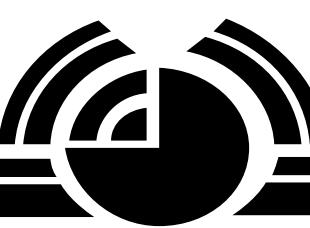


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Squirrel Hill Historical Society



The Bridges of Squirrel Hill



Squirrel Hill's bridges, past and present, not only vary in appearance and size—they also vary in their histories. They were built at different times and for different reasons.



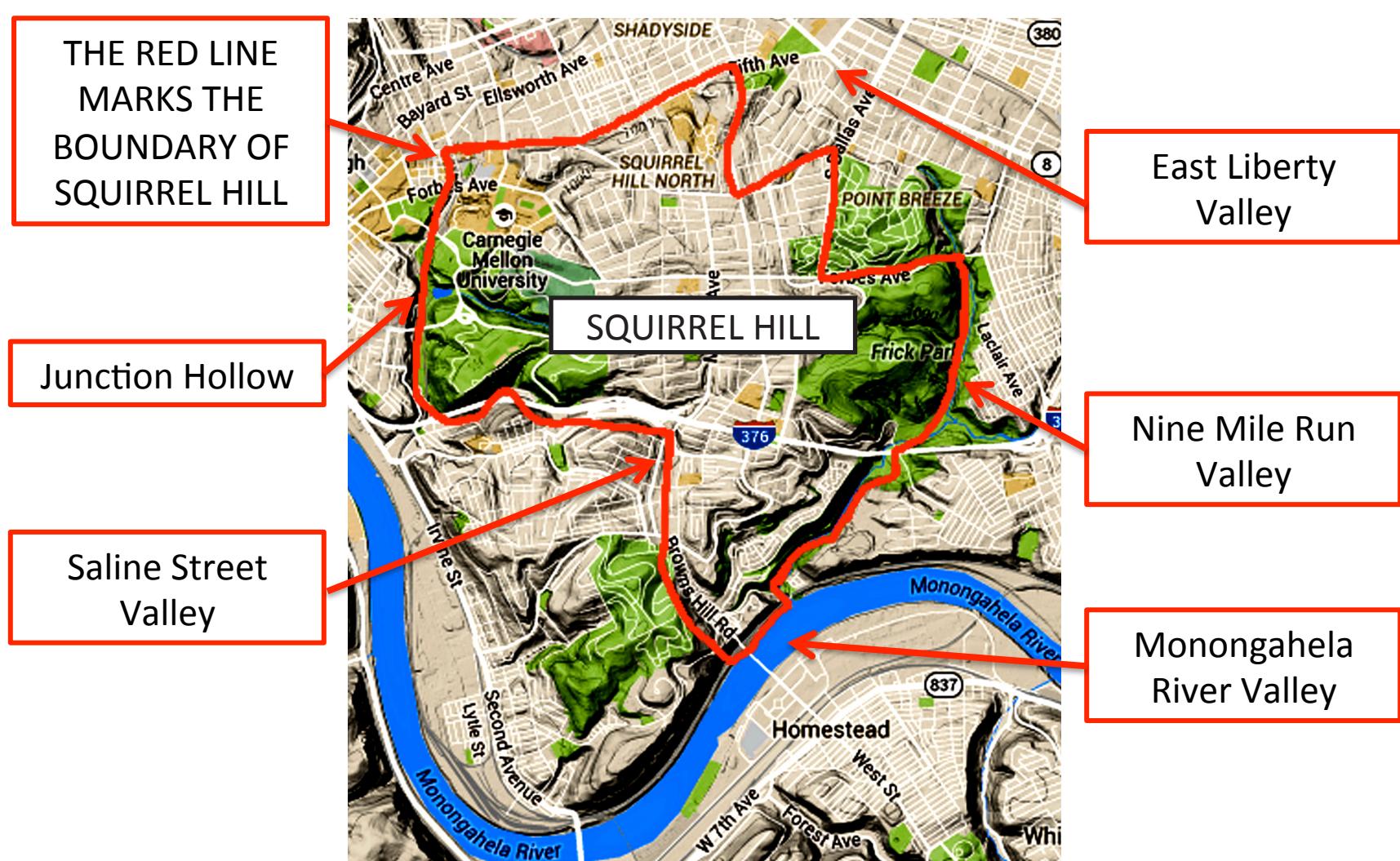
How many other communities can boast of having a huge concrete arch Interstate bridge? The Parkway East bridge over Commercial Street was constructed in 1951.

