

MINNESOTA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PART I. PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Common Name: Whitefish Creek Bridge
Bridge Number: 3355
Identification Number: ML-KAN-005
Location:
Feature Carried: US 169
Feature Crossed: White Fish Creek
Descriptive Location: 2.2 Miles South of County Line
Town, Range, Section: 43N-27W-7
Town or City: Kathio Township
County: Mille Lacs

UTM:

Zone: 15
Easting: 438870
Northing: 5118070

Quad:

Vineland
7.5 Minute Series
1927

Present Owner:

State

Present Use:

Mainline

Significance Statement:

Overlooking Mille Lacs Lake, Bridge No. 3355 carries Minnesota Trunk Highway 169 across White Fish Creek. The bridge originally was built in 1921, as a 16-foot, concrete-slab span with a 20-foot-wide roadway between solid-parapet concrete railings. In 1939, the bridge was widened on each side to accommodate a 60-foot-wide roadway with two granite sidewalks. The new deck portions were conventional concrete-slab work, and the abutment extensions, railings and headwalls were concrete. The exposed concrete surfaces were faced with random ashlar granite except the wall areas intended to be below grade, which were faced with round lake stones. Plans for Bridge No. 3355, prepared by the National Park Service in 1938, are on file with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT). These drawings indicate that the bridge has not been significantly altered since its remodeling in 1939.

In 1938, The National Park Service completed drawings for remodeling Bridge No. 3355, a concrete-slab structure originally built in 1921 according to a standard plan prepared by the Minnesota Highway Department. The work on Bridge No. 3355 was part of a general

improvement of Trunk Highway 169 along Mille Lacs Lake, which included an extensive roadside-beautification and wayside-development component built during 1935-1940, in the vicinity of Garrison, by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). In its original design, Bridge No. 3355 was a 16-foot, concrete-slab span with a 20-foot-wide roadway between solid-parapet concrete railings. The remodeling, completed in 1939, widened the bridge's abutments and slab on each side to accommodate a 60-foot-wide roadway with two sidewalks. In keeping with the New Deal's labor-intensive, work-relief aesthetic, the CCC adorned Bridge No. 3355 with meticulous stonework, covering its new abutment extensions, railings, and retaining walls with rockfaced, random-coursed granite.

As one of Minnesota's rare examples of an ornamental concrete-slab bridge, Bridge No. 3355 is eligible for the National Register for its design under Criterion C, within the historic context of "Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges in Minnesota, 1900-1945." The Multiple Property Documentation Form associated with this context states, in Registration Criterion 5, that a concrete highway bridge may be eligible under Criterion C if it displays notable aesthetics. With its elaborate, well-executed, ornamental stonework, Bridge No. 3355 fulfills this criterion.

Bridge No. 3355 is also eligible under Criterion A for its association with the CCC's Mille Lacs Lake wayside beautification project, within the historic contexts of "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941" and "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960."

The following is excerpted from the Mn/DOT Historic Roadside Development, Structures Inventory form:

The Whitefish Creek Bridge (Bridge 3355) was constructed in 1939 by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) working in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Highways and the National Park Service. The bridge was built by the enrollees of a CCC camp that was established in 1935 on the southern edge of Garrison. The camp was sponsored by the Department of Highways, supervised by the National Park Service, and operated by the U.S. Army.

Bridge 3355 was designed to incorporate a small, pre-existing concrete slab bridge that was built in 1921. The expansion of Bridge 3355 allowed for a 60'-wide roadway and two sidewalks. The bridge had been completed by November of 1939, according to a dated historic photo. T.H. 169 over Whitefish Creek was widened as part of a large T.H. 169 and T.H. 18 improvement project directed by the highway department's Mille Lacs Lake Highway Development Plan.

The bridge plans were signed in January of 1939. A "General Note" on the plans describes the work: "The existing reinforced concrete bridge which was constructed by the Minnesota Highway Department is to be extended on both sides because of the change in the present highway to two lanes with island. The extensions to match up with the present structure . . ." The bridge plan is signed by four officials from the Department of Highways -- Harold E. Olson (Engineer of Roadside Development), A. R. Nichols (Consulting Landscape Architect), A. W. Moulster (District Engineer) and O. L. Kipp (Construction Engineer) -- and three officials representing the National Park Service -- Agge Thompson (CCC Camp Superintendent who signed under "Checked by"), Harold W. Lathrop (Minnesota Department of Conservation Park Authority), and Ed Lasey (Inspector).

The bridge plan includes the statements "Designed by H. O. Skooglun" and "Drawn by H. O. Skooglun." Skooglun apparently worked within the National Park Service's Minnesota Central Design Office in St. Paul, under the supervision of Edward W. Barber who was chief architect and major designer for the Park Service. Skooglun also designed the Garrison Pedestrian Underpass (Bridge 5265), the Garrison Creek Culvert (Bridge 5266), the T.H. 169 Culvert at St. Alban's Bay, and the Kenney Lake Overlook -- all a few miles from Whitefish Creek (all are included in this

inventory). Also participating in the design of the project was Arthur R. Nichols who was Consulting Landscape Architect for the Minnesota Department of Highways in the 1930s. Nichols participated in the design of all of the CCC-built roadside development improvements near Garrison.

