Allagash River Bridge construction photographs

MCC-0596

Total boxes: 1
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Fort Kent, Maine
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Allagash River Bridge construction photographs

Shelf List Number: UP-596

Collection Overview

Creator

Merritt G. Tibbetts

Dates

1940s

Extent

13 sepia photographs of bridge construction.

Provenance

These photographs were likely taken by Merritt G. Tibbetts, a construction worker who assisted building the Allagash River Bridge in the early 1940s. Photographs were kept in the family until Marlene Bottomley, granddaughter of Merritt, reached out to donate them to the Allagash Historical Society. The society then suggested they be donated to the Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes for more substantial conservation; Darrell McBreairty delivered the materials in the fall of 2026.

Language

English

Conservation Notes

Photographs have been placed in protective sleeves.

Conditions Governing Access and Use

Restrictions

Access:

None

Physical:

None

Technical:

None

Rights Statement

Copyright has not been assigned to the Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes. All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted in writing to the Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes.

Recommended Citation

Allagash River Bridge construction photographs (MCC-00596). Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes, University of Maine at Fort Kent.

Collection Description

Historical and Biographical Information

For decades, Allagash's access to the rest of Maine was decided by the conditions of the Allagash River itself. When the river was clear of ice, travel was made possible by a cable ferry, which could cross up to sixty times a day. Many of these trips transported lumber, a major aspect of Allagash's industry. In winter, crossings were made across the ice, but for a month and a half in spring and again in fall, ice formation made travel impossible. After years of lobbying, a bridge near the confluence of the Allagash and Saint John rivers was finally approved for construction in 1943, in part due to wartime demands.

Costs were estimated at $55,000, of which Allagash paid nearly $5,000. Due to wartime shortages, it was constructed primarily of timber sourced from the west coast, with collected scrap metal used to furnish necessary steel and iron. The final structure measured almost five hundred feet long and fourteen feet wide, at times over 45 feet above the river. Its live load capacity was fifteen tons per twenty-five feet. Construction, in which Merritt G. Tibbetts played a role, was completed in 1945; 700 people attended the festivities. The bridge was replaced in 1956 and again in 1992.[1]

Scope and Content

This collection contains 13 sepia-toned photographs, all of which are either 3.25x2.25" or 4.5x2.5" in size. Nine show the first Allagash River Bridge in the early stages of construction, with wood-crib piers installed but no deck spanning the water, as well as

[1] See: "Allagash Bridge." *Allagash, Maine*. 2025. https://allagash.live/allagash-bridge.; "Bridge to Link 'Lost' Community of Allagash With Outside World." *Bangor Daily News*, 12 April 1943.; "Site of Allagash Bridge." *Bangor Daily News*, 3-4 July 1943.; and "St. John's Valley Celebrates First Allagash Bridge." *Bangor Daily News*, 30 August 1945.

construction vehicles and workers. The final four photographs show early construction on another, smaller bridge built with concrete. Merritt G. Tibbett, creator of the photographs and construction worker on the Allagash River Bridge, likely worked a construction crew at this site, as well. Although many photographs have been labeled as dated 1941 and 1942, given the timeline of construction, they were likely taken in 1943 or 1944.

Arrangement

Photographs have been kept in their original order.

Separated Materials (If Applicable)

Like copies have been created and are also stored at the Allagash Historical Society.

Subject Headings

Allagash (Me.)

Allagash River (Me.)

Allagash River Bridge (Me.)

Bridges

Construction

Photographs

Related Materials

Allen Jackson digital image collection of Allagash, (MCC-00458). Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes, University of Maine at Fort Kent.

Town of Allagash collection (MCC-00582). Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes, University of Maine at Fort Kent.

Collection Inventory

Sleeve	Photo	Description	Date
1	1	A wood-crib pier and deck slab extending from the riverbank.	Early 1940s
1	2	The Allagash River with a wood-framed pier in the water and the wood-crib pier and deck slab extending from the bank.	Early 1940s

Sleeve	Photo	Description	Date
1	3	Two wood-crib piers in the Allagash River, looking from one shore to the pier and deck slab on the opposite shore.	Early 1940s
1	4	A wood-crib pier in the Allagash River.	Early 1940s
1	5	A closer shot of a woman standing in front of the wood-crib pier in the Allagash river.	Early 1940s
2	6	The shore of the Allagash River with a wooden approach slab built into the bank and houses just beside it.	Early 1940s
2	7	A man using a bulldozer to drag a log down a dirt road, likely at the construction site. A young boy sits atop the bulldozer and another man stands to the left.	Early 1940s
2	8	A flatbed truck and crane on a dock or ferry in the Allagash River.	Early 1940s
2	9	A crane on a dock or ferry in the Allagash River.	Early 1940s
3	10	A bridge in the early stages of construction across a river, with two concrete piers and wooden framing. A note on the back reads “Start of wooden bridge over Alagash River,” though Darrell McBreairty has printed a label reading “Mislabeled. Definitely not Allagash River.”	Undated
3	11	A pickup truck and cars parked beneath trees.	1941/1942
3	12	Two men standing in a dirt work yard near a crane and storage shed.	Undated
3	13	A finished bridge stretching across an unknown river.	Undated