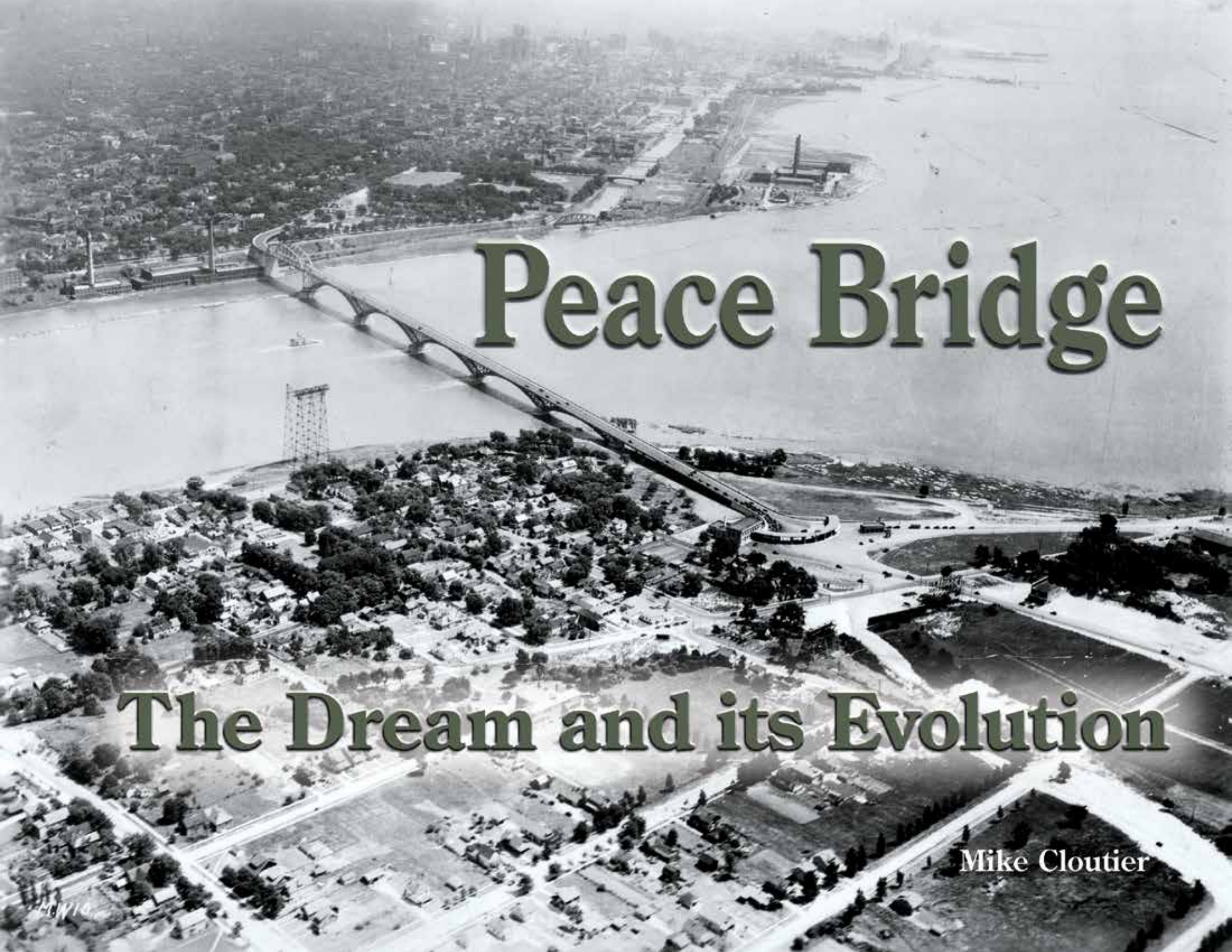




Peace Bridge

The Dream and its Evolution

Mike Cloutier



Peace Bridge

The Dream and its Evolution

By Mike Cloutier

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I am delighted to send greetings on the 80th anniversary of the Peace Bridge. The people of New York State value the friendship we share with Canada and truly appreciate such landmarks as the Peace Bridge — especially all that it represents. A stunning example of ingenuity and construction, this impressive span contributes to the rich history, beauty and landscape of the Greater Niagara Region.



The Peace Bridge embodies the international goodwill between New York State and Canada and continues to benefit our economies by connecting our people and by serving the business needs of surrounding communities. It is not only a critical transportation link, but also a powerful symbol of nearly two centuries of friendly relations between two great countries. The very fact that the Peace Bridge is governed by a binational board speaks to the strength of this relationship.

While we celebrate the proud history and achievements of the Peace Bridge, we look forward to the future. The reasons for its constructing the bridge in the early 20th century are similar to those driving the need to expand in the early 21st century — a safe, secure and efficient bridge and plaza that will accommodate current and future trade, tourists and commuters. The prosperity of Western New York has and continues to be inextricably linked to the Peace Bridge.

I congratulate the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority and on behalf of the State of New York, I wish you continued success.

Eliot Spitzer
Governor of New York
Albany, 2007

I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to everyone celebrating the 80th anniversary of the Peace Bridge.

For eight decades, this bridge has provided a vital link between Fort Erie and Buffalo and continues to be a lynchpin of the world's largest trading relationship with about \$700 million in two-way trade between Canada and the United States crossing this bridge every week.

Although the need for a bridge at this location to facilitate the flow of traffic and trade was the impetus for its construction, it had long been planned to also serve as a memorial to peace between Canada and the United States, in particular to mark the century since the end of the War of 1812. This close relationship has allowed our two nations to work together on programs like EZ-PASS, NEXUS and FAST to accommodate the millions of vehicles that cross here annually. As plans to expand this corridor advance, it is reassuring to have a neighbour that is also interested in a solution that will promote safety and security while boosting commerce and tourism.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, please accept my best wishes for continued success.



Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Ottawa, 2007

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Introduction

This book was commissioned by the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Peace Bridge.

The bridge is a conduit, a link between people, communities, nations, a concrete and steel expression of humanity's wanderlust and desire for freedom from the constraints imposed by geography.

Every year, \$40 billion worth of trade crosses the Niagara River between Buffalo, New York, and Fort Erie, Ontario. Millions of vehicles carrying millions more people travel conveniently and safely.

The Peace Bridge evolved from a structure that simply allowed people to get "over there" into a key component of the national, regional and local social and economic infrastructure on both sides of the international border.

Histories of the bridge had been written, and they were to provide background, a context, to examine how the bridge affects the society it serves today.

However, accounts of the bridge's history included unsupported statements, ambiguities, errors and unanswered questions. It would not have been possible build upon a fractured foundation.

This book clarifies ambiguities, corrects errors and answers some questions. In one volume, it provides a glimpse into the lives of the key men responsible for bringing the Peace Bridge into existence. It tracks conflicts between communities and business interests as efforts progressed. It clarifies key events, such as the financing, the Depression-era transition from a private company to a public authority, and a further transition in which governments on both sides of the border became equally and directly represented.

There are recent milestones as well — the famous Battle of

the Barge incident, the discovery and documentation of relics from an ancient civilization that lived in the area, and the efforts to expand the bridge's capacity.

The primary source of information for this book was first-hand reports in Buffalo and Fort Erie newspapers written at the time. They are contained in microfilm and clipping files at the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, the Fort Erie Public Library and the archives of the Peace Bridge Authority. Photographs and other artwork were culled from the Peace Bridge collection unless otherwise noted. The Fort Erie Museum was also a rich source of visual material.

The PBA deserves much credit for having collected and archived volumes of newspaper clippings and photographs over the 80 years of its existence. Not many businesses or agencies would spend the time or expend the resources to preserve their documented histories. Considering that there were as many as four daily newspapers publishing concurrently in Buffalo, the prospect of plowing through 80 years worth of material was daunting.

The material presented is a matter of public record and available at libraries. Access to internal documents was not sought.

Acknowledgments are due to the staff of the Grosvenor Room of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library for their kind assistance and insight, the staff of the Fort Erie Museum, and Niagara College student Matt Day for his research assistance. Thanks are due, as well, to Peace Bridge employees for their insights, enthusiasm and transportation across the bridge.

Source material has been handed over to the Fort Erie Museum for inclusion in its local history archives.

*Mike Cloutier
October 2007*

Alonzo Mather's River Dream

"You can look down deep into it and you will soon be lost in thought, and for hours you can sit on its banks lost in meditation — a river no man with a soul can study without feeling reverence, bringing him nearer his Creator."

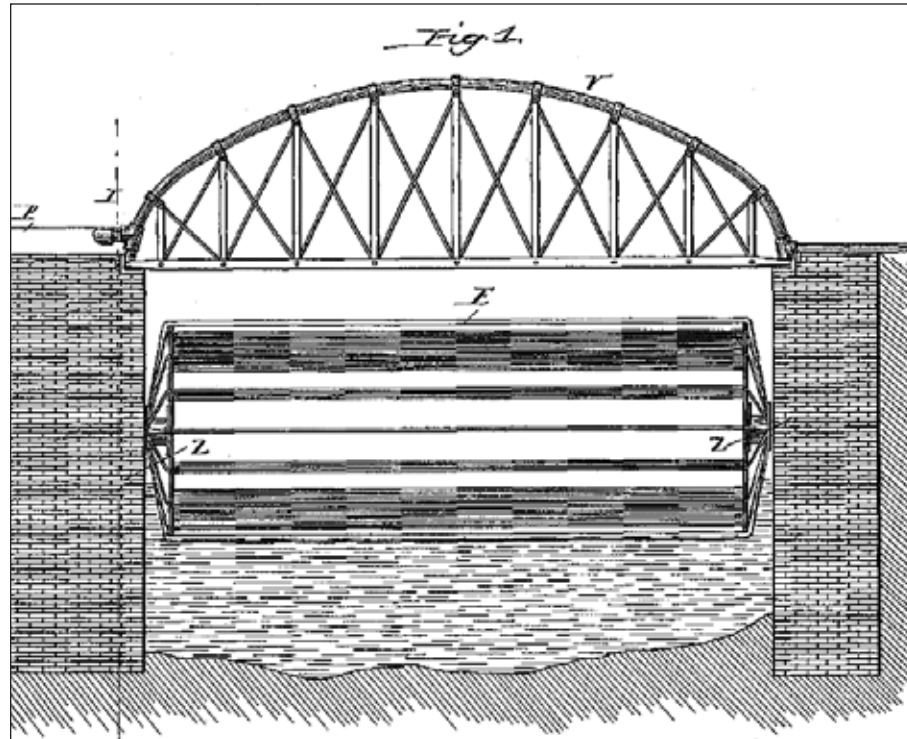
Alonzo C. Mather

When Alonzo Clark Mather sat on Buffalo's waterfront, he saw vast riches flow past. "I believe," he wrote in a short book titled *Practical Thoughts of a Businessman*, "half the wealth of the continent is wasted in allowing the energy stored in the great lakes to run at waste through the Niagara River."

Published in 1893, his book might be called a business plan. It outlined his vision, cash flow projections, vertical market opportunities and sketches of proprietary technology. He appealed not only to capitalist desires, but patriotism and compassion.

His was a six-part plan that would lift Buffalo above even the greatness it then enjoyed and would ensure its place as one of the most important cities of the world. It would be part of a great international city with the river at its heart.

He envisioned a great hydro-electrical plant across the river where the current was wildest. Turbines, similar to paddle-wheels that powered many steamships of the day, would be slung under seven "power spans," each a city block wide (from



the perspective of the water flow) and three stories high. Canal locks near the middle of the river would be gateways for ships and other marine vessels.

Six of these giant structures, he postulated, could be built between the riverhead and Grand Island without adversely affecting the flow of water for hydro-electric projects farther downstream or the level of the lake.

Since the generating station would connect two land masses, Mather opined that it only made sense to create a bridge over which pedestrians, electric trolleys and other vehicles could travel.

“A memorial bridge to inventors of the 19th century (to) span the most wonderful river in the world with a powerful wheel licking up the millions of pounds of energy and converting it to that most useful of all elements ‘electricity’.”

Railway invention earns fortune

Mather's fortune had been made when he devised a feeding and pen system for livestock transported by rail. His patented stock car prevented losses caused by starvation and injury, and he found a ready market with railroad companies, meat packers and ranchers who leased them.

He started with one car in 1880 and 13 years later had 1,400 cars in service, saving the cattle industry nearly \$4 million per year, he claimed.

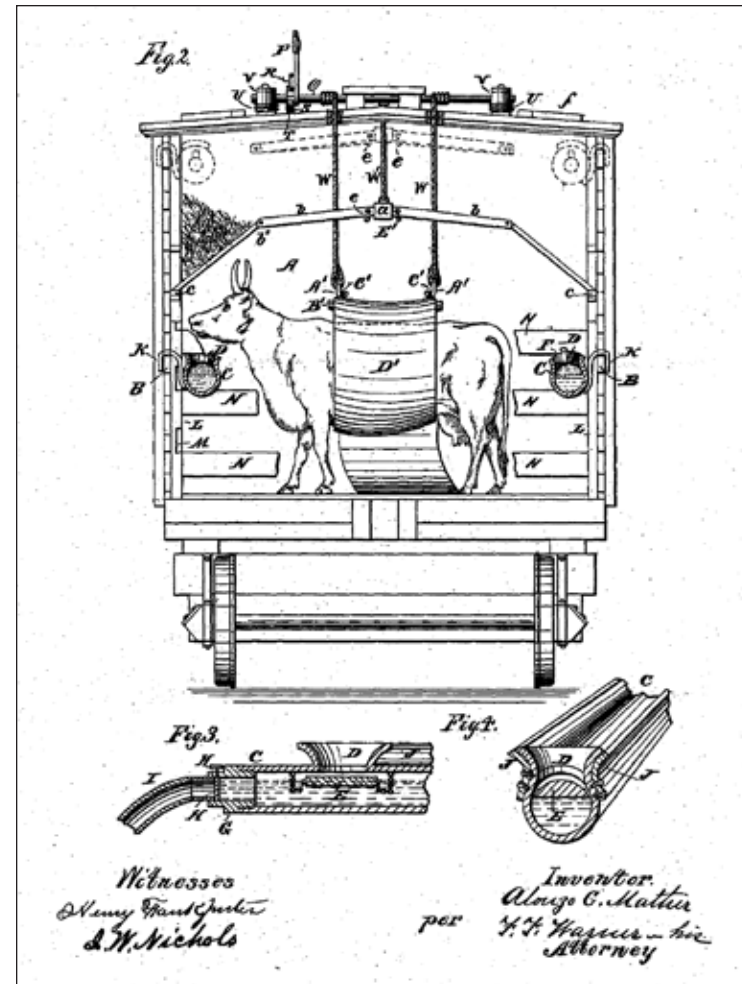
He was a rather prolific inventor with 52 patents registered in his name in United States and Canada. Many were improvements on existing technology in his main field of railway transportation — the livestock car was but one, a refrigerator car another — but he also had ideas for a “motor road vehicle,” improvements on pneumatic tires, “sparking igniter for explosive engines” and “flying machine.”

Mather was born in Fairfield, Herkimer County in upstate New York in 1848, the youngest of three children. His father, William Mather, was trained as a physician and lectured on chemistry and electromagnetism at various colleges including what would become Colgate University.

Young Mather eschewed college education and went into business as a haberdasher selling “men's furnishings” in nearby Utica. He moved the business to Quincy, Illinois, where the rapidly developing Midwest offered more promise and later to Chicago. In 1880, he registered his first patent — a glove with laces that could be easily tightened with one hand. The Mather Self-Lacing Glove sold 1.5 million pairs in 10 years.

The stockyards at Buffalo at the cusp of the century were among the largest in the United States and it would have been usual for Mather to be in Buffalo on business trips, often staying at the Hotel Iroquois.

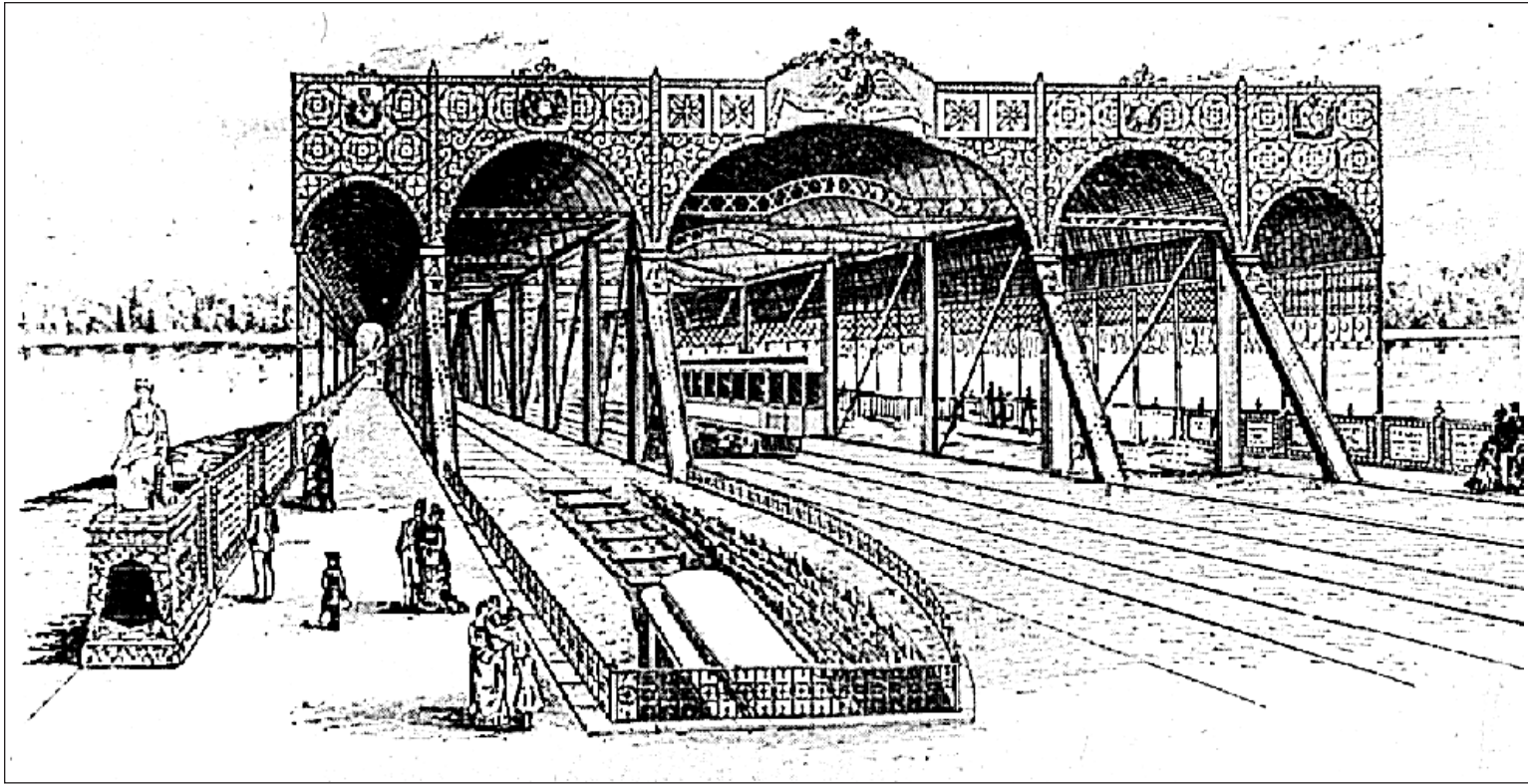
Mather estimated the river could generate a huge amount of electricity at Buffalo. He was not, however, the first to want to harness the power of the water. William Dunbar cut a channel on the Canadian shore in 1792 for a millrace to power a grist



mill. It operated under various owners until 1861 when it was destroyed by fire.

The “Mather Power Bridge,” as it was dubbed by the newspapers, would be a memorial to inventors of the 19th century whose creations were building a better world. His structure “designed so elaborately in lacework of iron” would last centuries. “People would travel thousands of miles to see it and feel repaid.”

The bridge would have sidewalks and a carriageway as well



as rails for trolleys and locomotives powered by the electricity it generated. The surplus energy would also supply Buffalo and the surrounding areas.

Wanted to 'emancipate the canal horse'

But that was just the start. Mather sought to use electricity to power the barges on the Erie Canal and "emancipate the poor canal horse" that towed them, trudging up and down the tow path in a brutish life of endless hard work and poor conditions. Using animals like that was a "disgrace of the 19th century."

With the removal of horses from the tow path, a high-speed electric railway could be built along the canal, part of a system that would bring Chicago and New York within five hours travel of Buffalo.

"It is the duty of man to at once commence to look around him

and bring into immediate use that wonderful energy which is never consumed, of which the world is full, which can be produced by the rise and fall of the tides and gravitation of the earth."

Mather believed in "unrestricted trade the world over," especially on the North American continent, "which I think can be done with the wonderful annihilation of distance and rapid means of communication due to electricity."

He also envisioned the Canadian shore lined with elevators and "manufactories," as "beautiful a city as now lies on its east bank."

Taking a lesson, perhaps, from his father's experience as a physician and lecturer, proceeds from his power bridge would fund an institution devoted to the study of medicine and elec-

tricity. "A center where no expense would prevent the possibility of establishing nature's laws on all subjects in medicine and electricity and prove their correctness." He would establish a reward for the discovery of "an infallible cure for any of the numerous diseases so common."

Sought money and public favor

"As is well known, it is utterly impossible to accomplish any great or small work without money or public favor," Mather wrote. "Hence I hope that if not all my plans, at least some of them will take root in popular favor, sufficiently strong to enable me to carry them to a successful completion."

Although local suppliers provided electricity on a limited scale in Buffalo, it wasn't until 1896 that power generated at Niagara Falls was to arrive. And then, all of it was initially allocated to power the Buffalo Street Railway Company.

He assured his readers that his project for a power bridge was solid. "Put your money in a legitimate but new enterprise where you can see the necessity of the additional capital and the practical and ultimate success of the undertaking and not in the hands of great stock-jobbing corporations which pay dividends today and go into receiver's hands tomorrow and whose property is covered in so many layers of bonds that an additional issue can be slipped in at the bottom, top or middle of the pack and not make any material difference."

Not once had he missed paying a four percent semi-annual dividend on the preferred stock of his stock car company since its organization in 1881, he wrote.

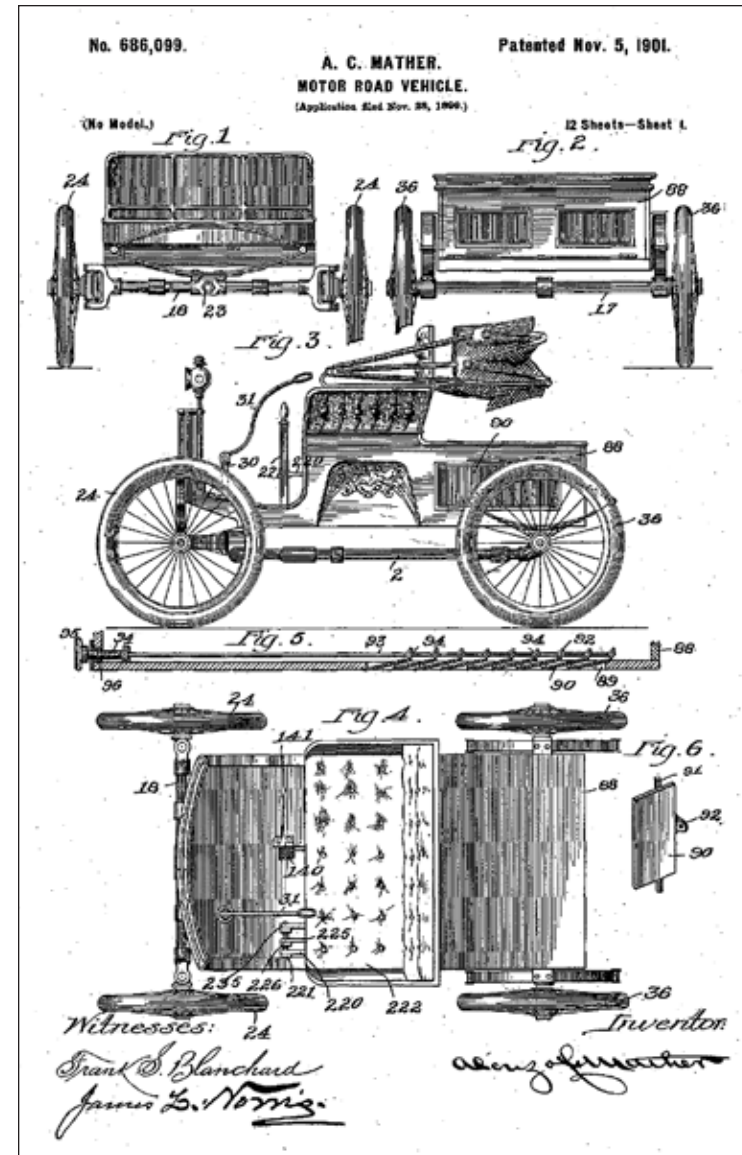
He had the land, too. He had purchased tracts on both sides of the river. Ultimately, this would be his lasting contribution.

The key to Mather's success was not only his inventive spirit and dogged persistence, but he allied himself with others offering a "better mousetrap" and advantage.

Up against powerful forces

With his power bridge idea, however, Mather lined himself up against powerful forces — railroads, marine shipping and ferry companies, fledgling electrical producers, trade protectionists and science.

Little was heard of Mather for a few years after 1893. America had slid into an economic depression. Banks failed. Railroads went bankrupt. The steel industry declined. At its peak, some



cities experienced 25 percent unemployment. It was blamed in part on a trade protectionist law that set a flat 48.4 percent tariff on imported goods. It wasn't until at least 1896 when the econ-

omy began to turn around.

Proposed structure for Pan-Am Expo

That was also the year the Parliament of Canada enacted legislation to incorporate the Mather Bridge and Power Company, but a flurry of opposition greeted him when he publicly resurfaced in Buffalo in 1899 to espouse his project during the preparations for the Pan-American Exposition of 1901. Electricity and demonstrations of its usefulness would be a key part of this world fair.

Mather proposed to construct a single experimental power span at his own expense to prove the merit of his idea. If his project was practicable, he would then go on to build the rest of the structure.

Trustees of the Buffalo Merchants' Exchange formalized their objections with a resolution against the project. They felt an experiment is not necessary because any engineer "of standing in his profession" would be able to calculate how much power could be developed. They also said the "experiment in hydraulic engineering" was merely a guise to obtain a charter for a bridge. "The bill (also) contains defects in wording which do not increase the confidence in the good faith of its promoters," citing a section that prohibited steam locomotives from using the bridge, but not "electric traction locomotives."

Another objector was attorney Henry W. Sprague, a director of the Montreal-based International Bridge Company, owned by the Grand Trunk Railway.

Railroad company protested

The International Bridge between Black Rock and Bridgeburg was a prized property. The thought of another rail bridge to Buffalo was anathema to the GTR.

Sprague told a hearing held by Buffalo Mayor Conrad Diehl that a bridge would not be tolerated by the government, by the great industries down the river or by the great commercial interests involved.

But with a promise that dividends from a power bridge would be paid to the city, and given that Mather was willing to put up as much as \$200,000 to construct his experimental span for which he did have some popular support, Diehl consented and state legislation was enacted and signed into law in April 1899.

Mather was pleased, but had booked passage to Europe in the

meantime and would be gone for the summer. "But it can be said that the project will be realized in time for the Pan-American Exposition."

There was a hitch. Approval of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would be required to ensure the navigation right of way was protected on the river.

In the state capital, Albany, further agitation was fomented in February 1901 when Assemblyman Louis Meister introduced a bill to repeal the law allowing Mather to build his experiment.

"This is a gigantic scheme to build a bridge for some big railroads that want to cross over from Canada," he is quoted in the Buffalo Express. "I understand that certain big power people in Buffalo are greatly interested in having my special bill passed, yet I mean power people in Niagara Falls and Buffalo. There is going to be a big fight to get this bill through." He did not identify the people.

Explained real estate purchases

More than a year later, unnamed sources in a Buffalo Express newspaper article said Mather had been acquiring property that would be used by the Pere Marquette Railroad Company for a terminal and use his bridge to bypass the International Bridge. Mather denied the accusations, but confirmed that he had added to his extensive real estate holdings which totaled more than 175 acres in and around Fort Erie alone.

"I will admit buying quite large quantities of land on both sides of the Niagara River," he wrote in a letter to the public in the Buffalo Express. These were investments that will greatly increase in value, he wrote. "I would not desecrate this structure with any steam railroad."

The Buffalo Merchants' Exchange had been agitating for improvements to the Erie Canal and felt Mather's project would stymie their efforts and create another hazard to navigation.

"The river is a dangerous thing to navigate as it is," said a Mr. Mason, secretary of the merchants' organization. His words were spoken at a hearing conducted by a sub-committee of the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce in January 1903. "The water works crib furnishes one dangerous obstruction now and we don't wish for anything more in the way."

Mason told the hearing that the Mather power bridge could

only generate one-tenth what could be generated at Niagara Falls, and it would not be enough to supply Buffalo. He denied the merchants were influenced by the power companies.

"You can state it as strong as you wish that the power companies have nothing to do with our objections," Mason said. "We are merely working for the interest of Buffalo and nothing else."

While the power output would be small in comparison to Niagara Falls, Mather conceded, it was closer to the market where it was needed and would be less expensive. He just wanted a chance to try it out.

Desire to do good in the world

"I do not guarantee that I will succeed, but my love for work in new fields and my desire to do some good in the world inspire me to risk my money. All I want is a chance to develop this power . . . and when it can be done without hindrance to navigation, to complete the structure of which the experimental plan is a part."

The chamber of commerce opposed the bridge plan and its objections were published in the Buffalo Express.

"It is enough to say of the Mather scheme that it is scientifically absurd, and has not the approval of any respectable scientific or engineering authority. This is quite enough to condemn it. Its enthusiastic inventor should retire to some mountain stream for his experiment. The Niagara River is not the only available spot for them. A bridge and

real estate operation is, doubtless, concealed under the power scheme. After the canal is built a bridge may become desirable, and it will not be necessary for it to masquerade as a power scheme."

The death knell was sounded by Colonel Theodore Bingham of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He told a reporter for the Buffalo Commercial, "The scheme is visionary, and I might say truthfully that it is absolutely idiotic."

Visionary in this sense does not relate to great powers of foresight, but to fanciful speculation not based on what is actually possible.

"This plan of Mr. Mather is so impracticable and will fall so far short of the object that it proposes to further that I cannot, for one, consent to see it tried," Bingham said.

Ultimately, the decision was his. It was the Corps' responsibility to ensure navigation of the river was not obstructed. The Corps was also charged with advising Congress and the president on engineering matters.

Under a headline, "Weary, but not hopeless," in the Buffalo Express a few days later, Mather offered a prediction.

"It is in the line of progress and bound to come and no power on earth can prevent in no distant day a bridge across the Niagara River within the limits of Buffalo, the same as there are bridges everywhere where the growth of the country will justify the investment necessary for their construction."



Resembles signature

The capital letter "M" used in this brochure bears a similarity to the way Alonzo Mather drew the letter in his signature, most strikingly, the sweeping cursive initial loop at the beginning. He also drew his h's taller than his t's. The skewed angle of the M toward the right in the brochure contrasts with the straight verticals of the rest of the type, giving the type the sense of the left slant he adopted in his signature.



Monument dedicated to Mather's dream

Alonzo Mather became the first living American to be memorialized with a monument in Canada when Mather Arch was dedicated in 1940.

Mather Park, where the arch is located, was developed in conjunction with reconstruction of the military fort — the original Fort Erie — as a tourist attraction and the extension of the Niagara Parkway system leading to it.

Mather donated \$25,000 toward development of the park on land that he had once owned.

