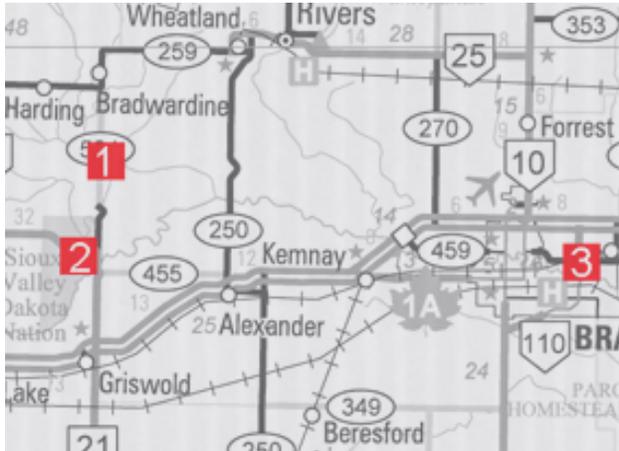


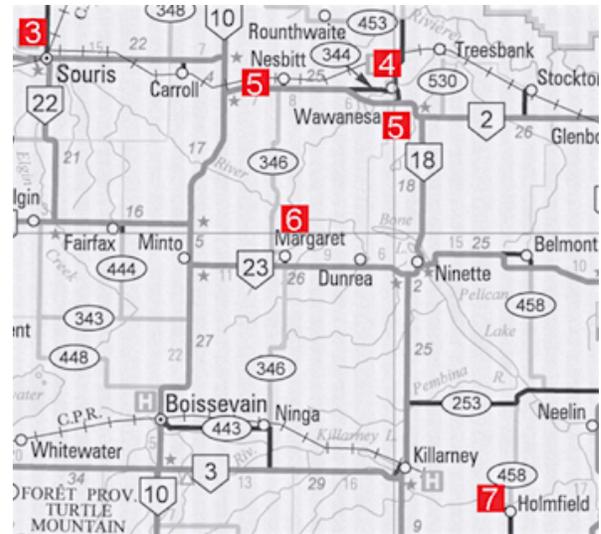
## Here and There: An Overview

We present here just a small representative sample of the hundreds of bridges built over creeks and ravines in the Southwest Corner.



### Part 1: North

1. Abandoned Bridge over the Oak River - Bradwardine Area. N49.98041, W100.46175
2. Abandoned Bridge over the Oak River - Sioux Valley First Nation. N49.86012, W100.47871
3. Abandoned Bridge over Plum Creek N49.62135, W100.29937



### Part 2: South

3. Abandoned Bridge over Plum Creek N49.62135, W100.29937
4. Abandoned Bridge over Black Creek. N49.61945, W99.67744
5. Two small bridges in the RM of Oakland. N49.62135, W100.29937 and N49.57217, W99.68875
6. Abandoned Bridge over McKinnon's Ravine north of Margaret N49.41345, W99.85637
7. Abandoned Traffic and Railway Bridges in Holmfield N49.13806, W99.48190

## Here and There: Oak River - Bradwardine Area

N49.98041, W100.46175

This concrete beam bridge over the Oak River, on Highway 564 south of Bradwardine, was built in 1916.



The more modern bridge nearby was built in 1961



Often the first bridges took the slight detour to find the best crossing site. Here the original crossing site was on the road allowance and the new bridge bypassed it.

Any chance they did that to leave attractive old structure standing?



The old bridge was left in place while the road was re-routed just a bit.