The Mille Lacs Lake Highway Development Plan and the Garrison CCC Camp

The Whitefish Creek Bridge was built as part of the Mille Lacs Lake Highway Development Plan (also known as the Mille Lacs Lake SP-15 project). Operating between September of 1935 and March of 1940, this project improved many miles of T.H. 169 and T.H. 18 west and north of Mille Lacs to facilitate increased recreational and commercial travel. It was the most extensive roadside development project undertaken by the CCC in the state.

The bridge and other components of the project were planned by the Minnesota Department of Highways and the National Park Service, and were built with CCC labor from the Mille Lacs Lake Highway Wayside CCC Camp (Camp SP-15) that was located on the western side of T.H. 169 on the southern edge of Garrison. The first portions of the plan to be developed were a 4-mile section of T.H. 18 northwest of Garrison, a 5.5-mile section of T.H. 169 north of Garrison, and a 7-mile section of T.H. 169 south of Garrison. A construction plan noted: "Ultimate development of the parkway and connecting waysides is to continue around the entire lake, a distance of approximately 90 miles." The project was never completed to the extent planned. However, between 1936 and 1939, the highway department and the CCC constructed at least seven known standing structure projects in the Garrison area, all of which are extant and are included in this study. They are the following:

- Garrison Concourse
- Garrison Creek Culvert (Bridge 5266)
- Garrison Pedestrian Underpass (Bridge 5265)
- Garrison Rest Area
- Kenney Lake Overlook
- T.H. 169 Culvert at St. Alban's Bay
- Whitefish Creek Bridge (Bridge 3355)

Historian Rolf Anderson writes:

The principal design work for the Mille Lacs Lake Highway Wayside projects was executed in the [National Park Service's] Minnesota Central Design Office in St. Paul, which was actually a branch office of the National Park Service Regional Office in Omaha. . . . Principal figures included Edward W. Barber, the chief architect and major designer, V. C. Martin, who designed the Kitchen Shelter [at the Garrison Rest Area], Oscar Newstrom, and N. H. Averill who completed many of the master plans and landscape designs. . . . Park Service engineers and landscape architects had experimented with a variety of styles and eventually concluded that buildings constructed with native materials and designed to harmonize with their natural settings were most appropriate (Anderson, "Mille Lacs Lake Kitchen Shelter" 1990:8-5).

The 1938 ~Annual Report~ of the highway department's Roadside Development Division summarized work completed that year in the Mille Lacs Lake area:

The construction work on a large masonry concourse overlooking Mille Lacs Lake was begun in 1936 and continued through 1937 and 1938. In addition, some major changes in alignment and design of the roadway have been made, together with the construction of several large drainage structures which were provided with rustic stone headwalls [see Garrison Creek Culvert, Whitefish Creek Bridge, T.H. 169 Culvert at St. Alban's Bay, and Garrison Pedestrian Underpass

(Bridge 5265)]. Grading operations are now in progress, extending from Garrison to 1 1/2 miles south and consist of a divided roadway of two 30 foot lanes with an island of 6 to 90 feet between (~Annual Report~ 1938:19).

CCC Camp SP-15, also known as the Mille Lacs Highway Wayside Camp, was located on the western side of T.H. 169 on the southern edge of Garrison. The camp was established in September of 1935 and was one of four CCC camps in Minnesota that were sponsored by the Department of Highways. Camp superintendent was Agge Thompson. The camp's 200 enrollees worked primarily on the Mille Lacs Lake Highway Development Project. Work on the Project ended when the men of CCC Camp SP-15 were transferred on March 31, 1940, to the St. Croix Recreational Demonstration Area (now St. Croix State Park).

The Garrison CCC Camp was one of four CCC camps in the state that were sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Highways. (Most of the state's other CCC camps were sponsored by agencies such as the Department of Conservation's State Parks Division, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Soil Conservation Service.) The first of the four highway department camps was the Spruce Creek Camp that was established on the Cascade River on the North Shore in 1934. The other three highway department CCC camps were established in 1935.

The four CCC camps sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Highways were the following:

- Lakeshore (Camp SP-19), located near Knife River on the North Shore
- Leech Lake (Camp SP-16), located near Whipholt on Leech Lake
- Mille Lacs Lake (Camp SP-15), located at Garrison on Mille Lacs Lake
- Spruce Creek (Camp SP-13), located near Cascade River on the North Shore

The four camps were established specifically for highway improvements and were supervised by the National Park Service. Each camp had approximately 200 enrollees who worked on roadside landscaping and erosion control, and constructed wayside rests, bridges, culverts, and similar highway structures. Rolf Anderson calls Mille Lacs the "largest and most extensive of these [highway CCC camps]" (Anderson, "Garrison Concourse" 1990:8-3).

