

MAIN STREET BRIDGE (ASSINIBOINE RIVER SPAN) COMPONENTS

ORNAMENTAL STONEWORK

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee
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Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) Land Commissioner from 1879-89, Charles John Brydges, proposed several bridge schemes for Winnipeg, rightly predicting that new spans meant business and increased land values at either end. In the late 1870s, he published a plan for two bridges to cross each river from the heart of the Hudson's Bay Reserve (a large block of land at the south end of Main Street owned by the HBC) using capital secured from HBC investors and others. The Assiniboine Bridge was planned to connect the growing population of Fort Rouge (then known as St. Boniface West) with Main Street and Winnipeg (Plate 1). The Broadway Bridge was planned to connect Broadway with Provencher Boulevard in St. Boniface (Plate 2).

Construction of the Assiniboine Bridge went relatively smoothly. The iron swing bridge was officially opened on July 18, 1881. Tolls charged during the first year were 2¢ each way for pedestrians, 5¢ each way for a rider with a mule or horse, 5¢ per head for loose animals, and 15¢ each way for a single animal pulling a vehicle. The bridge generated nearly $3,500 between July and December 1881 and was continually a profitable venture.[1]

Completion of this structure ensured Fort Rouge's immediate growth. Its expanding population (many of whom were influential businessmen and politicians) quickly lobbied to become part of the City of Winnipeg. Council agreed to their terms to provide three free bridge connections to the area and, to partially satisfy the agreement, purchased the Assiniboine Bridge from the HBC for $45,000 in January 1883.[2]

In 1893, the Norwood Bridge was constructed across the Red River, giving modern access to the growing population of St. Vital and Norwood (Plates 3 and 4). It was built as a toll bridge by the Norwood Improvement Company (new Norwood land owners were given a one-year free pass

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1 J. Selwood, op. cit., p. 18.

2 Ibid., p. 18.

over the span).[3] This bridge, along with the 1881 Assiniboine Bridge, continued to serve south Winnipeg until 1897 when the City chose to build a new Assiniboine River span (now known as the Main Street Bridge), the original structure having become unsafe due to increased traffic loads.[4] Both new bridges were of steel construction. The Main Street span cost $38,330 and was built by Dominion Bridge Company of Winnipeg (Plate 5).[5]

Just prior to World War I, City of Winnipeg officials announced a bold policy of bridge replacement where aesthetic considerations would be taken into consideration. In 1914, City Council asked its bridge engineer, Paul Schioler, to prepare plans for three new bridges across the Assiniboine River, including a replacement for the Main Street Bridge. He enlisted the help of Arthur A. Stoughton, newly appointed chair of the new University of Manitoba Department of Architecture and advocate of the "City Beautiful" movement. Schioler put forward dramatic and highly stylized drawings a year later for a Main Street Bridge over the Assiniboine River (Plate 6) as well as for the Maryland Street (Plate 7) and Arlington Street (Plate 8) spans.[6] As one report observed,

> If Winnipeg erects those or any similar bridges it will be the first Canadian city to follow the lead of cities abroad in expending as much care on the architectural treatment of such structures as upon public buildings…It seems to those [Old World] people a matter of civic decency and self respect [sic] as well as of public pride that all street fixtures and necessities, large or small, should be as well designed as possible, so that, while fulfilling their useful purpose…they always improve the opportunity created by satisfying a need to make an object of beauty. If Winnipeg erects…these bridges…it will be distinguished above all other Canadian and most cities on this continent by decorating its river with crossing structures beyond the bare utilities that engineering can supply by the addition to them of architectural grace and elegance.[7]

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3 Winnipeg Free Press, September 14, 1955, p. 25. Tolls were collected until 1907. The bridge was purchased in 1909 by St. Boniface for $90,000.

