

# Mill Creek Bridge



General Information	Physical Details
Bridge No. C8	Type: Masonry Arch
Ownership: Regional Municipality of Waterloo	Span: Single
Construction Date: 1837	Dimensions: 5.7m x 11.4m (LxW)
Water Crossing: Mill Creek	Materials: Stone



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

## General Description

The Mill Creek Bridge is located on Dundas Street in the City of Cambridge's Soper Park. It was constructed in 1837, making it the oldest documented bridge in the Region of Waterloo and likely the oldest in the Grand River watershed. British pioneers, John Galt and thousands more first used the bridge, representing a historic link to the Region's past. Today, the bridge crosses Mill Creek via Dundas Street and the pedestrian sidewalks that pass through the arch beneath the bridge.

In 2004, this unique bridge underwent major reconstruction, including the replacement of the existing concrete and replication of the original structure. The roadway was widened and new parapet walls composed of natural stones were installed to replace the previous steel railings. The original stones were individually numbered before reconstruction and were incorporated in the facing of the new structure and parapet walls to disguise the reconstructed concrete arch beneath. A plaque was erected on site in 2007 by the Region of Waterloo to celebrate the bridge's significant historic past.

Sources: GRCA Heritage Bridge Inventory  
*Spanning the Generations, Phase 1, 2004*  
*Cambridge Times, 2007*



# Mill Creek Bridge

Score: 68



## Documentation

### Builder

There is little known about the designer and builder of the Mill Creek Bridge in Soper Park. It is suggested that S. Ghanekar designed this bridge, but this has not been verified by a primary source. The builder remains unknown.

### Age

It is estimated the bridge was built in 1837, making it the oldest surviving bridge in Waterloo Region. The date of 1837 and accompanying photographs are mentioned in *The Jubilee Souvenir of Galt*, 1897, *The Strikingly Beautiful and Highly Industrialized Grand River Valley*, 1932, and the *Galt Centennial and Old Home Week*, 1927. *The Picturesque Galt: The most substantial and prosperous town in Canada*, 1902, makes reference to the "old bridge" but does not give a date.

## Technology

### Materials

Mill Creek Bridge was made of stone. Stone was a popular building material in Scotland, and most of the inhabitants of Galt were of Scottish decent. Stone bridges were popular during early railroad construction (1859-1880) and used as centerpieces in urban parks from 1900 to 1920. Stone was popular since it was both durable and fireproof.<sup>23</sup>

### Design/Style

The bridge is a single-span, stone masonry arch. It was incorporated into the development of Jackson's Park, which was later named Soper Park.

### Prototype

The Mill Creek Bridge is an early example of the stone masonry arch. There are only two stone masonry arches in Waterloo Region. The other bridge is located south of Cambridge along Highway 24, just past the Footbridge. Refer to Spanning the Generations Phase I: Inventory, for details. It is believed this bridge was built circa 1898.

### Structural Integrity

Mill Creek Bridge has been repaired/reconstructed several times. It was widened recently to accommodate the widening of Dundas Street. The structural arch has been altered. The interlocking stones have been shaved/shortened and the keystone is missing. A concrete lining artificially strengthens the arch. Steel and wooden inserts strengthen the upper blocks. The abutments have been encased in a field stone and concrete mix. A steel and concrete pedestrian walkway has been added underneath the arch. In conclusion, this bridge has been significantly altered from its original form. In, 2004 the existing concrete will be replaced, replicating the original arch structure, and the existing stone facing will be salvaged and re-installed. The keystone is no longer visible and many of the stone blocks have been trimmed and the arch is lined with modern concrete. A wooden beam, reinforced and bolted with a steel cover provides additional support for the bridge.

<sup>23</sup>David Cuming, *Discovering Heritage Bridges on Ontario's Roads*, 1983, p.18.

## Bridge Aesthetics and Environment

### Visual Appeal

The bridge is very old and decorative, and it is an architectural masterpiece. In 1905, when the City was improving Jackson's Park, Frederick Todd described the bridge as "rustic" and suggested that other bridges in the park should imitate its look.<sup>24</sup> The Park Board responded that stone bridges would be too expensive. The other bridges were instead made of cedar, with the bark still intact.

### Integrity

The Mill Creek Bridge is in its original location.

### Landmark

This bridge is a prominent feature of Soper Park, and separates the north and south sides of the park.

### Gateway

Not applicable.

### Character Contribution

The rustic stone arch over Mill Creek complements the peaceful environment of the park. Frederick Todd believed the bridge spruced up the park.<sup>25</sup>

## Historical Association

The stone masonry arch over Mill Creek in Soper Park was built in 1837. It is the oldest surviving bridge in Waterloo Region (162 years old) and still functional. In 1836, the Provincial Government built the McAdamized Road (Hwy. 8). A McAdamized road is a type of road construction named after the Scottish engineer, McAdam, who patented his invention in 1833. This road later became a part of Waterloo Road, which is now called Dundas Street.

On June 2, 1902, the citizens of Galt purchased 10 acres of land for \$1,600 from William Jackson to create Jackson Park. In 1903, an additional 42 acres of land to the north were purchased from William Jackson and incorporated into the park. On Nov. 23, 1920, Jackson Park was renamed Soper Park in honour of Dr. A. Soper for his work in beautifying the north end of the recreation ground. In 1921, the Galt Lawn Bowling Club played at Soper Park. In 1968, the Kinsman Pool was opened, costing the City \$150,000. In 1995, the City of Cambridge spent \$370,000 to make Mill Creek appear more natural.