Work began in the fall of 1938 with fill being taken from Oakes Park, now known as the Sugar Bowl, at the corner of Gilmore Road and Central Avenue to “reclaim” about 15 acres of land from the river and to build a breakwall to protect a road the

Niagara Parks Commission was building.

He was hailed as “endowed by his Creator with the ability to grasp what nature had given to the area and to foresee what works of men were necessary to put its resources to useful purposes,” by John Van Allen, an original director of the company that finally built the bridge.

The 92-year-old Mather was unable to attend the dedication ceremony because he was recovering from an injury in Los Angeles and he died a short time later on January 25, 1941.

From his \$5 million estate, he bequeathed \$125,000 to the parks commission to maintain the park. The bridge authority was also given a gift of \$125,000 which was used to construct lighting systems on the bridge.

Passion for progress drove his spirit

Alonzo Mather had a passion for “work in new fields” and held more than 50 patents for his inventions.

Along with the “humane” stock car that earned him his fortune, many improvements were patented, including a double-deck stock car for smaller animals such as sheep and hogs.

His first invention was a heavy work glove with a lacing system that could be tightened with one hand. Much later, while living in Fairlight, Saskatchewan, in 1922 he patented a yoke attachment system for wagons, plows and other farm equipment to allow easy hitching and unhitching while wearing gloves and mitts.

He also designed a “sparking igniter for explosive engines” in 1900, presumably to be used in a “motor road vehicle” he designed in 1899.

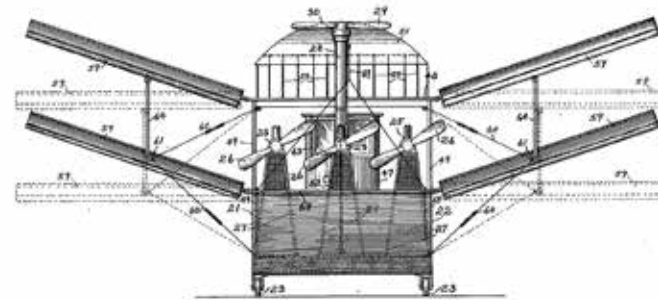
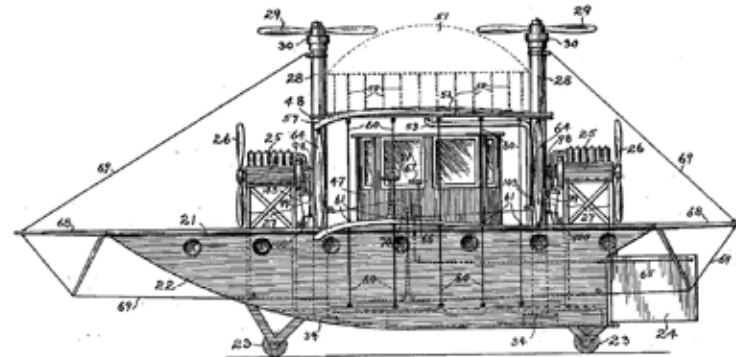
Like most inventors, he did not design entirely new things, but improvements to existing technology. His refrigerator car incorporated compressors powered by the motion of the car to keep the ice frozen. He also developed an insulation system.

Other rail transportation improvements included a freight car with hinged walls that would act as loading ramps, a simple ventilation system for stock cars and a drop-bottom stock car.

A number of inventions were related to his grand plan for the area around the Niagara River.

A three-rail track for electric high-speed trains called for the “laws of motion” to balance a railway car on a single middle heavy rail while it was traveling at speed. Two outside lighter rails, not as large middle rail would prevent the car from rolling over at curves and provide stability at slow speeds. Training wheels on a bicycle are based on the same principle.

He developed a mechanical indicator that would inform passengers where along the route a trolley was located and how fast it was going. A system of gears connected to the wheels would slide a pointer along a gauge with waypoints or transit stops marked out. The car speed would be indicated by the



speed of the pointer.

And, of course, his power generating water-wheel was patented, along with a belt-tightening device to keep the wheel from slipping while it was raised and lowered with the water level.

His patents also included an electric heater, pneumatic tire, steel tire and a flying machine (pictured) capable of vertical landing and takeoff from land or water that could also launch torpedoes.

Frank Burkett Baird

Frank Baird exemplified in many ways the American dream. He earned great wealth as a steel industry magnate and he used what influence he could bring to bear to advance the public good. He took a leadership role in the early evolution of the Peace Bridge project and became the person most closely identified with it. The bridge is considered his lasting legacy.

Frank Burkett Baird became the dominant face of the effort to build the Peace Bridge. He was recruited to join the group that was acting in Buffalo to set the foundation for a bridge and later became president of the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company. He also served in that capacity on the bridge authority that was formed in 1934 until his death in 1939.

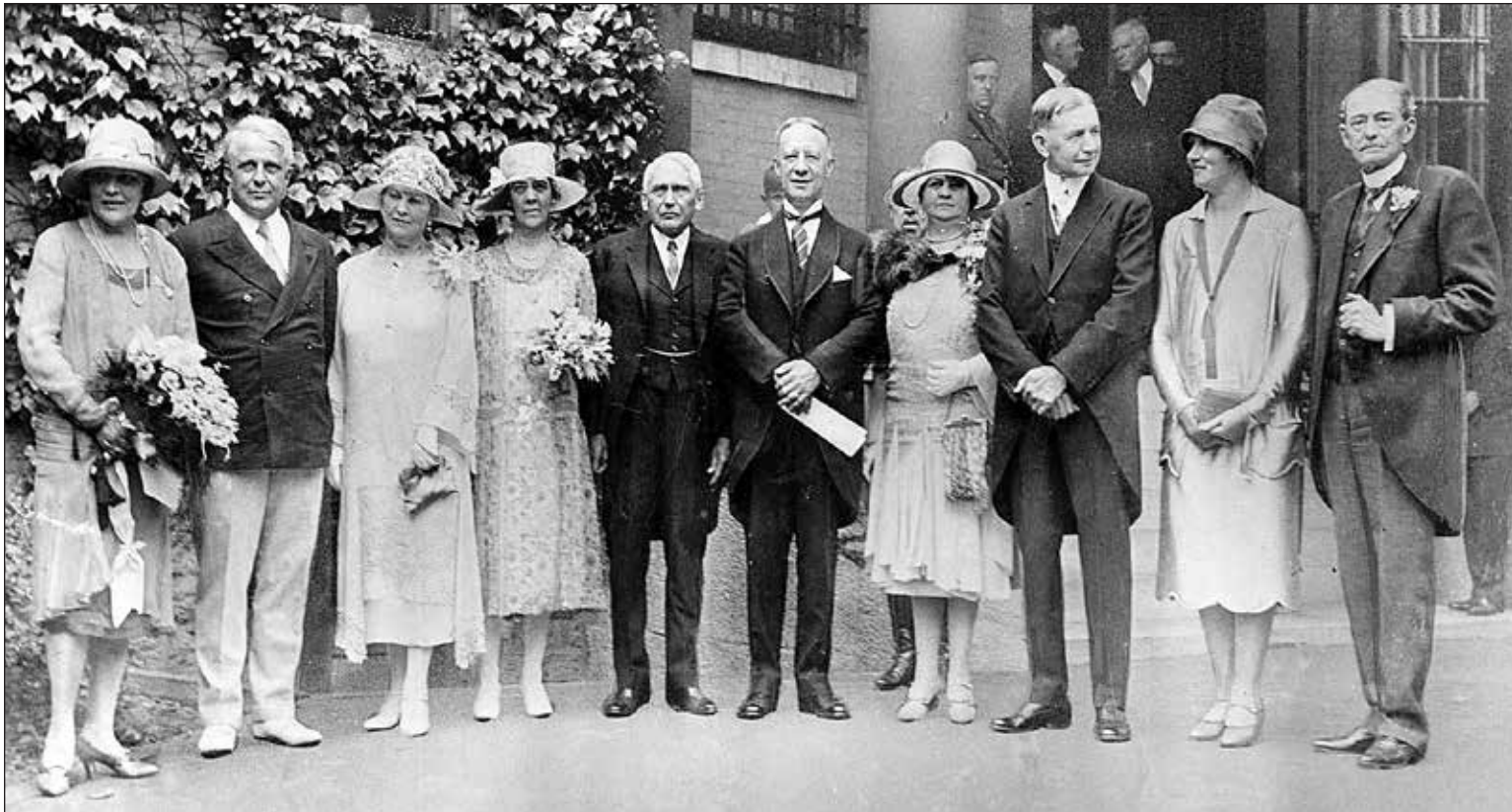
Baird was among four men who formed the core of the effort, three Americans and one Canadian. William A. Eckert and John Warren Van Allen were the other two Buffalo men. William Manley German was the key Canadian. They were the “Big Four” as dubbed by the Buffalo Sunday Times newspaper.

Accustomed to large projects

The Peace Bridge was not his first large project. He had already established companies to manufacture iron and engineered corporate organizations. He involved himself in community affairs and entertained U.S. presidents and other dignitaries.

Born in Marietta, Ohio, in the heart of the Ohio River valley in 1852, he was a third-generation iron maker, his father and grandfather having established blast furnaces. At the age of 33 he came to Buffalo and obtained a lease of an unused furnace in





Shining moment

Frank and Flora Baird, standing at opposite ends of the queue, entertained U.S. Labor Secretary James Davis (left), U.S. Secretary of State Frank Kellogg, New York Governor Alfred Smith, U.S. Vice-President Charles Dawes and their wives for lunch prior to the dedication of the Peace Bridge in August 1927.

North Tonawanda and organized the Tonawanda Iron and Steel Company.

A decade later in 1895 the stage was being set for the founding of the Buffalo Union Furnace Company. Baird started by helping to settle financial litigation surrounding the bankruptcy of the Union Iron Company. As part of his involvement, he secured a long-term lease and option on facilities and more than 50 acres of land on the Buffalo River and organized the Buffalo Furnace Company.

A second furnace was built in 1897 and the Union Iron Works was established with financial

involvement of M.A. Hanna and Company, a Cleveland conglomerate composed of mining, shipping, railway and other interests.

With investment from the American Charcoal Company, a third furnace was built the next year and the Buffalo Charcoal Iron Company was established. All three were merged as the Buffalo Union Furnace Company in 1900 with capital stock worth \$1.2 million.

Nineteen days after the company's incorporation papers were filed and three days before his 48th birthday, Baird married Flora Cameron in Waco, Texas. They had three sons, Frank, Cam-



eron, and William.

Baird's credentials as an iron maker did not end there and included the Canada Furnace Company in Port Colborne that would become the Port Colborne Furnace Company after it was sold in 1936.

Friend of U.S. presidents

Republicans from Baird's home state of Ohio factored large in the executive branch of the United States government. Five from the Buckeye State would serve in the White House from 1869 to 1901. Baird was an Ohio delegate to Republican national conventions in 1880, 1884 and 1888 to choose presidential candidates.

So great was the power of the Ohio Republicans to field successful candidates, Chauncey Depew, a Republican senator from New York and president of the New York Central Railroad quipped during a dinner speech, "Some men have greatness thrust upon them, some are born great, some are born in Ohio."

As well, Baird is known to have entertained Warren Harding, another Ohioan who was elected president in 1920, at his home in Buffalo. Other powerful people he was acquainted with

included Marcus Alonzo Hanna (of the M.A. Hanna and Company), Joseph Foraker, a presidential candidate, John Sherman, who served as Secretary of the Treasury and Secretary of State and Myron Herrick, Ohio governor and ambassador to France.

Baird's public efforts were not confined to politics. He took a role in many charitable, social and business betterment activities: his Episcopalian church, a war relief charity, Millard Fillmore Hospital, Albright Art Gallery, Masonic lodge, the Buffalo Club, the chamber of commerce, the Buffalo Better Business Bureau, and more.

Pan-Am Exposition director

He was also a director of the Pan-American Exposition of 1901, an event that was to become shrouded in a veil of national mourning when fellow Ohioan and Republican president William McKinley was assassinated.

Baird may have been particularly affected by the murder as the two had been described as friends in newspaper reports. He actively supported McKinley in his campaigns for Congress, his gubernatorial bids in Ohio, and in lining up delegates for his presidential nomination.

Company directors

This newspaper photo taken on the Peace Bridge shows Frank Baird with the entire complement of directors of the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company. He is located next to the vertical white crease line and is flanked in front by William German on the left and John Van Allen on the right. William Eckert, the shortest in the front row group, is standing farther to the left.

Baird related a story about a luncheon he hosted for McKinley at the Buffalo Club at a time when he was “financially distressed” and owed \$12,000 that was due immediately. He mentioned to the presidential candidate that the U.S. government owed him \$15,000. It was not due for 60 days, but prompt payment would be helpful. The next day, with a note signed by McKinley, Baird was on the train for Washington and returned with payment.

Recruited to lead the bridge effort

Baird was recruited among a number of captains of industry and business in 1920 to build the Peace Bridge. From the outset he chaired the main committees and would become president of the company that built and operated the bridge.

He was noted for the skills with which he could bring people with different ideas into consensus.

John Van Allen wrote in a tribute upon Baird’s death in 1939: “There were times when his associates seemed far behind in their thinking and there were times when they thought his ideas bordered on the visionary and when this happened, Mr. Baird would diplomatically suggest an adjournment. When the directors again convened, they had in the meantime caught up with his views and had comprehended the value of his advanced thinking and had reached the same conclusion. Any lesser man would have become at times impatient at the perception less clear of the men with whom he had to deal, but not so Mr. Baird. He seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of tolerance and diplomacy.”

He delegated responsibility for tasks to others more able than he and “gave them full power to carry out the matter in their own way and he gave them spirit and energy for the task by his own intense enthusiasm.”

Undertook the financing work

But it was the financing of construction of the bridge that he undertook himself and raised \$4.5 million through bond issues. In the days when a new car could be purchased for \$300, the scale in 1925 dollars becomes evident. And he single-handedly saved investors from losing their shirts when so many other investments had evaporated during the Great Depression.

He also saved the bridge dedication ceremony in 1927 from becoming a mere footnote in history when he secured the repre-



sentation of the Prince of Wales — the successor to the British throne — to greet the vice-president of the United States face-to-face over the international border that bisected the Peace Bridge. Buffalo would become known for the bridge instead of the place where the president was assassinated.

When the bridge was built, Baird was the toast of the town. Even while it was taking shape, Baird flatly refused sentiment in a public petition that it be named after him. There was also

Arena project not nearly as successful

By the time the Peace Bridge was built, plans were underway to give people in Buffalo more incentive to visit Fort Erie. Frank Baird provided that incentive.

He financed and constructed in 1928 a 5,000-seat hockey arena that would also serve as a commercial ice factory. It was a fantastic building — the first of its kind in Ontario — featuring a new style of construction that eliminated the need for pillars that obstructed the view of the ice surface.

The Peace Bridge Arena is believed to be the only arena that was home to a team from another country. The Buffalo Bisons played in the Canadian Professional Hockey League and later the International American Hockey League which was renamed the American Hockey League. National hockey teams from Chicago, Montreal, New York, Pittsburgh and Boston played exhibition and regular league matches.

Plans were announced for the \$200,000 project in October 1927 and the puck dropped for the first game on November 2, 1928. It was located near Main Street,



now Walden Boulevard, less than a half-mile west from the bridge.

Hockey was not a resounding financial success, especially during the Depression years that followed the arena's opening, but fans would come over from Buffalo, pay their bridge tolls, enjoy the more relaxed liquor laws in Ontario and a hockey game and head home, paying their bridge tolls on the way back.

It all came to crashing halt on St. Patrick's Day morning in 1936 when a heavy, wet snowfall caused the roof to collapse.

There were a few people inside, but they were uninjured.

Although the building could have been repaired, Baird made the decision not to and it was demolished. It would be at least another 10 years before a new arena was built. The Fort Erie Memorial Arena was built on the same location.

In the 1990s, the Peace Bridge authority purchased the property from the Town of Fort Erie and the bridge's maintenance garage sits very close to the original location of Baird's arena.

a short-lived campaign to recruit him to run for mayor. Even before it was complete, Baird was awarded the University of Buffalo Medal for the "act which has dignified the performer and the city of Buffalo in the eyes of the world."

Baird also presented himself to take the barbs and criticisms from the public. Although grateful for the structure and its benefits, people freely vented their opinions about its operation. But

his cachet never darkened. Months before his death, he was a guest at the reception for King George VI and his Queen consort when the Queen Elizabeth Way highway from Toronto was dedicated at Niagara Falls, Ontario, in June 1939.

He retained directorships on various corporate boards until his death November 15, 1939 six weeks after fracturing his hip in a fall at a downtown office building.

William A. Eckert

William A. Eckert was person one. He got the ball rolling and kept it rolling from as early as 1911 as the head of a business association in Buffalo's west end. Before his arrival, dreams of a bridge would founder. People would reach out for the concept, but it took his firm grip to make it a reality. As the owner of a manufacturing company, he made things. And, in a very real sense, he manufactured the Peace Bridge.

Every initiative needs its standard bearer — a person of dogged persistence and unflagging enthusiasm. In Buffalo, that spark plug was William A. Eckert. He grasped the idea of a bridge, brought people together, recruited men of wealth and influence to move the process along and kept a careful eye on progress as the project took shape.

Eckert was eclipsed in public celebrity by others because of their roles: Frank Baird because he was the financier and issues of money always draw interest, and lawyer John Van Allen because he was regarded as the spokesman as the project moved along.

Eckert was a self-made man. He brought a workmanlike ethic to the project and was not afraid to take the reins when a bridge was but an idea — inevitable, he would say, but merely an idea nonetheless.

Establishes manufacturing company

Starting with \$64 capital, he established a metal fabrication company, W.A. Eckert Manufacturing, turning out spun metal products, a trade he learned after arriving in Buffalo at the age of 17.

He was born in McEwensville, Pennsylvania, in 1867 and



spent his early boyhood in Constantine, Michigan, where his father was a coppersmith.

Eckert established his company in 1895 and developed it into

Ceremonial spadeful

To William Eckert went the honor of turning the first spadeful of earth to break ground for the construction of the Peace Bridge. The pictured event was the second sod-turning ceremony which was held at Erie Beach more than a week after the first, more quiet, affair held at the location where the bridge would be built in Fort Erie. To his right is his wife Florence. Immediately behind him is John Van Allen, and to his left is William German. It was a happy occasion but it marked the start of when work would really begin. Eckert set himself up in the construction office in Buffalo and minded the progress at every step. He would be eclipsed as the "father of the Peace Bridge" when he would leave the company in 1928 to run for election as comptroller for the city of Buffalo, a post he held until his death in 1939.



a thriving business manufacturing aluminum specialty products. He patented a few consumer goods he developed — a self-righting toothpick or matchstick holder, a bottle stopper and nozzle, for example — and some manufacturing tools.

He married Florence Smith in 1898, and they were nearly inseparable. They lunched together daily and she accompanied him on business trips. They had no children.

He took an interest in civic affairs and became a member of a number of organizations. For example, he was a charter member of the YMCA, a diligent Freemason, a member of the chamber of commerce and the founding president of the Buffalo Business Federation, an organization of 27 civic bodies that represented an aggregate membership of 17,000.

Most fatefully, he was a director of the West Side Business Men's Association, serving two terms as president. It was from this organization the final push for a bridge was made.

When popular support for a highway bridge began in 1909 on both sides of the border, the association was supportive but not active. It was concentrating its efforts on improvements to the Black Rock Canal and the Bird Island Pier.

It wasn't until 1911 when Eckert was chairman of the executive committee that he arranged for meetings between prominent citizens from both countries to discuss the matter and both governments would be encouraged to support the project.

The following year, Eckert was elected president of the businessmen's association and the effort gained momentum, culminating in a grand peace demonstration with at least 35,000 in attendance at Erie Beach, a popular lakeside resort just outside Fort Erie. The featured theme was the construction of a "peace memorial bridge."

Ironically, war trumped the movement for a peace bridge. Almost 100 years to the day after the last great battle at Fort Erie was fought in the War of 1812, Great Britain was at war in Europe. Canada began mobilization and industrial efforts were shifted toward supply of men and materiel for the military effort.

With the United States remaining neutral until the late years of the war, Eckert was free to promote the bridge concept. "I kept the idea before the public in many talks to business and luncheon clubs in Buffalo," he told the Buffalo Times.

Elected president again in 1919, the final effort began. An organizing committee of 12 each from Canada and the U.S. was formed. Eckert would be the 25th person and chairman.

Elected city comptroller

Following the construction of the Peace Bridge, Eckert would be elected comptroller for the City of Buffalo in 1928 to manage the city's finances. He was Republican, but did not associate himself too closely with other GOP (Grand Old Party) leaders. He was re-elected twice and was noted for his trustworthiness.

During his third term, he was a principal witness in a Common Council inquiry which resulted in several indictments and convictions against municipal officials.

Grand jury investigations were still underway when the Erie County Republican executive committee refused to endorse him to stand for a fourth term, but he indicated his intention to run as an independent.

However, on his way from his office to meet his wife for lunch, he was felled by a heart attack in front of city hall and died in an ambulance on August 1, 1939.

John Warren Van Allen

John Van Allen distinguished himself as an athlete and a scholar in college, an orator and writer and later a keen lawyer. He was a law partner of Ainsley Wilcox and took over where he left off after Wilcox's retirement during the formative stage of the Peace Bridge project.

John Warren Van Allen was credited with having a "genius for getting things done." As the chief legal representative for the group that wanted to build a bridge, he had a lot to do.

He came to Buffalo in 1904, newly admitted to the bar with a law degree from Albany Law School. Prior to that he had earned a bachelor's degree in 1902 from Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, not far from his hometown of Le Ray.

He distinguished himself not only as a scholar but also as an athlete, establishing school records in his freshmen year for the 100-yard sprint and 220-yard run.

While at Hamilton College he also won the Clarke Prize for public speaking, was elected governor of the honor society, was editor-in-chief of both the weekly newspaper and the yearbook and managed the music and drama clubs.

Born on August 12, 1876, he graduated from high school in 1896 and taught in the public schools of Jefferson County for three years before going to university.

He said he was attracted to Buffalo because he admired Grover Cleveland who was mayor for a time before he became governor of New York and then president of the United States. The publicity generated by the recently passed Pan-American



Exposition also attracted him.

Van Allen clerked for the Buffalo law firm of Bissell, Carey and Cooke for four years before he became acquainted with Ainsley Wilcox.

Later years

John Van Allen is flanked by Edward Lupfer, left, who was the chief engineer for construction of the bridge, and Frank Winch, an original director of the bridge company, on the occasion of the opening of Baird Drive in 1952.

Wilcox was a prominent lawyer and influential Republican. He was an old college friend of Theodore Roosevelt and his home is a national historic site as the place where Roosevelt was inaugurated after President William McKinley succumbed to an assassin's bullets 10 days after being shot while visiting the Exposition in 1901.

Van Allen was recommended to Wilcox as an able lawyer who could help him with the detail work in the practice. They organized the law firm of Wilcox and Van Allen with a handshake deal and put out their shingle in 1908. Later, Wilcox retired and sold the whole practice -- extensive library, fixtures and clientele -- to Van Allen for \$100 in 1917.

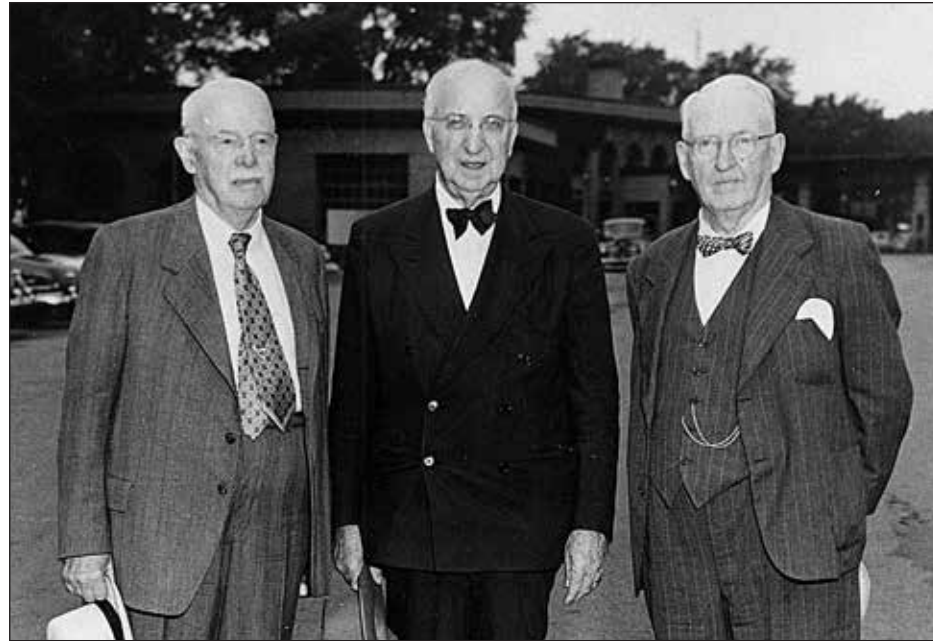
He married Gertrude Sweet on Valentine's Day, 1907 and they had three children, all girls.

Helped establish airport and airline

He was an aviation enthusiast and became acquainted with Lawrence Bell, president of Bell Aircraft Corp, and Glenn Curtiss and Lincoln Beachey, both noted aviation pioneers. He would also represent the Consolidated Air Craft Company which would establish Fleet Aircraft Company in Fort Erie.

Van Allen was one of Beachey's ground crew when the daring aeronaut flew under the Honeymoon Bridge at Niagara Falls for a \$500 prize. He also helped organize ground support for Curtiss' flight from New York to Albany in less than 24 hours for a \$10,000 prize in 1910.

Van Allen helped establish Buffalo's airport, an airmail service and the first regular commercial airline flying out of Buffalo, Colonial Western Airways, which operated daily flights to Toronto. It was "the scenic airway over Niagara."



He was active in the Buffalo Chamber of Commerce and was a president of the Black Rock Manufacturer's Association, elected honorary vice-president for life. He belonged to many social and fraternal clubs including Masonic lodges and associated organizations.

Van Allen is best known for his work to establish a bridge across the Niagara River. As well as his work organizing, he sat on the board variously as vice-president, secretary, treasurer and general counsel until his death July 28, 1958.

He was vitally involved in the establishment of the original bridge commission mandated by the U.S. Congress to begin preliminary planning, then on the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company and later on the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority that would replace it and which would be reorganized in the 1950s.

William Baird, son of Frank Baird, who assumed his father's post on the bridge authority after his death, called Van Allen "Mr. Peace Bridge" whose spirit made the bridge "a living thing rather than a structure of steel concrete and granite."

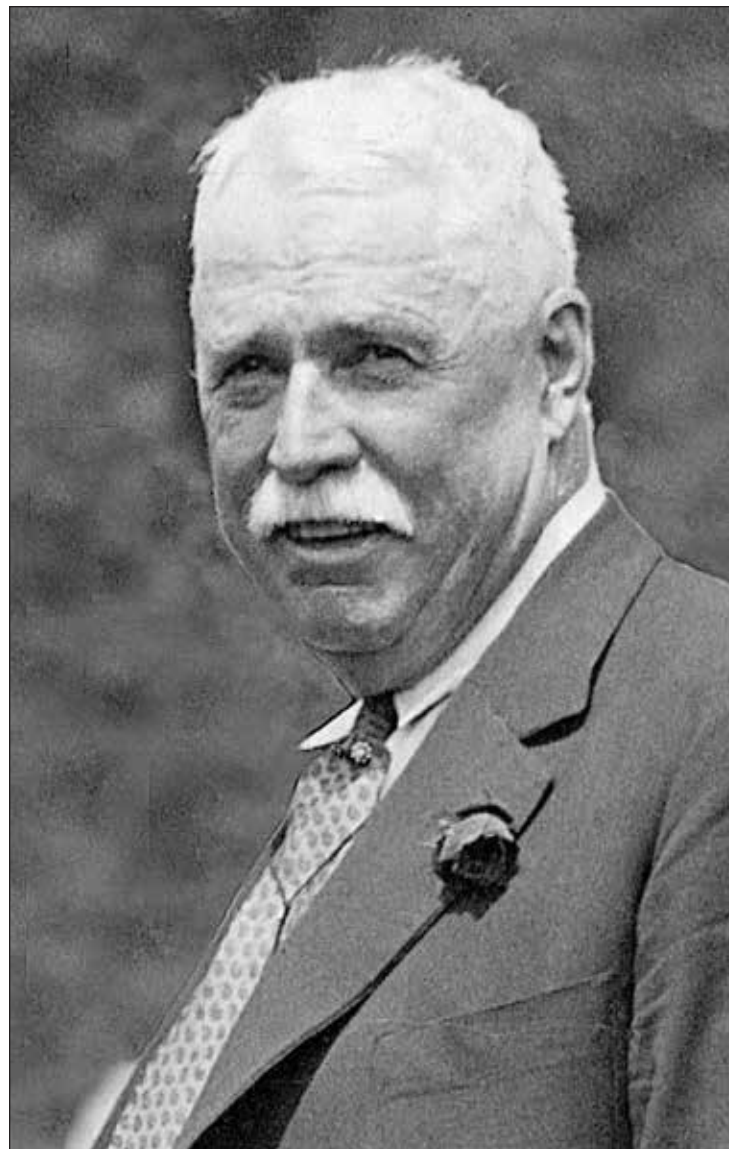
William Manley German

William German was the key Canadian figure in the effort to build the Peace Bridge. As the member of federal parliament for the area, his support was vital to get the government stamp of approval for the project and to put the legislative pieces together in the legal jigsaw puzzle.

William Manley German was “gifted with that rare faculty of magnetism,” a younger colleague would note many years after his death. He was educated and a fluent speaker. As the member of parliament representing the constituency of Welland in which Fort Erie was part, he negotiated the Canadian legislation that enabled construction of the Peace Bridge.

His entry into federal politics after a year as the deputy reeve of the city of Welland was bumpy at best. While winning a majority of 500 votes as the Liberal candidate in the general election of 1891, he was unseated in controversy. A judge found that German had promised two men from Port Robinson jobs if they voted for him. The decision was upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada and he was barred from federal office for seven years. Liberal James Lowell was elected in his place and his Conservative opponent, Dr. John Ferguson, was appointed to the Senate.

However, he won election to the legislature in the Province of



Racetrack proponent

Another of William German's projects was the creation of the Fort Erie Race Track in 1897. It is not known what his involvement was, but he was a member of provincial parliament at the time and is named as an original incorporator. The Peace Bridge was an important gateway to the track, just a short drive from downtown Buffalo.



Ontario in 1894 and was re-elected in 1898. While sitting as a member of provincial parliament, he ran in the federal election of 1900 to begin an unbroken string of 17 years as the MP for Welland and served a further four-year term starting in 1921.

Defended sensational legal case

German was born in Hillier Township near Belleville, Ontario (then known as Canada West), May 26, 1851. He received an elementary education there and attended Victoria College in nearby Cobourg. He was admitted to the bar in 1882 and became a barrister the next year. He entered law practice in Welland in 1892.

He gained some international celebrity as the defence lawyer in the sensational case of Olive Adele Sternaman, twice widowed, who stood accused of murdering her second husband, George Sternaman by poisoning him with arsenic.

She was born Olive Adele Sevenpiper in Rainham Centre

in Haldimand County just west of Welland County, co-incidentally not far from where Sternaman was born. She moved with her parents to Buffalo and married Ezra Shipman. During that time, she met Sternaman who boarded at their home. Both Ezra and George were carpenters and became friends.

Ezra died in 1895 — possibly under suspicious circumstances — and a year later married Sternaman and moved back to Haldimand County. He died shortly afterward leaving handsome insurance policies of which Olive was the beneficiary and she returned to Buffalo. Her second mother-in-law suggested the deaths of two husbands in two years was suspicious and an investigation was opened. The coroner determined the cause of death was arsenic poisoning. She was arrested and extradited.

