

# *Galloping Gertie*

A disaster waiting to happen



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



Before there was a bridge, ferries were the main way that people crossed from Gig Harbor to Tacoma. The car ferry landing was just outside the mouth of Gig Harbor, and another was located at the tip of Point Fosdick. The *Skansonia* ferry was built in 1929 and was 165 feet long. It ferried cars across the Narrows until the first Narrows Bridge was built in 1940... then again after the bridge collapsed.

Bridge design proposed by David B. Steinman, 1928.



Civic groups in Tacoma and surrounding areas started trying to get a bridge across the Narrows in the late 1920s. Many proposals emerged and the state legislature passed a law authorizing a bridge in 1929.

## Compare and Contrast

HARBOR HIST



First Narrows Bridge, designed by Clark Eldridge and Leon Moisseiff, 1940. Photo by James Bashford



What is this? Why do you think the Harbor History Museum has it in its collection? Why do you think it is in this slideshow?



This is the 4x5 Graflex R. B. Super D camera used by James Bashford to capture the collapse of the Narrows Bridge on November 7, 1940. Bashford took all of the following black and white photographs, as he had been hired to document construction of the bridge.



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

Black and white photograph of an individual standing outside the electric safety fence looking in at the construction area for the bridge. The two towers of the bridge were the first parts constructed. 1938 – 1939. Photographer: James Bashford



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

Catwalks were strung from the towers where the final suspension cables would hang. The cables that held the roadbed were hung from these main lines. 1938 – 1939. Photographer: James Bashford



View from the tower to the Tacoma side where the toll booths were under construction.  
1938 – 1939. Photographer: James Bashford





HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

First Narrows bridge under construction. The first section of roadbed was attached to the lowest parts of the suspension cable. 1938 – 1939. Photographer: James Bashford



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

Cable spool from the first Narrows Bridge. Found by a scuba diver in the 1950s. Cable went through the hole in the middle of the spool. Height: 10.5 in, diameter: 10 in.



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

First Narrows Bridge under construction looking at the tower, part of the deck/roadbed, and part of catwalk. 1938 – 1939. Photographer: James Bashford



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

First Narrows Bridge under construction looking west toward Gig Harbor, while on east anchorage. 1938 – 1939. Photographer: James Bashford



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

Bridge construction. Worker climbing wires, man on deck.  
1938 – 1939. Photographer: James Bashford



Piece of support from the 1st Narrows Bridge. Picked up from the beach by Clarence Mullenix shortly after the bridge fell. Height: 7in, width: 7in, length: 34 in. Harbor History Museum Collection



Construction of the first Narrows Bridge: Once the skeleton of the roadway was secured to the cables, concrete was poured to make a smooth, drivable surface. 1938 – 1939.

