# PERTH'S BRIDGES

***This watercolour by Thomas Burrowes (1796-1866)[1] depicts the village of Perth in 1828. It looks southwest along Gore Street and shows the early log bridges crossing both branches of the Tay River at Cockburn Island.*** (Archives of Ontario, C1000022).

Within the limits of the Town of Perth 13 bridges of varying age, size and importance span the Tay River. In examining the history of those bridges, reference was made to six early maps, dating from 1816, 1823, 1863, 1874, 1879 and 1881, accounts concerning development of the Tay Canal in 1831-1834 and the canal's reconstruction in 1885-1891, as well as other sources.

## Links 'O Tay Bridge

Upstream of Perth, from the foot of Bob's Lake, the Tay River is bridged at least 12 times[2], but the first bridge at Perth is located on the Links O' Tay Golf Course, only a short distance from the point where the river enters the town limits from Tay Valley (Bathurst) Township. A footbridge, it was constructed in 1924 to access a green the club had developed on Matheson Island, behind the municipal water treatment plant. The bridge was paid for, as a gift to the club, by golf enthusiast Thomas Alfred Code (1854-1937)[3],

> *"… to enable the sport to cross and recross, Mr. Code has built a neat cedar bridge at his own expense over the gap between the two cement dam abutments already there, so that access has been furnished to the extension".*[4]

Although benefiting from maintenance, repair, and reconstruction over the following century, the bridge still crosses to the Matheson Island green today.

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[1] Thomas Burrowes, a former Corporal of the British army's Corps of Royal Sappers and Miners (1815-1824), worked for two decades (1826-1846) as a civilian employee on the Rideau Canal project, serving variously as overseer, surveyor and clerk.

[2] At Crow Lake Road (Bolingbroke), Davern Lane, Bolingbroke Road (two bridges), Jordan Cottage Lane, Althorpe Road, Bathurst Concession-2, Menzies Sideroad, Noonan Sideroad, Bowes Sideroad, Glen Tay Road and a private driveway.

[3] Owner of Code's Custom Wool Mill.

[4] Perth *Courier*, May 30, 1924.

**Peter Street Bridge**

A short distance down stream, a 60-foot concrete bridge connects the golf course to the town center at Peter Street.

The river was first bridged at this point in the 1840s by the Matheson[5] family to conveniently access their farm, the property that later became the Links O' Tay Golf Course. A rather rudimentary structure, the original bridge was rebuilt in about 1880 to a standard adequate to support the passage of wagons going to and from Charles Matheson's (1843-1917) Riverside Cheese Factory, located not far from where the Links O' Tay clubhouse stands today.

In May 1914, when teamster Carl Bates (1889-1975) was delivering a load of lumber to the golf course, the bridge *"slipped off its timbers … and immersed the load in deep water. The horse was rescued, and Bates got the wagon and lumber out, but he received a ducking …"*[6] The bridge was repaired that winter but, in the spring of 1917 Captain Alan Frederick Matheson (1847-1928)[7] had to, once again, have *"the rustic bridge … put in a state of repair after the winter's ice and the spring freshet forced the west end off level"*.[8]

When the Links O' Tay Golf & Country Club purchased the golf course from the Matheson estate in 1921, the bridge was part of the deal and over the winter of 1924-1925 the club had the much fatigued old bridge replaced. The new bridge cost $1,000 and in May 1925, during the Old Boys Reunion held that year, it was officially opened, with the unveiling of a plaque naming it for the Matheson family.

***Peter Street Bridge, c1900*** (Isabel Hardie)

***Peter Street Bridge, 2021*** (Ron W. Shaw)

That 1925 bridge served until 1941 when it was *"replaced by a metal bridge of modern design and substantial construction"*[9]. This 'new' bridge had actually once spanned the Mississippi River at Playfairville and was donated and installed by club member Lawrence James (1877-

[5] The farm was originally owned by merchant and senator Roderick Matheson (1793-1873), then by his sons until sold to the Links O' Tay Golf Club.

[6] Perth *Courier*, August 31, 1914.

[7] The man who first brought golf to Perth and created the Links O' Tay Golf Club.

[8] Perth *Courier*, June 22, 1917.

[9] Perth *Courier*, January 30, 1941.

