



Photo courtesy of Branford Historical Society

LOOKING UP THE BRANFORD RIVER from the roof of the MIF. At the bottom of the picture are MIF buildings, center is the old Indian Neck Avenue bridge. To the far left is Meadow Street and at the top the Montowese Street bridge where the boat the Jenny Lind was docked.

Pictures of the Past

Bridge history fraught with problems

Indian Neck Avenue Bridge
Transportation across the river has always been a concern of the residents of Branford. A bridge was built in 1791 across the river to provide better access to Indian Neck. This bridge known as the "Lower Bridge" and later Hobatts or Hubbard's Bridge crossed the river at what is today Montowese Street.

Not far from the Montowese Street Bridge another bridge was built across the river shortly after the Civil War. Called the "Upper Bridge" or sometimes the Long Bridge, it was made with wooden stiles and part of the bridge could be opened to allow boats through. In 1884 Edwin Baldwin of Branford built a small commercial building on top of the bridge. Here he had a machine shop where he invented and repaired motors for boats. One of the motors fell into the river and can still be found on the bottom. The Baldwins also sold hot dogs from the

stand. In 1896 the "Refreshment House over the river" was run by George Erickson where he sold cigars, soda and ice cream.

The Upper Bridge, now known as the Indian Neck Avenue Bridge, had a number of problems. The bridge was not well built and high tides and winds would wash or blow away sections of the bridge. In 1899, 100 feet of railing was blown off during a gale. A section of the bridge collapsed in 1900 and was repaired. Fortunately no one was hurt during these incidences. The bridge was replaced in 1938 by Mariani Construction Company of New Haven for \$45,000. The new concrete and metal bridge was 150 feet long and 27 feet wide and was still maintained as a draw bridge though rarely used.

This year the Indian Neck Avenue bridge was closed due to its deteriorating condition and will again be replaced.

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