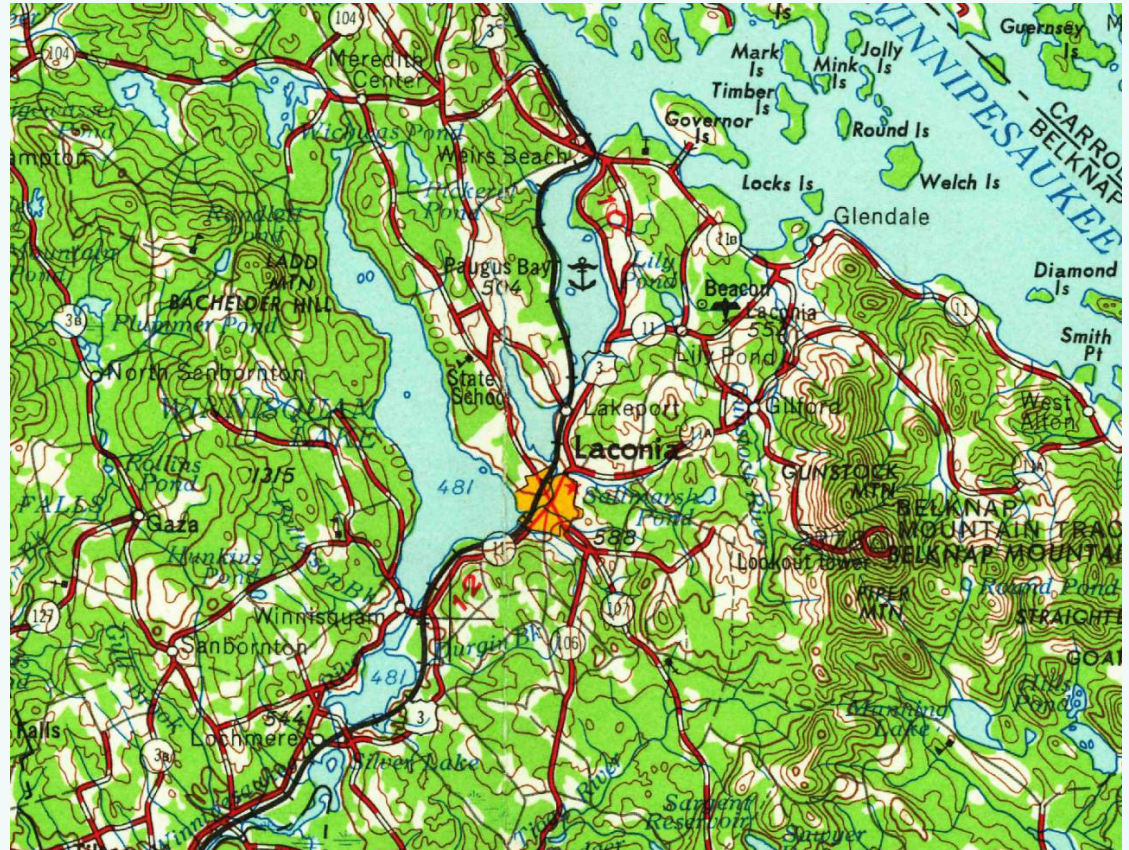
Water is a defining feature of Laconia, extending between the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee and Lake Winnisquam and along the Winnepesaukee River, which flows through lakes Paugus and Opechee. Waterpower was one of the factors that attracted colonial settlers to the region in the eighteenth century and fueled industrial growth in the nineteenth century. The natural lakes and falls were ideal sites for dams and mills. Villages grew up on the shores of these lakes and rivers, and the location required many bridges, the earliest of which were constructed of wood timbers.



1816 New Hampshire map by Philip Carrigain shows the early roads and water bodies, before the town of Laconia was formed from parts of Meredith, Gilford, and Gilmanton in 1855. There were bridges at The Weirs channel, Folsom's Bridge (Lakeport), Meredith Bridge in what is now downtown Laconia, and Union Bridge on Lake Winnisquam (David Rumsey Map Collection)

Highways

Laconia is at the intersection of north-south highways US Route 3 and NH Route 106 and NH Route 107, and east-west NH Route 11. These were historic routes that became part of the New Hampshire highway system in the early twentieth century, when local roads were improved with paving and new sturdier bridges. US Route 3 was one of the original north-south state highways, designated as the Merrimack Valley Road in 1907. Federal funding was received in 1916 to support upgrades for a new invention: motor vehicles. Named the Daniel Webster Highway in 1921, it was numbered US Route 3 in 1926. NH Route 11 was designated as an east-west state highway in 1915. Both US Route 3 and NH Route 11 passed through downtown Laconia until the Laconia Bypass was built in 1963-68 south and west of the downtown. The new highway used overpasses to cross NH Route 106 and NH Route 107, which are secondary north-south state highways. NH Route 106 north from Laconia and a portion of NH Route 107 to the south were part of the early Province Road between the Seacoast with the Upper Connecticut Valley.

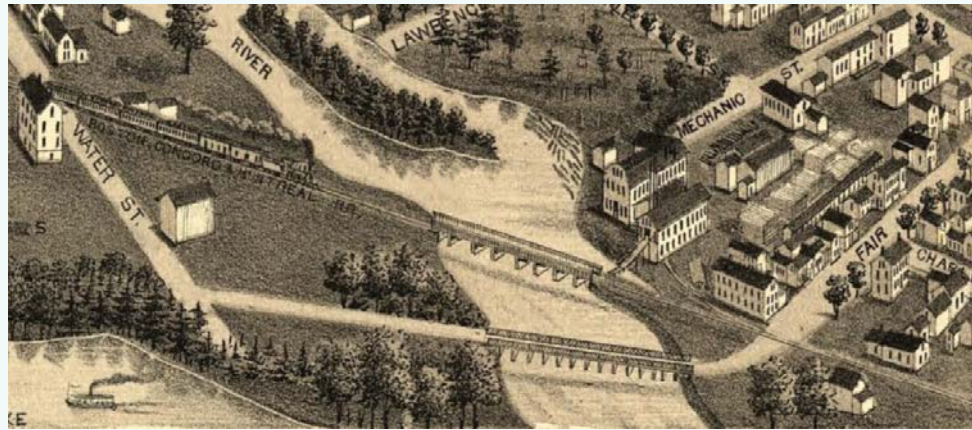


1963 USGS map shows the development of highways through and around Laconia before the bypass was built (USGS)

Railroads

Laconia still has an active railroad line that follows the lakeshores and crosses back and forth over the Winnepesaukee River. There are eight railroad-related bridges in Laconia, including long multi-span "trestles" and small culverts.

The railroad played a key role in the growth of industry and Lakes Region tourism in the nineteenth century. The Boston, Concord and Montreal Railroad was built through Laconia in 1848-49. The Concord and Montreal Railroad operated the route from 1889, and the Boston and Maine took the line over as the White Mountains Branch in 1895. A second railway, the Lakeshore Railroad, connected Lakeport with Alton Bay from 1890 to 1935. In the mid-20th century, service was cut back as cars and trucks replaced trains as the preferred mode of transportation. The last scheduled passenger train departed Laconia in January 1965.



