The Pulpit Harbor Bridges

First Bridge

There are only two bridges on North Haven and both of them connect portions of the land around Pulpit Harbor to the main portion of the island.

Originally, Pulpit Harbor and the stream we now call the "Mill Stream" were both referred to as the "North Harbor". It was the "Narrows" of North Harbor in 1850 that the first of our two bridges was constructed, about 100 feet east of the present bridge. Enos Cooper and Co. built the wooden bridge at a total cost of $300. By 1857, a new bridge was needed; William and James Frye built the replacement bridge for $600. Local history suggests that the bridge could not withstand the severe tidal and icing conditions and was in constant need of repair. Later, granite piers prolonged the life of the bridge.

By 1881, yet another bridge was voted in existence at a Special Town Meeting. This was a much sturdier bridge built on stone piers, except for 40 feet at the center which was wood. Two thousand dollars was set aside by the town for this third bridge, [a pattern of rising costs is perhaps emerging?] which was located at the site of the current bridge. Subsequently, the town connected the Town Roads with the bridge.

The wooden portion of this bridge was called the "draw" and consisted of planks laid lengthwise and crosswise, and which could be removed by hand to allow the passage of vessels between the mains Harbor and the "Mill Stream" where Charles Brown's boat shop was located. The planks were taken up and replaced by hand at least 100 times between 1884 and 1909.

Early in the 20th century a new draw that could be raised by gears was installed. In 1916, the first water pipe was laid across the bridge, permanently eliminating the draw and bringing town water to summer residents.

A further reconfiguration of the area occurred in 1921 when the town dynamited the ledge from in from of what was then Gordon Peters home to widen the approach to the bridge.

The bridge was traditionally one-way only, but with increased automobile traffic, the town eventually voted to install a new, two-lane steel and concrete bridge in 1955-1956. Finally, yet another new bridge has recently been completed in time for summer traffic in 2017. By now, the State of Maine has assumed costs for bridge construction and repair.

Beach Bridge or Second Bridge

The history of North Haven's second bridge begins in 1883 when the town approved $250 to be paid to Alvin G. Beverage to construct a wooden bridge connecting "Blue Point" with "Beverage Point" at the beach where the Beverage store was located. Before the existence of Beach Bridge, residents and customers would go all the way around the cove to reach the far side. Recycled wood from the nearly-always-in-repair First Bridge was used in construction.

By 1945, the bridge, often repaired, was in sorry condition and had deteriorated to the
granite bridge was constructed for $25,996. Our current bridge replaced the 1949 version in 2015.

The construction and repair of these two bridges speaks to the significant year-round population originally settled around Pulpit Harbor and also to the 20th century increase in summer residents in that area.

A very early photograph of First Bridge with mechanical Draw installed.
Taking Up The Draw

When I was seven or eight years old
I thought it quite a chore
to walk to the Pulpit Harbor school
Seemed like a mile or more.
The conveyance was our own two legs
No matter what the weather
But when the teacher rang the bell
We quickly got together.
If we were tempted to complain
I think we had a reason
For we had plenty of dust and mud
And ice and snow in season.
Crossing the old stone Mill Bridge
Was always such a thrill
I was tempted there to linger
And watch the water spill
As it came rushing down the Mill Stream
Along the rock bound shore
Into sheltered Pulpit Harbor
So near the Babbidge Store.
I still recall the fear I felt
The first time that I saw

The men at work at what I learned
Was taking up the draw.
The middle of the bridge was gone
And when I ventured near
I saw the waves beneath my feet
As they dashed against the pier.
The crew at Charles Brown's boat shop
Which was on the Mill Stream side
Had built a sloop with tall mast set
And on the early morning tide
She was being towed through the drawbridge
And would soon be on her way
Whether for work or pleasure
Sailing on Penobscot Bay.
As she was towed along the harbor
She sure was a pretty sight
With her deck a shining varnish
And her hull a gleaming white.
With the bridge put back together
I too was on my way
But my thoughts were all at sea
And school was just another day.

Lucy Hopkins, 1974
Beach Bridge as built by Alvin Beverage in 1883. The Bridge connected his land on both sides of a small cove.

Old Beach Bridge at Pulpit Harbor. Taken before 1947 when the bridge was replaced by a steel and concrete bridge.
1934 wooden abutments

1946 granite abutments
High tide at Beach Bridge!
Farewell to the Island

The beauty of the sea
Means so very much to me,
Even in the rain and clouds
That wrap the boats in velvet shrouds.

The wake of the ferry
Spreads down its carpets, smooth and pale,
Edged in frothy lace of a phantom wedding veil.
An ethereal bride floats down the misty aisle
   Toward the altar of golden hue
In the vast cathedral of sea and sky
   On the horizon on infinite blue.

The light-house stood old and gray
Like an old sea-man remembering a better day
When folks from the mainland came to fish,
And stay to talk of races and rescues from this,
The old light-house on the breakwater.

Buffeted by gales and storms
‘Til the calmer sea of the harbor brought no more qualms,
The ferry docked at the pier;
Passengers scattering far and near
To meet again another year.

Celestine L. Sager, (Mrs. Lawrence Sager), 1971
Contact between Alvin Beverage and the town of North Haven to build the first version of Beach Bridge. 1883
The Town of North Haven pays Alvin Beverage at the rate of 15 cents per hour for his work on Beach Bridge.

1906

The town of North Haven pays R. L. Whitmore $5.00 for materials and his work to repair Beach Bridge.