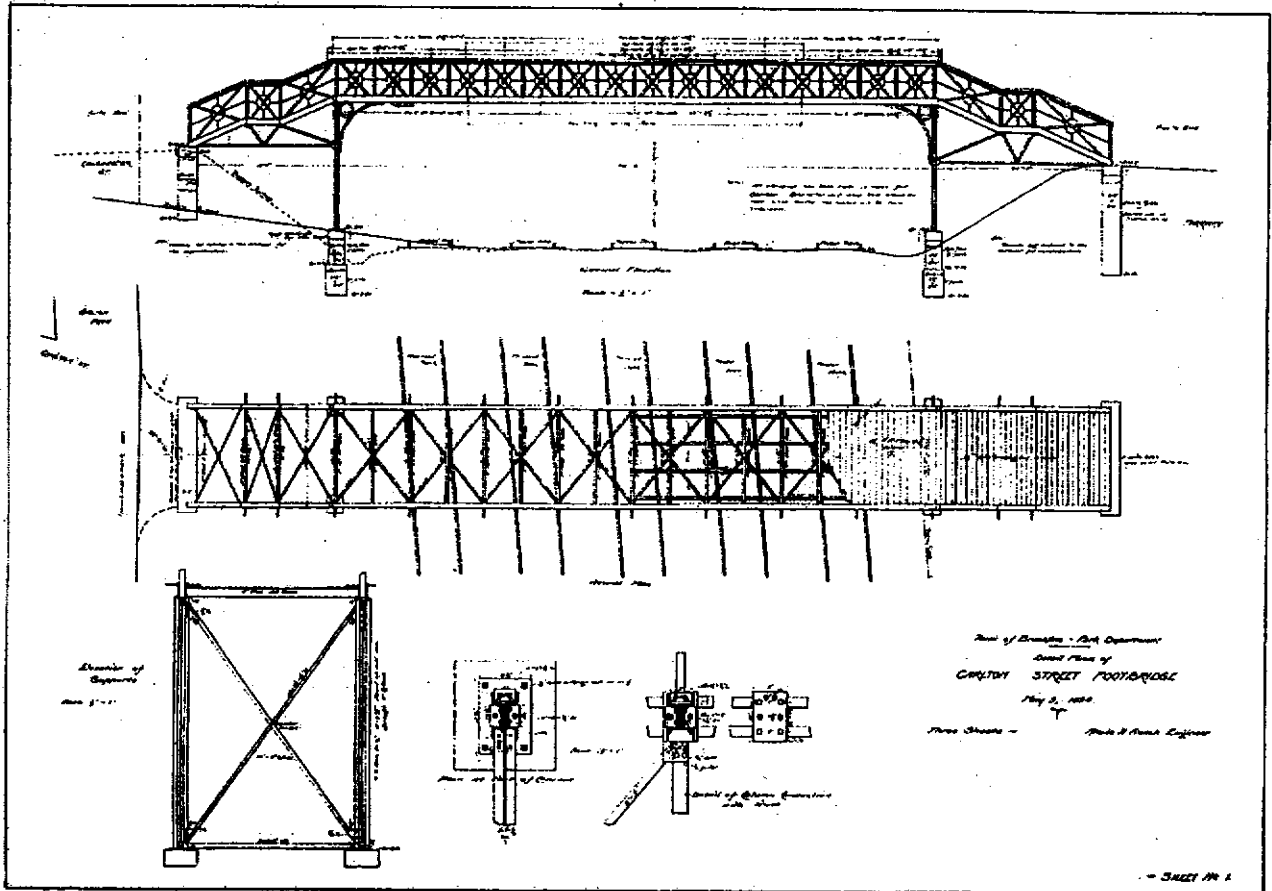


# CARLTON STREET FOOTBRIDGE

## FEASIBILITY STUDY - PHASE II



## HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION

Presented to the:  
**Town of Brookline**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Carlton Street Footbridge is a steel truss bridge that was designed and constructed in 1894 by the first Town Engineer of Brookline, MA, Alexis H. French. The bridge is located at the corner of Carlton and Colchester Streets in Brookline and, until it was closed in 1976, served as an entrance to The Riverway, one of the Emerald Necklace Parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in 1880-1895. The Town of Brookline decided to close the bridge in 1976 due to the deterioration of the wood planking. Since that time the bridge has further deteriorated, rendering it unsafe to the point that a decision must be made to either restore or remove the bridge altogether.

To that end, the consulting firm of Amman & Whitney was contracted by the Town of Brookline to conduct a feasibility study for the bridge, the thrust of which was a structural analysis. Data in the March 2000 study revealed that the footbridge super structure was sound and could be rehabilitated. The study also assessed the options of removal and replacement. In conclusion, the study found that the bridge was historically important and served as a missing circulation link in the Town of Brookline and should therefore be restored.

The Town has commissioned a second study, in 2001, to address questions raised by the Selectmen after listening to issues raised at a public hearing. Their outstanding questions were outside the purview of the original structural study. While six aspects of the bridge are being evaluated, this report focuses on the historical aspects of the footbridge and evaluates its significance based on existing written and graphic documentation, including The Emerald Necklace Parks Master Plan (completed 1989, updated 2001).

Carlton Street Footbridge is an integral part of The Riverway and the Emerald Necklace Park System as designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. The Carlton Street entrance to The Riverway is one of the planned access points to the park and, as such, is included on all plans for the Emerald Necklace parks. The footbridge was added to the plans in March 1892 during the period in which Olmsted was planning and designing the park system, and was included on all plans thereafter. Subsequent plans by Olmsted show planting plans at the entrance and a secondary path that curves up the slope to meet the entrance. The footbridge was designed and constructed in 1894, during Olmsted's period of involvement with the parks.

The footbridge was designed by Brookline's first town engineer, Alexis H. French. French, who collaborated with consulting architects Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge to design all other bridges in The Riverway, was an accomplished engineer in his own right. He made many contributions to the Town of Brookline during his forty-four year tenure as the town engineer.

The footbridge is part of the Emerald Necklace Park System which has National and State Register of Historic Places status. Due to its Historic Register status, any change to the structure, either restoration or removal, would require a review process as a first step. The type and extent

of review would be dictated by the type of funding or permitting procured to do the work: local, state, or federal.

Using State funding for restoration necessitates a project review under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), M.G.L., chapter 30, sections 61 through 62H. MEPA would also need to review the project if any state agency permits or licenses are required. With federal funding, the project is subject to Section 106 Review under the National Preservation Act of 1976. Should local funding be used for either restoration or removal, there would be additional comment by the Brookline Preservation Commission.

Regardless of the funding source, the project will have to be reviewed by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). Because of the footbridge's location spanning MBTA train tracks, MBTA will need to evaluate the project to determine how and if they will be able to maintain continual train operation throughout the work period. Because the MBTA is a state authority, the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) would have jurisdiction over the project. The Town of Brookline would, therefore, have to prepare an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) to submit to MEPA. In addition, under MEPA review, Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) will review the project.

The project would be reviewed by MEPA in another capacity as well. According to MEPA Director, Jay Wickersham, the Carlton Street Footbridge is located within the project area of the current Emerald Necklace Environmental Improvements Project (Phase I - Muddy River Flood Control), which is currently undergoing MEPA review (EOEA#11865). Therefore, any alterations to the bridge would require environmental review, beginning with the filing of a Notice of Project Change on the existing Muddy River Restoration Project and public review and comment on the proposed alteration. Please refer to Appendix A for a letter from Jay Wickersham regarding this topic. Substantial mitigation is suggested as a likely requirement if the removal of the bridge is permitted.