

Albert Abair – attended 1929 opening day celebration
Interviewed by Mountain Lake PBS on September 29, 2011

“We lived on a farm down in Pantton, down by Arnold’s Bay. I don’t know if you know where that is. Benedict Arnold is where he sunk his fleet.

Opening day festivities

I went down with my mother and father. They were running the farm and we went down to see the opening of the bridge. We drove down Lake Street, which follows the lake all the way down through. When we got down to where the West Addison Store is, I think that was something that that store had just recently opened. I think they built it and opened it knowing that the bridge was going to be opening so they’d be right there to get business.

But, that’s as far as we could drive. The road was - - from Addison Corners down on [Route] 17 all the way to the bridge was full of cars and so we had to park there and we walked from there down to the bridge, which is about two miles. And, where I was, and my folks and myself we were down on the lakeshore. I would say that’s in between where the bridge is and where the ferry is now, in that area. And, of course, there was a ferry running there at that time from – right there at Chimney Point and they would go out and go over to Port Henry. So, that closed, I guess, probably, the day after they opened the bridge. I’m not even sure if that was just a pedestrian ferry or if - - I don’t remember seeing cars go on it but, of course, the road was full of cars so I don’t think traffic could move anyway. But - - So, I don’t really know for sure if it was a ferry that carried cars or just pedestrians...

They had a lot of boat races and you know stuff like that and, of course, all of the ceremony of all the big wheels was up on the bridge, so, that was quite a ways from where I was standing.

The thing that I couldn’t quite figure out back in those days there wasn’t that many cars but to have the road full of cars there must have been people from a long ways away that came down to see that and think what it’s going to be now when they open this new one with the amount of traffic there is.

They had some speed boats and stuff out there racing and I remember one thing that - - some guy with an old World War I airplane, one of those double wingers with an open cockpit, flew under that bridge and looped it and nobody else seems to remember that that I’ve talked with but I remember it.

[didn’t go onto the bridge on opening day] I figured I had walked far enough. We had to walk all the way back too.

I think we went down there before the bridge opened too. If I remember right, we went down when they were building it. There was just had the cement piers in when I first remember going down there to see it. But, then when it was all built and it opened we went down that day.

The 1929 bridge

I don’t remember what the toll was on it at that time. They had a toll on that bridge when they first opened it. Since I’ve lived here, my wife and I had friends over in Crown Point that we met so we used it pretty much then going over.

A lot of people were pretty stunned that they closed it and I don't think they needed to close it myself. The one thing that bothers me and that bothered a lot of people because I saw articles in the paper about it - - when they decided that the bridge was getting in bad shape, they put traffic lights up [while it was being repaired]. Well, you had trailer trucks, sometime you'd have two or three trailer trucks sitting there at the red light. When the light turns green, they all go across it at the same time. That puts tremendous amount of weight on it.

They definitely need the new bridge because they've got a lot of - - quite a few of the farmers down there, I guess, have got land over in New York State that they leased, those farms that are right close there and they're back and forth there every day even on the ferry. So, it's going to be a lot nicer for them when they get that bridge.

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They [bridge celebration committee] asked Bill Larrabee and I to be there for the thing [celebration] and they were supposed to get, if they can find it, a 1929 car for us to ride in on the opening of the bridge but I don't know. That's going to be next spring sometime, I guess, May.

Demolishing the bridge

I don't see - - when they built that bridge they didn't have all the big cranes and stuff that they've got today. Why couldn't they have taken that bridge down and run a crane up on each end of it, up on the bridge and taken that center section out like they did putting the new one up and tear it down in reverse of how they build it? They wouldn't have had all that crap in the lake. I think it was just a quicker way to get it down and they thought it was going to be cheaper. But this outfit that's building the new bridge all that stuff in the bottom of the lake bothered them getting their steel pilings down in there.

I was down on the lakeshore when they blew it up but it was in a snowstorm and you couldn't hardly see it. I heard it and I saw all the flashes of explosions when it went. I think some people felt kind of bad to see it go. I think that's why they kind of wanted to choose something that looked pretty much similar to the old one."