1958)[10]. When completed, his wife Marion[11] and daughter Ethel James[12] cut the ribbon and led *"a procession of golf club members and cars across the bridge"*.[13]

The bridge of 1941 was seriously damaged in 1958 when the Perth Fire Brigade responded to a minor fire in the golf pro's living quarters.

> *When the pumper was crossing the bridge to the golf links the heavy nine-ton machine broke the stringers under the planks and could not be taken back over the structure. Sandy Parks*[14] *placed a couple of steel girders on the floor of the bridge and the pumper was driven safely over the bridge.*[15]

Thus reinforced the bridge continued to carry traffic from town to club and back without further incident until 1971 when the 60-foot span concrete bridge was constructed, paid for jointly by the Provincial Department of Transport ($40,000) and the Links O' Tay Golf & Country Club ($11,000). That bridge received a $12,500 upgrade by the Perth Works Department in 1985.

**Rogers Road Bridge**

Today's concrete and steel highway bridge on Rogers Road was built in the latter part of the 20th century and rehabilitated in 2023 by Dalcon Constructors Ltd. at a cost of $898,700.


***Matheson-Grant Bridge, date unknown***
(Perth Museum)

***Matheson-Grant Bridge, date unknown***
(Brent McLaren Collection)

The first bridge across the river at Rogers Road was constructed in the summer of 1889, at the behest of Lieutenant Colonel Arthur James Matheson (1845-1913)[16] and Dr. William Grant (1845-1897)[17] who owned a property known as the Gamsby Farm on the south side of the river where they wished to develop a housing estate. The construction cost of $1,100 was shared

[10] Lawrence Henry James, partner with his brother George Sutton James (1869-1964) in James Brothers hardware store.

[11] Alison Marion Hislop (1876-1969).

[12] Ethel Alison James (1914-1997).

[13] Perth *Courier*, May 8, 1941.

[14] Robert Alexander 'Sandy' Parks (1917-1971), building contractor.

[15] Perth *Courier*, May 8, 1958.

[16] Arthur Matheson, son of Senator Roderick Matheson (1793-1873), was Mayor of Perth 1883-1884, MPP for Lanark South 1898-1913 and Ontario Provincial Treasurer 1905-1913.

[17] Dr. William Grant practiced medicine and operated a pharmacy at Perth 1867-1897.

between the municipality ($400) and the developers ($700), with Matheson and Grant also agreeing to meet the cost of maintenance for 10 years. The bridge was built of timber on six stone-filled piers, with one approach anchored on rock and the other on stone fill.

***Rogers Road Bridge, 2022*** (Ron W. Shaw)

In 1889 the bridge at this location joined Park Street in Caroline Village with Market Street on the opposite (southwest) bank.[18] Re-decked, repaired and reinforced several times, the Matheson-Grant bridge served until it was replaced by the Rogers Road Bridge of today.

## The Island Bridges

Rainbow Footbridge –

The steeply arched wooden footbridge that spans about 90 feet of the Little Tay River at the upstream (west) end of Haggart Island, was installed in April 1970 by the Town of Perth as part of a project that replaced an old weir with a 'Rocky Ramp'.

***Little Tay Weir Dam Bridge, c1960*** *(*Perth Museum)

***Rainbow Bridge, 2022*** (Ron W. Shaw)

[18] Park and Market Streets were renamed Rogers Road in 1963 at the request of the International Silver Company who built a manufacturing plant along the road.

The old footbridge, it replaced, passing over the top of the weir (photo above), had partly burned in May of that year. That bridge, however, was only the more recent of several bridges at this location dating back to the days of the pioneer mills built on the island in the second and third decades of the 19th century. The postcard showing the Matheson-Grant Bridge (above), titled '*The Tay from Haggart's'*, also shows an arched footbridge over the Little Tay at this location in about 1900.

Cavers Footbridge –

The shallow arched footbridge across the Little Tay River, linking Stewart Park with Code/Haggart Park, was built in 1931. It was later dedicated to the memory of C. Douglas Cavers (1922-2009), a Perth businessman,[19] Rotarian, Mason, and prominent supporter of the Perth Citizens Band.

