

Installation of second pedestrian bridge complete

■Belmont

Village

Spur Rail Trail:

Engineer who helped procure bridge from Dover for \$1, hopes trail will eventually extend west to Tilton.

By **JOHN KOZIOL**

Union Leader Correspondent

BELMONT — In a display of Yankee ingenuity, a group of volunteers recently completed the installation of a second, covered pedestrian bridge on the Belmont Village Spur Rail Trail over the Tioga River.

Completed on Jan. 31, the installation extends the trail, which starts at the Tioga Pavilion and Belmont Mill in the downtown, about a mile west to a point that's a short distance from South Road and the conservation land that was recently acquired by the town.

Measuring 94-feet in length and 12-foot wide, the yet unnamed second bridge over the Tioga is downstream from a footbridge at Slippery Rock Crossing. Both bridges began life some 30 years earlier as sections of a 154-foot long pedestrian bridge over the Cocheco River in Dover.

Having out lived it usefulness, however, the Dover bridge was put up for sale.

The timing of Dover's decision to sell the

bridge was serendipitous, as the Belmont Revitalization Committee, which was created in 2010 by selectmen to develop a strategy and vision for improving the downtown at little or no taxpayer expense, was simultaneously exploring ways of connecting the river walk along the Tioga with the Belmont Mill. Folks, including Woody Fogg, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and professional engineer, had been scouring the area for recycled barn wood with which to build the proposed bridge, when Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin learned that the Dover bridge was available.

Fogg went down to Dover, inspected the bridge and determined it could be put to use Belmont, however a problem became apparent: Belmont couldn't give what the City of Dover wanted, which, as Fogg recalls, was between \$40,000 and \$50,000.

The following year, seeing that the Dover bridge was still on the market, Fogg decided to send over a bid.

"I said let's offer them a dollar," Fogg said, and "they called back and said 'bring the dollar.'" A native of North Hampton who pursued an engineering career after 34 years in the Army, Fogg, from the start, seemed to be the right guy to bring the Dover bridge to Belmont.

"I knew the guy who designed that bridge, and I knew the guy who built it," said Fogg, adding that he also knew the bridge was constructed in three sections so that it could be readily disassembled.

After cutting its roof into three sections, all six pieces of the bridge were brought to and stored at the Belmont Public Works Department. In 2015 the Slippery Rock Crossing bridge was installed, while the task of putting in the second bridge started last fall with the construction of several abutments.

The remaining work on the bridge — repairing, replacing and repainting the siding, shingling the roof and installing lighting — will be done in the spring and the trail leading to it will be groomed.

Fogg hopes that one day, the Belmont Village Spur Rail Trail will extend all the way west to Tilton where it would connect with a trail along the Winnepesaukee River that itself is part of a regional system stretching from Franklin to the Lakeport section of Laconia.

Fogg thanked Beaudin, the Public Works department and the town for their support, and stressed that "none of this would have been possible without the generosity, ingenuity and equipment of the Roberts family," which operates Leslie E Roberts, LLC, a contracting company based in Belmont that was critical in moving and reinstalling the two pedestrian bridges.



This 94-foot long, covered pedestrian bridge was installed Jan.

31 on the Belmont Village Spur
Rail Trail over the Tioga River. It
used to be part of a longer span that
stretched over the Cochecho River in
Dover. JOHN KOZIOL