

Bridgeport



Bridgeport waterfront, 1913. Haines Photo Co, Library of Congress

Bridgeport was founded from parts of Stratford and Fairfield.

Stratford

In 1639, English settlers sailed from Massachusetts Bay Colony up Long Island Sound. They found a place they liked at the mouth of the Pequonnock River.

The Paugussett Indians lived there. The Connecticut Colony moved the Paugussetts to a reservation so that the settlers could stay there.

At first, the English farmed and fished. The port on the banks of the river was busy. Shipbuilding and oystering were early industries.

Fairfield

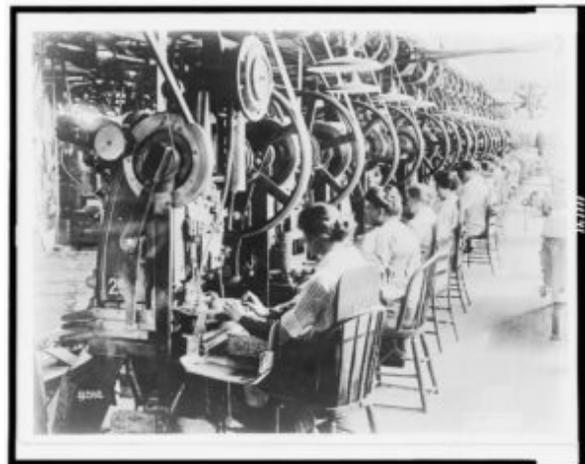
Fairfield was settled in 1639, too. Roger Ludlow and a few families came from Windsor. Ludlow was deputy governor of the Connecticut Colony.

Bridgeport

The area that became Bridgeport was called Stratfield beginning in 1701. It was between Stratford and Fairfield. In 1821, the town of Bridgeport separated from Stratford and Fairfield. It was named for the bridge and the port there.

Bridgeport became a city in 1836 when the Housatonic Railroad was built. The railroad ran along the Housatonic River valley north to New Milford. Railroad lines connected Bridgeport to Waterbury and New York City. The railroads helped build a bustling economy.

Women assembling cartridges at Remington Arms Union Metallic Cartridges Co., 1914. Library of Congress



Thousands of immigrants came to Bridgeport in the late 1800s. They came from Europe for a better life. They found work in the factories. The factories made sewing machines, cars, guns, and ammunition. Bridgeport's products helped win World War I and World War II. But by the late 20th century, the economy had changed and Bridgeport's factories had closed.



Bridgeport "Newsie" by Lewis Hine, 1909. "7:00 A.M. Sells before school, after school and Saturday and Sunday. Begins about 6 A.M. Has been at it 3 years. Bridgeport, Conn. Location: Bridgeport, Connecticut." Library of Congress

Bridgeport's most famous residents were circus promoter P. T. Barnum and performer Tom Thumb. Abraham Lincoln gave a speech in Bridgeport in 1860. The next year Lincoln was elected president of the United States. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a famous civil rights activist. He spoke three times in Bridgeport in the 1960s.

Read about Tom Thumb at whereilivect.org/notable-connecticans-tom-thumb

Link to an [1893 map of Bridgeport](#) at UConn's MAGIC site.

Compare [an aerial view of Bridgeport in 1934 with today](#) also on UConn's MAGIC site.

Barnum Museum. photo: Carol M. Highsmith, Library of Congress