On trial for her life in 1897, German was retained for her defence. She was found guilty. An appeal to a higher court failed. But while waiting to be led to the gallows in the

Silver spades

Two silver spades were used in the ceremonial groundbreaking and then presented to American and Canadian leaders of the Peace Bridge project. German was one of the recipients.

Cayuga jail yard, German petitioned the federal minister of justice in Ottawa to re-open the case on the grounds of new evidence. A new trial was ordered two days before her scheduled execution. As well as some circumstantial evidence, the case hinged on whether embalming fluid may have caused a positive test for arsenic in Shipman's body. While the undertaker swore in the first trial that he did not embalm the body, he reversed his testimony in the second trial and Olive was freed.

German was the defence lawyer in two other capital murder cases. On one, the jury denied a finding of guilty for murder but settled on manslaughter. On the second, the verdict was guilty.

Took case to British Privy Council

He was also involved in an international boundary dispute on Lake Erie where a Canadian Coast Guard Cutter seized a fishing tug, the "Kitty D." German proved that while the tug was indeed in Canadian waters, its fishing nets were in U.S. waters.

This case at the turn of the 20th century went beyond the highest court in the land to the Privy Council of the parliament of the United Kingdom, which, under the British North America Act — the Canadian constitution — was the final arbiter of



law in the Dominion of Canada.

German was also a key shareholder in the Fort Erie Jockey Club Ltd. which was incorporated in 1896. Thoroughbred horse racing at the Fort Erie Race Track commenced in June 1897. Thirty years later, he was also involved in the establishment of the General Brock Hotel in Niagara Falls, Ontario.

While sitting as an MPP in the Ontario legislature, German was a member of the Standing Committee on Railways throughout his tenure. He also sat on standing committees dealing with municipal law, public accounts and private bills as well as ad-hoc committees to examine specific bills.

For most of his federal career he sat on the government side of the House but did not receive an appointment to Cabinet. He won election with the governing Liberals in 1900, 1904 and 1908.

Opposed free trade with U.S.

In the election of 1911, German split with the prime minister over free trade with the United States. Sir Wilfrid Laurier promoted a trade reciprocity agreement with the United States to reduce high import tariffs which ultimately was rejected by the voters. German received an “acclamation at the hands of both the Liberals and the Conservatives,” according to a historical article by Allan Brooks, published in the Welland Tribune, March 31, 1958. German became known as an “independent Liberal.”

The Conservatives under Sir Robert Borden won the election and for the first time German found himself in the role of opposition MP.

He sided back with Laurier in 1917 in which Laurier refused to support conscription in the First World War. This led to a major division in the Liberal party and another electoral defeat for the party. German, too, was defeated.

He ran again in 1921 and won the Welland seat under the party leadership of William Lyon Mackenzie King. According to Brooks, German was not enamored of King’s ingratiating disposition. “Personal and shameless flattery of Laurier” was responsible for his early advancement.

He did not run in 1925, but was convinced to run in 1926 with

the promise of a Cabinet post. He lost the election and retired from politics.

Supported early efforts

German’s involvement in efforts to build a bridge stretched back to at least February 1908 when the Bridgeburg Board of Trade met with him to discuss the question of expansion of the International Bridge for carriage and pedestrian traffic. He also lent his support to a company that was incorporated in 1909 to build a new bridge at Fort Erie.

German did not lend his name as an incorporator to this company but promoted the concept in public speaking engagements and with government officials.

He chaired the committee that organized a massive gathering at Erie Beach as a peace demonstration which at its heart was the promotion of a bridge. Some of the attendees were Sir John Gibson, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, William Lyon Mackenzie King, who would become prime minister and John MacDonald, editor-in-chief of the Toronto Globe.

German would become a director in the bridge company formed in 1923 that would eventually build the bridge. He would serve as a vice-president and be the Canadian liaison for government affairs.

He died at the age of 81 on March 31, 1933.

Early Efforts

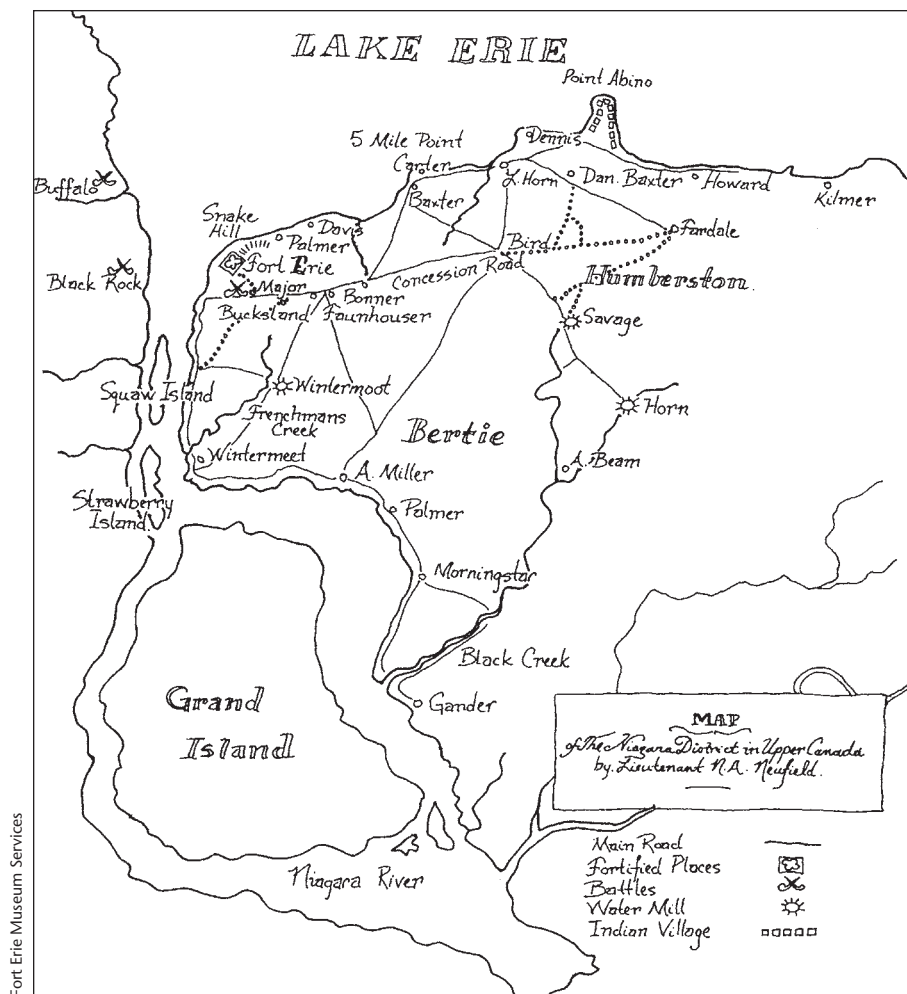
Private companies were established on at least four occasions over the course of 30 years to build a bridge across the Niagara River at Buffalo. A fifth effort was planned to be a government project as a memorial to peace between Great Britain and the United States, but it was terminated with the outbreak of the First World War.

Bridging the Niagara was nothing new. At the time the Peace Bridge was being considered in the 1920s, structures were in place at Queenston-Lewiston (the first built in 1850), Niagara Falls (the first in 1848), and there was a railroad bridge between Bridgeburg and Black Rock owned by the International Bridge Company and completed in 1873.

The International Bridge was a subsidiary of the Grand Trunk Railway Company, which had become the dominant railway in Canada and ran on extensive trackage in the U.S. More than once the GTR teetered on bankruptcy and because it defaulted on loans from the Canadian government, it was nationalized in 1920 and then merged with other nationalized railroads to form the Canadian National Railway in 1923.

The site of the bridge in Canada was a settlement called Victoria renamed International Bridge in 1877. It was still part of the larger Bertie Township whose borders roughly matched





Fort Erie Museum Services

Post-war Niagara

A hand-drawn copy of a map of southern Niagara originally drawn in 1815 shows roads, trails, settlements, farms and battlefields.

those of the current Town of Fort Erie.

The community broke from the township in 1895 and the Village of Bridgeburg was founded. Its status was changed to a town in 1915. Such was the impact of the railway that the main street was named Gzowski Street after the GTR's construction engineer who built the bridge, Sir Casimir Gzowski. It was later changed to Central Avenue.

The fortunes of Bridgeburg were linked to the fortunes of the International Bridge. The railroad was the number one employer. The railyard would become the third largest in Canada after Montreal and Toronto. The bridge was also a factor in the development of Buffalo as a major rail center.

When companies were chartered in Canada and New York in 1857 to build a railroad bridge, a provision required a carriageway and sidewalk be included. When the GTR acquired the stock of these companies and combined them into a single International Bridge Company in 1869, these provisions remained but only a railway track was built.

The International Bridge is a two-piece affair. The truly international span linked Bridgeburg and Squaw Island which is U.S. territory. A swing bridge connected the island with the mainland at Black Rock, formerly a town that had amalgamated with Buffalo in the 1850s.

Local passenger traffic was possible on a rail-car called the Dummy. This and river ferries provided cross-border access at Black Rock, Buffalo and Fort Erie.

The Dummy schedule and those of the ferries were inconvenient to the free flow of traffic. Both operated only during daylight hours, and the ferry system was subject to weather conditions. Only in 1910 did night-time operation of the Dummy begin.

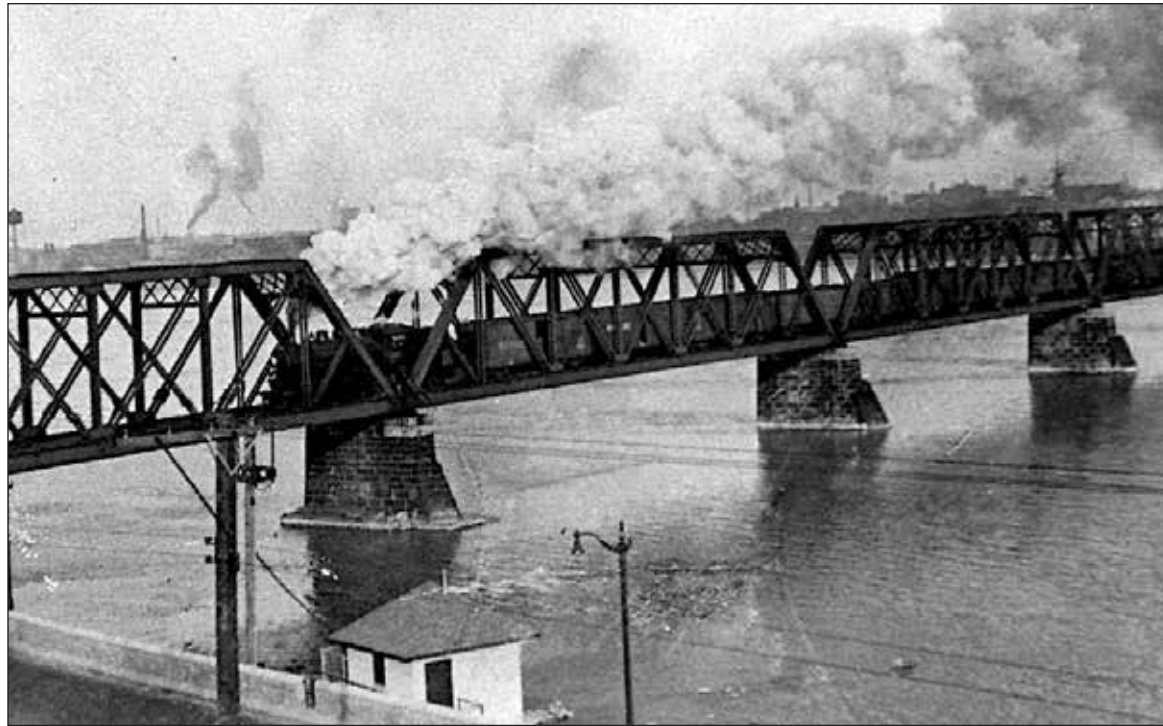
Poor business model for bridge expansion

People from all quarters at the south end of the Niagara River agitated for expansion of the International Bridge to allow a driveway and sidewalk, but the company resisted, citing a poor business model.

The company said it would cost as much as \$1.5 million to expand the bridge and it would only earn tens of thousands of dollars from additional tolls. Proponents claimed the bridge earned hundreds of thousands of dollars in yearly profit from train traf-

International Bridge

While it was not the first bridge across the Niagara River, the International Bridge between Bridgeburg and Black Rock was the first built above the falls and the first to feature piers in the water.



Fort Erie Museum Services

fic and that it should subsidize the roadway.

Despite the on-going resistance, hope sprang eternal, and many believed it would occur eventually.

Agitation for a new bridge or improvements to the International Bridge almost always occurred coincident to each other. Regardless of what advocates wanted, they wanted it in their respective communities.

It was a see-saw starting in 1891 when the first documented effort for a bridge at Fort Erie was made. It didn't end until 1925 when all government approvals were in place and shovels broke ground.

Typical were the events of 1916 when an accident claimed the lives of three people when their automobile rolled off the end of the ferry and into the river at Fort Erie.

This was during a time when bridge plans lay dormant because of Canada's involvement in the First World War.

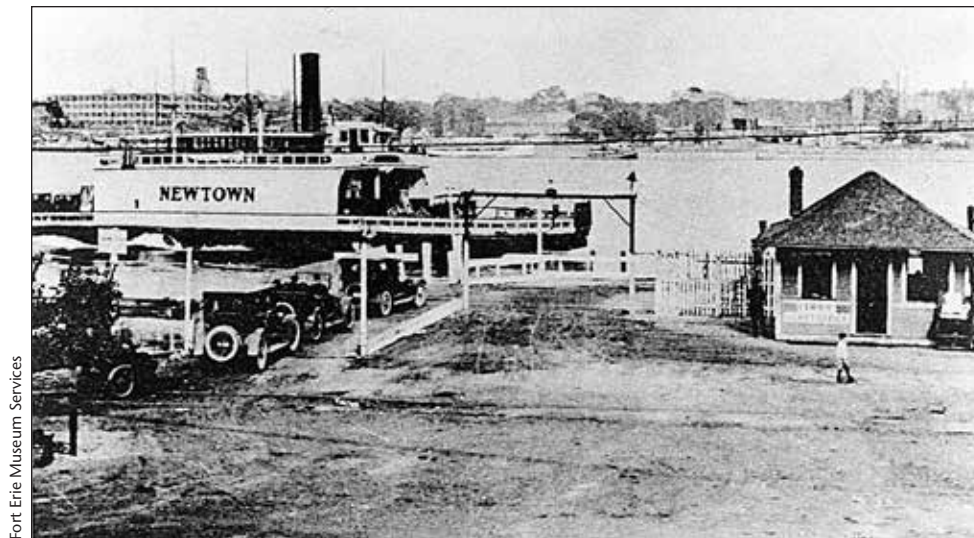
"Bridge driveway agitation renewed," reads the headline of the May 26, 1916 edition of the Ridgeway Herald. "Prominent citizens in Bridgeburg, Buffalo and Fort Erie have expressed the opinion that the opportunity should be seized to press the International Bridge Co. to build a footpath and driveway as provided in the charter granted it by the Dominion and New York state governments."

But residents in Fort Erie saw a "grave menace" brewing. "They think that a driveway and footpath at Bridgeburg would put Fort Erie off the map as far as business is concerned."

Four private efforts

At least four charters were granted by the Canadian government for bridges at Fort Erie.

The first known incorporation occurred in July 1891 when John Ferguson, A.G. Hill, M.E. Dunlap, George M. Porter, Charles B. Gaskill and Alexander Logan formed the Buffalo



Fort Erie Museum Services

Ferry service

Newtown was one of four ferries owned by the International Ferry Company that operated between Ferry Street in Buffalo and Bertie Street in Fort Erie.

and Fort Erie Bridge Company.

Alonzo Mather incorporated the Mather Bridge and Power Company in 1896. An application to extend his franchise faced opposition in Parliament in January 1911 when complaints were made that he was taking too long to begin construction. Approvals from U.S. authorities were not forthcoming.

The Fort Erie and Buffalo Bridge Company was incorporated in May 1909 by Donald MacGillivray of Port Colborne, William Phin of Welland, Joseph Battle of Thorold, Sylvio Caspatis of Columbus, Ohio, David Hyman of Buffalo and William Hartupee of Pittsburgh.

And finally, in 1923, the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company was incorporated which resulted in the construction of the Peace Bridge. A company of the same name was incorporated by New York State and the two were merged as a single corporation in 1925.

Competition for railway bridge

Little is known of the 1891 effort except what is contained in the Act of Parliament to incorporate the company. It was to be primarily a railway bridge and the company was granted powers to lay up to six miles of track to connect with "existing and future lines of railway in the County of Welland."

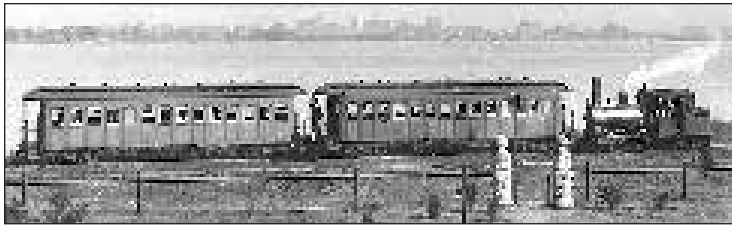
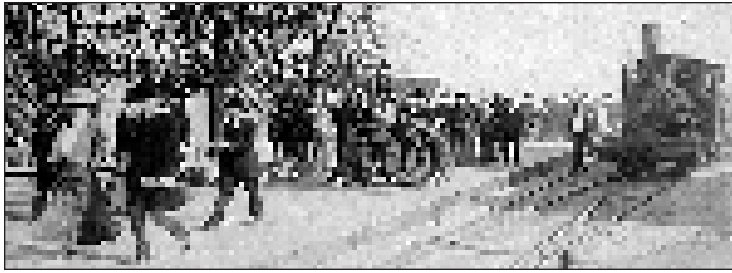
The company "may construct or arrange the said bridge for the use and passage of foot passengers, street cars, carriages and other vehicles, as and whenever they deem advisable."

The company could locate the bridge at any "convenient point in the village of Fort Erie" provided it received approvals from U.S. authorities. In the meantime it could acquire land, submit plans "and do all other things authorized by this Act, except the commencement of the actual construction of the said bridge."

One of the principals may have been John Ferguson who had been the Member of Parliament for Welland until March 1891 and was appointed to the Senate in October 1892.

Another principal may have been Colonel Charles Gaskill a Civil War veteran who, according to Edward T. Williams in his book, *Niagara County a Concise Record of Her Progress and People 1821-1921*, "was concerned in gigantic enterprises that required heavy capital and more than once his own private fortune, which was considerable, was placed as an available resource, and it was in the aftermath of the panic of 1893 that he practically lost all he had accumulated." He died in 1919 in Niagara Falls, NY.

It is believed that this company's name was changed to the Welland and Grand Island Bridge Company in 1899 and may have been



Fort Erie Museum Services

a concern that was interested in a railroad bridge from near Black Creek, a few miles north of Bridgeburg, to Grand Island, N.Y.

More railway dissatisfaction

The incorporation in 1909 of the Fort Erie and Buffalo Bridge Company (note the municipalities are transposed in the title compared to the 1891 company) underscored the dissatisfaction with the International Bridge and the unending hope it would provide for non-railway traffic on its bridge.

Although the GTR had rebuilt the steel superstructure of the International Bridge eight years earlier, it was not expanded for pedestrians, small vehicles and horses.

Legal challenges were undertaken in both countries. In Canada, a suit was filed and finally heard in the Supreme Court in 1908, but it ruled the bridge company was not compelled to provide for a sidewalk and carriageway.

A bill was advanced in the New York State Assembly in early 1909 to replace the company's

charter with one that compelled it to expand. This would ultimately fail, but company executives met with Black Rock and Bridgeburg business associations promising an improved bridge in 10 years if the efforts on the bill was stopped. The businessmen were adamant work should be done within five years. In November that year, work commenced to double the swing bridge over the Black Rock channel but a road was not built. It was assumed this work was preliminary to extending an expanded bridge to Canada, but it was never started.

Meanwhile, the Fort Erie and Buffalo Bridge Company was formed, and it was feared in Bridgeburg that it was merely a "device to block the movement started a year ago to compel the Grand Trunk to build a carriageway in connection with the International Bridge."

Despite assurances by William German, the member of parliament for Welland county, that \$1 million in capital had been raised, the effort seems to have been quietly dropped.

Canadian attraction

Erie Beach was a popular lakeside resort that was owned by the International Ferry Company at one time and which also operated a small scale railroad from the ferry dock to the resort. The location was variously known as Erie Beach Grove, Fort Erie Grove and Snake Hill Grove.

1814-15 **PEACE** 1914-15

DEMONSTRATION

Erie Beach Grove, Fort Erie
On Wednesday, July 30, 1913

Hydro-Aeroplane Flights 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

BALLOON ASCENSION 11 A.M. HIGH-WIRE ACTS DAYLIGHT FIREWORKS AT 12
 BOY SCOUTS and CAMP-FIRE GIRLS' PARADE
 CROSSING OF FLAGS BEFORE THE SPEAKERS' PLATFORM

SPEAKERS

Members of the Dominion, Ontario and United States Cabinets
 COMMENCING AT 2 P.M.

Lieut.-Col. Sir John M. Gibson Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario	H. A. Meldrum President of Buffalo Chamber of Commerce
Gov. Sulzer of New York State	Congressman Smith of Buffalo
Dr. J. A. Macdonald Editor-in-chief of the Toronto "Globe" and Prominent Peace Advocate	John A. Stewart Chairman of the National Peace Committee of the United States
Mayor Louis P. Fuhrman of Buffalo, N. Y.	A. C. Humphrey Secretary of the National Peace Committee of the United States
Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King Former Minister of Labor for Canada	T. Kennard Thompson, C.E. of New York, designer of the proposed Peace Memorial Bridge between Fort Erie and Buffalo
Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux Former Postmaster General of Canada	Evan E. Fraser, M.P.P. of Niagara Falls, Ont. Other speakers of prominence

W. M. GERMAN, M.P., Welland, Chairman

Sports 4.30 p.m. Grand Parade 8 p.m. Dancing
Fireworks Illustrating The Proposed Peace Bridge at 8.30 p.m.
91st Highlanders' Band of Hamilton (50 Musicians)
74th Regiment Band, Buffalo, N.Y.,
 AND OTHER BANDS IN ATTENDANCE ALL DAY

REDUCED FARES ON ALL THE RAILROADS

CLOSING CEREMONY: National Anthems of Canada and the United States by the Combined Bands

One of the principals of this company, Donald MacGillivray, would become involved with a later organizing effort and a director of the Peace Bridge.

Memorial to peace gathers steam

The notion of a memorial to 100 years of peace between Great Britain and the United States was gathering steam in the communities of Fort Erie and Buffalo in January 1911.

A National Peace Committee had been formed in the U.S. to organize celebrations and spur monument-building to mark the centennial of the end of the War of 1812.

Similar efforts were underway in Canada. William German said Canada had great plans and supported efforts to build a bridge.

"Canada is heartily in favor of this project," he told a meeting of Buffalo businessmen. The Fort Erie Times quoted him as saying Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier expressed his pleasure with the project and said he would work for its realization.

"What we want is not a private enterprise, but a bridge built by the two governments, free to the people of both countries; one that will typify 100 years of peace. I want to see the Maple Leaf and the Stars and Stripes interwoven on a bridge in mid-stream."

Delegates of the National Peace Committee visited Buffalo in July 1911. They included Kennard Thomson, a civil engineer who graduated from the University of Toronto and was making his mark in New York, Andrew B. Humphrey and John A. Stewart. The latter two were American "Anglophiles" who sought strong bonds between the U.S. and Great Britain.

They visited again in May 1913 and a large banquet was held at the Hotel Statler in Buffalo. Also in attendance — along with local notables — were official delegates from Great Britain, Canada, Newfoundland and Belgium.

[Although Newfoundland today is a province of Canada, officially known as Newfoundland and Labrador, in 1913 it shared the distinction with Canada as a "Dominion" with the status of nationhood but not complete political independence of Great Britain and only limited powers to conduct foreign relations.]

War clouds form over Europe

War in Europe had been thought to be inevitable for at least a decade. As well as rising nationalism, an arms race was under-

way, and tangled alliances were forming. Foreboding were the remarks of Sir Arthur Lawley, a member of the British delegation, a minor aristocrat and a former governor of other British colonies.

Paraphrased by the Fort Erie Times, Lawley said “he wished to disabuse American minds of any idea that the object of the visit of foreign delegates is to arrange a treaty of compact to coerce any nation or people.”

Directly quoted, he said: “Nearly a century has passed without renewal of war between Great Britain and the United States, and we regard this matter as one for such gratitude and so full of good augury for the future that we would mark the occasion in such a way as not only to show our gratitude and make manifest our resolve to insure the permanence of the happy relations which now exist between us, but also to draw into closer union of harmony and friendship the men of your great republic and those of the British Empire. We trust that our example may lead other nations to incline to the arts of peace rather than of war.”

The inclusion of delegates from Belgium is interesting to note. The treaty that ended the War of 1812 was signed in the Belgian city of Ghent. Belgium was neutral in the alliances that had been forming in Europe, situated as it was between Germany and France who were antagonistic toward each other.

John Lord O’Brien of Buffalo was the toastmaster of the banquet and offered a toast to “the King of the Belgians and Kaiser William” (Wilhelm II, emperor of Germany).

The purpose of the banquet was to convince the delegates that Buffalo ought to be the location of a bridge across the Niagara River as a fitting tribute to the century of peace.

People in Niagara Falls felt the same way about their location. As Peter A. Porter, a former New York Congressman put it: “If there are to be two bridges we will not object to Fort Erie having one but we want the only one if only one is to be erected . . . As far as the argument that we don’t need another bridge, that is true. But we believe that Niagara Falls is the proper place for a bridge of this character; therefore, we should have it.”

Public spirit whipped up

Two months after the international delegation visited, a massive public rally was held at Erie Beach, a popular lakeside resort known as “Buffalo’s Atlantic City” just outside the munic-

ipal limits of Fort Erie.

“Monster throngs” attended the event July 30, 1913, variously estimated between 35,000 and 45,000 for a “Peace Demonstration.”

William German was the chairman of the Canadian committee that organized the event, the Welland County Committee for the Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of Peace Among English-Speaking Peoples 1914-1915.

Distinguished speakers included the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Sir John Gibson, the British monarch’s appointed representative in the province. This is in contrast to lieutenant governors of American states.

Also on the speakers’ list were William Sulzer, governor of the State of New York, Louis-Phillipe Pelletier, Postmaster-General of Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie King, a former Canadian cabinet minister who would go on to become prime minister, Herbert Bissell, a state supreme court justice, Messrs. Stewart, Humphrey and Thomson of the National Peace Committee as well as Louis Fuhrman, mayor of Buffalo and John Macdonald, editor-in-chief of the Toronto Globe, perhaps the most influential newspaper in Canada.

“Among the distinguished men at the celebration most delighted with the outpouring of people and the sentiment favoring the peace bridge project,” reported the Buffalo News, “was Alonzo C. Mather.” He did not give a speech.

Canadian government approves appropriation

A year later, the Canadian government approved a \$25,000 appropriation for preliminary work to implement the plans Kennard Thomson had drawn up for the committee. Thomson also reported in the Fort Erie Times edition of July 30, 1914 that the committee was seeking \$2 million each from the governments of the United States and Canada for the construction of a bridge at Fort Erie.

But Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary had been assassinated on June 28, and an escalating series of events led to Great Britain joining in what was then called the Servian war. Canada — a Dominion of the British Empire — was plunged into the war, along with all her available material and human resources.

War stopped the movement for a memorial to peace.

Final Battle

With debts to be paid following the end of the Great War, governments were not amenable to funding a bridge. Local businessmen, mostly American, picked up where the earlier effort left off. They faced strong resistance from Bridgeburg. The nationalization of a large part of the Canadian railway system offered another wrinkle.

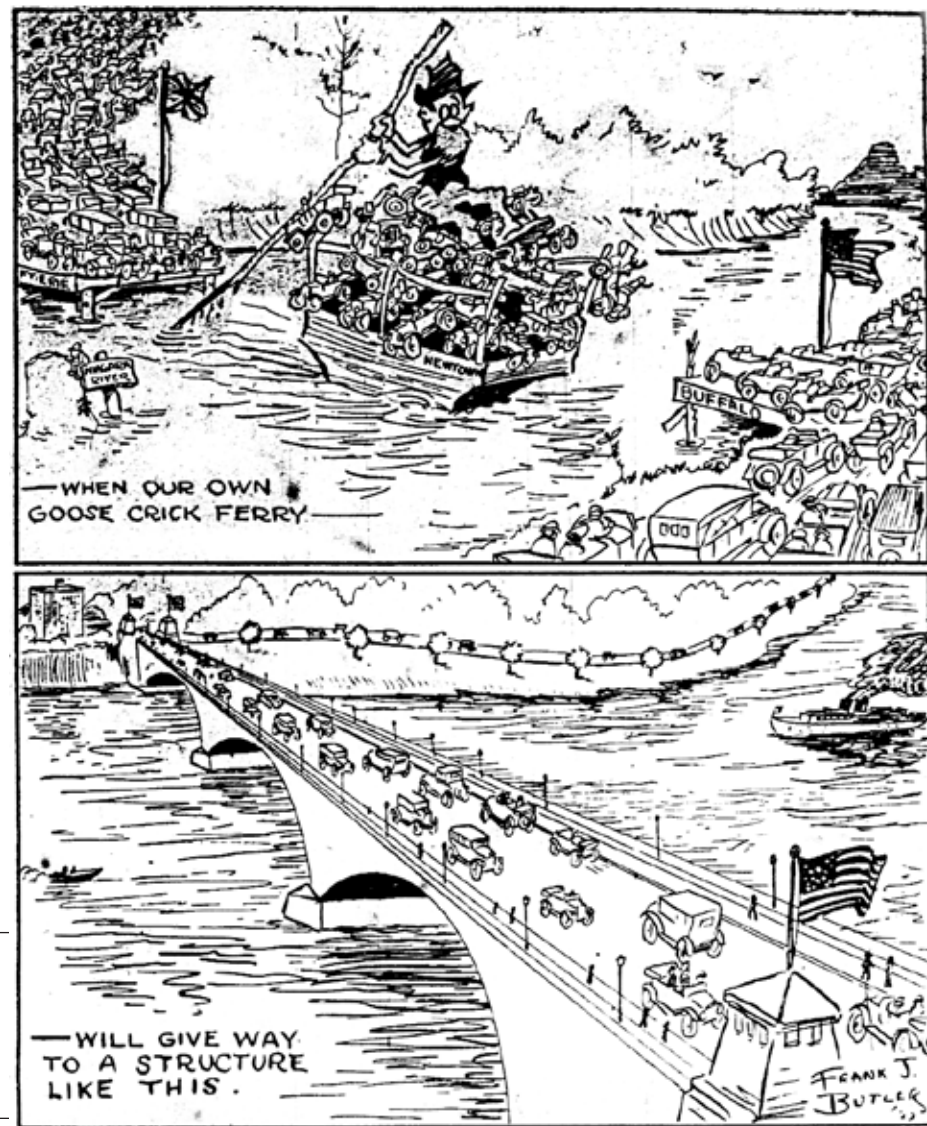
With the end of the First World War in 1918, attention could be directed toward domestic infrastructure projects. Although dormant, a vision of a bridge was never far from the collective consciousness.

Injury or death related to ferry operations was common: car accidents, horse accidents, drownings.

