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ROCKY NECK PARK TRAIL BRIDGE
Rocky Neck State Park
Foot trail over New Haven Railroad
East Lyme
New London County
Connecticut

HAER NO. CT-165

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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Location: Rocky Neck State Park
Foot trail over New Haven Railroad
East Lyme
New London County, Connecticut

USGS Quadrangle: Niantic, CT UTM: 18.730585.4575460

Engineer/Architect: State of Connecticut Department of Public Works

Fabricator: American Bridge Company

Date of Construction: 1934

Present Owner: Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Parks Division, Hartford, Connecticut

Present Use: active footbridge

Significance: Erected in 1934 by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, the Rocky Neck Park Trail Bridge is a key transportation element of Rocky Neck Park and carries a foot trail across the New Haven railroad tracks to the Rocky Neck Park Pavilion, the largest Depression-era structure built in Connecticut. The Rocky Neck Park Trail Bridge is also an unusual surviving example of a railroad footbridge.

Project Information: The National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), in association with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), is proposing a number of infrastructure projects to upgrade the Northeast Corridor Railroad right-of-way in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. In consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Amtrak and FRA have determined that the proposed "Northeast Corridor Improvement Project - Electrification: New Haven, Connecticut to Boston, Massachusetts" project will have adverse impacts on significant historic properties. Three memoranda of agreement outlining stipulations to eliminate, minimize, or mitigate adverse project impacts have been drafted by Amtrak, the FRA, and the respective SHPOs, and have been accepted by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The stipulations include the recording of the Rocky Neck Park Trail Bridge to Historic American Engineering Record standards.

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PART I DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

The Rocky Neck Park Trail Bridge is located within Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme, Connecticut. The bridge spans the Amtrak Northeast Corridor main line at Milepost 112.74, directly north of the Rocky Neck Park Pavilion. The bridge and a vehicular underpass immediately to the east provide access from the main part of Rocky Neck Park to the Pavilion and picnic grounds. The immediate area is wooded with views across tidal marshes and Long Island Sound. The bridge spans the two main line railroad tracks where they pass through a narrow rock cut.

The Rocky Neck Park Trail Bridge is a single-span steel-arch footbridge measuring 36 feet long between its stone end posts. The structure consists of two, two-part steel girder arches located 13 feet, 4 inches apart. Each arch consists of two arched steel beams, one above the other, that touch at their apex. Each lower beam has a radius of 59 feet, 6 inches and each upper beam has a radius of 142 feet. The lower beams are footed directly into the walls of the rock cut and the upper beams end at the bases of the stone end posts. The upper and lower beams are connected by ten vertical steel posts, and the two parallel arch girder units are connected by X-braces at the outermost sets of verticals. The arches support a sectional cast concrete slab deck with 3-foot 6-inch-high solid timber railings. The ends of the railings are anchored by 8-foot tall, square, horizontally-coursed fieldstone lantern piers. These piers resemble medieval towers with steep pyramidal roofs with copper caps and vertical rectangular openings below the arched tops.

PART II HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Rocky Neck Park Trail Bridge spans the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) Northeast Corridor, a high-speed passenger rail line that connects Boston, Massachusetts to New York City, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. This route originally consisted of several passenger and freight railroads with end-to-end-connections, which were consolidated into the Amtrak system in 1971. The segment of the Northeast Corridor that includes the Rocky Neck Park Trail Bridge was originally chartered in 1848 as the New Haven and New London Railroad. Construction was completed in 1852, and in 1858 the railroad was taken over by the New York, Providence and Boston, or the "Stonington Road". In 1892 the New York-to-Boston line was included in the growing New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad (New Haven) system. Through rail connection to New York City was not realized until the Thames River at Groton, Connecticut was finally bridged in 1889 (Karr 1995:94-96).

The Rocky Neck Park Trail Bridge is an important transportation feature of Rocky Neck Park. This 557-acre tract overlooking Long Island Sound was acquired by the State of Connecticut in 1931. Park improvements were started by the Federal Emergency Relief Association in 1934 and completed by the Civilian Works Administration in 1936. The bridge was fabricated by the American Bridge Company of Trenton, New Jersey. American Bridge, a subsidiary of the United States Steel Corporation, was founded in 1900 and rapidly became a dominant steel fabrication concern, absorbing more than half of the nation's steel fabricating capacity (Darnell 1984:B5-86). The adjacent 356-foot long Rocky Neck Park Pavilion was the largest of all Depression-era Works Progress Administration public works projects constructed in Connecticut. The Rocky Neck Park Trail Bridge was built to connect the Pavilion with the parking lot, picnic areas, and hiking trails, and was augmented by a vehicular underpass located east of the bridge (McCahon 1985).

The Rocky Neck Park Trail Bridge is a small but intact example of a steel arch, a bridge building method developed in the early twentieth century and later superseded by concrete and structural steel. The arch form was likely chosen for the Rocky Neck Park Trail Bridge in 1934 for its aesthetic rather than

for any engineering advantage. Especially in its end piers, the bridge shares the picturesque, rustic scheme of the Park Pavilion and other similar WPA-era structures which stressed the use of local, natural materials (Anon. 1993).

