



NEW HAMPSHIRE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

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WORK BEGINS ON WHITTIER COVERED BRIDGE

Structural work has begun in earnest on Whittier Covered Bridge in Ossipee after the weakened bridge was rescued from potential collapse under the record-breaking snows of the winter of 2007-8.



Photograph by James L. Garvin

Whittier Bridge moving out of danger on July 2, 2008

In February, Asplundh Tree Expert Company of Lancaster offered the services of two boom trucks and their crews to rake wet snow from the bridge's roof, while covered bridge builder Tim Andrews of Gilford and a helper removed 4,000 pounds of floor planking from the vulnerable center of the span. At an Executive Council meeting on April 9, 2008, Governor John Lynch commended Asplundh and Andrews for their donated efforts in the face of a dire threat.

Funded by a \$100,000 grant from LCHIP and by appropriations from NHDOT and the Town of Ossipee, the first phase of the project

removed Whittier Bridge from the Bearcamp River on July 2.



Photograph by Shelly Angers

Governor John Lynch reads a commendation to bridge rescuer **Tim Andrews** (standing, second from left). Standing at left is **Robert Gillette**, representing the Town of Ossipee, while Councilor **Raymond Burton** (seated, left) and **James L. Garvin** (standing, right) look on.

The deteriorated trusses had previously been strengthened by the insertion of a supplementary structural system within the bridge. The temporary internal structure bore the stresses as 3-G Construction of Holderness lifted the bridge with jacks, placed it on rollers, and moved it on steel rails to an adjacent roadway where it will be rehabilitated on solid ground.

Details of the rehabilitation plan for the bridge are being developed by

the Town of Ossipee, the Federal Highway Administration, New Hampshire DOT, and the Division of Historical Resources. The full costs of the work will be met by a federal grant of \$632,000 from the National Historic Covered Bridge Preservation Program, announced in April. The grant will also fund the subsequent return of the strengthened bridge to its original abutments. The restored bridge will be re-opened to traffic and will be rated to carry at least a six-ton live load.

Built in 1870, the Whittier Bridge is named in honor of poet John Greenleaf Whittier, who spent summers in Ossipee in the late 1800s. The bridge utilizes Paddleford trusses, a complex structural design invented by Peter Paddleford (1785-1859) of Littleton, New Hampshire, and employed mostly in New Hampshire and adjacent parts of Maine. The trusses are supplemented by thirty-inch-deep arches made from laminated two-inch planks. With their feet resting on the abutments below the bridge floor, these wooden arches undoubtedly saved the bridge as roof leaks progressively weakened the trusses after the structure was closed to vehicles in 1989. The dangerous condition of Whittier Bridge earned the span the dubious distinction of being named one of the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance's "Seven to Save" in the fall of 2007.