



Historic Bridge Foundation Facebook Archives

Focus Bridges: Aetnaville

The Aetnaville Bridge, closed in 1988, was built to carry Georgia Street Bridge over the back channel of the Ohio River between Aetnaville, Ohio, and Wheeling Island in Wheeling, West Virginia. The Aetnaville Bridge was built primarily to benefit the city's streetcar system, although it carried vehicular and pedestrian traffic as well. The bridge was built from 1890-1891. Some sources claimed that the Wrought Iron Bridge Company of Canton, Ohio built the bridge but this has not been confirmed, and may be confusion with the nearby Bridgeport Bridge, which the Wrought Iron Bridge Company did build. The Aetnaville Bridge features four 200-foot pin-connected Pennsylvania through truss spans. The spans are noted for their ornate portal details, including ornamental knee braces and elaborate portal cresting. Pennsylvania truss bridges are rare, and multiple span examples like this bridge are even more rare. Nationwide, very few multi-span pin-connected Pennsylvania truss bridges survive. The bridge is currently slated for demolition by the West Virginia Department of Transportation, which owns the bridge.

The Aetnaville Bridge was one of three metal truss bridges built around the same time on Wheeling Island. These three bridges replaced or supplemented the first bridges to the island: the Wheeling Suspension Bridge (a National Historic Landmark that remains standing today) and an 1839 covered bridge over the back channel of the Ohio River.

The Bridgeport Bridge crossed the back channel of the Ohio River, and was built by the Wrought Iron Bridge Company in 1893. It was a three span pin-connected Parker through truss with vertical endposts. It replaced the aforementioned covered bridge. It was demolished in 2011, having been replaced a number of years earlier by a parallel modern bridge.

The Steel Bridge crossed the main channel of the Ohio River one block south of the suspension bridge. It was built in 1891, the same year as the Aetnaville Bridge. This bridge was similar in design to the Aetnaville Bridge. Like the Aetnaville Bridge, this bridge was a pin-connected Pennsylvania through truss bridge, but spanning the larger, navigable main channel of the Ohio River, it featured two large truss spans over the river, plus approach spans. It was succeeded in large part by the construction of the Fort Henry Bridge to the north of the suspension bridge in 1955. The west approach to the bridge was demolished in May-June, 1959 following a collapse of the approach. The remainder of the bridge was demolished in 1962.

The Aetnaville Bridge is therefore the last of the three truss bridges built for Wheeling Island between 1891 and 1893. The Aetnaville Bridge contributes to the Wheeling Island Historic District, which also includes the Wheeling Suspension Bridge.



1

View of the Steel Bridge after the collapsed approach had been removed.



STEEL BRIDGE OVER THE OHIO RIVER
Wheeling in the distance.

2

Historical photo of the Steel Bridge.

This folder has been prepared as a public service of *Union Federal Savings and Loan Association of Wheeling* as a reminder of the many fine things our City offers. We are proud of Wheeling and proud of the fact that for over 25 years we have played an important part in its continued growth.



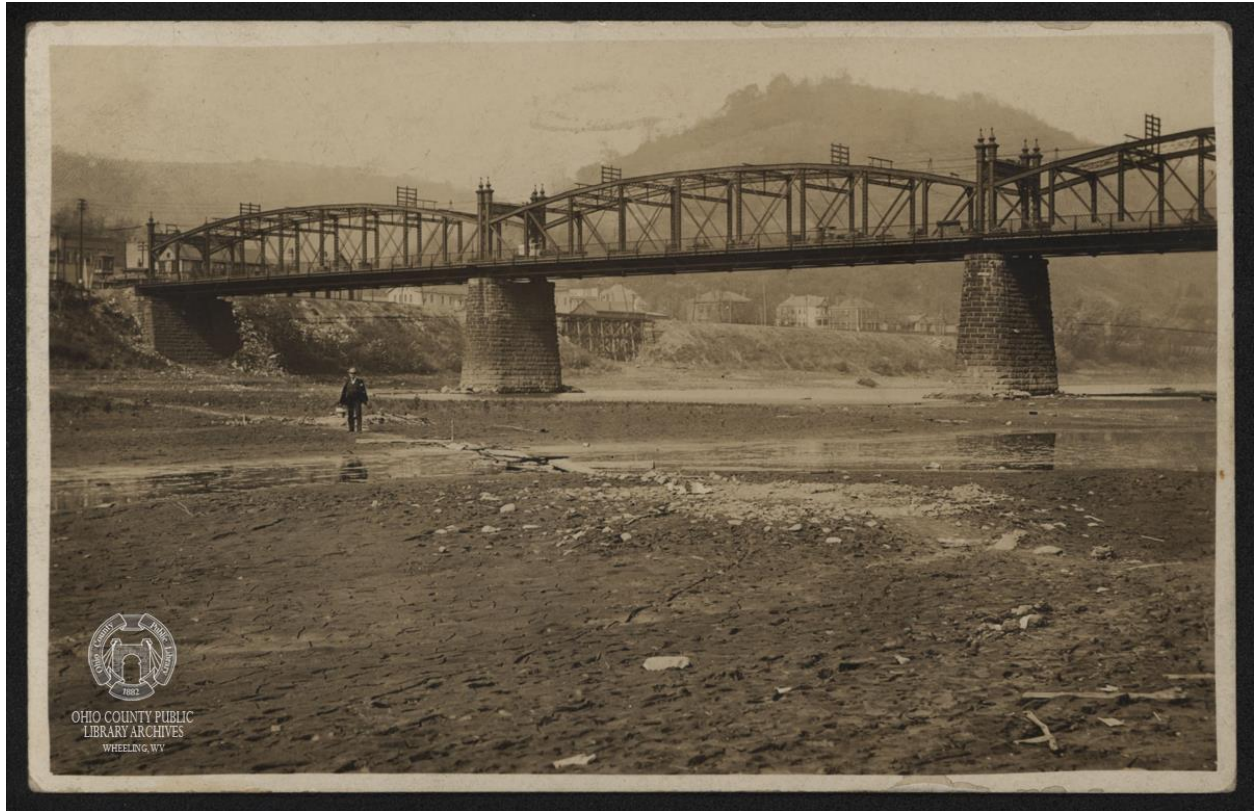
3.