More common were delays caused by mechanical failures or weather. As automobiles became more popular, long queues would develop on the roads surrounding the ferry docks. Although in this period three boats

Impatience

A 1923 editorial cartoon in the Buffalo Courier expressed public sentiment about the increasingly congested ferries and the wish for a bridge to Canada. The headline over it reads, "Oh Speed the Day."



Automotive popularity

The increasing popularity of the car meant people could travel farther and faster, but ferries could not accommodate them expeditiously.



Fort Erie Museum Services

operated by the International Ferry Company could be pressed into service, demand to cross the river was growing and the ferries could not keep up.

Unsatisfactory service from the ferry company and the International Bridge Company, which operated a railcar — the Dummy — to shuttle passengers between Bridgeburg and Black Rock, often invoked the wrath of editorialists on both sides of the border.

The freedom that the automobile afforded was stymied by the limitations of crossing the river. Community demand for a bridge boiled.

Local businessmen lead effort

William A. Eckert had been involved with plans since the idea of a “peace memorial bridge” took shape a decade earlier. While the great project had been interrupted by the war, he kept the idea alive in speaking engagements with business and luncheon

clubs.

As president of the West Side Business Men’s Association and with its backing, Eckert pulled together a meeting of prominent people in March 1919 from both sides of the border to begin a new campaign.

Two committees emerged from the meeting, one American, one Canadian.

The first U.S. committee included representatives of the Automobile Club of Buffalo, Black Rock Manufacturers Association, Buffalo Chamber of Commerce, Builders Exchange, Central Labor Council, Civic Center Association, Greater Buffalo Advertising Club, Kiwanis Club, Real Estate Association, Retail Merchants’ Association, Rotary Club, and of course the West Side Business Men’s Association.

Municipal and business leaders

On the Canadian side, the representatives were municipal and

business leaders from most of the municipalities in the southern portion of Welland County except Bridgeburg and Niagara Falls, both of which had international bridges.

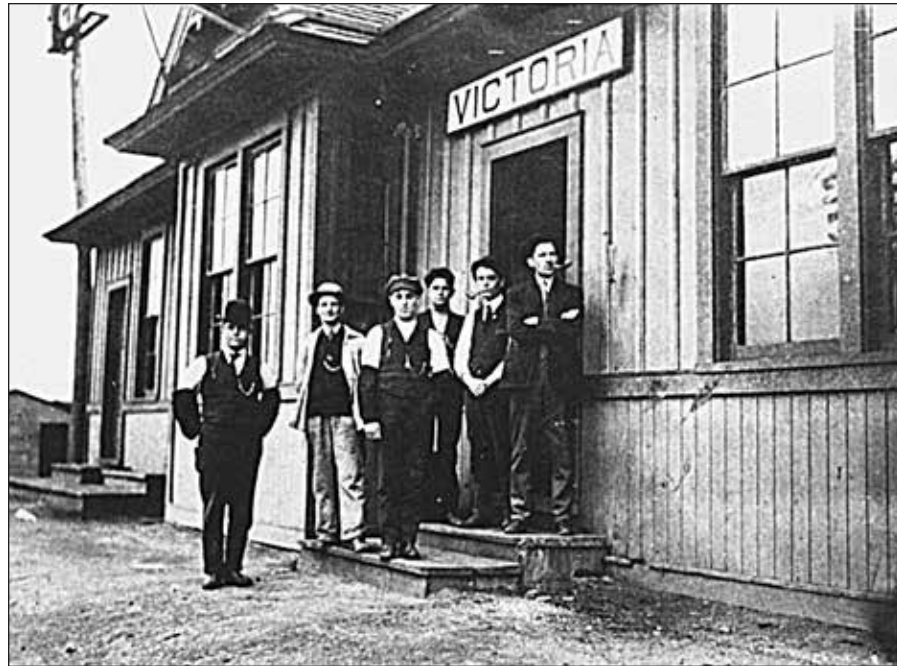
A small item in the April 25, 1919 edition of the Fort Erie Times states that the New York state legislature passed a bill which was awaiting the governor's signature "providing for a commission to confer with Canadian authorities on the project for a Peace Memorial Bridge over the Niagara River" and that \$2,500 had been approved for its expenses. "The City of Buffalo is bringing strong pressure to bear upon the governor to favor the bill."

Buffalo's city council appointed public works commissioner Frederick Bagley to the committee in June, and in September proposed that a federally-appointed commission be created to begin investigations and to take action. The Buffalo Public Bridge Commission was created by an act of Congress and with the President's signature became official in January 1920.

It's at this point that Frank Baird enters the scene. He was named to the commission as was John Van Allen. Other members of this commission would go on to become directors of the company that would eventually build the bridge.

Interestingly, in the pre-war effort for a peace memorial, Van Allen's senior partner in his law firm, Ainsley Wilcox, was a public proponent of the bridge. As well as assuming the practice from Wilcox in 1917, Van Allen also assumed at least one of his civic causes.

A delegation representing Welland county council visited Ottawa in February 1920 for a meeting with Sir George Foster, the federal minister of trade and commerce and was acting prime minister at the time of the visit. Reeve Louis Douglas (also sometimes referred to as Lew Douglass) was a party to the delegation and reported that



Fort Erie Museum Services

Foster favored a plan to appoint a commission to work with the American commission that had been established.

By September, the Canadian government had not yet appointed a bridge commission when a pair of Cabinet ministers arrived in Bridgeburg and Fort Erie. John Dowsley Reid, minister of railways and canals, and Gideon Decker Robertson, minister of labor, assessed the situation. Since the government had just taken over control of the Grand Trunk Railway, they were particularly interested in the International Bridge.

Evan Fraser, the member of parliament for the moment and a member of the governing Conservative caucus, wrote Garrett O'Connor, a resident of Bridgeburg:

"I do not think it possible to have the government to build a peace bridge (at Fort Erie), and

Village renamed

Before the International Bridge was built, the settlement in Canada was called Victoria, then it was renamed International Bridge to prevent confusion with others named Victoria.

I have been doing my utmost to have them widen the International Bridge. I may say that I had the Hon. J.D. Reid and the Hon G.D. Robertson on the grounds yesterday, and they both expressed themselves as very much interested in the project — indeed, favorable to it and I believe that engineers will be on the job very shortly.”

Bridgeburg confidence bolsters

If the proponents of an expanded International Bridge felt a jolt of confidence from Fraser’s letter, they would have felt doubly so in light of a U.S. Supreme court decision in November. The high court determined that New York State was within its rights to pass a law forcing the International Bridge Company to build a carriageway and sidewalk over the Black Rock Canal.

The construction would have been relatively easy work, since the swing bridge connecting the mainland to Squaw Island had been expanded a decade earlier and other improvements had been made to the superstructure.

“The decision is felt to be the opening edge to compel the company to provide similar facilities in connection with its bridge from the American to the Canadian side of the river,” reads the Fort Erie Times.

“Bridgeburg and Black Rock property owners, who expect to benefit directly if a driveway all the way across the river becomes a fact, renewed hope yesterday when they heard of the decision of the United States Supreme Court. Some even went to the length of believing that the Grand Trunk, which is now part of the Canadian government system, would begin without delay.”

While it was true the GTR was now under government control, hopes were premature because there was much uncertainty in the situation.

The federal government had financed the building of a second transcontinental railroad across Canada by the GTR which was completed in 1914. While the Canadian Pacific Railway had the southern route through the prairies and Rockies — which was a profitable line — the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway operated a route farther north which proved to be less profitable.

The GTR defaulted on loans it received to build the GTPR, and the GTPR was nationalized in 1919 and merged into a

Crown corporation, the Canadian National Railway. The federal government went after the GTR as well and took control of the railway in July 1920.

The company was not merged into the CNR until January 1923, and it is likely the delay was due to shareholder resistance to being taken over by the government. Likely, as well, a complete inventory of the GTR’s extensive property had to be taken.

Government dithered

Despite earlier Canadian support of a highway bridge at Fort Erie as a government project, despite the organization that had taken place and despite U.S. legislative and executive support, all bets were off. It would be another three years and a change in government before Canada would give its seal of approval to a new bridge. Even then it would not be a government project. The Crown — all acts of the Canadian government are in the name of the Crown — would leave it to private citizens, mostly American, to do all the heavy lifting in a quasi-public, but private international infrastructure project.

American efforts continue

Work in the United States continued during the railway turmoil in Canada. Congress authorized the members of the bridge commission to develop and submit plans to the War Department for approval by its engineering division in August 1921. It received presidential approval in December.

A similar charter was requested from the Canadian government. It passed in the House of Commons but was defeated by the Senate in late 1921 “to give time and opportunity to the administration to study and consider the advisability and wisdom of rebuilding and enlarging the present International Railway Bridge.”

Meanwhile, public hearings and meetings were held in Buffalo. Tentative plans were drawn and locations pondered.

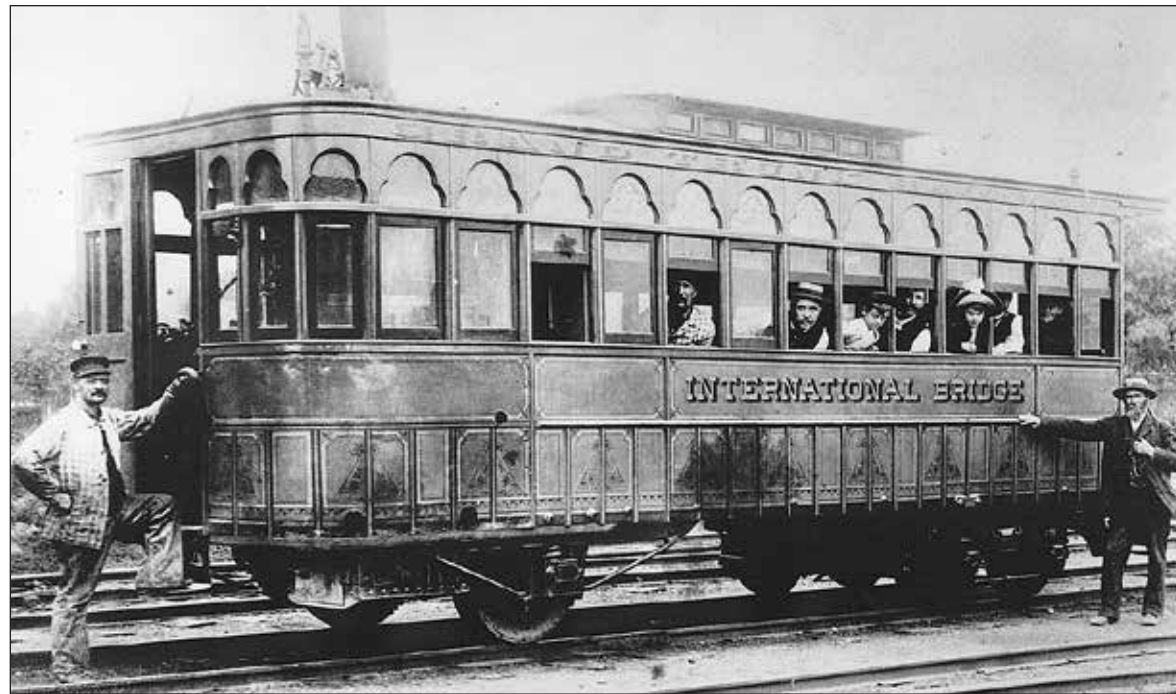
The question of expansion of the International Bridge lingered. Hopes would rise on one side and wane on the other every time the newspapers intimated this or that plan was moving forward.

Allied MP regains seat

In December 1922, William German, who had regained his seat from Evan Fraser in the federal election a year earlier,

GRAND TRUNK RY. SYS. CANADIAN NATIONAL RYS.	
TIME TABLE	
International Bridge Motor Car.	
Effective February 21st. 1926	
Lvs. BLACK ROCK	Lvs. BRIDGEBURG
† 6.10 A. M.	† 6.20 A. M.
† 6.30 A. M.	† 7.00 A. M.
† 7.10 A. M.	† 7.30 A. M.
* 7.40 A. M.	* 8.00 A. M.
* 8.10 A. M.	* 8.30 A. M.
* 8.40 A. M.	* 9.00 A. M.
* 9.10 A. M.	* 10.00 A. M.
* 10.10 A. M.	* 11.00 A. M.
* 11.10 A. M.	* 12.00 Noon
* 12.10 P. M.	* 1.00 P. M.
* 1.10 P. M.	* 2.00 P. M.
* 3.50 P. M.	* 4.00 P. M.
* 4.10 P. M.	* 5.00 P. M.
* 5.10 P. M.	* 5.30 P. M.
* 5.40 P. M.	* 6.00 P. M.
* 6.15 P. M.	* 7.00 P. M.
* 7.10 P. M.	* 8.00 P. M.
* 8.10 P. M.	* 9.00 P. M.
* 9.10 P. M.	* 10.00 P. M.
* 10.10 P. M.	* 11.00 P. M.
† 11.10 P. M.	† 11.50 P. M.
† 11.55 P. M.	† 12.00 Midnight
*Daily. †Daily except Sunday.	

Passenger service
The Dummy shuttled passengers between Bridgeburg and Black Rock until 1935.



Fort Erie Museum Services

reported what the deputy minister of railways said: “The government is proceeding with its plans for a new International Bridge equipped with a driveway.”

But three months later after the railway merger was complete, German said, “The Grand Trunk engineers had reported against rebuilding the International Bridge.”

He also said that a newly-introduced Fort Erie bridge bill had passed first and second reading in the House of Commons and would get final reading after Easter. “There is no opposition to it in the Senate,” he said.

The federal government incorporated the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company composed of Canadian directors with German as its president in June 1923. This was a year and a half after a similarly-named corporation was granted a charter by the New York State Legislature — a sister corporation composed of Americans — mirroring the structure of the organization committees.

Bridgeburg or Fort Erie, not both

If the International Bridge had been expanded, it is unlikely that a bridge at Fort Erie could be built, at least for the time being. And, with a new bridge upstream, local passenger traffic at Bridgeburg would be lost along with the attendant economic benefits.

Bridgeburg town council, therefore, embraced the suggestion in August 1923 that the CNR was amenable to a partnership to expand the International Bridge.

The brother-in-law of Bridgeburg Mayor Malcolm Williams, H.A. Stewart of Vancouver “under instruction of (CNR president) Sir Henry Thornton” told the council that “Sir Henry is anxious to build the bridge you are asking for, but the National Railways have not the money to do it.”

Stewart said Thornton agreed that another company could build a “sidearm” expansion on the bridge for a road if it could be financed.

Stewart said a company had already been organized and he sought the support of the council. The council agreed and passed a resolution endorsing the effort. It also planned to prepare a bylaw to “guarantee the bonds that may be necessary to issue to pay for the construction” to a limit of \$1 million.

“The Fort Erie bridge would be under severe handicap should the other structure be built with driveways,” reads the Fort Erie Times. “The private bridge would cost at least twice as much to build and its revenues would not be supplemented by the heavy railway traffic. It is reported that its sponsors are doubtful of the market for their securities if the structure were being built with the knowledge that the traffic, great as it is, would have to be divided with another bridge nearby.”

Franchise protection given

It was this knowledge of the impact of another bridge nearby that the charter for the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company included a non-competition clause when it was incorporated by the Canadian government six months earlier. No other bridge could be built across the Niagara River within six miles of the proposed site near Walnut Street in Fort Erie without the consent of the company or the federal Cabinet.

It was common practice in England to grant franchise protection for toll bridge operators to ensure their structures were financially viable.

John Van Allen pointed out, however, that the CNR was a Crown corporation and the government might be apt to approve rebuilding the International Bridge in the interests of the Crown.

“Since the Canadian government now controls the bridge,” he told the Buffalo Courier, “and the circumstances of the charter are as they are, a matter of national integrity as well as legality is involved. I am sure that Canada will keep faith with this company and with the many Canadians who have given their time, effort and resources to procure a bridge at Fort Erie.”

Stewart’s claims, meanwhile, may have been premature, according to a letter Thornton wrote to German. “I am not prepared to say whether or not Mr. Stewart is correctly quoted, but I have not given anyone authority to start the reconstruction. I have said to Mr. Stewart that his project was interesting and that in so far as we are concerned we would like to see it devel-

oped to a definite conclusion.”

The public bridge company directors may have felt confident their proposal was protected, but Stewart’s claims cast a specter of uncertainty that Thornton’s letter did not clarify. It wasn’t until March 7, 1924 that the president of the CNR notified German that there would be no construction of a roadway on the International Bridge.

“I am sorry this has been delayed as long as it has,” he wrote, “but the interests involved were so large that I experienced a good deal of difficulty arriving at a decision. The field is now clear, however, for such action as you might take.”

The impracticability of a driveway on the International Bridge seemed evident to the Peace Bridge proponents as explained by Van Allen.

He pointed out that the bridge is too low and the swing bridge is required to be opened “for practically all craft passing down the river” being a nuisance for travelers.

He also said that there was no provision made for terminals at either end, the location was inconvenient, and to have a large number of road vehicles interact with trains only invites trouble.

CNR president speaks in Buffalo

Despite Thornton’s letter, it wasn’t until May 30 when he was the guest of Frank Baird at a luncheon at the Buffalo Athletic Club when it was heard straight from the horse’s mouth.

“I can definitely say that we are not opposing the construction of the bridge over the Niagara,” he told the assemblage of distinguished gentlemen. “It is not our object now to build another bridge over the river because present facilities are adequate for railroad transportation. But we are not opposed to your bridge.”

The Stewart plan did serve to delay progress on the new bridge. During the time of indecision it caused, the U.S. federal charter expired on December 1923 because physical work on construction — even nominal work — had not yet been undertaken.

In February 1924, German traveled to Washington to explain the delay since the source of it was a corporation of the Canadian government. A new charter was eventually granted and was signed into law June 18.

Approvals

The Peace Bridge figuratively and literally intersects with marine shipping, and protection of this strategic infrastructure was paramount for American authorities. Canada had the Welland Canal, which would be unaffected by the new bridge, but it also owned the railway bridge between Black Rock and Bridgeburg.

Shortly after the joint bridge committee was formed in 1920 and legalities were being worked out in Washington, Albany and Ottawa, design work began on the structure. Locations were surveyed and chief engineer Edward Lupfer drafted designs.

The river itself offered two hurdles: the natural obstacle of more than 2,000 feet of swiftly-moving water and the man-made obstacle of marine navigation.

Congress had determined decades earlier that the river must remain open to marine traffic and the War Department insisted

Official groundbreaking

An unknown member of the West Side Businessmen's Association holds Old Glory aloft for a photo of the official groundbreaking by William Eckert and William F. Willson on August 17, 1925. Hiram H. Green, a Canadian director, holds the Union Jack. A large public ceremony was held at Erie Beach resort less than two weeks later





Navigation channel

Navigation of the Niagara River was of prime importance to U.S. authorities and resulted in the construction of a high-level span over the Black Rock Channel which is separated from the river channel by the Bird Island Pier.

that the largest ships that plied the Great Lakes should be accommodated

Initially, this meant that there would have to be a 100-foot clearance over the river and that there could be no piers in the water.

The bridge builders were concerned with a few things as they drafted and re-drafted plans: the bridge must be elegant and graceful, convenient, have a gentle slope and cost less than \$3

million — a limit imposed by their charters.

The War Department's requirements ran counter to the goals of the bridge builders. Meeting its conditions would make achieving those goals that much more difficult.

Erie Canal and Black Rock Channel

There had been a shipping lock at the north end of the Black Rock Channel since 1833. It was immediately downstream of the Squaw Island

Bridge (part of the International Bridge). The channel is approximately three-and-a-half miles long from the Buffalo harbour.

As part of the Erie Canal complex that linked the upper Great Lakes to New York City and points between, channel and lock provided safe passage for ships to negotiate the rapids at the headwaters of the Niagara River. A municipal water intake for the city of Buffalo offered another danger to navigation.

The War Department's interest was inherent in the responsibility that the Army Corps of Engineers was charged with to maintain all shipping channels in the U.S..

Designs vetted

The bridge builders did not want a lift system for large ships to pass underneath because it would impede bridge traffic, and it could not afford to build a high-level bridge.

Lupfer drafted plans for a high-level suspension bridge that offered a 1,600-foot clearance span. Seeing the cost, the bridge builders had to ratchet down the height as well as the expense.

"In order to keep within the \$3 million limit fixed by our state charter it was found necessary to plan a bridge having at least four piers in the stream proper," he said to Buffalo city council in November 1922.

Frank Baird reasoned that since the lock and channel had been improved 10 years earlier [the Corps of Engineers rebuilt the lock and pier in 1908-1913], a passage for large ships in the river proper was unnecessary.

Some of the early drawings that Lupfer drafted in late 1921 showed a low-level bridge with bascules that could open over the river and the Black Rock Channel.

"Twenty or more plans were made of truss-spans, half-through arches and other types which came within the money limit, but none which gave the ornate features deemed so necessary in a bridge of this type," said Lupfer.

Beauty important

It was important that the bridge be a thing of beauty and object of pride, Lupfer opined. "There are many unsightly bridges in the United States, but of late years civic pride has come to the fore and must be reckoned with."

Attention had been focused on a location at the foot of Hampshire Street, the shortest distance across the river to the Canadian terminus near Walnut Street. The bridge builders sought

and received Buffalo city council approval in December 1922 for the location and a design that called for a low-level deck-arch with two bascule lifts, one over the river channel and another over the shipping channel.

At this point, everything was suspended because of the nationalization turmoil in the Canadian railway industry and the question of whether the International Bridge would be expanded had not been answered.

When the railway bridge issue was finally settled by the Canadian government and the Canadian National Railway Company in early 1924, corporate bodies were formed, and plans were submitted to the War Department for approval on July 30.

By that time, Buffalo city council had approved the use of city land for the bridge and its design had been changed slightly to replace the bascules with vertical lifts.

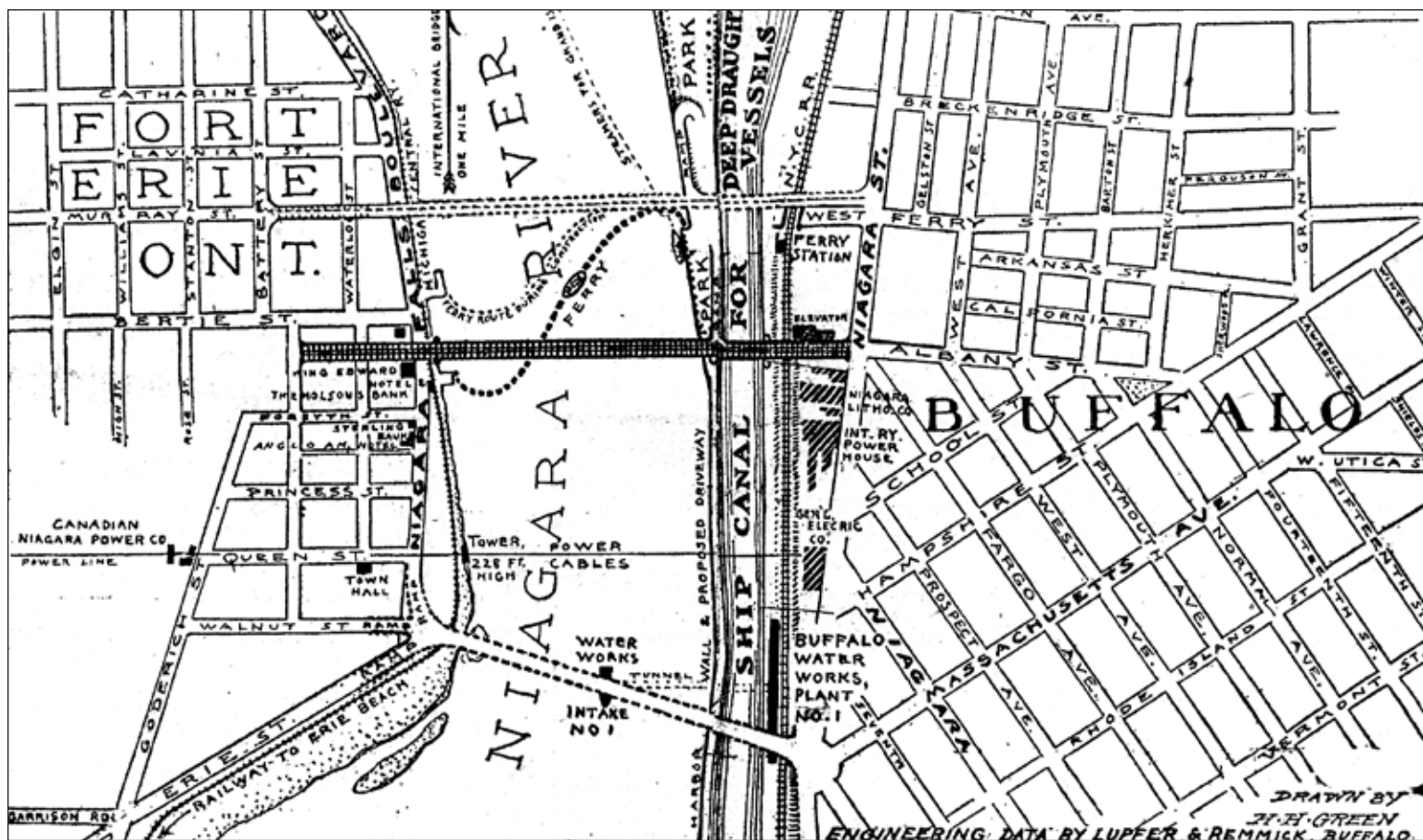
Lift systems unacceptable

A lift system was not the ideal compromise for either party. The War Department denied approval because it could not be "fully assured there will not at any time be any possibility of interrupting navigation," despite the redundant lift in the river channel. The bridge company was not keen on lifts because it did not want to see any interruption in the flow of toll-paying traffic caused by marine shipping.

Baird estimated a high-level bridge would cost double the \$3 million originally budgeted, most of it for additional land to construct approaches. However, the U.S. government owned a large amount of land a little farther south near Massachusetts Avenue where a minor military installation was located.

Fort Porter was not a vestige of the War of 1812. It was built circa 1840 and featured a masonry blockhouse known as "the Castle" used as the commandant's quarters. Its only link to the war was that it was named for a general in the war and congressman, George B. Porter. It served as a customs and guardhouse and was activated for the Civil War, Spanish American War and the First World War.

Further revision of the plan took place and the preferred location was shifted south with the expectation the lands at Fort Porter could be acquired. The bridge company settled on an asymmetrical design — a fixed low-level river span inclined up to a high-level span over the Black Rock Channel. Five steel



Three locations were considered by Buffalo City council in 1922. The south site was favored since it was at a hub of intersecting streets.

arch spans would link Canada to the Bird Island Pier and a through-truss would span the shipping channel. The War Department was amenable to the design and approved it in April 1925, but Congress needed to be convinced to abandon the fort. The bridge company pressed city council to pursue the issue. In the end, the federal government sold the 10-acre Fort Porter property to the city of Buffalo for \$400,000, and the bridge company paid \$300,000 for a large piece of it.

At this juncture in early 1925, the two companies at work — one in Canada, the other in the States — would be amalgamated or consolidated into a single corporation, final plans would be developed for approval by the various governments and money would be raised.

The consolidation of the two companies required only summary approval by the governments because they had been granted the authority to do so in their original charters. As well, the spending limit of the merged company was increased to

\$6 million, perhaps to reflect the \$3 million each government had previously authorized. Since preliminary approvals from the governments had already been granted, the final plans were rubber-stamped — save one.

Binational panel must approve

The International Joint Commission was created in 1909 in a treaty between the United States and Canada. Its mandate was to prevent and resolve disputes related to boundary waters. The IJC conducted a hearing on August 11, 1925 in the Clifton Hotel in Niagara Falls. Two members of the six-member board presided, Sir William Hearst, a Canadian appointee, and Porter J. McCumber, an American.

The U.S. State Department insisted in a letter to the commission, which was read at the hearing, that the IJC had no jurisdiction in the matter since the two federal governments had already agreed on the bridge matter, and therefore, there was no dispute to be prevented or resolved.

However, the Canadian government felt the IJC's approval was necessary and Hearst and McCumber argued the point for some time. They felt some legal precedent might be set if the IJC heard and ruled on the bridge application.

They came to the conclusion that no matter what it decided, the final arbiter would be the courts. If it did not hear the application, the Canadian government would deem the project illegal. On the U.S. side of the coin, since the State Department said approval was not necessary, conceivably it would only appeal if the IJC ruled against the project. The hearing proceeded.

Lake level main issue

The main issue the commission concerned itself with was the effect the piers would have on the water levels in the river and Lake Erie.

Lupfer said the effect would be insignificant compared to an eight-and-a-half foot variation



that occurs naturally from storm surges and seiches. “We are making a mountain out of a molehill.”

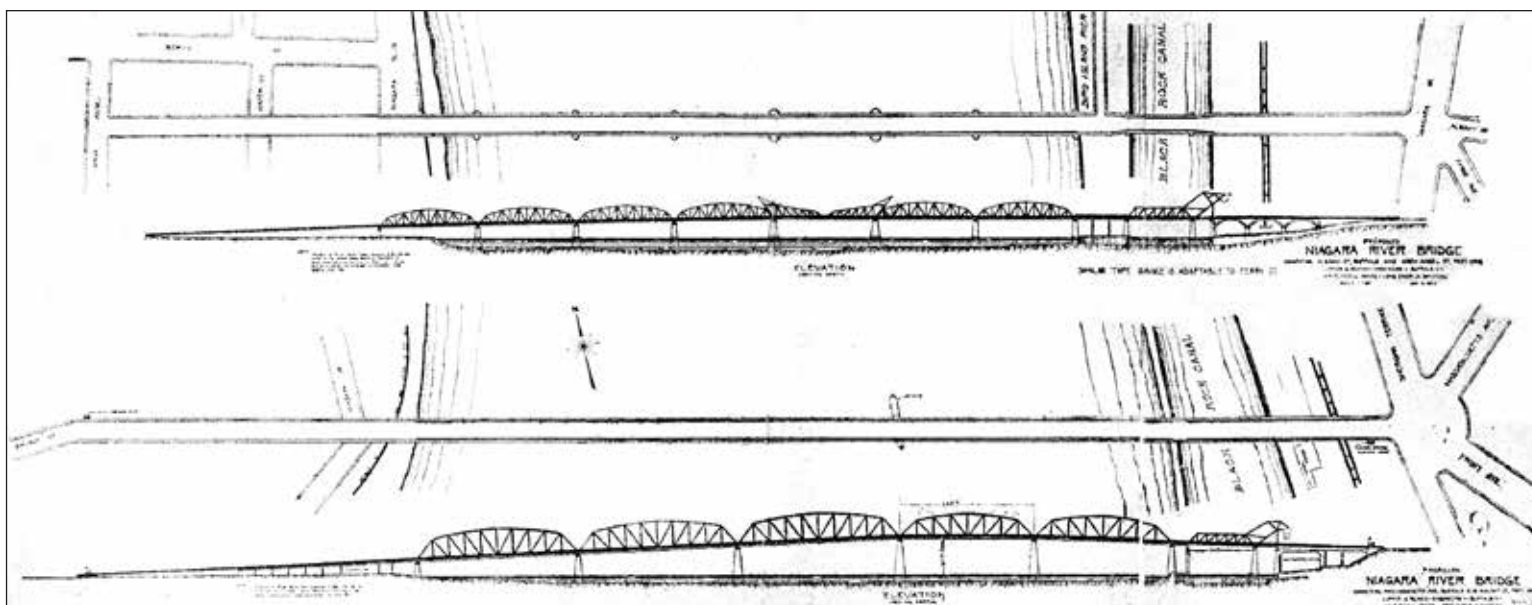
A strong storm can push water toward or away from the river in a surge and raise or lower the level dramatically in a period of a few hours. After it passes, the water recedes the same way water sloshes in a bathtub, for instance. This is called seiche. Tidal forces at their strongest can also cause a nearly two-inch water level change in Lake Erie.

