

City of Bridges



1. West City Park Bridge

(Photo by Mary Lee Nielson)

The 9.25 acres of land known as City Park was first owned by the Northern Pacific, then purchased by land developer B.W. Benson. In 1879, Benson had it cleared of its thick underbrush, then platted it for development with residential properties along the river. The center was set aside for a park. Benson later sold the rest to the city creating City Park as we know it.

The zoo, street, wading pool and fountain, which once graced the park, are gone but tennis courts and a playground have been added and concerts are held at the band shell during the summer as are Community Theatre performances.

A wooden bridge was originally built in this spot but was replaced by a steel bridge in 1899. The first concrete bridge was built in 1929 by the J.A. Jardine Company of Fargo, North Dakota similar in appearance to the East City Park Bridge. That concrete bridge developed serious cracking in the deck beams. Due to the popularity and historic significance of the bridge, public input favored replacing it with a new arch bridge in 2007.

2. City Park Bridge

With a bridge built connecting it to Main Street, the park became a center of recreational activities such as picnicking, boating, quiet reading, strolling and carriage rides on the street that once followed along the riverside. In the winter, a community skating rink was located below the footbridge.

Originally a wooden structure, it was replaced with the current steel walk bridge in 1911. It is sometimes called the Elks bridge as the beautiful Elks building directly to the east was also built at that time. The City Park footbridge is scheduled to be restored in 2009 using Transportation Enhancement funds.



3. VCSU Footbridge

(Photo by ND Tourism)

A wooden footbridge (originally a single plank with handrails) across the Sheyenne opened in the fall of 1892, linking the college to the city. As there were no dormitories on campus at the time and most students lived on the opposite side of the river, a bridge was a necessity. However, this bridge had to be taken up every year when the ice went off the river, causing expense and inconvenience.

The current ornate bridge was built in 1901. It is a three-span, 150 foot long suspension bridge-- the only one of its kind in North Dakota. The Valley City State University footbridge has been the scene of romantic strolls, marriage proposals and pranks. Through the years, teenagers and others have striven to drive various models of automobiles across the wooden planking of the footbridge with varying levels of success. On August 23, 1992, yet another teenaged driver severely damaged the decking, beams, cable anchors and railing while trying to cross the bridge with his late model American automobile

College officials were faced with two options: repair the bridge or replace it but overwhelming support for repair of the original bridge came from VCSU alumni, the Barnes County Historical Society, city residents and the State Historical Society. The Valley City State Normal School Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.

4. Mill Dam Bridge

The original bridge in this location was a wooden structure built in 1898. This was replaced in the winter of 1936-37 with a reinforced concrete structure with a railing similar to the City Park bridges. This second bridge was built by T.M. Swingen & Son. When it was replaced in 1991, the current concrete bridge was built by his great-grandson, Jim Swingen.

Located to the east next to the dam was the first flour mill built in Valley City in 1878. The original output of the mill was only a few hundredweight of flour per day but the company eventually became the fourth largest milling firm in the nation. Additional mills, as well as 150 country elevators and terminal elevators across the central United States, were built or acquired with a combined capacity of 18,000,000 bushels. The mill closed its doors in 1963 when its operations were moved to other company mills in Minot and Grand Forks.



5. Rainbow Bridge

(Photo by Clint Saunders)

This is the sight of the first bridge built in Valley City. Prior to the building of this first bridge, a river crossing was located slightly upstream from here. Locally known as Morrison's Ford, travelers rode or drove their wagons through the river to reach the other side.

The cut in the bridge bank to the north is the location of the Northern Pacific railroad bridge which gave the town its first name of Second Crossing of the Sheyenne. The first train crossed here on Sept. 15, 1872.

The original East Main Bridge was a wooden structure built in 1879. When the wooden bridge was deemed unsafe, it was replaced by a steel structure in 1899. The original Rainbow Bridge, built in 1925-26, was chosen for its strength and beauty to replace the steel structure. The bridge was unique in that concrete arches carried the weight. It was the only one of its kind in North Dakota and one of the few "Rainbow Arch" bridges still in use in the United States.

In 2004, deck deterioration and below standard width caused the signature bridge to be replaced. Because of its importance to the community, another Marsh Arch bridge was chosen despite the complicated design and associated costs.

6. Hospital Bridge

This 3-span, 255 foot bridge, featuring a poured concrete deck and superstructure on rolled steel girders with pilings extending 70 feet below the substructure, was built in 1982.

The original wooden bridge was built in 1929 to provide easier access to the Country Club and Northwest Nursery farm. The bridge was virtually rebuilt in 1954 before being replaced by the present concrete structure.



7. Highline Bridge

(Photo by Janet E. Schultz)

The original line of the Northern Pacific Railroad descended from the east, crossed the Sheyenne River at Valley City over a low bridge, and climbed out of the valley to the west. Because of the depth of the valley, the grades on either side of the river were severe. To avoid these severe grades, the new or "High Line" was built one mile upstream.

At 3,860 feet long and 162 feet above the river bed, the Highline Bridge is one of the longest and highest single-track railroad bridges in the nation. Work began on June 30, 1906. The first official train crossed the trestle on May 12, 1908 and regular train service over the bridge began May 20th.

Because the bridge was of vital importance in moving supplies and men, it was closely guarded during both World Wars to prevent sabotage. In World War I, the bridge was guarded by Company H North Dakota National Guard of Jamestown. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, volunteers from the American Legion, VFW, city and railroad personnel took up the watch until Company F of the North Dakota State Guard was officially mustered in.

In 2004, the High Line Bridge was listed as a National Civil Engineering Landmark.

Engineering Facts:

- 14,000,000 pounds of steel were used
- 380,000 field rivets were used on location, excluding those used in the preassembled sections which were shipped from the factory
- 10,000 cubic feet of concrete was used in the piers supporting the steel columns
- 80,000 linear feet of wood piling was used under the piers for added stability
- 160 men were employed in its construction
- \$750,000 was expended on the bridge, more than \$1.5 million on the entire cutoff project

8. Maryvale Bridge

A wooden bridge was originally built at this site in 1935. Damaged over the years by farm traffic, trucks from nearby gravel pits, and occasional flooding, the Maryvale Bridge was reconstructed in 1969 and then totally replaced in 1995.

Maryvale is the Provincial Center for the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation for the United States Province. The Sisters of Mary of the Presentation is a Roman Catholic religious women's community founded in 1828 in Broons, France.

Maryvale serves as a place of formation for women who desire to enter religious life and as a retirement center for the Sisters and was built in 1965. The physical layout of the building with the chapel in the center is a symbol of the God-centered lives which all are called to lead lives dedicated to the service of God and neighbor. The Maryvale facility also includes a Hospitality Center and Spiritual Life Center.