

# “Double Trouble” On the Rouge River

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On 15 October 1954, Hurricane HAZEL drenched the Toronto area with 21 cm of rain. There was widespread damage and many bridges were washed out - including two on the Rouge River in Scarborough. At that time, access to the Municipality of Scarborough from the northeast was via Steeles and Finch Avenues over the Rouge. The steel superstructures of these bridges had been swept away by the torrent.



The Municipality requested the emergency replacement of these bridges. On Sunday, 17 October, the Militia units in the Greater Toronto Area were called out by the Lieutenant Governor for duty in Aid of the Civil Power. 2 Field Engineer Regiment, RCE mobilized on short notice and was operational by Monday evening. When the extent of the disaster was realized, a troop from the Regular Force unit 1 Field Squadron from Chilliwack, BC was flown in for deployment as the situation required.

Reconnaissance of the Steeles Avenue bridge revealed that the abutments were still sound and the site was suitable for a Bailey Bridge. The Finch Avenue site, however, presented serious engineering challenges because the abutments were damaged. The North abutment was still standing but had been seriously washed out behind. The south abutment had been undermined and had collapsed in several places down the river bank. If it could be repaired, a 150-foot 'double-single' Bailey could effectively span the gap.

The Bailey Bridge equipment was ordered from Ontario Hydro and fill was arranged from municipal sources. Construction commenced on 20 October and the Steeles Avenue bridge was opened for traffic the next afternoon. At the Finch site, the troop from 1 Field Squadron - with assistance from 2 Field Engineer Regiment and municipal employees - also commenced work on 20 October. The north abutment had by this time failed thus increasing the gap to 190 feet.

The chosen solution was to construct a timber pile trestle in mid-stream. A pile driver was obtained from a local construction site and the necessary timbers borrowed from the municipality. By working under lights at night, the trestle was completed and the bridge was opened on 22 October. It was named "Double Trouble" due to the setbacks experienced on the project.

This bridge is still in operation today. An additional row of Bailey panel girders has been added to the original trusses in order to accommodate the heavier traffic and the municipality replaced the original wooden deck with steel mesh. The basic bridge structure and the timber pile trestle remain as-constructed in 1954 and, except for minor closures for maintenance, the structure has been in continuous use since Hurricane HAZEL.