Squirrel Hill Needs Bridges Because It Is Surrounded by Valleys.

When people are asked what bridges Squirrel Hill has, puzzled looks usually result.

However, the truth is that Squirrel Hill has a lot of bridges because it is on a hill that is surrounded by deep valleys.

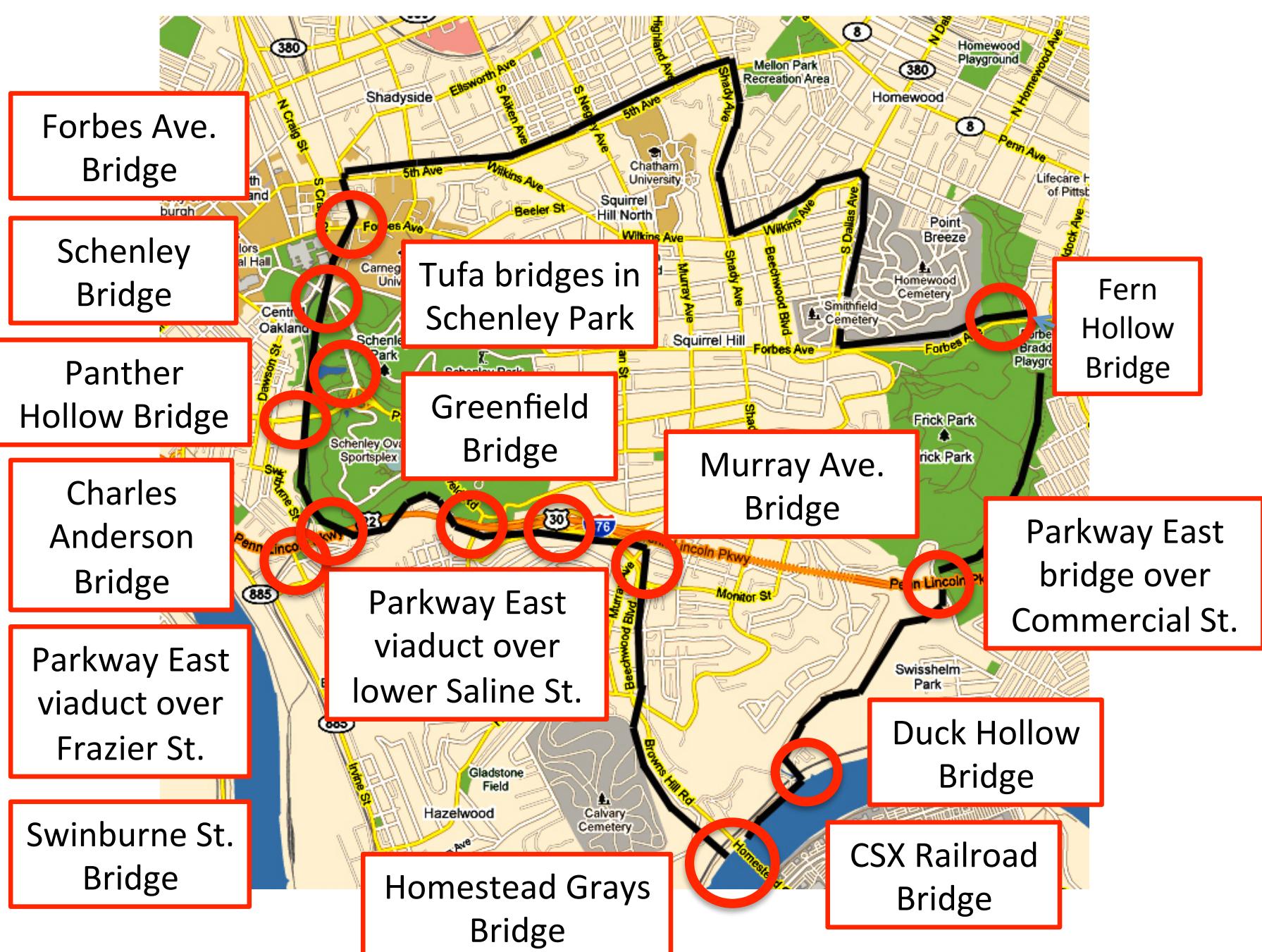
The Topography of Squirrel Hill



Squirrel Hill's Bridges

Most of the bridges connect Squirrel Hill to other neighborhoods. Some of the bridges have been replaced once, some twice. Some are small, some are massive. They range from Interstate highway bridges to trail bridges in Schenley Park. There is even a railroad bridge. All have interesting stories.

The Bridges of Squirrel Hill



Beechwood Boulevard (Greenfield) Bridge

The crumbling Beechwood Boulevard (Greenfield) Bridge, built in 1923, was closed for replacement in October 2015. The graceful concrete arch bridge, decorated with urns and carved pylons, was designed to be the grand entrance to Schenley Park at the end of a sweeping boulevard connecting that park with Highland Park. The northern part of the road became Washington Boulevard, the southern part, Beechwood Boulevard.

The bridge was the second bridge on the site. The first was a temporary wood and steel structure built in 1911. It was called the William Pitt Bridge because Beechwood Boulevard was called William Pitt Boulevard for a short time.

The new bridge was completed in 2017. It has a steel arch and some of the decorative elements that graced the old bridge. Its arch is green as a reference to Greenfield..



The poster to the right publicized a town meeting held in Greenfield to discuss issues relating to the closing of the Greenfield Bridge.



THE YEAR OF THE BRIDGE



Original Bridge—William Pitt Bridge, 1911



Current Bridge—Beechwood Blvd. (a.k.a Greenfield) Bridge, 1923



New Bridge — Beechwood Boulevard Bridge, 2017

Murray Avenue Bridge

The Murray Avenue Bridge has been replaced twice. The first bridge was strictly a trolley bridge. The second bridge was the older “sister” to the Beechwood Boulevard (Greenfield) Bridge—a graceful, embellished concrete arch bridge. It was replaced in 1968.

Two of the decorative elements of the concrete arch bridge remain. Pedestals with the seal of Pittsburgh, topped by eagles, now guard the entrance road to the lock and dam at the intersection of Washington and Allegheny River Boulevards in Highland Park.