4 Winnipeg Tribune, January 19, 1949, p. 1.

5 Manitoba Free Press, September 12, 1931, p. 3; and Winnipeg Free Press, September 14, 1955, p. 25.

6 Manitoba Free Press, June 1, 1915, p. 5. Early cost estimates for the 3 bridges were: Main- $191,276.00; Arlington- $126,379.00; and Maryland- $141,680.00

7 Manitoba Free Press, June 12, 1915, Special Section, p. 4.

Unfortunately, World War I put these and many other City of Winnipeg projects on hold.[8]

As part of the relief employment effort during the Great Depression, several large projects were completed, funded by all three levels of government. The Main Street/Norwood Bridges were replaced in the early 1930s. The Norwood section, with its 164.7-metre span, cost $600,000, while the Main Street Bridge (122 metres in length) was completed for $480,000. Foley Brothers Limited was awarded the sub-structure contract[9] and the Dominion Bridge Company of Winnipeg was given the contracts to fabricate the steel. The Board of Engineers, noting the fact that the aesthetics of bridges were becoming an important consideration, supported a scaled-down version of the 1915 bridge designed by Schioler and Stoughton.

Construction of the two bridges began on December 29, 1930 and on October 9th, 1931, Mayor Webb and his became the first car to cross the new spans (Plates 9 and 10). They were officially opened to the citizens of Winnipeg on November 21st.[10] The Norwood Bridge featured four fixed girder spans and one bascule span, its 630-tonne counterweight concealed underneath. The Main Street Bridge was designed with three fixed spans and the ability to turn a fourth into a bascule span.[11]

Carved stone was found at the four corners of the Main Street Bridge including large and small pylons connected by solid stone walls (Plates 11 and 12). Metal railing was used on the bridge span (Plate 10). In the late 1990s, when the Main Street and Norwood Bridges were replaced, these ornamental stone elements were used to accent the new Main Street Bridge, which was renamed Queen Elizabeth Way.

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8 Jean Pierre LeMaitre, "Arthur Alexander Stoughton: The Real and the Beautiful," unpublished paper, no date, n.p.

9 Manitoba Free Press, December 22, 1930, p. 21.

10 After some debate at City Council, the Main Street Bridge was renamed "The Bridge of the Old Forts."

11 Western Canada Contractor and Builder, XXVIII (September 1931), p. 18.

STYLE

The architectural elements from the 1931 bridge are classically styled.

CONSTRUCTION

Tyndall limestone from the Gillis Quarries was used for the ornamental pylons and balustrades.[12] It is unknown at this time who produced the bison heads.

DESIGN

The 1930s Tyndall limestone has been used in several areas of the new bridge (Plate 13). The twin span structure utilizes the stone pylons and balustrades in the northwest, southwest, northeast and southeast corners, as well as carved bison heads set on limestone bases. Bison heads are also found in the space between the spans on both sides of the river (Plates 14-17). The pylons include carved shapes and designs (Plate 18).

INTERIOR

N/A

INTEGRITY

The ornamental stone is in good structural condition and since their re-use in the new bridge, has not suffered significant alteration.

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[12] Winnipeg Free Press, September 14, 1955, p. 25.

STREETSCAPE

These ornamental elements have been place on the four corners of the bridge over the Assiniboine River as well as a central location between the two spans and are an important part of the bridge streetscape.

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS

Arthur A. Stoughton (1867-1955), founding head of the Department of Architecture at the University of Manitoba, is listed as the designing architect for the Main Street Bridge of 1930-1931 from which these architectural elements were re-used (see Appendix I for biographical information) – Plate 19.[13]

This is the first Stoughton structure evaluated by the Historical Buildings Committee.

Collaborating with Stoughton was the former City of Winnipeg's Bridge Engineer Paul Christian Birch Schioler (1883-1945). Born in San Francisco, California to Danish parents, Schioler was educated at the University of Copenhagen, graduating as an engineer and working on the Panama Canal.[14] By 1908, Schioler, his wife Nathalie and children Philip and Carla,[15] were living in Winnipeg, Schioler was named as 3rd assistant engineer in the City of Winnipeg's Engineer's Department under the leadership of H.N. Ruttan.[16] When Ruttan retired in 1914, the entire department was reorganized and Schioler became the head of the newly created Bridge Construction and Maintenance Division, although the report stated that he had been in charge of overseeing Winnipeg's bridges "for years."[17]

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13 Manitoba Free Press, December 10, 1930, p. 5.