***Little Tay Stewart-Code Park Crossing, c1925***
(Perth Museum)

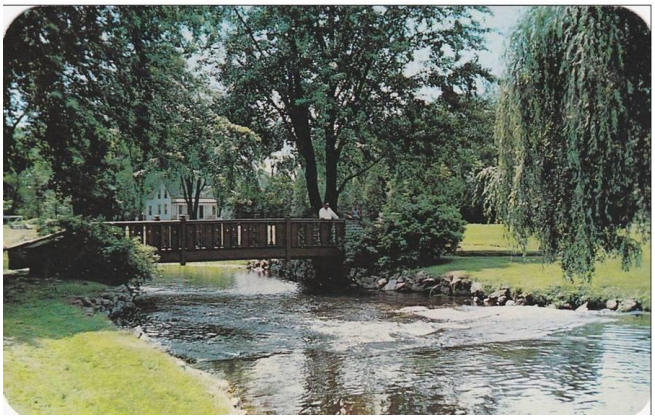
***Douglas Cavers Bridge,* 2022**
(Ron W. Shaw)

Like the Rainbow bridge, the present Cavers Bridge was preceded by earlier bridges, of varying quality and life span, dating back two centuries. Many of those being nothing more than two or three logs or several planks laid across the stream.

Green Footbridge –

The green footbridge in Stewart Park dates from 2011 when it replaced an earlier structure of undetermined age that was deteriorating. Once again, there appear to have been numerous bridges of one sort or another over the stream at the same location for many years.

[19] Proprietor of Cavers' Jewellery and the Mills China & Gift Shop.



***Stewart Park Bridge, c1950*** (Courtesy Grant Machan***)***

***Stewart Park Green Bridge***, ***c2020*** (*Unknown)*

The bridge replaced in 2011, or its immediate predecessor, may date to Jessie Henderson-Stewart's (1868-1956). Ms. Stewart developed the former McLaren Whiskey property into a park in the years between the death of her husband John A. Stewart (1867-1922) and her donation of the park in his memory to the Town of Perth in 1947.

Mill Street Bridge –

The present day stone bridge that spans the park stream at Mill Street dates from the mid 20th century..

***Mill Street Bridge, 2022 (***Perth Museum)

***Mill Street Bridge, 2020*** (Ron W. Shaw)

The 1816 town plan map shows no Perth bridges at all, and the 1823 map omits the stream that divides the island, but we may safely assume there has been a bridge at this location from at least 1817 when Dr. Alexander Thom (1775-1845) built his sawmill at the west end of Haggart Island. The maps of 1863, 1874, 1879 and 1881 all depict a bridge on Mill Street spanning the park stream.

Dry Stone Footbridge –

Built over the Stewart Park stream where it spills into the main branch of the Tay River, the Dry Stone Footbridge serves as centerpiece of the 'Terrace on the Tay' public space, a re-development of what was once Perth's outdoor river-fed swimming pool.

***Dry Stone Bridge*** (Steve Barber / John Scott)

The bridge was built as a project marking Perth's bicentennial in 2016 and constructed to demonstrate the art of dry stone masonry, an ancient building technique that does not use mortar.

The bridge project was conceptualized by John Scott, Heritage Masonry Professor at the Perth campus of Algonquin College, designed by Algonquin masonry graduate John Bland, and built by the Dry Stone Walling Association of Canada with funding support from the municipality. The work involved master masons from Scotland, Ireland, the U.S.A. and Canada and the participation of 60 volunteers.

The completed project won commendation from the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering as the First National Civil Engineering Demonstration Site.

**Gore Street Big Tay Bridge**

The 20-ton low level (2.7 m / 9.0 ft) steel and concrete beam bridge that today carries Gore Street traffic across the main branch of the Tay River, was constructed in 1957. It is, at a minimum, the sixth bridge to link the town's southeastern precinct with Cockburn Island at the same location.

The story is told that, when the first immigrants reached the Tay River, either surveyors in the fall of 1815 or the vanguard of settlers in March 1816, they made camp for the night on the south shore. The following morning, finding the river too deep and cold for wading, they fell a large elm tree across the stream thus creating the settlement's the first bridge.

