

= Rosendale Trestle =

The Rosendale Trestle is a 940 @-@ foot (290 @-@ meter) continuous truss bridge and former railroad trestle in Rosendale Village , a hamlet in the town of Rosendale in Ulster County , New York . Originally constructed by the Wallkill Valley Railroad to continue its rail line from New Paltz to Kingston , the bridge rises 150 ft (46 m) above Rondout Creek , spanning both Route 213 and the former Delaware and Hudson Canal . Construction on the trestle began in late 1870 , and continued until early 1872 . When it opened to rail traffic on April 6 , 1872 , the Rosendale trestle was the highest span bridge in the United States .

The trestle was rebuilt in 1895 by the King Bridge Company to address public concerns regarding its stability , and it has been repeatedly reinforced throughout its existence . Concern over the sturdiness of the trestle has persisted since its opening , and was a major reason Conrail closed the Wallkill Valley rail line in 1977 . After the rail line 's closure , Conrail sold the bridge in 1986 for one dollar to a private businessman who tried unsuccessfully to operate the trestle as a bungee jumping platform in the 1990s . A similar attempt was made the following decade . The trestle was seized by the county in 2009 for tax nonpayment , and renovated as a pedestrian walkway for the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail . The deck and railings now continue all the way across the trestle , and access is from a parking lot about 1 ½ mile (400 meters) north on Binnewater Road . It opened to the public with a celebration on June 29 , 2013 .

= = History = =

= = = Construction = = =

In 1870 , the Wallkill Valley Railroad operated trains between Montgomery and New Paltz , New York , and began building a 413 @-@ foot (126 m) bridge south of Rosendale , at Springtown Road , to cross the Wallkill River . The Springtown bridge was completed by 1871 , and the rail line was opened north to the town of Rosendale . Rosendale issued \$ 92 @, @ 800 in bonds on May 13 , 1869 to finance its portion of the railroad .

Though the trestle was difficult to build , and viewed as weak by modern standards , it was remarkable for its time , and can be considered the " most awesome part " of the Wallkill Valley rail line . Construction on the bridge 's abutments began in August 1870 by A. L. Dolby & Company , but work on the superstructure by the Waston Manufacturing Company did not begin until the following year due to problems with quicksand during the excavation . Sections of the superstructure were built in Paterson , New Jersey . The bridge originally had seven wrought @-@ iron spans and two shorter wooden spans ; the longer spans were each 105 feet (32 m) in length . The bridge cost \$ 250 @, @ 000 to build , and followed a Post truss design . Roughly 1 @, @ 000 short tons (910 t) of iron and 420 @, @ 000 board feet (990 m3) of timber went into its construction . At the time of its completion in January 1872 , it had the highest span of any bridge in the United States . Due to its height , it could " scarcely be crossed for the first time without something like a feeling of terror " . The bridge allowed the rail line to continue north to Kingston .

= = = Active rail service = = =

The bridge was opened on April 6 , 1872 in a ceremony attended by 5 @, @ 000 people , including prominent men from across Ulster , Orange , and Dutchess counties . One of the spectators was James S. McEntee , Esq . , an engineer who had worked on the Delaware and Hudson Canal in 1825 . He was the only person to have seen both " the passage of the first loaded boat through the canal and the first train over the bridge which spans it " . A 4 @-@ 4 @-@ 0 locomotive with five boxcars and two passenger cars made the inaugural run . Many spectators doubted the strength of the bridge , and believed that the trestle would collapse under the weight of the train . The bridge appeared unaffected by the strain , and an increasing number of people rode over the bridge during

the second and third runs .

A. L. Dolby & Company was contracted to complete the rail line between the bridge and Kingston . The track reached the Kingston Union Station in November 1872 . By this time , trains were running regularly to and from Kingston .

By 1885 , the bridge supports were reinforced and the track was converted from broad gauge to standard gauge . In 1888 , the Wallkill Valley Railroad received a permit from the town of Rosendale to " construct and maintain abutments to support [the] trestle " as long as such work did not interfere with traffic along the underlying highway (present @-@ day NY 213) . That same year , the Delaware and Hudson Canal allowed the railroad to temporarily use some of its property by the Rondout Creek to place bents for bridge repairs . The waterway beneath the trestle could be quite treacherous ; so many people drowned that the area became known as " Dead Man 's Stretch " . There have been reports of ghostly " apparitions " in the area , particularly of a white dog .

The bridge was rebuilt by the King Bridge Company between 1895 and 1896 , remaining in use most of the time ; the trestle is the only railroad bridge featured in the King Bridge Company catalogs of the 1880s and 1890s that remains standing . The renovation converted the bridge 's structure from iron and wood to steel to allay public concerns about its strength ; the height of the bridge evoked collapses such as the Tay Bridge disaster . The steel was provided by the Carnegie Steel Company . The renovation raised the bridge 's piers by 8 feet (2 @. @ 4 m) and made the bridge straighter ; the original design had a curve on the southern terminus . One of the northern spans was completed by February 1896 , and the entire reconstruction was finished by June . The layout of the spans was unchanged from the original 1872 design . Following its reconstruction , the bridge was unaffected by the shock of a large cave @-@ in at a nearby Rosendale cement quarry on December 26 , 1899 , though it was shaken by a nearby boiler explosion that occurred days before the collapse .

