

Woodland Bridge – A Hazard Removed

June 10, 2021



The Woodland Bridge in Olmsted Woods

The Woodland Bridge sat astride the ravine in the Olmsted Woods for some 60 years. With its rustic wooden pilings and charming gazebo sited mid-span, it held memories for decades of students crossing over and countless visitors entering the woods to ascend the Pilgrim Way.

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The remnants of the Woodland Bridge in March 2021

All Hallows Guild had the bridge reinforced in 2003 as a part of our restoration of the Olmsted Woods. The bridge was still fulfilling its purpose until 2012 when a *derecho*, with strong straight-line winds, toppled large tree limbs onto the bridge. The ensuing damage forced the bridge's closure.

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Rotted bridge decking shown in 2016

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Damaged wood removed from the bridge during the demolition process in 2021

Beginning in 2016, All Hallows Guild engaged engineers to analyze the condition of the bridge and explore the possibility of a new bridge. The studies and subsequent sessions with engineers and architects concluded that the Woodland Bridge was not repairable and should be removed. Despite stabilization and reinforcement measures, insect damage and wood rot had destroyed too much of the wood pilings, railings, and planking, leaving a genuine hazard for any who ignored the barriers to try the crossing. Faced with this realization, the Guild undertook the process of having the bridge removed.



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A section of rail and decking, and the roof of the bridge's gazebo, lifted off with a crane – *photos by P. Spaulding*

Bridge demolition was accomplished in late March. A team of arborists accustomed to climbing on and hanging, harnessed, from unstable wood trunks and branches carefully cut the wood sections piece by piece. Cut sections were hoisted by a crane into dumpsters parked on Pilgrim Road and no heavy equipment had to disturb the Woods or the ravine.

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Crane on Pilgrim Road to lift cut bridge sections – *left side photo by M. Fetterman*

The remaining metal sections of pilings in the ravine can function as part of check dams for water control or they may be concealed with plantings.



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After removal of the bridge structure – the remnants of the wood piers and the metal pilings in the ravine

Visitors continue to enjoy the Woods, taking a longer, more circuitous route from bottom to top. More time to enjoy the peace and serenity of this urban oasis!



The Pilgrim Way is the main pathway through the Olmsted Woods