



# LIBERTY POLE & BRIDGE

LEGEND RECORDS “Liberty, Property & no Stamps” on a flag flown on the first Portsmouth Liberty Pole in January 1766. In response to British attempts to tax products without American representation in Parliament, the Portsmouth Sons of Liberty returned the royal commission of the local stamp agent to England. They then erected a flagstaff and rechristened the old span “Liberty Bridge”—a name it bore until the City filled the waterway in 1899. A new pole, erected with public donations in 1824, was “adorned with a cap, and surmounted with a splendid eagle” as a patriotic memorial. In 1857, a shield was attached to the pole and in 1899 the pole was again replaced to hold the regilded 1824 eagle.



## “A SPLENDID EAGLE”

In 1824, the new Liberty Pole was topped by a liberty cap and eagle carved by Laban S. Beecher of Boston. The eagle is now displayed in the Portsmouth Public Library.

Photograph courtesy of the City of Portsmouth.



## LIBERTY BRIDGE, 1813

In 1731, the town authorized several individuals to build a swing bridge, which was constructed so that its span swung sideways to allow tall masts to pass through the opening. The new span was the first deep-water bridge to connect the northern and southern sections of Portsmouth. The bridge transformed a small lane, which ran along the shore, into an important riverfront thoroughfare later named Water Street—today called Marcy Street.

*Map of the Compact Part of the Town of Portsmouth in the State of New Hampshire, 1813, J.G. Hales, cartographer. Courtesy of the Portsmouth Athenæum.*



## The LIBERTY SHIELD

In 1857, a wooden shield carved by the Bow Street firm of Gleason and Henderson was fastened to the lower part of the staff. The old shield, now located in the Sheafe warehouse, was replaced in the 1970s by a new one carved by Don Ricklefs.

*Painting of liberty shield by Arthur A. Harriman, 1932. Courtesy of the Portsmouth Athenæum.*



## TWO PHOTOGRAPHS

After 1766, when the first Portsmouth Liberty Pole was raised, Swing Bridge, as it had been called, was renamed Liberty Bridge. Again in 1795, when the citizens of Portsmouth met to protest the government’s unpopular commercial restrictions, Liberty Bridge was the scene of fiery oratory. Even as late as 1834, the nearby intersection of Charles and Marcy Streets retained the name of Liberty Square. In 1899, the City finally filled the waterway beneath the bridge and removed it.

*At left: View of the Liberty Pole and Bridge, circa 1895. Photograph courtesy of Staples-Herald Collection, Strawberry Banke Museum.*

*At right: View of the Liberty Pole, circa 1870s. Photograph courtesy of Patch Collection, Strawberry Banke Museum.*



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