At the very most, according to calculations Lupfer provided the commission, the piers would cause no more than a three-inch rise in the water at the bridge location and the effect would be dissipated farther out into the lake. Flows downstream would not be affected because the water's velocity between the piers would increase.

The Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario was concerned with downstream flow and wanted the commission to require the bridge company to “compensate to the extent directed

March past fort

Soldiers march by the site of Fort Porter which was decommissioned in 1926 to make way for the Peace Bridge. Note the exposed beam of the bridge which was under construction by then.



Multiple designs

Two designs were offered for consideration in 1922, incorporating lift systems over the Black Rock Channel and the river channel.

and when required by (HEPCO) for the reduction in the discharge capacity of the river due to the bridge and shall take effective means to prevent accumulation of ice.”

“Vicious suggestion”

That was definitely outside the commission’s jurisdiction, said Van Allen. “The most vicious part of the suggestion is that this commission should state that we must compensate anybody. Leave that to the regular laws of the respective countries. If there is a liability it will be determined in accordance with them. I do not see how this commission could say that we must compensate anybody because that question should be determined by the facts and the law.”

The commission was told that 226,000 cubic feet of water per second passes over the escarpment and a treaty allowed 56,000 cubic feet to be diverted for power purposes; flows would probably never decline enough to affect power generation.

Although it would be another two months before the IJC would officially render its decision, the two commissioners on hand told the gathered directors of the bridge company — Van Allen, Lupfer, William German, William Eckert, William F. Willson, William Douglass and Hiram Green — that they would recommend approval of the project.

“In the meantime would it be considered ‘lese majeste’ if we should go ahead and contract,” Van Allen asked, wondering if work could proceed.

“I do not think you need worry over that,” replied McCumber.

Groundbreaking

Less than a week later, readers of the Buffalo Morning Express were greeted with the news:

“Promptly at 2 o’clock yesterday afternoon (August 17), a group of men walked through high grass to the river’s edge at Fort Erie. While two stalwart ones held aloft Old Glory and the Union Jack, one by one the others silently broke ground

with silver spades. No word was spoken.

"These simple ceremonies, performed under clear, sunny skies, marked an historic event — the beginning of the new Buffalo-Fort Erie bridge, which is to span the river as a memorial to the 100 years of peace between United States and Canada.

"To William A. Eckert, chairman of the construction committee of the bridge company and who has been hailed as the father of the Fort Erie bridge, was given the honor of turning the first spadeful of earth."

A much grander ceremony would be held August 26.

The men who built the Peace Bridge

The beginning of what would become the Peace Bridge occurred on March 5, 1919. Two committees were born reflecting the bi-national character of the project. They would meet a week later at the Hotel Statler in Buffalo to form a joint committee.

Representing the American committee were William Eckert, E. H. Hutchinson, John Cowper, Howard Heston, D'Arcy Roper, Samuel Botsford, Robert Lacey, Harry Vars, George Norton, H.A. Meldrum, L.H. Bley, Albert Kinsey, I.C. Kantrowitz and H.G. Anderson.

Canadians were Louis Douglas, W.T. Malkin, W.G. Athoe, W.P. Fawcett, Charles Steele, K.J. Shirton, B.L. Edgcombe, A.J.J. Brennan, B.L. Booth, L.B. Spencer, R. Barnhardt and J.G. Morningstar.

The Buffalo committee petitioned the U.S. Congress to form a Public Bridge Commission in January 1920 to investigate the feasibility and to take actions it deemed appropriate to start planning.

Its members were Frank Baird, Edward Barcalo, Marcus Barmon, Frederick Bagley, Emmanuel Boas-

berg, Charles Cilfton, John Cowper, William Eckert, Louis Fischer, Carmelo Gugino, Charles Heald, Edward Homes, Allan Holloway, Edgar Joralemon, Charles Kane, Edward Kener, John Kloefer, James McNulty, Jacob Siegrist, John Van Allen, John Wickser, Floyd Willis and Frank Winch.

This committee was granted a U.S. charter in December 1921 giving it the authority to build a bridge subject to approval by other parties, including the Army Corps of Engineers and the Canadian government.

The Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company was incorporated by New York State in February 1922. It was formally organized in January 1923. Frank Baird, Charles Cilfton, William Eckert and John Van Allen were the officers.

In Canada, the federal government did likewise in June 1923 and enacted legislation to incorporate the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company.

Its incorporators were William Willson, Louis Douglas, William Douglass, H.H. Green, H.A. Cousins, Albert Bell, William German, Robert Cooper, Jay Diffin, L.B. Spencer, Louis Blake Duff,

A.D. Cross, Donald MacGillivray, F. W. Fawcett, Charles Steele, G. Smith MacDonald, J.G. Morningstar, John Young, George House and William Robinson. Provisional directors were Willson, W. Douglass, MacGillivray, Cooper, German, Steele and Duff.

Plans had advanced enough by 1925 that a single corporate body to finance and construct a bridge could be formed. That was accomplished with the amalgamation and consolidation of the two companies. It too was called the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company. Frank Baird was president, William German, William Eckert and Charles Clifton were vice-presidents, John Kloefer was the treasurer and John Van Allen, the secretary.

Other directors from the U.S. were Emmanuel Boasberg, John Cowper, Louis Fischer, Carmelo Gugino, Edgar Joralemon, Edward Kener, Allan Holloway, Jacob Siegrist, John Wickser, Frank Winch. Canadian directors were E.B. Holmes, Jay Diffin, L.B. Spencer, William Douglass, William F. Willson, Hiram Green, Donald MacGillivray, Charles Steele and William G. Willson.

Financing a Bridge

"The bridge company has been financed. The location has been selected and the bridge will be built."

Frank Baird, June 1, 1925

Edward J. Lupfer, chief engineer of the project, estimated in April 1925 that construction of the bridge would cost \$3.25 million, not including land costs and financing charges.

All told, the bridge company would have to raise \$4.5 million dollars. This was done through the issuance of bonds. Two debt financing instruments were exercised. Three million dollars was raised with 30-year first mortgage sinking fund bonds bearing an interest rate of seven per cent. The other \$1.5 million was raised by selling 20-year sinking fund debenture bonds with an eight-percent interest rate. Interest was payable every six months.

It was the "largest piece of financing ever handled in Buffalo by Buffalo investment dealers," reads the Buffalo Morning Express June 3, 1925, the day after the bond issues were made. They were "already selling (on the open market) at a substantial premium over their offering price."

The underwriters were: Fidelity Trust Company of Buffalo; Schoellkopf, Hutton and Pomeroy, Inc.; and O'Brian, Potter and Company. The firm of Kissel, Kinnicutt and Company from New York was also part of the deal.

These "wholesalers" purchased the mortgage bonds at 99.5

percent of face value, while the debentures sold for 96.5 percent. This means the bridge company received \$2,985,000 on the mortgage bonds and \$1,447,500 on the debentures for a total of \$4,432,500.

There are various models to understand the contemporary dollar value of the bridge and financing. One way is to compare the amounts as a ratio of the gross domestic product adjusted for inflation (the nominal GDP).

The \$3.25 million that Lupfer predicted for construction would translate into \$175 million in 2005. The entire \$4.5 million face value of the bond issues would have been \$242 million in 2005. A \$100 dollar investment in one of the bonds in 1925 would have been roughly equivalent to \$5,400 in 2005.

Henry Ford's popular automobile, the Model T, sold for about \$300 in the 1920s — about \$16,000 in 2005 dollars. The six-cylinder Nash four-door coupe ranged from \$1,700 to \$3,700. Two 13-ounce bottles of pickles could be had for 13 cents, bacon for 37 cents a pound and a good men's suit for \$28.50. A newspaper cost five cents.

The bonds were an attractive investment. The interest rates were high compared to what banks offered. The stock market

was hot, however. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained more than 25 per cent in 1924 and had increased nearly 10 percent in the first six months of 1925. The Buffalo stock exchange likely performed similarly. The bonds also held a good redemption value. The company could buy back or redeem the bonds for face value plus a premium that would reduce in value as years passed and interest was earned.

Advance orders were such that Frank Baird, president of the bridge corporation, asked local dealers to ensure that everyone who wanted to buy a bond was able to purchase at least one, and preference should be given to people who wanted to buy the smaller denomination notes.

The signature of Frank Baird, "Your obedient servant," appeared under an advertisement in one of the Buffalo newspapers on June 1, the day before the bonds went on sale.

"The bridge company has been financed; the location has been selected and the bridge will be built," he wrote.

Governments unwilling to fund bridge

Originally, in the pre-war effort to build a bridge, governments in the United States and Canada would have financed a bridge. Following the war, however, "heavy war debts would prevent those countries from making appropriations for the bridge," Baird explained.

"The governments at Washington, Ottawa and Albany were not willing to grant a franchise for a toll bridge to a private company." It was proposed instead "to form a company that would charge a rather high toll until the securities were paid for and then the bridge company would have no further rights to the property. The American rights would revert to the State of New York and the Canadian rights to the Dominion of Canada," he wrote. Essentially, after private citizens had done all the work, they would surrender their shares in the bridge company for \$50,000 — the original investment that seeded the bridge project — to the governments. Once the bridge was handed over, there would be no tolls, the

Regarding the New Bridge

To the Good People of the Niagara Frontier Greeting:

A group of men have been working on the undertaking for over four years and through your splendid co-operation in creating public spirit in favor of the bridge, the success of the long-hoped-for project is now assured.

Since 1851 a number of efforts have been made to build a bridge from Buffalo to Fort Erie, but governmental requirements regarding navigable rivers were very rigid and as bridge plans were not permitted in the river, the various projects did not succeed.

One of the most recent efforts was made in the spring of 1914 when it was proposed to build a bridge in commemoration of one hundred years of peace between the two countries. The expectation was to secure appropriations from seven governmental sources—

United States
City of Buffalo

Dominion of Canada
Province of Ontario
County of Welland

State of New York
County of Erie

In August of that year the World War started and the bridge effort was discontinued.

Some five years ago the United States Congress, at the request of the City Council of Buffalo, passed a bill appointing twenty-five Buffalo men as a commission to investigate the Niagara River bridge problem. The undersigned was a member of that commission and knows the work its members performed. The commission found that the heavy war debts of both Canada and the United States would prevent those countries from making appropriations for the bridge. A number of alternative plans were suggested and the present plan was adopted.

The governments of Washington, Ottawa and Albany were not willing to grant a franchise for a toll bridge to a private bridge company. The commissions then proposed to form a company that would charge a rather high toll until the securities were paid for and then the bridge company would have no further rights in the property. The American rights will revert to the Legislature of New York and the Canadian rights to the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada. The officers and directors of the bridge company receive no pay for their services and after the bridge is completed, will be required to pay toll each time they cross the bridge, the same as all other patrons of the bridge.

The unusual concessions obtained from the two governments were not for the purpose of allowing anyone to make money, but both governments realized it was a commendable effort of the people of the Niagara Frontier.

The present plan is simply this—the people who use the bridge will pay toll until the bridge is paid for; then the bridge will belong to the public.

The United States government recently constructed a ship canal and locks for vessels and large vessels no longer use the Niagara River at this point so the governments are permitting the bridge company to build bridge piers in the river.

The former prohibition against bridge piers in the river was the great obstacle to all past efforts. This has been a successful community effort. The directors have been aided by public sympathy, by the press, by Buffalo city officials and by the officials of Fort Erie, our Congressmen and Senators, the Canadian government officials and the officials of the United States War Department have co-operated in such a splendid way that they well deserve the gratitude of the Niagara Frontier.

So far this letter has been merely a sketch of past history with which most of you are familiar. The reason for its publication is as follows:

The bridge company has been financed, the location has been selected and the bridge will be built.

Very shortly, probably tomorrow, the bonds will be sold by a syndicate of prominent bankers and brokers. For several days investors have been placing orders with banks and brokers to enter their subscriptions early in the morning on the day that the sale begins.

The unusual concessions obtained make the securities very attractive as an investment.

The directors of the bridge company in their contract with the underwriters made it a point to have the bonds in denominations of \$1,000, \$500 and \$100, either coupon or registered. This was to give investors in smaller amounts an opportunity to buy some of the bonds, if they wished to do so. This being a community effort, it is desirable that every person is given the opportunity to join in the investment. There should be several thousand subscribers.

My opinion is that the bonds will be not only quickly sold, but will be largely over-subscribed. The chairman of the underwriting committee has, at my request, written to the banks and brokers asking them to favor so far as possible persons subscribing for smaller amounts.

I am not trying to sell bonds; on the contrary, the members of my family and myself have sold some securities, including some government bonds, to enable us to subscribe for \$100,000 debentures and also to buy some of the first mortgage bonds. I asked one of the Buffalo banks to make the purchase for us at the proper time, and Saturday I was told that the bonds are to be allotted among some forty banks and brokers and that I had better divide the order. Monday (today) I will scatter the order among a number of firms. I will not wait until tomorrow, when I think the brokers have arranged to offer the securities.

I am making this personal statement because I am President of the Bridge Company and I do not want any person to be able to say that the bonds were all sold before persons wishing to subscribe for smaller amounts were given an opportunity to do so.

I have the honor to remain,

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

FRANK E. BAIRD.

P. S.—This advertisement is not paid for with bridge money or by the underwriters. I have paid for it personally. F. E. B.

company directors asserted. How maintenance and operations would be funded was left unanswered.

“These unusual concessions were not for the purpose of allowing anyone to make money, but both governments realized it was a commendable effort of the people of the Niagara Frontier,” Baird wrote.

Baird sells government securities to buy bonds

If held to maturity, the 30-year mortgage bonds would cost the bridge company \$6.3 million in interest payments, \$2.4 million for the 20-year debenture bonds.

In order to reduce long-term interest payments, the bridge company intended to buy back the bonds before maturity. Annually out of net earnings, after interest payments were made, the company would retire up to \$100,000 of the mortgage bonds and \$50,000 of the debenture bonds. Then a seven-percent dividend would be paid on the capital stock (a total of \$3,500), after which, if there was any surplus, additional bonds would be retired.

Baird announced his intention to buy \$100,000 of the first mortgage bonds and some of the debenture bonds. “The members of my family and myself have sold some securities including some government bonds to enable us to subscribe.”

Demand for the bonds was high and they were sold out the morning they were offered.

When the grand total was tallied after construction was complete in May 1927, the bridge, approaches, land and buildings cost \$4,701,176.05 or \$246,473,222.53 in 2005 terms.

An additional \$500,000 in bonds were issued but were not part of the original sale. These would finance unanticipated expenses and the total bond debt was \$4.86 million.

Tolls set a month before opening

In the bond offering notice, the company estimated revenues of \$550,000 and operating expenses of \$50,000.

Tolls were set in late April 1927, a little more than a month before the bridge officially opened for business.

Pedestrians and passengers in cars were charged five cents each way, children under five years of age were free. Small cars such as the Model T, 25 cents, mid-size cars, 35 cents, and large cars, 40 cents. A one-horse vehicle cost 25 cents, and a two-horse vehicle 40 cents. These rates were at par with the ferry rates. Trucks were charged based on their loaded capacity and whether they carried cargo — 25 cents for a half-ton truck empty to \$4.50 for a seven-and-a-half ton vehicle loaded. Heavier trucks would need special permits.

In contemporary terms a motorist driving a small car would pay \$2.81 each way. A large car would cost \$4.50. The seven and a half ton truck, \$50, but much less if returning empty.

Construction Begins

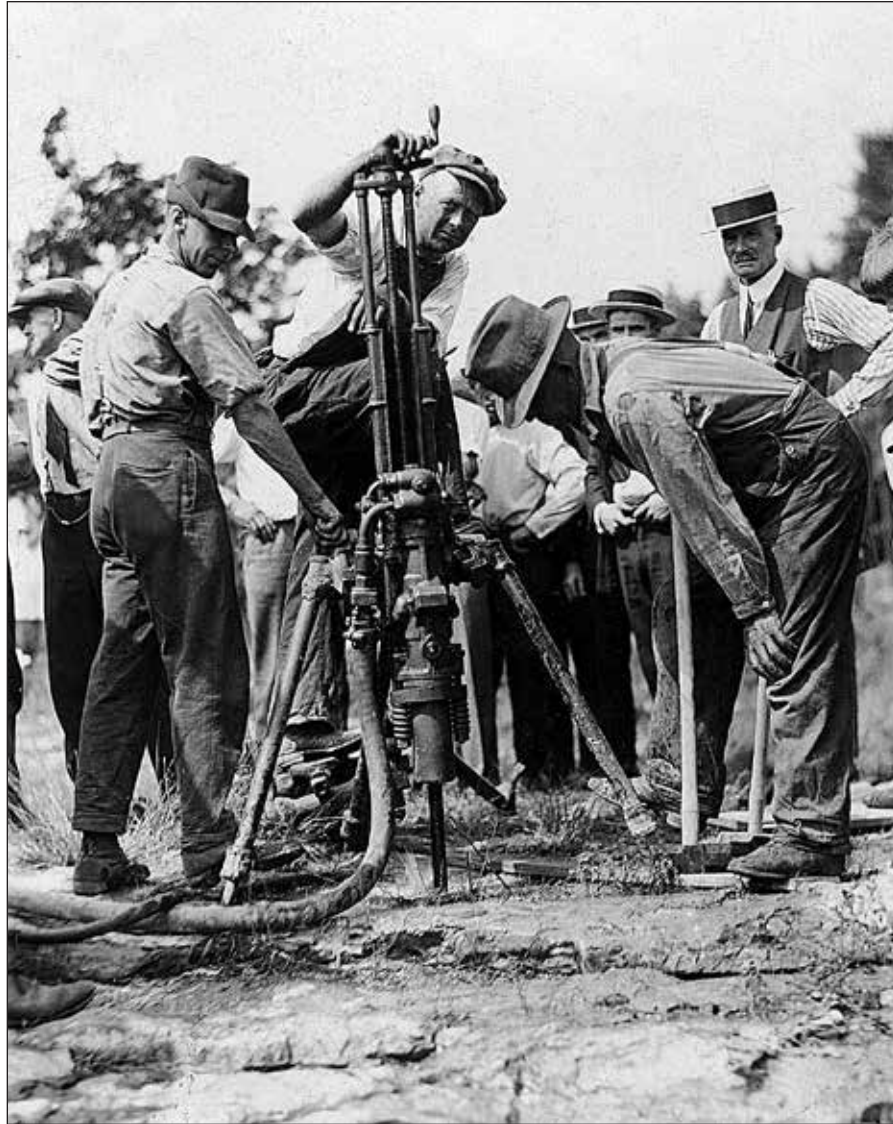
It was a long journey to get to a point where concrete could be poured, stone laid and steel riveted. Any obstacle now could be overcome with muscle, machines and sliderules.

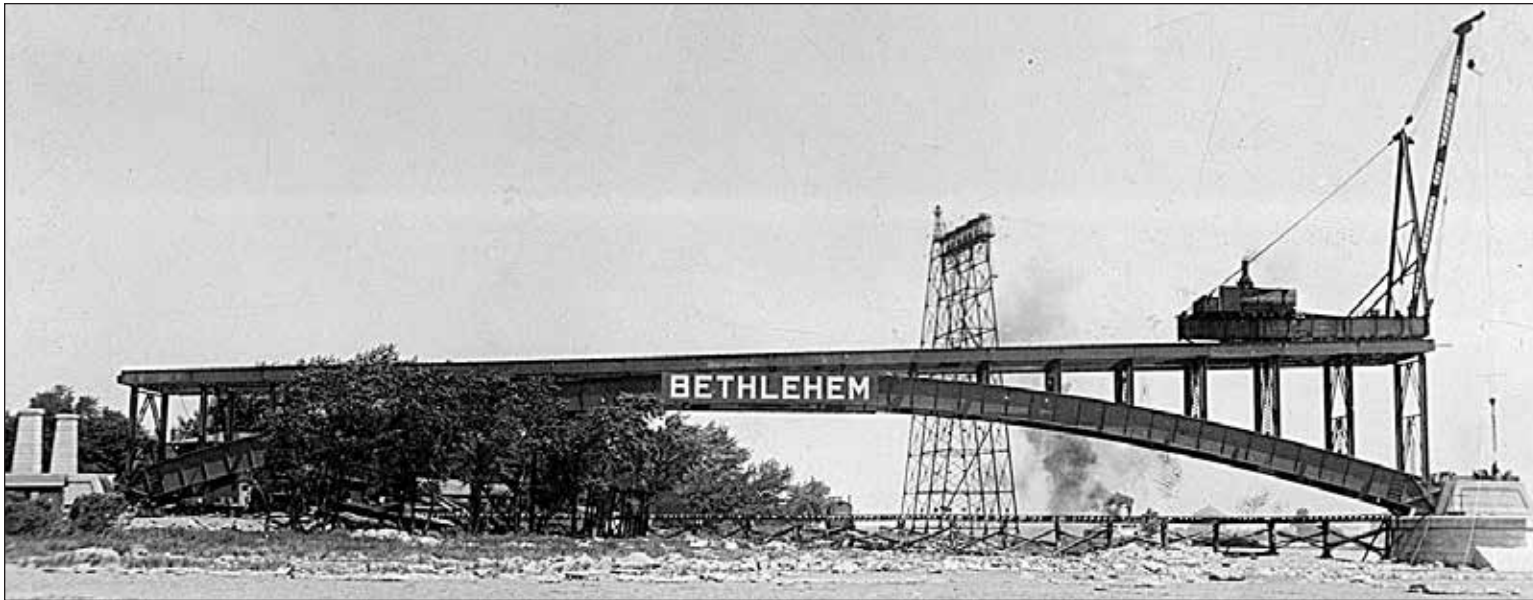
For nearly two years, spectators gathered on the shores of the Niagara River to view the spectacle that was unfolding before them. A bridge. Finally, a bridge was being built between Buffalo and Fort Erie.

On March 12, 1927 the first cars were driven over the nearly complete structure. Bridge company executives bundled into vehicles in Buffalo and made the historic trip at 3 p.m. The lead car was driven by the project's chief engineer, Edward Lupfer, who dragged himself out of a sick bed for the occasion. The second was driven by William Eckert.

"When the little cavalcade approached the Canadian terminus, a group of workmen cheered loudly while a steam shovel added its shrill notes to the boisterous welcome," announced the *Courier-Express* newspaper the next day.

Only one article was more prominently posi-





Bethlehem Steel won the contract to supply and assemble steel. The metal itself cost \$1,324,750, supplied from its Lackawanna plant.



Surveyors ensure the bridge will be built in the right location.

tioned on the front page: “Urge Baird as Mayor,” reads the headline. A short-lived effort to draft the president of the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company, Frank Baird, to run for mayor was initiated while he was out of town in Arizona. Such was the joy over the imminent opening of the Peace Bridge.

Work begins

Groundbreaking occurred August 17, 1925 in Fort Erie to officially start the construction. A much grander ceremony was attended by hundreds of people who turned out August 26 at Erie Beach. Silver spades were given to Eckert and William German. Respectively, they were representative of the Americans and Canadians who had worked so long and so hard to link two nations and the two communities of Buffalo and Fort Erie.

Having forded the river of political, business and regulatory obstacles, all that stood in the way were the immutable laws of nature. But at least those could be overcome with muscles, machines and slide rules.

Contracts were awarded in the fall. Bethlehem Steel of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, won the contract to supply and assemble



Dredging at Pier 1
Dredging work was done prior to construction of Pier 1 on the east side of the Black Rock Channel.

the steel, much of it manufactured at its Lackawanna plant. Porter Brothers of Spokane, Washington, was responsible for the concrete, piers, roadway, sidewalks, paving and balustrades. Some steel was supplied by a Hamilton, Ontario, firm.

Porter Brothers set up companies in St. Catharines, Ontario, to undertake work in Canada. Buildings for customs and immigration, tolls and administration would be built. The Castle at Fort Porter would also be moved a short distance away to property owned by the city — a portion pur-

chased from the U.S. government when it approved the abandonment of the fort.

Four structural types

Four structural systems were used to build the bridge and approaches. Two types were used on the bridge proper — the parts of the structure directly over the river — and two types for the approach spans.

The highest and perhaps most prominent feature of the bridge is the Parker truss which spans the 360-foot distance of the Black Rock Channel

Piers 1 and A

Men work atop Pier 1 as it nears completion in late November 1925. Pier A is also under construction. These two piers would support the span under which the Niagara Thruway would be built in the 1950s.

with a clearance of 100 feet.

Five sweeping arches each bigger than the previous one starting from the Canadian shore provide an incline up to the truss span over a distance of 2,035 feet.

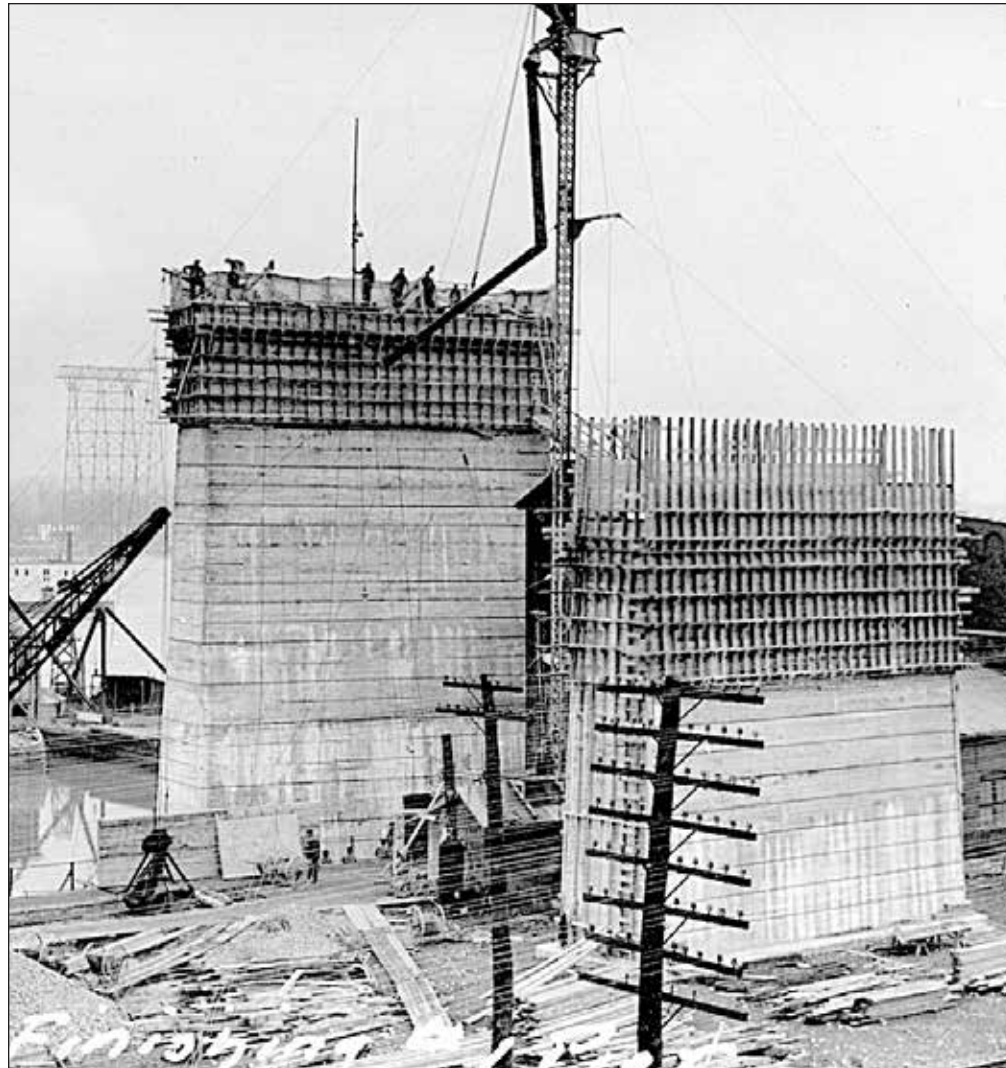
The approaches are composed of simply-supported girder spans and wall supported concrete deck systems.

In total there are 49 spans connected together to form the Peace Bridge.

Work starts before official approval

While the last approving agency, the International Joint commission, would not give its written approval until October 6, advance work was well underway by then and construction began almost immediately after the order was official.

Pier 1 is located on the east side of the Black Rock Channel. Piers west of it are numbered, while piers to the east are lettered. Pier 2 is located in the river beside the Bird Island Pier which is the west wall of the channel. Pier A is located to the east, and along with Pier 1, provides the support for the first

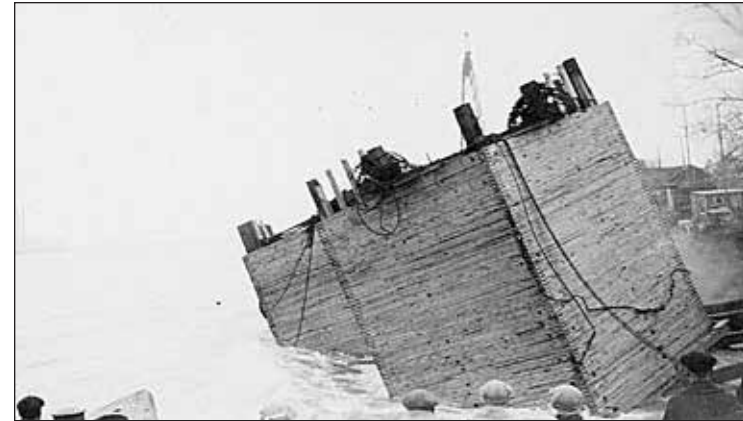


span on which a steel beam was placed.

River piers most challenging

Pier 3 was the most challenging part of construction. It was the first of three piers that would be set in the river where the water moves anywhere from seven to 12 miles per hour.

The reinforced concrete piers were constructed inside timber



Ready, launch, tow

The 20-foot high caisson for Pier 3, the first of the piers to be set in the river, was built on shore downstream. They were significantly larger than the 40-foot by 80 foot form into which concrete would be poured to allow room for concrete weights used to sink them. As well, a large piece of cut granite would be placed to form knife-edged ice breakers. Once complete, the caissons were launched and towed to the site.

caissons that were built on shore, towed out to the water and sunk 15 feet to the river bed. Forms inside would be filled with concrete to make the piers.

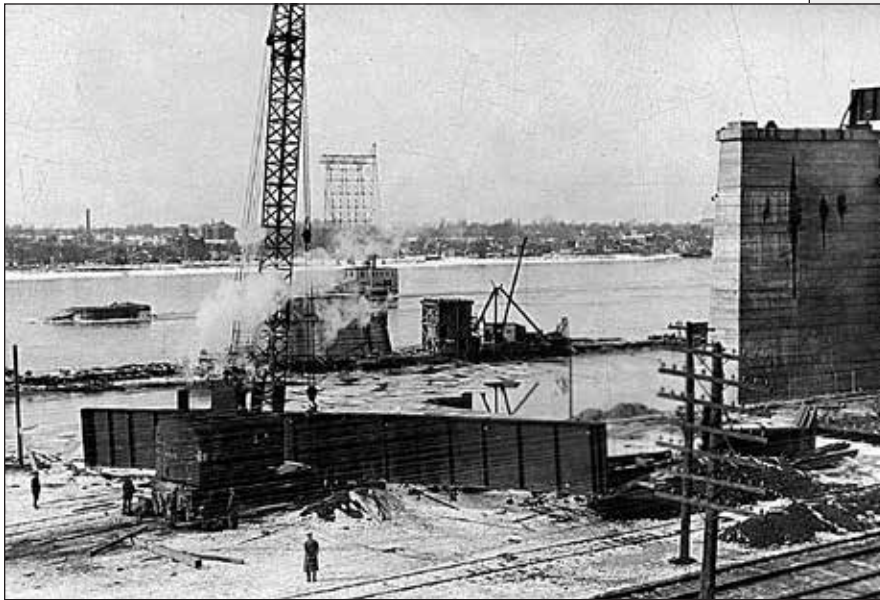
They were set on the hard sedimentary bedrock called dolostone that forms part of the Onondaga Escarpment that runs from the Finger Lakes region in New York to near Cayuga in Ontario.

