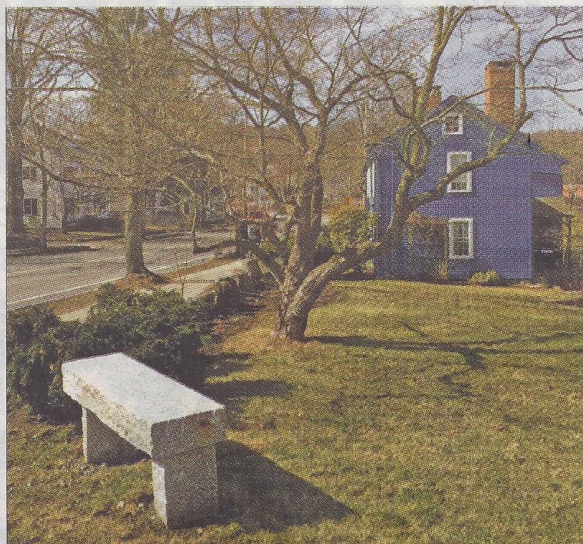


Hartshorne House's new bench once part of Longfellow Bridge



THE new bench at the Hartshorne House has been placed in an area where Lake walkers and others can rest. (Courtesy Photo)

By NANCY BERTRAND
President and Historian of
Wakefield Historical Society

WAKEFIELD — The garden at Wakefield's historic Hartshorne House has a new historic enhancement, courtesy of a Wakefield business that specializes in repurposing historic hardscape materials.

The Hartshorne House's "new" custom bench, designed for the comfort of walkers who want a brief rest in the garden of Wakefield's historic past, was once part of the historic Longfellow Bridge.

Here's how a little bit of the bridge happened to come to the Hartshorne House.

The historic bridge, created to take the place of the original West Boston Bridge, was built between 1900 and 1906. Nicknamed the Salt and Pepper bridge because of the texture of the building materials, it was designed by Edmund Wheelwright. The bridge's design was inspired by European and historic themes popularized by the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Its four large piers are fashioned to recollect the prows of Viking ships, carved in granite. Originally named the Cambridge Bridge, it was renamed the Longfellow Bridge in 1927 by the Mass. General Court.

Years of neglect resulted in structural problems for the bridge, closing it for emergency repairs in 2011. A more complete and significant restoration, begun in 2013, is scheduled for completion in 2018. Because of the historic nature of the bridge, the state's Department of Transportation and the Cambridge Historical Commission mandated that the restoration of the bridge be in keeping with its historical integrity. This would prove to be a problem, not only in the now obsolete building techniques required but also in the difficulty of matching the colors of the granite.

Originally, the plan was to simply re-use the bridge's interior granite curbing, which had to be replaced anyway in order to suit modern safety specifications. Unfortunately, the original granite curbing, originating from Deer Isle, Maine, was of a much lighter, pinker color than the famed salt and pepper Rockport granite of the main structure of the bridge. Granite excavation in Rockport ended during



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the Depression years. The task of finding great amounts of the matching Rockport granite presented a seemingly insurmountable problem. A local granite farm in Wakefield would prove the solution to the problem.

Olde New England Granite, a company specializing in repurposing hardscape materials, had been engaged to remove the granite Deer Isle curbing from the Longfellow Bridge. The company's owner, Biz Reed, remembered that he had 3,000 tons of Rockport granite sitting in his New Salem Street facility. The granite, excavated from the same quarry that had furnished the majority of the granite for the original bridge, had been salvaged from the Hines Memorial Bridge in Amesbury during a reconstruction project. It matched the Longfellow Bridge perfectly.

The pinker Deer Isle granite curbing material, salvaged by Biz Reed from the Longfellow Bridge, has been brought to Olde New England Granite's facility in Wakefield and is being reused for smaller projects. The historic granite still shows the marks of being hand cut by workers over 100 years ago and is being marketed for bird baths, planters, stepstones, reflecting pools and benches. One of these benches was earmarked for donation to Olde New England Granite's hometown of Wakefield. It was through the joint efforts of the Wakefield Historical Commission and the Wakefield DPW that the bench ultimately found its way to the garden of the Hartshorne House.

When Biz Reed contacted the Historical Commission about the possible donation, the Hartshorne House garden

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seemed a perfect fit – its location would allow the bench to be viewed and enjoyed by hundreds of Lake walkers on a daily basis and the historic Hartshorne House gardens, lovingly tended by the Hartshorne House Association's Garden Committee and the House residents, provides the perfect scene.

Olde New England Granite, one of the foremost area suppliers of reclaimed historic hardscape materials, has been featured on

"This Old House." Its granite farm contains granite salvaged throughout New England, including the old Scollay Square Police Station and park (circa 1838) as well as from the Longfellow Bridge project.

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Phone: (781) 334-4805/Fax: (781) 334-2362
oldenewenglandgranite.com
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