

Bridgeport Bridge

Wooden bridge 1847
Steel truss and pony truss bridge 1897
Concrete bowstring arch bridge 1934
Restoration 2009

Spanning the Generations

Since the early days of settlement along the banks of the Grand River and its tributaries, bridges have been important focal points for communities. Our significant heritage bridges have become distinctive landmarks that contribute to a strong sense of place. These links to our past span the generations as well as our waterways.

The future of our bridges cannot be taken for granted as the ravages of time take their toll. The challenge for our generation is to maintain their symbolic as well as their functional integrity.

Bridge Design

The Bridgeport Bridge is a five-span concrete bowstring arch bridge. Each span has a length of 25.1 metres for a total distance of 126 metres. The Bridgeport Bridge is a replica of the seven-span Freeport Bridge (1926) in Kitchener and the two-span Main Street Bridge (1931) in Cambridge, both of which were designed by A. B. Crealock. This type of bridge was commonly built in the early part of the 20th century and is an example of the transition from steel truss to concrete truss bridges.

Bridge History

The earliest crossing at this location was constructed in 1847, at which time an island located in the middle of the river diverted the water flow into two separate channels. The first bridge between the mainland and the island was a two-span wooden bridge. The wooden bridge was replaced in 1897, by a two-span steel truss bridge across the main river and a smaller pony truss bridge across the narrow channel to the east.

The current bowstring bridge was constructed in 1934, at which time the island and large trees were graded away. Built during the Great Depression as a public works project, the total cost for the bridge was \$65,600.74, a portion of which was provided by the government in the form of labour relief. The Bridgeport Bridge was designed by D. J. Emery, the Waterloo County Road Superintendent, and built under the direction of the Kitchener Suburban Roads Commission.

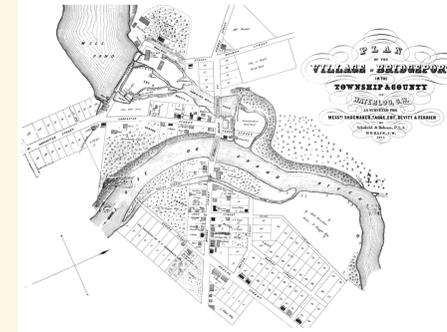
Restoration

In 2009, the Region of Waterloo completed an extensive restoration of the bridge. This included the replacement of the deck and existing sidewalk, the addition of a cantilevered sidewalk on the downstream side, the installation of period-sensitive light fixtures and the repair of other bridge elements. A study was undertaken to determine which coating material would provide the most effective protection for both the new and old concrete components of the restored Bridgeport Bridge.

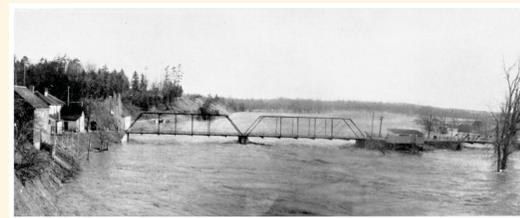
Although the earliest bridges have disappeared, their replacements have become important community landmarks.



The wooden bridge (1847 - 1897).



The 1856 plan of the Village of Bridgeport.



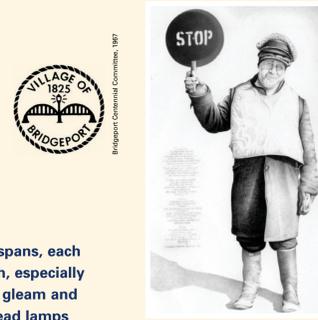
The steel truss and pony truss bridge (1897 - 1934) during a flood.



The bridge has survived major floods in 1948 and 1974 and Hurricane Hazel in 1954.



The concrete bowstring arch bridge in 1934.



Bridgeport General (1974), a print by renowned German-born Canadian artist Horst Maria Guilhauman.



An ice jam under the bridge on March 15, 1911.

"It stretches across in five spans, each one a beautiful curving arch, especially lovely at night when lights gleam and the flicker of automobile head lamps pick up portions of white design."
The London Free Press, 1938

The Bridgeport Bridge is a cultural heritage resource that is located in the city of Kitchener. It was ranked seventh out of 100 bridges studied by the Region's Heritage Planning Advisory Committee. Heritage bridges were an important factor in the 1994 designation of the Grand River as a Canadian Heritage River.

