

An aerial, black and white photograph showing the construction of a bridge over the Raritan River. Several large, rectangular concrete piers are visible in the water, with a crane on a barge positioned between them. The bridge deck is partially completed, extending from the right side of the frame towards the center. The surrounding landscape is a mix of urban development and open land.

***The History & Technology***

*of the*  
***Edison Bridge & Driscoll Bridge***  
*over the*  
***Raritan River, New Jersey***

*Construction of the Edison Bridge, 1940.*  
*Source: New Jersey Department of Transportation.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Route 9 Edison Bridge and Garden State Parkway Driscoll Bridge cross the Raritan River together to form one of New Jersey's most vital highway links. Barring accidents or construction, as many as 275,000 vehicles per day cross these two bridges, making them perhaps the heaviest traveled twin bridges in the world.

The route across the Raritan between Perth Amboy and South Amboy has been important since the state's earliest days. In 1684, Radford's Ferry provided the link for the stagecoach line between New York and Philadelphia. For over 200 years, ferries shuttled travelers across the Raritan.

In 1875, Perth Amboy and South Amboy were joined by a bridge for the first time with the construction of the New York and Long Branch Railroad Bridge across the mouth of the Raritan River. The line ran from Long Branch to Perth Amboy, where it made connections with branches of the Pennsylvania and the Central New Jersey railroads. This new line was instrumental in the further development of seaside resorts along the Jersey shore in Monmouth and Ocean counties and was soon transporting hordes of summer beachgoers.



*Victory Bridge, in foreground, is a swing bridge, pivoting on a center pier to allow boat traffic to pass through two channels. Opening the bridge in the summer resulted in huge traffic backups. Edison Bridge, west of the Victory, was built high enough to allow all vessels to pass under. Source: NJDOT*

The railroad bridge stalled the construction of a highway bridge over the mouth of the Raritan River until 1910, when a "county bridge" was erected with a drawspan in the middle. Within a few years, it was inadequate to handle the traffic and the weight of increasingly larger trucks. Calls for a new bridge, which began in 1916, were answered ten years later by the Victory Bridge.

Again the anticipated traffic loads were grossly underestimated. No one could have predicted that the number of car registrations in the United States would triple during the 1920s to 23 million. The Roaring Twenties might well have been named for the sound of overheated cars and drivers heading to the Jersey beaches over the Victory Bridge on a typical summer weekend. Hordes of new car owners had discovered the joy of motoring to the beaches. To make matters worse, the increase in pleasure boating, also on the weekends, led to more frequent openings of the Victory Bridge. It was apparent to the locals that a second bridge, not a replacement, was required, and that it must be a fixed bridge, high enough for any conceivable vessel to pass freely under.



*Beach traffic on the Victory Bridge—visible in the background—in the late 1930s. Source: NJDOT*