

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0688886

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED NOV 1 1978

DATE ENTERED DEC 20 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Queensboro (59th Street) Bridge

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

11th Street and Bridge Plaza North and Bridge Plaza
South, Borough of Queens to 2nd Avenue and 59th
and 60th Streets, Manhattan

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

New York

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

9th and 18th

STATE

New York

CODE

036

COUNTY

New York and Queens 061/081

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☒ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☒ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Dept. of Transportation, City of New York

STREET & NUMBER

40 Worth Street

CITY, TOWN

New York

VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

New York County Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER

31 Chambers Streets

CITY, TOWN

New York

STATE

New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Queensboro Bridge is a two-span, through cantilever truss bridge. In a manner that is unusual for a bridge of this size, neither span has a suspended truss, and each is hinged directly to its counterpart. The overall length of the bridge is 4168 feet from Second Avenue in Manhattan to Eleventh Street in Queens. The main span, bridging the East River from Manhattan to Roosevelt (Blackwell's) Island, is 1182 feet in length. The lesser span, bridging the river from Queens to Roosevelt Island, is 988 feet in length. The bridge is 86 feet wide, and its height above high water is 135 feet. Built between 1901 and 1909, the Queensboro Bridge was the longest, largest and heaviest cantilever bridge ever built at the time of its completion.

The steel superstructure of the bridge stands on four piers of rusticated granite, one each in Manhattan and Queens, and two on Roosevelt Island. The bridge has two roadways, an upper and a lower deck. All roadways are of reinforced concrete, but originally consisted of steel floor beams and stringers carrying a wood deck. The bridge was designed to carry pedestrians, the Second Avenue Elevated, and trolleys. It now is limited to vehicular traffic only.

Both the Manhattan and Queens approaches consist of simple steel frame structures stiffened below the lower roadway. Only the Manhattan approaches exhibit extensive architectural treatment. The anchorages are of rusticated masonry surmounted by segmentally-arched pediments and shallow domes as they rise above the roadways. They are treated as monumental elements, and contained elevators and stairways to the trolley lines on the bridge. On the Manhattan side, the treatment of the approach continues this nonstructural stone treatment to the west of the anchorage. There is an arcade of nine segmental arches running to First Avenue, a broad segmental arch over the avenue, and three arches just to the west of the avenue. The spandrels above the arches were originally filled with an incrustation of multicolored tiles, which have since been removed leaving grey brick exposed.

Behind the arcades is a space that was designed and used as a public market. It is arranged in a uniform pattern of four bays on a thirty foot grid and is surmounted by shallow timbered vaults. The arcade is glazed in small lights with steel mullions and muntins. The glazing was added in 1918 to allow the market to operate year round. The arcade west of First Avenue is covered by the same shallow vaulting as is the market space. The vaults, known as "Guastavino Tiles" (after their builder), or Catalan Vaulting, consist of three

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Queensboro Bridge
New York/Queens County
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layers of ceramic tiles cemented together, with a combined thickness of about four inches. These vaults are totally self-supporting, and remain intact with only minor signs of efflorescence resulting from poor drainage of the roadways above.

The upper level roadway is supported by an exposed steel sub-structure, and access is via a pair of ramps running north and south at midblock. Approach ramps were added between First and Second Avenues during a bridge renovation in 1955, and were executed in a style and in materials consistent with the original approaches. The lower level is reached by two ramps off of Fifty-ninth and Sixtieth Streets and directly from street level at Second Avenue.

On the Queens side, the approaches lead from a complex of elevated highways, all rebuilt in 1955. The Queens approaches never had the embellishment of the Manhattan approaches; they are all built of exposed steel and concrete.

The steel superstructure shows considerable aesthetic treatment. It is entered from either end through a monumental arch which has a massive bronze plaque in the place of the keystone. The original engineer's conception was considerably altered by the architect and supervising engineer to give it a more graceful and monolithic profile. The steel towers are surmounted by ornate steel finials.

At the bridge plaza on Second Avenue, there are two kiosks of the original five (one has been restored and moved to the Brooklyn Children's Museum) that led into the trolley station below grade. These kiosks are built of cast iron and terra cotta tile, with Catalan Vaulting for the soffits. The iron is especially well detailed with complex Beaux Arts ornament. Near the corner of Fifty-ninth Street and Second Avenue stands one of the original two electroliers, built of heavy bronze in a distinctly Beaux Arts style. The other half of the pair is in storage in the trolley barn below awaiting restoration. These elements were designed by the architect as fitting compliments to the design of the approaches and the bridge itself. Another particularly interesting decorative element occupies the east wall of the market space, and is a fountain given to the market in 1919 by the Municipal Arts Society. It is of carved stone, and includes a mosaic by Edwin Blashfield.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1909 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Gustav Lindenthal/Henry Hornbostel

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Queensboro Bridge is significant as an urban artifact, as an important engineering achievement and as a civic symbol.

