



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) ▼

Press Release

December 6, 2011

[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

MTA's Scenic Henry Hudson Bridge Celebrating 75 Years

The Henry Hudson Bridge, connecting the northern tip of Manhattan to the Riverdale section of the Bronx, turns 75 on Monday, Dec. 12th and will celebrate with the opening of a month-long photo exhibit at the Riverdale Public Library.

"We are pleased to share some of the thousands of historic photos from our Special Archive in celebration of the Henry Hudson Bridge," said MTA Bridges and Tunnels President Jim Ferrara. "The Henry Hudson was originally designed for leisurely weekend drives but through the decades has evolved into a vital transportation connection in the tri-state region, linking New York City and the northern suburbs."

A month-long photo exhibit, hosted by the Riverdale Branch of the New York Public Library, will open on Dec. 12th. The exhibit will include more than a dozen photographs from Bridges and Tunnels extensive Depression-era collection and will include a section for schoolchildren, focusing on different types of bridges and the building of the Henry Hudson, and another geared to the community before the bridge was built.

"The Henry Hudson Bridge links two important New York City communities and we hope that our neighbors from both Manhattan and Bronx communities will visit the library and share this important milestone," said Henry Hudson General Manager William McCann.

The Henry Hudson, at 800-feet, was the world's longest plate-girder, fixed arch bridge when it opened in December 1936, just five months after MTA Bridges and Tunnels' flagship Triborough Bridge (now the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge) began operating.

Then City Parks Commissioner Robert Moses wanted the bridge built as part of his West Side improvement project and envisioned a parkway that would allow cars to drive from the Battery to the Bronx without getting caught in 11th Avenue's jumble of railroad trains and horses.

Moses' first opposition to the proposed six-lane bridge came from a group of what he called "parlor conservationists" who objected to his removing a decaying tulip tree from Inwood Hill Park in order to build the bridge's parkway approach. The next was from bridge underwriters who insisted that motorists would not pay the dime toll because the free Broadway Bridge was just blocks away.

In both cases, Moses won. The tulip tree was removed and the bridge was built, after a compromise, with four lanes instead of six. Afterward many replacement trees were planted.

Moses knew the bridge would be popular because of its scenic views of the Hudson River and the Palisades to the west as well as the freedom it offered from Broadway Bridge's congestion, and had it built to support a second deck. The three-lane, upper level of the bridge, which carries traffic north to the Bronx, opened 18-months later on May 7, 1938. The total cost of the bridge for both levels was \$5 million.

Today an average 63,000 cars use the bridge daily. An \$86 million rehabilitation project that included replacing the original Depression-era lower level, Manhattan-bound roadway, the entire North approach structure at the Bronx end of the bridge, and refurbishing the pedestrian walkway was completed in June 2010 and another three-year, \$33 million project is underway to replace the original 1930s steel curb stringers that support the upper level roadway.

"All of this work is being done to make sure that the bridge remains as strong as it was the day it opened and for many decades to come," said Facility Engineer Walter Hickey.



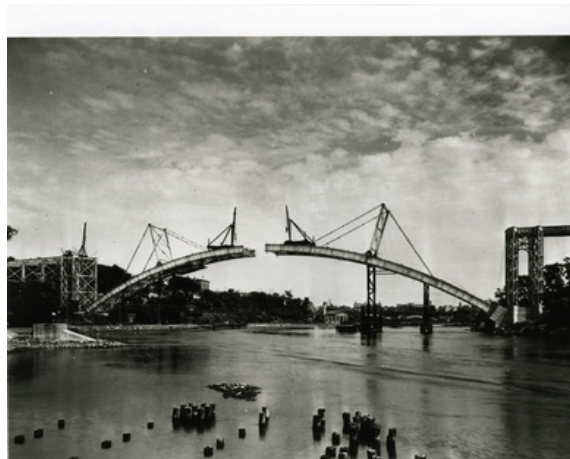
HH RAS 6.19.1936: The Henry Hudson Bridge under construction. Photographer: Richard Averill Smith, June 19, 1936.



HH from above: Present day aerial view of Henry Hudson Bridge from above



HH-3408D View of Henry Hudson Parkway, looking north, in Riverdale. c. 1934. Photographer: unknown.



HH Construction 1936: Looking from the Bronx, the final crown piece is placed at the center of the plate-girder, steel arch. New York Central Railroad tracks (now Metro-North) continued operating during construction. The small railroad bridge in the distance belonged to Grand Central Railroad and today is used by Amtrak. Photographer: unknown. July 8, 1936.