From the time of its reconstruction to its eventual closure , passengers continued to have concerns over the trestle . The " speed , weight , and positioning of rolling stock on the bridge " was monitored , and it was repeatedly reinforced to " carry the ever heavier loads of modern railroading " . In the 1940s , steam engines carrying heavy loads over the bridge caused the catwalk on the west side of the bridge to shake . By 1975 , the rail line had deteriorated to the point where federal regulations allowed only 8 @-@ mile @-@ per @-@ hour (13 km / h) traffic over the trestle , though engineers were instructed to only go as fast as 5 miles per hour (8 @. @ 0 km / h) . The sturdiness of the bridge , specifically the stability of its piers , was a deciding factor when Conrail (then @-@ owner of the Wallkill Valley rail line) closed the Wallkill Valley Railroad in 1977 .

= = = Modern use = = =

Conrail had begun taking bids on the trestle as early as 1983 . An initial offer was made to the town of Rosendale , which refused , unwilling to accept the liability . Conrail sold the bridge , along with 11 @. @ 5 miles (18 @. @ 5 km) of the Wallkill Valley rail corridor , in 1986 to a private businessman , John Rahl , for one dollar . Rahl took title of the trestle and corridor on July 11 , 1986 . Included in Rahl 's purchase was a train station in Rosendale 's hamlet of Binnewater ; the station was a part of the Binnewater Historic District . A Rosendale homeowner association had tried to purchase the properties before Rahl , also for one dollar , but Conrail declined their offer .

Rahl , born around 1948 in Washingtonville , was a construction worker and auto mechanic . He lived near the trestle , in a " converted warehouse , whose support beams had once formed the scaffolding for the trestle crews " . Rahl 's reason for buying the rail line was originally to open a " dining car restaurant " along the corridor , and to establish a tourist railroad from Kingston to the trestle . He claimed the purchase granted him the right to " restore rail service on the whole Wallkill line " , and joint ownership of Conrail . Plans to restore service subsequently " didn 't pan out " . Within one year of the purchase , Rahl sold 11 acres (4 @. @ 5 ha) of the property to a housing developer . On May 16 , 1989 , a storm caused such severe damage to the Binnewater station that part of it broke off and fell into the road ; the building was subsequently demolished by the town of Rosendale 's highway department .

Between 1989 and 1991 , Rahl installed planking and guard rails on the southern half of the bridge , which was then opened to the public . He allowed bungee jumping off the bridge until a January 1992 court order held that it violated zoning laws . One person tried to bungee jump off the bridge without a restraining cord . The bridge was slightly damaged by a fire in mid @-@ 1999 , but it was repaired by September of that year .

Douglas Hase , an entrepreneur who had run bungee jumping and hot air ballooning companies , tried unsuccessfully in 2003 and 2004 to get a variance for another bungee jumping venture . During a public hearing about Hase 's proposal , a county legislator began screaming to simulate the sound neighbours would hear repetitively when people jumped off the bridge .

After Rahl failed to pay \$ 13 @,@ 716 in property taxes over a period of three years , Ulster County foreclosed on the entire 63 @.@ 34 @-@ acre (25 @.@ 63 ha) property on April 15 , 2009 . The Wallkill Valley Land Trust and Open Space Conservancy offered to purchase the property , and the county authorized the sale in July . The sale was completed in late August 2009 . The Land Trust agreed to pay all outstanding taxes before receiving full ownership and adding it to the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail . Ownership of the trestle was transferred to the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail Association .

Following an engineering survey by Bergmann Associates ? the same firm that inspected the Poughkeepsie Bridge prior to its conversion to a walkway ? the bridge was closed to the public in June 2010 for repairs . Renovations were originally expected to cost \$ 750 @,@ 000 and begin in early 2011 , with a 12 @-@ month completion time . The New York State Office of Parks , Recreation and Historic Preservation granted \$ 150 @,@ 000 toward the renovation . By November 2010 , an additional \$ 300 @,@ 000 had been raised from private donors , and other sources . By the end of 2010 , over 10 1 ? 2 short tons (9 @.@ 5 t) of tires were removed from the Rosendale section of the rail trail .

The surface of the walkway was rebuilt with a wood @-@ plastic composite built by a volunteer force . On February 17 , 2011 , a Bergmann Associates employee used the trestle as a case study in a seminar on adaptive reuse of defunct railroad bridges . By late March 2011 , the estimated cost of renovating the trestle had risen to \$ 1 @.@ 1 million , and the expected time to completion increased to two years .

A campaign to raise \$ 500 @,@ 000 for the renovation began on March 27 , 2011 ; by June 30 , about \$ 50 @,@ 000 had been raised . Two 2009 lawsuits brought by John E. Rahl against the New York Telephone Company over alleged fees due to him for a fiber optic line crossing the trestle were dismissed by two lower courts (in Vermont and New York) . On November 18 , 2011 , the US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit dismissed Rahl 's appeal . As of July 2011 , a lawsuit brought by John Rahl over the ownership of the trestle remains pending before the Second Circuit Court . Rahl claimed that he retained ownership of the property because only the state , and not the county , had the right to seize the trestle , which was " forever railroad under 19th century eminent domain legal doctrines ? long forgotten by modern jurisprudence " . The trestle has been the site of numerous picnics , barbecues , and at least one wedding .

In late June 2012 , contractors began welding new railings to the trestle and conducting other preparatory work for opening the walkway . An event at nearby Willow Kiln Park was held on June 29 , 2013 to celebrate the grand opening of the trestle to the public . The trestle was fully re @-@ opened to the public for the first time since the rail line closed , and a 24 @-@ mile @-@ long (39 km) segment of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail from Gardiner to Kingston was opened .