Photographer: James Bashford



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



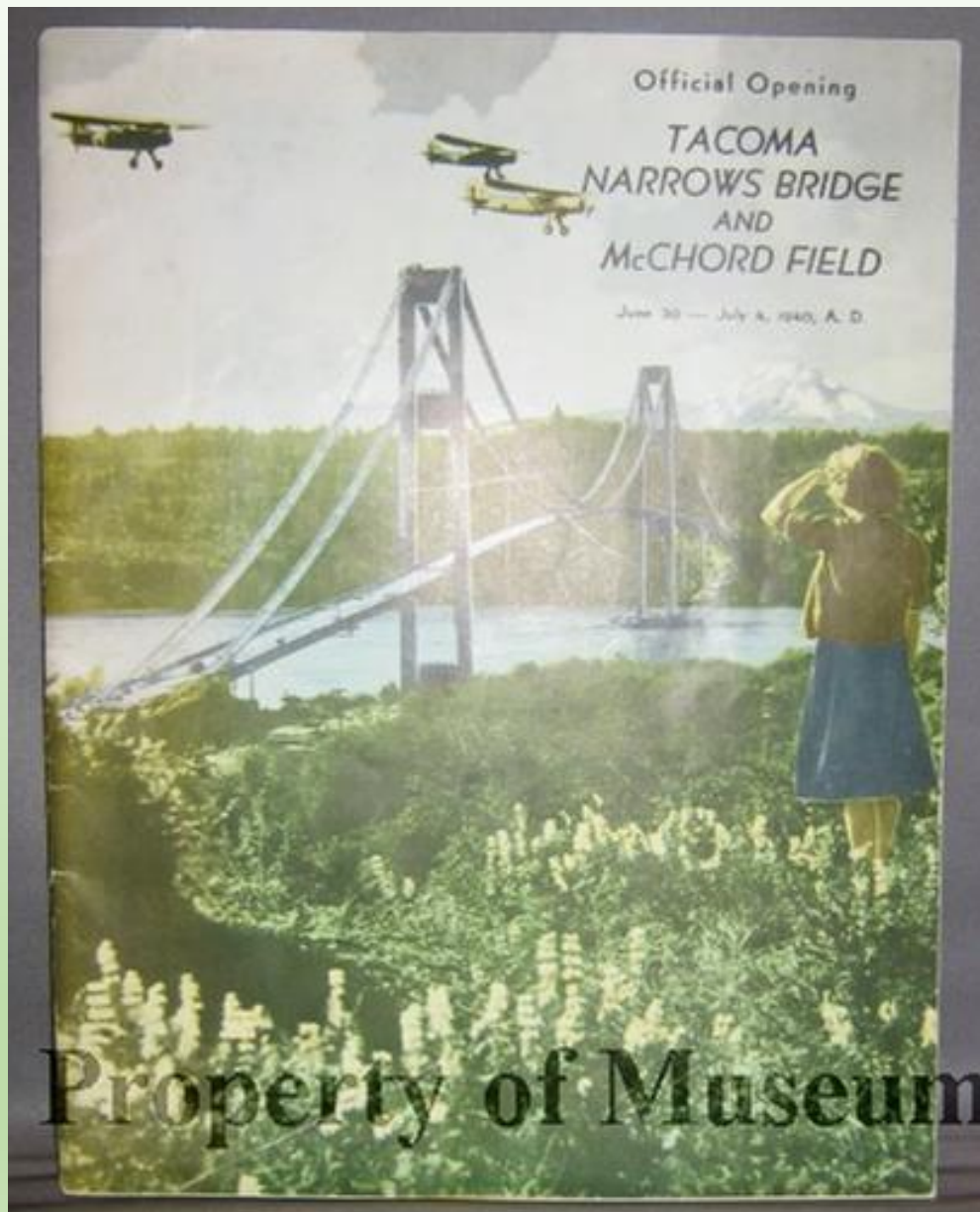
HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

Aerial view of the Narrows Bridge looking from University Place to Gig Harbor. 1938 – 1939.  
Photographer: James Bashford





Opening Day, July 1, 1940. Looking from the bridge back toward Tacoma toll booths, convertibles carry dignitaries through the toll booths and across the bridge. A large crowd can be seen in the background and photographers are on top of the toll booth. Photographer: James Bashford.



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

Souvenir booklet for opening of the 1940 Tacoma Narrows Bridge and McChord Field.  
Harbor History Museum Collection



Aerial view taken from a bridge tower, looking down the middle of the bridge. Notice there are only two lanes for traffic. Gig Harbor and the construction site can be seen in the background as well as two cars and some people on the bridge below. 1940. Photographer: James Bashford