PART III SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Plans and Drawings

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Parks Division, Hartford, Connecticut.

B. Historic Views

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Parks Division, Hartford, Connecticut. View across deck, ca. 1965.

C. Bibliography

Anon. Historic Resource Summary Sheet for the Rocky Neck Park Trail Bridge. 1993.

Darnell, Victor. Directory of American Bridge Building Companies 1840-1900. Washington, D.C.: Society for Industrial Archaeology, 1984.

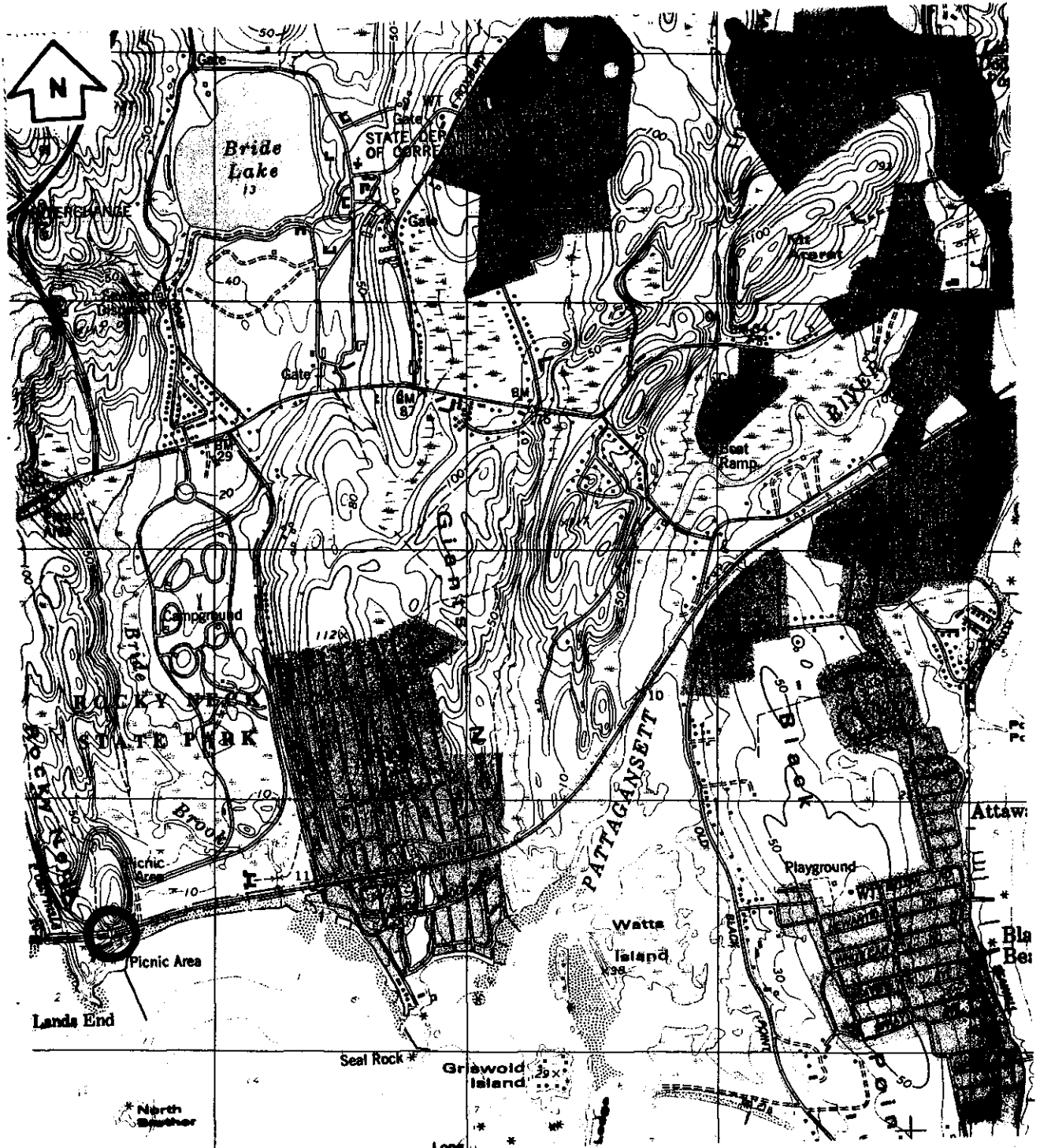
Karr, Ronald Dale. The Rail Lines of Southern New England: A Handbook of Railroad History. Papparel, Massachusetts: Branch Line Press, 1995.

McCahon, Mary E. Historic Resources Inventory Form for the Rocky Neck Park Pavilion. In Connecticut State Parks and Forests Depression-Era Federal Work Relief Program Structures Thematic Resources National Register of Historic Places Nomination. Hartford, Connecticut: Connecticut Historical Commission, 1985.

D. Interviews

None conducted

Location Map



Source: USGS Quad, Niantic, CT