The bridge was designed by Gustav Lindenthal, "one of the great men of American bridge engineering,"¹ and his bridge was the largest and heaviest cantilever bridge ever constructed to the time of its completion in 1909. The successful completion of the bridge was noted throughout the world, since cantilever bridges had fallen into disrepute with the collapse of the Quebec bridge in 1907, two years before the completion of the Queensboro. Also unusual was the fact that the bridge was built as a "through cantilever," in which the bridge's roadways pass through its supporting trusses rather than sitting above them, as was more common. In addition, the Queensboro is unusual in that it has no suspended spans -- that is, hinged spans supported by cantilevered trusses -- it is hinged only in the center of each river crossing. The Queensboro "epitomizes the exuberant vitality of American structural art perhaps better than any other large bridge.... (It) may, from the point of view of style and engineering, be said to represent the culmination of nineteenth-century American bridge design."²

Another unique aspect of the bridge is that it was the first to involve an architect from its conception onwards. "Mr. Lindenthal had the conviction that the common method of bridgebuilding, whereby the structure is designed by an engineer, and afterward, if at all, an architect invoked to give it such form and comeliness as may still be practicable, was a radically wrong method..... the artistic con-

¹David Plowden, Bridges: The Spans of North America. The Viking Press, New York; 1974. p. 180.

²Ibid., p. 179.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 26

QUADRANGLE NAME Central Park

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1, 8 5, 87, 4, 00 45, 1, 25, 5, 0

B 1, 8 5, 88, 9, 10 45, 1, 17, 2, 0

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C 1, 8 5, 88, 8, 80 45, 1, 16, 6, 0

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D 1, 8 5, 87, 3, 80 45, 1, 24, 8, 0

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Bounded on west by Second Avenue in New York County; on east by Eleventh Avenue. The bridge is eighty-six feet wide.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
New York	036	New York	061
New York	036	Queens	081

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Huntley Gill, edited by Elizabeth Spencer-Ralph

ORGANIZATION

NYS Parks and Rec., Div. for Historic Preservation

DATE

10/11/78

STREET & NUMBER

Agency Bldg. #1, Empire State Plaza

TELEPHONE

(518) 474-0479

CITY OR TOWN

Albany

STATE

New York

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL xxx

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation

DATE

10/20/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

12-20-78

ATTEST:

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

Dec. 19, 1978

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Queensboro Bridge
New York/Queens County

CONTINUATION SHEET

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structor must be associated with the scientific constructor at every step."³ Lindenthal commissioned Henry Hornbostel, president of the Beaux Arts Society of America, an "architect of considerable originality"⁴ in spite of his rigid adherence to the principles of the Beaux Arts style. He made many additions and basic changes to the preliminary work of the engineers, making the steelwork of the cantilevers more appealing and creating a unique series of approaches in Manhattan. His work was well received, and Montgomery Schuyler found that "the (Queensboro Bridge) shows as distinct an advantage upon the Brooklyn Bridge as the Williamsburg (a particularly unpopular East River bridge completed in 1903) shows a retrogression."⁵ Lindenthal's practice of involving an architect from conception through completion proved so successful that it became almost universal practice thereafter.

The Queensboro Bridge was also built as symbol of the unification of the City of New York. The boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and Staten Island became part of New York in 1903. Until then, only Roebling's Brooklyn Bridge joined any two boroughs. The Queensboro, along with the Manhattan and Williamsburg Bridges, were quickly built soon after unification, all being completed by 1909, as a physical affirmation of the consolidation.

The bridge was built with special features. Beneath the Manhattan approaches, Raphael Guastavino, the famed engineer/contractor, built a 47,000 square-foot public market surmounted by his unique Catalan Vaults. The market space, the bulk of which lies in the western portion of the block between First and York Avenues, was used until 1936 as one of the grandest of the city's public markets. It remains in use as a storage space for city trucks. The space has been called one of New York's great architectural secrets,⁶ and is surely a testimony both to the civic spirit that built a major municipal gathering place as part of a utilitarian structure, and the skill of Guastavino, Hornbostel, and Lindenthal.

³Montgomery Schuyler, "Our Four Big Bridges," Architectural Record, Vol. XXV, p. 155.

⁴James Van Trump, "Henry Hornbostel: The New Brutalism," Charette, Vol. XLVI, No. 5, pp. 9,19.

⁵Montgomery Schuyler, op. cit., p. 154.

⁶Paul Goldberger, Interview, January 25, 1977.

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Queensboro Bridge

New York/Queens County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Barman, Christian. The Bridge. New York, 1926.

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New York, 1908.

Hornbostel, Henry. "The New East River Bridges." Architecture.
Vol. VIII, 1903, pp. 103-105.

New York City Department of Bridges. Blackwell's Island Bridge.
New York, 1903.