14 Manitoba Free Press, August 22, 1916, p. 22; "Schioler v. United States et al." 75 F.Supp. 353 (1948), petition heard in District Court, N.D. Illinois, E.D., January 26, 1948 (below as "Schioler v. U.S."; and "Officers' Declaration Paper – Lieutenant Paul C.B. Schioler," dated March 23, 1916.

15 Canada Census, 1916.

16 Manitoba Free Press, February 24, 1908, p. 3. Schioler, it was reported, helped organize a Scandinavian Aid organization in Winnipeg in 1912. Manitoba Free Press, April 27, 1942, p. 3.

17 Manitoba Free Press, May 19, 1914, p. 9

Unfortunately for Schioler, the economic slowdown due to World War I translated into the cutting of many positions within the City of Winnipeg. In February 1915, Council approved the letting go of 38 workers, 16 in the engineering department with the "most serious" departure being Schioler, which occurred officially in June.[18] Schioler remained in the City and was hired to review and make a report to the Commission looking into the Legislative Building construction scandal in 1915-1916.[19]

Schioler separated from his wife and left for Chicago, Illinois by 1920.[20] He remarried, had two more children and worked for the next decade as that City's Bridge Engineer. According to court documents, he moved his new family to Denmark in 1931 where he died on March 31, 1945.[21]

PERSON/INSTITUTION

The Main Street Bridge or Bridge of the Old Forts, continued to serve the people of Winnipeg until the 1990s when it was decided to replace it with a twin span structure. The new northbound bridge was completed in 1996 and the southbound portion in 1999. The new Main Street Bridge, to quote the designing architects:

> …borrows reinterpreted architectural details from the historic forts and downtown structures as a link to the past, details such as grand scale, native Manitoba Tyndall Stone, battlement plates, sloped girders, piers and abutments. Although the bridge has allusions to the past it is a contemporary structure that accommodates all contemporary requirements such as pedestrian overlooks, planters, benches, cyclist corridors, pedestrian and roadway scale lighting, and ice breakers.[22]

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18 Manitoba Free Press, February 23, 1915, p. 28.

19 Manitoba Free Press, July 17, 1915, p. 1 and July 20, 1915, p. 2.

20 Manitoba Free Press, October 13, 1920, n.p. The former Mrs. Schioler sued and won for "failure to provide necessaries."

21 "Schioler v. U.S."

22 Quoted from Scatliff + Miller + Murray website (no date) at www.scatliff.mb.ca/profile/bridge_architecture/bridge_architecture.html.

EVENT

There is no known event connected with this building.

CONTEXT

The re-use of 1930s ornamental detailing on the new Main Street Bridge is an acknowledgment of the heightened demand for aesthetically pleasing civic structures in the 20th century. Architectural style and ornamentation for bridges, service buildings, electrical plants, etc. became the norm and in spite of the dire economic environment of the Great Depression, the bridges still featured modest ornamental treatment.

LANDMARK

The Main Street/Norwood Bridges have been an integral part of the development of south Winnipeg and St. Boniface for over 100 years. They are one of the busier bridges in the City and are well-known to all citizens, including the stone accents.

APPENDIX I

Arthur Alexander Stoughton

A.A. Stoughton was born in Mount Vernon, New York in 1867 and studied architecture at both Columbia College (Ph.B. in 1888) the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, France (1888-1893).[1] After graduating he returned to New York City in 1894 and founded the firm Stoughton and Stoughton with older brother Charles W.S. Stoughton (1860-1944).[2]

In 1913, he was named the first head of the University of Manitoba's Architecture Department, helping it to develop and mature in its naissance. A strong advocate of city planning and the "city beautiful" movement, he remained with the University until 1930.[3] Stoughton was a long-time member of the Art Committee of the Winnipeg Industrial Bureau and a supporter of the Winnipeg School of Art.

