

Our New Life in Longview

When we were still allowed to live in Canada, I enjoyed telling people about Gabriola's vegetable based events. Every July first (Canada Day) the rod and gun club conducted a Potato Cannon contest. Visualize PVC pipe used as a barrel, hair spray used as a propellant, a BBQ lighter to ignite it and contestants launching potatoes across a narrow body of water.

Then in September at the Fall Fair my wife and I personally conducted The Great Gabriola Squash Race. Once again imagine three 4x8 pieces of plywood mounted on a frame with a rail down the middle and elevated 8' at one end to make a 24-foot dual track where racing vehicles constructed of many materials, including at least one squash, zooming down the track.

So when we moved to Longview, Washington we were thinking it is probably a more normal community. A little reading taught us that it has been selected as one of the U.S.'s pretty city's, which it is. It's a tree city besides. But learning that the trees contain a series of bridges, which allow squirrels to travel through the canopy (unharmd by motor vehicles), puts it in the class of special places.

We have lots to explore on our bikes now. Hope you enjoy the photos and reading the descriptions. Louie takes credit for the photos of the squirrel bridges, but most of the rest is borrowed research.

Squirrel Bridges

The Nutty Narrows Bridge is a squirrel bridge in Longview, Washington. It has the title of the "World's Narrowest Bridge" and also the "World's Narrowest Animal Crossing."

The original bridge was built over Olympia Way on the west edge of the library grounds. Before the bridge was conceived and built, squirrels had to dodge traffic to and from the Park Plaza office building where office staff put out a nutty feast for the squirrels. Many times, Amos Peters and others who worked in and near Park Plaza witnessed squirrels being run over.

Amos Peters worked in construction (and was a member of The Sandbaggers, a fun-loving prankster group). One day Peters found a dead squirrel with a nut still in its mouth, so at that day's coffee break, discussion turned to squirrel safety. The group of businessmen cooked up the squirrel bridge idea and formed a committee to ask the City Council's blessing. The Council approved, and Councilwoman Bess LaRiviere jokingly dubbed the bridge "Nutty Narrows," named after the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. The name stuck!

Designed to look like a mini-suspension bridge, the 60-foot-long (18 m) span made of aluminum piping was covered with a retired fire hose to create the roadway. The total cost for the bridge was \$1000.

In 1983, Peters took down the bridge for repairs. Crosspieces were replaced and the faded sign was repainted. Upon its completion, the bridge was re-dedicated with special guests Chip 'n' Dale and Mickey Mouse from Disneyland. Also in attendance were 300 children and local dignitaries.

Upon Peters' death in 1984, a ten-foot wooden squirrel sculpture was placed near the bridge in his memory.

And then there were more... In 2011, "The Sandbaggers" initiated the annual Squirrel Fest and for several years a new squirrel bridge was inaugurated. A list of bridges can be found on the next page.

This description is from the website. "Squirrel Fest is the first of its kind on the West Coast and in the Mount St. Helens region! We're nuts over this celebration in honor of our furry friends and so are our 3,500+ guests we reconnect with annually. Longview is known for its Squirrel bridges near the Civic Center and we're excited to invite you to celebrate with us! With a wide variety of nutty activities, Squirrel Fest offers something for everyone. Squirrel Fest will take place August 21st, 2021 at Longview Civic Center Park featuring local vendors, performances, children's activities, delicious foods and more!

Launching the first Longview Squirrel Fest was a dream of a local group, The Sandbaggers, with the idea of creating a fun event that would be nutty enough for all ages. In 2019 the Rotary Club of Longview took over the event as it continued to grow and outpaced the Sandbaggers.

