

Wadley Falls Bridge

(Text and photos from the Lee Heritage Commission)



WADLEY'S BRIDGE, LEE, N. H.

It is believed that the stone abutments shown in the picture above and constructed in 1896 are the abutments that are still in place 116 years later. Quality stone work.

The Wadley Falls Bridge Replacement in 1896

For an unknown reason the bridge at Wadley Falls was replaced with an iron bridge supplied by the Berlin Bridge Co in 1886. The total cost of the bridge was \$1,962.31 including the 722 dollars paid to the Berlin Bridge Co. (1887 Town Report). **Note** - some of the above sum may have been for other Town bridges. Ten years later in the spring of 1896 a big spring flood with ice jams wipes out the fairly new bridge and crashes it against the wooden mill dam taking out part of the dam also. The town immediately employed local men and installed a temporary bridge costing the huge sum of \$140.03 including stringers. A few months later starting in July of that year a new iron bridge was again supplied and erected by the Berlin Bridge Co. on granite stone abutments constructed by the contractor Joseph Abbott of Dover(see picture). This time new granite abutments were constructed and the bridge was raised two feet. The expenses for this bridge as reported in the 1887 Town report were as follows:

Joseph S. Abbott, abutments	1,000.14
Berlin Iron Bridge Co.....	800.00
Berlin iron Bridge Co. raising bridge..	8.10
Dame Bros., 5363 feet plank.....	85.81
Dame Bros. 2138 feet plank	32.07
Other expenses	26.59
Total	1,952.71
Grading at bridge	221.48

Below are excerpts from the Lee Section of the Newmarket Advertiser which give an accounting of the flood and bridge construction.

3/7/1896 It goes without saying that the flood has swallowed all entertainments intended for this week, and the people are virtually prisoners on their own premises. As far as I can learn, none of the Town bridges has sustained the damage that Wadley's has. The immense masses of ice that came rushing so suddenly and fiercely against the lower iron bridge between 2 and 3 o'clock Monday morning, tore it from its foundation, and it went crashing down to the dam, carrying most of that structure with it. The iron work lodged just below the dam and is twisted into a shapeless mass.

3/14/1896 A large crew of men worked Sunday to lay a temporary bridge at Wadley's. There was great rejoicing that was heard after several days' deprivation, cross to the other side in an ordinary way.

6/13/1896 A new iron bridge is to replace the one torn away and wrecked at Wadley Falls by the spring floods. It is to be two feet higher than the old one.

8/1/1896 The work of building the new bridge over Wadley's is well under way, and travel across will be suspended for three or four weeks. A roadway has been improvised through Mr. Glidden's field, coming out back of the shoe factory. After a driver has gone over the rocky river bed once he will be inclined to find a still longer way around rather than go over it again. Only level headed people are advised to try it at night.

8/29/1896 One accident and one fatality has been the result so far at the bridge building at Wadley's. Last week one of the stone cutters received a painful wound in the ankle from a piece of steel which flew from a drill, and he was obliged to seek the services of a physician and have it removed.

8/29/1896 S.W. Hurd of Farmington, in the employ of the bridge contractor, Joseph Abbott of Dover, was instantly killed on Monday afternoon by falling from his team, the wheels passing over his chest. He had been at Wadley's with a load of stone and had got back to Durham when this occurred. The frightened horses (four of them) ran away and were captured only after a hard chase. Mr. Hurd was 30 years old and unmarried.

8/29/1896 The work of building the abutments for the new bridge at Wadley's progresses slowly, this being the fifth week, and some prophecy that a number more will pass ere the bridge will be ready for public travel. It is being done in a thorough manner, and only those who are on the premises to see for themselves can imagine what a laborious job it is.

9/5/1896 The bridge at Wadley's is nearing completion, then it is goodbye to the beach rides through the river.

9/5/1896 The iron work of the new bridge puts the other one in the shade from an architectural point of view.