After his retirement from the University he moved back to New York and re-joined Stoughton and Stoughton. He died in Mount Vernon, New York in 1955.

A colleague said of Stoughton:

> Professor Stoughton saw that not only the work of training students in Architecture was necessary but that the general public must also be trained to admire and love the beautiful in buildings.[4]

A list of Stoughton designs would include:

Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, New York City, 1900-1902 (Stoughton and Stoughton)
41st Police Precinct Station House, 3016 Webster Avenue, New York, 1906 (Stoughton and Stoughton)
Maryland, Arlington and Main Street Bridges, Winnipeg, 1915 (not built)
World War I Memorial Building, Darlingford, MB, 1921

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1 Marilyn Baker, The Winnipeg School of Art: The Early Years (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 1989), p. 111; "Arthur Alexander Stoughton," in The Canadian Encyclopedia (Online version, Historica-Dominion, 2012).

2 "Arthur A. Stoughton Fonds," Archives of Manitoba.

3 Ibid.; and The Canadian Encyclopedia, op. cit.

4 Long-time Provincial Architect Gilbert Parfitt, quoted in M. Baker, op. cit., p. 111.

A.A. Stoughton designs, continued:

Main Street, Richardson Building, 1929 (not built)
Buller Building (Science), 45 Chancellors Circle, University of Manitoba, 1932
Tier Building (Arts), 173 Dafoe Road, University of Manitoba, 1932
R.T. Riley House, 186 West Gate, 1920
Bannatyne Avenue, University of Manitoba Medical College (Health Science Centre), two buildings, 1920-1921[5]
Cenotaph, Prince Albert, SA (with Marguerite Taylor), date unknown

[5] City of Winnipeg Buildings Permits, 2049/1920 & 1989/1921.

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Plate 1 – The first Assiniboine (Main Street) Bridge, with Upper Fort Garry in the background, n.d. (Reproduced from Winnipeg 100 [Winnipeg: Winnipeg Free Press, 1973], p. 10.)

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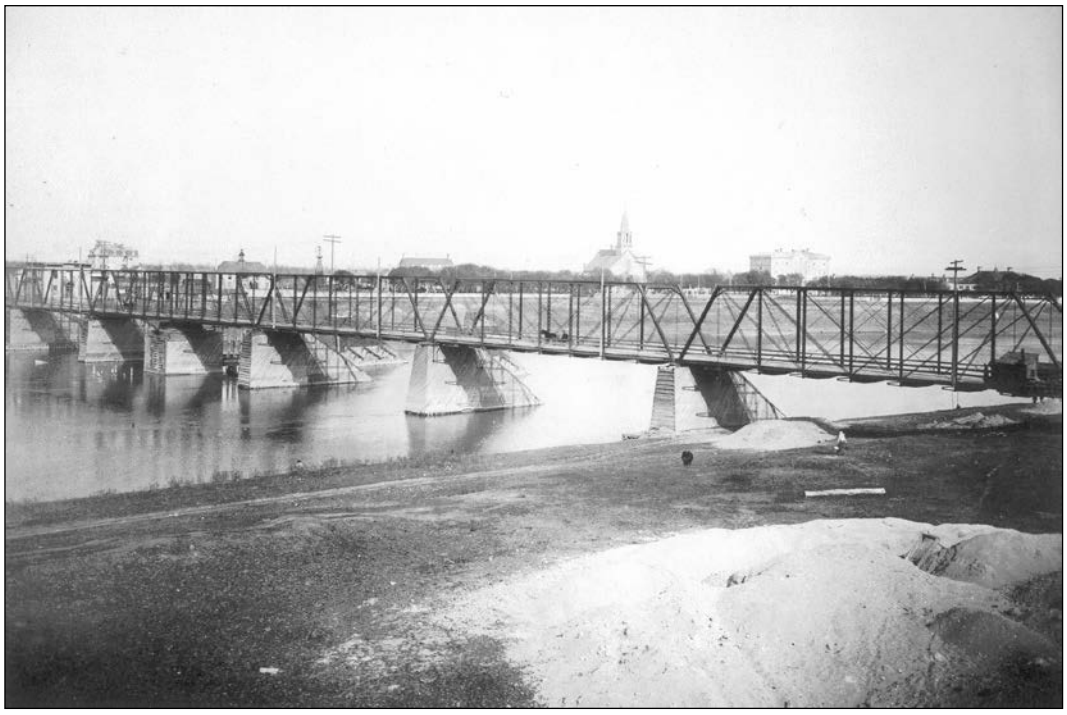

