

## John Lyle Harrington



John L. Harrington was born on December 7, 1868, in Lawrence, Kansas. He attended public schooling in Kansas before graduated from the University of Kansas in 1895 with a Bachelor of Science in civil engineering.

At McGill University, he completed a second BS in 1906, and a Master of Science degree in 1908. In 1930, Harrington earned a Doctorate of Engineering from the Case School of Applied Sciences.

In his sophomore year at the University of Kansas, circa 1893, Harrington spent his summer vacation in the office of John Alexander Lowe Waddell.

After graduating from the University of Kansas in 1895, although it is unclear when he started, Harrington was employed by the Locomotive and Machine Company of Montreal, Quebec, Canada, eventually becoming Chief Engineer, in which capacity he served until 1907. Waddell states in his book, *Bridge Engineering Vol I*, page 724, that Harrington had also been employed by the C.W. Hunt Company of New York. Charles Wallace Hunt was President of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers in 1898-99, and Harrington held that position in 1923-24.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Wallace\\_Hunt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Wallace_Hunt)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_L.\\_Harrington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_L._Harrington)

In the preface of his book, *De Pontibus*, which Waddell signed on October 18, 1897, the first edition of which was published in 1898, along with others, he credited John L. Harrington, then a Junior Member of ASCE, with the proof-reading of the manuscript, so it seems safe to assume that Harrington did the proof-reading during his summer employment. One might also surmise that Harrington's life-long fascination with bridges began with the reading of *De Pontibus*.

Waddell began discussions with Harrington in 1906 about joining his firm, and in 1907 when Waddell's partner, Ira G. Hedrick, left the firm, he brought Harrington in as a partner, establishing the firm of Waddell & Harrington. One of the first items discussed was the possibility of writing the third edition of *De Pontibus*, and what it should contain. It was Waddell's intent that all professional employees of Waddell & Harrington would have a hand in the project so that no one would be over-burdened with writing in addition to their primary responsibilities as bridge designers. As Waddell states in *Bridge Engineering, Vol. I*, The list of chapters [contemplated] grew so rapidly that very soon it was decided to change the title to "Bridge Engineering" and ignore the idea of a third edition of the old book. It was intended that the preparation of the new book

should be the joint work of the new firm, the author [Waddell] feeling then that the task would be too onerous for him to undertake single-handed. Unfortunately for the book, at least as far as its early completion was concerned, the firm developed an exceedingly large and important practice, amounting at one period, simultaneously in both office and field, to some fifteen million dollars worth of bridge work, so that very little time could be spared for technical writing." And he goes

on to say, "From time to time, however, the author managed to prepare a few of the chapters allotted to him; but Mr. Harrington never found it convenient to even start on the preparation of his share thereof, consequently the progress was slow and unsatisfactory during the eight years of the firm's existence; and a great deal of what the author wrote became stale and antiquated, owing to the progress that was continually being made in the science bridge building.

In the summer of 1914, while the author was in Cuba struggling with the materialization [i.e. selling] of a great bridge project. Mr. Harrington announced his intention of withdrawing from the firm; and, of course, the author agreed, reserving later the right of twelve month's notice according to the terms of the partnership contract. When Mr. Harrington and he met in October, it was decided that the author should take over the writing of the proposed treatise, but should deal in a general way only with the subject of movable bridges, so that Mr. Harrington may some day write an exhaustive and detailed monograph thereon, as he is eminently capable of doing. It is to be hoped that nothing will prevent his undertaking and completing the proposed book on the lines now contemplated; for it would certainly be a great boon to bridge builders."

It appears obvious that Waddell had left the management of Waddell & Harrington in the hands of John L. Harrington while he traveled the globe selling bridges, and that by 1914, Harrington, as well as the other members of the firm, had become disillusioned with the arrangement, and the firm of Waddell & Harrington was dissolved, apparently in 1915.

Two engineering firms that evolved from the partnership of Waddell & Harrington, that are still in existence, are Howard, Needles, Tammen & Bergendoff, now known as HNTB; and Harrington and Cortelyou, now a division of Burnes & McDonnell.

One employee of Waddell & Harrington who stayed with Waddell after the dissolution was Shortridge Hardesty, who later became Waddell's partner in Waddell & Hardesty in New York City. After the death of Waddell in 1938 he continued the name of the partnership for 7 years, changing the name to Hardesty & Hanover in 1941, when he took in Clinton D. Hanover, who been hired by Waddell & Hardesty in 1924, and who was chief of the bureau of bridge design for New York City at the time Hardesty & Hanover was established.

The chronology of these firms is well documented on the world wide web.