

MINNESOTA ARCHITECTURE - HISTORY INVENTORY FORM

Project: Local Historic Bridge Study - Phase II Excelsior, Hennepin County, Minnesota

Identification
Historic Name Bridge 21; Bridge 90608
Current Name Bridge 90608
Field #
Address Minnetonka Boulevard over St. Albans Bay
City/Twp Excelsior
County Hennepin
Legal Desc. Twp 117N Range 23W Sec 35 QQ NWNW
USGS Quad Excelsior
UTM Zone 15 Datum 27
Easting 1495626 Northing 16314345
Property ID (PIN)

SHPO Inventory Number HE-EXC-063

Review and Compliance Number

Form (New or Updated) Updated

Description
Linear Feature? No
HPC Status Unknown
Resource Type Structure
Architect/Engineer Hennepin County
Style WPA/government Deco Moderne
Construction Date 1941
Original Use Transportation
Current Use Transportation

Description

Bridge 90608 carries Minnetonka Boulevard over an inlet of Lake Minnetonka, known as St. Albans Bay, in a residential neighborhood in the city of Excelsior. The 1941 bridge is comprised of three, 36-foot-long, cast-in-place reinforced-concrete girder spans each with seven girders with slightly arched fascia girders. Bridge railings are composed of three metal pipe cross-pieces and concrete end and intermediate posts that are rounded and stepped with inscribed vertical lines. The concrete deck is integral with the longitudinal beams, has a bituminous overlay, and a concrete sidewalk on the west side. The substructure consists of concrete abutments, concrete wingwalls, and concrete piers that are integrated with centrally located intermediate railing posts. The integrated piers and intermediate railing posts feature a stepped detail, reflecting Works Progress Administration (WPA; later called Work Projects Administration)/government Deco Moderne influences, and rise above the deck like pylons to frame the center main span. The bridge was designed by Hennepin County engineer W. E. Duckett and constructed by the WPA. Metal endpost plaques read as follows: "Hennepin County Minnesota Bridge 21 1941" and "Work Projects Administration Project 1941."

Hennepin County made minor repairs and modifications over the years to the bridge. For example, the bridge deck was repaired in 1971. In 1999 a stone seawall and concrete pedestrian walk was constructed under the south side of the bridge. The wall holds the south slope from the south abutment. Other than this modification, the bridge has largely been unaltered.

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EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

Historical Context

Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges in Minnesota, 1900-1945; Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941

Historical Narrative

Construction of Bridge 90608 was sponsored by the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners and executed by the WPA in 1941. As was typical on such projects, the sponsor supplied the engineering and the materials, while the WPA paid for the labor. Hennepin County Board minutes reveal that the following contractors were successful low bidders on the project: Century Washed Sand and Gravel Company (cement, \$1,774); Lampert Yards, Inc. (form lumber, \$1,596); Cowin and Company, Inc. (reinforcing steel, structural steel, pipe railings, \$2,668); and Wheeler Lumber, Bridge and Supply Company (foundation piles, \$2,132). Based on correspondence and bridge plans obtained at the Hennepin County Engineering Office, Hennepin County Engineer W.E. Duckett designed and prepared the plans for the bridge in 1940. Correspondence and other information at the county engineering office confirms that the bridge was constructed by the WPA. In the county highway system, the structure was known as Bridge 21; in the state system, it was designated as Bridge 90608.

The bridge was constructed during a period when work relief projects operated by the WPA provided employment for struggling workers and improved infrastructure throughout Minnesota. During the administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1933-1945), a number of federal programs, known collectively as the New Deal, were created to alleviate unemployment and stimulate private business. In 1935 the Works Progress Administration was established to operate a national program of small projects to achieve these objectives. On July 1, 1939, the Works Progress Administration was incorporated into the Federal Works Agency and was renamed the Work Projects Administration. The WPA was active in Minnesota based on documentation in the *Final Report on the WPA Program between 1935 and 1943*. The number of people employed on WPA projects in Minnesota was 68,840 in September 1938 and remained high just two years later in March 1940 at 49,752. Nearly \$6 million of WPA funds had been spent on projects in Minnesota by June 1943. Those expenditures included a total of 1,458 new and rehabilitated bridges and viaducts throughout the state.

