

Kelly's Falls Hydroelectric Plant

In 1890 The Electric Company built a stone dam at Kelly's Falls and erected one of the state's earliest hydroelectric plants. It became the Union Electric Co. in 1893, then Manchester Electric Co. in 1900. The formation of the Public Service Company of New Hampshire in 1926 merged Manchester Electric and 18 other power companies. Hydroelectric generation peaked in NH in 1945 and by 1973 forty-one plants had been retired. Kelly's Falls plant closed in 1973, making way for the new Kelly's Falls Highway Bridge to cross its land.



Kelly's Falls Hydroelectric plant, c. 1915, with new concrete dam and coal-fired steam generator plant. More capacity was added in 1925 and 1927 to meet the demand of newly electrified appliances like stoves, toasters and irons.



Kelly's Falls Hydroelectric Plant, March 1, 1896, after 36 hours of rain caused the stone dam to burst, collapsing the generator house and dumping equipment into the river. The plant was quickly rebuilt to maintain its share of the competitive and growing electric lighting market.

Kelly's Falls Highway Bridge



Kelly's Falls Bridge, c. 1915. The dog-leg design avoided the power plant and appeased Goffstown residents who resisted the taking of their land for the new highway.



Kelly's Falls Bridge masonry workers posing, 1914. Note timber derrick behind them, used to raise and lower construction materials.



Kelly's Falls Bridge construction, May 1914. Designed by noted engineer John W. Storrs, it was one of the largest bridges in the state at the time. Storrs designed hundred of bridges in NH during the early 20th century.



Kelly's Falls Bridge and PSNH power plant, 1940. Harold E Langley, noted Highway Department engineer, designed major repairs in 1940. The bridge was replaced in 1973 when PSNH demolished their power plant, allowing the new bridge to follow a straight alignment.

KELLY'S FALLS HISTORY

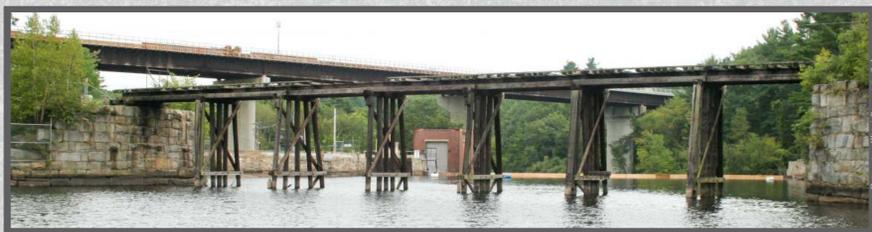


Photo courtesy of Manchester (NH) Historical Association



The Boston & Maine Railroad Covered Bridge at Kelly's Falls was a 150'-span lattice truss with a reinforcing arch, built c. 1901. When destroyed by fire in 1941, the roof and siding had already been removed by the railroad to help prevent such a disaster.

Kelly's Falls Railroad Bridges



After the fire, the B&M built a trestle bridge to carry the three freight trains a week still running to Goffstown. Using recycled steel beams on wood-pile bents was the least expensive option. Leaders in timber bridge design, B&M engineers reinforced the bents with underwater stone-filled cribs to resist ice and floods. The trestle survived admirably until replaced by a single-span steel-truss pedestrian bridge in 2015.

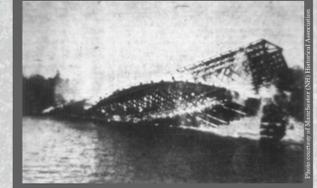
Rail Trail History

The Piscataquog-Goffstown rail trail follows the route of the New Hampshire Central Railroad, chartered in 1848 to connect Manchester and Claremont. Construction began in Manchester in February 1850 and ended ten months later in Henniker, out of money and never completed further west. The line was operated by the Manchester & North Weare Railroad, then the Concord & Montreal Railroad and finally the Boston & Maine Railroad who leased it in 1895. The B&M upgraded the bridges for heavier locomotives, replacing the covered bridges over the Piscataquog River at Kelly's Falls and Goffstown Village by 1901.

Known as B&Ms North Weare Branch and later the Goffstown Branch, business fell off in the 1920s due to competition from cars and trucks. The 1936 Flood swept away the great Merrimack River bridge in Manchester and caused extensive damage. Two years later the line west of Goffstown was abandoned. Limited freight service continued until the Goffstown covered bridge burned in 1976. The Manchester-Goffstown section was abandoned in 1981. Goffstown led planning efforts to create a rail trail in the 1990s and initiated construction in 2008.

Railroad Bridge Burns

On September 1, 1941, the Boston & Maine Railroad timber truss bridge burned in a spectacular fire believed to have been started accidentally or on purpose by youths. Strong winds fueled the fire and showered burning embers on a wide area, igniting brush fires, a house and a mattress carried atop a passing automobile. Thousands of spectators watched from Kelly's Falls Highway Bridge, often running for cover as shifting winds bombarded them with flaming missiles. The fire's intensity melted the rails and forced firemen back several times before the structure collapsed into the river.



For more information on local history visit the Manchester Historic Association. <http://www.manchesterhistoric.org>

For more information visit Manchester's Parks & Recreation website. <https://www.manchesternh.gov/Departments/Parks-and-Recreation/Parks-Facilities/Recreational-Trails/Piscataquog-Trail>