



Washington Bridge No. 200 Documentation Providence and East Providence, Rhode Island

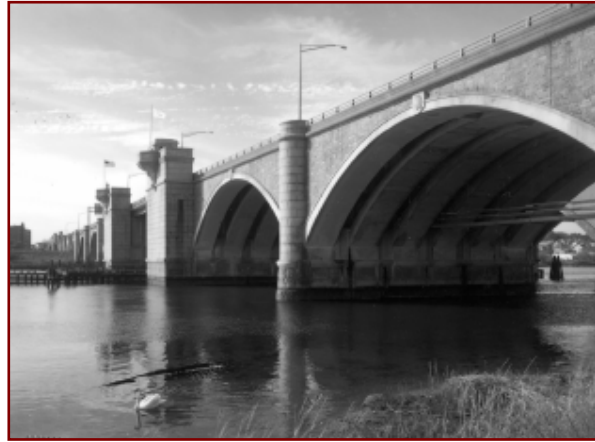
Date of Performance: 2001–2002

Client: Rhode Island Department of Transportation

PAL completed Rhode Island Historic Resource Archive (RIHRA) documentation of the Washington Bridge (RI Bridge 200), which carries the eastbound lanes of I-195 over the Seekonk River from Providence to East Providence. RIDOT is proposing to demolish most of the 2,500-foot-long bridge and preserve remaining parts as a recreational path linking India Point Park to the East Bay bicycle path in East Providence. The RIHRA documentation was undertaken as part of the mitigation for the demolition of the bridge, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Washington Bridge was constructed between 1928 and 1930 to replace an outmoded 1885 steel truss swing span bridge. The bridge was financed through the sale of bonds and required the formation of a special Washington Bridge Commission in 1923 to oversee planning and construction. Consulting engineer Clarence W. Hudson of New York completed the engineering design and another New Yorker, architect Carl L. Otto, added the Classical Revival architectural details for the surfaces, towers, and decorations of the bridge to hide the raw concrete frame. The bridge was opened September 25, 1930.

The bridge is a component of Rhode Island's early attempts to accommodate the automobile age through highway infrastructure construction. It is also a notable example of a civic improvement that embodies the tenets of the City Beautiful Movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Washington Bridge is one of three major open spandrel reinforced concrete arch bridges in the state. The others are the 1932 Stillwater Viaduct in Smithfield, and the Ashton Viaduct in Cumberland and Lincoln, built 1934–1945. The open spandrel concrete arch style was an early-twentieth-century bridge construction method noted for its economy of materials.



***Washington Bridge No. 200
Interstate 195, Providence, Rhode Island***

In the mid-1950s the Washington Bridge alignment was incorporated in planning of the Eisenhower Interstate Highway System and the bridge was conceived as a component of Interstate 195 to link Providence with Fall River, New Bedford, and Cape Cod. In Providence, this project was constructed in phases that lasted until the early 1970s. In 1968 Bridge 700 (Washington Bridge North) was constructed immediately north of the 1930 bridge to handle westbound traffic and the Washington Bridge was reconstructed to carry eastbound traffic only. This improvement resulted in major landscape changes because construction of I-195 cut through India Point and associated ramp complexes on both ends of the bridge.

PAL SERVICES

- ***SECTIONS 106 AND 110 CONSULTATION***
- ***ARCHIVAL RESEARCH***
- ***HISTORIC CONTEXT DEVELOPMENT***
- ***LARGE FORMAT PHOTO-DOCUMENTATION***
- ***NATIONAL REGISTER EVALUATIONS***
- ***ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS***