

## **One Ferry and Three Bridges** **by Mel Montemerlo**

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The current Windsor Locks bridge (2016), known as "The Bridge Street Bridge," connects Windsor Locks with Warehouse Point. The person who created Warehouse Point was William Pyncheon. He was also the man who founded the city of Springfield. He needed to ship goods from Boston to Springfield, but most boats on the Connecticut River could not get past the falls at Enfield. So, in the 1630s, he built a warehouse at a place that came to be known as "Warehouse Point". He stored goods until they could be taken to Springfield either by land or by special boats. It soon became clear that for commerce to grow in Windsor Locks, easy access was needed to Warehouse Point.



**The old ferry between Windsor Locks and Warehouse Point  
1783 - 1886**

The first method of crossing the river between the two towns was by ferry. The ferry was tied to a pier in the river to prevent it from being washed downstream. The photograph of the ferry is from about 1885. In it, the ferry is moored on the Warehouse Point side of the river. The buildings on the other side of the river are the mills in Windsor Locks. The ferry operated from 1783 until the suspension bridge was built in 1886.

In October 1886, the ferry was replaced by an impressive suspension bridge, built by the Warehouse Point Bridge and Ferry Company. The bridge was made up of a 550-foot main span and two 300-foot side spans. That bridge charged a toll for all traffic until the state purchased it and made it free in July 1908. It was the first free bridge across the Connecticut River in the state. This was the first step in the state's plan to own and control all bridges over the river.



**Suspension bridge: Windsor Locks - Warehouse Point  
1886 - 1921**

The suspension bridge was a one-lane toll bridge. The road was then called "State Aid Road No. 20". Later the name was changed to Route 140. The photograph of the bridge was taken in 1900 from the East bank of the river, looking toward Windsor Locks.

The main suspension cables were anchored below ground at each end. Each suspension cable was made up of bundles of twisted wire rope. That process was developed by John Roebling in the 1840s and was used on the Brooklyn Bridge.

In 1907, it cost an individual driving a touring car 25 cents, and it cost twelve and a half cents for a horse, wagon and driver. For a person on foot, the cost was three cents.

As motor traffic increased, especially truck traffic from the tobacco fields, the old bridge became unsafe and obsolete. Keeping it in good repair was increasingly expensive. This second bridge opened, at a final cost of about \$500,000, on Dec. 2, 1921.

By the 1960s, the 1921 bridge was growing obsolete. In 1967, the state posted a maximum load of 15 tons, requiring heavier trucks to use the Dexter Coffin Bridge on I-91. The Department of Transportation decided to replace rather than repair the bridge. The new bridge opened in 1992. It is referred to as The Bridge Street Bridge. It is the bridge which is still in use in 2016.

We have seen the ferry and the three successive bridges which allowed people to travel between Windsor Locks and Warehouse Point.

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