

Brief History of Byram River Bridges
Prepared by AECOM
for
US Army Corps of Engineers – New York District
Westchester County Streams
Byram River Basin Flood Risk Management
Replacement of Byram River Bridges
New York and Connecticut
Contract No. W9128F22D0030 and Task Order No. W9128F25F0018

January 2026

The Byram River Bridges and Their Role in Regional Transportation

The Byram River Bridges—the Byram Bridge (present-day West Putnam Avenue Bridge) and the County Road No. 43 Bridge (present-day Hillside Avenue Bridge)—are historically significant structures that crossed the Byram River at the New York–Connecticut border, connecting Port Chester, New York, and Greenwich, Connecticut. The bridges are owned by the State of New York and served a vital role in the early development of Boston Post Road, U.S. Route 1, and the transportation network linking New York City to New England. It is anticipated that replacement of the bridges will begin in 2027.



Byram Bridge (West Putnam Avenue Bridge) (2025) County Road No. 43 Bridge (Hillside Avenue Bridge) (2025)

Early Crossings and the Predecessor Bridge

The earliest known crossing of the Byram River near this location was a natural granite ledge known as “The Great Stone at Wading Place,” used by Native Americans and early European settlers traveling along the original Boston Post Road, a Colonial-era route established in 1673 for mail delivery between New York and Boston. By the mid-19th century, a two-span timber bridge, financed by nearby Port Chester, replaced the natural ford. The responsibility for maintenance and repair of the bridge was transferred to Westchester County by the New York State Legislature in 1886. The following year the county determined that the timber bridge was unsafe and opted to replace it with a more permanent structure.



Byram Bridge was featured on many turn-of-the-20th-century postcards.

(Source: Cardcow.com available at <https://www.cardcow.com/540602/port-chester-new-york-byram-bridge/>
Accessed April 8, 2025)

Byram Bridge (1888)

At the request of Westchester County, J.A. Kirby, Port Chester's village engineer, developed two bid options for the new bridge, which was to be either an iron truss or a stone arch. Although bridge building companies had developed low priced, mass-produced, industrially manufactured rolled iron shapes, which were cheaper and easier to erect, the lowest bid was for a new stone arch bridge submitted by contractor William McCabe of Mamaroneck, New York. The two-span stone-arch bridge was constructed for \$14,750.00, which was \$127 cheaper than the lowest iron truss option. After completion in early 1889, the bridge quickly became a regional landmark associated with the "Gateway to New England" because it straddled the Byram River along the Boston Post Road, the principal route between New York and Connecticut. Because of its popularity along the Boston Post Road, the bridge was also featured on early 20th-century postcards and admired for its elegant arches and rusticated masonry. The bridge was widened in 1911 to accommodate an increase in traffic and dedicated sidewalks were added at this time.

Improvements to the Boston Post Road

Upgrades to the roadway and bridge approaches were also completed in each state, consisting of two 10-foot lanes of new pavement and 5-foot shoulders between the bridge and Greenwich in 1912, and a new roadway surface and curbing on North Main Street/West Putnam Avenue in Port Chester in 1922. The segment within Connecticut was widened to 36 feet in 1924.



Both the picturesque building constructed in the 1920s to house a sewage ejector station and stone retaining walls along the New York Side of the Byram River complimented the Byram Bridge at right edge of photograph (1933).