Plowden, David. Bridges: The Spans of North America. New York, 1974.

Schuyler, Montgomery. "Bridges and the Art Commission." Architectural
Record. December, 1907. Vol. XXII, pp. 469-475.

-----". "Our Four Big Bridges." Architectural Record.
March, 1909. Vol. XXV, pp. 147-160.

Property

Queensboro (59th Street) Bridge

State

N.Y.

Working Number

11.1.78.4435

78001879

TECHNICAL

Photos

7

Maps

1

CONTROL

OK 11.2.78

Also significant in community planning, transportation, and commerce — although not well focused in #8.

HISTORIAN

Accept

12-09-78

J. L. Brown

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Good nomination - only engineering and architecture are checked in #8 but they are documented - a significant resource warranting NR listing - Accept

Inventory

Review 12/14/78

Don Jackson

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Accept
L. Beebe

12-18-78

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register Write-up

Federal Register Entry

2.6.79

Send-back

Re-submit

Entered

DEC 20 1978

INT:2106-74



Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courtyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St.
New York, NY

DEC 20 1978

NOV 1 1978

View: General view of the
bridge approach on Man-
hattan.

Photo #1



Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courtyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St.
New York, NY

DEC 20 1978 NOV 1 1978

View: General view from
Manhattan.

Photo #2



Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courtyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St
New York, NY

NOV 1 1978

Photo #3

DEC 20 1978

View: span over the East
River and piers on
Roosevelt Island.



Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courtyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St.
DEC 20 1978 New York, NY

View: The piers and bridge
on Roosevelt Island.

NOV 1 1978

Photo #4



Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courtyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St.
New York, NY
DEC 20 1978

View: Detail of bridge

NOV 1 1978

Photo #5



Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courtyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St.
New York, NY

DEC 20 1978

View: Exterior of vaulted
marketplace.

NOV 1 1978

Photo #6



Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courtyard, Queens County
Photoby: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St.
New York, NY

DEC 20 1978

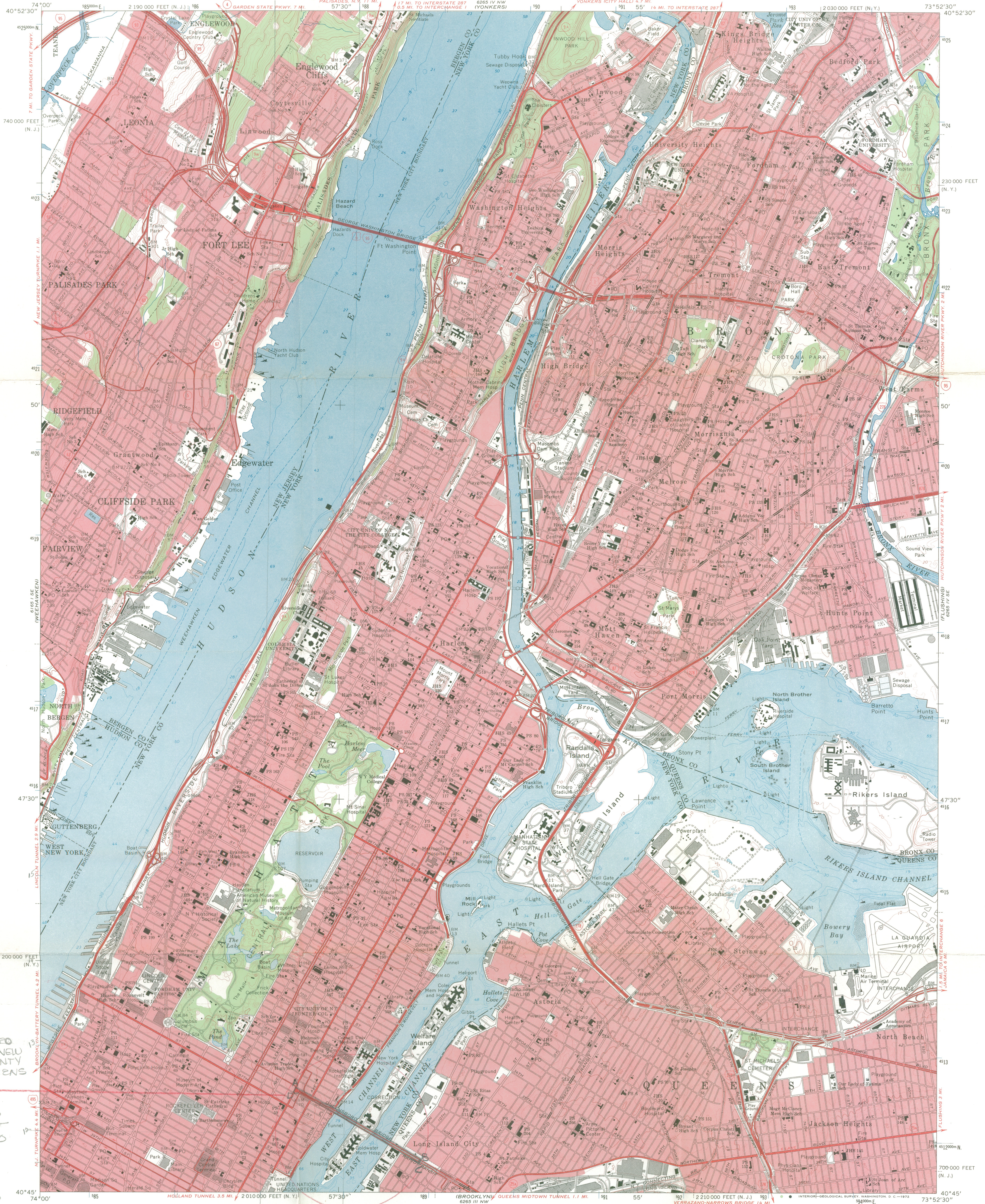
View: Under the bridge on
Manhattan side.

