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SERVING TILTON, NORTHFIELD, BELMONT & SANBORNTON, N.H.

FREE



DONNA RHODES

A second bridge over the Tioga River is now in place, and will be instrumental in the development of the Village Spur Trail for hiking, biking and cross-country skiing in Belmont Village.



COURTESY

After rolling two sections of a covered bridge into place over the Tioga River in Belmont last month, Matt Roberts, Ron Mitchell and Mark Roberts (left to right) are shown connecting a section of the roof to the bridge trusses.

Final sections of covered bridge put in place in Belmont

BY DONNA RHODES
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BELMONT — On Jan. 31, the final two sections of a covered

bridge bought from the Town of Dover in 2013 were joined together and set in place at their new home along the Village

Spur Rail Trail in Belmont, which will now provide walking, biking and cross country ski opportunities for people

from the Tioga Pavilion in Belmont Village out to South Road off Route 140.

The bridge was purchased for \$1, and had to be cut into three sections in order to transport it to Belmont. Plans were made to use one portion for a narrow crossing over the Tioga River while the other two sec-

tions were earmarked for a wider crossing further down the trail that was once an old railroad bed.

In December of 2015, a small group of volunteers teamed up with the Roberts family of Leslie E. Roberts LLC, which provided the necessary heavy equipment, and placed the first section

over the river beside the Belmont Mill building. It allowed people the opportunity to walk along the river behind the mill then cross over to the Village Spur Trail, as the former railroad bed was named. From there, the trail traveled along the banks of the river to the next crossing behind

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COURTESY After the newest bridge along the Village Spur trail was in place, Jeff Roberts (left), Woody Fogg (center, on bridge) and Matt Roberts (right, under bridge) prepared it to then be jacked down onto its permanent bearings.

BRIDGE

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Great Brook housing development but there it came to a dead end for awhile.

A little more than two years later, thanks again to the Roberts family and those same volunteers, Woody and Christine Fogg, Ken Knowlton and Ron Mitchell, the remaining two portions of the bridge are now joined over the river and the trail continues on out to South Road.

“The plan is to have it go on up to meet the Winnepesaukee River Trail behind McDonald’s sometime in the future, but that’s a project for the next set of volunteers,” Fogg said.

Placing the final sec-

tions of the bridge into place took the crew approximately three weeks to complete. The area had to be cleared, the structures had to be moved from where they were stored at the highway department, then not only placed across the river but physically joined together. Fogg said thanks to the expertise, creativity and generosity of Mark, Matt and Jeff Roberts, the job went smoothly and the project was a success.

“They were the key to the whole thing. Without the Roberts family none of this ever would have happened,” he added.

The concept for the two bridges and the trail was developed through a 2010 charette that identified ways

Belmont could attract more people to the village. Among the other projects that resulted from that gathering were the development of Penstock Park, the construction of the Tioga Pavilion, an infrastructure upgrade, the relocation of the historic Belmont Bandstand and improvements to the village green.

“The intent was to accomplish all this work at very little cost to the taxpayers of Belmont. That was achieved through a combination of state and federal grants, donations of materials and services, and lots of volunteer labor and commitment,” Fogg said.

Since the first bridge was put into place, members of the Charles

Kilburn American Legion Post 58 have held work sessions each year to clear brush and beautify the trail. With some help provided by volunteers from Belmont High School and the United Way’s annual Day of Caring, they have opened up a view of the river that people can enjoy as they travel across the bridge and along the riverbank.

While the second bridge is in place however, there is still a bit of work to be done when the weather gets a bit warmer. Right now a few wooden planks have been laid down to get onto the structure but soon the land will be graded on both ends to make it safely accessible on foot or by bicycle.

A bit of structural and cosmetic work is also planned. Fogg said they will have some replacement siding milled out for boards that were damaged or removed when the bridge was cut and the two sections were joined together. Gable ends will need to be painted and he hopes they will be able to install some lighting on both bridges in the near future. That work will take a little time but Fogg is excited to see it through to its completion.

“It’s all been a labor of love for us,” he said.