That tree had stood on the site chosen for the King's Store, fronting the west side of Gore Street between Harvey Street, and the riverbank. The location was later occupied by a brewery and distillery owned in succession by William Morris (1786-1858), William Locke (1800-1862) and James Spalding Jr. (1855-1935), and the stump of that elm tree was said to be *"preserved for many years in the basement Spalding's Brewery"*.[20] The first man to cross the elm tree 'bridge' and set foot on Cockburn Island was soldier-settler Magnus Flett (c1778-c1840), former Private of the Glengarry Light Infantry.[21]

[20] *Perth Courier*, June 13, 1957.

[21] A native of Orkney and a veteran of three years service with the Glengarries, Flett and his wife settled at Bathurst Township C-2/L25(E).

When settlers began reaching the Tay from Brockville in March 1816, the advance party's first undertaking was construction of the King's Store and building a log bridge over the Tay so that those following them could reach their allotted land in the Townships of Drummond and Bathurst.

Even before it was completed, that first Gore Street bridge claimed three lives. While working chest-deep in the cold spring runoff, William Holdness (1789-1816)[22] *"took a violent fit of sickness"* and died as he was being evacuated to medical attention at Brockville. A short time later, before the deck was fully laid, two children fell into the icy stream while crossing on the stringers. The boy went into the water first and his older sister drowned while trying to rescue him.[23]

In the spring of 1819, the log bridge was washed away.

> *The snow melted so fast, that in two days the swamps were all covered with water, and the rivers had overflown their banks. In a short time, the Tay had risen to such a height that it carried away the bridge built by the settlers in 1816, so that we were forced to travel, for about two months, between the north and south side of this town in boats or canoes*.[24]

The washed-out bridge was replaced by another log structure that served until it was replaced by a stone bridge built in 1834 by the firm of Spalding & Mahon at a cost of £41.8.0

The new bridge was a thing of beauty, a perfect Roman Arch, a design very unusual in its day. When most stone bridges rose five or six feet from the river's edge before the arch began, the Gore Street bridge was a perfect arch from shore to shore, clearing the water by 10 feet. Its grace and beauty were so remarkable that it brought the town a certain amount of fame. Artists came to sketch it, and its image was reproduced on teacups and paper weights. It was usually known as Locke's Bridge as it stood more-or-less in front of Locke's Brewery.

When the Tay Canal (first opened in 1834) was reconstructed in 1885 and 1891, Perth Mill owner and member of parliament John G. Haggart (1836-1913) ensured that the project included a last-minute extension of the original canal. The additional work reached from the turning basin between Gore and Drummond Streets to the top of Cockburn Island, at the end of Mill Street, where Haggart owned a large flour mill. The beautiful old stone bridge stood in the way of progress (i.e. Haggart's bottom line). It was torn down to make way for the dredge and the promised barge traffic that was to follow.

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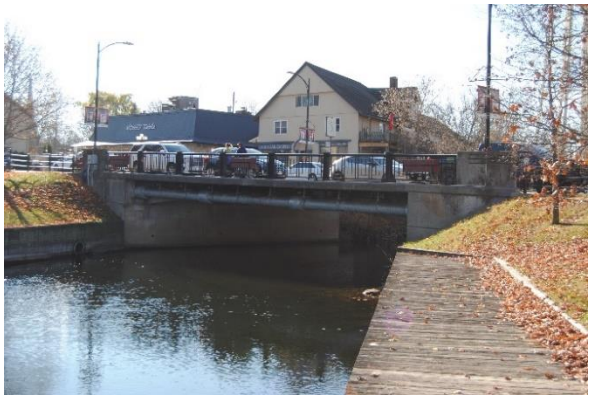
[22] Holderness was a native of Yorkshire, England. His death was the first at the settlement. He left a pregnant wife, Mary Ann Garlick (1785-1865), and six children. When his seventh child, Eliza Holderness, was born three months later she was the first child born at the new settlement.

[23] According to an item in the *Perth Courier* of June 24, 1948, the children were *"a son and daughter of John Campbell, one of the first settlers on the Scotch Line"*, most likely a reference to former Quarter Master Sergeant John Campbell, who, with a wife, five sons and a daughter, located on North Elmsley C-10/L-23(SW) in November 1816.

[24] *Hints To Emigrants*, by Rev. William Bell (1824).

