

# Huron Road Bridge

## Spanning the Generations

From the early days of settlement on the banks of the Grand River and its tributaries, bridges have been important focal points for communities. Our significant heritage bridges have become distinctive landmarks that contribute to a strong sense of place. These links to the past span generations as well as our waterways.

Their future cannot be taken for granted. As the ravages of time take their toll, the challenge for our generation is to maintain the symbolic and functional integrity of these structures.

## Bridge Design and Materials

The Huron Road Bridge is a modest, single span, single lane bridge. Built in 1930, it is the Region's earliest example of a concrete bridge constructed with visible steel I-beams for support. Typical of rural bridges built in this time, this structure has open decorative concrete post and rail barriers that allow views of Schneider Creek.

During the era of this bridge's construction, concrete began to overtake steel as a primary bridge building material as it was inexpensive, durable and long-lasting. In addition to the Huron Road Bridge, three concrete and steel I-beam bridges were later built in the region's townships, but all have since been removed.

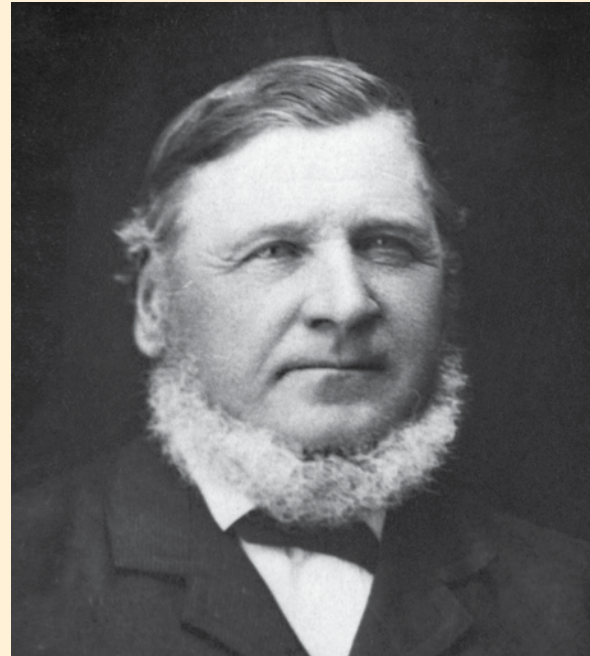
## Maintenance and Restoration

The bridge has been regularly maintained since its construction. First built with six I-beams, five more were later added to strengthen the structure. In 1999, the City of Kitchener restored several of the I-beams and undertook concrete repairs. In 2012, the City fully rehabilitated the bridge deck and replaced the steel I-beams and railings to reflect those of the original design in order to conserve this unique example of bridge construction.

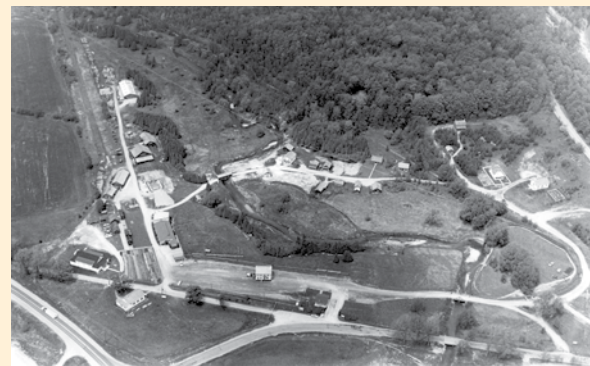
## The Huron Road

This bridge is located on the Huron Road, a historic roadway built through the wilderness by the Canada Company in 1828-1829. The Huron Road was part of one of the largest land development strategies in Upper Canada and became a vital communication link providing travel from Guelph to Goderich.

Travellers on the Huron Road used various routes in this area, depending on the best crossing point over the Grand River. The crossing that aligned with this location over Schneider Creek was known as Bechtel's Ford and was used from 1836-1851.



Isaac Cressman (1837–1921), early settler of the land north of the Huron Road.