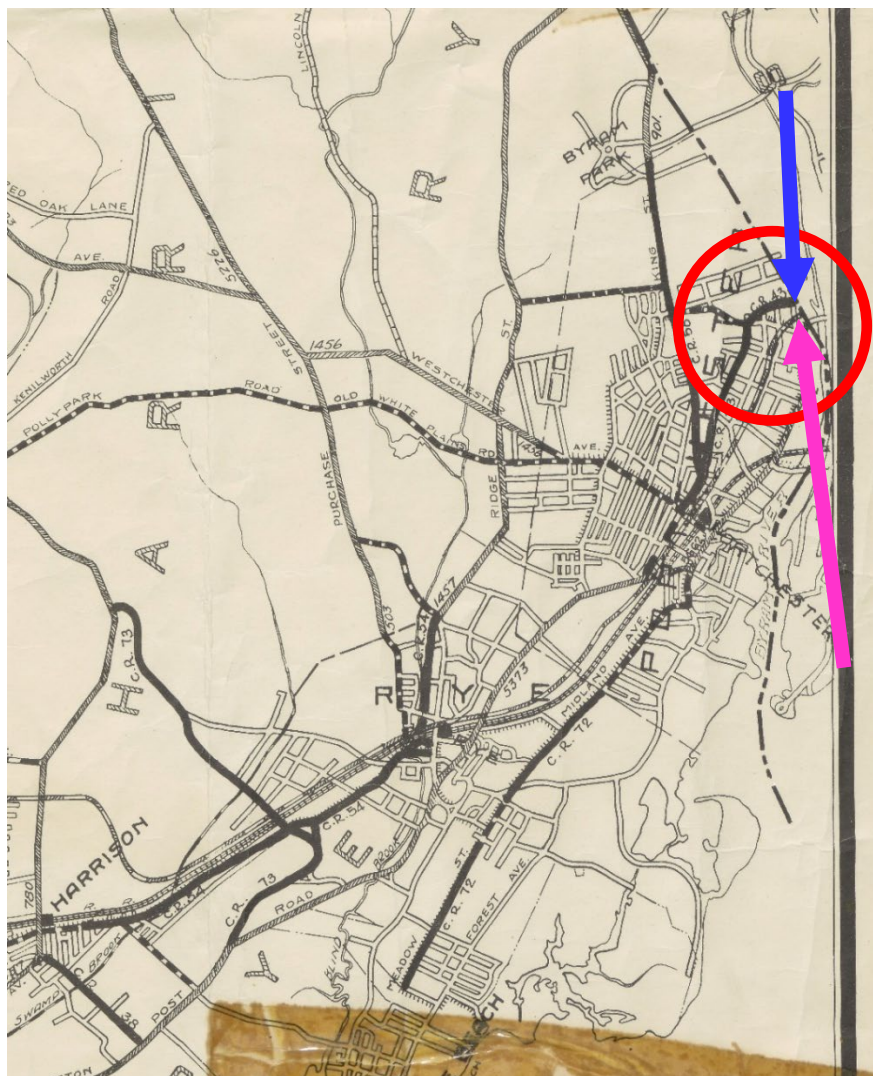
*(Source: Westchester County Emergency Work Bureau, White Plains, N.Y. 1933. *What Your Work Relief Dollars Bought for You; a Report to the Board of Supervisors and the Taxpayers of the 18 Towns That Make up the Westchester County Public Welfare District by Their Emergency Work Bureau of Westchester County, Covering the Period from November 7, 1931 to August 15, 1933.*)*

County Road No. 43 Bridge (1926)

To alleviate traffic congestion on the Boston Post Road, Westchester County constructed a new bridge about 300 feet north of the Byram Bridge in 1926. Designed by Charles MacDonald, Westchester County's first full-time engineer, the two-span reinforced concrete T-beam bridge featured stone-clad facades and arched fascias to visually complement the older Byram Bridge. Built by Albert E. Castle, Inc. of Brooklyn, New York, who was awarded the contract for his low bid of \$52,482.70, the bridge was part of a broader initiative to modernize the county's road network during the automobile boom of the 1920s. The bridge carried westbound traffic on the newly designated County Road No. 43, creating a one-way pair with the eastbound 1888 bridge and improving traffic flow across the state line.

Historical Context and Regional Impact

Automobile and truck traffic continued to increase during the early 20th century. The connection of roadways into a coherent system facilitated their improvement by shifting the fiscal responsibility for their maintenance and modernization from local villages and towns to county, state, and federal governments. A system of county roads was developed by Westchester County in 1929. County Road No. 43 was extended from the state line into Port Chester and included the new bridge. Byram Bridge was part of New York State Highway 5662. Both bridges were located along the newly designated U.S. Route 1, which was the easternmost and longest north-south highway in a nationwide road network, created in 1926. Additional measures to alleviate traffic between New York and Boston included the construction of the Merritt Parkway in 1938 and the Connecticut Turnpike (Interstate [I]-95) in 1958.



Detail of 1929 Westchester County Road Map showing location of 1888 Byram Bridge (pink arrow) along State Highway 5662 and 1926 County Road No. 43 Bridge (blue arrow) along County Road No. 43.

(Source: Westchester County Archives, Elmsford, New York)

Flooding at the Byram River Bridges

The 30 square miles of the Byram River watershed has experienced multiple flood events caused by major storms, significantly damaging structures upstream of the bridges. Studies were completed following storm events in 1938, 1955, 1971, 1972, and 1975. The Byram River Basin Study, completed in 2009 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), recommended a feasibility level study for Byram River Basin. The 2020 feasibility study recommended the replacement of the Byram River Bridges following the conclusion that they constricted the flow of river and increased the upstream water surface elevation.

Bridge Replacement

In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, USACE and the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred that both Byram River Bridges slated for replacement are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In 2019, USACE

entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the New York SHPO and Connecticut SHPO to minimize the effects of removal of these historically significant bridges. Stipulations of the MOA include preparation of a Historic American Engineering Record report on the bridges, a treatment plan to guide historic bridge removal, historically sensitive bridge replacement designs, and this brief document which has been made available to the public.