



by Douglas H. Frazer



The Bridge Lane Footbridge Reborn

On November 16, 2014, the Village of Fox Point and Footbridge Friends, Inc. opened the brand-new Bridge Lane ravine footbridge. The bridge connects Bridge and Barnett Lanes east of Lake Drive and north of Green Tree Road. The ceremony marked the beginning of the second hundred years of a bridge across the ravine.

The Calumet Land Company, the original developer of the area, had built the original bridge in the spring of 1911. It was wide enough (12 feet) to accommodate vehicles. At the time, Lake Drive, then known as the Fox Point Road, did not extend between Green Tree and Calumet Roads. The original bridge was a major north-south shortcut and a more direct route to the Fox Point Club—which was located in the area of North Club Circle—and its nine-hole golf link.

For almost 100 years, walkers, runners, and bikers had used the footbridge—some every day year-round. Time, however, took its toll. The Village closed the bridge in October 2010 because of concern over its structural integrity. In August 2013, the Village removed the old structure.

After much discussion and years of study and debate, the village board came to consensus that it would move forward with a new bridge provided that one-half of the cost was borne through private donations.

In the spring of 2012, a core group of residents formed Footbridge Friends, Inc. as the vehicle to raise donations on a tax deductible basis



for the project. Barbara Schwartz served as president, David Goelzer vice-president, Joel Been secretary, and Maureen (Mo) Daly treasurer. The IRS approved its application for 501(c)(3) exempt organization status, and in August 2012 Footbridge Friends hired Amalia Schoone, the principal of In Progress Consulting, as its fundraising advisor. Key committee members included Carol Lewensohn, John and Andrea Grant, Mary and John Emory, Terry McGauran, Carolyn Karl, Polly Drew and David Kornhauser, and Jane Frank.

The campaign moved out of the quiet phase on December 12, 2012, at an event at the Town Club in Fox Point, featuring comments about the bridge by Scott Stroh, executive director of the Milwaukee County Historical Society, and Whitney Gould, historical society member and well-known former urban landscape writer for the Journal Sentinel. It was underwritten by about a dozen community residents and attended by over 100 people.

Footbridge Friends followed this up with an active round of fundraising including phone calls, coffees, and wine parties. The campaign received a huge boost when an anonymous donor issued a challenge to match new gifts and gift increases. By the close of 2013, it was clear that Footbridge Friends was within sight of raising half a million dollars in pledges and gifts.

On April 8, 2014, after Footbridge Friends reported it had secured its share of the cost, the village board approved the construction of the

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new bridge at a cost of about \$876,000 (not including study, design, removal, inspection or change order costs). The bridge was engineered and designed by Ayres Associates, manufactured by Anderson Bridges, and installed by Janke General Contractors.

The Village and Footbridge Friends broke ground on August 8, 2014. On October 21, 2014, a 60 ton crane positioned on the Barnett Lane side lifted the first section over the trees, and placed it on a large A-frame anchored into and extending from the side of the ravine. Workers then attached the section to the concrete abutment and to the A-frame itself.

A massive 550 ton crane positioned on the Bridge Lane side on a temporary platform 6-8 feet below the bluff lifted the second section into place on October 23, 2014. The crew then installed the section's wooden walkway. Janke had not installed the walkway in advance due to the weight of the section (27,500 pounds) and the distance (170 foot reach to the center section) and height (approximately 6 to 8 feet over the tree canopy) the lift required. On November 4, 2014, the crew lifted and connected the third and final section to the middle section and the Bridge Lane abutment.

The structure is 286 feet long and made of weathered steel with an Ipe (a Brazilian hardwood) deck. The bridge has a 10,000 pound load capacity. The bridge and the new space it creates are gorgeous. In the opinion of observers, the result has exceeded expectations.

More than 375 people donated to the project, along with several private foundations and businesses. In fact, several individuals have donated to the project since the new bridge opened. If you have had the chance to visit the beautiful, new bridge and would like to show your support, please contact Barbara Schwartz at 414-446-9501 and she will be happy to discuss a tax-deductible donation with you. All donors of \$1,000 or more will be listed on a sign at the new footbridge – and the sign won't go up until the spring, so there is still time to add your name!

At the November 16 ceremony, former Village Trustee John Emory brought a bell to the opening that was rung every time a pledge was made at phone-a-thons the previous winter. With a nod to the future

generations who will enjoy the bridge, Emory's granddaughter, Grace Gabrys, rang the bell as the bridge was opened to the applause of more than 100 people.

Douglas H. Frazer is a trustee on the Fox Point Village Board. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of the Village, the village board, other village board members, or Best Version Media, LLC.



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