The Oak River is one busy river. As it winds its way from north of Shoal Lake to meet the Assiniboine in the Sioux Valley First Nation it flows under many bridges. Most of these are on grid roads, and in most cases the stream is narrow. Not far from the one south of Bradwardine, which has been replaced, is another that is still in service at [N49.98887](#), [W100.41642](#). It is near Ancrum, the site of a community (School, Church and Cemetery) established before the arrival of a rail line created the village of Bradwardine



It is of a similar design (George Penner - Historic Sites of Manitoba)

## Here and There: Oak River: Sioux Valley First Nation

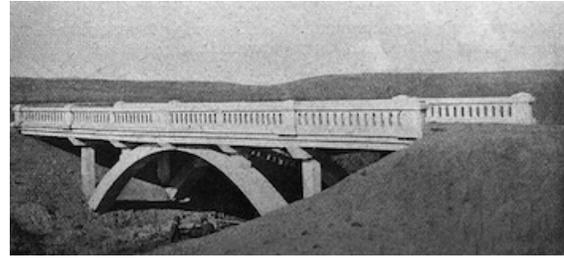
N49.86012, W100.47871

Just a bit off of Highway 21 as it passes through the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, the remains of a picturesque concrete arch bridge spans Oak River.



It was built in 1917.

The period from 1915 - 1930 was a time of extensive road construction and bridge building in Southwest Manitoba. During the first wave of settlement the necessary bridges were of wood construction, suitable for light loads. The explosion in the use of automobiles also prompted the need for not only better bridges, but many more of them. So we saw an extended period of sturdier bridges built of concrete.



*Photos courtesy Historic Sites of Manitoba*



As elsewhere, the new routes tended to be more direct. The old bridge may have been structurally sound when it was abandoned, but Highway #21 took a direct route and bypassed it.

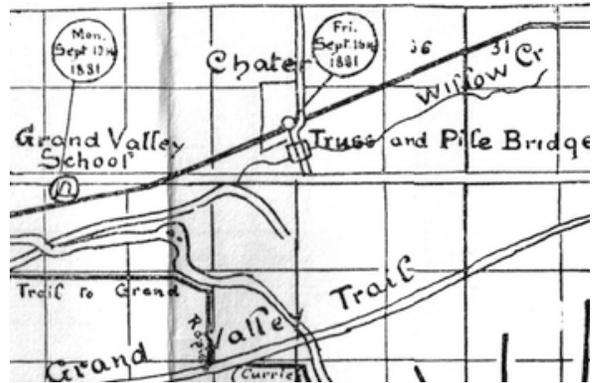
## Here and There: Willow Creek

N49.75378, W99.75740

This concrete bridge on Valley Road [Provincial Road 457] is typical of the style used in the 1920's. The local history notes that in 1911, "Contractor Koester notified the Municipal Council that the bridges across Willow Creek and Little Souris River were now completed."



Many bridges of this type were replaced with the sort of structure we see in the new version. Less elaborate in style, but more functional and sturdy



This map by Kavanagh depicting historic locations shows that the first bridge crossing Willow Creek was closer to Chater.

## Here and There: **Glen Souris**

N49.75378, W99.75740

Glen Souris was a community based around a Church, Cemetery & School near where the Little Souris River runs into the Assiniboine River SE of Brandon.



The bridge built in 1919 has always been known as the Glen Souris Bridge, and mentioned often in the Cornwallis local history.



It was one of several bridges from that era that became part of the identity of the community it served. It is mentioned often as a reference point in the local history - .a sort of local landmark that all could relate to.

The concrete for the bridge was hauled from Brandon to the site. While it is crumbling in places the bridge is still in use for local traffic.



The concrete may be crumbling in places but the structure seems sound. It sees local use.

## Here and There: Plum Creek - Near Souris

N49.62135, W100.29937

Driving west out of Souris on Highway 21 you cross Plum Creek as it enters the town and winds its way to where it falls into the Souris River at Victoria Park. A minute or so later, if you happen to look north at just the right time, as I did one day, you will see another bridge where the highway used to cross the creek. The site can be accessed from the next grid road.



This concrete arch bridge over the Plum Creek was built in 1921.

The highway has since been relocated to the south. As roads and bridges were re-built more advantageous crossing points were often selected. As the original, or first, bridges really couldn't be brought up to standard by repairs, re-building was essential, so as you are starting from scratch you might as well re-consider location issues.



In this case the earlier site was used. Underneath you find what looks like the remains. Those first bridges were much simpler - usually based upon piles.



