

Fairport Memories: Construction of Main Street Lift Bridge



With Fairport's Main Street bridge temporarily closed for repairs, we look back 99 years, to March of 1914, and the construction of the lift bridge. The predecessor to the current bridge was an 80 foot long fixed bridge. In 1903 a decision was made to widen the canal to 125 feet, resulting in the replacement of bridges from the Hudson River to Lake Erie. Along the length of the canal, the widening occurred on the south side, leaving the towpath intact on the north shore.

The bridge is referred to as a bow-string truss type. It was designed by F.P. Williams, and built by H.S. Kerbaugh Inc. for \$75,000. Several engineering problems existed with the replacement of the old bridge, primarily driven by elevation issues with the north and south approaches. The 1914 replacement bridge, 139 feet in length, incorporates an irregular ten sided design, crossing the canal at an angle of 32 degrees from southwest to northeast. Every angle of the bridge is unique, and there are no square corners on the bridge floor. The original decking was wood, long ago replaced with steel grating.

Fairport's historic lift bridge was threatened with replacement in the 1970's, when a plan was considered to build a new bridge that would span high above both sets of railroad tracks that existed at the time, as well as the canal. At the time, the lift bridge needed extensive repairs, and the community was divided regarding the choices of repairing or replacing the lift bridge. Ultimately the bridge was renovated, and growing traffic congestion was addressed by replacing the single lane canal bridge at Turk Hill Road.

In 2009 the Fairport Historic Preservation Commission named Fairport's Main Street lift bridge a village landmark.

Photo and text provided by Bill Poray, Perinton town historian.