Lupfer wanted to get Pier 3 in place before winter set in and the 40-foot by 80-foot caisson was launched December 10. Anchors were set 1,500 feet upstream in the lake to which a



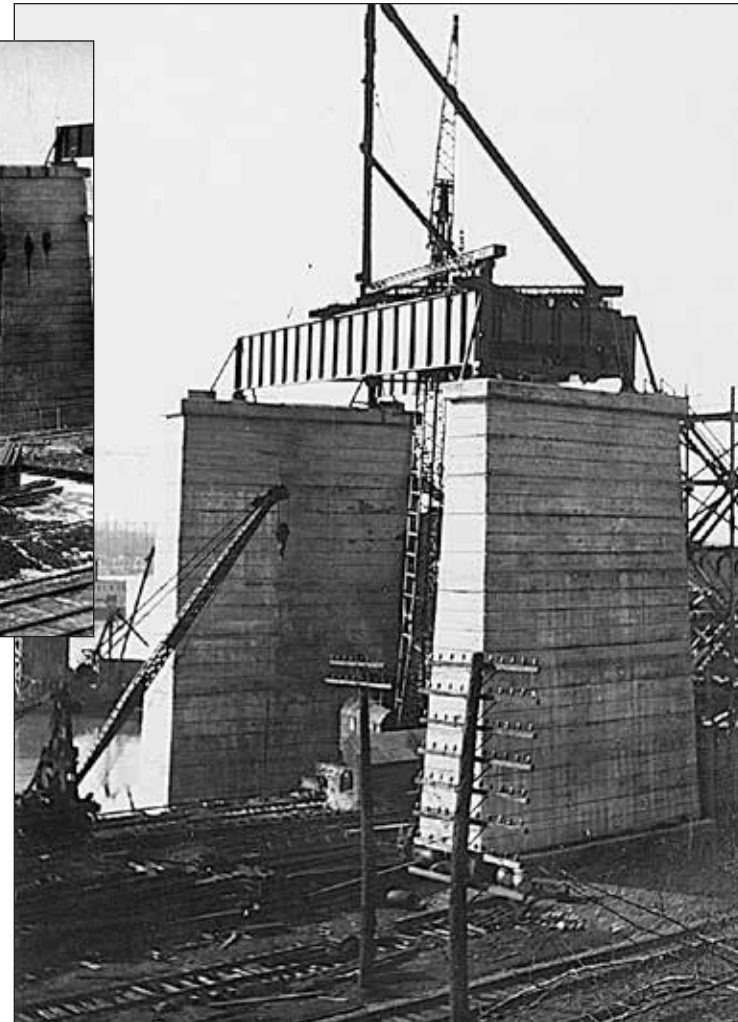
winding scow that towed the caisson was attached with cables. Winches would maneuver the scow into place and another set of winches controlling cables attached to the caisson allowed it to be placed in its resting spot.

It took two days of “pulling and hauling and juggling around



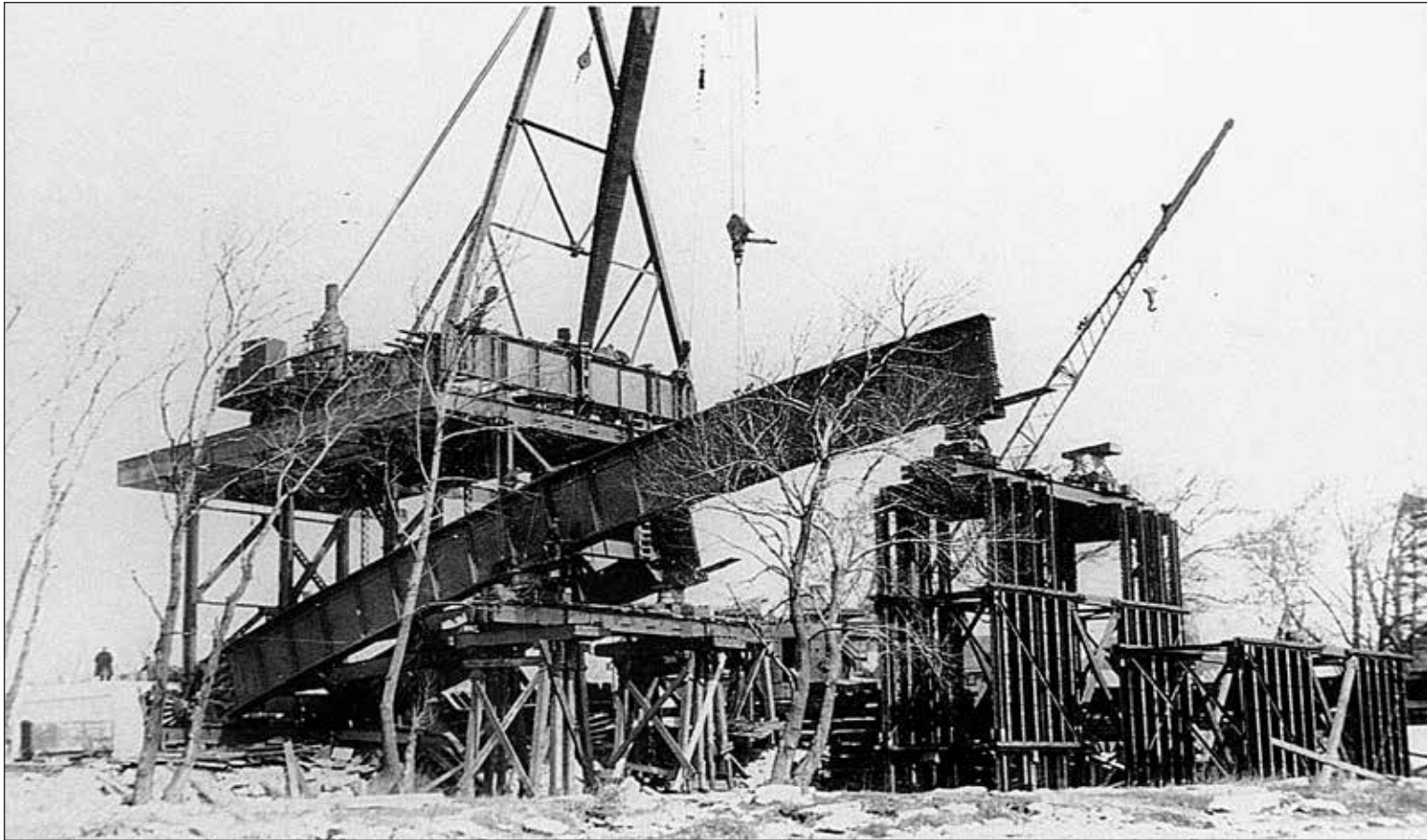
Steel work

A steel beam (above) is hauled toward the piers on which it will be secured. The Parker truss (below) under construction provides 100 feet of clearance over the Black Rock Channel which gives the Peace Bridge its unique asymmetrical design.



to get the unwieldy caisson into position and set on the bottom," Lupfer said.

Water inside the caisson was a boiling mess. Because the river bed was uneven, water flowed easily into the caisson and it could not be caulked. Steel piles were driven around the nose and sides of the caisson to lessen the water pressure into the holes between the timber and the rock. A diver used cement to caulk it and concrete was poured into the forms.



Pier 3 was largely complete by the middle of February, putting the process two months ahead of schedule. Work on the next two piers would not begin until the spring ice flow abated.

First steel placed

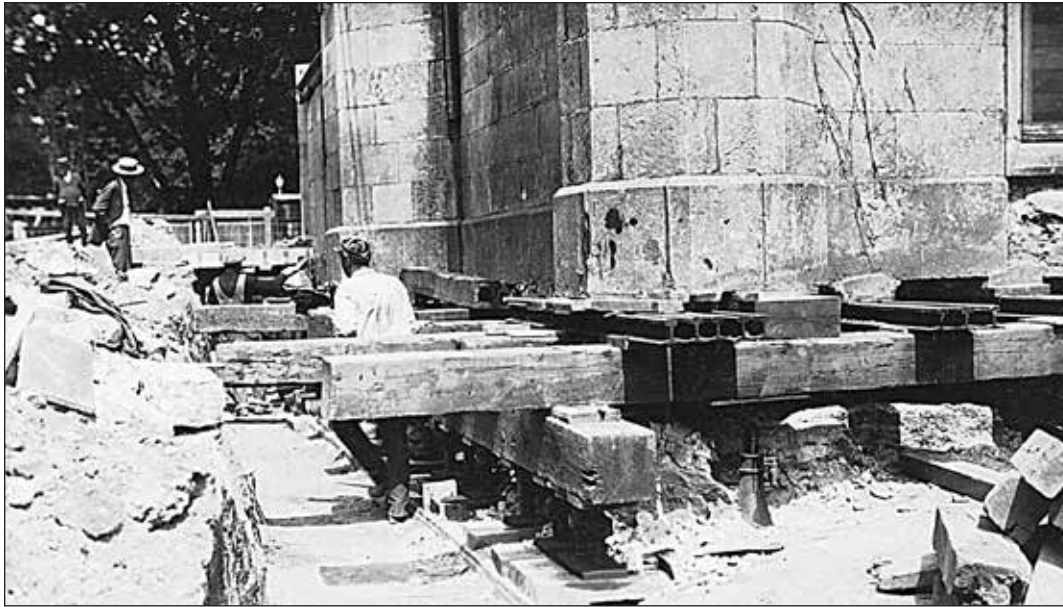
A steel beam between Pier 1 and Pier A was the first piece of structural steel that was erected. It was placed in late March and the bridge started to take shape.

Work on the truss began in early May, and by mid-summer with the truss nearly complete, a giant steel arch began to grope westward. Arches also began to reach toward Buffalo from Canada, and the final rivet was driven without ceremony

the week of October 18, 1926.

Although no discussion of its use for rail traffic was made during the years of approval-seeking and financing, the structure was designed and built to accommodate rail traffic. Trolley stringers were built into the bridge and could support a 40-ton railcar. Railroad tracks could be retrofitted in the future if needed.

Pouring concrete for the deck began when the structural steel work was completed and the crane removed. Concrete sidewalks would also be poured. The roadway was finished with granite block pavement.

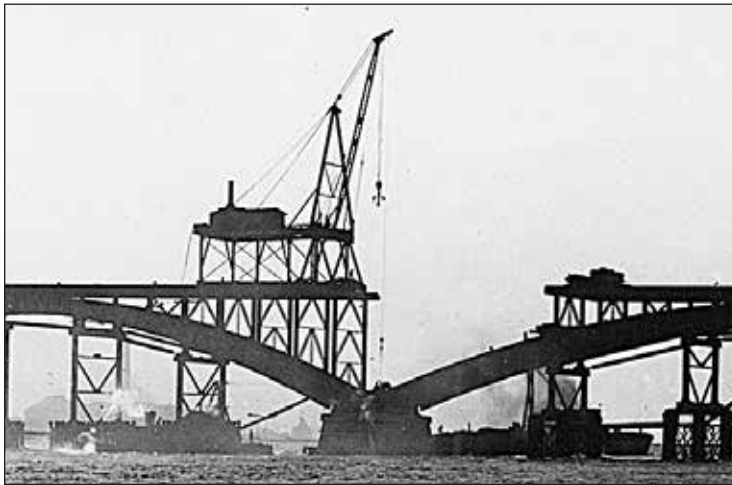


Out with the old

Workers prepare to move the blockhouse of Fort Porter, known as the Castle. The bridge company had to work around the U.S. government's schedule which required a full year to abandon the fort. It was located where the approach span would be built so work could not begin until 1926. The Castle was moved to another part of the former fort property that the city of Buffalo had purchased.

First border red tape

Engineers who were invited for an informal tour on a cold, windy December morning may have been the first people to run into border red tape.



Gathering at the construction office in Buffalo, the 20 Canadians and Americans were told by a U.S. customs officer that if they crossed over on the bridge, they would have to return by ferry because the bridge had not yet been officially designated a port of entry. The supervisor granted special permission.

More forceful measures were taken to prevent wayward advances on sovereign territory. A chain link fence topped with barbed wire was guarded by the U.S. Border Patrol.

"The bridge, the latest route for alien smugglers and liquor runners, has been the scene of several abortive attempts at violations of the customs and dry laws," reads the Buffalo Courier.

The so-called "dry laws" were good for the bridge. Lupfer credited Prohibition for the speedy work of construction.

"No more hazardous work in bridge construction exists than the sinking of caissons in swift running streams and the building of heavy abutments and the erection of heavy steel work, and prior to the passing of the 18th Amendment, it was not unusual for gangs of men doing this hazardous work to be pretty well disrupted after each pay day.

"No time has been lost from men failing to show up after pay



day. This was never possible prior to the passage of the 18th Amendment.

“It has been a real pleasure to do this work under these conditions. I have been a constructor all my life and have had many pieces of work disrupted and held up on account of gangs being badly broken up after each pay day.”

Nearly 9,000 tons of steel was riveted together, and another 800 tons was used to reinforce 36,000 cubic yards of concrete — enough to cover a football field, including end zones, to a depth of five and a half feet. Granite block pavement cov-

ered 19,000 square yards, or nearly three football fields, on the bridge deck. The terminals were covered with 25,000 square yards of pavement.

While cars could be driven over the bridge in March 1927, there was still much work to do. Roads, plazas and buildings would have to be constructed. The bridge still had to be designated a port of entry and customs and immigration officials would have to be assigned and bridge employees hired.

On June 1, 1927 the Peace Bridge opened.

Horsepower

Horse-drawn wagons carried away material excavated from a moraine to cut an entrance to Main Street by which most Peace Bridge traffic would pass through Fort Erie. Meanwhile, work on the deck continued.

Dedicated to Peace

U.S. Vice-President Charles Dawes extended his hand over the international border to greet members of the Royal Family and others in the delegation of British and Canadian notable persons prior to the dedication of the Peace Bridge on August 7, 1927. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of York are to the left. Farther to the left, in top hat and tails, is Frank Baird, president of the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company.

The official dedication of the bridge had been timed to coincide with a Royal Visit to Canada by the Prince of Wales, Edward, and his younger brother Albert, the Duke of York. It was hoped that U.S. President Calvin Coolidge would also attend.

The date had not been set when the bridge opened on June 1, 1927, but it was thought a dedication could be held in September after Prince Edward completed his vacation in Alberta and President Coolidge completed his summer sojourn in the American west. But word came down on June 22 from the Black Hills region of South Dakota that the president would not attend.

Although he had given it serious consideration, according to the Buffalo News, he declined because “there are so many

demands for the President to visit the various states that he does not feel he should make too many visits to any one of the 48.”

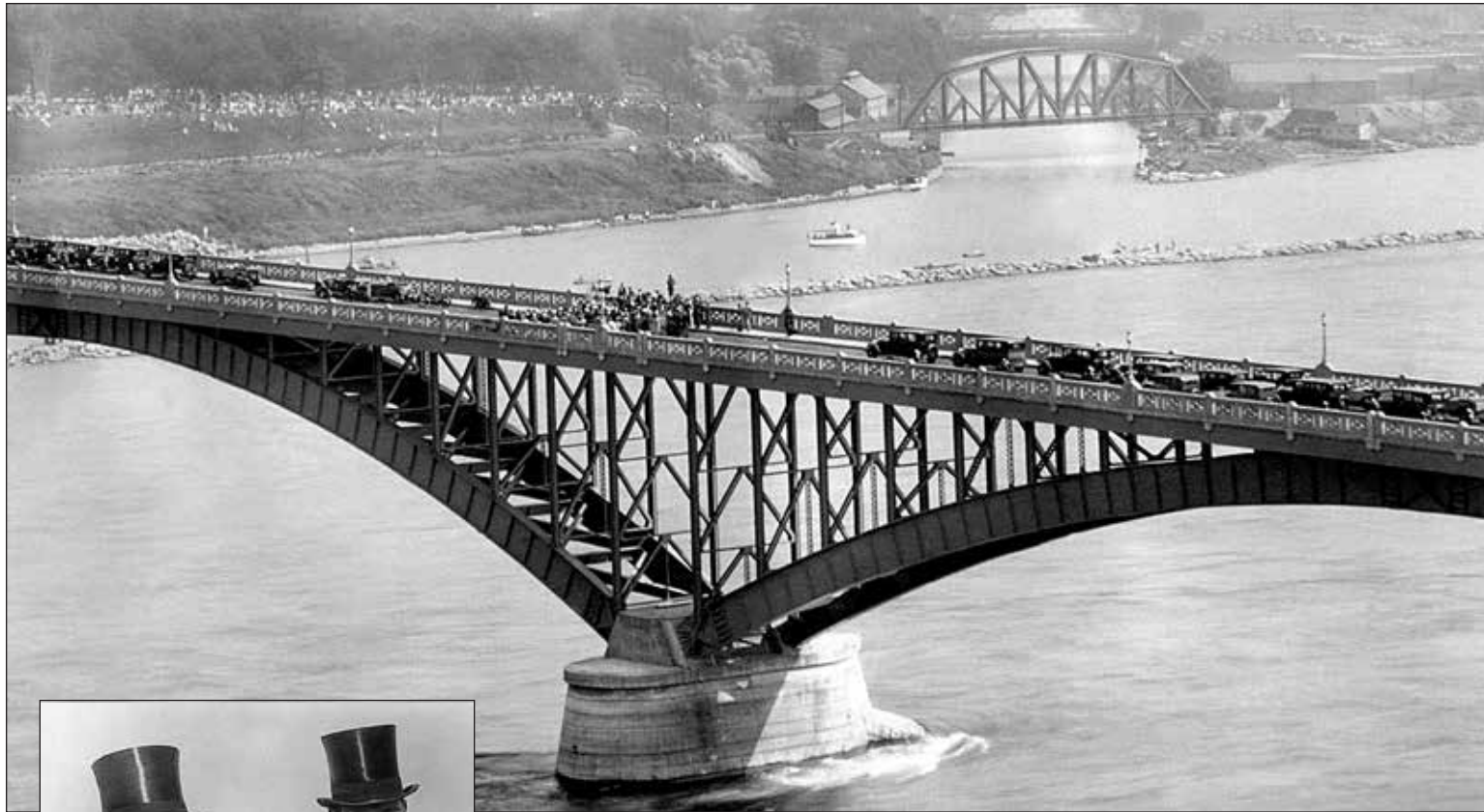
Bridge company president Frank Baird felt off-put by the Republican president and said that his visits to New York City should not be charged to Buffalo and that he would be justified





Pomp and pageantry

Two future Kings of the British Empire, His Royal Highness Edward, the Prince of Wales (standing at left, next page) and His Royal Highness Albert, the Duke of York — later to be known as George VI — were greeted with pageantry at the Fort Erie terminal of the Peace Bridge. The Prince of Wales inspected troops of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, of which he was the ceremonial commander. Along with British and Canadian notable persons, they were driven to the middle of the bridge to meet the American delegation at the international border. When he stepped across the border, he became the first member of the immediate Royal Family to enter the United States.



in making another visit to the state.

Of note is the Black Hills region is where Mount Rushmore is located, and the president and Congress had recently approved the creation of the Mount Rushmore monument. Work on the mountainside carvings of four previous U.S. presidents would begin in October.

In his stead, Coolidge indicated he would send Secretary of State Frank Kellogg if British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin attended.

According to an unknown newspaper article of July 23, diplomatic sensitivities were aroused, and the British government made excuses for the Prince of Wales, "because it would not do for him, under the circumstances, to appear at an official function without a high ranking American official to be there."

Baird persuaded Vice-President Charles Dawes to attend and diplomatic notes were exchanged between the state department and the Canadian government with the result that the Royal visi-



Sea of faces

A crowd estimated between 20,000 and 30,000 gathered in Buffalo at the Peace Bridge for the dedication speeches. The photo above is a part of the panoramic picture below which shows the thousands of people who attended the occasion.

tors would attend the dedication on August 7.

As history would later unfold, two future Kings would visit Fort Erie and Buffalo, and it would be the first time two heirs-apparent would visit Canada and the United States together.

(The Prince of Wales would ascend upon the death of his father King George V in January 1936, and Albert would ascend when his older brother, Edward VIII, abdicated a little less than a year later. Albert, who always preferred one of his other given names, would become George VI.)

The Royal siblings drove from Toronto, taking the scenic route from Niagara Falls on the Niagara Boulevard, which was closed to public traf-

fic, and arrived in Fort Erie at 3:30 p.m.

The Prince of Wales inspected troops of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, of which he was the "colonel-in-chief," and the Royal party made their way to the international border that bisects the Peace Bridge.

Meanwhile, following an extravagant luncheon held at the home of Frank Baird, a parade left Elmwood Music Hall at 1:32 p.m.

Military units, bands and troops of Boy and Girl Scouts accompanied the cars carrying the American dignitaries: Vice-President Dawes, Secretary Kellogg, Police Chief Higgins and Deputy Marnon, Secretary of Labor James Davis, New York Governor Alfred Smith, Buf-



falo Mayor Frank Schwab, Bethlehem Steel president Charles Schwab, U.S. Minister to Canada William Phillips, Baird and their wives and close associates, relatives and many others.

Poignant reminder

The Courier-Express described the scene. "The avenue, stately and decorous, was the first to stand at attention to pay dignified homage to the great men of affairs whose combined presence marks a brilliant chapter in the history of this city, an assembly that will be graven in local history as second only to that great occasion when McKinley and another brilliant gathering passed along the same thoroughfare, in an opposite direction, to the ill-fated Music Hall."

The reference is to President William McKinley, an associate of Baird, who was assassinated outside the Temple of Music during the Pan-American Exposition in 1901.

Thousands of people were packed along Porter Avenue and the approaches to the bridge to view the parade, and the guests of honor were escorted to their seats on a platform. Before them was a sea of faces numbering 20,000 to 30,000 in Front Park. Speeches were made and Baird was the master of ceremonies.

A bugle sounded from the bridge to announce the arrival of the Prince of Wales in Fort Erie, and the American dignitaries hurried back to their cars and paraded up over the bridge to greet the party from Canada.

As well as the Royal visitors, British Prime Minister Baldwin, Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, Governor-General Lord Willingdon, Lieutenant Governor William Ross, British ambassador to the U.S. Sir Esme Howard, Ontario Premier Howard Ferguson, Canadian Minister to the U.S. William Phillips, and Fort Erie Reeve Louis Douglas were among the official party.

Halfway across the bridge, the two delegations met, separated by a silk ribbon. It was the vice-president who broke the ice. Offering his hand to the Prince of Wales over the ribbon, he said, "How do you do? I'm Dawes," according to a newspaper account -- "or words to that effect," it qualified. Soon handshakes and greetings were exchanged among everyone.

Radio announcer Graham McNamee broadcast a description of the event on the 35 stations of the National Broadcasting

Company throughout the United States. Many Buffalo radio stations and others in New York, Pennsylvania and Ontario covered it live. It was also broadcast on frequency wavelengths that could travel far across the earth to be rebroadcast in other parts of the British Empire.

Mrs. Dawes and Mrs. Ross took their positions on each side of the ribbon with shears in hand. They snipped, the ribbon fell, and the Peace Bridge was dedicated.

When the Prince of Wales walked across the international boundary shortly after 4 p.m., it was the first time a member of the immediate Royal Family set foot in the United States. His landing on American soil in Buffalo a few minutes later made the first Royal Visit official, heartily acclaimed by the huge crowd.

"It gives me great pleasure," his voice boomed through large public address speakers, "to be present on the occasion of the formal dedication of this bridge which commemorates the peace which has happily endured between the British Empire and the United States for more than a century. May this bridge be not only a physical and material link between Canada and the United States, but may it also be symbolic of the maintenance of their friendly contacts by those who live on both sides of the frontier. May it serve also as a continual reminder to those who will use it and to all of us, that to seek peace and insure it is the first and highest duty both of this generation and of those which are yet to come."

More speeches were made extolling peace and friendship and the efforts of the men to bring the idea of a bridge to fruition.

William German, the Canadian vice-president of the bridge company, a former member of parliament and skilled orator, spoke eloquently.

"The reward is in the doing," he said, "and no effort is in vain. Determination, pluck, vision and patriotism have here been brought to their culmination. Not only will it mean to us all great benefits both commercial and industrial, but above all it signifies the blending of two great nations, two flags which lead the world down those paths which make for peace and prosperity for all the world and a peace which it particularly signalizes, not for 100 years alone, but forever."

Tolls, Taxes and Reorganization

A combination of forces led the bridge company to hasten its plan to hand over the Peace Bridge for public ownership. Chief among these was not so much a decline in revenue as a result of the economic depression, but high taxes, especially property taxes paid to the municipalities it served. And it faced increasing public pressure to reduce tolls.

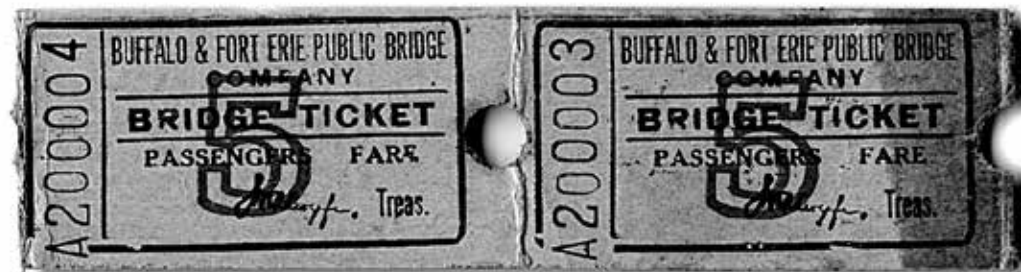
As expected, revenues during the first three months exceeded expectations and the bridge company was on track to more than double its first-year's prediction. More than 2.7 million people and 867,000 vehicles used the bridge. When the semi-annual interest payment was due on December 31, 1927 the bridge company was able to buy back \$86,000 in bonds, which was more than it anticipated in the first six months of operation.

While its schedule called for at least \$150,000 in repurchases per year, business was so good that double that amount was redeemed, and \$1.4 million worth would be retired in four and a half years.

The bridge company's revenues took a startling tumble beginning in 1931 as a result of a world-wide recession that had not yet bottomed out. Peak revenues of \$992,000 were earned in 1930. The next year revenues were down \$100,000, and total revenue for 1932 was only \$672,000. Even though the original revenue estimates were exceeded, so

too were expenses and taxes.

The Buffalo Courier-Express newspaper began a campaign to force the bridge company to reduce its toll charges. Almost daily starting in the late summer of 1932, it ran articles blasting the tolls and the company's policy of bond repurchasing. It liberally



quoted government officials, businessmen and the public in support of its campaign.

The paper believed the bonds should not be bought back prematurely and tolls should be reduced. Board directors even

Traffic declines

Bridge traffic declined in the early 1930s but it remained respectable, as shown in this photo from July 1933, and it started to rebound in 1935. Traffic during the war would decline because of imposed austerity measures of gasoline and tire rationing, but “in-bond” trucking starting in 1942 would mitigate the declines — U.S. trucks were permitted to use the shortcut north of Lake Erie between Detroit and Buffalo and their cargo was not subject to tariffs. The practice ended with the end of the Second World War but resumed in 1948.



joined the call. William German, who was by then a former member of parliament, and William Willson, who was the current member of the Ontario parliament, urged reductions.

The company was called “stubborn” by the paper and said the growth of ferry business indicated that the economy was not as big a factor in bridge traffic as most people thought. The company contended that any increase in traffic would not be enough to justify the loss in revenue from a reduction in tolls.

“Anyone can take a sheet of paper and a pencil and try to solve the problem,” wrote Baird in a newspaper ad, one of a series of four he purchased in the *Courier-Express* in the days leading up to the board’s quarterly meeting October 19. “But remember that any solution must take into consideration the fact that the Peace Bridge bond interest must in any event be paid.”

He said if the bridge company had not redeemed the bonds, it would have defaulted on its interest payments by as much as \$30,000. A default would have been catastrophic and could have resulted in the takeover of the bridge by a private enterprise.

The newspaper campaign created the uncertainty in the bond

market whether the company might default on its interest payments, Baird said. Up until then, the bonds were trading at between 109 and 104 (100 being face value), then dropped to about par and then again to 95 — a decline in the total value of more than \$200,000, he said.

“During the distressing financial period through which we have been passing, I feared that some of the timid holders of Bridge securities would be unnecessarily frightened, and I always dread panic,” Baird wrote.

A small number of bonds (110 of no specified value) “were sacrificed at the low figures mentioned, but only one single bond was sold at 95,” as best as Baird could ascertain.

“There were three lots of securities held in town on which considerable money had been borrowed, and during these times, capital is apprehensive,” he wrote. “A public-spirited man of means in this city, who is in no way connected with the Bridge Company, made large purchases of bonds at public and private sale to steady the market. Within the next two or three days, several private purchases were made and there are no dis-

tress bonds now overhanging the market.”

Baird estimated that had this “public-spirited citizen not stepped into the breach at the time he did, the bonds might have gone down to 70 or 75.”

That would have been a crisis partly of Baird’s own making. He had encouraged individuals to purchase small amounts of bonds when they were first offered in 1925. Small-time investors would have been more likely to cut their losses and cash out at a time when money was scarce. That year marked the third year in a row of drastic deflation — 2.51 per cent in 1930, 8.8 per cent in 1931, 10.31 per cent in 1932, and 5.12 per cent in 1933. The sell-off might have snowballed and the bond values devalued even more.

“Of course,” Baird wrote, “such an actual loss could not have occurred because the financial institutions in this city, knowing the value of these securities would have come to the rescue.” He urged people to hold onto the bonds and to buy more “if you have any idle money.”

Difficulties on multiple fronts

The bridge company faced problems on a number fronts.

Firstly, the lack of “idle” money was a large part of traffic declines. Access to Canada by Americans was all about leisure — beverages, beaches and other recreation — the first to be sacrificed when times are rough. A trade tariff war between Canada and the U.S. had resulted in the loss of commercial traffic. Prohibition in the U.S. had not yet ended and customs officials inspected visitors and returning nationals closely, not only for contraband but illegal aliens.

Secondly, the company, Baird particularly, faced pointed barbs of public opinion jabbed daily from newspaper articles for five weeks to which he remained silent. The opinions on the bridge’s finances were undermining confidence in its ability to pay bondholders. Baird’s credibility and the company’s credit were at stake.

The company was doing everything it originally said it would: charge a “rather high toll,” pay interest and retire the bonds as quickly as possible.

Thirdly, Baird sought tax relief. He felt it unfair that the public bridge paid taxes, saying its importance far outweighed any benefit accrued from taxation. Fort Erie’s property taxes

were particularly irksome having risen from about \$10,000 in 1927 to \$76,000 in 1932 — and that amount was half what the bridge company was levied before an appeal was made. Buffalo taxes amounted to less than \$38,000. As well, the company was subject to income taxes it paid to the U.S., Canadian and New York State governments.

The board “unanimously” declined to reduce the tolls at its October 19 quarterly meeting. John Van Allen, vice-president and counsel, held a press conference in his office in the Liberty Bank Building two hours after the private meeting adjourned to inform reporters. The bridge was in sound financial condition because “we prepared for these times and retired enough bonds to see us safely through,” he said.

The board discussed an idea to seek a loan from the state’s Reconstruction Finance Corporation to buy back the company’s high interest bonds and re-issue securities at a lower interest rate.

Van Allen said this money — part of President Franklin Roosevelt’s “New Deal” some of which had been earmarked for bridges to Grand Island — was intended for new construction projects to create jobs. Bankers also said a new bond issue “would not be advisable.”