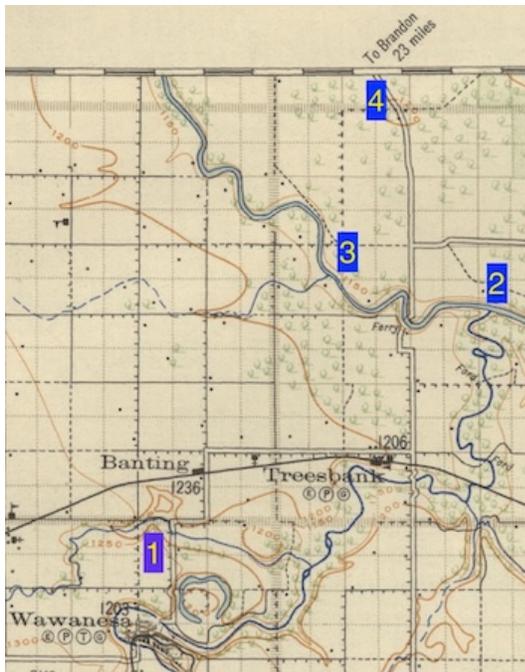
Gordon Goldsborough's photo from Historic Sites offers a great view. Plum Creek appears to be quite a river in this shot. For much of its journey from Oak Lake it is a modest stream through flat prairie. At nearby Souris it takes a sharp descent into the deep Souris Valley. A wander through Victoria Park in Souris is a great way to see it,

## Here and There: **Black Creek**

N49.61945, W99.67744

Prior to 1966 if you wanted to go from Wawanesa, north to Shilo, there wasn't a very direct route. The road passed through Treesbank and then north to the Treesbank Ferry over the Assiniboine.

It was, however, a scenic route, that passed through or by some noteworthy locations. In just a few kilometres you would reach the bridge over Black Creek. Fans of Nellie McClung might be familiar with that name, as it was mentioned more than once in her writings.



1. Old Black Creek Bridge
2. Souris Mouth WMA
3. Brandon House #1
4. The Criddle Homestead

From Treesbank, after crossing at the ferry, you pass within two kilometres of the mouth of the Souris, the site of Brandon House, and the home of Percy Criddle.

From a pioneer account...

*"Spring came in that year with a rush, and Black Creek overnight became a small sized torrent. The men decided they would have to devise some sort of ferry boat on which to transport the settlers across the Creek, bridges in those days being unknown luxuries. They set to work and the result of their labours was a deep flat bottomed wooden boat, somewhat like a wagon box, to be manipulated with a paddle. Johnnie was given the responsibility of transporting the new settlers and their effects across the Creek. Aside from the almost constant danger of upsetting his craft, there was interest and excitement alone in the varied nature of each cargo."*



*The old bridge appears to be sturdy and access is not blocked off, but there is no road access from the south and only a rough trail from the north. It does however make a part of a pleasant walk along the nearby grid road to the north with its pleasing views of Black Creek,*



*A view from the south.*

## Here and There: Pembina River, Ninga Area

N49.19732, W99.87847



*This concrete beam bridge over the Pembina River on Highway 346 south of Ninga was built in 1927. (George Penner - Historic Sites of Manitoba)*

Through much of the first leg of its long winding trek across southern Manitoba the Pembina River is a modest little stream. Originating south of Ninga, ultimately fed off of the south shoulder of Turtle Mountain, it changes its demeanor once it tumbles down a steep incline off of the Souris Plains into a much more prominent valley at the south end of Pelican Lake. From there it finds its way through a wide scenic valley. Rock Lake and Swan Lake are part of its course. It passes through LaRiviere, angles southeast toward Pembina Crossing. It is showcased, in all its scenic splendor, at Pembina Hills Provincial Park before dipping into North Dakota and entering the Red River near Pembina.

Which brings me to the next personal aside....

*About 25 years ago while hiking along an old trail at the south end of Pelican Lake we came upon what looked like the remains of a bridge on the Pembina River.*

*You can see where the approach (from the south) starts to wind its way up out of the valley. I filed the photo away and forgot about it until I was digging through old files for this project. I had no idea exactly where I took the shot. So I checked my trusty Dominion Survey maps and found this...*



Not only was there a bridge there, but it was an interesting one.



