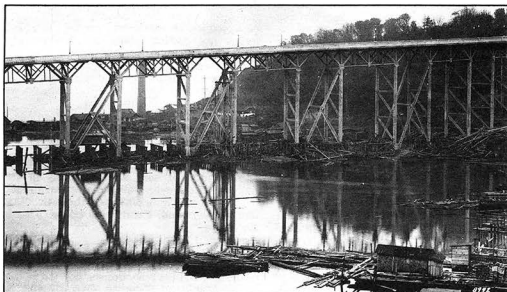


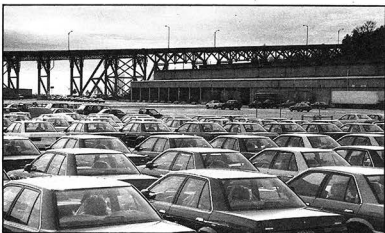
NOW AND THEN



SEATTLE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

Above — When completed in 1930, the Magnolia Bridge rose above the tides and shoreline shacks strewn along the beaches of Smith Cove.

Right — Eventually, the tidelands were reclaimed for a flood of auto imports.



PAUL DORPAT

Magnolia Link

This high bridge was an engineering wonder

WRITTEN BY PAUL DORPAT

When it was completed in 1930, the sweep of the Magnolia Bridge as it ascends west of Pier 91 was considered a modern engineering wonder: At nearly 4,000 feet, it was the largest of only three reinforced concrete spans built anywhere.

The big bridge was first proposed six years earlier when the West Wheeler Street Bridge was set on fire by a spark from a Great Northern locomotive passing beneath it. At first, the Seattle city council refused to build a high bridge to the bluff, since only 4,000 people lived west of Interbay and south of Ballard. The city chose a humbler alternative by extending the West Garfield Street Bridge with a timber trestle that reached Magnolia at an elevation just a few feet above high tide.

Magnolians, however, organized the Garfield Bridge Club and persuaded the city to replace the trestle with the soaring trusses shown here. The strewn timbers of the temporary low bridge, cluttering the base of the new span, are also evident.

This view was photographed Dec. 22, 1930, two weeks after the high bridge was dedicated with band music, the usual speeches and a procession of motorists and pedestrians. Then the tidelands of Interbay still reached far north of Garfield Street, requiring the bridge to be built above piles driven 20 to 40 feet into the ground. Now the tide basin has been reclaimed and blacktopped as a parking lot — most often for Japanese imports.

PAUL DORPAT SPECIALIZES IN HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHY AND HAS PUBLISHED SEVERAL BOOKS ON EARLY SEATTLE.