

Wolf Bridge  
(From the Ed Foss Collection)

On a mid-April day in the early 1800's Sally Goodrich stood gazing thoughtfully out of the window of her home in the valley between the South and Middle mountains of the Pawtuckaway range. She listened to the babbling of the rills which had formed as tiny trickles a week before under the blanket of snow on the mountains and with the continued warmth had gained in size until patches of bare ground were visible, lightly veiled by the wispy fog of early spring.

The winter had been long and hard. There had been none of the usual thaws, and the snows which had begun falling in early November had reached a depth of five feet or more in the little valley. Several times during the winter they had listened to the clamor of wild beasts in the evening and less than a month before her husband, Bernard, had come in with the news that the tracks of an animal (apparently a wolf) were evident where the beast had circled the barn repeatedly and vainly tried to gain entrance.

Their fear of injury to their precious livestock had been lessened several days after the incident when one of the Chase boys had come over the Middle Mountain and told how in the early hours of the morning his father had shot at, and apparently seriously wounded the gaunt animal as it was tearing at their barn doors. Master Chase had also brought news that things had not gone well during the winter with the Burnhams, friends and neighbors in Fundy several miles to the south. It was this disturbing news which troubled Sally, and led to a decision. Travel now was certain to be easier than a week hence when the primitive roads would be softened by the recession of frost so Sally turned from the window and after a brief consultation with her husband they wheeled the buggy out of the barn, harnessed the family horse, "old Ned" and hitched him to the buggy. A readied basket of "vittles" and delicacies and securely tucked under the seat, and with the reins and hickory whip firmly in her hands Sally headed the rig up the valley.

She travelled the pasture road, by the eastern end of Middle mountain and

turned down the steep hill toward Round Pond. It was the uneasy actions of "Old Ned" as they reached the level ground at the end of the pond that first alerted Sally to possible danger. He quivered with fear, and his dancing, mincing feet as he shied sideways forced her to use the whip constantly to keep him moving along the rough, uneven road.

The carriage was nearly to the culvert spanning the brook running into the pond from the Rocky Ridge when she spied the two shadows moving as one from beneath a hemlock to spring at the throat of her fear-ridden horse. The glance was all Sally needed, with all her strength she brought the whip down along "Old Ned's" back. The horse in one tremendous lunge threw off the beasts, tipped the wagon violently throwing her onto the edge of the road, and was off, the buggy careening behind him, maddened by pain and terror.

Still with the whip firmly in her hand Sally scrambled instantly to her feet knowing a fleeting instant of panic as portions of the oft-heard tales crowded her mind. Throwing caution to the winds she flung herself at the wolves, swinging the whip, and feeling an intense satisfaction as the lash bit deeply into first one, and then the other. Snarling, they leaped from the roadway, and paused some yards distant, side by side, eyeing her as though considering how best to deal with what had looked like easy prey.

Slowly Sally backed down the road. It was the feel of the rough planking of the culvert that gave her inspiration and hope of a refuge. She made one last whip swining sortie at the gaunt and slaving wolves who were pressing closer, then leaped from the road into the small, icy stream entering the culvert. With frantic, desperate strength she tore some of the rocks from the culvert walls, and piled them into a rude barricade just inside the culvert span. Then, with some protection on three sides assured, she turned to watch as the beasts padded back and forth a few yards from her - at last to sit side by side - watching her, mouths slightly open, tongues lolling out, as though in silent laughter at her predicament, (Secure perhaps in the belief that night and her increasing weakness would be their allies). The water ran clear and icy cold and deepened where Sally crouched inside the culvert. Her feet began

to ache, and the close cramped confines of her refuge brought increasing stiffness to her body. She only dared hope that by some miracle someone would see the driverless carriage along the way. It was over three miles by narrow, winding roads to "Fundy", and although she and "Old Ned" had often traveled the route, it was too much to expect that he could make his way there unguided, a yet---

The sun had passed high noon and was tipping to the west, when she noticed that the two wolves, with ears laid back were gazing intently toward the east. Uneasily they milled about a few moments, then crossed the road to slip noiselessly out of sight along the shore of Round Pond. A faint "Halloo" - another and Sally dared to leave her refuge - her ordeal over. "Old Ned" had made his way, unnoticed and unguided, and reached the Burnham home in "Fundy". It had taken her friends only a few minutes to set out along his back trail, but the progress had been slowed by the need to scan the sides of the roads, and call out often, lest she be passed, and left injured or unconscious somewhere on the way.

For years the culvert bore the name "Wolf Bridge". It has filled from silt and the erosion of years, and is hard to find. Sally lived to the age of one hundred and one years, and lies at rest with her husband and several of their children in the cemetery a few yards to the rear of her home. Her home is now (1974) that of the forest ranger of the Pawtuckaway mountain area in Nottingham New Hampshire.