

## PELHAM'S Highbrook Avenue Bridge

### One of Pelham's architectural glories, and a significant historical landmark

The former New York Westchester and Boston Railway bridge on Highbrook Avenue is a monument to those early twentieth-century days when Pelham was rapidly transforming itself from a lot of hills and trees into a comfortable suburban community. Along with the two branches of the New Haven Railroad, the New York, Westchester & Boston Railway played a major role in creating our town, especially the Village of North Pelham. Built in an age when most people didn't have automobiles, The New York, Westchester & Boston opened on May 29, 1912. Pelham residents could ride to New Rochelle and go shopping, or travel downtown to the Bronx, where they could connect with the subways and the Third Avenue el, for journey to their workplace in Manhattan. After only twenty-five years of service, the Westchester went broke in the Great Depression, entered bankruptcy, and shut down service on December 31, 1937. Its modern electric cars, perhaps the finest in America, rode no more.

Efforts to revive the line as a publicly owned commuter railroad failed, because Pelham and other Westchester communities, preferred to take back the land for taxes, and sell it to homebuilders, to boost local real estate taxes. The rest of the railroad in Pelham was torn down. Only the Highbrook Avenue bridge remained as a monument to the lost railway.

The bridge was designed by a noted railroad architect, Alfred Fellheimer, of the Reed & Stem firm which first designed Grand Central. He designed all the structures of the railway with Mediterranean and Mission style structures. The concrete arch in Pelham was one of his most graceful designs. It was built in 1911. Today it is Pelham's largest public monument and outdoor sculpture. Perhaps it will also become a neighborhood park.

Hopefully the bridge will receive recognition as a work of art and an historical landmark, be suitably marked with a plaque, and serve as a centerpiece of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NYW&B in 2012.

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