

= New Harmony Toll Bridge =

The New Harmony Toll Bridge , also known as the Harmony Way Bridge , is a now @-@ closed two @-@ lane bridge across the Wabash River that connects Illinois Route 14 with Indiana State Road 66 , which is Church Street in New Harmony , Indiana . The bridge links White County , Illinois with Posey County , Indiana . The four @-@ span bridge is owned by the White County Bridge Commission and was built without federal funds in 1930 by the Big Wabash Bridge Company of Carmi , Illinois . The next bridge across the Wabash about 15 miles (24 km) downstream is the Wabash Memorial Bridge near Mount Vernon , Indiana and the next bridge upstream is for Interstate 64 , which does not allow farm vehicles .

= = Details = =

As originally designed , the bridge is 2 @,@ 579 feet (.49 of a mile) long . It has 47 spans and a 20 foot wide concrete roadway .

The bridge is the first highway bridge erected across the lower Wabash River and the oldest remaining bridge in use over the Wabash ' s length in Illinois and half of Indiana . The original owner was a private company , the Big Wabash Bridge Company of Carmi , Illinois , which was chartered by Congress to build and operate the bridge on May 1 , 1928 . The company contracted with the Nashville Bridge Company of Nashville , Tennessee to build it . The bridge opened on December 21 , 1930 , and 10 @,@ 000 people attended the dedication of the bridge on December 30 , 1930 . In 1941 , Congress created the White County Bridge Commission as a joint Illinois @-@ Indiana agency to purchase the bridge from the Big Wabash Bridge Company for \$ 895 @,@ 000 .

About 900 vehicles crossed the bridge each day . The bridge collected an average of \$ 30 @,@ 000 in monthly tolls and had \$ 22 @,@ 000 in monthly expenses . The bridge was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007 in part because of its relationship to historic New Harmony , Indiana as well as the bridge 's age . The three @-@ member Commission was established by Congress on April 12 , 1941 , but Congress repealed the statute providing for an appointment mechanism in 1998 . The Commission 's general manager , who is 75 , speculated that the bridge would close if the three current commissioners would resign or die .

In 1951 , the current toll booth on the western edge of the river was constructed by the Electronic Signal Company , to replace an earlier booth on the eastern edge . In 1952 , a tollpayer sued to exercise his right to inspect the books and records of the Commission , but lost his lawsuit and was not allowed access . In 1955 , the General Accounting Office issued a report critical of the Commission and claiming that one commissioner had a conflict of interest . In response , the U.S. Department of Justice filed a suit seeking removal of the Commissioner and recovery of the misapplied funds . However , the courts dismissed the case .

In 1994 , the Commission contracted to apply an epoxy coating on the bridge 's surface , but the coating delaminated and the Commission refused to pay the contractor claiming that the coating had not been applied correctly . After a trial , the Commission lost the lawsuit and paid .

From September 2007 to April 2008 , the bridge to closed to all traffic when cracks appeared in some of the concrete support piers . During the closure , contractors added new pilings to the existing piers and made other required repairs . In 2010 , engineers determined that the bridge required an additional \$ 6 million in repairs . The National Bridge Inventory rated the bridge " Structurally Deficient . "

= = Closure = =

On May 21 , 2012 , it was announced that the bridge would close permanently at noon on May 29 , 2012 . White County Bridge Commission member Jim Clark stated , " the cost to make repairs was more than we could imagine . " However , Clark then made the decision to close the bridge immediately after receiving the complete report from a team of nine engineers who inspected the bridge on April 29 . " I knew it was bad , but didn 't know just how bad until I received their full report

by email Monday morning , " Clark said . " Once I saw their weight @-@ load calculations , I knew we had to shut it down right away . We couldn 't wait until May 29 . " The thirteen toll booth employees were laid off . As of the closure there are \$ 49 @ , @ 015 in toll tickets that have not been used . Refunds were given for thirty days from the closure . The closure of the New Harmony Bridge as reported in the Evansville Courier would have a significant impact on farmers in the area and the oil industry . The bridge 's closure increases the distance between New Harmony and Crossville , Illinois by about ten miles .