End of Prohibition imminent

A financial report for 1932 was not greeted with overwhelming confidence when it was published January 31, 1933. While the bridge company did make its interest payments and it also redeemed \$320,700 worth of bonds (approximately one-eighth of its long-term debt), the drop in traffic and revenue was steep and the prospect for short-term growth was bleak. The repeal of Prohibition was on the horizon and the sale of low-alcohol beer in Buffalo would be permitted on March 23.

There was also a small deficit in operations — including the disputed taxes with Fort Erie — that was covered by short-term bank loans.

Bond prices fell six and seven points. Wages of the approximately 30 staff were cut 20 per cent and their hours cut 15 per cent.

Toll handlers and “special policemen” earned \$28.50 and \$22 per week respectively under the new wages. “The (bridge company) finally has taken cognizance of the depression and put

into effect drastic reductions,” the Courier Express said, but tolls remained unchanged.

Proposes transfer to governments

Another large reduction of the bond prices on the markets started when the company decided it would like to hand over the bridge to the Canadian and New York governments earlier than anticipated.

All along, from the time the bridge building efforts were formalized in 1920, the bridge was to be transferred to the two governments after its debts were paid. This would have occurred by 1955 when the 30-year bonds matured.

The only way to reduce toll rates was to refinance the debt and reduce taxes, Baird said. The only way to do that was to transfer the Peace Bridge. Even though it faced some financial turmoil, it was a going concern, provided an immense public service, and it was built on behalf of the governments.

In March 1933 the company proposed a new public entity which would become an international compact between New York and Canada. This new company would have nine directors, six New York state residents appointed by the governor and three Canadians appointed by the federal government in Ottawa. The new entity would buy the stock, and therefore all the lands and structures, at face value (\$50,000) and issue tax-free bonds to redeem all the outstanding bonds of the bridge company.

Baird didn't suggest that the bonds be guaranteed by the government, just treated the same as municipal bonds whereby no tax is charged on earned income and a lower interest rate could be offered. The authority itself would benefit from income tax exemptions and might be able to leverage property tax reductions, especially in Fort Erie.

New York State eagerly accepted the idea. Governor Herbert Lehman was fully in support. It would have passed the legislature in the spring session of 1933 if not for a protest from Erie county representatives led by Assemblyman William Marcy. They wanted a guarantee from Baird, in writing, that tolls would be cut.

If traffic remained the same, tolls could potentially be cut by half under the new plan, Baird said. It was a big “if.” It was not good enough for Marcy, and the bill was not brought forward for

Canadians complain

TUT! TUT! MR. BAIRD

Toward the close of last week Frank B. Baird, respected president of the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company, was reported in the Buffalo Evening News as telling a women's political club that “if he had his way the rates to Fort Erie residents and other Canadian commuters would be doubled, not lowered” on the Peace Bridge.

Mr. Baird gave as his reasons that Fort Erie derived the major financial benefit from the Peace Bridge, and the report went on to quote him as attacking the assessment against the big structure by the Village of Fort Erie. We feel that Mr. Baird must have had an irritable moment. He could hardly have meant what was reported. Doubtless he was “misquoted,” as so many prominent men are nowadays.

So far Fort Erie has derived scarcely any profit from the Peace Bridge. Potential benefits have been nipped in the bud by the high tolls in existence. As for taxation by Fort Erie, it has so far been very light and falls far short of offsetting the town's increased expenses caused by the building of the bridge.

These things will probably be all straightened out and some scheme suitable to all parties accepted. Hot words and misquoted statements will be forgotten in an effort for the common good.

Editorial, Fort Erie Times, June 15, 1928.

a vote in the legislature.

Baird went one better. Commuter ticket books were offered at 20 percent discount on a \$5 book (\$4). Pedestrians could buy 10 five-cent tokens for half price. The cuts were instituted in May as an experiment until October.

The market sunk further. Baird and other board members bought bonds to protect the price. He arranged open lines of

credit with the bridge company's bankers worth \$225,000 and directors made daily bids on the open market. Brokers were told to urge every potential seller not to sell at the "ridiculously low price."

Baird and members of his family by 1934 owned \$414,000 of the bridge's debt, but not all of this was bought at low prices. Most purchases were made at prices higher than 94 and some at a premium, he told a Congressional foreign affairs committee hearing. There were 900 bondholders in total.

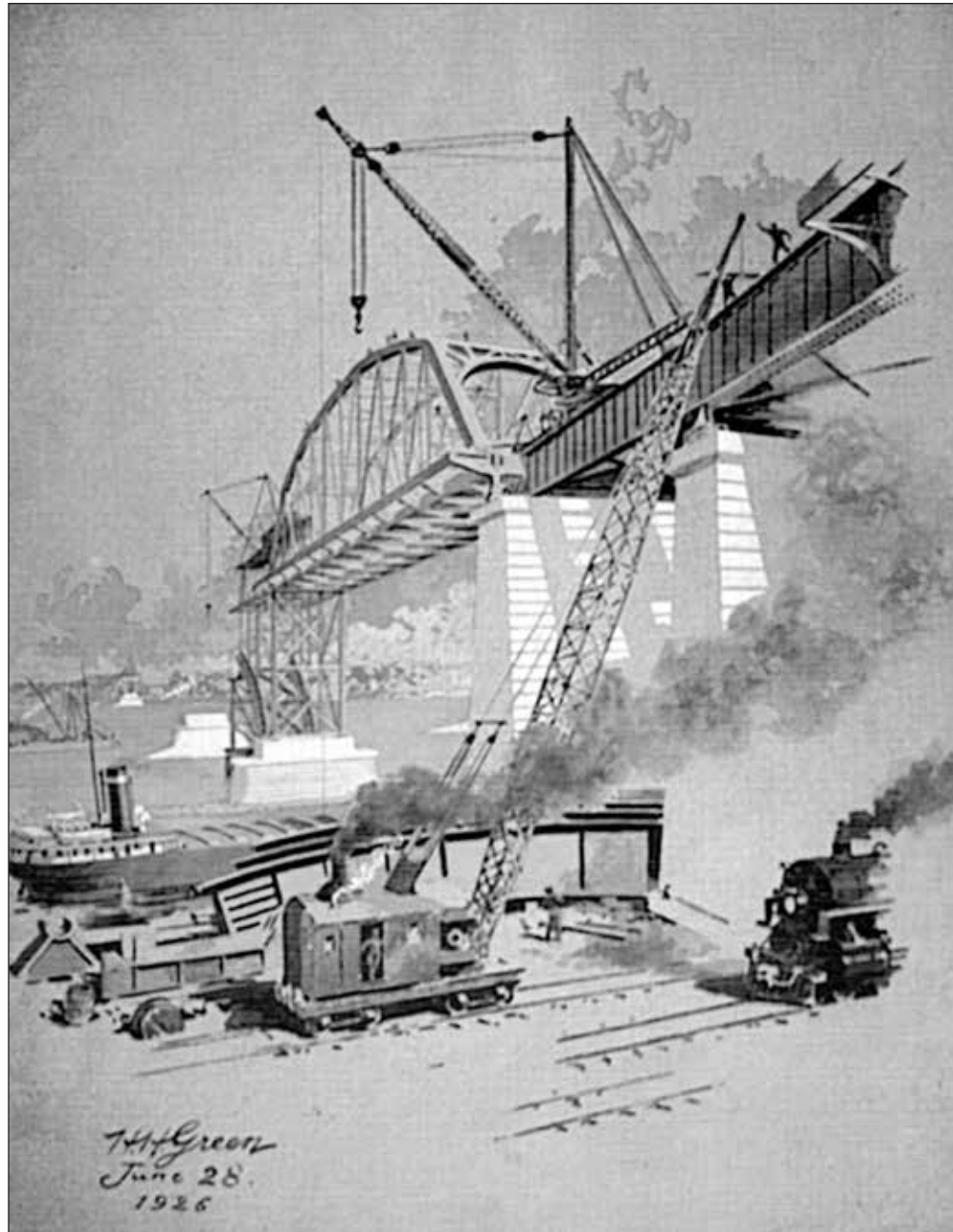
Governments approve

New York state legislators unanimously approved the plan in August. Canadian government approval was given the end of March 1934. The U.S. Congress gave approval to the transfer and the financing plan in May.

Outstanding bonds would be exchanged for new bonds at face value plus cash to reflect their redemption premium — for each \$1,000 bond, \$55 for the seven percent bond and \$30 for the eight percent bonds. The new interest rate was five percent.

The Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority was born. It was an international compact between New York and Canada and was exempt from paying income taxes to state and federal governments and property taxes to the city of Buffalo. Fort Erie's property taxes remained, but they were reduced to a payment-in-lieu of taxes of \$35,000 per year.

Tolls remained largely unchanged for the time being, although commuter books were cut to \$3.25 and truck tolls were reduced to a maximum of \$2.



Failed Takeover Attempt

A plan was hatched in Buffalo to use the Peace Bridge as leverage to finance the work of the newly-created Niagara Frontier Port Authority to oversee management of all major transportation infrastructure in or near the city. New York officials “erroneously” assumed Canadians would be okay with this new arrangement.

For two decades the Peace Bridge did well. Having successfully reduced its taxes and bond interest payments, the bridge weathered the Depression of the 1930s with moderate growth in traffic that started in 1935. It never had a problem with bonds or long-term financing again.

In fact, when the initial series of bonds for the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority were redeemed in 1946, another issue was made to fund construction of warehouses and other improvements. These would have matured in 1962, but the authority was in a financial position to redeem them in 1957.

If cash is king, then credit is the crown prince. The Peace Bridge had both in 1955. Its cash flow and good credit was eyed by Buffalo politicians as early as 1950 as a way to earn some direct benefit from the bridge that it was denied because the city could not tax it.

The Buffalo Port Commission discussed taking over the bridge to seed improvements for parking and truck terminals



New terminal facilities were built in 1955 in preparation for the extension of the interstate highway system to Buffalo.

at the harbor. Mayor Joseph Mruk dismissed it as a “wild pipe dream,” but it gathered momentum as the bridge approached debt-free status and would be handed over to the governments of Canada and New York.

In early 1955, New York State passed legislation to form the Niagara Frontier Port Authority and to merge the Peace Bridge into it. The new authority would oversee the harbor, Buffalo airport, mass transit and the bridge. Eight New Yorkers and three Canadians would be appointed to the authority by their respective governments, but the Canadians would have no voice in

Lapse of communication one of several 'bugs'

It has been public knowledge for many months that Canada is concerned over the slight implied in the unbalanced representation given her on the newly created Niagara Frontier Port Authority. But recent talks in Ottawa served to point up the fact anew.

No real cleavage exists on the issue. Our side agrees readily that Canada should be granted what she seeks — an equal voice in all matters affecting the Peace Bridge, one of the facilities slated for transfer to the new Authority. But the details must still be worked out and — according to a ruling last year by State Attorney General Javits — both our Congress and Canada's Parliament must still approve the transfer.

Why wasn't the representation issue disposed of satisfactorily prior to enactment of the Port Authority bill? It's a fair question. One answer, evidently, is that

those who drafted or amended the bill did not really foresee that Canada would press for equal representation.

A second more inexcusable answer is that, according to Ottawa sources, Canada was not consulted on the bill and did not learn of it until after its passage by the 1955 Legislature. Hence her dissatisfaction with the membership clause was not known until later.

The reason for this reported lapse of international communication on our part has not been explained, but Buffalo officials point out they dispatched all data on the bill to U.S. diplomatic sources for presumed transmission to the Canadian government.

It's true, of course, that Canada has never before had equal representation in Peace Bridge affairs; although, in practice, all actions concerning the span have been taken in complete harmony and

unanimity. This unequal setup reflects the fact that the Peace Bridge was built entirely with American funds all privately raised by Buffalonians. By terms of the original pact, however, Ontario and New York will become owners of their respective sides of the bridge as soon as all bonds are paid off; and that time is now set for 1962, only a few years distant.

Whatever the background, it's worth noting that the question of Canada's representation illustrates only one of several "bugs" in the Port Authority law as it now stands. Gov. Harriman himself stated when he signed the measure that various amendments would be needed to perfect it. Let's hope that by careful attention to detail in Albany, Washington and Ottawa, all the bugs can be worked out of the Port Authority legislation before this year is over.

Newspaper editorial, January 25, 1956

matters except those directly concerning the bridge.

It was thought the bridge operating surplus would be a good source of income, and the bridge could be mortgaged again — at least the part in New York — with a bond issue to pay for harbor improvements.

Negotiations would whittle down Buffalo's and New York's expectations and the bridge authority would be reconstituted again.

Canadian government kept in dark

Canadian officials said they were not formally notified until it was all but a done deal as far as their state and city counterparts were concerned. The New York attorney general, Jacob Javits,

advised that the state could not unilaterally change the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority. "The consolidation and transfer of jurisdiction provided for by the Public Authorities Law section 1534 may not take place under the circumstances covered by your question until such approval and consent of the the Dominion and the Congress are given," Javits wrote.

Lester Pearson, the Canadian secretary of state for external affairs, briefed the federal Cabinet once formal notice of the proposal was forwarded.

The initial problem that Pearson saw was the idea that the bridge would become a profit-making venture. "It would be a contravention of the original intent of those who conceived the

idea of the Peace Bridge and subscribed the money to build it," he wrote in a memorandum to Cabinet on January 25, 1956.

"Refusal to agree that the bridge should be a profit-making toll bridge may be expected to generate considerable ill-will towards Canada in the Buffalo area." Pearson was willing to accede to that wish.

If not, "New York interests would unilaterally terminate the present arrangement and impose tolls on their half of the bridge. The levying of tolls for profit on the American side appears in any case to be practically inevitable. The smaller the Canadian toll, the larger the American toll can be. The Canadian government would thus be indirectly subsidizing the beneficiary of the American tolls (the port authority)."

Pearson had already decided that handing control of the bridge to New York state ought to be refused. This would cause "considerable ill-will." Refusing a permanent toll system would "aggravate the situation."

As well, he recognized that unless the government were to directly fund maintenance and future expansion, tolls would have to be continued anyway.

He also addressed the unbalanced representation on the existing authority and suggested any new plan ought to include equal representation by Canadians and Americans.

He forwarded three options, one of which would finally be adopted: "The Canadian government could agree to the operation of the bridge for profit by a separate corporation which could turn over half of the profits to the Niagara Frontier Port Authority and half to some agency designated by the [Canadian] federal government."

This "contractual arrangement . . . would provide for complete equality of control and for the protection of Canadian interests to the full."

The key point for the New York interests, and it was denied them, was that the bridge assets could not be used as security for anything other than bridge financing, although a portion of operating profits could be turned over to the port authority to do with as it wished.

Another key point was that the parties in an international compact are equal partners and the board of directors must reflect that. At the time, there were six New York and three

Foot-in-mouth diplomacy

For weeks everyone in an official position has been treading softly and minding their P's and Q's in what they said about the Peace Bridge and the Port Authority. No one wanted to do or say anything that might disturb top-echelon Canadians, whose federal cabinet meets tomorrow to discuss future handling of the Peace Bridge.

The Port Authority last Friday refused to be drawn into a verbal match with Ft. Erie spokesmen over the bridge lest it upset the delicate diplomatic balance that exists in Ottawa.

On Monday, however, one Buffalo official whose identity is not known at this time told about a possible 11th hour measure. He said the Americans are considering the possibility of asking Gov. Harriman to replace the present six members of the Peace Bridge Authority with six members of the Port Authority.

With a 6-3 representation on the Bridge Authority, the new members could change the policy of the organization to permit using the American half of the bridge net revenues for Port Authority financing. While this would be of inestimable help to the Port Authority when it takes over the bridge July 1 — if the Canadians acquiesce — this personnel shift certainly isn't going to make the Canadians feel more kindly toward the Port Authority.

Such a contemplated move might nullify a possible agreement with Canadians on the federal level. One person close to the protracted negotiations termed the announcement of the possibility as "foot in mouth diplomacy."

Excerpt from newspaper article January 31, 1956.

Canadian representatives on the bridge authority board.

The general structure and responsibilities of a reconstituted Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority was established in that meeting, although it would take nearly a year of negotiations to see it happen.

Pearson, incidentally, would become prime minister in 1963

Peace Bridge is just that to Canadians

Alternatives suggested by the Canadian government to the hastily conceived and cockeyed plan proposed on this side of the Niagara River for making the Peace Bridge part of the Niagara Frontier Port Authority's operations deserve plaudits here as well as on the Canadian side.

Chiefly, acceptance of either one of the two alternatives will mean assurance that the Peace Bridge will not become the creature of an agency whose primary purpose is to promote other public facilities than means of crossing the river.

To the extent that this is so, international motorists will be afforded greater protection against raises in tolls designed merely to increase revenues for improvement of port facilities on the American side. No matter what the good intentions of the present authority members, membership on the body will change from time to time.

This, we think, is a consideration that made the proposal put forward on behalf

of the Port Authority on the American side a little alarming to the public mind.

At the same time that the Canadian plan would set up safeguards against authority "raids" in the matter of toll charges, it seems that it also would fulfill the needs of the Port Authority for revenue within acceptable limits.

The American plan was to transfer ownership of the bridge to the Port Authority. Canada would have representation on this body to function in all matters pertaining to the bridge.

The Canadian government rejected this plan. Instead, it advocated (1) a separate corporation to administer bridge affairs or (2) ownership and operation of half the bridge by the Niagara Frontier Port Authority and the other half by the Canadian government with a cooperative arrangement between them.

In either case, it would be left to the Americans what disposition they would make of their half of the toll revenue. In

other words, for all the Canadian government cared, half the revenues could go to the Port Authority.

The Canadians would be willing to continue toll charges on the bridge "for a substantial but limited period, such as 30 years." They would also be willing to dissolve the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority, which currently owns and operates the bridge, in order to facilitate one of the alternate arrangements.

This newspaper said a long time ago that ownership of the Peace Bridge by a Port Authority set up to promote port installations only on this side of river hardly would be acceptable to Canada. We thought then that the idea was cockeyed; now we are certain of it.

The Canadian government's willingness to work out a solution that will not hamstring the American aspirations is splendid evidence that the Peace Bridge is aptly named.

Courier-Express, February 7, 1956

but not before he would receive world-wide acclaim as a Nobel Peace Prize winner for his efforts to create a United Nations peacekeeping force during the Suez Canal crisis of 1956.

"Erroneous assumption"

A delegation from the port authority, the city of Buffalo and the U.S. Embassy met with Canadian finance minister Walter Harris in late March 1956.

The Americans said they didn't think Canada would have any problems with the port authority plan when it was first drafted but learned in February that it was an "erroneous assumption."

The city had committed \$12 million of "civic assets" toward the port authority and now found itself in an awkward position. It was also awkwardly pointed out to the Americans that the Peace Bridge had completed construction on improvements in Buffalo and that a transfer, as proposed, would not allow similar work to occur in Fort Erie.

The Americans also said the proposed arrangement would allow Buffalo to levy taxes on the bridge, pointing out that Fort Erie had received \$500,000 since 1933 and Buffalo nothing.

Fort Erie's primary concern was to ensure the continued flow

of tax revenue, which would amount to \$60,000 in 1962, and it expected revenues to grow. The town did not receive taxes, per se, but payments-in-lieu of taxes. The payments were negotiated in 1955 at \$45,000 and were scheduled to grow each year over the life of the seven-year deal.

Existing bridge management endorsed

On a visit to Fort Erie, Canadian government officials faced “marked unanimity. . . . All were quick to endorse the work of the existing bridge authority and to recommend its continuance,” according to a memorandum from G.R. Harman, an external affairs representative.

“The port authority would not maintain the efficiency of the bridge operation but instead would raise tolls and use the Peace Bridge revenues for other unrelated purposes.”

John Van Allen, the bridge authority’s lawyer and the last of the original bridge builders, said the bridge authority had been completely ignored when the port authority was established.

He also said that if something was not worked out, the “governor (Averell Harriman at the time) can still frustrate the operations of the existing authority” since it was composed of a majority of Americans appointed by the governor.

It took more than a year before a settlement was reached. It resulted in a reconstituted international compact between New York and Canada as approved by the U.S. Congress. The key points were:

- the Peace Bridge would continue to be owned and operated by the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority and would continue to do be for a term of at least 30 years and a new agreement would have to be drawn up to reflect that.
- the bridge authority would be composed of five Canadians appointed by the federal government and five representing New

York interests, but no more than three may represent the Niagara Frontier Port Authority.

[Currently, in 2007, the Canadian Minister of Transport appoints five members to the authority. The Governor of New York appoints two, and the New York State Department of Transport, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority and the Attorney General appoint one each.]

- a minimum amount of \$200,000 be paid from the bridge’s net revenue each to Canada and the port authority.
- the bridge could not be consolidated with another interest.
- the bridge could continue to issue bonds
- the equivalent of the amount paid to Fort Erie in lieu of taxes be paid to the city of Buffalo.

[Provincial legislation that came into effect in 1998 mandated that international bridges be subject to municipal property tax. Currently, the Peace Bridge, pays approximately \$500,000 to the Town of Fort Erie, and an equal amount is paid to the City of Buffalo as an “equalization payment.” The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, as it is known today, receives a payment of \$200,000 per year. A \$200,000 payment is no longer made to the Canadian government; however, the Peace Bridge Authority provides all facilities and maintenance for Canada Border Services Agency operations at no charge.]

It all became official on January 1, 1958 and the authority held its first meeting January 22. Canadian members were J. George Johnston, W.G. Stamp, Dr. A.L. Hays, A.L. Brooks and John MacDonald. Americans were William C. Baird, son of Frank Baird who assumed his father’s seat on the authority when he died in 1939, Benedict T. Holtz, Louis J. Leftkowitz, John J. Johnston and Joseph P. Molony.

Battle of the Barge

A marine salvage contractor was tasked with the “delicate and dangerous” job of extricating Barge 45 which had become pinned against one of the bridge piers when a tugboat operator mistakenly thought he could run the river. Not only was it a hazard to navigation, but water levels were affected in the upper Great Lakes.

Tugboat captain Ronald Blaha found out the hard way how not to navigate the Niagara River. He, his wife and a deckhand narrowly escaped death August 7, 1986 when their tug, the Ruth B, capsized in the swirling water under the Peace Bridge. Mr. and Mrs. Blaha were rescued by fisherman about a mile and a half downstream. Meanwhile, their 21-year-old deckhand was stranded atop the wreckage of the barge — Barge 45 — they were towing and which had become wedged against a bridge



Whoops

Barge 45 stayed in place from August 7 to December 19. The first attempt to move it failed when the lift barge was caught in a strong lateral current that the wreck created and became wedged under one of the arches. The bridge was then closed for 25 hours until it could be freed and engineers declared the bridge safe. Rivets were damaged but the structure remained sound.



pier, cemented in place by the force of 100 tons of rushing water.

Blaha had tried to negotiate the 150-foot barge down the river channel when the swift current forced it up onto the pointed icebreaker on one of the piers where the force of the water kept it firmly in place.

According to estimates of the U.S. Army Corps of Engi-

Removing water

Water is removed from compartments that could be made water tight to remove weight and prevent load shifting.

neers, the obstruction held back enough water to raise the level of Lake Erie by four inches by the time it was freed in late December, and its effects were felt in Lakes Michigan and Huron.

As well as being a hazard to navigation, it was feared it might break up and cause substantial damage to the International Bridge downstream. Although, it hadn't damaged the pier holding up the Peace Bridge, it might if it shifted. The bridge was allowed to remain open for traffic.

Blaha said navigation charts showed the river was safe for shallow vessels. Without benefit of advice which he requested by radio from the Coast Guard, he decided to bypass the Black Rock Channel — the designated preferred route.

"If somebody had just said, 'Hey, buddy, nobody runs down the river,' this whole thing would not have happened," he told the Buffalo News.

A Coast Guard spokesman said at the time that it was policy not to give advice over the radio in order to avoid liability in case something went awry.

By late September, the U.S. government had authorized funding for its removal, estimated initially to cost \$3 million. Interestingly, the pier is in Canadian territory and only about one-third of the wreck was within the U.S. boundary. A contractor for the U.S. Navy was engaged for the job.

It took nearly two months to get all the equipment in place,



notably a lift barge with two cranes with a capacity of 500 tons had to be brought up from Louisiana for the job. On the way, crane components were assembled in New York and Montreal.

Anchors were set into the bedrock 1,500 feet out in the lake to which a winching barge was attached by three-inch steel cables. This barge would ease the lift barge into place and hold it steady against the current.

The operation was dependent on weather. High winds — so common in the late fall — would make the job much more difficult, and ice that would start to form in the winter might build up on the wreck and create more potential for damage.

The object was to use the barge's powerful cranes to lift the wreck off the icebreaker. The lift barge with Barge 45 in tow winched out and taken away. It was a delicate and dangerous

Hoist brackets

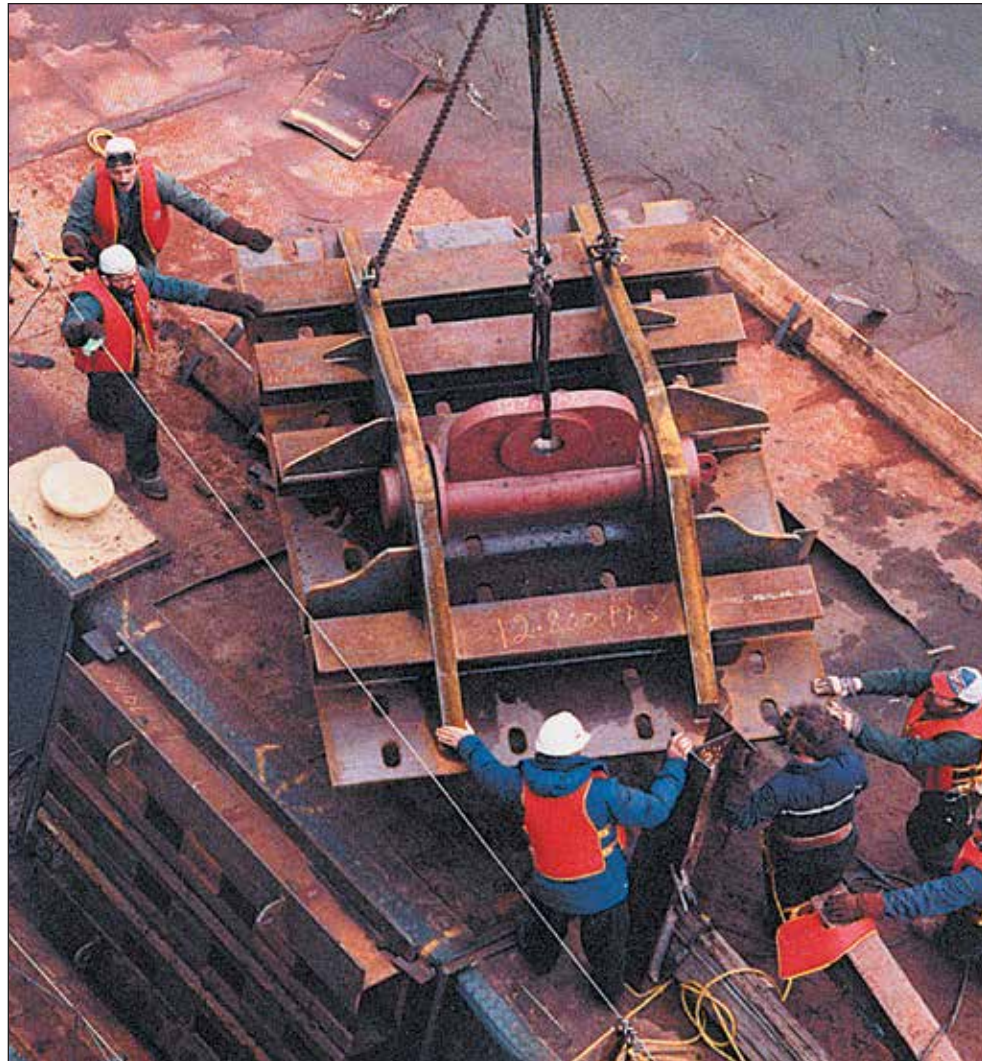
Two brackets were lowered and welded onto the wreck to provide suitable anchorage for the lift.

operation.

"It has all the makings of a historical event," said one of the many bystanders who had gathered on both shores at the beginning of December to watch events unfold. Police were engaged to keep traffic moving at prime vantage points along the Niagara Thruway and roads in Fort Erie. Security people made sure traffic kept moving on the bridge, although one lane and the south sidewalk were closed. "Coffee, Donuts, Bargeburgers," read a sign erected by an entrepreneur in Fort Erie. Other souvenirs were sold to commemorate the Battle of the Barge.

As the lift barge was being eased into position on December 2, the force of the water moving horizontally around the wreck pushed the barge off target and before the slack in the cable could be wound in, the lift smashed into the steel arch and became wedged underneath it. At least a half a dozen trucks were stopped and backed off the bridge.

The Peace Bridge was closed for 25 hours until the lift could be freed and damage assessed. A rapid increase in the water level then could have proved disastrous. The lift barge could not be yanked out for fear of causing more damage, so ballast was redistributed to sink the bow and raise the stern enough to clear the bridge. Although some rivets had been sheared, the structure remained sound and the bridge was reopened for traffic. Damage amounted to \$231,000.



Learning from this mishap, salvagers decided that the lift barge needed lateral anchorage. Cables would be strung from another barge in the Black Rock Channel to steady the horizontal movement of the lift barge.

Following a weather delay, a second mishap occurred nearly a week later. The plastic lead line for the horizontal cable snapped

Cutting holes

A diver used a torch to cut 10-inch holes into the wreck to allow water to drain during the lifting operation.

from the steel cable as it was being wound to its anchor point. A worker suffered a broken foot — although serious, it was minor compared to the injury it might have caused.

The first lift attempt was made a few days later. The crane was positioned and cables were attached to lifting brackets that had been welded onto the wreck and the lift began. One of the rollers cracked, stopped turning and a cable frayed and snapped.

Damage to the lift barge was repaired — a new roller was supplied by a local foundry — and a second attempt was made to lift the wreck a couple of days later.

Water was pumped from some of the compartments to lighten the wreck and the crane began its work. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the wreck was raised over the course of hours on Saturday. At about 9:30 p.m. the wreck was lifted about 20 feet and another mishap occurred. A strong wind grabbed hold of the hulk and twisted it. Water still inside sloshed around and another cable snapped.

“We’ll be starting over again,” said John Derbyshire of the Corps of Engineers. “But it won’t be from ground zero.” The wreck was still wedged against the pier, but it was higher up out of the water.

More repairs were undertaken and a diver was sent down to cut 10-inch holes in the wreck to allow the water to drain while it was being raised.

Early in the morning of December 19, the third lift attempt



began. After about an hour-and-a-half, it was complete and the lift barge was winched back with its cargo in tow. The force of the effort folded the wreck in two.

After the anchors were released, three tugs began to tow the barge, but the wreck became grounded. A fourth larger tug helped get it to its resting place after a full day of work.

Barge 45 was deposited in a dumping area near the former Bethlehem Steel mill the evening of December 20.

The final cost of the salvage effort was estimated at \$5.5 million. The U.S. government sued Blaha and the man to whom he sold the wreck for the amount, but settlement was reached for a total of \$20,000 in 1992.

Archaeological Discoveries

Extensive archaeological studies undertaken in association with Peace Bridge and municipal construction projects uncovered more than one million cultural artifacts — evidence of an ancient civilization stretching back 80 centuries and beyond.

Evidence of the aboriginal civilization that inhabited the area at the headwaters of the river for many centuries had been documented since the late 1800s, but it wasn't until the 1990s when archaeological studies were done as part of various bridge authority and municipal construction projects that the extent became clear.