Plate 2 – Broadway Bridge, looking east with St. Boniface in the background, ca.1900. (Reproduced from William H. Carre, Art Work on Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 1900 [?: W.H. Carre & Co., 1900], Part III, page 5.)



Plate 3 – The Norwood Bridge, built in 1893, ca.1905. (M. Peterson Collection.)

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Plate 4 – Streetcar crossing the Norwood Bridge, no date. (Reproduced from the Rob McInnes Postcard Collection, found in Past Forward, City of Winnipeg Digital History Collection.)

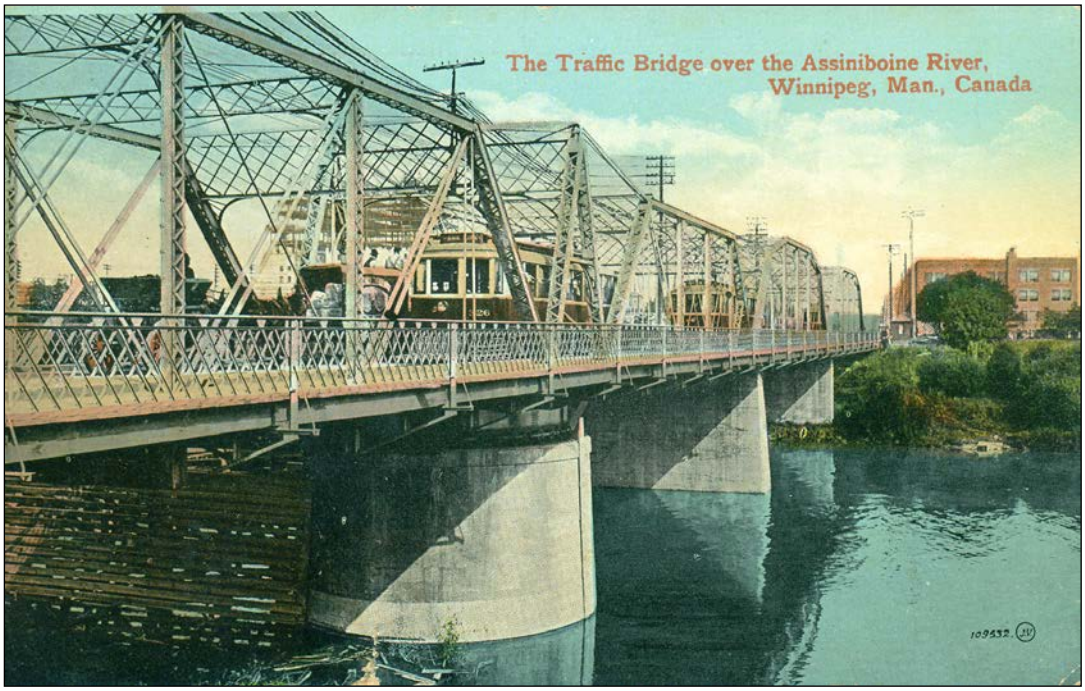

Plate 5 – Main Street Bridge, ca.1913. (Reproduced from the Rob McInnes Postcard Collection, found in Past Forward, City of Winnipeg Digital History Collection.)