Each year is better than the last, growing in attendance, awareness, fun and even more shows from great local musicians, children's entertainers, and headliners that you'll just go NUTS about."

more about the first Squirrel Fest can be found at

https://tdn.com/news/local/longview-squirrel-fest-part-of-effort-to-reshape-city-identity/article_470b779c-8e6a-11e0-95f4-001cc4c002e0.html

video from the squirrel cam can be found within

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBti0Qa4c_o

List of Bridges



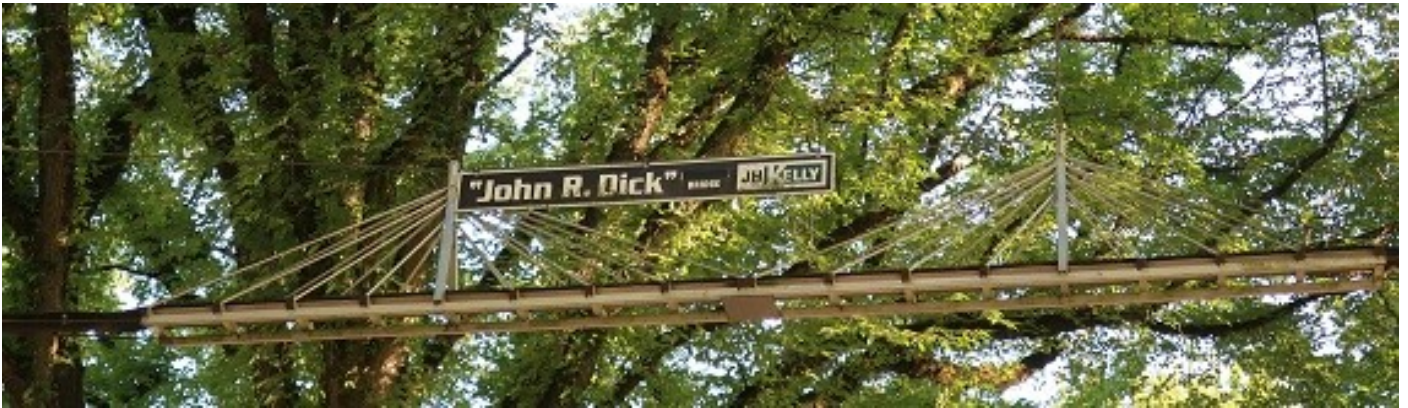
1. The Nutty Narrows Bridge

Erected 1963 by Amos Peters. Believed to be the world's first squirrel bridge. Constructed of aluminum and a fire hose. Peters constructed the bridge after seeing squirrels attempting to cross Olympia Way from the Library grounds to the Old West Side Neighborhood. (On Olympia Way near 1525 18th Avenue, between 18th Avenue and Maple St.



2. Bruce Kamp Bridge

Erected in memory of Bruce Kamp in 2011. Made of copper, and the first covered squirrel bridge in the world and is the first squirrel bridge to utilize a webcam. (It has a 24/7 squirrel web cam accessible from the lvsquirrelfest.com website.) (1318 Kessler Boulevard)



3. John R. Dick Bridge

This bridge was designed and built by John R. Dick. It was installed in 2012, shortly after Dick's death. It is based upon the Leonard Zakim Memorial Bridge in Boston. John had a lifelong fascination with bridges, and enjoyed the TV show Boston Legal, in which the bridge appeared prominently in background shots. Located at 2900 Nichols Boulevard, near RA Long High School.



4. OBEC Bridge

Constructed and donated by the company that secured the contract to construct a new bridge across Lake Sacajawea on Washington Way. This bridge has a redwood frame and metal roofing and was made to look like a scale model of a bridge fit for people. Installed in 2013. Constructed of wood with interesting architectural bracing. (Louisiana Street near 1503 23rd Avenue)