1883 "Bird's Eye View of Laconia," detail shows a railroad bridge adjacent to the newly built Fair Street Bridge over the Winnepesaukee River (Library of Congress)

In 1975, the State of New Hampshire took over some of the bankrupt Boston and Maine routes, including the White Mountain Branch. Now, freight trains pass through downtown Laconia infrequently, but the Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad runs along the shoreline between Meredith, Weirs Beach and Lakeport. Recently the railroad corridor was adapted for recreational use as a paved multi-use recreational path alongside the tracks on the "WOW"—Winnepesaukee-Opechee-Winnisquam Trail.



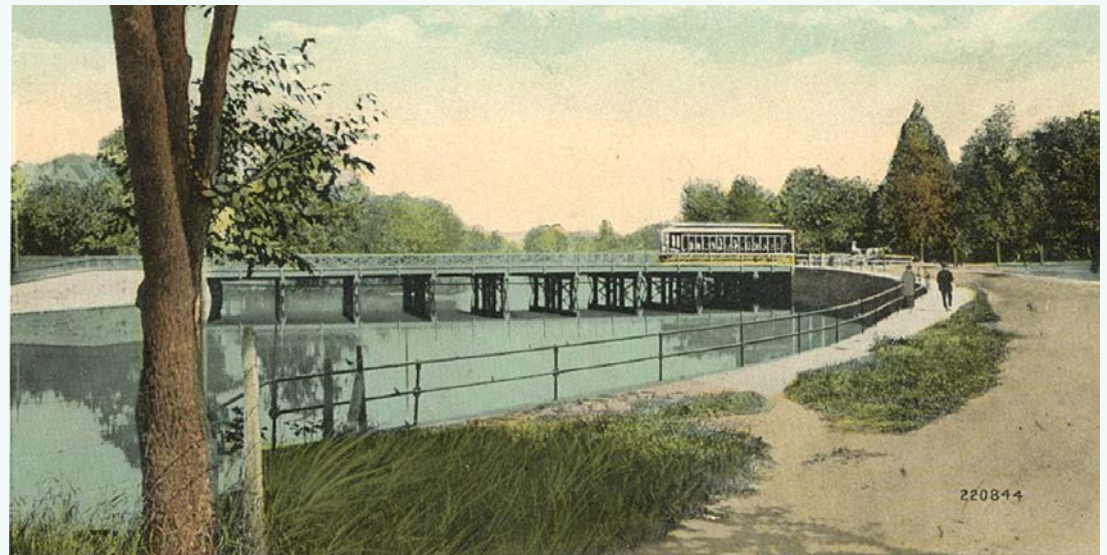
1970 aerial photo shows the railroad bridge and a second Fair Street Bridge, built in 1927 and replaced in 1973 (Laconia Historical and Museum Society)

Street Railways

Local transportation between downtown Laconia and Lakeport was provided by the Laconia Street Railway. Horse-drawn trolley cars operated from 1882, until the route was electrified in 1898. In 1899, the tracks were extended up Weirs Boulevard to The Weirs. Heavier vehicles, such as trains and streetcars, meant that most bridges needed to be strengthened to carry heavy loads. New engineering technology and steel construction at this time provided the solution. The streetcar era lasted until 1925 when buses replaced trolleys as public transportation.



An electric streetcar passes over the Weirs Channel truss bridge (www.weirsbeach.com)



CHURCH STREET BRIDGE, LACONIA, N. H.

A horse-drawn trolley car crosses the Church Street bridge (Laconia Public Library)

Where in Laconia?

Downtown Laconia currently has seven bridges over the Winnepesaukee River: four road, two railroad, and one foot bridge. The earliest bridge was built in 1764 about where the Main Street Bridge now stands. It connected the towns of Gilmanton, later Gilford, and Meredith. Meredith Bridge, as it was then called, became an important crossing on the Province Road that was constructed in 1769. As the village grew, additional bridges were built at Mill Street in the 1780s, followed by Messer Street ca. 1830, then Church Street ca. 1850, and Fair Street some decades later. The river was the town line with Gilford until 1874 when a portion of Gilford was annexed to the town of Laconia; another portion was annexed in 1893 when Laconia became a city.



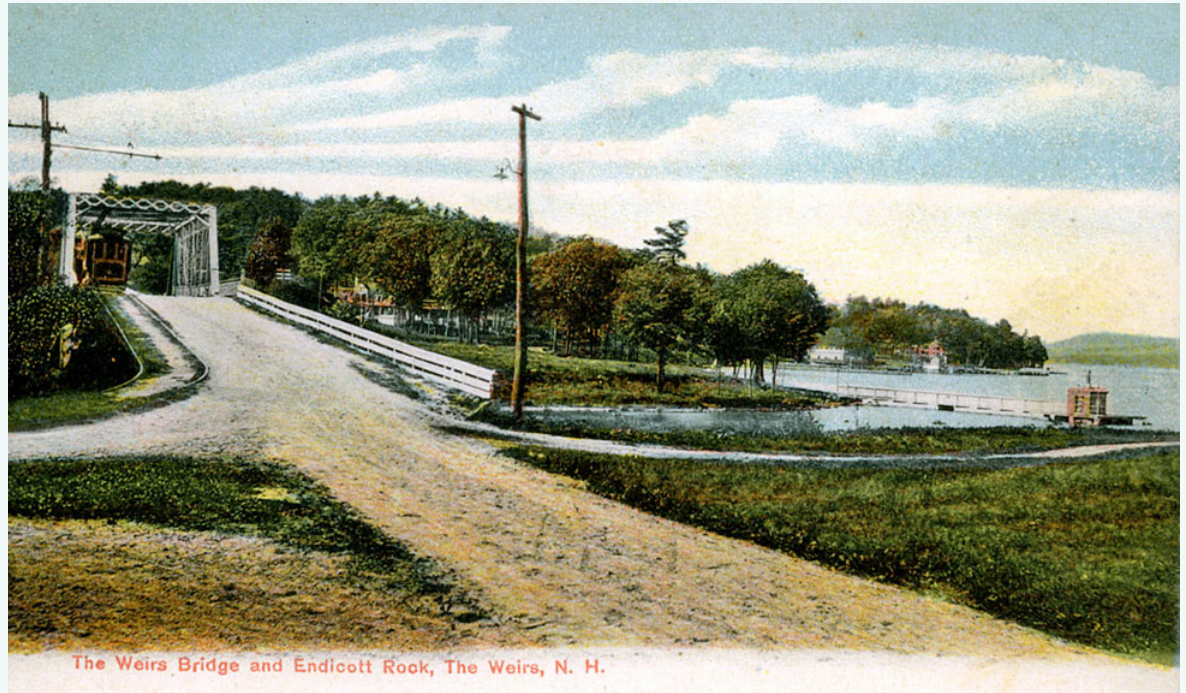
Early view of the Main Street Bridge in 1865 (Laconia Public Library)



Elm Street Bridge in Lakeport, ca. 1900 (Laconia Public Library)

Lakeport or Lake Village is located on the Winnepesaukee River between Lake Paugus (also known as Paugus Bay) and Lake Opechee. The first bridge in this area was built in 1782 at Gold Street where there is a footbridge now. It was called Folsom's Bridge for the nearby mill owner. A higher bridge was required after a new dam raised the water level in the mid-1800s. A second crossing was added in 1870 at Elm Street. The Lakeport Dam, rebuilt in 1957, still generates hydro-power and regulates the water level of the lakes above it.