NOV 1 1978

Photo #7

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

CENTRAL PARK QUADRANGLE
NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
SW/4 HARLEM 15' QUADRANGLE



QUEENSBORO
BRIDGE NEW
YORK COUNTY
AND QUEENS
COUNTY

A EASTING
5187/400
NORTHING
45112/550

B EASTING
5188/910
NORTHING
45111/720

C EASTING
5188/880
NORTHING
45111/660

D EASTING
5187/380
NORTHING
45112/480

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Revised in cooperation with New York
Department of Transportation

Control by USGS, USC&GS, and New Jersey Geodetic Survey

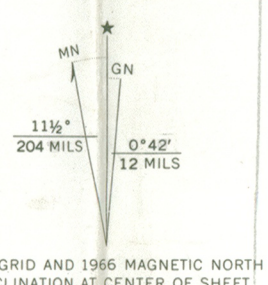
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods and by USC&GS Charts T-4567,
T-5089, T-5264, T-5278, T-5448, T-5449, T-5451, T-5452, T-5453, T-5458,
and T-5778. Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1954 and planimetric surveys 1956.

Revised from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1966

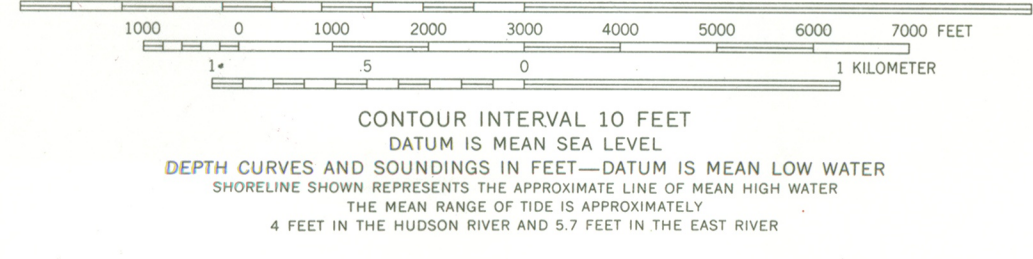
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 226, 274, 745,
746, and 747 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes

Polycyclic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on New York coordinate system, Long Island zone,
and New Jersey coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



SCALE 1:24,000



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

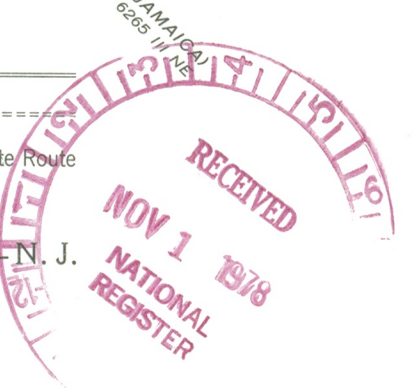
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———

Interstate Route — U.S. Route — State Route —

CENTRAL PARK, N.Y., N.J.
SW/4 HARLEM 15' QUADRANGLE
N4045-W7352.5/7.5

1966

AMS 6265 IV SW-SERIES V821



DEC 20 1978



NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

40 Worth Street New York, N. Y. 10013



Anthony R. Ameruso, P.E.
Commissioner

NOV 24 1978 DOT-CI-GAK-107.M

Dr. William J. Murtagh
Keeper of the National Register
Heritage Conservation & Recreation
Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Department of Transportation
City of New York
40 Worth Street
New York, New York 10013

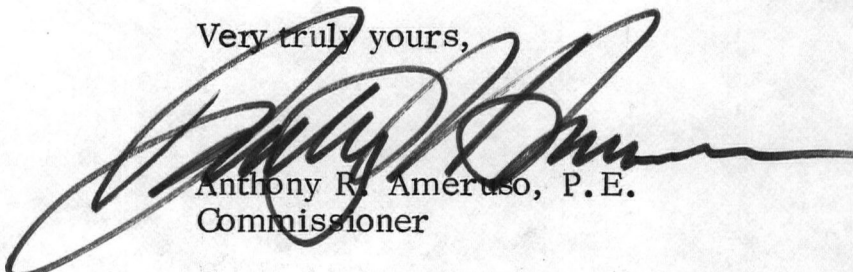
Re: Queensboro Bridge

Dear Dr. Murtagh:

This is in reply to your letter dated November 8, 1978 indicating that the Queensboro Bridge has been nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

We are pleased that this facility is being considered as long as the designation does not require us to incur above normal maintenance expenditures and providing that we are not restricted in making beneficial improvements for the betterment of our Transportation network.