The first Murray Avenue Bridge, 1895



The second Murray Avenue Bridge, 1914

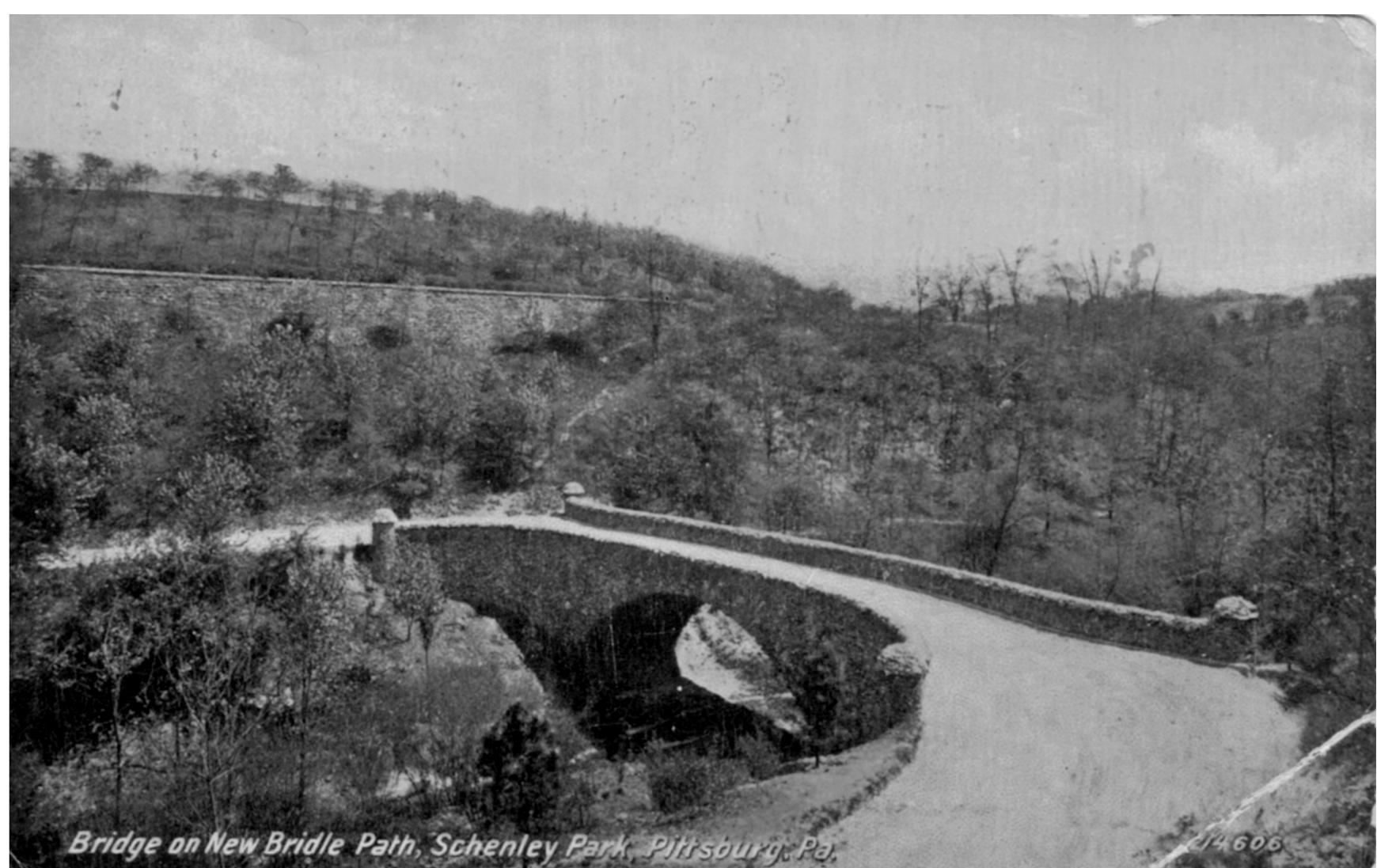


The third Murray Avenue Bridge, 1978

Tufa Bridges in Schenley Park

The two tufa bridges on the walking trails in Schenley Park may be small, but they are significant. They were Pittsburgh's first concrete arch bridges, built around 1908, at a time when engineers were not familiar with the properties of concrete.

The bridges are faced with tufa, a porous limestone, to make them picturesque. Tufa also lines the aisles of Phipps Conservatory and covers a small brick arch bridge in the Stove Room.



