

Front Street and North Fraser Drive Fraser River Walking Bridge - 1929



View towards West Quesnel



Bridge Span across Fraser River



Bridge, Park and Trails

Description

The Fraser River Walking Bridge is a fine example of a wooden truss bridge of its type built in 1929. The entry points to the bridge are located where Carson Avenue and Front Street intersect in Downtown Quesnel, and on North Fraser Drive in West Quesnel. The historic place is confined to the bridge structure.

Heritage Value

The eastern side of the Fraser River Walking Bridge is located in Downtown Quesnel which is the commercial and administrative center of the city. The western side of the Fraser River Walking Bridge is located in West Quesnel which developed as a rural community with small houses and family farms. The growth of West Quesnel was moderate until this single-lane bridge across the Fraser River was constructed in 1929. The bridge provided a permanent link between the two Quesnel communities. These communities were amalgamated into one city in 1958. In 1971, the two-lane Moffat Bridge was built and growth in West Quesnel increased steadily.

Howe Truss bridges were once very common in many areas of the province. They were mostly built between 1920 and 1950. Many wooden structures have since been replaced with concrete beam type bridges which are less expensive to maintain. The defining character of a truss bridge is the vast number of timbers vertically arranged in a triangular pattern. The vertical beams are placed under tension where they meet to create a force able to hold considerable weight. Truss bridges are often constructed when economics is an issue. Wooden trusses use local supplies that require less investment even though they are more costly to maintain over time. The intrinsic value takes on greater significance as fewer wooden truss bridges remain in the province today.

Prior to the completion of the Fraser River Walking Bridge in 1929, travel across the Fraser River was made by cable ferry. The Fraser River Walking Bridge was the first bridge to span the Fraser River in Quesnel and remained the only bridge until 1971. The bridge was open to single-lane traffic that included automobiles, semi-tractor trailers, livestock, and pedestrians. Vehicles did not have a speed restriction, however horses were not to exceed walking pace. The original speed limit sign, 'Horses Must Not Exceed Walking Pace' is located at the Quesnel and District Museum and Archives. The Fraser River Walking Bridge is believed to be the longest wooden Howe Truss Bridge still in use. It was converted to pedestrian use in 1971 when the Moffat Bridge opened.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of the Fraser River Walking Bridge include:

- the only bridge across the Fraser River in Quesnel between 1929 and 1971;
- believed to be the longest Howe Truss span bridge in BC;
- a two hundred foot wooden span;
- vertical timbers under tension forming triangles;
- a valuable link to West and North Quesnel;
- it contributed to the development of West Quesnel;
- its prominent location.