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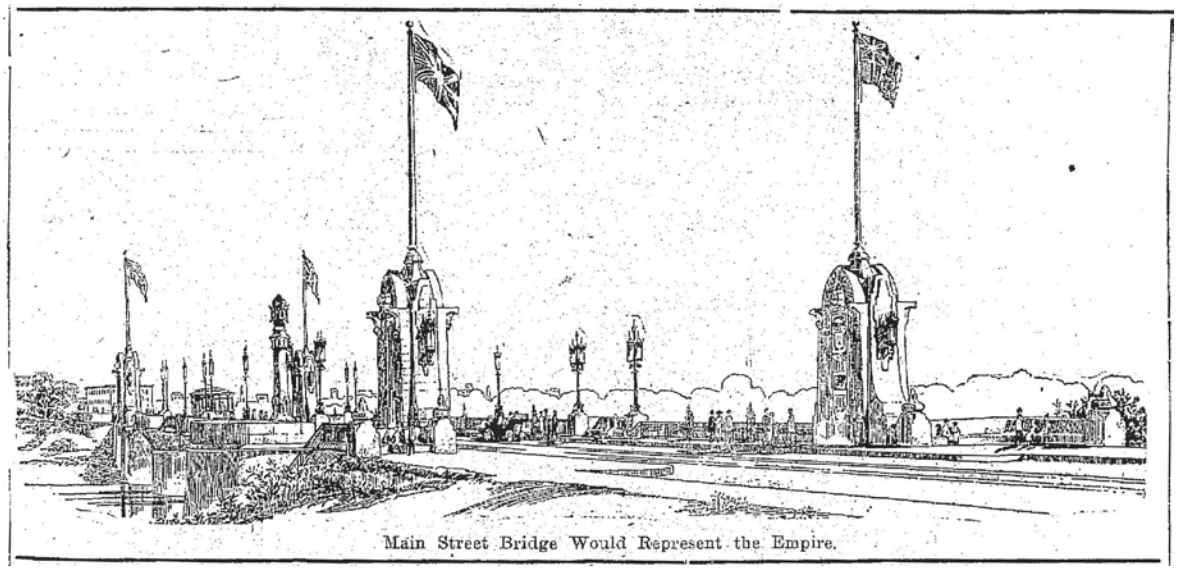

Plate 6 – Arthur A. Stoughton's 1915 design for the Main Street Bridge. (Reproduced from Manitoba Free Press, June 12, 1915, p. 4.)

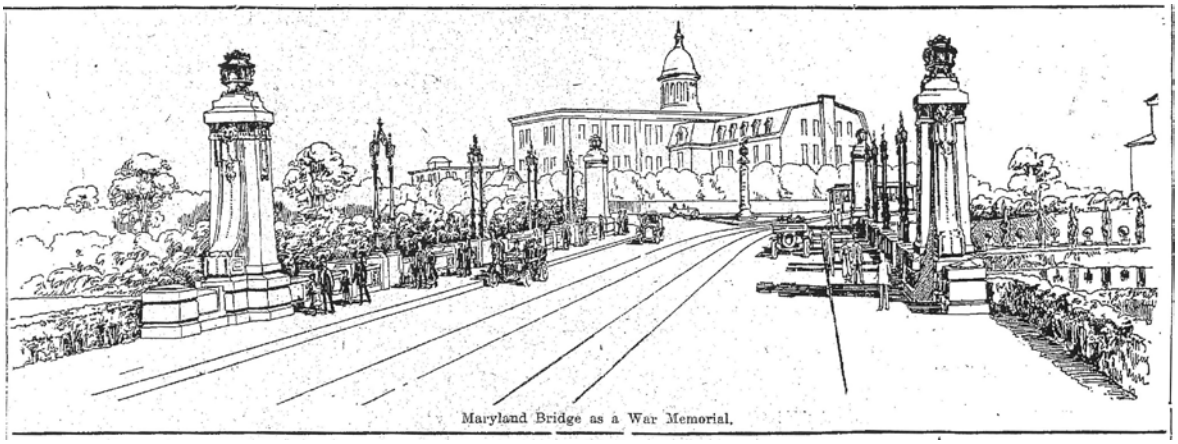

Plate 7 – Arthur A. Stoughton's 1915 design for the Maryland Street Bridge. (Reproduced from Manitoba Free Press, June 12, 1915, p. 4.)

