

Special Edition Summer 2019



THE ANNISQUAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

7 Walnut Street
Annisquam MA 01930

Visit the Firehouse

The Firehouse will be open Mondays 3-5 PM through August. Please contact: avhistorical@gmail.com for access at other times.

Admission

Admission is free but donations are gratefully accepted.



Celebrating the Annisquam Bridge

By Rita Teele & Robert W. Cunningham

On July 17, 2019, the current bridge across Lobster Cove celebrated its 30th birthday.

Since its original construction in 1848, there have been many anniversaries associated with this bridge. Preceding all such occasions, which were associated with modifying or rebuilding the original structure, there were civic arguments, council hearings, state mandates, neighborhood meetings and multiple newspaper articles. A recitation of the complete history of the bridge would require a book!



The bridge circa 1890.

A boot and shoe repairman is crossing the bridge in his wagon. AHS086

From the late 1800s, the bridge, with its draw, had been a two-way thoroughfare from Washington Street to Bridgewater street. With the cessation of ship building, and other marine traffic, the draw became obsolete. From October 1946 to late March, 1947, the draw span and its mechanism were removed. A roadway, 22 feet in width, and a raised sidewalk of 4 feet in width were created.

In 1968, only twenty-one years later, the planks needed replacement, many of the pilings were in poor condition and the stringers were too soft to hold nails. The bridge was closed to automobile traffic although pedestrians were still allowed passage.



\$300,000 was appropriated to rebuild the bridge but in 1970, the Massachusetts Department of Public Works decreed that construction of wooden bridges would no longer be permitted. Instead, a new, high-level bridge was proposed.

continued to deteriorate. A fire in April of 1975 damaged a portion of the bridge near the former draw span. Patchwork maintenance was applied but the bridge was near to collapse by the mid 1980s. Pedestrian traffic was then no longer allowed.

The idea of a large bridge of steel and concrete girders spanning the Cove met with instant resistance on the part of the inhabitants of Annisquam. The city agreed to allow use of the bridge as a pedestrian walkway. The structure

Don Usher, who at the time was the voluntary guardian of Annisquam's history, lobbied for, and acquired National Register status for the bridge.



Although this designation helped raise its profile, it provided no guarantee from dismantlement. However, there was huge pressure by many in Annisquam and in the rest of Gloucester to replace the bridge with an historically accurate replica.

Finally, the Massachusetts Department of Public Works agreed to replace the bridge with a wood-pile footbridge, similar in design to the existing structure. Consulting engineers provided their report, the money got allocated, and by 1989, the new bridge was under construction.



Piles remain after removal of the decking.



Amy Sweeney photo

Work is finally underway to replace the wooden bridge over Lobster Cove.

Bridge work underway at last

By **AMANDA L. WATERFIELD**
Times staff

The long-awaited reconstruction of Lobster Cove Bridge in Annisquam has finally begun.

Crews from Great Eastern Marine Service began driving pilings last week for the new, pedestrian bridge linking the Annisquam village to Washington Street.

Ken Taliadoros, co-owner of Great Eastern Marine Service, said that the construction of

the new bridge began on Feb. 1.

The remains of the old bridge had to be torn out before work on the new bridge could begin, Taliadoros said.

Taliadoros said that the removal of the old bridge began in the first week of January, and took about a month to complete.

"We're on schedule, and hope to be completed by end of May," Taliadoros said.

The bridge has been closed to pedestrian traffic since 1987, and was closed to vehicular

traffic in 1968, according to city engineer Jim Willett.

The new bridge will be for pedestrian traffic only, Taliadoros said. It will save pedestrians a 1¼-mile detour up Leonard Street.

"You won't be able to drive (over the new bridge). The older one was much wider," Taliadoros said.

He said that the project's cost of approximately \$310,000 will be paid for with state funds.

Article in the Gloucester Daily Times at the start of reconstruction in 1989.

With the completion of the replacement bridge in July of 1989, a celebration was definitely in order. Alice Clark, 106 years of age, who had lived in the village for most of her life, was partnered with Sarah Cunningham, 6 years of age, to cut the ribbon on the village side of the bridge and officially declare the new bridge open to pedestrian traffic.



Alice Clark and Sarah Cunningham conferring before the ceremony.



Cutting the Ribbon



Alice Clark and Sarah Cunningham are the first to cross the new bridge.



Diners on the bridge, Sea Fair 2004

Now, the bridge is used by walkers taking a short cut between Washington Street and Annisquam Village, by those accessing the city float that is connected by ramp to its mid-portion, and by children. Its unsung role is of providing a rite of passage—from small child to “big kid”—that is marked by jumping off the bridge when school ends and summer truly begins.



Siblings jump off the bridge to celebrate summer holidays in Annisquam.