There is a legend that Locke's Bridge collapsed of its own accord. While it is true that a large portion of it did fall down, suddenly and unexpectedly, in July 1891, it did so while demolition work was already underway. Damaged by the dredging and blasting going on around it, cracks suddenly appeared and two men working beneath it had a narrow escape as it came down, crushing a steam drill.

***Locke's Bridge 1891,*** (Perth Museum)



***Big Tay Gore Street Bridge, 2022*** (Ron W. Shaw)

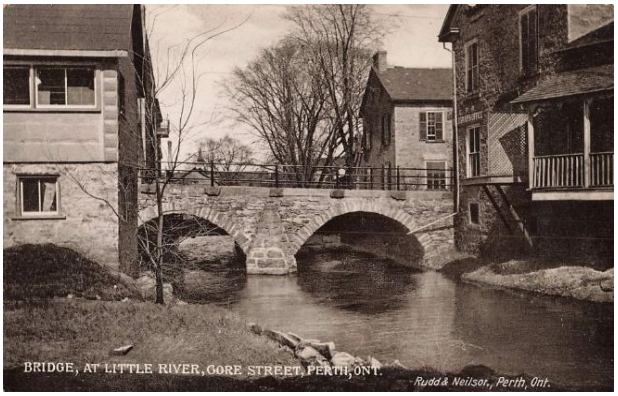
The demolished stone bridge was replaced in 1892 by a swing bridge manufactured and installed by the Canadian Bridge and Iron Company of Lachine, Quebec. The bridge cost $3,987 and the masonry piers on which it sat cost another $5,400. Because the canal extension was a late-date add-on, the Federal Government paid only $5,387 toward the bridge, leaving the Town of Perth to pay the remaining $4,000 of the $9,387 total.

As the bridge was being replaced and the canal dredged up to his dam, Haggart constructed a wharf at his mill. However, as there was no associated turning basin at the mill, the extension was essentially a cul-de-sac into which barges were reluctant to venture. There is no evidence Haggart's canal extension was ever used to transport cargo of any kind. The bridge was swung less than a dozen times in 66 years, most often to allow passage of Senator Peter McLaren's (1833-1919) steam yacht, *Geraldine*. When the bridge was opened for the last time about 1905, it took eight men to operate it. The gears were seized by rust, the drive shaft bent, and weights in the swinging mechanism fell off. Nevertheless, destruction of the stone bridge and its replacement with an iron swing bridge still benefited Haggart. Inclusion of the new bridge in the 1883-1891 canal project was little more than camouflage for the real purpose of the channel extension – the dredging added two and one-half feet of head at the Haggart Mill dam making it possible to profitably generate electricity.

John Haggart's Gore Street swing bridge served until it was replaced in 1957 with the cement and steel bridge in service today, paid for by all three levels of government, federal, provincial, and municipal.

**Gore Street Little Tay Bridge**

Unless they found a shallow ford, the arrivals of March 1816 perhaps felled a second, smaller, tree for a first crossing of the Little Tay. The first bridge over the north branch, however, was another log structure constructed within a few weeks of the one crossing the Big Tay.




***Little Tay Gore Street Bridge, c1910*** (Rudd & Neilson)

***Little Gore Street Bridge, c2015*** (Simon Sulyma)

Suffering the same fortunes as its big sister, a series of log bridges spanned the Little Tray crossing until the double span, stone arch bridge that serves today was built in 1905. Souvenir buttons marking that year's Old Boys Reunion bore a photo of the new bridge.

**Tay Canal Bridges**

The Canadian Bridge and Iron Company bridge at Gore Street, installed in 1891, was an afterthought to the 1883 plan for the Tay Canal reconstruction. Three other swing bridges, at Drummond, Beckwith, and Craig Streets, were purchased and installed under a single contract with Robert Weddell Bridge and Engine Works of Trenton, Ontario.

Those bridges all consisted of two parts, a fixed span, and a swing span, mounted on a central pier. The combined cost was $10,562 -- $3,590 for the fixed spans and $6,972 for the swing spans.

> *The swing spans were described as being a Kingpost truss with latticed main posts and transverse cap beam from which suspension cables are hung to support the ends of a low through girder span of the Howe truss type. The fixed spans are simple Howe trusses. Structurally the swing spans are of the unequal arm, or bobtail, centre-bearing swing bridge type stabilized by means of a ring of roller wheels outside of the pivot.*[25]

The Wedell Bridge Company claimed to have lost $2,000 on the contract, however, having miscalculated some of the costs in their original tender.