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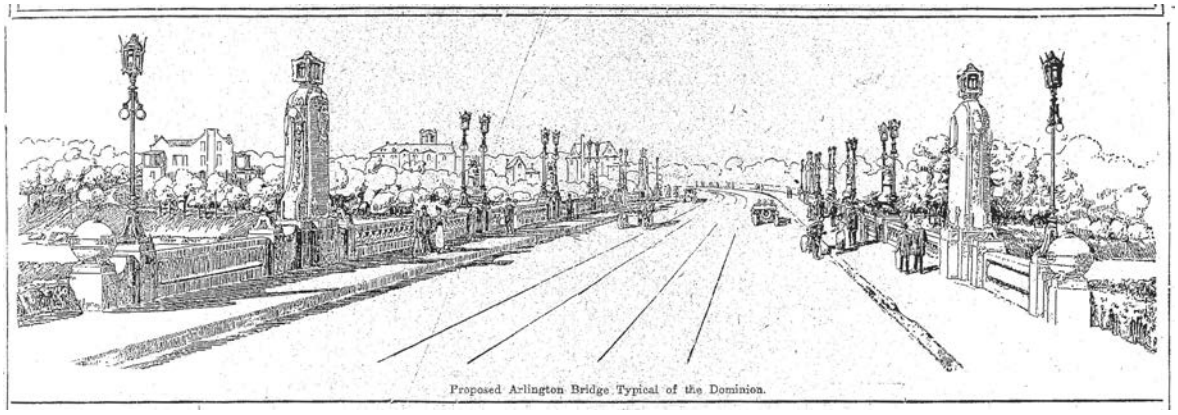

Plate 8 – Arthur A. Stoughton's 1915 design for the Arlington Street Bridge. (Reproduced from Manitoba Free Press, June 12, 1915, p. 4.)



Plate 9 – Construction of the Main Street Bridge, April 8, 1931. The Hotel Fort Garry is visible in the right background. (Archives of Manitoba, "Winnipeg-Bridges-Main 2-Construction 1932-#16.)

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Plate 10 – Completed Main Street Bridge, November 14, 1931. The ornamental stone is located at the arrow. (Archives of Manitoba, "Winnipeg-Bridges-Main 2-Construction 1932-#43.)



Plate 11 – Construction of the Main Street Bridge, August 24, 1931 with stone pylon/solid stone wall element in the foreground. (Archives of Manitoba, "Winnipeg-Bridges-Main 2-Construction 1932-#35.)

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Plate 12 – Construction of the Main Street Bridge, September 18, 1931 with metal railing and stone elements in the background. (Archives of Manitoba, "Winnipeg-Bridges-Main 2-Construction 1932-#37.)