The symbol to the left of the bridge indicates a school. Glendenning School District would normally be centred on an area of about 16 sections. That meant several of the students would be from the south side of the stream. Aside from that, schools often doubled as community centres, and even Churches. They were the heart of the community.

The bridge was likely well used up until the school closed in 1966.

Here and There: Oakland RM.  
Nesbitt Area  
N49.621349, W100.299373

Two bridges over small ravines in the Wawanesa area offer examples of the simple designs used to cross small streams.



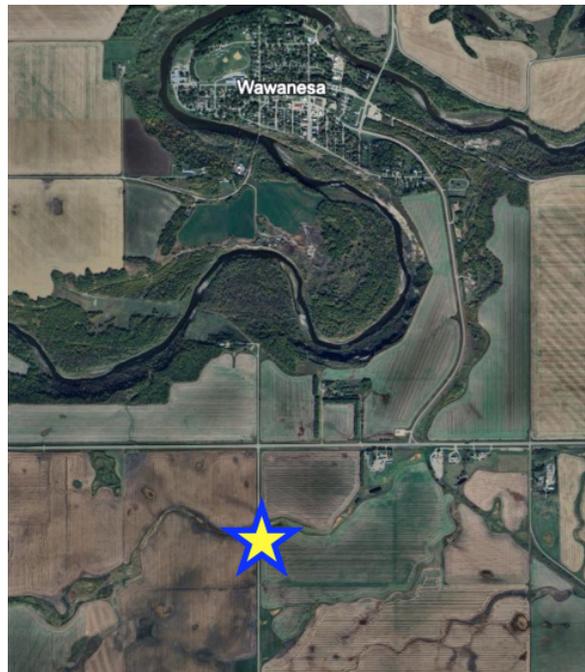
This concrete culvert bridge, built in the late 1910s or 1920s near Nesbitt is an example of Plan No. 460. It really is just like two culverts encased in concrete. Simple to build and all that was required for a seasonal stream.



Here and There: Oakland RM.  
Wawanesa Area N49.57217, W99.68875



This version of the concrete culvert design just south of Wawanesa was built in 1921. It is a more substantial structure than the previous design, likely built to replace a culvert that wasn't doing the job during spring run-off.



## Here and There: Margaret N49.41345, W99.85637



This concrete arch bridge was built over McKinnon's Ravine in 1916 just north of Margaret. It replaced a concrete culvert bridge destroyed by flooding in of 1916. Note that here, as elsewhere, when bridges were replaced, lessons had been learned from periodic flooding. The platform is raised high above the ravine.



The original concrete culvert bridge, visible in each photo, was left in place as engineers believed there was no benefit to remove it.

The bridge was later bypassed by a steel culvert and embankment to the west and the two old bridges are now abandoned. Whereas most "replacement bridges" were built higher - to sort of make sure they could withstand anything nature could throw at them, the strategy here was to revert to the use of the culvert, although in durable steel, and to rely on the earth filled embankment to hold back anything the culvert couldn't handle.



As you can see the road used to proceed straight north past the Cemetery. That road takes you to Lang's Valley and onward. Its a very scenic drive though the Souris Hills ending at Wawanesa



Another view,

## Here and There: Long River - Holmfield

N49.13806, W99.48190



and exits top left on its way to Killarney and west. The tracks are gone but the structure of the bridge remains.



Another view.

*Photo by Gordon Goldsborough*

This concrete beam bridge over the Long River north of Holmfield was constructed in 1925. It was removed in November 2022 but a portion was moved to the Bank of Toronto vault in Holmfield. Whereas the concrete arch bridges we've seen certainly showcase form as well as function, this concrete beam structure is notable for its touch of adornment.

### At the Crossroads



Holmfield was served by both CP and CN Railways, both long gone. You can see traces of the CN Wakopa Line entering from top right. It was abandoned in 1961. The CP Branch from Cartwright and points east enters bottom right