Very truly yours,


Anthony R. Ameruso, P.E.
Commissioner

NOV 30 1978
DATE REC'D

INITIALS

12/4/78

85

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ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE NEW YORK

Date Entered DEC 20 1978

Name

Location

Queensboro Bridge

New York
New York and Queens Counties

Also Notified

Honorable Daniel P. Moynihan
Honorable Jacob K. Javits
Honorable Geraldine A. Ferraro
Honorable S. William Green

State Historic Preservation Officer
Mr. Orin Lehman
Commissioner
Parks and Recreation
Agency Building #1
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12238

NR

Byers/bjr 1/16/79

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

710
*Queensboro Bridge
New York and Queens Counties, N.Y.*

IN REPLY REFER TO:

JUL 30 1982

Editors
Newsweek
444 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

Dear Sirs:

I was distressed to read in your August 2 article on "The Decaying of America," that the City Manager of Eaton Rapids, Michigan, believes that an aging bridge cannot be replaced because it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. On the contrary, listing in the National Register only assures that an historic bridge (or any other type of historic property) will not be destroyed without taking its historic qualities into account. Historic bridges are replaced regularly, often after their design and construction features have been recorded for posterity under the Historic American Engineering Record program. Even more often, a caring community has converted an historic bridge into a safe use such as for pedestrian traffic, erecting a new bridge as a bypass for motor traffic.

Most historic properties are fully capable of being used to meet the needs of today and tomorrow. In fact, many have structural strengths that cannot be duplicated with today's building methods and materials. It is essential to remember this as we deal with the very problems your article highlights. The purpose of the National Register is to assure that the positive qualities of historic properties are properly considered as we plan and build for the future. Listing in the National Register does not require the preservation of historic properties at the cost of human safety, and it is not doing so in Eaton Rapids.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Jerry L. Rogers

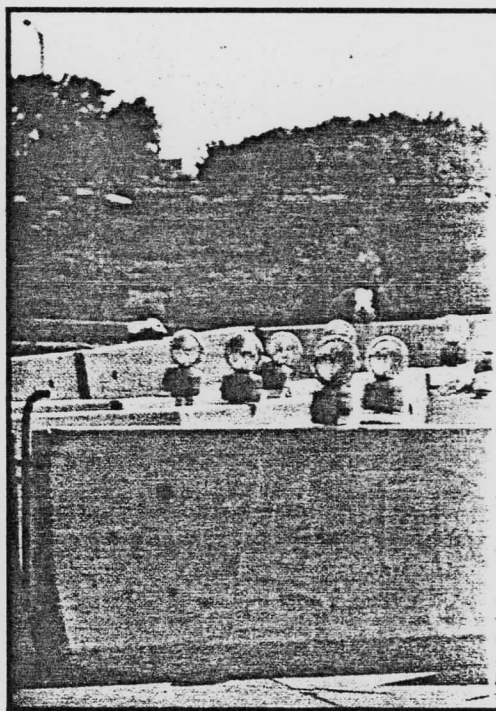
Jerry L. Rogers
Keeper of the National Register
National Park Service

AUG 2 1982

cc: Douglas Baldwin-Office of Public Affairs
001 004 002 700
710-Aten 040-Berklacy



Jacques M. Chenet—Newsweek



Axle-crunching section of road in New York City, dangerous bridge in Boston, costly aftermath of the collapse of an earthen dam near Estes

Newsweek

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

The Decaying of America

No one noticed the spidery crack inching its way along the concrete casing of New York City's 65-year-old water tunnel No. 1. But one weekday morning, 600 feet below the Bronx, the steady torrent of water loosened one chunk of concrete, then another, then another, until an underground landslide closed the tunnel off. Manhattan's water trickled to a stop. Within minutes pumps in high-rise buildings, trying to compensate for the loss of pressure, caused a widespread blackout. Elevators stopped at mid-floor. Subways rolled dead, their antiquated electrical backup systems unable to handle the sudden load. Sewers backed up. Fires raged. Before rescue workers could come to their aid, thousands of panic-stricken New Yorkers headed for the only means of escape—the city's dilapidated bridges. Overloaded with humanity and cars, the 73-year-old Queensboro Bridge cracked, groaned and toppled into the East River.