Nine sites constructed by these camps are included in this Historic Roadside Development Structures Inventory (see individual inventory forms):

Built by the Spruce Creek Camp
Cascade River Overlook (includes Bridge 5132)
Spruce Creek Culvert (Bridge 8292)

Built by the Mille Lacs Lake Camp
Garrison Concourse
Garrison Creek Culvert (Bridge 5266)
Garrison Pedestrian Underpass (Bridge 5265)
Garrison Rest Area
Kenney Lake Overlook
T.H. 169 Culvert at St. Alban's Bay
Whitefish Creek Bridge (Bridge 3355)

No properties built by the Lakeshore or Leech Lake CCC camps are included in this study. (One of the principal accomplishments of the Lakeshore Camp is the elaborate Knife River Historical Marker on old Highway 61 several miles northeast of Duluth. The site is intact but in fragile condition. It is no longer on right-of-way and is now within the jurisdiction of St. Louis County Highway Department. No standing structures built by the Leech Lake CCC Camp, which

operated for only six months, are known to be extant.)
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Whitefish Creek Bridge (Bridge 3355), built in 1939 by the CCC, is one of seven bridges recorded in this inventory that are faced with stone. It is one of 14 sites in the inventory known, or suspected, to have been built by the CCC. The bridge is one of five sites in the study that were designed by H. O. Skooglun of the National Park Service (NPS), and one of eight sites in the study that were designed by NPS designers (in collaboration with A. R. Nichols).

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960." It is recommended that the Whitefish Creek Bridge is ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this historic context because it meets the following registration requirements:

Significant to the History of Roadside Development. The Whitefish Creek Bridge is one of nine properties in this inventory that were built by the four CCC camps in Minnesota that were sponsored by the MHD. (All four camps were dedicated to roadside development.) The MHD-sponsored CCC camps improved many miles of trunk highway, as well as constructing 9 of the 68 Depression-era properties in this inventory. These numerous New Deal-era sites represent the MHD's first large-scale effort to construct roadside development facilities in the state. Whitefish Creek is an excellent example of the distinctive and well-constructed public facilities, built by the MHD in partnership with federal relief agencies, that met the objectives of roadside development while providing essential work and job training to the nation's unemployed during the Depression. (National Register Criterion A.)

Furthermore, the bridge is significant as one of seven sites that were built near Garrison by the CCC as part of the Mille Lacs Lake Highway Development Project. This 4 1/2-year-long roadside development project improved and developed T.H. 169 and T.H. 18 near Garrison for recreational purposes. It was the most extensive roadside development project undertaken by the CCC in the state. The seven properties near Garrison (four of which are bridges) are rare in the state for their variety, design quality, degree of integrity, and close geographic proximity. The properties are testimony to the success of the partnership between the MHD, the National Park Service, and the CCC. This collaboration produced functional, long-lasting, and aesthetically-superior roadside amenities that continue to enhance the experience of the traveling public today. (National Register Criterion A.)

Design Significance. The Whitefish Creek Bridge is an excellent example of the application of the "National Park Service Rustic Style" to small highway bridge. It has stonework of excellent quality. The site displays the special labor-intensive construction techniques and distinctive use of indigenous materials that characterize both the Rustic style and federal relief construction in Minnesota. (National Register Criterion C.)

PART II. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of Construction:

1939

Contractor and/or Designer (if known):

Contractor: Civilian Conservation Corps

Designer: National Park Service

Historic Context:

Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges in Minnesota

Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941

Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960

National Register Criterion:

A, C

PART III. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Descriptive Information:

single-span concrete slab

concrete and masonry abutments

bituminous-covered concrete deck

Granite railings

The granite used to construct the bridge was probably obtained from a quarry near Isle, a community located on the southeastern shore of Mille Lacs Lake. The Isle-Warman Creek granite region contains outcroppings of red, gray, and black granite that were quarried by various companies. The Cold Spring Granite Company, for example, operated a quarry about five miles south of Isle as early as 1935. Light gray granite from the site was called Isle Granite and was marketed under the name of Cold Spring Pearl White granite.

PART IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

References:

Minnesota Department of Transportation Bridge Database; Bridge No. 3355 File, in Minnesota Department of Transportation, Waters Edge Building, St. Paul; Bridge No. 3355 File, in Minnesota Department of Transportation Records Storage Center, St. Paul; Bridge No. 3355 File (plans), in Minnesota Department of Transportation District 3 Office, Brainerd, Minnesota; Rolf T. Anderson, Draft National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for Mille Lacs Lake Kitchen Shelter, 9 October 1990, in State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul; Robert M. Frame, "Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges in Minnesota," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Sec. F, 8, in SHPO; field inspection by Chad Perkins, 20 September 1996; "Historic Roadwide Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways," prepared for Minnesota Department of Transportation by Gemini Research (Susan Granger, Scott Kelly, Kay Grossman), December 1998.

PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

Historians:

Jeffrey A. Hess

Form Preparer:

Mead & Hunt, 2006

MHPR NO. ML-KAN-005