Old postcard showing tufa-covered arch bridge in Schenley Park near Bartlett Street

Tufa-covered arch bridge
in Phipps Conservatory
Stove Room



Brown's Bridge



Bridges and Tunnels of Allegheny County, PA
2001 Bruce S. Criddlebaugh

Homestead was a bustling steel town, and Squirrel Hill was a conduit from Homestead to downtown Pittsburgh and East Liberty. The first bridge connecting Homestead and Squirrel Hill was near the mouth of Nine Mile Run. It was the 1897 Homestead & Highland Bridge, also called Brown's Bridge because Captain Samuel S. Brown headed the group of investors who built it. Captain Brown owned coal mines, coke ovens and a fleet of steamboats to carry coal and coke to roaring mills and factories from Pittsburgh to New Orleans. He also owned the trolley company that ran across the bridge.

Most Pittsburgh bridges of the 1800s were built by private enterprise. Tolls paid for upkeep and generated profit.



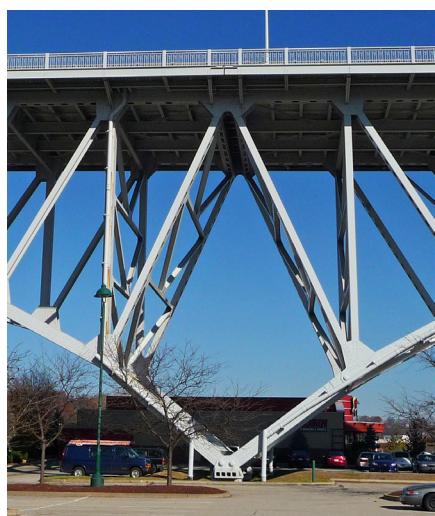
Brown's Bridge was demolished around 1938. The abutment on the Squirrel Hill side is all that remains of the bridge.



Homestead Grays Bridge



The Homestead Grays Bridge, a truly awesome 4,200-ft. bridge built in 1937, replaced the outmoded and deteriorating Brown's



Bridge. It was originally called the Pittsburgh-Homestead High Level Bridge because it soared not only over the Monongahela River but also over the busy train tracks on the Homestead side, ending the constant traffic bottlenecks at railroad crossings.

The Homestead Grays Bridge was built with innovative diamond-shaped Wichert trusses (above), which allowed otherwise continuous spans to flex independently.

The Charles Anderson Bridge in Schenley Park (below) also has Wichert trusses.