Weirs Beach, near the outlet of Winnepesaukee's Meredith Bay, is Laconia's most popular summer destination. The railroad brought tourists to The Weirs in the late nineteenth century. Railroad overpasses were built to ensure safe crossing for cars and pedestrians over the tracks that ran along the shore. The historic bridges over the Weirs Channel included a wooden boxed pony truss bridge and two steel truss bridges before the present US Route 3 Bridge was built in 1933. The beach itself was created in the 1950s where there was once a bridge to Endicott Rock.

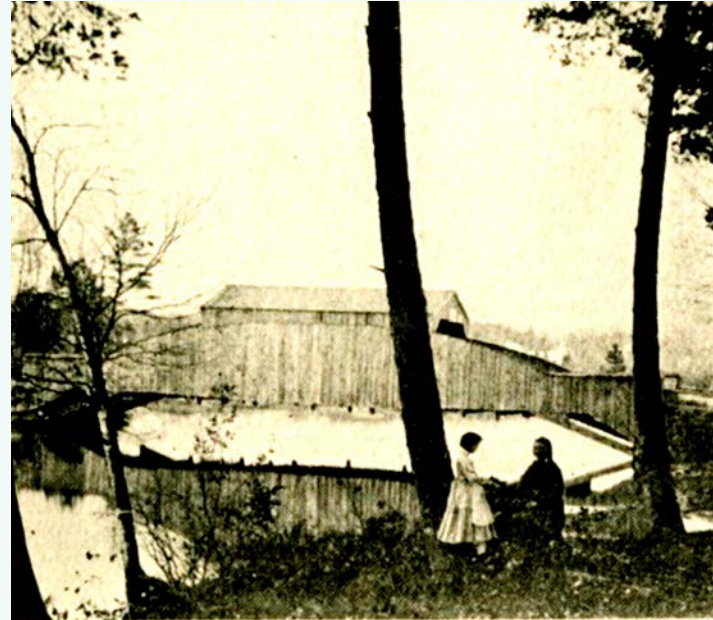


Weirs Channel Bridge facing toward Endicott Rock before the beach was created (Laconia Public Library)

Historic Bridge Types and Materials

In Laconia, bridge structures were replaced as engineering technology and traffic changed. The Main Street Bridge, for example, was rebuilt no fewer than seven times!

Wooden Bridges: The earliest bridges were **wooden stringer bridges** with two or more heavy parallel timbers supporting a wooden deck of crosswise planks. **Wooden truss bridges** in the United States were first popularized in the late eighteenth century. After 1800, through, or high, trusses were often covered to shelter them from the weather, resulting in the familiar "**covered bridge**." Some pony, or low, truss structures were also covered or boxed in for the same purpose. **Stone**, usually cut granite blocks, was used for the abutments supporting the ends of the bridges and piers in the middle. Multi-span bridges were sometimes supported by **timber trestles**, a braced wooden frame.



The original Messer Street covered bridge in the 1860s (Laconia Public Library)

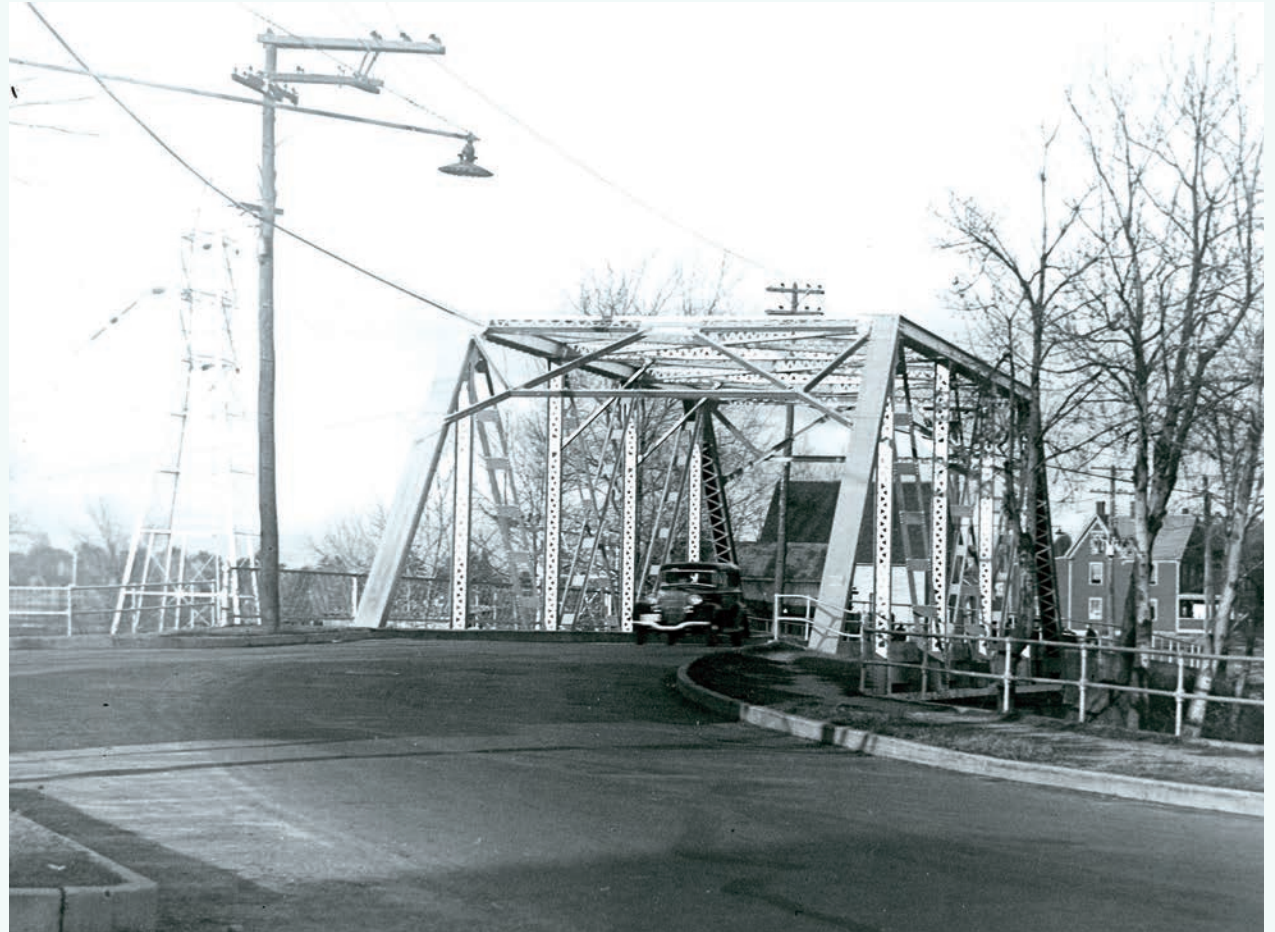


The Messer Street Bridge built ca. 1880 was an open deck type of suspension bridge supported by truss rods below the deck (Laconia Historical and Museum Society)

Metal Bridges: Metal was used increasingly for bridge construction from the mid-1800s. The railroads replaced many of their wooden bridges with wrought iron in the 1870s and used steel from the 1880s-90s.

