

Riley Springs Footbridge
Rock Creek Park
Washington
District of Columbia

HAER No. DC-32

HAER
DC
WASH,
895-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
RILEY SPRINGS FOOTBRIDGE
HAER No. DC-32

Location: Riley Springs Footbridge is located on a bridle trail in Rock Creek Park, and spans Rock Creek one-half mile south of Wise Road and just east of Beach Drive, Washington, D.C.

Date of Construction: 1934-35.

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

Present Owner: National Park Service.

Present Use: Footbridge.

Significance: Riley Springs 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:

The overall length of the bridge and its abutments is 120', the width is 10'. Two stone piers and creekside abutments with wingwalls support the long, arched concrete span. The piers have a diamond shaped batter of 1/4" to 1'. Square cut ashlar masonry was used for the piers and abutments. On the concrete deck of the bridge, chamfered concrete posts with finials--carrying plain rails--border the footpath. This bridge, which cost \$7,217 to erect, replaced one at this site that washed away in 1933.⁴

Prepared by:
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Summer 1992

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- "Parks Office is Complimented for Rock Creek Bridge Designs." Evening Star, 26 November 1933.
- Spratt, Zack. "Rock Creek's Bridges." Records of the Columbia Historical Society 53-56 (1959): 101-34.

⁴ Zack Spratt, "Rock Creek's Bridges," Records of the Columbia Historical Society 53-56 (1959): 106.