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

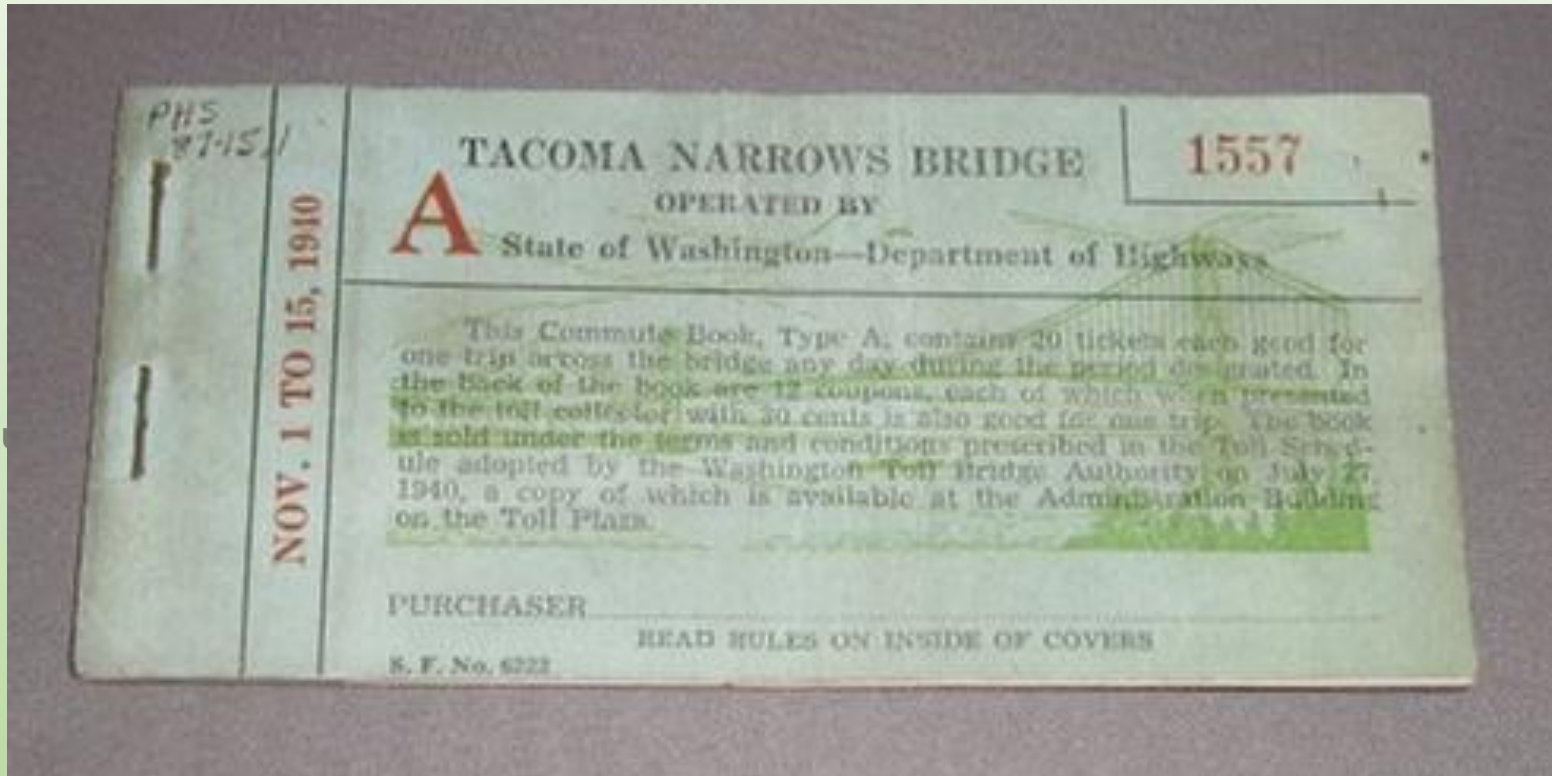


HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

Aerial view taken from the bridge tower, looking down the cable at the bridge span below. Tacoma side of the bridge can be seen in the background as well as a cars on the bridge below. 1940. Photographer: James Bashford



Bridge entrance - the cement sign reads "Tacoma Narrows Bridge." The toll booth can be seen in the background. 1940.  
Photographer: James Bashford



Tacoma Narrows Bridge toll coupon book, Nov. 1 to 15, 1940. Most coupons were never used because the bridge collapsed November 7 of that year. Harbor History Museum Collection



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

November 7, 1940, around 10am. Bridge undulating, the beginning of the collapse. An arrow drawn in the middle of the photograph points to the only car stuck on the bridge. Photograph taken from the embankment looking toward Gig Harbor. Photographer: James Bashford



November 7, 1940, about 10:30 am. Bridge beginning to crack – a chunk of roadway splashes into the water. Photograph taken from the embankment looking toward Gig Harbor. Photographer: James Bashford





HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

November 7, 1940, about 11am. Galloping Gertie, the first Narrows Bridge collapsing. Photograph taken from the embankment looking toward Gig Harbor. Photographer: James Bashford