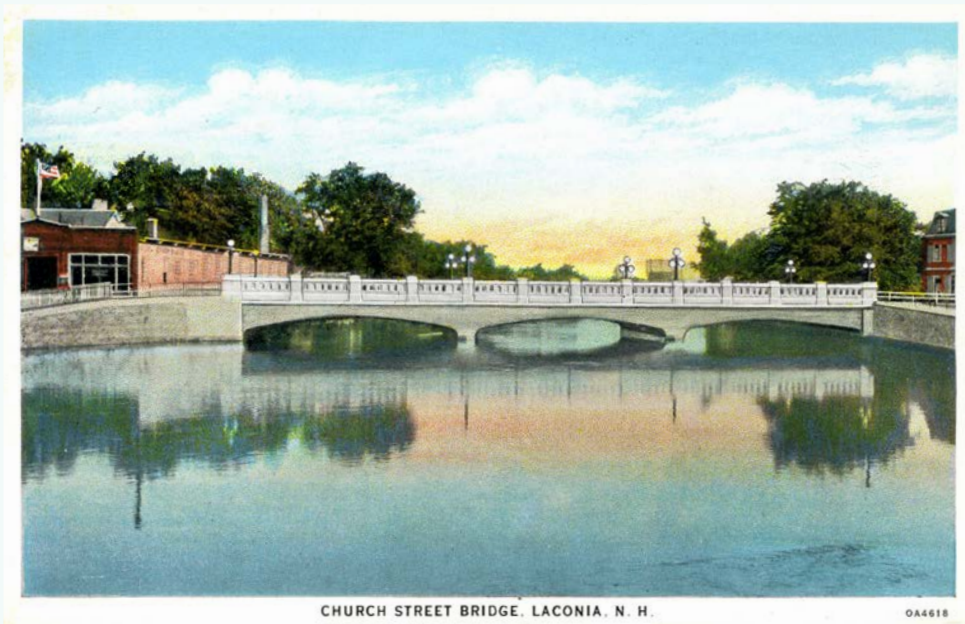
Truss bridges, supported by two parallel structures built up of a series of metal triangles, were common in the late nineteenth century. They were prefabricated by a foundry and erected on site. Connections were made by pins and then rivets until welding was adopted in the 1950s.

Girder bridges are a common type with parallel metal beams supporting a deck of concrete or railroad ties. The most common girder is the **I-beam**, which has an I-shaped cross section. Plate girders are built up of metal plates bolted or riveted together. Rolled steel I-beams are molded in one piece with integral top and bottom flanges. Steel girders are still the most common bridge support for longer spans. There are a total of ten I-beam bridges with concrete decks and several girder railroad bridges in Laconia today.



The 1923 Messer Street Bridge was a steel Pratt through truss type bridge (Laconia Historical and Museum Society)

Concrete Bridges: The beginning of the twentieth century saw the paving of roads for automobile traffic and the use of concrete for bridges, including abutments and decks. Cast in place reinforced concrete with embedded steel rods was poured on site in wooden forms. **Concrete slab bridges**, where the concrete deck with embedded steel is also the supporting structure, have been used for short spans since the early 1900s. **Concrete closed spandrel deck arch bridges** were popular for their classical appearance in the 1910s-30s. The Weirs Channel Bridge is a good example covered in granite to resemble a stone arch. **Concrete rigid frame bridges** are a single poured concrete structure with a metal frame, like a box culvert. **Prestressed concrete I-beam bridges** have been built since the 1950s. Precast off-site, the beams have high tension wires or cables embedded in them, stretched prior to casting the concrete in a mold. Laconia has three prestressed concrete bridges.



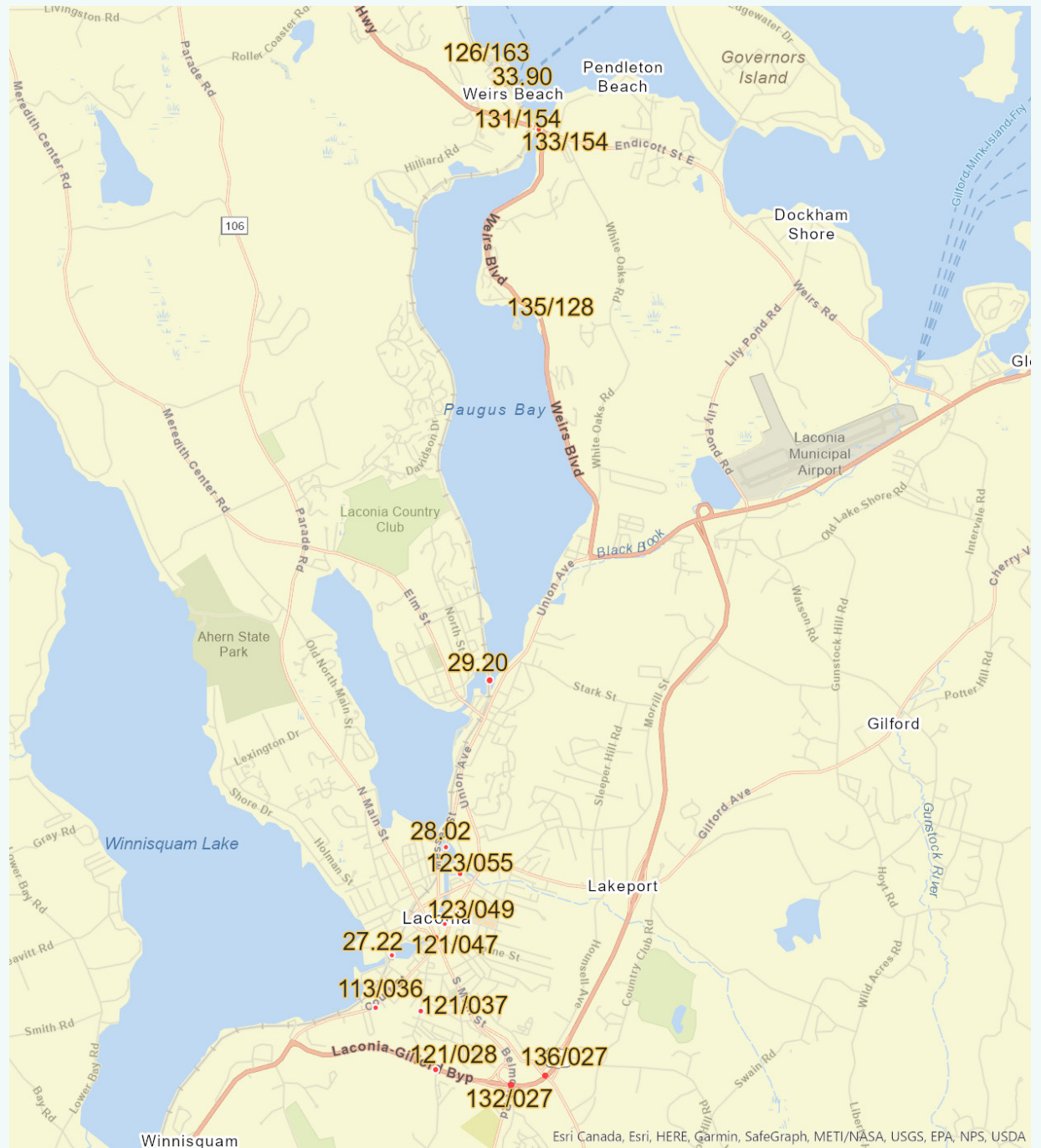
The 1928 Church Street Bridge was a closed spandrel concrete bridge (Laconia Public Library)



The modern Church Street Bridge built in 1981 is an I-beam bridge with a concrete deck (Preservation Company)

Historic Bridges in Laconia

Bridges in Laconia that were built or substantially reconstructed over 50 years ago are presented below in geographical order from north to south, beginning in Weirs Beach and ending south of downtown Laconia. Bridges are identified by NHDOT bridge number or railroad marker number.

