

This Week in Saratoga County History - Fire Destroys Waterford Covered Bridge

Submitted by Russ Vandervoort, July 9, 2020

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From the Troy Times July 10, 1909



The famous old wooden covered bridge across the Hudson River between the upper section of this city and Waterford was destroyed by fire shortly after noon today. This bridge, which was perhaps the oldest bridge of the kind in the United States, was one of the landmarks and curiosities in this section. It was first opened for traffic in the year 1803 and has been in constant service ever since up to the hour of its destruction today.

The fire originated in the middle of the structure and is supposed to have been started from an electric wire, the insulation of which had worn away.

As soon as the blaze was discovered the fire departments of Waterford and Upper Troy were summoned to the scene and although every effort was made to stay the flames, the structure was laid in ruins within the course of an hour, the flames being fanned by a stiff breeze.

The fire was one of the most spectacular that has occurred in this section in many years. Great volumes of smoke curled heavenward and shot out from the sides, the top and the bottom of the old wooden structure. As the flames ate their way through the massive woodwork, the superstructure of the bridge weakened and collapsed and fell into the Hudson and all that is now visible is a twisted mass of car rails and wire and other iron materials.

While the flames were at their height a dozen or more firemen were on the bridge and when the first span went down seven of the men were thrown into the river. All narrowly escaped drowning and one was severely injured, his head having come in contact with a piece of iron.

The loss occasioned by the city is placed at \$100,000.

The bridge was probably the only old-fashioned wooden covered bridge of any size left in this country. It was privately owned and the toll which has been collected for passing over it runs well into the millions of dollars.