WPA bridges were typically designed in two stylistic trends, including a rustic, traditional style or a WPA/government Deco Moderne style. Rustic style bridges were often found in park or park-like settings and featured wood or stone, or stone veneer construction. The WPA/government Deco Moderne style reflected Moderne styles that had been developing prior to the advent of the federal relief programs. Moderne examples feature sleek lines, vertical inscribing, stepped concrete profile, and minimal ornamentation. Additionally, according to the Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges in Minnesota Multiple Property Document, "Moderne examples have pipe railings with masonry posts, a railing design found on earlier bridges that were remodeled during the 1930s (whether WPA or not)." Bridge 90608 reflects the WPA/government Deco Moderne style exhibited through a slightly arched fascia girders, metal pipe rail with concrete posts, and integrated piers with a stepped profile.

Significance

Bridge 90608 was evaluated under the "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941" Multiple Property Document (Federal Relief Construction MPD) for *Criterion A* for its association with the WPA. The Federal Relief Construction MPD identifies Transportation Systems as a property type. The property type is further divided into the following "structural types": highway, street, and sidewalk projects and airport facility projects. While bridges are not specifically mentioned as a structural type, bridges are often constructed as part of highway or street projects and, for the purpose of this evaluation, they are reviewed as part of the highway, street, and sidewalk project structural type. According to the registration requirements,

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the Transportation System is eligible under *Criterion A* if it provides an important change in the existing transportation pattern such as a newly developed farm-to-market road, a highway incorporating the principles of landscape design into the construction process, accessed the resort areas of the state or a new airport. Research did not reveal that Bridge 90608 was constructed as part of a larger highway or street development program, improved the state or city's existing transportation pattern, or accessed the state's resort areas or a new airport. As such, Bridge 90608 is not significant under *Criterion A* as part of the Federal Relief Construction MPD.

Bridge 90608 is significant for its architectural design, within the Multiple Property Documentation Form of "Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges in Minnesota, 1900-1945" (Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges MPDF). The context states, in Registration Requirement 5, that a concrete bridge may be eligible under *Criterion C* if it displays notable aesthetics. Bridge 90608 displays aesthetic value in its slightly arched fascia girders and its integrated piers and intermediate posts, which feature a stepped detail that reflects WPA/government Deco Moderne influences. Therefore, Bridge 90608 fulfills this criterion.

Additionally, Bridge 90608 is significant for its association with work relief efforts by the WPA within the historic context of the Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges MPDF. The context states in Registration Requirement 7 that a concrete bridge can be eligible if it is documented as being constructed through a New Deal agency and retains architectural merit and integrity as outlined in Registration Requirement 5. The bridge is visually documented as being a WPA constructed project by an original plaque that reads "Work Projects Administration Project 1941." Additionally the County Highway Engineer's correspondence from the period confirms the involvement of the WPA in the construction of the bridge. Although the bridge was designed by the Hennepin County Highway Department, the bridge was constructed using WPA labor and as a result, possesses a direct association to this important federal relief program that provided jobs in communities throughout Minnesota, including in the city of Excelsior, during the mid-1930s and early 1940s. As indicated above, Bridge 90608 also exhibits notable aesthetics in the Moderne architectural style. Therefore, the bridge fulfills Registration Requirement 7. The bridge has a period of significance of 1941, which corresponds to the year the bridge was built.

Integrity

Bridge 90608 retains a high degree of integrity. The bridge remains in its original location and continues to carry Minnetonka Boulevard over St. Albans Bay in Excelsior. Its setting over an inlet of Lake Minnetonka and association with transportation, as it continues to carry vehicular traffic, is also retained. To meet the requirements of the Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges MPDF the bridge must retain its significant elements in the superstructure. Research did not reveal any substantial alterations since the bridge's construction in 1941. The 1999 addition of the seawall and concrete walkway under the south side of the bridge are the only known alterations to the bridge. These modifications do not adversely affect the integrity of the superstructure or aesthetic features of the bridge. As such, the bridge retains integrity of materials, design, and workmanship.

Recommendation

Bridge 90608 is significant under National Register of Historic Places (National Register) *Criterion C* in the area of engineering for its notable WPA/government Deco Moderne style and association with a federal relief program within the Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges MPDF. It meets Registration Requirement 5 as a bridge that displays notable aesthetics. It also meets Registration Requirement 7 as a documented WPA-constructed bridge that retains its architectural merit and integrity. Within the historic context Federal Relief Construction MPD, Bridge 90608 does not have significance as a Transportation System as it does not meet the Registration Requirements for the property type. The bridge retains all aspects of integrity despite the minor addition of a retaining wall and walking path under the bridge. While the bridge is recommended not eligible under *Criterion A*, Bridge 90608 is recommended eligible for the National Register under *Criterion C: Engineering* for high artistic value. The period of significance is 1941, which corresponds with the year the bridge was built.

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Sources

Anderson, Rolf T. "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Sec. E, 48-67. Available at the State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minn.

Bridge 90608 File, Hennepin County Engineering Office.

Bridge 90608 File, in Minnesota Department of Transportation, Waters Edge Building, St. Paul.

Bridge 90608 File, in Excelsior City Hall, Excelsior, Minn.

Field inspection by Chad Perkins, 30 September 1996.

Field inspection by Mead & Hunt, Inc., 12 August 2013.

Frame, Robert M. "Reinforced-Concrete Highway Bridges in Minnesota." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Sec. F, 8. Available at the State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minn.

Hennepin County Board of Commissioners. Proceedings, 3, 5 February 1941. Available in Hennepin County Government Center, Minneapolis.

United States Federal Works Agency. "Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43." Washington, D.C.: Federal Works Agency, 1947. Available online at Library of Congress in electronic format at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/gdc/scd0001/2008/20080212001fi/20080212001fi.pdf>.

Works Progress Administration of Minnesota. *WPA Accomplishments: Minnesota 1935-39*. St. Paul: Works Progress Administration, 1939.

Consultant's Recommendation of Eligibility

Eligible - Individual

Prepared By

Mead & Hunt, Inc.

Date Surveyed

8/12/2013

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Property Photographs



View facing west



View facing east

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View facing east



View facing east

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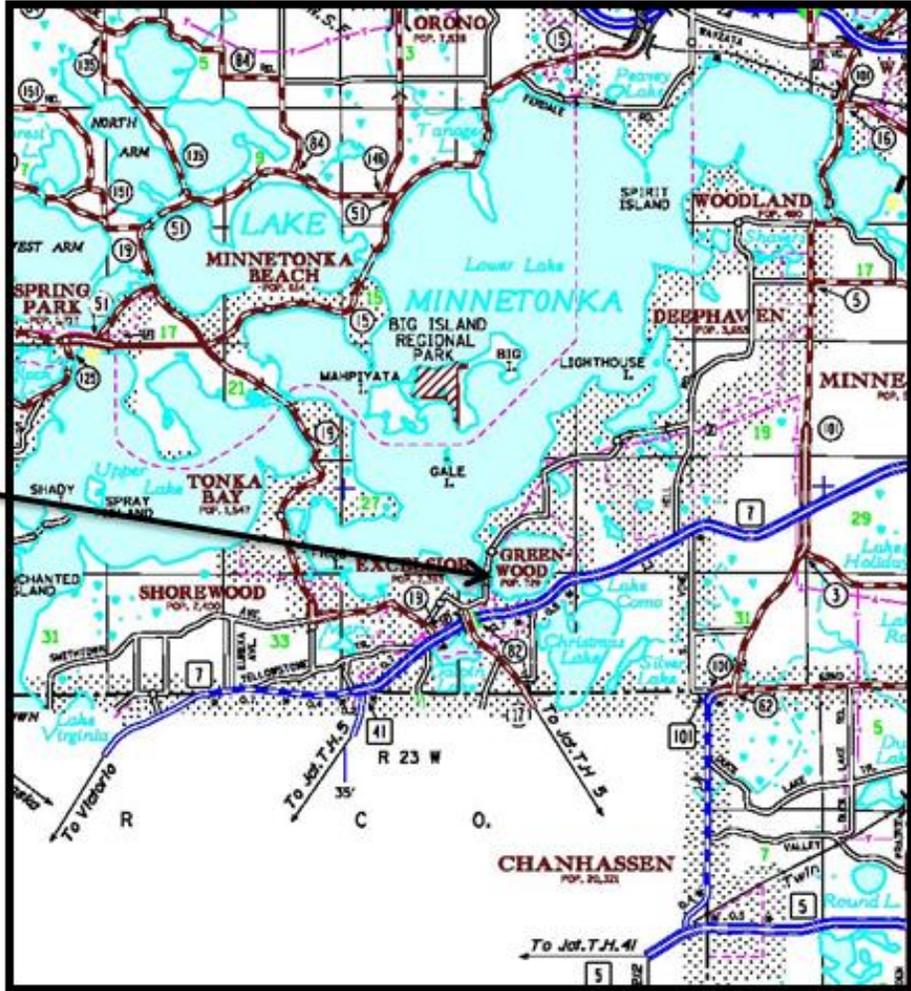
View facing south

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BR. NO. 90608



Bridge 90608 – 56C (MTONKA BLV) over ST ALBANS BAY



PROJECT LOCATION

HENNEPIN COUNTY

SEC. 35, TO 117NN, R 23W

UTM ZONE: 15 NAD: 27

USGS QUAD NAME: EXCELSIOR

EASTING: 1495626 ft.

NORTHING: 16314345 ft.