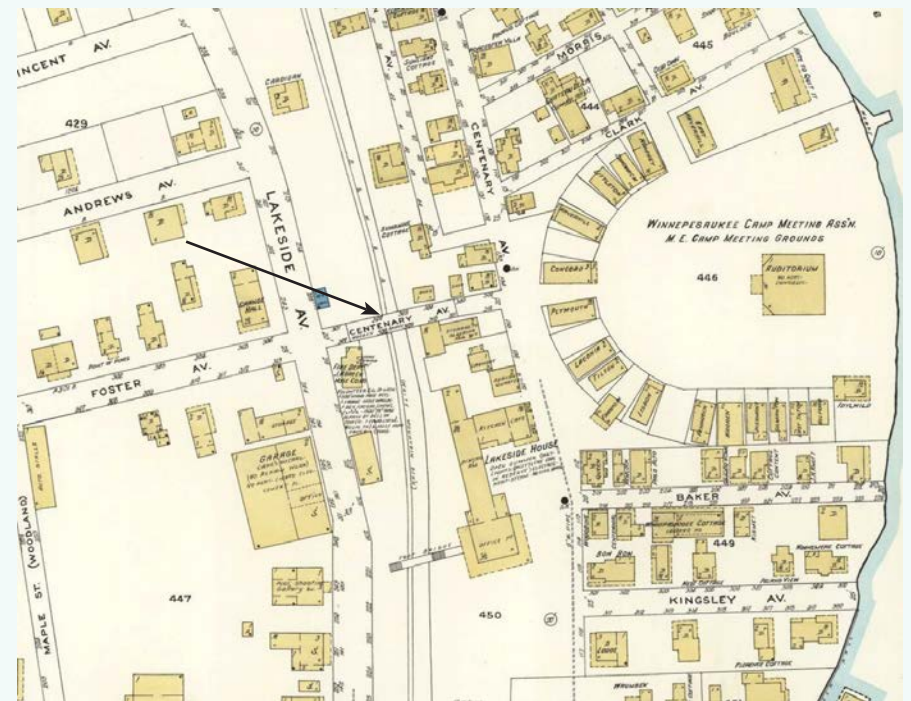


Overall map of historic bridges in Laconia

126/163, 33.94

Centenary Avenue Bridge over Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad, 1940

The Centenary Avenue Bridge passes over the railroad tracks in Weirs Beach, connecting the Lakeside Avenue downtown with the former Methodist camp meeting ground. The **timber stringer bridge** was built in 1940 to replace an older wooden bridge. The bridge has timber beams supported on timber trestle bents typical of Boston and Maine Railroad overpasses of the early twentieth century, with concrete and stone footings and mortared cut stone abutments. Its wooden parts have been replaced over the years, including a new timber deck in 2016-17. After the camp meeting ground was established on the lakeshore in 1874, carriages and pedestrians crossed the tracks at grade until the first wooden overpass was built here in the late 1890s when the railroad became part of the Boston and Maine system. Today, the Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad operates on the state-owned line between Meredith, Weirs Beach and Lakeport. This is the only historic timber bridge remaining in Laconia.



1923 Sanborn Map shows the Centenary Avenue bridge connecting Lakeside Ave to the Methodist Camp Meeting Grounds, and the footbridge to the Lakeside House to the south (Library of Congress)



Centenary Avenue Bridge, facing north, 2021 (Preservation Company)

33.90

Pedestrian Bridge over Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad, 1917

A riveted steel frame footbridge crosses the railroad tracks between the Winnepesaukee Marketplace, formerly the Lakeside House hotel, and Lakeside Avenue. The **metal deck truss bridge** has the shape of a kingpost truss built on an incline. The original decorative metal corner posts of the bridge support an arched metal canopy and globe lights, added in the 1980s when the old summer hotel was remodeled. The bridge was built by the hotel owner in 1917 as an attraction for customers who wanted easy access across the tracks from where their automobiles would be parked. They could summon a porter with a buzzer mounted on the bridge, and a valet would park the car in a large garage that stood across the street. Nearby Lakeside Avenue amusements included shops, a pool hall, casino and music hall. The footbridge is numbered 33.90 by the railroad, indicating the number of miles north of the Concord station.



*1985 photo before remodeling of hotel and bridge canopy
(www.weirsbeach.com)*



*Footbridge with canopy, Winnepesaukee Marketplace at right,
looking toward the Centenary Avenue Bridge visible in the
distance, 2021 (Preservation Company)*

US Route 3 Bridge over Winnipiesaukee Scenic Railroad, 1848/1933/2020

The US Route 3 bridge over the railroad tracks at Weirs Beach was rehabilitated in 2020 with a new concrete deck. The old granite abutments remain in place underneath. The original bridge was erected in 1848 for the Boston, Concord & Montreal Railroad, later owned by the Boston and Maine. In 1933, heavier traffic required rebuilding of the overpass at the same time as the adjacent highway bridge, and the steel and wood beam deck was replaced with a **reinforced concrete slab**.



2021 view facing northwest, with original stone abutments still visible (Preservation Company)



1940 view facing southeast (NHDOT)



2021 view facing southeast (Preservation Company)

US Route 3 Bridge over Weirs Channel, 1933

The Weirs Channel Bridge at the southern end of Weirs Beach offers scenic views of Lake Winnepesaukee from its sidewalk and lookout points. This was an early crossing where a bridge was built in 1803-04. In the 1830s, a raised bridge was erected over the channel to accommodate the steamboats that carried freight and passengers around the lakes. It was a wooden boxed pony truss bridge, which had side walls but no roof. In 1883, the Town of Laconia erected a new steel truss bridge, but the electric streetcar line required a stronger bridge, a Pratt truss, which was installed in 1899. The current bridge was built in 1933 to carry the Daniel Webster Highway/US Route 3 over the channel. Sometimes called the Aqueductan Stone Bridge, taking the name of the Native American fishing village once located on the shore, it is not a stone bridge but a **stone-faced concrete bridge**. The closed-spandrel side walls of the semi-elliptical arch are solid concrete. The ashlar cut granite facing was quarried in Concord, NH. The bridge was designed by the New Hampshire Highway Department and built by a Manchester contractor. Federal Aid highway funds were used as well as Depression-era funding to provide relief work for the unemployed. Local men were hired, with as many as seventy-five men on the job at a time. Work began in December 1932 and was complete before the tourist season the following June.