That vision of urban apocalypse isn't far-fetched. America's infrastructure—the vast, vital network of roads, bridges, sewers, rails and mass-transit systems—is heading toward collapse. The decay is most acute in older industrial cities, but clogged highways and strained water systems also threaten to strangle booming Sun Belt towns, and even in dusty rural communities, potholes batter chassis and jangle motorists' nerves. Two weeks ago, in one 24-hour period, an 80-year-old earthen dam burst in

Colorado, sending a wall of water through the town of Estes Park, and a major aqueduct broke in Jersey City, N.J., leaving nearly 300,000 residents without drinkable water for six days. Says Robert Harpster, executive director of the Iowa League of Municipalities, "Our sewers leak like sieves, our mass transit is in bad shape and our roads look like the Ho Chi Minh trail."

Ever since the canal boom of the 1800s, public works have shaped the nation's character and accommodated its growth. But

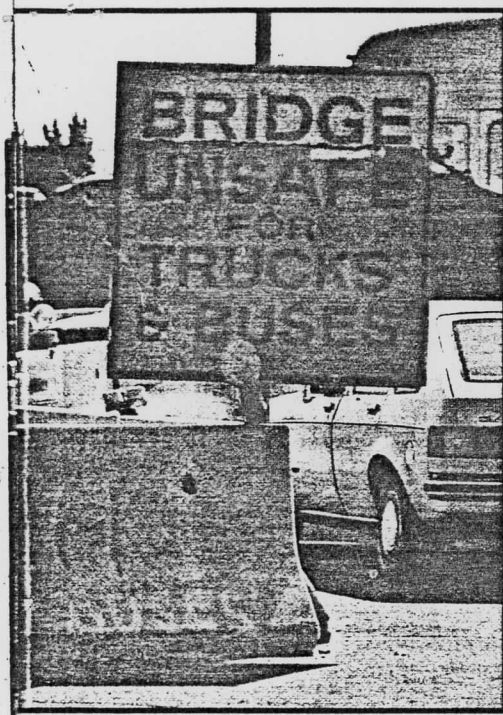
*Aging and neglected,
the nation's network
of roads, bridges,
sewers and rails
is nearing collapse.*

today one-quarter of the interstate-highway system is worn out and needs resurfacing. One-half of Conrail's rails and roadbeds are seriously decayed. Half of all American communities cannot expand because their water-treatment systems are at or near capacity. One-fifth of the nation's bridges are so dangerously deficient they are either restricted or closed. "We're living on our laurels of the 1950s and 1960s," says Transportation Secretary Drew Lewis. Agrees Pat

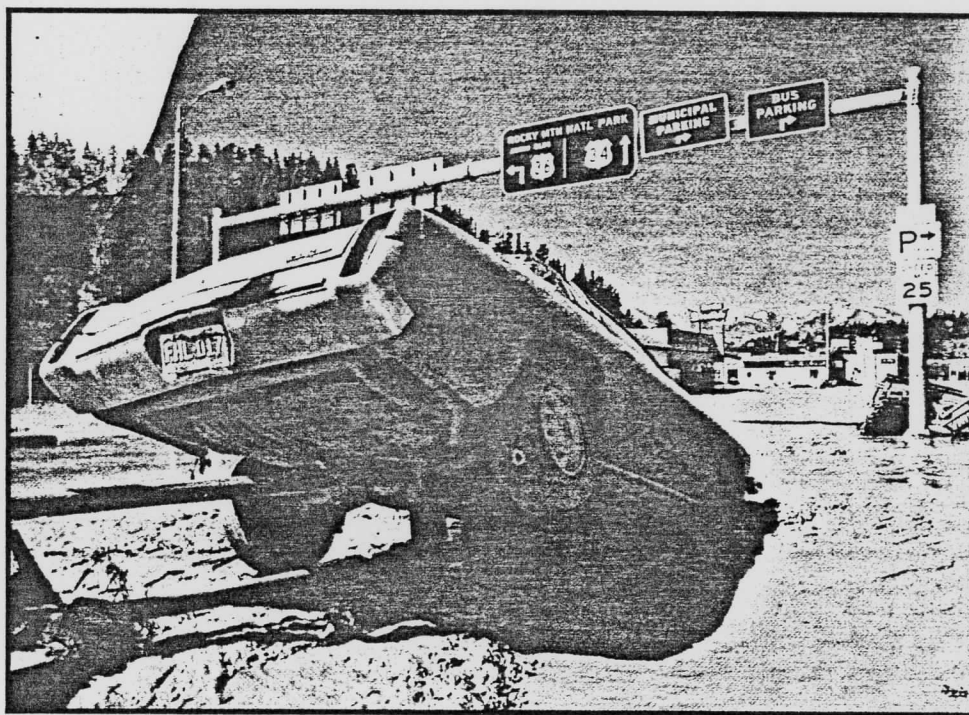
Choate, co-author of "America in Ruins," a study of the crisis for the Council of State Planning Agencies: "We've been squandering a major part of our national wealth."

