

Abstract Submission for 5th Canadian River Heritage Conference

Title of Presentation:
Heritage Bridges in Waterloo Region

Category: Celebrating River Heritage

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Abstract

Heritage Bridges play an important role that goes well beyond their obvious function as connective components of our transportation infrastructure. They contribute to our community's social and economic development and reflect the technology of the times they were built in. Many of these bridges are familiar and distinctive landmarks that contribute to a strong sense of place and link the current generation to the past. Today, Heritage Bridges are threatened by growth and the demand for improved transportation, neglect and environmental affects such as pollution, floods and weather.

The Region of Waterloo lies entirely within the watershed of the Grand River, which was designated a Canadian Heritage River in 1994. In an effort to preserve heritage bridges in Waterloo Region, the Region's Heritage Planning Advisory Committee (HPAC) took the initiative to identify and collect relevant documentation and took the lead in recognizing the significant historical past of our heritage bridges by educating municipal councils and the public, nominating selected bridges to the National Register, and installing plaques showing historic photos and information about the bridges.

A multi-phase study has been in progress for over 6 years. In phase 1, more than 100 bridges of interest located throughout the region were inventoried and evaluated for their heritage significance, and the 10 most significant structures were identified. In phase 2, detailed documentation on these 10 most significant heritage bridges was compiled, laying the foundation for the eventual formal recognition of these outstanding structures. Phase 3 focused on the Region's truss bridges, which provided a rare opportunity to experience 80 years of evolving bridge design and technology within a few hours drive.

This paper will provide details about the inventory of heritage bridges in Waterloo Region and summarize the methods used to locate, document, and assess them. It will identify challenges and opportunities in preserving heritage bridges.

Biographical sketch:

Mai Al Nabhan has a degree in Architectural Engineering from Damascus University, Syria; a Masters in Community and Regional Planning from Iowa State University, USA; and an International Certificate in the Preservation of Historic Urban Centers from ICCROM, Italy. She has worked for the Ministry of Culture in Syria, the Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East, and the United Nations, she has taught design and historic preservation courses.

Jean Haalboom-Biography

Regional Councillor, Regional Municipality of Waterloo - 2000 -present '07
Council Committees - Planning and Public Works, Administration and Finance, Community Services, Rural Water Quality, Wastewater Treatment Master Plan, Public Art, Project Teams for Bridge and Road projects

Chair, Heritage Planning Advisory Committee, Region of Waterloo - 1994 - present '07

Councillor, City of Kitchener - 1997 - 2000

Board Member - Grand River Conservation Authority , 1997 - present '07

Board of Governors - Wilfrid Laurier University - 2000 - 2006

B.A. degree - University of Waterloo

Educator -Special Education, Waterloo County Board of Education - 36 years

Under Jean's leadership as Chair of the Heritage Planning Advisory Committee, the study of more than one hundred Heritage Bridges in Waterloo Region was conducted and published. Jean has a thirty year commitment to the field of heritage preservation. Her accomplishments include the establishment of three heritage conservation districts in the City of Kitchener, scenic roads mapping and designation, participation leading towards the amended Ontario Heritage Act, and tours of the built heritage in the Grand River watershed. Jean is a strong advocate for environmental preservation.

Her current goal is to see the restoration of Wellesley Bridge #6, a bridge featured in Canadian novelist Jane Urquhart's "The Stone Carvers".