

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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THE SAWYER ROAD BRIDGE OVER MARSH CREEK



Our photo here shows the Sawyer Road Bridge in the Town of Carlton from the bed of Marsh Creek, looking up stream. Many people are not aware of how high the bridge is above water level.

George W. Callard, son of L.W. Callard, who oversaw its construction, heard his father speak frequently of the magnitude of this building project. About a year ago George decided to look into and research the construction of the bridge building project. He consulted with me and used Supervisors Proceedings to start with. He also found information through the Carlton Town Clerk's Office, the Carlton Historian and his own files.

We are indebted to him for taking the initiative to follow through and find as much information as he could about the construction of this important bridge in Carlton.

Many times when we go to find out about something from years ago, we discover that the information is there but in many different forms and places. It often takes time and patience to put it all together in usable form, which George has done for us. With an interest in bridges throughout New York State and our concern for their safety and their repair bills, this is certainly a timely topic.

The History of the Touhey Bridge By George W. Callard

The Town Fathers realized in 1924 the need for a new bridge over Marsh Creek on the Sawyer Road. The bridge was called Touhey Bridge because of the person that owned the property on the southwest corner of Sawyer Road and the Marsh Creek Road.

A vote was held in March 1924 on whether to build a new bridge over Marsh Creek on the Sawyer Road. The vote was 174 for and 71 against. I have no information about the bridge that was to be replaced except that it was an iron bridge. The new bridge would be larger and built of reinforced concrete with a concrete floor together with suitable concrete abutments for supporting the span of the bridge. The bridge would be built by the Town of Carlton Highway Department under direction of the Town Highway Commissioner, L. Waldo Callard.

The 16th of April 1925 the Town Board of the Town of Carlton passed a resolution by an all aye vote to sell bonds to pay for the bridge. The amount to be raised by selling bonds was \$14,000. This was a cheap price to pay for a project of this size. The town officials at the time were as follows:

Supervisor, Richard W. Bamber; Town Clerk, Walter S. Garrett; Justices of Peace, A. James Sergeart, George H. Wilson, Everitt Gray, W.H. Grady.

The bonds were sold at public auction at the Citizens National Bank, in Albion, New York. The town was represented by Messers Thompson Bros., Attorneys of Albion, New York.

Work on the bridge must have started soon after the bonds were sold. The next reference in the media was in May, 1925. The reference in the Carlton Station news said, "Work on the bridge north of Sawyer is progressing nicely." A later issue told about a Mr. Fuller. It says, "Mr. Fuller has employment with our Town Commissioner, and while unloading bridge iron had a very unfortunate accident and broke both legs. He is in Gregory Hospital. At present writing is comfortable." In the middle of July the following appeared in the Carlton Station News Letter: "The Bridge north of Sawyer, we are informed, is so they can cross."

In the report of Harry D. Waldo, County Superintendent, from the proceedings of the Board of Supervisors, we find additional cost of \$1,297.90 for making the fill at Touhey Bridge. This was paid by the county. The final cost to the Town of Carlton for Touhey Bridge was \$14,032.30. This was pretty close to budget.

We find in the report of Harry Waldo, the following reference to the Touhey Bridge: "For the construction of the Touhey Bridge, a three span, steel beam and concrete structure, 28 inch Bethlehem beams used. Each beam span 43 feet overall - total span 129 ft. overall. The two center piers about 36 ft. above bed of stream. All new abutments and piers, concrete parapet wall carrying a 2½ inch pipe railing, painted white. This work was done entirely by the town forces under L.W. Callard, Town Superintendent of Highways, and is deserving a great deal of credit. Total cost, not including fill, \$14,032.30."

It is interesting to note that the total number of days worked by the Carlton Highway Department was 312. The salary of the highway superintendent for the year 1924 was \$1,656.29. Expenses of the highway superintendent for the year was \$220.29.

This bridge, built in 1924, is still in everyday use. The posted limit is 10 tons. This bridge is now 69 years old.