

BRIDGETOWN USA

In addition to the “City of Roses”, Portland is known as “Bridgetown” with 11 architecturally significant highway bridges within the 16-mile stretch of the lower Willamette River, including Multnomah Channel.

All require electricity, but none more so than the five large movable bridges – the Hawthorne (1910), Steel (1912), Broadway (1913), Burnside (1926), and Morrison, first built in 1887.

Multnomah County replaced the original Morrison with a second span in 1905. It wore out by mid-century, pounded by trucks and cars, and prone to gear malfunctions from swinging open for passing river traffic, 500 times a month.

Multnomah County contracted for construction of a third Morrison Bridge in the 1950s. NECA contractor Jaggar-Sroufe (cofounded by Samuel I. Jaggar who wired the Forestry Building at the 1905 Lewis & Clark Exposition) installed all the wiring and controls for the bascule span machinery, traffic gates, street lights and navigation lights, as well as the submarine cables between the east and west bascule piers. NECA contractors constructed streetlights for the bridge approaches, McCoy Electric on the east side of the Willamette, Huenegard Electric on the west.

Morrison Bridge opened May 24, 1958, with pomp by Mayor Terry Schunk, music by Benson and Wilson high school bands, water fountains shot by fireboats, and a flyover by F-102 Delta jets.

In 1987, as part of the Willamette Light Brigade’s community campaign to light Portland’s bridges, volunteers from NECA/IBEW Local 48 and the Metro Training Center donated the \$78,000 in costs to install thirty-five 1,000-watt lights on the Morrison Bridge. Sutherland Electrical served as general contractor with its president, Robert Agee, project supervisor.

In 2003, NECA contractor Heil Electric and Local 48 electricians renovated Morrison and Burnside bridges under a \$1.2 million contract, enabling Multnomah County to control both from a single remote site.



MORRISON BRIDGE ILLUMINATED, DECEMBER 1987. NECA/IBEW LOCAL 48 DONATED MATERIALS AND LABOR TO THE PROJECT. L TO R: BOB AGEE, OWNER SUTHERLAND ELECTRIC; TIM GAUTHIER, NECA EXECUTIVE MANAGER; JIM HANSON, ELECTRICIAN; DWAYNE JOHNSON, ELECTRICIAN; ED BARNES, IBEW LOCAL 48 BUSINESS MANAGER.



CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW MORRISON BRIDGE, 1958