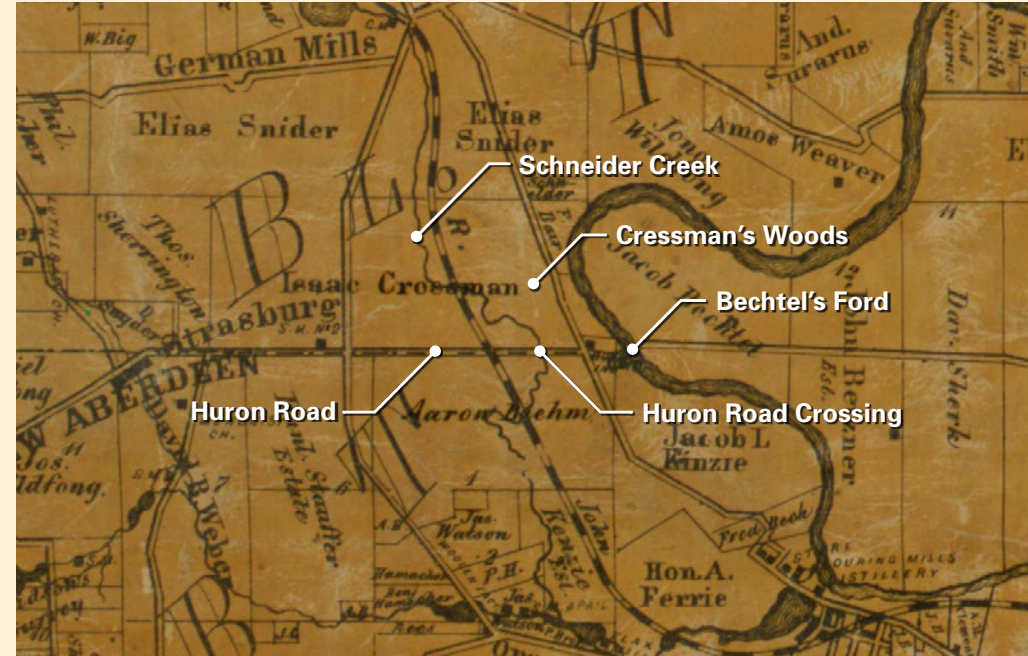


Aerial view of Doon Heritage Village in the 1960s. Note the Huron Road Bridge in the bottom right.



Children playing in Schneider Creek below the Huron Road Bridge in May 1982. Note the visible I-beams.

The Huron Road Bridge ranked 10th among the 100 heritage bridges studied by the Region's Heritage Planning Advisory Committee. Heritage bridges were an important factor in the 1994 designation of the Grand River and its tributaries as a Canadian Heritage River.

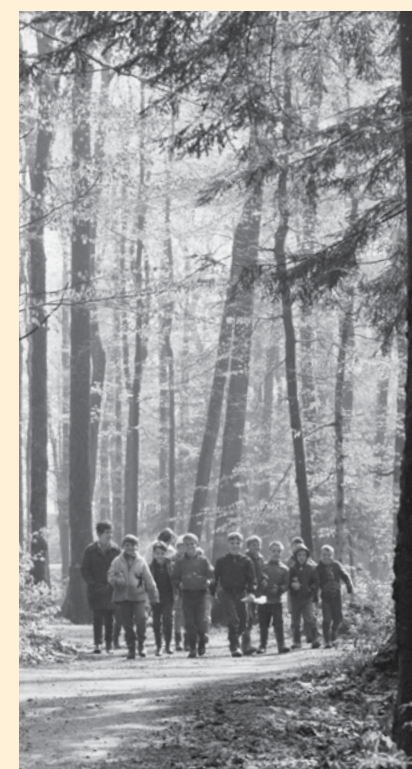


Historic map of Waterloo Township illustrating the early settlement of this area in 1861. Note the crossing of the Huron Road over Schneider Creek at this location.



The Huron Road Bridge is the earliest example of a bridge constructed with concrete and visible steel I-beams in Waterloo Region.

In 2000, the City of Kitchener received the Mike Wagner Heritage Award for its work in restoring many of the bridge elements.



Grade 5 students visiting the old growth trees in Cressman's Woods in 1969.



Instrumental in preserving the area, Homer Watson painted "Cressman's Woods in June" c.1910.



Huron Road Bridge in 2004 before the structure was rehabilitated in 2012. The I-beam located below this plaque was salvaged from the original bridge.

## Schneider Creek

Schneider Creek, which runs southerly through Kitchener and flows into the Grand River, was known as Beasley's Creek or Doon River prior to 1850. In mid-1891, Waterloo Township Council threatened legal proceedings to stop Berlin (now Kitchener) from using the creek as a "receptacle for the Town's sewage." Fearing that the waste was causing annual epidemics of diphtheria, scarlet fever and typhoid, the Town Council was inspired to take action and created a sewer system. In 1891, a 20-acre "sewer farm" was laid out at the foot of Mill Street at what is now Rockway Golf Course.

## Early Settlers

Many early settlers in this area were German-speaking Mennonite farmers from Pennsylvania. In the 1860s, the wooded lands on either side of the bridge were owned by two of the region's earliest non-Aboriginal families: the Biehns to the south, and the Cressmans to the north. Isaac Cressman owned the land where the Waterloo Region Museum stands today. In addition to clearing a portion of land for settlement, Isaac preserved the wooded area on the north side of his property.

## Cressman's Woods

In 1913, Cressman's Woods (now Homer Watson Park), was offered for sale by auction for logging. A group of public-spirited citizens took action to preserve the area, forming the Waterloo County Grand River Park Co. Ltd. and buying the woods. Their actions were one of the earliest environmental conservation efforts in the province. Leading the movement was Homer Watson, renowned artist; D.B. Detweiler, a promoter of the Ontario Hydro distribution system; and A.R. Kaufman, a Kitchener industrialist. In a speech, Homer Watson remarked that "it was left to the generous spirits of those tree lovers living in Berlin, Waterloo, Preston, Galt and Hespeler to come to the rescue of the forest and by producing the means of cash, they were able to withhold the destroying axe."

Kitchener Parks Commission records show that the virgin forests contained a fine variety of trees including Canada yew, hickory, white elm, ash, maple, and hemlock. Due to the uniqueness of Cressman's Woods, part of the property was selected as the site of Doon Pioneer Village (now Doon Heritage Village and the Waterloo Region Museum) in 1957. Today, Homer Watson Park is one of the last stands of old growth, native trees in the surrounding area.



Heritage Bridges of Waterloo Region

The Heritage Bridges Program is sponsored by the Heritage Planning Advisory Committee. Visit [www.regionofwaterloo.ca](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca)

**Huron Road Construction – 1828–1829**

**Earlier Bridge Crossings at this Location – c.1836–1930**

**Waterloo County Grand River Park Co. Ltd. Established – 1914**

**Bridge Construction – 1930**

**Bridge Rehabilitation – 2012**



Region of Waterloo