The bridges had a swing span of 77 feet (23.5 meters) and a road width of 14.5 feet (4.4 meters). The substructures consisted of masonry abutments, piers, and pivot piers built by Davis & Sons of Ottawa. Stone did not come from local quarries but was shipped to Perth by rail from the Davis & Sons quarry at St. Martin's near Montreal.

The bridges were decked by planks nailed to timber joists and had a load capacity rating of five tons. The swing spans were manually operated by means of a turning lever inserted into the deck to operate the rack and pinion turning unit.

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[25] *Historic Bridges on the Rideau Waterways System, Preliminary Report*, by Robert W. Passfield (1976).

The swing spans of the Drummond and Beckwith Street bridges were fixed/blocked in 1941 and bent timbers added for extra support, thus obstructing the passage of marine traffic into the basin. Moreover, when the decking was renewed in November 1973, it was continued over the joint of the two spans thereby further preventing the bridges from being swung. Locked in the closed position, only canoes, rowboats and the smallest of outboard motorboats could pass under them. Valuable opportunities for the community to benefit from water born tourism was lost.

**Drummond Street Bridge**

Also known as the 'Long Bridge', the piers for Drummond Street bridges were begun in late September 1888 and were completed in December. Installation of the swing bridge was completed in the spring of 1889, although difficulties with completing the south approach delayed its use until the end of the year.

The Drummond Street bridge had a vertical clearance of 10.5 feet over the water. It differed slightly from the other three in that the canal tow path passed under its north end, between the pivot pier and the heel abutment, and it had a 216 foot (66 meter), 3.5 foot (1.1 meter) wide sidewalk cantilevered on the outside of the main girder on the downstream side. The sidewalk was actually an add-on, constructed in the fall of 1889 by Perth carriage maker Thomas Hicks at a cost of $319.68. A railing was included in the contract in view of the 12 foot (3.66 meters) drop from road to water. The Drummond Street bridge was the only one of the three to be furnished with a sidewalk.

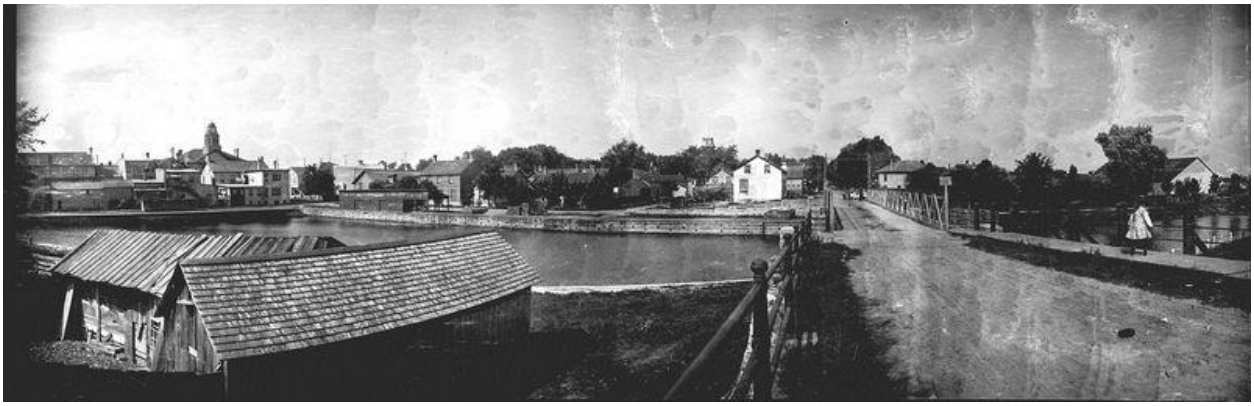
The *Perth Courier* thought the bridge a good one, but too narrow.

> *It is a pity, and a shame, however, that the width of Drummond St. Bridge is contracted to fourteen feet — too narrow for so important a bridge, where loaded teams often meet.*[26]


***Drummond Street Bridge, Pre-1981*** (J. H. Adams)

***Drummond Street Bridge, Post-1981*** (Hamilton Spectator)

[26] *Perth Courier*, January 25, 1889.