All told, the cost of needed repairs around the country could run as high as \$3 trillion. But the bills are coming due at a time when there is little money to spare. The Reagan Administration favors cutting Federal aid for highways, bridges and pollution-control projects and plans to phase out mass-transit operating subsidies by 1985, leaving state and local governments to pick up the slack. For their own part, many states and cities are already in fiscal *extremis* and will be forced to spend more and more scarce funds for simple operating costs as Federal aid to other programs diminishes. Money is even tighter where strict local tax-cut measures are in effect. Under Proposition 2½, for example, Massachusetts is devoting only .5 percent of its budget this year to maintenance and repair—a policy one expert on the state's budget, Mark Ferber, calls "penny-wise and pothole foolish."

At the same time, record interest rates have driven the cost of issuing municipal bonds—the traditional means of raising capital funds—prohibitively high. And other recent Federal policies have hardly helped. All Savers certificates, Individual Retirement Accounts, accelerated depreciation and "safe harbor" leasing laws have all reduced the incentives for individuals and corporations alike to invest in tax-



Ira Wyman



Howell—Denver Post-Picture Group

Park, Colo.: 'Our sewers leak like sieves, our mass transit is in bad shape and our roads look like the Ho Chi Minh trail'

exempt municipal bonds. "The U.S. Treasury is slowly choking the ability of states to raise money," charges Massachusetts bond counsel Francis X. Meany. Some economists warn that Reagan's plan to stimulate the growth of the private sector through tax cuts could backfire if the roads, bridges, rails and water systems that businesses depend on are allowed to collapse from too little government support.

Human Toll: Already the nation's decaying physical plant is costing Americans dearly. In Houston, for example, city planners estimate that motorists pay a "traffic congestion tax" of \$800 a year in time and gasoline wasted on the city's snarled expressways. U.S. Steel spends an extra \$1 million a year detouring its trucks around a closed bridge in Pittsburgh. TRIP (The Road Information Program), a highway-industry group, estimates that the aggregate cost to the private sector of bad roads and bridges is \$30 billion a year—for everything from broken axles to lost business. Even worse, the infrastructure crisis is exacting a heavy human toll. A recent Federal Highway Administration study found that spending an extra \$4.3 billion to fix dilapidated bridges and roads could save 480,000 injuries and 17,200 lives over fifteen years.

There are nearly as many reasons for infrastructure decay as there are potholes. Some of it stems simply from old age. Built largely in the 1950s, the interstate-highway system, for example, was designed to last only 25 years. Many roads, bridges and water systems are also bearing far greater burdens than they were ever expected to accommodate. Boston's six-lane Southeast Expressway, built in 1959 for 75,000 cars a day, is now an axle-crunching obstacle course that carries 150,000 cars daily. And

everywhere, age and abuse have been compounded by neglect. Investment in public works by all levels of government has dropped by more than 25 percent since 1972 (chart, page 18). As the fiscal crises of the 1970s hit, many local officials balanced budgets by canceling preventive maintenance and deferring needed repairs. "In the choice between laying off police or maintaining sewers," says Lincoln, Neb., Mayor Helen Boosalis, "the sewers always lose."

Although billions of dollars have been spent on public works in recent years, the vast bulk of expenditures has gone not to maintain old facilities but to build ambitious new pork-barrel projects, often determined more by politics than actual need (page 18). Says E. S. Savas, Assistant Secretary for Housing and Urban Development, "Have you ever seen a politician presiding over a ribbon-cutting for an old sewer line that was repaired?" All too often the cost of such projects is wildly inflated by corruption on the part of construction firms, labor unions, public officials and organized crime—all at the taxpayers' expense (page 17). Meanwhile, the longer the repairs are put off, the costlier they become. "Deferred maintenance becomes reconstruction," says Choate's co-author, Susan Walter.

One big obstacle to good infrastructure maintenance is the very system that controls it. Responsibility for maintaining public facilities rests with more than 100 Federal agencies, as well as the 50 states, more than 3,000 counties and thousands of local agencies. In Cleveland four separate municipal departments share authority over hundreds of dilapidated bridges. In Eaton Rapids, Mich., city manager Dennis Craun has compiled a 120-page booklet of all the

Federal regulations that pertain to a 90-year-old one-lane bridge that is not strong enough to carry trucks or buses—but is nevertheless listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and therefore cannot be destroyed. "I'm about at the point where I'd consider driving an 80,000-pound tanker over it," he says. "That would do the trick."

