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Manfred Hauben

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Title: Williamsburg Bridge. The Williamsburg Bridge, opened in 1903, broke records: First all-steel suspension bridge, longest suspension bridge, heaviest load capacity, falling into most disrepair (by the 1980s). It also possibly garnered the most aesthetic knocks, such as “ugliest ever” by then New York City bridge commissioner Gustav Lindenthal, and “... it can never be made to look well,” by Henry Hornbostel, a beaux-arts trained architect commissioned by Lindenthal to beautify Leffert Lefferts Buck’s original design (many proposed improvements, such as tower finials, were never implemented). Interestingly, the Eiffel Tower generated similar vitriol when built and some postulate an influence of Eiffel on Buck, the two bridge builders having previous concurrent bridge building experience in South America. From an engineering perspective the design can boast of time and resource efficiency plus adaptability to increasing loads—an “engineer’s bridge.” Visually, its vertical lattice, deep stiffening trusses, and cantilevered side spans are heavy, skeletal, and perhaps gawky, and it can look unbalanced especially in profile. Still, the Williamsburg Bridge is a marvel and an unconventional beauty! View it from different vantage points and cross the bridge on the terrific pedestrian walkway. When you do, you know you are seeing something special.

Manfred Hauben, MD, MPH, Pfizer Inc and NYU Langone Health, New York City