The Community of Bridgeport: East and West of the Grand

Located where the Grand River was shallow enough to be crossed on foot or horseback, Bridgeport began with the development of two villages, one on the east and one on the west side of the river. In 1829, Jacob S. Shoemaker built a dam on the west side of the river and began to construct a milling complex. The settlement that developed was known first as Shoemaker's Mills, and later as Lancaster and Glasgow. Meanwhile, the east side of the river developed primarily as a residential community. In the 1830s, John U. Tyson named the community Bridgeport, after a town in his native Pennsylvania. By 1845, Bridgeport had a population of 100, and supported a tavern, store, ashery and blacksmith shop. Rapid development and a growing population made it appear as though Bridgeport would become the most prosperous village in the County. This changed in 1852 when Bridgeport was bypassed by the Grand Trunk Railway and lost much of its industry and potential for growth.

In 1856, a plan was registered that combined the settlements on either side of the Grand River into the Village of Bridgeport and in 1864 the settlements were legally joined. Nearly a century later, in 1952, Bridgeport became an incorporated village and its reeve sat on the Waterloo County Council until 1972 when Bridgeport was annexed by Kitchener.

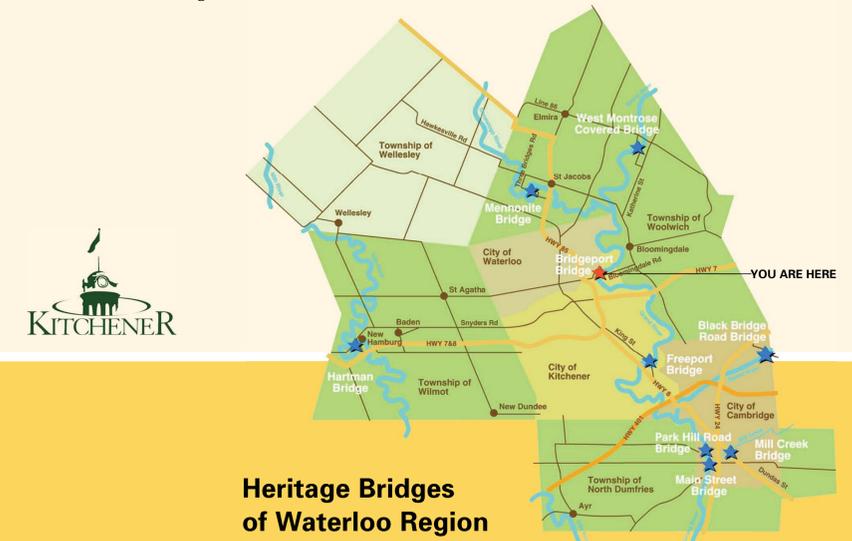
Dancing in the Streets

On Sept. 14, 1934, the Storms Construction Company held an open air dance on the Bridgeport Bridge to celebrate the early completion of the structure. An article in the *Kitchener Daily Record* described the dance floor as "spacious" and predicted that "not too many toes should be stepped on". The community's enthusiasm for the new bridge was clear as more than 5,000 people attended the event and the dance was considered a "stupendous success".

General's Green and the Grand Hotel

The base of this plaque is constructed of recovered bricks from the Grand Hotel. Dating back to 1856, the hotel was located at the west end of the Bridgeport Bridge.

The park in which this plaque is located is known as General's Green. The General, whose name was Frank Groff, was a well-known citizen of Bridgeport. For more than 20 years, he volunteered as a crossing guard to help children cross the busy intersection at Lancaster and Bridge Streets on their way to and from Bridgeport School.



Heritage Bridges of Waterloo Region

The Heritage Bridges Program is sponsored by the Heritage Planning Advisory Committee. Visit www.region.waterloo.on.ca

Concrete Bowstring Arch Bridge 1934

Designer/Engineer: D. J. Emery, Waterloo County Road Superintendent

Construction: Storms Construction Co. Ltd., Toronto

Total cost of the bridge: \$65,600.74



Region of Waterloo