Citizen opposition has also stood in the way of preventive maintenance, since road, bridge and water-main work can be inconvenient as well as costly. But as the decay worsens, some citizens are taking the lead—and some deteriorating facilities have become key political issues. Last March women in Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich., got so fed up with the potholes on Detroit's Lakeshore Road that they donned hard hats and hockey helmets and fixed them. U.S. Representatives Barney Frank and Margaret Heckler are fighting a re-election battle over a 76-year-old bridge in redistricted Fall River, Mass. Frank recently brought the chairman of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee to visit the bridge; Heckler brought Drew Lewis. "If this is what it takes to get action, I'll take it," says bemused Fall River Mayor Carlton Viveiros.

'Bumpy Rug': Aware of the growing potency of pothole politics and the genuine dangers of serious breakdown, many city officials are belatedly fighting to save their public facilities—at no small cost to city coffers. Chicago's Mayor Jane Byrne has announced a two-phase, \$187.5 million plan to rebuild 22 bridges and viaducts, 90 intersections and 46 railroad crossings. New York City has embarked on a ten-year, \$34.7 billion program to renovate streets, bridges and mass transit and work has begun on a third water tunnel. In Pittsburgh Mayor Richard Caligiuri is devoting \$60 million of his

NATIONAL REGISTER DATA SHEET

① NAME as it appears on federal register:

Queensboro Bridge

② OTHER NAMES:

59th Street Bridge

③ date of entry:

DEC 20 1978

④ county code:

061

⑤ LOCATION street & number

59th St.

city / town

New York

vicinity of

state

New York county

NY

(also in Queens Co.

NE

⑥ NPS REGION:

⑦ OWNER ☐ PRIVATE ☐ STATE ☐ MUNICIPAL ☐ COUNTY ☐ MULTIPLE ☒ FEDERAL (agency name) DOT

⑧ ADMINISTRATOR:

⑨ EXISTING SURVEYS ☐ HABS ☐ HAER ☐ NHL ☐ FUNDED? ☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ CONGRESS. DISTRICT 9 & 18 ☐ SOURCE of NOMINATION ☐ STATE ☐ FEDERAL

if state who prepared form?

⑩ WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT?

☐ YES, NAME

☐ NO

⑪ WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK?

☐ YES, NAME

☐ NO

⑫ ACREAGE

☐ LOCAL ☐ PRIVATE ORGANIZATION

⑬ CONDITION

☐ excellent

☐ good

☐ fair

☐ deteriorated

☐ ruins

☐ unexposed

☐ unexcavated

☐ altered

☐ unaltered

☐ reconstructed

☐ excavated

☐ original site

☐ moved

☐ unknown

⑭ features:

☐ SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-1

☐ NOT INTACT-0

☐ UNKNOWN-4

☐ NOT APPLICABLE-7

☐ SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-2

☐ NOT INTACT-0

☐ UNKNOWN-5

☐ NOT APPLICABLE-8

☐ SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-3

☐ NOT INTACT-0

☐ UNKNOWN-6

☐ NOT APPLICABLE-9

⑮ ACCESS ☐ YES-Restricted ☐ YES-Unrestricted ☐ No Access ☐ Unknown

⑯ ADAPTIVE USE ☐ YES ☐ NO

⑰ SAVED? ☐ YES

⑱ IS PROPERTY A HISTORIC DISTRICT? ☐ yes ☐ no

⑲ AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:

☐ ARCHEOLOGY-prehistoric-2

☐ COMMERCE-6

☐ ENGINEERING-11

☐ ENTERTAINMENT-26

☐ LANDSCAPE ARCH.-15

☐ LAW-16

☐ POLITICS/GOVT.-21

☐ RELIGION-22

☐ RECREATION-28

☐ SETTLEMENT-29

☐ ARCHEOLOGY-historic-1

☐ COMMUNICATIONS-7

☐ EXPLORATION-12

☐ LITERATURE-17

☐ SCIENCE-23

☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN-24

☐ URBAN PLANNING-31

☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)

☐ AGRICULTURE-3

☐ CONSERVATION-8

☐ HEALTH-27

☐ MILITARY-18

☐ SOCIAL/CULTURAL-30

☐ TRANSPORTATION-25

☐ ARCHITECTURE-4

☐ ECONOMICS-9

☐ INDUSTRY-13

☐ MUSIC-19

☐ ART-5

☐ EDUCATION-10

☐ INVENTION-14

☐ PHILOSOPHY-20

⑳ CLAIMS: explain

'first' ☐

'oldest' ☐

'only' ☐

㉑ functions

WHEN HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT:

CURRENTLY:

㉒ dates of initial construction:

major alterations:

historic events:

㉓ ETHNIC GROUP

ASSOCIATION

㉔ architectural style(s):

㉕ architect:

㉖ master builder:

㉗ engineer:

㉘ landscape architect / garden designer:

㉙ interior decorator:

㉚ artist:

㉛ artisan:

㉜ builder/contractor:

㉝ NAMES give role & date

PERSONAL:

EVENTS:

INSTITUTIONAL:

㉞ NATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP