

The Historic Bridges of Essex County

The American historian Richard Sanders Allen once said about the historic bridges over the Ausable River that there are “few watercourses in America, comparable in length to the Ausable, over which so many early bridge types remain.” Although since he made that observation, several of the Ausable River’s bridges have been destroyed, there still remain an unusually large number of historic bridges over the river and within Essex County. Besides providing important transportation connections, these bridges are rare works of American civil engineering, they attract visitors, are a tremendous source of community pride, and are part of what make Essex County such an extraordinary place to live and visit.

The following is a list of the *designated* historic bridges located entirely or in part in Essex County. Their designation may be one or more of the following: National Register of Historic Places (NR), State Register of Historic Places (SR); or National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark (NHCEL). For each bridge, there is a brief description of its historic and engineering importance and its current condition and status.

State Owned Bridges



Ausable Chasm Bridge (Ausable Chasm, NR/SR). This bridge was built between 1932 and 1934 by Burr Stark of Hadley, New York for \$63,323. It includes a 212’ steel arch span, two 52’ stone-faced, concrete arch approach spans, and other retaining walls and landscape features faced with local sandstone and granite. The bridge was extensively rehabilitated in the 1990s and is in good condition.



Wilmington Bridge (Wilmington, NR/SR). This two-span, stone-faced, concrete arch bridge was built between 1934 and 1935 by C. L. Smith for \$70,375. It was built at about the same time as the Whiteface Veterans Memorial Highway. Both used rough hewn granite as a way of making the structures fit well with their natural surroundings. The 160’ bridge was rehabilitated in the 1990s and is in good condition.



Lake Champlain Bridge (Crown Point, SR). This bridge was designed by the Boston firm of Fay, Spofford and Thorndike and was completed in 1929. The Champlain Bridge has the distinction of being the first bridge in America to employ a continuous truss that swings gracefully from its Warren deck-truss approach spans to a channel-span through truss with curving upper and lower chords. The Lake Champlain Bridge is the most significant work of bridge engineering in the Adirondack-Lake Champlain region and has been determined eligible for National Historic Landmark designation.

County Owned Bridges

Old State Road Bridge (Ausable Chasm, NR/SR). Until the completion of the Ausable Chasm Bridge in 1934, this one lane, pin-connected, Pratt pony truss bridge carried all of the north-south traffic on New York State Route 9 through the hamlet of Ausable Chasm. The bridge was built circa 1890 and included a cantilevered sidewalk that faced Rainbow and Horseshow Falls and the beginning of the Chasm. One visitor remarked around the turn-of-the-century that “no words of mine are adequate to describe the view from that bridge.” The bridge has been closed since 2004.



Stone Arch Bridge (Keeseville, NR/SR, NHCEL). This 110’ stone arch span was completed in 1843 by local mason Solomon Townsend. It uses native sandstone, taken from the Ausable River, and cut limestone from Willsboro Point. It is the oldest bridge in the Adirondack-Lake Champlain region and was extensively rehabilitated within the past eight years.



Swing Bridge (Keeseville, NR/SR, NHCEL). This is a pedestrian suspension bridge built by the Berlin Iron Bridge Company in 1888 at a cost of \$3,500. It was built at a time when Keeseville was a thriving industrial community and the bridge helped villagers to get between various places on either side of the river. It is a rare surviving example of a 19th century suspension bridge and one of only two made by this company that still survives. The bridge has not had any substantial work done on it in many years.



River Street or Upper Bridge (Keeseville, NR/SR, NHCEL). Built in 1878 by Murray, Dougal & Company from Milton, Pennsylvania, this is the oldest Pratt through truss bridge in New York State and one of only 75 cast and wrought iron bridges left in the entire country. The bridge, along with the Stone Arch Bridge and Swing Bridge, were designated as National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 1987, a designation they share with nationally known structures like the Brooklyn Bridge, Erie Canal, and Golden Gate Bridge. The bridge is presently closed.

Jay Covered Bridge (Jay, SR). The Jay Covered Bridge was built in 1857, after a “freshet” the preceding year washed away almost every bridge and dam along the East and Main Branches of the Ausable River. The bridge was extensively reconstructed over the past several years and was reopened to pedestrian use in 2006.



Walton Bridge (Keene, NR/SR). This bridge was originally built circa 1890 by the Berlin Iron Bridge Company in Black Brook (Clinton County) and was moved to its present location in Keene around 1925. It is a 96’ long, pin-connected, lenticular or parabolic truss bridge and is one of only about 40 of this type that still survives in the United States. It is presently closed to vehicular traffic but is still used by pedestrians.

Town Owned Bridges



Frasier Bridge (Ticonderoga, NR). This two span, stone arch bridge was built over the Lachute River in 1875.

Privately Owned Bridges

Ranney Bridge (Keene, NR/SR). This pin-connected, Pratt pony truss bridge was built in 1902 by the Canton Iron Bridge Company of Canton, Ohio. It was originally located near New Russia and was moved to its present location, where it provides access to camps on the east side of the river, around 1925.

Beer’s Bridge (Keene, NR/SR). This pin-connected, Pratt pony truss bridge was built circa 1900. It was originally located elsewhere in Essex County and was moved to its present location, where it provides access to camps on the east side of the river, around 1925.

Notman Bridge (Keene, NR/SR). This stone-faced, concrete arch bridge was built in 1913 for the Notman family, to provide access to their camp on the east side of the river. It was built by stone masons from Staten Island, working with local builder Clarence Edmonds. It was extensively rehabilitated in 1989.

Slater’s Bridge (Keene, NR/SR). This pin-connected, Pratt pony truss bridge was built circa 1900 and originally carried (what is now) NYS Route 73 where it crosses the Ausable River near Marcy Field. In about 1935, it was moved to its present location in St. Hubert’s to provide access to logging operations in the vicinity.

Other Essex County Bridge Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places

Otis Road Bridge (Elizabethtown). This Warren pony truss bridge over the Boquet River was built in 1914.

Acid Plant Bridge (Jay). This Pratt through truss bridge was built in the late 1930s to carry a narrow gauge railroad between J. & J. Roger’s pulp and paper mills.