***Drummond Street Bridge, Pre-1981*** (Isabel Hardie)

The Drummond Street swing bridge was replaced in 1981 by a fixed low level concrete and steel highway type bridge. When historian, author, and television personality Pierre Berton (1920-2004) visited Perth that September, in his capacity as a member of Heritage Canada's Board of Governors[27], he was appalled by the new bridge. Berton opined that Parks Canada[28] should *"blow it up and install a swing bridge so that boaters can turn around in the Tay Basin"*.[29] The concrete bridge of 1981 was rehabilitated in 2022.

**Beckwith Street Bridge**

In order to accommodate vastly increased traffic created by the opening of the CPR Car Shops[30] in 1882, the Tay was first bridged at Beckwith Street with a wooden structure completed in October of that year. To that date the closest bridges to Beckwith Street were at Drummond and Brock Streets.

The Beckwith Street bridge was only seven years old when it was replaced by one of the Wendell swing bridges. It opened for traffic on April 19, 1889, and, although it no longer swings, it is still in use today.

With removal of the 1880s swing bridges from Drummond and Craig Streets, the bridge at Beckwith Street stands as the oldest steel swing bridge in the Rideau Canal system and is *"of a type no longer found on Canadian canals"*.[31] It is one of the oldest rivet-connected truss bridges in Canada, and among the oldest surviving metal bridges in Ontario.

The Beckwith Street bridge was restored in 1985 to the point that it might, one day, swing again, but with three other low bridges blocking access to downtown Perth at the Basin, the need or opportunity is unlikely to present itself.

[27] Heritage Canada funding and technical assistance was, at that time, playing a major role in the revitalization of Gore and Foster Streets. Berton was accompanied by fellow board member Tommy Douglas (1904-1986) founder of the New Democratic Party.

[28] Parks Canada owns and operates the Tay Canal and Basin.

[29] Perth Courier, September 16, 1981.

[30] Located along the northeast side of Chetwynd Street between Herriott and Craig Streets.

[31] *Historic Bridges on the Rideau Waterways System, Preliminary Report*, by Robert W. Passfield (1976).

***Beckwith Street Bridge, 2013*** (Holth & McOmber)

***Beckwith Street Bridge, 2011*** (Ken Chaplain)

In addition to the bridge itself, the one-and-one-half storey Bridgemaster's House still stands at its north end on the corner of Riverside Drive and Beckwith Street. Bridgemasters were appointed by the Federal Department of Transport and provided a house, located close to the bridge(s) of their assignment, in addition to their salary. They were responsible for the opening and closing of the bridges as well as routine day-to-day maintenance. At Perth, as the Tay Canal carried so little traffic, a single bridgemaster seems to have managed all four canal bridges. Bridgemasters John Russell and Philip McParlan had sufficient time on their hands that, beginning in 1925, they developed extensive landscaping and flower gardens along the south bank of the Basin between Gore and Drummond Streets -- gardens that still bloom after 100 years thanks to the efforts of the Perth Horticultural Society. The canal bridges at Perth had four keepers --

John Hendry (1840-1912), served c1889-1904
John Russell (1854-1931)[32], served 1904-1924
Philip Joseph McParlan (1887-1946) served 1924-1946
Frederick Louis McParlan (1925-1947) served 1946-1947[33]

**Brock & South Street Bridges**

A bridge over the Tay at Brock Street dates to as early as 1823 and was shown on maps as late as 1881, but it seems to have been removed as part of the 1885-1891 Tay Canal reconstruction project.

In the early years of the settlement the Tay was also bridged at South Street, but that bridge seems to have been removed during the construction of the original Tay Canal in 1834.

**Craig Street Bridge**

The first bridge to cross the Tay at Craig Street was a timber-built structure constructed in 1831 at a cost of £12.10.0.[34] It was known as 'Red Bridge'.

[32] Former Assistant Lockmaster at Beveridge's Locks.

[33] After only 15 months on the job McParlan was drowned in a boating accident on Chistie Lake.

[34] *Reminiscences From Perth Ontario* (1979) by W. T. Lloyd Harper (1907-1990).

