

## Sandy Brook Bridge

The day has finally arrived (April 17, 2000) when construction begins on the bridge crossing Sandy Brook that serves the residents of the upland area known as Beech Hill. Until quite recently, the residents now living on Beech Hill Road, Chapin Road, Moses Road and Simons Pond Road all thought of themselves as being residents of “Beech Hill”. The name dates from at least the mid-1780s, and refers to the 1400-foot high elevation that dominates the locality. Beech trees were the most numerous species of tree in upland Colebrook in the days when these hills were covered with virgin forest, and presumably there was a greater concentration here – thus justifying the name.

As far as Beech Hill Road is concerned, the first person to actually construct a house on that upland was Seth Hurd in May of 1786. The first point of crossing Sandy Brook was at the present site of Campbell Road Bridge. The reason for this choice was that it is the only location south of Phelps’ meadows in North Colebrook that has no prominent river banks, thus permitting the construction of a ford, and by so doing, avoiding the extra expense of constructing a bridge.

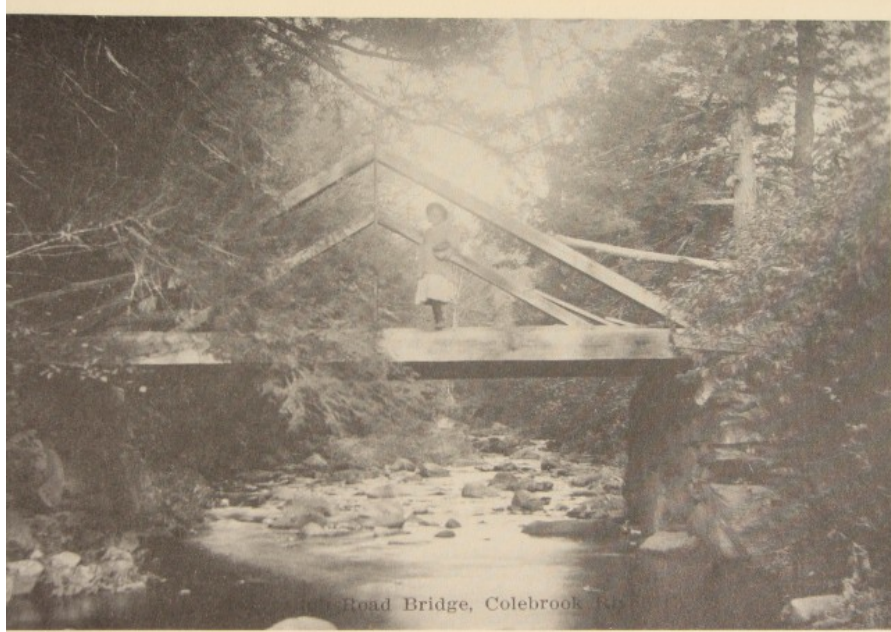
In the following years, as the population grew, the cost of a bridge was no longer considered an obstacle. As much of the trade (if that is the correct term) in those days was between the Beech Hill upland and the Phelps’ operations in North Colebrook, a more westerly orientation of the road was called for. The site currently used, where the bridge is now being replaced, was the one chosen, although not everyone seemed content with the choice. On November 9, 1807, the voters of Colebrook “voted that if the bridge across [*sic*] Sandy Brook near Capt. Arah Phelps’ sawmill should be found necessary to be rebuilt the ensuing season, it shall be built near the watering place, so-called.”

Not another word about the subject is mentioned in our ledgers until September, 1811 – four years later – when the following entry appears: “Voted that the vote passed some years since to erect a bridge across Sandy Brook at the watering place on Beech Hill be rescinded. Voted to build a bridge across Sandy Brook and Viets Brook at or near the place where the last bridge was built.”

Colebrook doesn’t mention the cost of construction, but Winchester’s records shed some light on the subject of bridge building in those days. They give the rate of 2 shillings per day per worker building bridges (.67¢). An entry made December 7, 1778 states: “Voted to give John Balcam 9 dollars for 2 Whitewood trees, which the committee cut on said Balcam’s land to build Still River Bridge.”

I don’t know the amount of funding that has been set aside for the current project. (I could easily find out, but in the interest of my blood pressure, have postponed for a future date!) It is also going to take six months to complete. [The actual completion date was September 8, 2000.] That’s OK. We residents of “The Beech Hill” have as a detour, Campbell Road Bridge, the site of the original “Watering Place.”

Historically speaking, at least for the next six months, we have come full circle.



... Road Bridge, Colebrook River, c. 1890