

March 14, 2018

Old Stones, New Bridge East Park Bridge Replacement

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, three million young American men participated in the Civilian Conservation Corps. This public works relief program was part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's 'New Deal' that provided desperately needed income to individuals and families across the country. With a focus on natural resources, the workers planted nearly three billion trees and constructed trails, bridges and lodges in more than 800 parks nationwide.

Of the countless projects constructed by the CCC workers, one was a small stone bridge across a small stream in a not-so-small park in Mason City, Iowa.



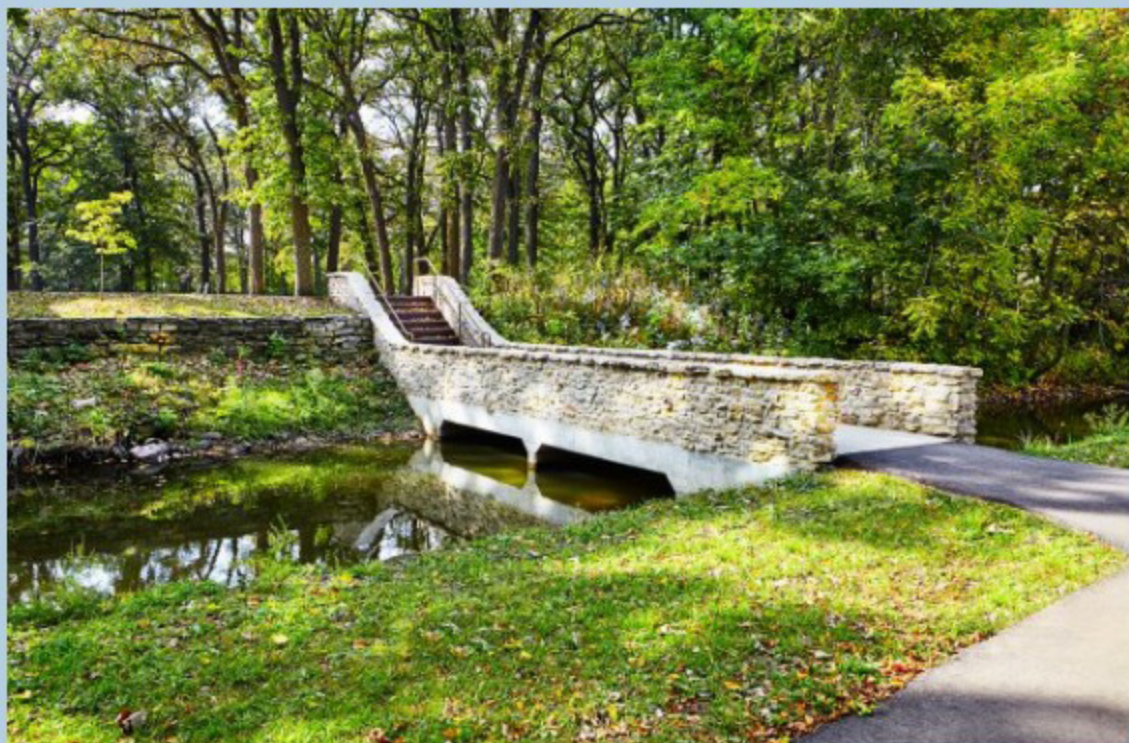
Stone Bridge Before

East Park was established in 1909 and contains just under 60 acres. Along with the Winnebago River and Willow Creek, a two-mile trail system runs through it and the small stone bridge, built more than 80 years ago, takes that trail across a small stream. But after 80 Iowa winters and 80 spring floods the bridge was in danger of collapse and had to be removed. With a desire to maintain the crossing, the Mason City Park Board hired WHKS to evaluate various options from repairing the bridge as-is to replacing the bridge. Not wanting to lose the picturesque quality of the old bridge, the Mason City Park Board decided to salvage the original stone and reuse it in the construction of a new one.

A video of the demolition of the depression-era bridge shows the backhoe operator gently lifting the sections of the stone walls and carefully placing them on the bank. (If a backhoe can be 'gentle!') From there, masons cleaned the original blocks of limestone and set them aside for reuse.

Meanwhile, engineers from WHKS designed a new bridge with a robust concrete box culvert that can handle the annual flooding. On top of that concrete, and clear of the eroding action of the water, the original stones were reused to construct the bridge's side walls, designed to be almost identical to the original.

Today, trail users can cross the small creek on a brand-new bridge that is safe, strong and flood-resistant, while looking every bit as picturesque as the original did in 1937.



Stone Bridge After Rehabilitation

