

Central Park Bridges, Pinebank Arch  
(Central Park Bridges, Bridge No. 15)  
Spanning the bridlepath, south of 65th Street  
transverse, east of West Drive, near  
Columbus Circle entrance, Central Park  
New York City  
New York County  
New York

HAER No. NY-196

HAER  
NY,  
31-NE40,  
153B-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HAER  
NY,  
31-N490,  
153B -

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

CENTRAL PARK BRIDGES, PINEBANK ARCH  
(Central Park Bridges, Bridge No. 15)

HAER NY-196

Location: Spanning the bridlepath, south of 65th Street transverse, east of West Drive, near Columbus Circle entrance, Central Park, New York City, New York County, New York

Date of Construction: 1861

Present Owner: City of New York

Present Use: pedestrian bridge

Significance and Description:

Designed by Calvert Vaux and drawn by Jacob Wrey Mould, Pinebank Arch is an outstanding example of the bridges and arches of New York's Central Park. Vaux, a professionally trained British architect, came to the United States in the early 1850s. He worked with Andrew Jackson Downing until the death of the latter in 1852, and then joined with Frederick Law Olmsted to enter the competition for design of Central Park. Mould was also an English immigrant. He initially served as Vaux' chief draftsman and later became the sole designer of some of the park's cast-iron structures.

The over 46 bridges and arches in the 840-acre park, designed to separate foot, horse, and now motorized traffic in the park, are intentionally different from one another, emphasizing their naturalistic setting and furthering the romantic plan of the park. Pinebank Arch, specifically designed to ensure the safety of pedestrians by carrying them over the bridlepath, is one of the five remaining intricate cast-iron bridges built between 1859 and 1864, gracing the park and serving functional transportation purposes.

Cast iron was an innovative material at the time, promising to be durable, fireproof, and economically sound as well as artistically malleable. The alloy used in casting the bridges in Central Park included phosphorus, which rendered the metal particularly fluid. Hence, the details, which are drawn from nature and natural forms but do not replicate specific plants, are especially crisp and fine.

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Each bridge was designed in concept by Vaux with the details executed by skilled draftspersons, particularly chief draftsman J. Wrey Mould. The designs were then sent to a foundry for casting. Pinebank Arch was cast by the J.B. and W.W. Cornell Foundry. The other iron bridges in the park probably were also. After casting, the parts were returned for assemblage on site.

Just as each bridge is different from each other, so are the settings. The bridge abutments meld into the landscape, as if planted rather than placed. Pinebank Arch is oriented from north to south.

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