



# Victoria Bridge

**Broadway, Stratford**

**1924**

<b>Use:</b>	Road Bridge	<b>Historic Value:</b>	3 out of 5
<b>Materials:</b>	Concrete	<b>Architectural Value:</b>	1 out of 4
<b>NZHPT Registered:</b>	Not registered	<b>Technical Value:</b>	2 out of 2
<b>Legal Description:</b>	S.H.3.	<b>Symbolic Value:</b>	1 out of 3
		<b>Rarity Value:</b>	- out of 2
		<b>Townscape Value:</b>	1 out of 2
		<b>Group Value:</b>	- out of 2
		<b>Overall Heritage Value:</b>	<b>8 out of 20</b>



When Stratford was first being settled, developments took place on both sides of the river. Due to the significant level of both of them, it was decided that a bridge should be constructed. This occurred c. 1878 and was wooden a wooden made of nearby pit-sawn timber that was virtually milled on site.

In 1897 though, this was replaced by a new structure. It was known as the 'Record Reign' Bridge, to recognise Queen Victoria as having become the longest reigning British Monarch during that year. The foundation stone was laid on June 22 by the Worshipful Master of the Masonic Lodge, Mr H.N. Liardet. Addresses were given by Mr W. Symes M.H.R, and the Chairman of the Stratford County Council, My Joseph Mackay. The cost of the new bridge was contributed to by the Town Board and the County Council as well.



It was then not until the early 1920s that it was decided the bridge would be replaced, possibly because of the increasing number of motor vehicles using it. In 1921, a poll of ratepayers authorised the Borough Council to raise a loan of £129,500 for general purposes. A significant proportion though, was to be used for the new bridge. It was constructed by Coombridge & McKay but was designed by the Public Works Department under the Engineer-in-Chief F. Furkert. When built it was the second widest bridge in New Zealand at 29.7m.

Subsequently, on 8 June 1923, the Mayor of Stratford Mr. J.W. McMillan opened the bridge for traffic, although it was not until 20 June 1924 that it was officially opened by Hon J.C. Coates, the Minister of Public Works (*see above photo*).

This is the bridge that remains today. It is still known as Victoria Bridge. There is parking along both sides and as the bridge blends in so well with the road, many do not know they are even driving over one.



### **Bibliography:**

Thornton, Geoffrey: 'Bridging the Gap: Early Bridges in New Zealand 1830-1939' [Reed Books, 2001]

Stratford Jubilee 1878-1928

Heritage Trail Notes

Old Photos: Kieran Best, Private Collection of McAlister Photos