

STORIES of New Jersey

In May 1867 a charter was granted and John Roebling was appointed Chief Engineer. But he was not to see the completion, or even the starting of what he considered would be his crowning achievement. On June 28, 1869, Mr. Roebling was standing on a cluster of piles at the Fulton Ferry Slip, Brooklyn, fixing the location for the proposed tower. He failed to see a ferry boat before it crashed into the piling. One of his feet was crushed, necessitating the amputation of some of his toes. Tetanus set in and on July 22, as he neared his 63rd birthday, he died.



Brooklyn Bridge (1883)

Colonel Washington Augustus Roebling, his son and associate, was appointed to succeed him. It was January 1870 before actual construction was started. A scow with a coil of three-quarter inch wire rope was moored alongside the Brooklyn tower and the end of the coil hoisted to the top, passed down on the land side, then carried back. The scow was then towed to the New York side and the rope carried over that tower and wound on a huge drum till it hung above the river. A second wire rope was run in the same manner and the two were joined around huge driving wheels or pulleys at each end. An endless wire rope "traveler," revolving by steam power, now stretched from city to city.

One day in August 1870 the hanging of the cable was started by a man on this slender aerial. In a "bosun's chair," he started in the traveler from the top of the Brooklyn tower down the long sag and up to the top of the New York tower while a million people gazed in wonder, bands played, and boat whistles shrieked.

The Brooklyn Bridge project introduced several innovations in construction. The foundations of the great towers were built by the caisson method.