Archaeological Services Inc., headed by Dr. Ron Williamson, linked three known sites of major significance along Fort Erie's river shore as components of a much larger 80-acre area that is known simply as the Peace Bridge Site.

It is the largest site of its kind in northeastern North America and clearly shows it was a rich source of tool-making material, including spearheads, knives, scrapers and drills and likely served as a manufacturing and distribution center.

More than one million artifacts have been recovered from the Peace Bridge Site and some have been included in a gallery called Mewinzha which forms the centerpiece of the lobby of the Peace Bridge Authority's new administration building. It



Fort Erie Museum Services

was constructed in partnership with the Town of Fort Erie and Fort Erie Museum Services.

Sites along the Niagara Boulevard at Forsyth Street (Orchid Site) and Queen Street (Surma Site) had been documented and because artifacts were found at Walnut Street three decades



Museum gallery

Some of the artifacts recovered are on permanent display in a gallery in the Peace Bridge Authority lobby, a gallery called Mewinzha. Fragments of a complete ceramic vessel and a slate gorget engraved with images of a Thunderbird are among the items.



before, archaeological studies were conducted on Walnut Street in 1992 and 1993 in preparation for construction of commercial customs facilities. A single one-metre excavation at a previously undisturbed location yielded more than 4,000 artifacts at the Walnut Site.

Two human burials were discovered during investigations prior to the installation of storm water catch basins in 1993. It was found that one skeleton had been truncated by a trench dug for a natural gas pipeline some years previously. As a result of the discoveries, the catch basins were

relocated.

In light of the density of artifacts that existed in the area and the real probability of disturbing other burials, the commercial customs building was built on footings rather than on an excavated foundation.

Investigations in 1995 centered on the resurfacing of the truck yard for the Commercial Vehicle Processing Centre, installation of underground services and landscaping. Dozens of tools, hundreds of fragments of vessels and thousands of animal bones were discovered and recorded.

Also discovered during this study was a large fragment of a slate gorget engraved with the images of two thunderbirds, and the fragments of a complete ceramic vessel that contained remnants of fish, venison and a local herb called purslane.

Further archaeological excavations occurred in 1997 in preparation for the proposed twinning of the Peace Bridge. This provided direct evidence of the location of the riverbank at the time of the earliest known occupation of the area, and the site from where chert, which was used to make tools, was mined.

None of these discoveries were older than 4,000 years, although it had long been speculated that the Peace Bridge site had been occupied many years earlier but that high water levels had scoured away the evidence.

The planned installation of underground cable in 2001 prompted more investigation and an 8,000-year-old spear point was discovered. It was the first artifact older than 4,000 years and confirmed that the area had indeed been occupied at least since then and possibly much earlier.

Source: "Footprints of Civilization" Ronald F. Williamson, Martin S. Cooper; *Many Voices II*, 2004, Fort Erie Museum Services

A Better Bridge

Traffic congestion was an early and frequent complaint. Depending on the time of year, time of day and the procedures of customs and immigration staff, the bridge would become veritably choked with cars. The border created a unique problem: traffic jams in one country would spill over into the other.

“Upward of 25,000 automobiles crossed the Peace Bridge yesterday,” its first day of operation on June 1, 1927, noted the Buffalo Times.

“The unending procession of motor cars which traversed the superb river-spanning structure from the United States to Canada and from Canada to the United States constituted a most impressive demonstration of the vast facilities of interchange created by the Bridge.”

Official figures were less. The bridge company collected tolls for 4,815 cars which crossed from the U.S. in the first 24 hours, according to the Courier-Express, but no numbers were published for Canadian travelers.

It was still an enthusiastic response, and traffic ebbed and flowed with the time, day, season and holidays. It would become not unusual for holiday or weekend traffic to top 10,000, even 20,000 on the Fourth of July, according to the newspapers.

At the end of April 1930, the bridge company reported that 2.27 million vehicles — an average of 6,200 per day — had crossed in the previous 12 months.

The bridge company at the time sought to purchase the remaining 1.79 acres of the former Fort Porter property from

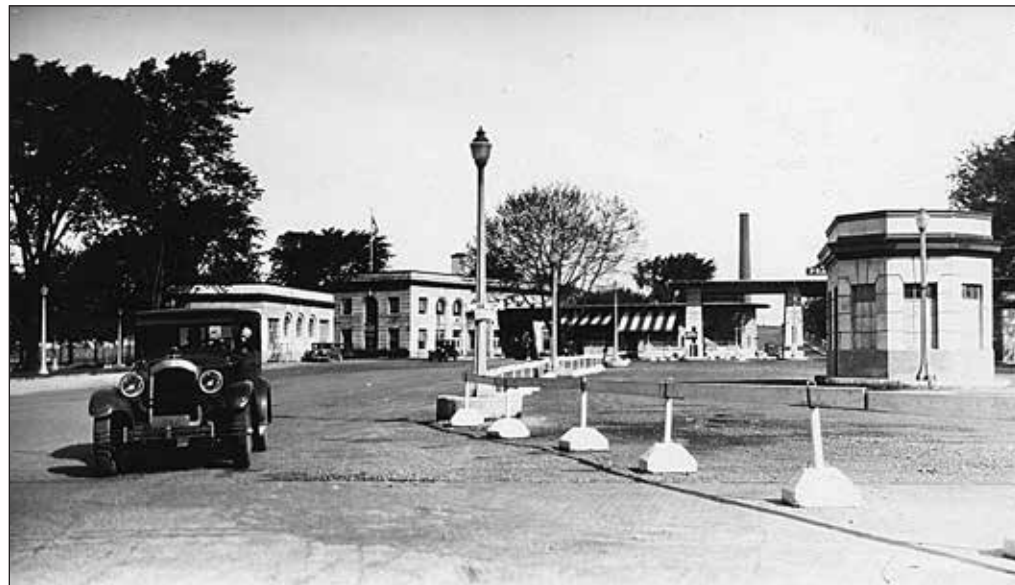


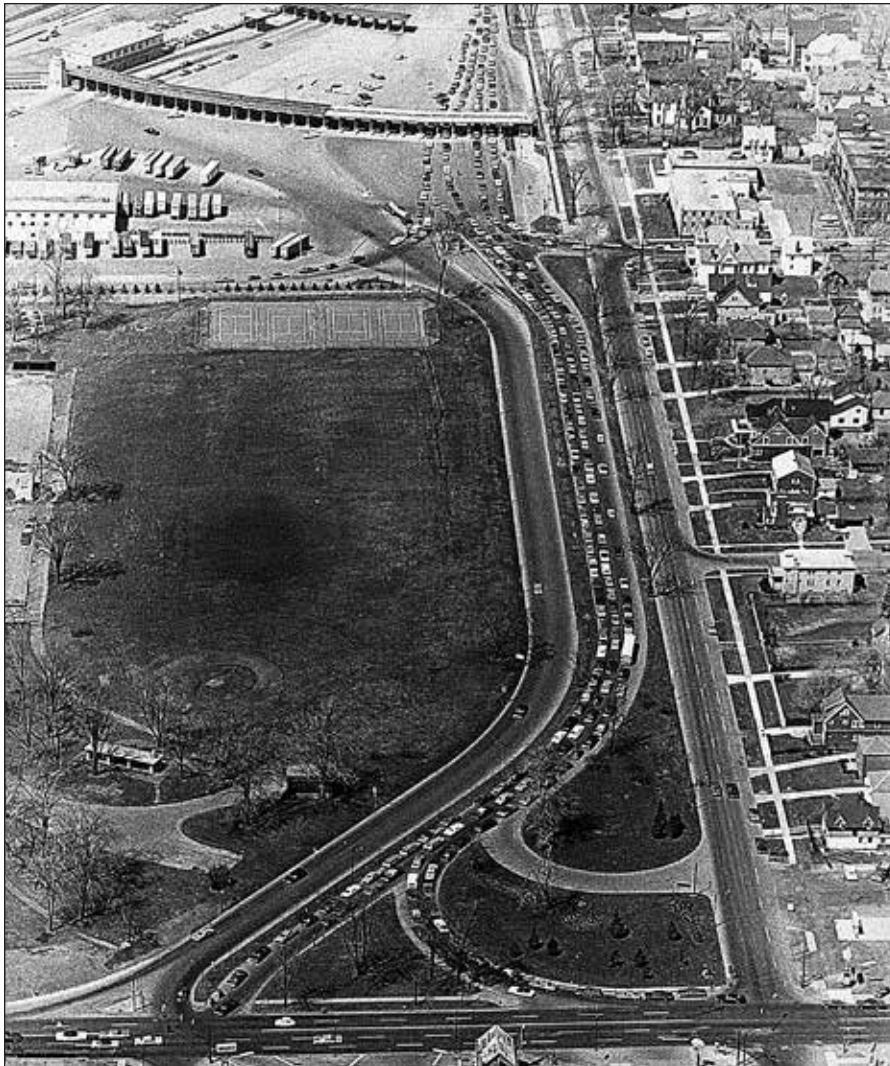
the city to add eight lanes to the existing nine at the Buffalo terminal. This was recommended by U.S. customs and immigration officials and would complement improvements being made in Fort Erie.



First improvements

The first improvement was the final paint job. The steel had been coated with "battleship gray" during construction, and the decision to paint it dark green was made after giving much thought to the esthetics. The photo is from 1929. Two years later, light towers were constructed on the Canadian approach and were taken down in 1938 when the Niagara Parks Commission constructed the Niagara Parkway to historic Fort Erie. In Buffalo, approach roads were widened in 1935 to allow more vehicles to queue in the plaza.





New road
Baird Drive was opened in 1952 to prevent traffic from backing up on other streets nearby.

Initially, a sale was vetoed, but after the corporate and financial reorganization of the bridge authority, additional U.S. warehousing and customs facilities were built in 1935.

Every few years major improvements would be made - new buildings, lanes, roads. The first of

these occurred in 1930 when three lanes were added to the existing five in the approach plaza in Fort Erie, and large decorative light towers were constructed. In Buffalo, the plaza was enlarged to provide a larger funnel of roads to the bridge, but no lanes were added.

This very first expansion effort would also set a precedent where structures would be built only to be removed a short time later. In the first case, the light towers were removed in 1938 for the construction of the Niagara Parkway extension and Mather Park.

Living thing

When the bridge was described as “a living thing” in a eulogy for John Van Allen in 1958, it was correct. Demolition of the old and building the new would mean that very little of the original work would last to the 21st century except the bridge structure itself, and even that would be modified. There were even attempts to reproduce itself.

As early as 1952, the bridge’s chief construction engineer, Edward Lupfer, forecast it would reach capacity in three years. He said this on the occasion of the opening of Baird Drive in Buffalo. This was a new road built through Front Park that would act as a driveway so that vehicles waiting to enter the bridge plaza would not be queued on city streets.

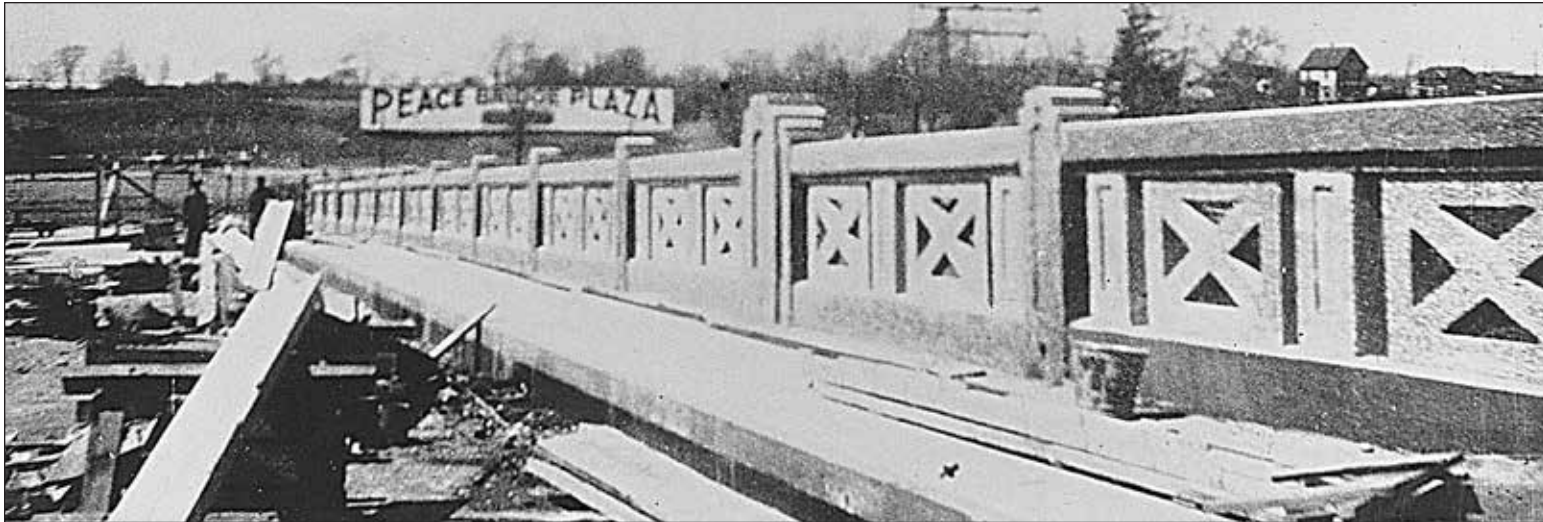
This project was part of a master plan developed in anticipation of the extension of the Queen Elizabeth Way highway to Fort Erie and the extension of the New York Thruway between Buffalo and Pennsylvania.

When the Thruway was completed in 1957, motorists were still forced to use local roads to get to the bridge. A ramp directly linking the highway to the bridge plaza was built in 1964. When similar work in Fort Erie for the QEW was completed in 1971, the two highways were directly

Paved with stone

Granite block was used to cover the deck of the Peace Bridge when it was first built. Later it was covered with asphalt. In 1971 the blocks were removed, a rubberized undercoat was applied to prevent water leakage and corrosion of the steel, and it was topped with asphalt pavement. The granite removal reduced the weight of the bridge by 2,500 tons.

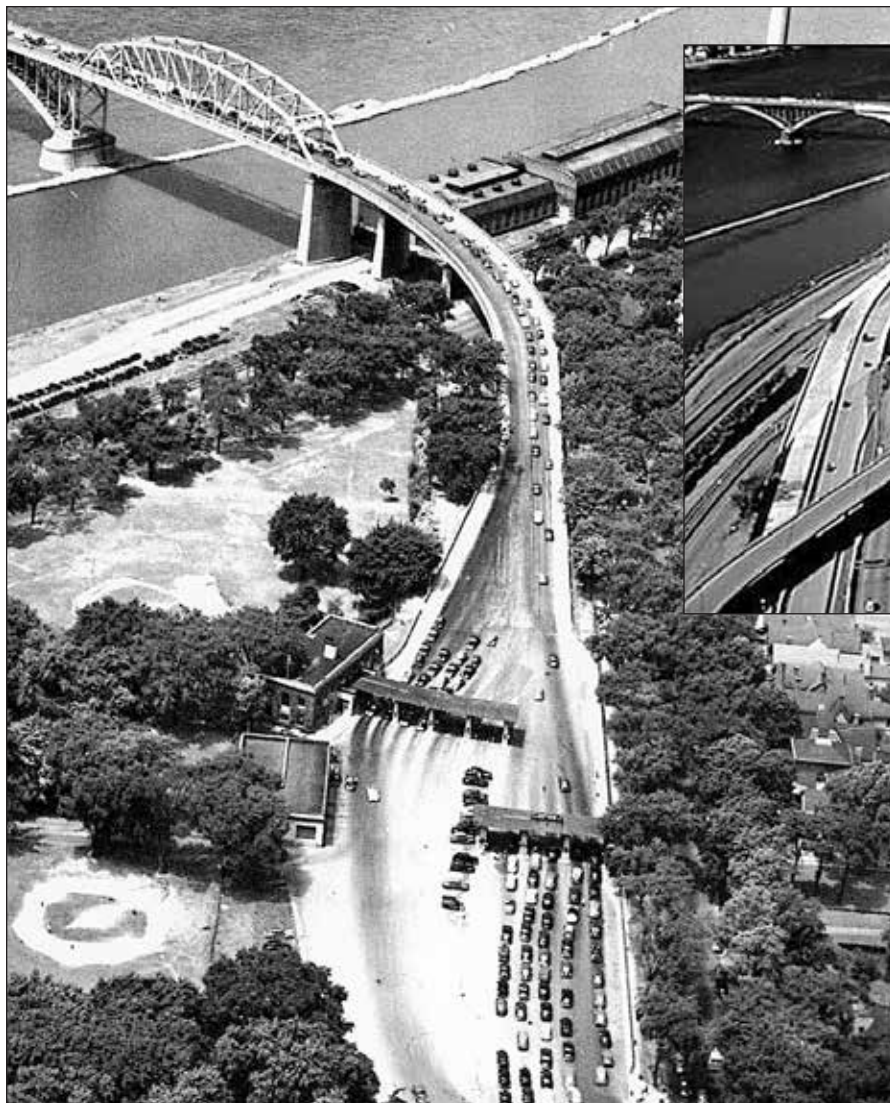




Saltires everywhere

The concrete balustrades removed in 1964 featured a design of a saltire or St. Andrew's Cross. The concept was retained in the steel railings erected in their place. The imagery exists in the canopy in the Canadian plaza constructed in 2006-07.





U.S. plaza change

Expansion of the U.S. plaza and the New York Thruway can be seen in photos taken circa 1940 and 2003.

connected by the Peace Bridge.

Improvements were also made to the bridge structure itself. The concrete balustrade - something Lupfer regretted because it obstructed the view of the lake and river - was replaced with

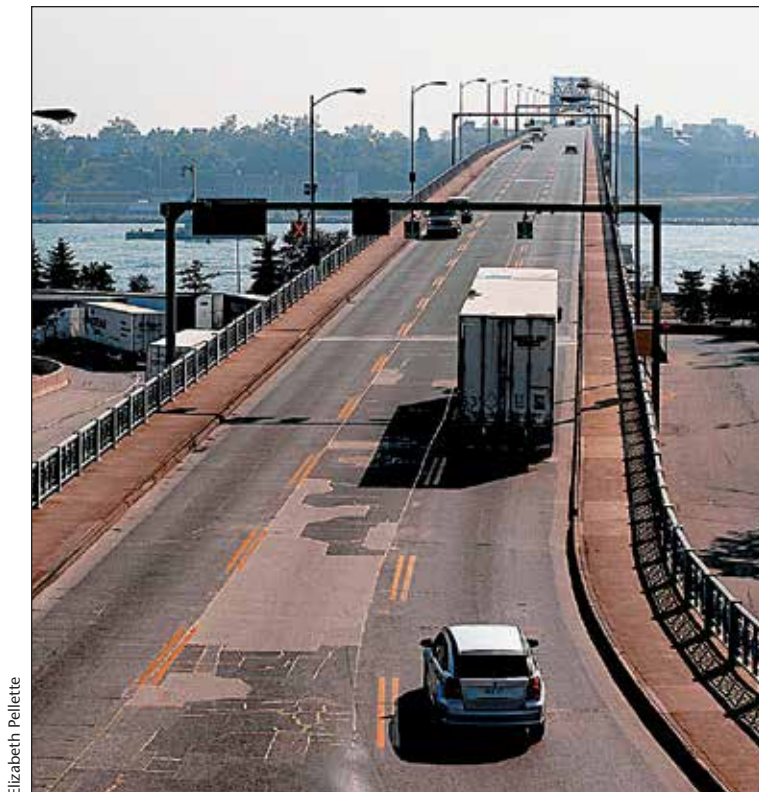


steel railings in 1964, and it cut 1,000 tons from the bridge's weight. Seven years later, another large weight loss occurred when the granite block paving stones were replaced with asphalt to remove 2,500 tons. The total weight of the bridge when it was constructed is estimated at 75,000 tons.

First major expansion proposed

Weight reduction was required to move forward with a plan adopted in 1967 to widen the bridge deck to create more bridge lanes. It was one of three options the bridge authority considered: building a new bridge and building a second upper deck were the other two. However, traffic growth stopped and bridge use leveled off and even declined starting in the 1970s and the project was canceled, but measures continued to be undertaken to increase the flow-through capacity of the bridge especially for wider vehicles.

One of the measures implemented in 1972 was



Elizabeth Pellette

to reconfigure the four-lane traffic system on the bridge — two lanes each way — to a three-lane system in which the middle lane would be dedicated to the direction in which flow was heavier as needed. This made the Peace Bridge more attractive and functional for trucks and offered improved safety for cars. Rarely was traffic so heavy in both directions that all four-lanes were full. A notable exception, for example, is Labor Day when heavy summer traffic is compounded by a long weekend celebrated in both countries.

Automobile traffic has always been volatile, and accommodating shifting traffic trends is fraught with variables. The largest automobile volumes

were recorded in the early 1980s when gasoline price regulation in Canada resulted in significantly lower prices and U.S. motorists lined up day and night at Fort Erie gas stations. Peace Bridge traffic is also affected by currency exchange rates, legislation in one country or the other (such as Ontario's anti-smoking laws), or changing border and customs policies and procedures. The outbreak of SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) in Toronto that was part of a world-wide pandemic caused a dramatic decline in travel to Canada. A highly-anticipated Buffalo Bills football game or a Buffalo Sabres hockey game can cause a large spike in daily traffic, as can chang-



Lanes reconfigured

Four nine-foot-wide lanes were changed to three 12-foot lanes to accommodate wider vehicles and make the bridge more functional for trucks. The middle lane could be dedicated to either east-bound or west-bound traffic as conditions warrant.



Highways linked

With the completion of direct connection with the Queen Elizabeth Way and the Niagara Thruway in 1971, the Peace Bridge became a link between two superhighways in two countries.



ing attendance patterns at Fort Erie bingo halls and the Fort Erie Race Track. The effects of weather and even labor strikes can be dramatic.

Commercial traffic has grown consistently — with some fluctuation reflecting the economic climate — from 19,000 in 1940 to more than 350,000 in 1970 and more than 1.3 million in 2006.

Free trade arouses renewed expansion plan

Traffic increased dramatically as a result of a binational free trade agreement which came into effect in 1988, and the bridge authority began to undertake studies in 1992 to increase capacity, renewing plans to expand the bridge. All the while a second trade agreement - a trilateral pact among Canada, the U.S. and Mexico called NAFTA, short for North American Free Trade Agreement - was being negotiated and finally implemented in 1994.

A new Canadian customs administration building was completed in 1991, and soon after, work began on new commercial inspection facilities. A large amount of land to the north was purchased for inspection facilities, warehouse and offices. The entire length of Walnut Street from the Niagara Boulevard to Goderich Street, including the road itself, was acquired. Com-

mercial inspection facilities, warehouses and offices were built.

Meanwhile, the Canada-United States Accord on Our Shared Border was signed by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and President Bill Clinton in February 1995. Its goal was to improve the efficiency of the border to accommodate increasing trade while providing “protection against drugs, smuggling and the illegal and irregular movement of people.” This sparked more land acquisition in Fort Erie and more construction projects.

Land to the south of the bridge plaza was purchased for construction of the Commercial Vehicle Processing Centre, parking lot and marshalling yard for trucks. In order to reduce the queues on the bridge, truckers were requested to have papers and other documentation prepared and submitted to U.S. Customs ahead of time. They could do this paperwork at the CVPC and fax it to authorities.

Another large parcel of land was assembled and acquired west of Central Avenue on the south side of the Queen Elizabeth Way for parking, a large duty free store, bridge maintenance garage and a new highway exit to Central Avenue. The area encompassed a number of private homes for which the Peace Bridge Authority negotiated purchase as well as the Town of Fort Erie’s East End Arena, provincial courthouse and a section of Walden Boulevard and other streets.

Interestingly, Frank Baird’s Peace Bridge Arena once stood on this land. It had been subdivided in the 1920s by Buffalo realtor Albert Kinsey, an early supporter of bridge construction efforts, and was known as the Peace Bridge Plaza. Walden Boulevard was then called Main Street and was constructed with a broad median to be a gateway to the town from the bridge. For



Roger Ripa

many years it was the busiest street in Fort Erie as it was the most direct route to Highway 3 and to the road which would become the Queen Elizabeth Way.

Mutually-beneficial solutions

The Peace Bridge Authority and the Town of Fort Erie worked together to help solve each other’s problems. The results were bridge facili-

Commuter lanes

NEXUS lanes for automobiles and FAST lanes for trucks were established in 2003 to allow speedier Customs processing for pre-approved travelers.



Rental income

Duty-free shops in the Canadian plaza (main photo) and the U.S. plaza (inset) generate a large amount of rental income. As well, U.S. government facilities are leased, but Canadian facilities are rent free as a condition of operating the bridge.

ties were expanded to handle increased traffic, the town built a new municipal hall and twin-rink arena complex, and provincial court services remained in Fort Erie.

The municipal offices were located in the former town of Bridgeburg civic hall on Jarvis Street since the village of Fort Erie and Bridgeburg amalgamated in 1930 and even after the amalgamation with Bertie Township in 1970. In the late 1980s, planning began to provide better

accommodations.

With the Peace Bridge's proposal to acquire land west of Central Avenue, a parcel of which was occupied by a provincial courthouse, the authority negotiated to purchase the Jarvis Street town hall property and to fund construction of a new courthouse. The proposal served a second purpose to prevent the threatened withdrawal of court services from Fort Erie.

The Peace Bridge Authority's proposal to



Elizabeth Pellette

Gateway to Canada

A \$50-million project completed in 2007 created a new gateway plaza in Fort Erie and saw the toll booths relocated to Canada to open up the constricted plaza in Buffalo, pictured below.



Elizabeth Pellette



Roger Ripa

acquire the East End Arena created debate about a replacement recreation centre and where it should be located. It was the intervention of a private business man that allowed it to proceed. Edward Freeland, founder and chairman of Peace Bridge Brokerage, the largest customs brokerage in Fort Erie and a major international firm whose name belies any business association with the bridge authority, donated a large piece of property for the new recreation centre near the geographic centre of Fort Erie next to the site of the new town hall. Funds from the sale of the East End Arena would offset the construction cost of the new arena.

Second bridge proposed

Meanwhile, as progress was being made for support and com-



Elizabeth Pellette

New offices

A new Peace Bridge administration building, at right, was built in Fort Erie and overlooks the bridge, river and lake. The old offices in Buffalo were turned over to U.S. Customs and Border Protection for its growing needs.

mercial facilities, the thought of expanding the bridge was never far away. The bridge authority had studied locations to the north and south of the existing bridge and completed a final design report and environmental assessment in 1997. Similar studies were done for the U.S. plaza and roadway configurations in 1998, and by the spring of 1999, a new companion three-lane bridge was fully designed, permitted and bid for construction.

The project faced opposition on four fronts: the city would not grant land easements; public calls

were made for a different “signature” design; concerns were raised over air quality; and a lawsuit was filed contesting the environmental review process that was followed.

The project was cancelled and the process was begun anew with unprecedented opportunity available for public and government review and input. The new bridge project would be a partnership of the Peace Bridge Authority, the Town of Fort Erie and the City of Buffalo. Opportunities to review the Peace Bridge Expansion Project Bi-National Integrated Environmental



Process exceeded those necessary under legislated requirements.

Security becomes paramount

The world changed on September 11, 2001 when terrorists attacked the United States. “They attacked our common commitment to democracy, the rule of law and a free and open economy,” stated a new border accord, the Canada-U.S. Smart Border Declaration of December 2001.

Binational government emphasis was rotated 180 degrees. Prior to the terrorist attacks, trade and travel efficiency was paramount while ensuring security. Afterward, security became the primary objective while providing for efficient flow

of trade and people across the border. “Public security and economic security are mutually reinforcing,” the declaration states.

While the new emphasis entered the picture fairly early in the renewed bridge expansion planning process, it meant that some knowledge gained about the border from nearly 75 years of experience had to be thrown out and new operational conditions added.

The two governments agreed to work cooperatively to implement security measures and other programs, as opposed to working in isolation of each other. Two examples are NEXUS and Free and Secure Trade (FAST) programs that allow pre-approved travelers and commer-

Aesthetic appeal

A fountain offers travelers a changing water show as they enter Canada and await clearance by border service agents.

Design jury chooses companion span



A jury of 32 experts and lay people chosen by government agencies involved in the bridge expansion process and the mayors of Fort Erie and Buffalo selected a twin-tower cable-stay companion bridge designed by Swiss engineer Dr. Christian Menn as the preferred option for a new bridge. The jury, which had equal representation of U.S. and Canadian residents, met four times in the autumn of 2005 to consider 33 alternatives which included replacement and

companion options. The choice features 567-foot towers that supports a 1,600-foot main span. It represents a balance among vision, esthetics, public input, function, cost, security and history. The jury also recommended some enhancements such as a softening of the angles and that security considerations have respect for the simplicity and elegance of the design, a clear vista of the lake and river and an unobstructed view of the existing bridge.

cial carriers, respectively, access to dedicated lanes to speed the clearance process.

Another is the concept of Shared Border Management that was negotiated in principle in late 2004 between the federal governments. It called for the establishment of U.S. customs facilities in Fort Erie to provide inspection of travelers and commercial traffic bound for the U.S. A similar project for Canadian facilities in the U.S. at other bridges was also studied. While the two governments negotiated how the concept would be implemented, planning for a new bridge progressed but stalled until an agreement could be reached. After two-and-a-half years, the governments failed to agree and the concept disintegrated in mid-2007.

However, discussion of a new bridge design did continue - as well as other aspects of planning. A 32-person jury of experts appointed by federal and state agencies and lay people appointed by the Town of Fort Erie and the City of Buffalo met in the fall of 2005 and whittled down 33 proposed plans for bridges that would either replace or accompany the existing bridge. It decided to keep the Peace Bridge and to build a type of suspension bridge called "cable-stayed" beside it.

Increased vigilance at the border as a result of the terrorist attacks caused lengthy traffic tie-ups on the connecting highways. Congestion had become a matter of life and death - even before 2001 - as a number of motorists were killed in rear-end collisions with trucks that were queued on the New York Thruway and the QEW.

Canadian gateway plaza

The Canadian government allocated \$21-million toward approximately \$50 million in improvements at the Peace Bridge in 2003. It was part of a package of more than \$600 million for improving border traffic at six crossings across the country. Much of the money was spent on improvements to connecting highways in partnership with provincial governments.

The toll booths were removed from the Buffalo plaza and relo-

cated to Canada where tolls would be paid as motorists exited the bridge. Also in the U.S., the duty free shop was relocated from the middle of the plaza to the edge of the property. A new bridge administration building was constructed in Fort Erie and the bridge authority turned over its offices in the Buffalo plaza to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The Canadian customs and immigration administration building, which was erected in 1991, was torn down and replaced, as were the inspection booths, and a new immigration centre was built. The number of inspection lanes was increased on both sides of the border and roadways were reconfigured. And a large water fountain was built as part of the Canadian gateway feature.

The effect was to move Canadian checkpoints farther west of the bridge structure and to open up the U.S. plaza. This mitigated bottlenecks at either end of the bridge so that waiting vehicles would fill up the plazas instead of queue on the three lanes of the bridge and cause congestion on the highways upstream.

This latest construction, which was completed in the early summer of 2007, implemented plans that were first forwarded in 1993 to create esthetic and functional gateways from one country to the other. Although not the same project and significantly modified, improvements proposed more than a decade earlier were put into place.

Similar major improvements to the U.S. plaza are tentatively scheduled for 2009-2014 as part of the Peace Bridge's overall capacity expansion plan.

Planning for change is a continuing effort, as it has been over the history of the past 80 years. Change is constant.

Meanwhile, the bridge itself remains as sound as it did when it was opened 80 years ago. Yearly inspections are conducted, which exceeds state standards for biannual inspections, and the bridge is rated perfect for structural adequacy and safety by an independent engineering firm.

