

Clover Bar Bridge: the Grand Trunk Pacific's official entrance to Edmonton

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Building a city around a river provides some expensive challenges. For years the city of Edmonton existed with only the Low Level Bridge and John Walter's ferry to carry people and goods across the river. As the city grew, so too did its needs for new ways across the river. In February 1906 the Grand Trunk Pacific looked into creating an east end entrance into the city and as such bought a strip of land from R.P. Ottewell.¹ This purchase began the process of building the Clover Bar Bridge. Less than a year later, construction began on the bridge and 150 men were hard at work installing the ninety-five foot high piers.² The G.T.P. crew was not biding their time, by April 1907, the workers had sunk the piles from which the concrete piers would rise the next summer.³ By October of 1907 the scale of the work had increased and now over 300 men were engaged in the project and the progress was steady. As the *Bulletin* reported, "one abutment, seven pedestals, and one pier are finished. The three coffer dams for the remaining piers are also completed."⁴ The amount of manpower necessary to finish the bridge correlated to the scope of the project as the *Bulletin* describes, "the bridge, which is over a quarter of a mile in length, is the longest and highest and largest bridge in every way on the new Transcontinental road from Winnipeg to Edmonton."⁵ The men working on the bridge lived in camps similar to the oil rig camps of today, and worked in shifts to complete this immense

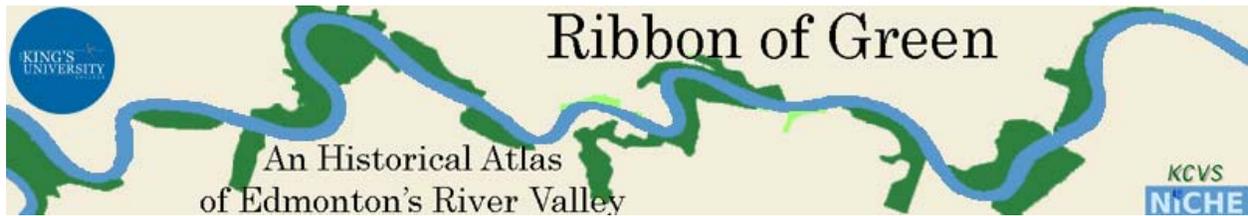
¹ "Purchase Registered This Morning," in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, February 2, 1906.

² "Clover Bar Bridge Now Under Way," in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, December 24, 1906.

³ "Building The G.T.P. Bridge Over The Saskatchewan," in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, April 6, 1907.

⁴ "The G.T.P. Bridge At Clover Bar," in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, October 14, 1907.

⁵ "G.T.P. Clover Bar Bridge," in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, October 30, 1907.



project. By February 1908, the bridge was ready for steel and had become a spectacle to be taken in, as its engineering feats had yet to be matched across Canada.⁶ Less than a year later, work on the Clover Bar Bridge was finished and as the *Bulletin* reported, “the G.T.P. intend that the bridge shall be put to immediate use.”⁷ The beginning of Edmonton’s bridge building future had begun. Today Edmonton boasts an impressive nine bridges which allow its citizens and those just passing through to travel easily across the river and through the city.

⁶ “Big G.T.P. Bridge Ready For Steel,” in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, February 28, 1908.

⁷ “The G.T. Bridge Completed To-day (sic),” in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, December 26, 1908.