

Bluffs Footbridge
Rock Creek Park
Washington
District of Columbia

HAER No. DC-33

HAER
DC
WASH,
575-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
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Location: Bluffs Footbridge is located on a pedestrian/bridle trail in Rock Creek Park, and spans the creek at a point 200' yards north of the mouth of Piney Branch, Washington, D.C.

Date of Construction: 1934.

Designer and Builder: National Park Service, Eastern Division, Branch of Plans and Designs.

Present Owner: National Park Service.

Present Use: Footbridge.

Significance: Bluffs Footbridge is one of a series of eight footbridges built in Rock Creek Park during the Depression, of which Rapids Footbridge (HAER No. DC-14) is the most notable. All these bridges were Public Works Administration projects. The rustic style exemplifies the type of crossing advocated by Albert H. Good in his sourcebook, Park Structures and Facilities (1935).¹ Good recommended stone or wood as a construction material, and a rugged or informal appearance for bridges in park settings.² However, concrete was acceptable for reasons of economy, but only so long as the material was expressed honestly. In his book, Good illustrated the Rapids Footbridge, and described it as a "frankly concrete" bridge in Rock Creek Park.³

Project Information: The documentation of Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway was undertaken as a two-year pilot project to help establish standards and guidelines for recording the structures and landscape features of park roads and parkways. This project was a joint effort of the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a combined division of the National Park Service, Robert Kapsch, chief. The project was sponsored by the Park Roads Program of the National Park Service, John Gingles, deputy chief, Safety Services Division. The project supervisor was Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.

The Washington-based summer 1992 documentation team was headed

¹ William Bushong, Historic Resource Study: Rock Creek Park, District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1990), 178.

² Albert H. Good, Park and Recreation Structures: Part I- Administration and Basic Service Facilities (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1938), 175-76.

³ Good, 187.

by landscape architect Robert Harvey (Iowa State University-Department of Landscape Architecture) who served as field supervisor; the landscape architects were Deborah Warshaw (University of Virginia) and Dorota Pape-Siliwonzuk (US/ICOMOS-Poland, Board of Historical Palaces and Gardens Restoration); the architects were Evan Miller (University of Colorado-Boulder), Steven Nose (University of Maryland), and Tony Arcaro (Catholic University). The historians were Tim Davis (University of Texas) and Amy Ross (University of Virginia). Jack E. Boucher made the large-format photographs; Air Survey Corporation of Sterling, Virginia, produced the aerial photography and digital mapping from which the site-plan delineations were made.

Description:

This structure is a long, sweeping concrete arch supported by one stone pier, and creekside abutments with wingwalls. The overall length of the bridge and abutments is 90', the width is 6'. The masonry of the piers and abutments is square-cut ashlar stone laid in regular courses. The piers have a diamond-shaped batter, which progresses from 1/4" to 1'. Chamfered wood posts carrying simple flat rails are secured to the concrete deck with anchor bolts. The structure was built at a cost of \$4,201.

Prepared by:
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HABS/HAER Historian
Summer 1992

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