© 2008 Allegheny County, PA
Bruce S. Cridlebaugh



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Nine Mile Run Bridges



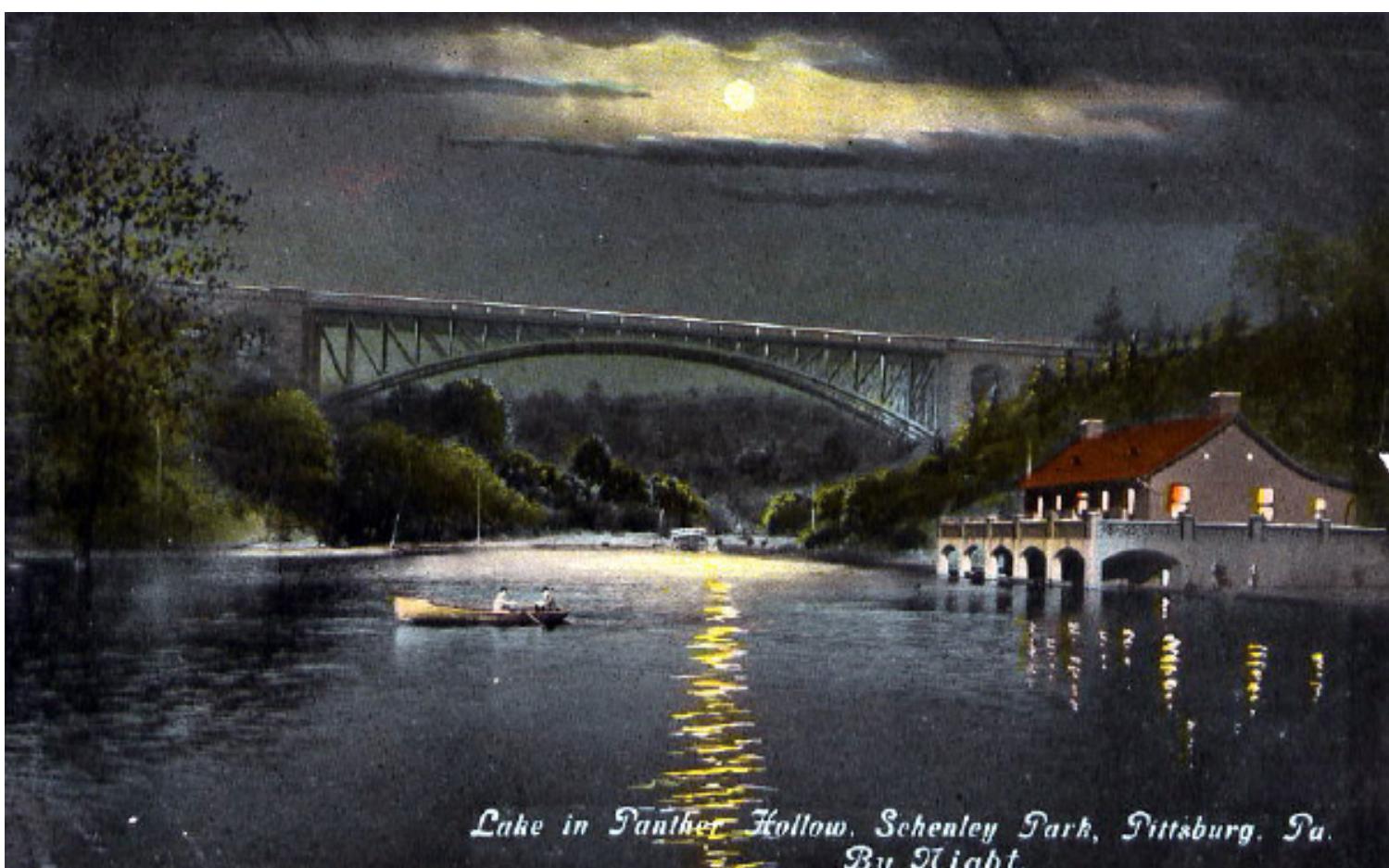
This 1927 view of Nine Mile Run valley looking east shows temporary rail bridges used for slag dumping. In the foreground is a long-gone wooden footbridge to Duck Hollow.



Included among Squirrel Hill's variety of bridges are a CSX railroad bridge and a small vehicular bridge that connects the houses in Duck Hollow to the rest of the world. One of the interesting things about this bridge is that it used to be part of Second Avenue, which once passed through Squirrel Hill on its way east. The next phase of Summerset development calls for a new bridge to be built on the other side of the railroad bridge and the old bridge to be kept as part of the Duck Hollow Trail.

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Panther Hollow Bridge and Schenley Bridge



The bronze panthers were designed by Giuseppe Moretti.

The 1895 Panther Hollow Bridge (above) and the 1887 Schenley Bridge (below) are near-identical twins. Then-Director of Public Works Edward Bigelow wanted beautiful bridges for Schenley Park. He also wanted bridge designs that would not block the scenic views from above or below. The solution was steel arch bridges.



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Fern Hollow Bridge



The Fern Hollow Bridge connects Squirrel Hill to South Braddock Avenue. The first bridge (above), built in 1901, made a realignment of Forbes Avenue necessary. It used to wind down into the valley and went along what is now Rosemary Road to South Braddock. The bridge was replaced in 1972 (below).



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Want to Know More About Bridges?

Images of America: Pittsburgh's Bridges is a book about 144 of the city's past and present bridges, including many in Squirrel Hill. It was written by SHHS member Todd Wilson, a civil engineer, and Helen Wilson, SHHS vice-president.

It can be checked out from Carnegie Library and is also available at local bookstores and on amazon.com. . .