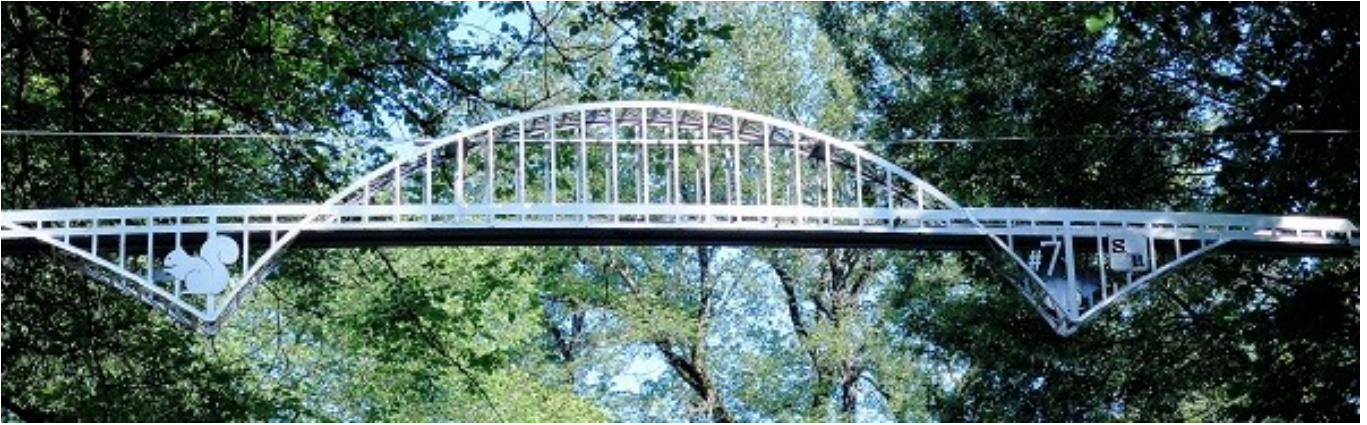
5. Safety Awareness Bridge

Designed and constructed by the Bits and Bots Robotics Club from RA Long and Mark Morris High Schools. Inspired by the memory of Linda LaCoursiere, who was struck by a car. Made of aluminum with cutouts and tinted material. The bridge features an industrial look and is made of gleaming steel. It includes colored glass panels of a walker, bicyclist and runner. Many squirrels use this bridge. Installed in 2015. (1708 Kessler Boulevard)



6. R.D. Olson Bridge

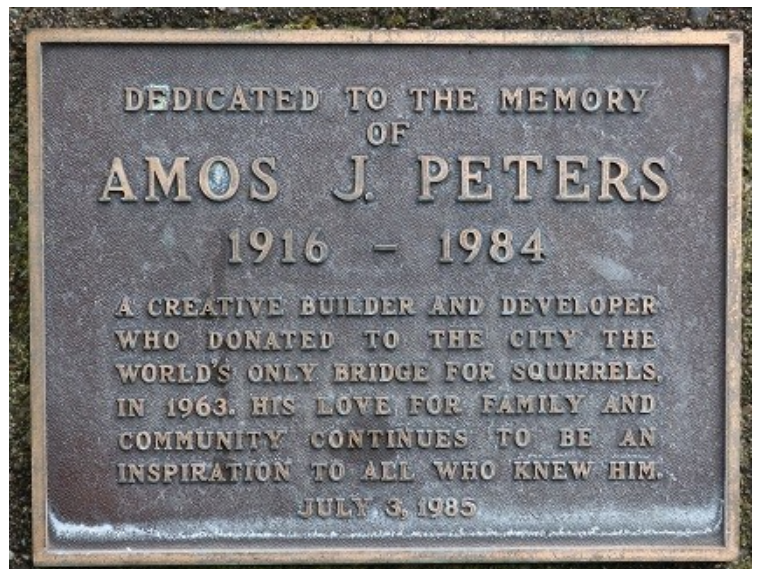
This bridge was built by R.D. Olson MFG of Kelso Washington and was designed to resemble the Lewis and Clark Bridge crossing the Columbia River. It was installed on Kessler Boulevard across from the Lion's Island, just north of Washington Way.



7. Exact scale replica of Portland's Fremont Bridge
This all-aluminum bridge was constructed by H&N Sheet Metal in Kelso. It is the longest bridge to date at 20 feet and is located on Kessler Boulevard at the end of Lake Sacajawea.

Sandbagger Squirrel Statue, erected in honor of Amos Peters by the Sandbaggers.
(Longview Public Library grounds, Olympia Way)

Squirrel Crossing Bridge



Squirrel Statue and Plaque