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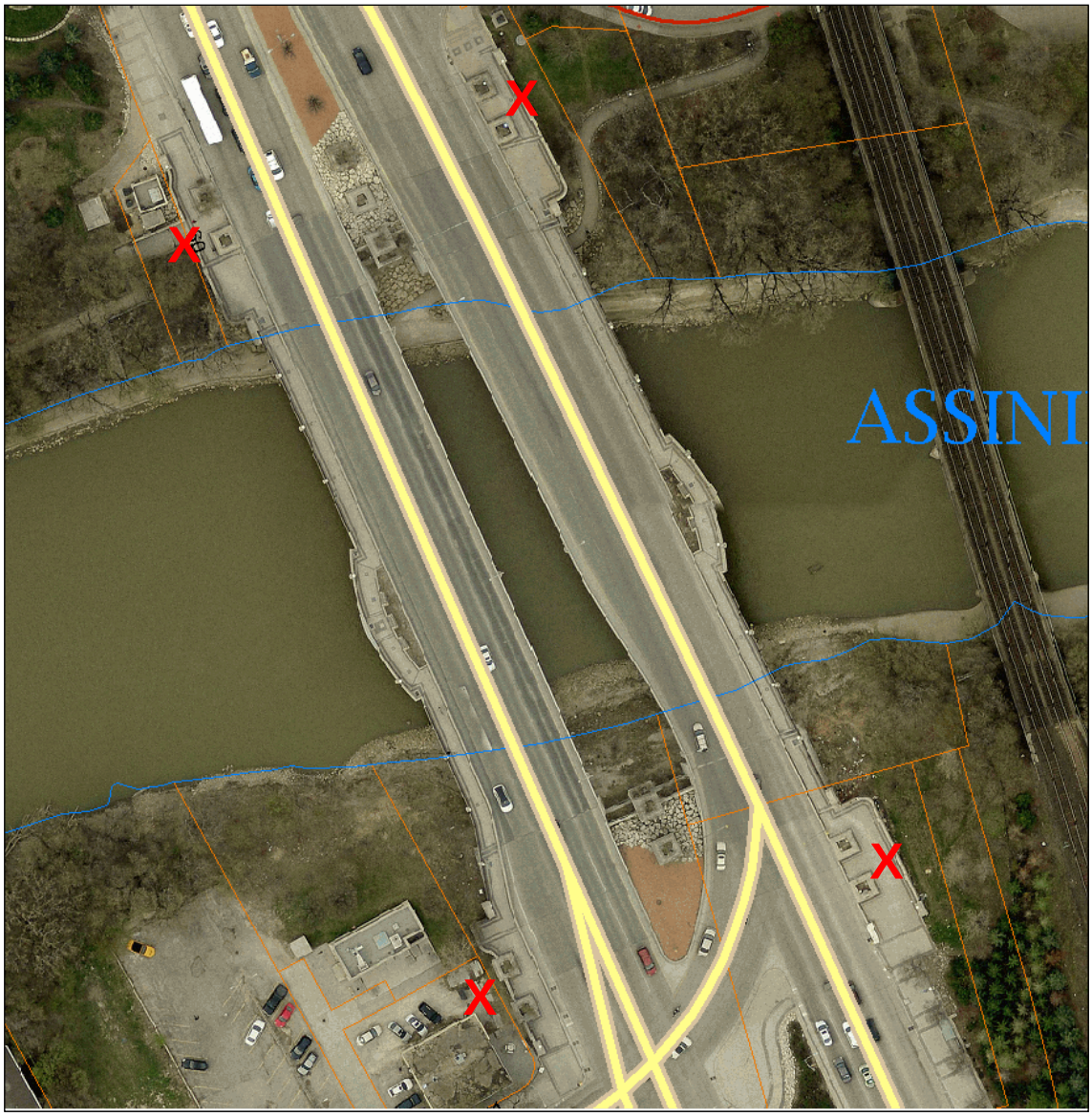

Plate 13 – Aerial view of the Main Street Bridge over the Assiniboine River, 2012. The ornamental pieces from the old bridge – limestone pylons and solid walls with small pylons – are installed at the four corners of the Assiniboine River span ("X"). (City of Winnipeg.)

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Plate 14 – Limestone pylon and solid stone wall, northwest corner, Queen Elizabeth Way, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)



Plate 15 – New bison head on limestone base, northeast corner, Queen Elizabeth Way, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)

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Plate 16 – Northeast corner, Queen Elizabeth Way, 2013, showing 1930s era solid, low stone wall. (M. Peterson, 2013.)



Plate 17 – Looking north from the south bank of the Assiniboine River, between the spans of the Queen Elizabeth Way, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)

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Plate 18 – Stone pylon, northeast corner Queen Elizabeth Way, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)



Plate 19 – A.A. Stoughton, no date. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba.)