

Generations of STEM:

Emily Roebling

Bridge Engineer

Emily went to school to study Georgetown Academy of the Visitation but was never formally trained as an engineer. She married Washington Roebling, son of John Roebling who was beginning work on the Brooklyn Bridge. John passed away early in the project, and Washington took over from him. Sadly,

Washington soon became ill from “Caisson’s Disease,” a condition caused the depressurization going in and out of the caissons (footings) of the bridge.

Having talked with her husband while he was ill and taken on a great interest in the bridge design, over time Emily assumed the role of Chief Engineer for the Brooklyn Bridge. While her husband was the official Chief Engineer, she took on many of the role’s duties and represented her husband at the bridge site and other functions, becoming the face behind the project.

In 1883, fourteen years later, Emily rode with President Chester Arthur across the bridge at the opening (while carrying a rooster to symbolize victory.) Emily went on to earn a law degree and champion women’s rights.



Image Source: Wikipedia / Brooklyn Museum