That bridge was replaced in 1889, by the third Weddell rivet-connected truss swing bridge. The piers were begun at Craig Street in late September 1888 and by January 23, 1889, the wooden planking had been laid and the bridge was opened for public use. The *Perth Courier* thought the new bridge was …

***Craig Street Bridge 2021*** (Ron W. Shaw)

> *… a good job, and a very substantial work, and should last for generations. The roadway, however, is rather narrow for so public a thoroughfare, being only fourteen feet between the guard timbers on the planking. Of course, in daylight there will be no difficulty with fair driving, but on a dark night two teams meeting on the bridge would have difficulty in steering so as not be foul each other.*[35]

The Craig Street bridge in use today, carrying Highway-43 over the canal, was constructed in 1954. It was the first of the modern bridges built to replace the 1888-1889 swing bridges installed during reconstruction of the Tay Canal.

A fixed, low level, concrete bridge it has a clearance of just eight feet (2.4 meters) and only the smallest of boats can pass under it. The bridge marks the end of modern navigation on the Tay Canal and, as many tourists dislike leaving their boats at the nearby wharf constructed in 1965, construction of the current bridge, together with the bridge on Drummond Street and the disabling of the Beckwith Street swing bridge has significantly undermined the town's tourism industry.

**Beyond Town Limits**

Dowson's Rapids Bridge - About two miles below Perth, a timber bridge once crossed the river at Dowson's Rapids dam and lock[36], near the confluence of Jebb's Creek and the Tay. It had been constructed in 1869 at the cost of $100 by William Dowson (1822-1887) under contract to the Township of North Elmsley. 'Dowson's Bridge' carried a township road leading to the Rideau Ferry Road. In 1888, as the Tay Canal was being redeveloped, the Ministry of Railways and Canals paid Samuel T. Dowson (1857-1929) $1,000 in compensation for the removal of the bridge. It was taken out at the same time as the lock and dam were removed by the canal project's prime contactor A.H. Manning & Macdonald Company of Toronto.

Beveridge Locks Bridge - The concrete and steel highway bridge that carries County Road #18 (Port Elmsley Road) over the canal a short distance upstream from Beveridge Bay was built in 1961. A high-level bridge, it stands 22 feet (6.7 meters) above the water, the minimum bridge clearance on the modern Rideau Canal system.

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[35] *Perth Courier*, January 25, 1889.

[36] aka Lock-5 or Jebb's Creek Lock.

The modern bridge, crossing between the two Beveridge Locks, stands just a few feet from the site of the original timber swing bridge. That bridge was constructed in 1886 at a cost of $1,800 by the same carpenters who built the lock gates. In 1898 the timber bridge was replaced by an iron swing bridge built and installed by the Dominion Bridge Company Ltd. of Lachine, Quebec.

***Beveridge Lock Bridge, c1930*** (Parks Canada)

***Beveridge Lock Bridge, 2021 (***Ron W. Shaw)

When the new bridge was completed in 1961, the 1898 bridge was salvaged and moved to Narrows-Lock, between Big Rideau and Upper Rideau Lakes, and installed there in 1964. At its new locale, the swing bridge carries County Road #14 over the narrows.

> *This bridge is a rivetted steel through truss structure of the unbalanced arm, or bobtail, type with the two main girders being a modified Pratt truss. It is 69.75 feet (21.25 meters) long with a 13 foot (3.9 meter) road width and load capacity of five tons. The floor of the bridge consists of three inch planks spiked to longitudinal timber joists. Wooden railings are affixed along the inside of each of the two main girders. The bridge is manually operated by means of a turning lever inserted into the deck of the bridge over the pivot.*[37]

***Narrows Lock Bridge, c2013*** (HistoricBridges.org)

***Narrows Lock Bridge, c2013*** (HistoricBridges.org)

[37] *Historic Bridges on the Rideau Waterways System, Preliminary Report*, by Robert W. Passfield (1976).

The old iron swing bridge can be seen in daily service each summer. As a hand-turned swing bridge it is one of very few still in operation today. Most movable bridges have been built for or adapted to electric motors, but at Narrows Lock the operator still inserts a drive bar through a hole in the deck, which connects to a gearing system, then, pushes and walks the bar in circles as the bridge is swung open or closed -- the same functionality as operated the swing bridges at Perth between 1889 and 1941.

- ***Ron W. Shaw (2023)***