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

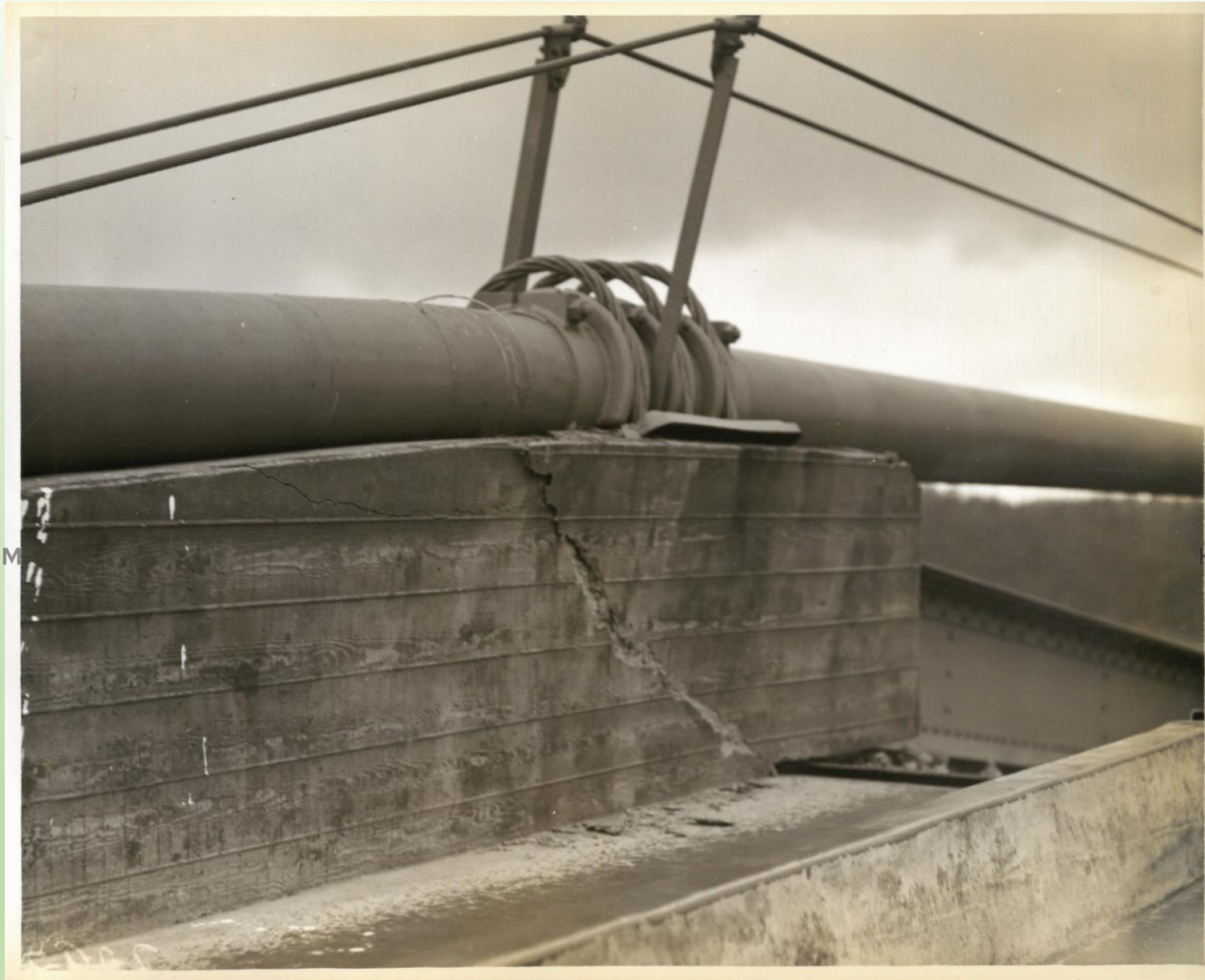


HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

November 7, 1940, around 12 noon. Galloping Gertie with a shattered center span.  
A piece of gnarled deck dangles above the water. Photographer: James Bashford



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

November 7, 1940. Narrows Bridge concrete cable support with a large crack; the damage was so severe that they began dismantling the bridge the very next day. Photographer: James Bashford



Ferries and landings at the mouth of Gig Harbor and Point Fosdick had to be put back into service after the bridge collapsed. The Pt. Fosdick ferry shown here went to Titlow Beach in Tacoma. Harbor History Museum Collection

HARBOR



Y MUSEUM



Pieces of steel believed to be from Galloping Gertie. Found underwater while building the 2007 Narrows Bridge. On display at Harbor History Museum. Donated to HHM by the Washington State Department of Transportation, which operates and maintains the bridges today.



Hope to see you soon!