

The Canton Bridge Company

In the early 20th century, the Canton Bridge Company, which built the College Avenue Bridge, emerged as a premier bridge builder, both within its native State of Ohio, in Pennsylvania, and in the nation (Ohio Department of Transportation, 1983). Three other Canton-built bridges listed in the Pennsylvania Historic Bridge Inventory (Kennerdell, built in 1906; Grove City, date unknown, and Greenville, built in 1902) are Pratt truss bridges. In 1891, Canton, Ohio, acquired its second important bridge company, the Canton Bridge

Company. The first company, Wrought Iron Bridge, had been founded in 1866 by David Hammond and was purchased by the American Bridge Company in 1899. In 1892, David Hammond, the "Daddy of steel bridge building in Ohio," became one of the original stockholders and officers of the new Canton Bridge Company. Hammond brought with him many of the skilled workers formerly employed by the Wrought Iron Bridge Company. In 1900, Canton Bridge Company's large (492 feet by 70 feet) production plant was one of the most complete bridge building facilities in America. The plant employed 175 workers, and speaking tubes and telephones connected the central office with every shop in the plant.

But it was Canton Bridge's extensive and efficient network of salesmen and sales offices that made the company one of America's outstanding bridge companies. Canton Bridge had sales offices in New York City, Kansas City, Omaha, Nebraska, as well as in Columbus and Toledo, Ohio. David Hammond's sons, H. G. Hammond, G. I. Hammond, and V. H. Hammond, the "Hammond Brothers," manned not only the midwest offices in Toledo, Columbus, and Canton, Ohio, but also handled the large Pennsylvania bridge market. Significantly, the Canton Bridge Company specialized in building highway bridges over small country streams. In 1901, Canton Bridge built 25 percent of all Ohio bridges and erected 886 bridges nationwide. Between 1891 and 1901, the company erected 6,003 bridges of various sizes from small 20-foot-long country bridges to a 223-foot bridge in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the large 800-foot bridge over the Wabash River in Perrysville, Indiana (American Pictorial Monthly 1902:16-20; Heald 1949:628-631).