

Henniker's unique legacy

of preserving historic bridges began with the Great New England Hurricane of September 1938, the region's most destructive storm of the 20th century. New Hampshire Highway Department replaced forty-nine town bridges and eleven state bridges destroyed by the storm including the 18th century stone double-arch bridge at Henniker's heart.



It completely collapsed, its foundations weakened by the 1936 Flood that destroyed the Leatherboard Bridge (now Ramsdell Road Bridge) just downstream. The state designed a plain concrete arch replacement bridge, but Henniker voters, seeing their heritage at stake, approved funds to replicate the landmark in stone.

Sixty years later the Town saved Patterson Hill Road Bridge, a rare surviving Pratt Truss. Patented by Thomas Pratt in 1844, its the first scientifically designed truss and one of the most widely used types in the world.

A sign at the intersection of Western and Patterson Hill roads provides more information on Henniker's historic bridges.

John William Storrs

*Bridge Engineer & Public Servant
Extraordinaire*



In 1915, John Storrs (1858-1942) designed Henniker's Patterson Hill Bridge and five other bridges for the city of Concord including Pembroke Bridge that was stored and reused for Henniker's Western Avenue Bridge in 1933. After 13 years as a bridge engineer with the Boston & Maine Railroad, he was appointed state highway engineer in 1903 and helped develop the state highway system. From 1905 to 1925 Storrs ran a consulting engineering practice in Concord and designed over 100 bridges in New Hampshire. He was appointed Engineer of the Public Service Commission in 1911, Commissioner in 1918 and Chairman from 1928 to 1930. A native of Concord, Storrs served as mayor for five consecutive terms between 1933 and 1942, dying in office at age 83, the country's oldest mayor.

This publication was prepared to help mitigate adverse effects to historic resources resulting from the replacement of Henniker's Western Avenue Bridge, completed 2017. It was required by the project Memorandum of Agreement between the Town of Henniker, the NH Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and the NH State Historic Preservation Office, and produced by Henniker Historical Society and Historic Documentation Company, Inc. with funding from the Town of Henniker, NH Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.

Historic Bridges of Henniker, New Hampshire



Rebuilding Henniker's 18th-century double stone arch bridge in 1938. Photo courtesy Henniker Historical Society.

Henniker's Legacy of Preserved and Replicated Historic Highway Bridges

Edna Dean Proctor Bridge

1780/1939

Patterson Hill Bridge

1915/1999

Western Avenue Bridge

1933/2017

Ramsdell Road Bridge

1937/2008

New England College Bridge

1972



Western Avenue Bridge

Built by NH Highway Dept. in 1933 to bypass Patterson Hill Road Bridge, the two spans were salvaged from Pembroke Bridge in Concord, a Pratt Truss bridge designed by John W. Storrs and built in 1915. Closed due to advanced deterioration in 2009, engineers unsuccessfully sought ways to restore the historic bridge.



Although more expensive than other replacement options, a Warren Truss of the historic low or "pony" type without overhead bracing and compatible with the historic setting was erected in 2018.

Patterson Hill Road Bridge

Designed by John W. Storrs, the state's preeminent bridge engineer of the early 20th century, this 113' Pratt Truss was erected by Groton Bridge Co. in 1915. By 1933 it was obsolete for bigger, heavier vehicles and bypassed by the Western Avenue Bridge. Although slated for removal, demolition funds were directed elsewhere and it survived another 65 years until 1999 when Henniker voted to save and restore the historic bridge, now the oldest Storrs' truss in service and one of the few remaining examples in the state.



New England College Bridge

To commemorate its 25th year, this innovative college built an authentic covered bridge to join athletic fields and the campus on either side of the Contoocook River. Covered bridge builder Milton Graton and son Arnold completed the 124'-span Town Lattice Truss in 1972 using historic materials and methods. It was listed on the NH State Register of Historic Places in 2002 for exceptional craftsmanship and for spearheading the revival of traditional covered bridge construction in NH.

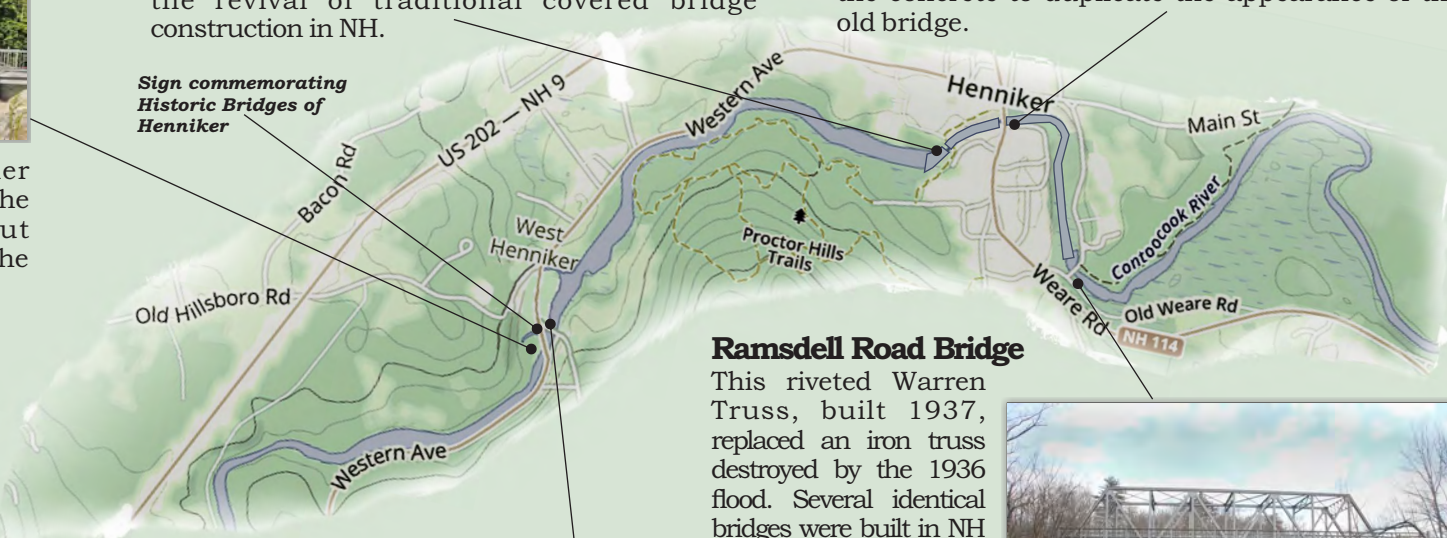
Edna Dean Proctor Stone Arch Bridge

Named in honor of Henniker's renown poet and benefactor, this reinforced concrete bridge with stone facing was built in 1939 to replace the original stone arch bridge built in 1780 and



destroyed in the 1938 Hurricane. With funds from the Proctor Family Trust, stone from the collapsed bridge was salvaged and applied over the concrete to duplicate the appearance of the old bridge.

Sign commemorating Historic Bridges of Henniker



Ramsdell Road Bridge

This riveted Warren Truss, built 1937, replaced an iron truss destroyed by the 1936 flood. Several identical bridges were built in NH with federal flood disaster funds. Lower Falls Covered Bridge preceded the iron bridge - it burned in 1900. The Town of Henniker, with the Federal Highway Admin. and NH Dept. of Transportation, rehabilitated the National Register eligible bridge in 2008 to modern standards. Photo at right shows the bridge and old "Leatherboard" factory in 1942.

