

The Bridges at Hartford, 1810 to Mid-1940s

SYNOPSIS For ROPEX 2017

PURPOSE & SCOPE: This exhibit tells the story of the succession of bridges crossing the Connecticut River at Hartford, Connecticut via picture postcards. The focus is on the bridges connecting Morgan Street in Hartford with Hartford Avenue (now Connecticut Boulevard) in East Hartford, from the earliest iteration in 1810 through to the current version, known as the Bulkeley Bridge. These bridges were the only ones to cross the Connecticut River between Windsor to the North and Middletown to the South until 1942 when the Charter Oak bridge was opened to traffic, so the exhibit ends in the mid-1940s.

TREATMENT: The story will be told in chronological order. Postcards from various time periods will be used to illustrate the story, although most cards will have been printed before 1935.

Text for the main story line will be in Times New Roman (11 point), while deltiological information will be presented in sans-serif Arial (10 point). Secondary story text and interesting tidbits will use italic Times New Roman (10 point).

The story will be divided into three sections:

- I. Early Bridges & Conveyances
- II. The Stone Bridge
- III. Epilog: Other Bridges

Each section will start with a section title in a double-line box. Section headers will appear on each page in the upper-left corner of each page (or double-page), and headers summarizing the story will appear in the upper-right of the pages.

Key and important items are highlighted with a double-line blue border.

IMPORTANCE: The bridges at Hartford provided the only crossing of the Connecticut River between Windsor to the north and Middletown to the South until 1942. This was a key crossing for commerce, travel, and the postal routes. The latest iteration, today known as the Bulkeley Bridge, was at the time of its completion in 1908, the largest stone bridge in the world. Still in use today, it is one of the oldest bridges in use as part of the Interstate Highway System, carrying almost 150,000 vehicles every day. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1993.

Many of the cards were produced by local publishers and printers. Of particular note are those by George E. Wright, a prolific chronicler of the sights of Hartford at the beginning of the 20th century. Without his cards many images of late 19th and early 20th century Hartford would be unavailable.

KNOWLEDGE, STUDY & RESEARCH: I have been collecting postcards related to Hartford, Connecticut since 2005, and cards related to the UN for almost 30 years. As a lifelong resident of Hartford (since 1956), I have a keen interest in the city and its history. Information regarding the bridge was learned from books and from various Internet sites (see References).

Deltiological knowledge is shown in the exhibit by the correct description of the type of card, its printing method, designer and publisher. Information about postcards was learned from books and various Internet sites (see References).

Although I've been competitively showing philatelic exhibits for over 25 years, this is my first Picture Postcard exhibit. It made its debut at AmeriStamp Expo 2017, and has been revised based on advice received at that show. Advice on improving the exhibit, as well as on postcards, is welcome and appreciated.

RARITY & CONDITION: Many of the postcards in this exhibit were printed prior to 1914, and are thus over 100 years old. I collect with an eye towards quality, and the cards selected for inclusion in the exhibit were

chosen for their condition. The vast majority are unused, clean, with square corners, no chipping, and generally free of faults.

Of particular note are the real photo postcards, which are uncommon for the bridges. Also of note is the card showing the stone bridge under construction. The only other card that I have seen showing construction is in an online archive of Hartford postcards.

REFERENCES:

About the bridge:

“Wikipedia: Bulkeley Bridge” - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulkeley_Bridge - general information about bridge, includes references to other sites. Site verified as of 2017-01-11.

“One New England: The Bulkeley Bridge: An Architectural Treasure” - <http://www.onenewengland.com/article.php?id=32>. General information. Site verified 2017-01-11.

“Crossing the Connecticut”, George E. Wright, 1908 Smith-Linsley Company, Hartford, Connecticut. This limited edition book (3,000 copies) provides background about the bridges and ferries that preceded the stone bridge, as well as details about the construction of the stone bridge. Although long out of print, one may read the book as a google book (URL too long to present here).

“Spanning a Century The Bulkeley Bridge 1908-2008”, Connecticut Department of Transportation, published 2008. Unfortunately, this oversized book, filled with many details and photos of the bridge is rare to find. I was only able to find it in the Connecticut state Library, which has just two copies. One copy may be borrowed via the inter-library loan facility.

About postcards:

“Metropostcard.com” - www.metropostcard.com; the information website of the Metropolitan Postcard Club of New York, is a wonderful source of information about postcards, providing information on publishers, printing techniques, etc. Highly recommended. Site verified 2017-03-08.

“Collecting & Exhibiting Picture Postcards” Seija Riitta Laasko, Livonia Print 2012. ISBN 978-952-93-1290-0.

“Picture Postcards in the United States 1893-1918”, 1st updated ed.; Dorothy B. Ryan, 1982, Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., New York. ISBN 0-517-524007.