

# NORWOOD BRIDGE

## Passengers Who Have Been Crossing Without Charge Treated to Surprise Yesterday.

Foot passengers crossing Norwood bridge yesterday were surprised to be informed by representatives of the Norwood Improvement company owners of the bridge, that they would in future be obliged to pay two cents toll each time they crossed the bridge. The alternative was to secure a pass. The intimation was backed by conspicuous notices to the same effect on three sides of the toll house. For some considerable time foot passengers and cyclists have been allowed to go free, hence the surprise. It had been generally supposed that the practice of exacting toll was to be discontinued.

On behalf of toll takers who have done service at the bridge, it is stated that the foot passenger traffic of late years has been so great that it was impossible for them to distinguish the pass holders from those who ought to pay, and that it was equally impossible to keep the horde of pedestrians in hand. The practice of collecting the two cents gradually fell to disuse, though the company never had any intention of foregoing the fee. The old style toll taker has disappeared, and in his place have come twain, of more or less strenuous proportions, and before the two, foot passengers must produce the green pasteboard, or a monetary equivalent, in order to travel unimpeded the subsidized thoroughfare. Few have protested. The toll takers assured a Free Press man that they had had no difficulty in making collections.

Prior to the building of the bridge, which was completed about 1891, the Norwood Improvement company, which owned practically all Norwood and Oak park, offered to the residents and property owners there a petition, the signers of which agreed to the terms of by-law 100 of St. Boniface. This by-law authorized the levy of a special tax on property in Norwood to provide moneys to be paid as a bonus to the bridge company for the construction of the bridge. The first payment of \$5,500 was to be made in 1892, but the time was extended to 1894. Every three years the amount was to be increased \$500. This by-law was declared to be void after 15 years; it therefore expires this year. The town of St. Boniface has paid to the bridge company about \$95,000 as proceeds of this tax.

Much of this sum has come from the bridge company itself, a mere matter of paying out of one pocket into the other, because for the first few years few tax-payers other than themselves were on the roll for the realty assessed. By the original arrangement, signers of the petition were entitled to receive free passes over the bridge. Those who would not sign were obliged to pay toll, but contributed no tax for this particular purpose. The matter to-day stands where it formerly stood. The properties contributing toward the bridge tax alone entitle the owners to free passes. Many residents of Norwood believe they cannot be compelled to pay the toll and may try to evade it. They believe they have a precedent. When the Rat Portage Lumber Company first began to do business there, they accepted the bridge company's schedule and paid the toll. Last year, however, they declined, and the company erected gates in an attempt to enforce payment. This only resulted in the gates being broken down. The lumber company's rigs would wait at the gate until someone entitled to pass would apply for passage, whereat they would rush in before the gate could be closed. After two, or three skirmishes, the bridge company gave up the fight and the lumber company's teams pass unobstructed.

As to purchasing the bridge, the company has, it is understood named \$70,000 as the price. A motion to purchase put by Alderman Bailey to the last meeting of the St. Boniface council passed unanimously, and there the matter stands.

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