1940s view looking toward Endicott Rock Park (www.weirsbeach.com)



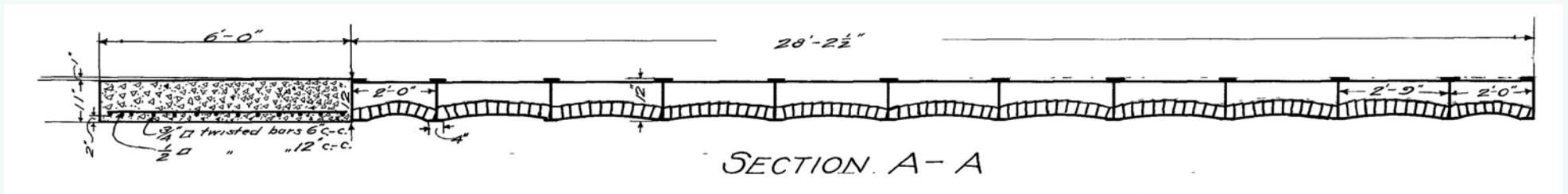
Looking toward Endicott Rock in 2021 (Preservation Company)

US Route 3-Weirs Boulevard Bridge over Langley Brook, 1898/1933

The US Route 3 bridge over Langley Brook was built in two stages. The upstream side is a **steel I-beam bridge** with a **brick jack arch deck** on granite block abutments, dating to 1898. Weirs Boulevard was built then as a waterfront carriageway between Lakeport and Weirs Beach and was also the route of the electric street railway. A few years later, it was incorporated into the state highway that became US Route 3. The original bridge, visible only on the underside, is the oldest jack arch bridge standing in the state, and the only brick-lined example. The jack arch deck method of construction had arches of poured concrete or brick between a series of parallel metal I-beams, with concrete poured on top to encase the stringers and form a deck. The 1930s reconstruction of the Daniel Webster Highway/US Route 3 included widening the bridge with a **reinforced concrete slab** extension and concrete abutments on the downstream side.



Upstream side ca. 1940, facing west (NHDOT)



Original cross-section drawing of the bridge showing the many arches comprising the jack arch bridge (NHDOT)



Underside of 1898 jack arch bridge (NHDOT)



Downstream side ca. 1940 (NHDOT)



Downstream side 2021 (Preservation Company)

29.20

Lakeport Railroad Bridge, 1892/1990

Near the outlet of Paugus Bay, the railroad bridge includes a drawbridge span installed in 1990 to allow boat passage to and from the nearby marinas. The older **timber pile trestle bridge** remains at either end. The railroad, operated for many years as the White Mountain Branch of the Boston and Maine, has been maintained by the State of New Hampshire since the 1970s. Water traffic now takes precedence over railroad traffic. The steel stringer drawbridge is kept open except when the train tracks are in use.



Lakeport Drawbridge, facing southeast, 2021 (Preservation Company)



1880s view facing northeast, showing the earlier Lakeport railroad bridge with a wooden boxed pony truss bridge over the water (Laconia Public Library)

Closed Bridge over Jewett Brook, ca. 1915

A closed bridge on a discontinued street off Davis Place is an example of an **I-beam stringer bridge** with concrete deck and concrete abutments. The steel beams underneath the bridge are encased in concrete as well, a common practice from 1900-1940 to protect the metal from corrosion. Steel stringer bridges are among the most common bridge type, with parallel I-beams supporting a slab deck. Nearby on Jewett Brook, the Davis Place bridge was rebuilt by the City of Laconia in 2006 (124/055) while the adjacent historic factory building was being renovated.



I-beam stringer bridge, 2021 (Preservation Company)

Mill Street Footbridge over Winnepesaukee River, 1958

The riverfront where Laconia's historic brick mills are located can be viewed from the pedestrian bridge at Mill Plaza. There has been a bridge in this location since 1788. The existing footbridge opened in November of 1958, replacing a wooden bridge that had been closed to vehicular traffic since 1949. The two-span **I-beam bridge** has steel stringers on concrete piers and a concrete deck. Just upriver is the Avery Dam, rebuilt in 1949 where there has been a dam since 1791 or perhaps earlier. Three water-powered textile and hosiery mills that replaced earlier saw and grist mills still stand nearby. The Belknap Mill built in 1823, the Busiel-Seeburg Mill, built in 1853 and enlarged in 1878, and the 1922 Pitman Hosiery mill on the opposite bank of the river were preserved in the 1970s when much of the riverfront was cleared for urban renewal. The Avery Dam still provides waterpower to two electric turbines, and automatic gates control the water level of Lake Opechee.



Previous Mill Street Bridge in 1949, looking downstream, before reconstruction of Avery Dam, with Busiel hosiery mill at right, Tilton and Pitman mills opposite (Laconia Historical and Museum Society)



Mill Street Footbridge in 2021, looking upstream with the Avery Dam and 1985 hydroelectric plant in background (Preservation Company)

121 / 047

Main Street-NH Route 106, Beacon Street East and Beacon Street West over Winnepesaukee River, 1970/2015

The bridge under Main Street and Beacon Street East and West in downtown Laconia was substantially reconstructed in 2014-2015. The unusual U-shaped design dates to the late 1960s, when Main Street and the riverfront were redeveloped as an Urban Renewal project. Nineteenth-century commercial and industrial buildings were demolished and replaced by Mid-Century Modern business blocks, parking, and public open spaces. The curved **steel stringer bridge** on concrete piers consists of three distinct but connected structures. Bridge construction took place 1969-70, and the original engineers were Alonzo B. Reed, Inc., of Boston. The rehabilitation was designed by Dubois & King, Inc.



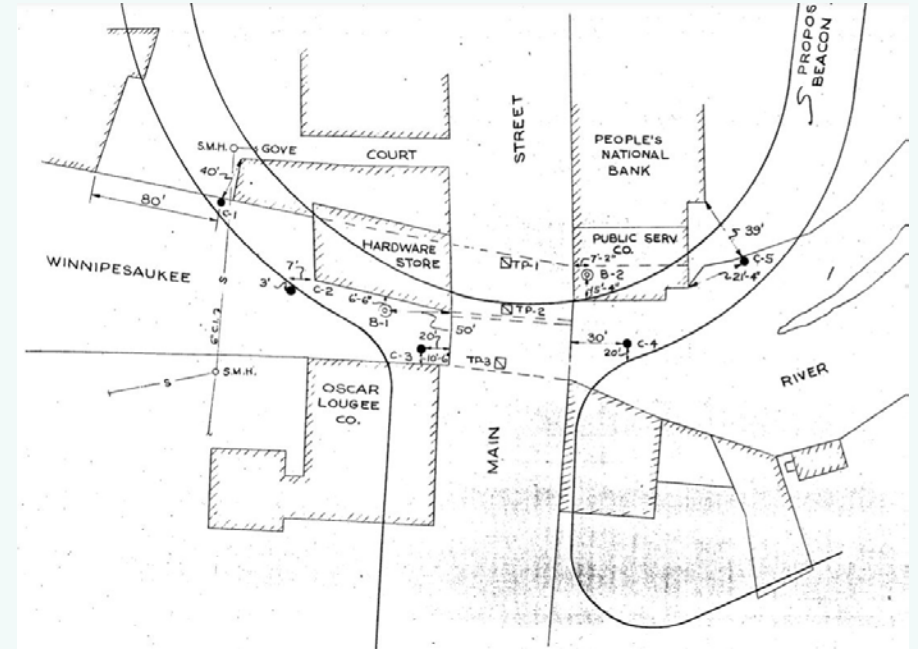
Beacon Street East under construction in 1969, facing northeast, with old Main Street Bridge in foreground (Laconia Public Library)



2014 Beacon Street East reconstruction, looking south (Dubois & King)



Old Main Street Bridge in Downtown Laconia in the 1930s or 1940s, showing buildings later demolished for Urban Renewal (Huse 2017, courtesy of Dean Dexter)



1968 Plan shows buildings to be removed (NHDOT)



2016 satellite view (Google Earth)

28.02

Railroad Bridge over Winnepesaukee River near Messer Street, 1894

The railroad tracks cross the river twice in downtown Laconia on long **deck plate girder bridges** off Messer and Fair streets. The 1890s was a period of railroad improvements, and steel was widely adopted to replace timber bridges. The girders are parallel I-beams built up of steel plates and angles that were bolted or riveted together. The former Boston, Concord and Montreal Railroad has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a linear historic district.



View of railroad bridge from Messer Street Bridge, 2021 (Preservation Company)

27.22

Railroad Bridge over Winnepesaukee River near Fair Street, 1893

The railroad tracks cross the river on a 228-foot-long, multi-span **deck plate girder bridge**. The six spans are supported by low stone and concrete piers and stone abutments. The timber railroad ties that form the bridge deck were replaced most recently in 2015. For many years, the tracks in downtown Laconia were only used by occasional freight or excursion trains until the Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad introduced special "rail bike" tours in 2021.



View of railroad bridge from Fair Street Bridge, 2021 (Preservation Company)

113 / 036

Court Street-US Route 3-NH Business Route 11A Bridge over Durkee Brook, 1912

This guide to Laconia bridges was prepared as mitigation for the 2021 replacement of the historic Court Street Bridge, which was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The concrete-encased **steel girder bridge**, erected in 1912 and stamped with the construction date, was built of multiple parallel I-beams covered in poured concrete to protect the metal from corrosion. It had a cast-in-place reinforced concrete slab deck and fieldstone abutments. The pipe railings were typical of the early twentieth century. The bridge was designed and built by the City of Laconia, as bridges were still a local responsibility in the early 1900s when the Merrimack Valley Road was first improved as a state highway. US Route 3 passed directly through downtown Laconia until the bypass opened in 1968 and Court Street became US 3 Route Business loop.



Court Street Bridge in 1940 (NHDOT)



Court Street Bridge in 2019 (NHDOT)

121/037

Academy Street over Durkee Brook, ca. 1912

Durkee Brook flows through the southern part of the city into Lake Winnisquam near Bartlett Beach. The bridge on Academy Street near the historic Union Cemetery is a concrete-encased **steel stringer bridge**, similar to the old Court Street Bridge and was likely built around the same time. The 1911 City annual report noted the need to replace the old bridge as quickly as possible. As of 2022 it is slated to be replaced again soon. .

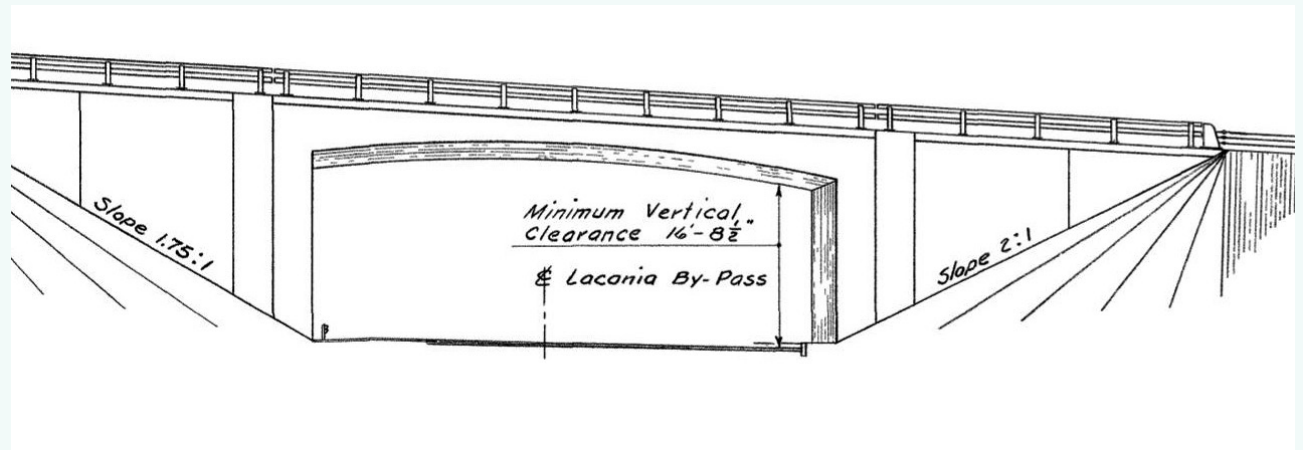


Academy Street Bridge, 2019 (NHDOT)

132/027

NH Route 106-Belmont Road over US Route 3-NH Route 11, 1963/2003

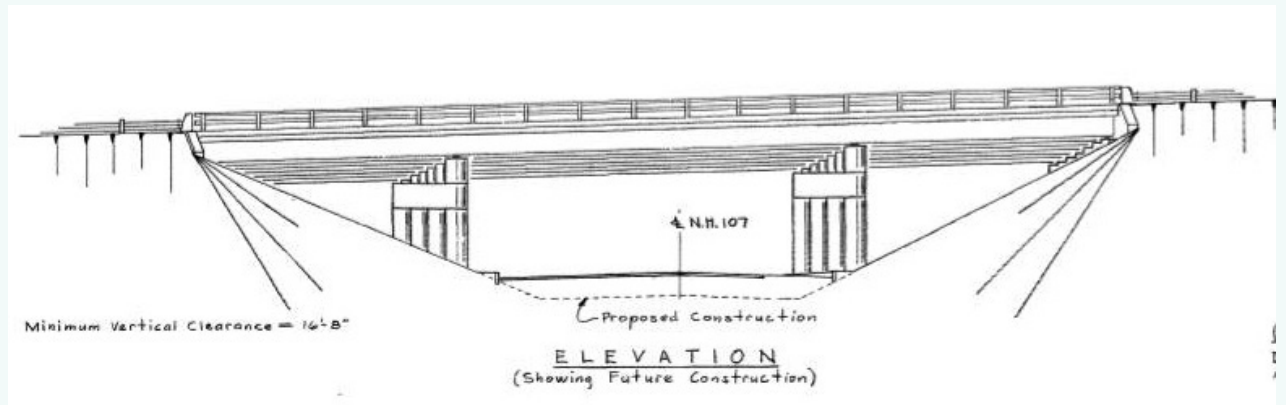
Each of the overpasses on the Laconia Bypass, built 1963-68, is a different type of bridge. All were designed by the New Hampshire Department of Public Works and Highways to meet different engineering requirements. On NH Route 106 southeast of the downtown, Belmont Road crosses over the US Route 3-NH Route 11 Laconia Bypass on a **rigid frame reinforced concrete bridge**. It displays the characteristic shallow arched soffit and continuous reinforced concrete abutments and superstructure. The bridge was rehabbed with new curbs and rails in 2003.



