Merritt Parkway, Guinea Road Bridge HAER No. CT-73
(Rocky Craig Road Bridge)
Spanning the Merritt Parkway at the 8.12 mile mark
Stamford
Fairfield County
Connecticut

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Merritt Parkway, Guinea Road Bridge
(Rocky Craig Road Bridge)

HAER No. CT-73

Location:	Spanning the Merritt Parkway at the 8.12 mile mark in Stamford, Fairfield County, Connecticut UTM: 18.618200.4550690 Quad: Stamford, Connecticut
Construction Date:	August 1937
Engineer:	Connecticut Highway Department
Architect:	George L. Dunkelberger, of the Connecticut Highway Department, acted as head architect for all Merritt Parkway bridges.
Contractor:	Paul Bacco Construction Company Stamford, Connecticut
Present Owner:	Connecticut Department of Transportation Wethersfield, Connecticut
Present Use:	Used by traffic on Guinea Road to cross the Merritt Parkway
Significance:	The bridges of the Merritt Parkway were predominately inspired by the Art Deco and Art Moderne architectural styles of the 1930s. Experimental forming techniques were employed to create the ornamental characteristics of the bridges. This, combined with the philosophy of incorporating architecture into bridge design and the individuality of each structure, makes them distinctive.
Historians:	Todd Thibodeau, HABS/HAER Historian Corinne Smith, HAER Engineer August 1992

For more detailed information on the Merritt Parkway, refer to the Merritt Parkway History Report, HAER No. CT-63.

LOCAL HISTORY

In 1640, agents of the New Haven Colony bought land on the banks of the Rippowam River where it meets the Long Island Sound. The following year, twenty-nine families from Wethersfield purchased these lands and moved there under the leadership of the Reverend Adam Davenport. The small settlement took the name Stamford even though it was still under the jurisdiction of the New Haven Colony. Stamford would continue to grow, and at one point included parts of Greenwich, Bedford, Pound Ridge, New Canaan, and Darien. In 1685, Stamford received its town patent from the Connecticut General Assembly. By 1700 its population had grown to 585; over the next century this number increased dramatically to 4,465.[1]

"Stamford began as a typical rural New England village and remained an agrarian community throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."[2] The region maintained around 4,000 residents until the arrival of the railroad in 1848. The introduction of the train meant that Stamford was less then two hours from New York City. The railroad also caused a boom in manufacturing. By 1850 the population increased to 5,000, and thirty years later this number more than doubled to 11,000.

Stamford's proximity to New York, combined with inexpensive land, and the availability of cheap foreign-born labor enabled many local companies to prosper and expand. The Stamford Manufacturing Company, the St. John Woodworking Company, the Stamford Woolen Mills, and the Yale & Towne Manufacturing Company, employed thousands of workers by the early 1890s.[3]

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[1]D. Hamilton Hurd, History of Fairfield County, Connecticut, (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis Co., 1881), 692.

[2]Wayne Russell, "That Special Blend--Stamford's Melting Pot," Stamford Past and Present, 1641-1976, (Stamford: Stamford Bicentennial Committee, 1976), 67.

[3]Russell, 67.

With this expansion of manufacturing came increased traffic on the main artery through town, the Boston Post Road. By the end of World War I, local residents were clamoring for a solution to the vehicular congestion. Unlike other communities along the Merritt that suffered through many conflicts, most residents in Stamford worked together to have the roadway completed as soon as possible.[4]

BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

Guinea Road traverses the few blocks from Stanwich Road on the south side of the parkway to June Road on the north side. The Daniel Deering Construction Company of Norwalk, CT, received the contract to grade the Merritt Parkway from Taconic Road, in Greenwich, to Guinea Road, in Stamford (ConnDot project #180-20). While the Guinea Road Bridge is located within this section of the Merritt, the grade separation and bridge contract went to the Paul Bacco Construction Company of Stamford, CT (ConnDot project #180-45).[5] The bridge cost $28,921 and was under construction from May 12, 1937, to the fall of that year. The paving work for this region of the Merritt extended from Taconic Road to Wire Mill Road, in Stamford. This contract was awarded to the New Haven Construction Company of New Haven, CT (ConnDot project #180-92). The Guinea Road Bridge has received little maintenance since it was built.[6]

[4]"Merritt Parkway Opens," Stamford Advocate, 3 July 1938, p. 1.

[5]Contract Card File, Map File and Engineering Records Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation, Wethersfield, CT.

[6]Guinea Road Bridge, DOT #700; Bridge Maintenance File, Engineering Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation, Newington, CT.

BRIDGE DESCRIPTION

The Guinea Road Bridge is an 80'-long reinforced-concrete arch with 21'-6"-long wing walls designed in a rustic style.[7] The 36' wide bridge spans the Merritt Parkway at right angles, providing a 60' wide roadway. The arch springs from an abutment that extends back under the arch and is reinforced along the bottom and back side as an extension of the extrados steel of the arch. The intrados of the span follows a segmental curve with radius of 85'. The extrados curves to thicken the arch from 1'-9" at the crown to more than 5' at the springline. A concrete buttress behind and integral with the abutment counteracts the thrust of the arch.

The intrados of the arch is faced with white stone voussoirs with an uneven radial depth, increasing in depth toward the springline. Each voussoir is drilled on each side for hooks that are embedded into the concrete. All other rubble masonry on the bridge is made from cement and is also embedded into the concrete and hooked every four square feet. The rubble masonry varies in color from pinks to tans to dark browns. The solid rubble handrail is set with a slight vertical curve. Boulders are piled around the base of the arch so the bridge appears to spring from natural rock. The construction drawings call for the Connecticut state coat of arms to be displayed on the inside of the pylons, but it does not appear anywhere on the bridge. Presently, vines cover the ends of the bridge.

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[7]Larry Larned, former historian at the Connecticut Department of Transportation, has found a photograph of a bridge in Burrowdale, England, which he believes was the model for Dunkelberger's design of the Guinea Road Bridge.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Stamford Bicentennial Committee. Stamford Past and Present, 1641-1976. Stamford: Stamford Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Stamford Advocate. 1937-1939.

———. Contract Card File. Map File and Engineering Records Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation: Wethersfield, CT. This includes construction drawings, copies of which are in the HAER field records.

———. Bridge Maintenance File. Engineering Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation: Newington, CT.

PROJECT INFORMATION

This recording project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division of the National Park Service, Robert J. Kapsch, Chief. The Merritt Parkway recording project was sponsored and funded by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDot) and the Federal Highway Administration.

The fieldwork, measured drawings, historical reports and photographs were prepared under the general direction of Eric N. DeLony, HAER Chief, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS Historian.

The recording team consisted of Jacqueline A. Salame (Columbia University), architect and field supervisor; Mary Elizabeth Clark (Pratt Institute) and B. Devon Perkins (Yale University), architectural technicians; Joanne McAllister-Hewlings (US/ICOMOS-Great Britain, University of Sheffield), landscape architect; Corinne Smith (Cornell University), engineer; Gabrielle M. Esperdy (City University of New York) and Todd Thibodeau (Arizona State University), historians; and Jet Lowe, HAER photographer.