### Bridge Group

This bridge is not a part of a group of bridges, although it did inspire Jackson Park's designers to build a series of rustic wooden bridges between 1905-1910. Pictures of these bridges can be found in the Cambridge Archives. In 2004, the existing concrete will be replaced, replicating the original arch structure, and the existing stone facing will be salvaged and re-installed.

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<sup>24</sup>Frederick Todd, *Correspondence with R.O. McCulloch, Esq., Chairman Galt Park Board, Galt, Ont., Renouf Building, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1905*, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5.

# Mill Creek Bridge Bibliography

"Jackson Park as it has been designed Mr. Todd." Galt Weekly Reporter, 28 Sept. 1905.

"Oldtimers Enjoy a Rest on Rustic Cedar Bridge" The Evening Reporter, Galt, 20 August. 1965: 3.

"The Dundas Street Bridge: Before the improvements at Soper Park", WHS, 1956: 14.

"The Old Swimming Hole" The Evening Reporter, Galt, 13 March 1951.

"Then and Now." The Cambridge Times, 7 Aug. 1991: A4. Photograph

"Then and Now." The Cambridge Times, 1 May 1996. Photograph

"Then and Now." The Cambridge Times, 30 Aug. 1989. Photograph

City of Cambridge. Public Works Department. Soper Park vertical file. "Frederick Todd, Correspondence with R.O. McCulloch, Esq., Chairman Galt Park Board." Galt, Ontario. 6 Sept. 1905.

City of Cambridge. Public Works Department. Soper Park vertical file. "Specifications for work to be done on Jackson Park.", Galt, Ontario. 1905.

City of Cambridge. Corporate Archives. "Mill Creek Indenture." Galt, Ontario. 1910.

City of Cambridge. Corporate Archives. Galt Centennial and Old Home Week, 1927.

City of Cambridge. Corporate Archives. The Picturesque Galt: The most substantial and prosperous town in Canada, 1902.

City of Cambridge. Corporate Archives. The Strikingly Beautiful and Highly Industrialized Grand River Valley, Jaffray, 1932.

City of Cambridge. Corporate Archives. The Jubilee Souvenir of Galt, 1897.

Martin, Ray. "Major facelift for Soper Park" Cambridge Reporter. 3 April 1996.

# Mill Creek Bridge

**Location** Regional Road No.8 (Dundas Street), 0.2 km South of Regional Road No. 27, City of Cambridge

## General Information

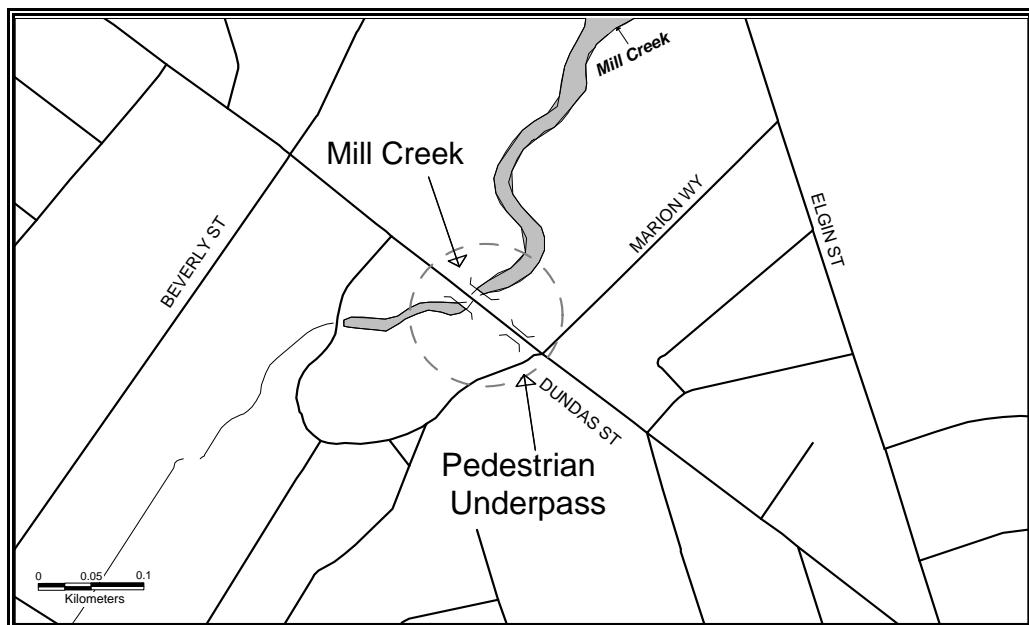
<i>Bridge No.</i>	000802
<i>Jurisdiction</i>	Regional Municipality of Waterloo
<i>Year built</i>	1837
<i>Drawings</i>	Regional HQ, and City of Cambridge

## Physical Components

<i>Type</i>	Stone Masonry arch
<i>Spans</i>	1
<i>Dimensions</i>	Length 5.7 m Width 11.4 m
<i>Load Limit</i>	None posted

## Descriptive details

This is a single-span, stone masonry arch bridge crossing Mill Creek in Soper Park. The original structure was built in 1837, making it the oldest bridge in the Region. The arch is covered with approximately 500 mm of fill, with a paved roadway surface. The handrails for the concrete sidewalks consist of steel vertical bars. In addition to a roadway sidewalk, there is also a creek sidewalk allowing pedestrians to cross through the arch beneath the bridge. In 2004, the existing concrete will be replaced, replicating the original arch structure, and the existing stone facing will be salvaged and re-installed. The keystone is no longer visible, and many of the stone blocks have been trimmed and the arch is lined with modern concrete. A wooden beam, reinforced and bolted with a steel cover, provides additional support for the bridge.



## Mill Creek Bridge

North View



South-East View



## Mill Creek Bridge (View Detail of Reinforcing Timber)