Historical aerial photo showing from front to back: Fort Henry Bridge, Wheeling Suspension Bridge, Steel Bridge.



4.

Historical aerial photo showing the Bridgeport Bridge in front and the Aetnaville Bridge behind it to the north.



5.

Historical photo of the Bridgeport Bridge during a low water event.



7

South elevation of the Aetnaville Bridge from Wheeling Island.



8.

Portal view of the Aetnaville Bridge.



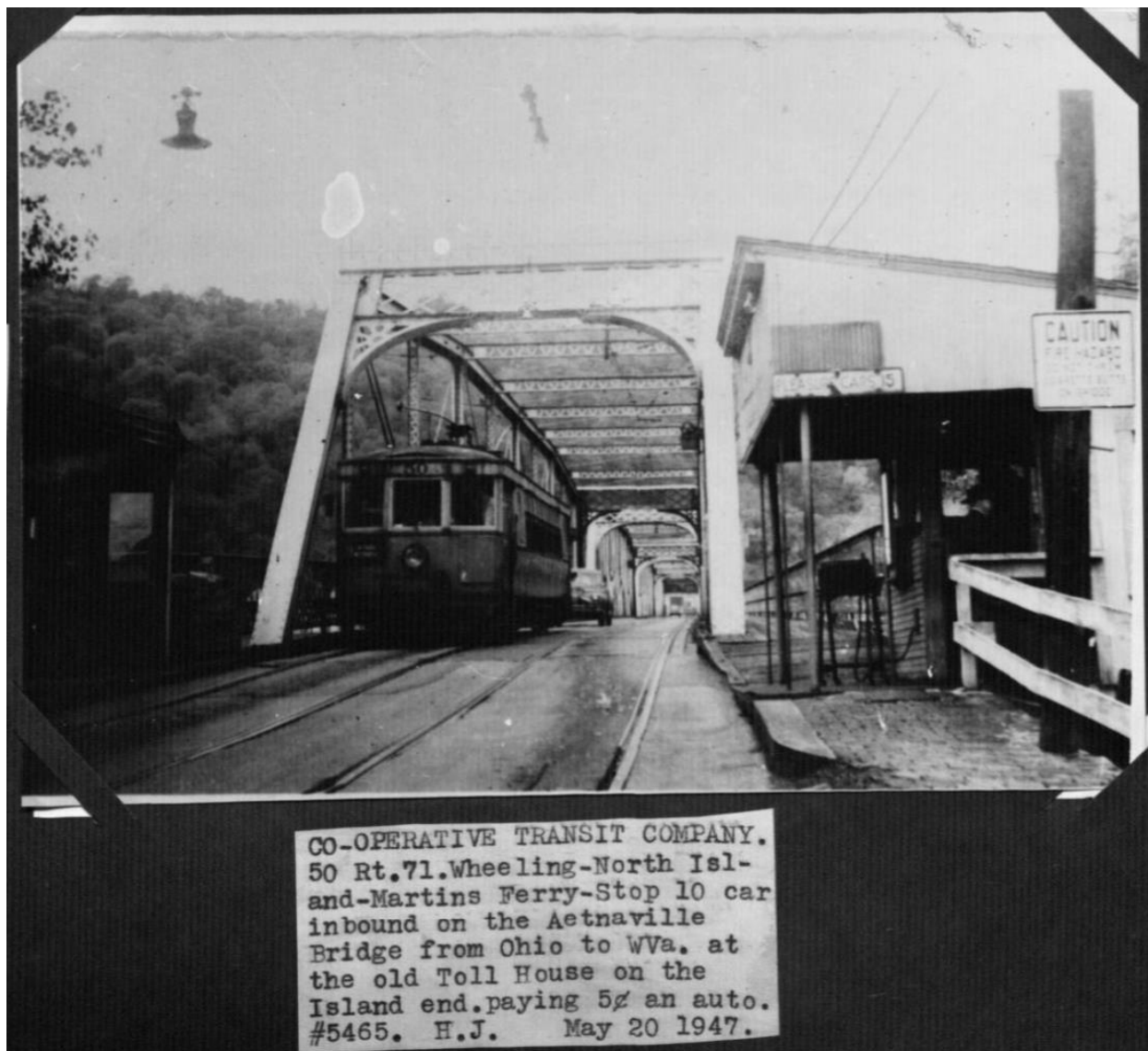
9.

Detail of the portal cresting on the Aetnaville Bridge.



10.

Knee bracing of the Aetnaville Bridge.



6.

The Aetnaville Bridge in 1947 showing a streetcar and a toll booth for vehicular traffic.