Mill Creek Bridge

Spanning the Generations
From the early days of settlement on the banks of the Grand River and its tributaries, bridges were important focal points for communities. Our significant heritage bridges have become distinctive landmarks that contribute to a strong sense of place. These links to the past span the generations as well as our waterways. Their future cannot be taken for granted, however, 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/Style
The Mill Creek Bridge is a single-span stone masonry arch. It is the Region’s oldest remaining bridge structure and one of two stone masonry arch bridges in the Region.

Materials
The Mill Creek Bridge was constructed in 1837 by unknown skilled stone masons. Stone was a popular building material in Scotland, and most of the inhabitants of Galt were of Scottish descent. Although expensive, stone was chosen as the material of choice for its durability and fire resistance.

Restoration
The Mill Creek Bridge has been modified several times since its original construction. It is no longer technically an arch as the interlocking stones have been altered and the keystone is missing. The initial timber beams and tie rods were replaced, the arch was reconstructed, and steel handrails were added underneath the bridge.

The Macadamized Road
In 1830s Galt
In its early days, Galt (now part of Cambridge) was a thriving agricultural community. By the late 1830s, the village had grown into a strong industrial centre producing high quality products. Galt became known nationally as "The Manchester of Canada" with locally manufactured goods being sold world wide.

The Mill Creek Bridge played an integral role in the design and development of Jackson Park (1905), later redesigned and renamed Soper Park (1920).

Jackson Park
In 1903, Galt acquired 30 acres of Jackson’s Field from William Jackson. The area was a favoured spot for swimming and sports and was often used by travelling circuses in the summer. A year later, an additional 42 adjacent acres were purchased. By 1905, 35.5 of these acres were passed on to the jurisdiction of the new Galt Parks Commission. Frederick G. Todd, Landscape Architect, designed the improvements to the public park lands which involved planting trees and shrubs, adding two pavilions, preserving the creek, providing immediate and careful attention to the bridge, and adding carriage driveways and walkways throughout the park. Development of the park continued until 1910 when lack of funds and the commencement of the First World War inhibited further progress.

Soper Park
After the First World War, a neighbouring landowner, Dr. Augustus Soper, created new plans for Jackson Park. He proposed filling the "frog pond" and creating the largest lawn bowling green in Southwestern Ontario. He also planned on lining the banks of Mill Creek with stone, converting the three dams into swimming pools, draining the swampy cedar grove, building sidewalks underneath the Mill Creek Bridge, planting various tree species, and placing granite pillars at all of the park entrances. To honour his contributions Jackson Park was renamed Soper Park on November 23, 1920. Over the years, people flocked to the park to swim, lawn bowl, picnic, and see the five acres of gardens that bloomed each June with more than 24 different varieties of peonies. In 1996, Soper Park received another facelift that naturalized the stream by removing the dams and ponds, introduced a wetland area, improved trails and added new pedestrian and vehicular bridges.

Stone Masonry Arch Bridge 1837
Bridge Designer/Engineer: James Kerr
Bridge Supervisor: Unknown
Construction: Unknown
Total cost of the bridge: Unknown

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