

Bill Thorpe WALKING BRIDGE

The Walking Bridge may be the longest pedestrian bridge in the world converted from a railway bridge, and is also the most popular 'people place' in Fredericton, rivaled only by Boyce Market. This 581m (1905 ft) walking/pedestrian bridge connects the northside and southside trails of Fredericton.



This Bridge offers panoramic views of the St. John River and the Fredericton skyline from its three viewing platforms, one of which was funded by the Y's Men Associations. In 2008 it was named the Bill Thorpe Walking Bridge in recognition of the dedication by Bill Thorpe to the Fredericton's Trail system.



Historically this bridge has an interesting background. The original bridge was constructed by the Fredericton and St. Mary's Railway Bridge Company in 1888 to accommodate the expanding railway network which twenty years earlier had reached Fredericton. By 1924 it had become part of the Canadian National system and was used by the Canadian Pacific Railway as well. The first

bridge was carried away by the spring freshet and ice jam of 1936, but the second and existing one was in operation again at a higher elevation by 1938. The single pier upriver was placed here in conjunction with the swing span that enabled the passage of riverboats. The swing span last operated in the early 1980s to allow the passage of a dredge, assisting in the building of the Westmorland Street Bridge. In April 1995 the last train crossed the bridge and by 1997 it was planked by Sentier NB Trail Council with the assistance of the City of Fredericton.



On the down river side of the bridge, are the remnants of a wharf that was once used by tankers who came to refuel at the Irving Oil Co. These tanks, built in the early 1930s and removed in 2004, stood on the original site of the 17th century Fort Nashwaak, followed by the Gibson Tannery. 200 metres further along the trail is the Trail Visitor Centre, a place for shelter, relief, refreshments, and information for the thousands of trail users. This place was built on the site of the last South Devon Railway Station.