Recent view facing east on US Route 3/NH Route 11 (NHDOT)

US Route 3-NH Route 11 over NH Route 107-Province Road, 1963/1993

US Route 3-NH Route 11, the Daniel Webster Highway, passes over NH Route 107, which is the road to Gilmanton. The 1963 bridge was rehabilitated in 1993 and again in 2017. It is a typical example of a **steel I-beam stringer bridge** with a reinforced concrete deck, on reinforced concrete cap and column piers, and short, stub abutments. US Route 3 is elevated over NH Route 107 on sloping fill embankments. The bridge has a slight skew and slope, and the height of the slanted deck is supported by columns of varying heights.



Original drawing of the southeast elevation, 1963 (NHDOT)

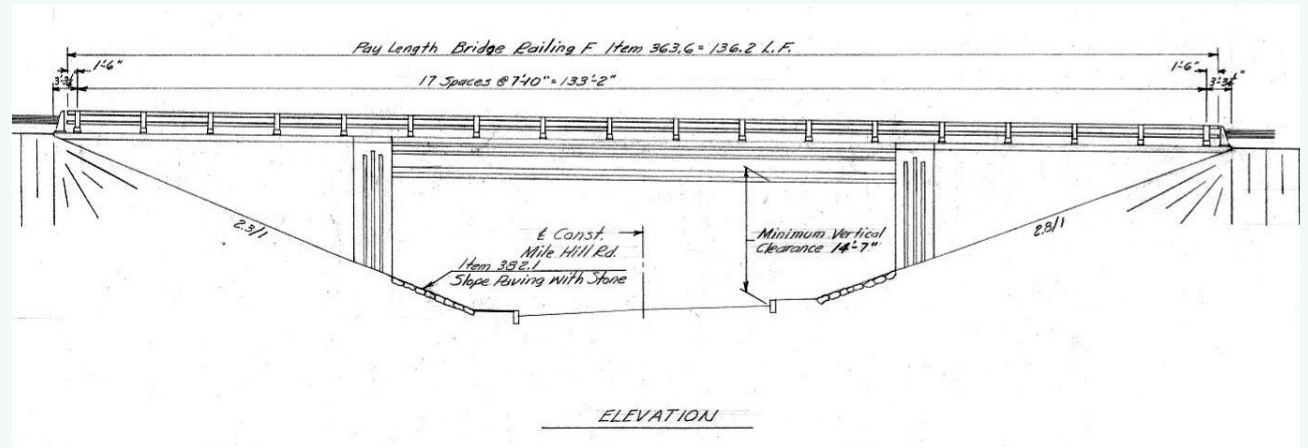


Recent view looking northwest on NH Route 107/Province Road (NHDOT)

121/028

US Route 3-NH Route 11 over Mile Hill Road, 1967

The Mile Hill Road overpass dates to the 1960s when the Laconia Bypass portion of the Daniel Webster Highway was built around the downtown. This was the last of three overpasses to be designed. It is a **prestressed concrete I-beam bridge** built of high-strength, precast concrete beams, with tension or stress applied before the beam is placed in position. Concrete beams could be longer, lighter, and less expensive than steel, so prestressed concrete became the most common type of bridge beam in the latter part of the twentieth century.



Original drawing of the south elevation, 1967 (NHDOT)



2021 view of US Route 3-NH Route 11 Bridge over Mile Hill Road, north elevation, facing south (Preservation Company)

Other Modern Bridges

Summit Avenue Bridge to Governor's Island (062/077) spans the Laconia-Gilford line. The current bridge dates to 1981 with repairs in 2020. There has been a bridge to the island since the early 1800s.

Union Avenue-US Route 3 Business-NH Route 107 Bridge over Black Brook (136/092) on the east side of Paugus Bay, north of Lakeport, is a concrete slab bridge built ca. 1975 in place of an early twentieth century structure.

Gold Street Footbridge over Winnepesaukee River (124/078) in Lakeport is a low truss bridge built in 2003. This was the location of the original bridge in the village but has been a pedestrian only crossing for over a century.

Elm Street Bridge over Winnepesaukee River (124/076) is a prestressed concrete bridge built in 2003. It replaced a reinforced concrete bridge built in 1914 under the direction of long-time City Engineer Col. Charles A. French in place of the original wooden bridge of 1870.

Bridge Street Footbridge over Railroad Tracks in Lakeport is a steel pedestrian overpass built 2003 in place of a timber vehicular bridge. It crosses the tracks and the WOW Trail.

Messer Street Bridge over Winnepesaukee River (122/058) is an I-beam bridge with concrete deck completed in 1980. The original crossing was via a covered bridge. It was replaced ca. 1880 and again in 1923 when a steel truss bridge was designed by Charles A. French.

Union Avenue-US Business Route 3 Bridge over Jewett Brook (126/055) in downtown Laconia is a concrete slab bridge erected in 1978-79 in place of a 1913 bridge. Union Avenue is the main road connecting Laconia and Lakeport and was the streetcar route from the 1880s to the 1920s.

Highland Street Bridge over Jewett Brook (130/056), located east of the downtown, dates to 1989. It is a concrete rigid frame, cast monolithically. It replaced a 1910 bridge that was I-beams on split stone abutments.

Church Street Bridge over Winnepesaukee River (123/052) is a 90.5-foot-long, I-beam bridge with concrete deck, built in 1981. It replaced a 1928 concrete closed spandrel arch bridge, that in turn had replaced a nineteenth century timber trestle. The nearby footbridge over the Perley Canal inlet was rebuilt in 2018.

Fair Street Bridge over Winnepesaukee River (114/042) was built in 1973 and received a new deck in 2007. It carries the street and the WOW Trail over the river near the mouth, at Lake Winnisquam. The original wooden bridge at this crossing was built in the 1880s, replaced by a two-span steel truss bridge in 1927.

WOW Trail over Durkee Brook crosses a new pedestrian bridge alongside the railroad tracks near Bartlett Beach on Lake Winnisquam.

Laconia's history is remarkably well documented. The following references informed this document and offer a wealth of additional information.

More historic photographs

Lakes Region History online: <https://laconia.pastperfectonline.com>

Books by Warren D. Huse:

Laconia. Mount Pleasant, SC: *Images of America* series, 1995

The Weirs. Mount Pleasant, SC: *Images of America* series, 1996

Lakeport. Mount Pleasant, SC: *Images of America* series, 1999

Celebrate Laconia: 125 Years of the Lake City. Laconia, NH:

The Laconia Daily Sun, 2017

More history

<https://www.laconiahistory.com>

<https://www.lwhs.us/history.htm>

<http://weirsbeach.com>

<https://www.belknapmill.org/museum>

<https://www.lakesregion.org/play/scenic-drives-historic-walks/laconia-river-tour>

More bridge information

Bridgehunter.com: <https://bridgehunter.com/nh/belknap/>

USDOT Historic Bridges: https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_topics/historic_pres/bridges.aspx

NHDOT Bridge Design: <https://www.nh.gov/dot/org/projectdevelopment/bridgedesign/documents.htm>

NHDOT Project Viewer: <https://nhdotprojects.sr.unh.edu/>

NHDOT Historic Bridge Review: <https://nh.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ebf189a3e44842d5a0b7669344adf925>



Col. Charles French's 1914 Lakeport (Elm Street) Bridge (Huse 2017, courtesy of Michael Brough).