

Caledonia Bridge

(Argyle Street North Bridge)



Photograph by Melissa Davies, 2012

General Information	Physical Details
Bridge No. HD1	Type: Concrete Bowstring Arch
Ownership: Ministry of Transportation	Span: Nine
Construction Date: 1927	Dimensions: 200.3m x 2.9m (LxW)
Water Crossing: Grand River	Materials: Reinforced Concrete



Evaluation Form	Check
Design/Physical Value	
I. Is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method	✓
II. Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	✓
III. Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	✓
Historic/Associative Value	
I. Has direct association with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is significant to the community	✓
II. Yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of the community or culture	✓
III. Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, engineer, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	✓
Contextual Value	
I. Is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area	✓
II. Is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings	✓
III. Is a landmark	✓

General Description

The Caledonia Bridge spans the Grand River on Argyle Street North, between Forfar Street West and Caithness Street in the town of Caledonia. The property consists of a nine-span concrete bowstring arch bridge that was constructed in 1927. It is the longest bowstring arch bridge in Ontario and Canada. Due to its outstanding design and scale, the structure was included on the Ontario Heritage Bridge List in 1990. It is the only remaining concrete bowstring arch bridge in Haldimand County and one of few remaining examples of this bridge type as the demolition of similar structures of shorter length have been accelerating in recent years.

The Caledonia Bridge is the fourth permanent bridge to be constructed at this crossing. The first bridge, of crib and frame construction, was washed away by ice and floods. The second bridge, constructed in 1842, was a 60-foot (18m) wide, six-span wooden structure reinforced with steel plates. It was constructed to provide permanent and unimpeded passage to the plank road between Hamilton and Port Dover. After 19 years this structure was also destroyed by the elements. In 1875, a large and impressive five-span iron Whipple Arch truss bridge was constructed. This crossing became a toll bridge, and adjacent to the structure a red and buff brick Gothic revival house was built for the new bridge's toll keeper. Tolls were collected until about 1890 to help defray the cost of the bridge, which was roughly \$22,500. This former toll house still sits next to the Caledonia Bridge. It has been designated for its cultural heritage value under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* (By-law 655/88).

In 1925, this third bridge on site collapsed under the weight of a truck carrying a load of stone. Following negotiations between the Provincial government and the County Council, the existing Caledonia Bridge was constructed in 1927. It was built by the Department of Public Highways of Ontario and Randolph MacDonald Co. Limited, and was designed by A. B. Crealock, bridge engineer with the Department of Public Works. The bridge's erection took five months and was undertaken from June to November of 1927. Its opening was celebrated by the town with a street dance.



The Caledonia Bridge is a landmark gateway to the town centre. It provides both a vehicular and pedestrian link between the residential areas to the south and the commercial core. For those passing through Caledonia it demarcates the entrance to the community and the exit from it. The arches are graceful with slight indentations. Pedestrian sidewalks on either side allow for excellent scenic viewing both up and down the Grand River. The bridge is a locally recognized heritage asset that contributes to the special character of Caledonia and the surrounding landscape.

The bridge is part of a group of four multiple-span concrete bowstring arch bridges spanning the Grand River that were erected in the same time period and in a similar style. These bridges are a part of the upgrading work that took place to the transportation networks in Ontario, after World War I, to accommodate the increased number of automobiles. This group includes three bridges within the Region of Waterloo: the Freeport Bridge and Bridgeport Bridge in the City of Kitchener, and the Main Street Bridge in the City of Cambridge.

Due to the Caledonia Bridge's deteriorating condition, it underwent short-term repairs in 2008. It is likely that the bridge will be replaced in 2016 with a wider structure able to accommodate heavy traffic.

Sources: *Historicbridges.org*
GRCA Heritage Bridge Inventory
Barbara Martindale
Archaeological Services Inc., Heritage Bridge Impact Assessment, January 2004

