

## **Alphonse Halter 9 Arch Stone Bridge at St. Cloud receives State Register of Historic Places Award**

The National Register nomination for the Palm Tree Road Bridge was presented by Dr. John Vogel to a Wisconsin Historical Society/Preservation Review Board meeting on 19 August 2022. The Society listed the bridge on the State Register of Historic Places and voted to submit the nomination to the National Park Service for review and listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Receipt of the nomination was acknowledged by the Park Service on 29 October 2022 and its approval is expected shortly. It was Dr. Vogel's tireless efforts that made it possible for the bridge to receive this recognition. The certificate was presented by Dr. Vogel to Town Chairman John Bord on December 8, 2022 at the bridge site.

The old bridge, built in 1901, was nominated to the National Register recognizing its fine stone construction and classic Roman profile notable for its odd number of arches, the center of which was the largest. It is then flanked by four spans of decreasing size on each side. There are few bridges in Wisconsin that employ the Roman profile as effectively as does the Palm Tree Road Bridge. It also has the most arches of any stone bridge remaining in the state.

The bridge caught the eye of and was acknowledged by Richard W.E. Perrin, an early advocate for historic preservation in Wisconsin. Perrin included the bridge in his book *Historic Wisconsin Buildings: A Survey of Pioneer Architecture*, published by the Milwaukee Public Museum in 1962 – a mere sixty years ago!

Harley Davidson's corporate magazine "The Enthusiast" featured the bridge on the cover of their April 1934 issue with Harvey Haase of Fond du Lac and Elmer Brown of Mount Calvary with their motorcycles.

The bridge has been recorded for the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a documentation program maintained by the National Park Service and curated at the Library of Congress.

The State and National Register-listing will help elevate its visibility around the state. That visibility will likely increase the number of visitors the bridge has in the future. It has been a popular site for background photos for graduations and weddings.

There is a plaque and stone monument in St. Cloud's Riverside Park adjacent to the bridge. The brass plaque was donated by the Malone Area Heritage Museum. The stone monument was erected in 2016 by the Halter family descendants, the plaque reads as follows:

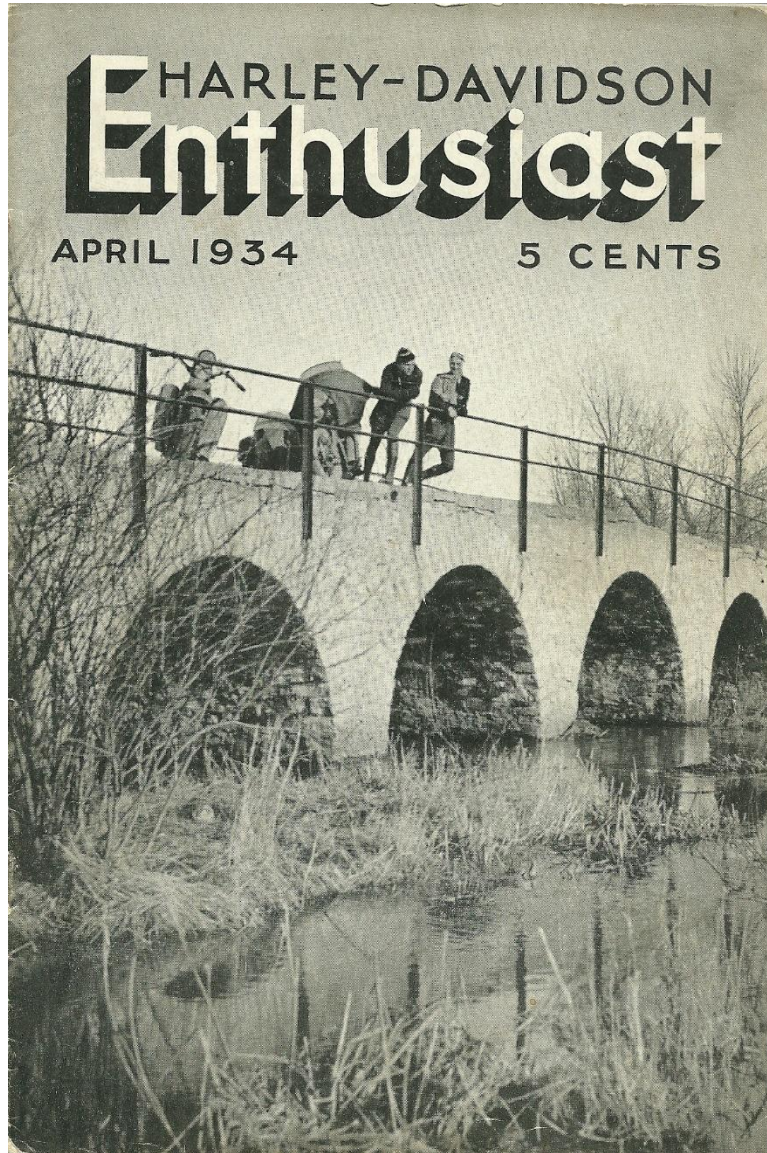
In about 1901, Alphonse Halter, a Swiss immigrant mason, designed and completed this impressive nine-arch stone bridge over the Sheboygan River. Alphonse's son, Gregory, and brother-in-law, Finton Schaub, along with local skilled laborers, assisted in the construction.

This picturesque landmark is an example of arched stone bridges that could be found throughout Wisconsin. Measuring 16 feet wide and 154 feet long, it contains the largest number of spans of any surviving arched stone bridge in the state and has a classical Romanesque design unique to Wisconsin.

Replacing a wooden bridge on this site, the arched stone bridge endured for over a century as a thoroughfare for local residents who have always referred to it as "The Old River Bridge." In 2004, the Town of Marshfield had repairs done to reinforce the structural integrity of the bridge. The bridge was closed to all vehicular traffic in 2012 and now serves as a walking and biking path.

Alphonse Halter was born in 1858 in Rebstein, Switzerland. He arrived in New York City aboard the ship *Labrador* in 1882, and settled in Mount Calvary in the mid-1880s. He married Rosalia Schaub. In 1902, Alphonse moved to Fond du Lac. He died in an auto accident in 1934 and is buried at Holy Cross Cemetery in Mount Calvary.

Dan Dreifuerst (info also provided by Dr. John Vogel, Heritage Research, Ltd)



Harley Davidson magazine cover



Alphonse Halter



Alphonse Halter on his newly built bridge in 1901



Dr. John Vogel presenting certificate to Town Chairman John Bord December 8, 2022



Richard Halter, grandson, and Martha (“Marty”) Ruhland granddaughter of Alphonse Halter and Norm Ruhland, Martha’s husband at stone monument Halter family built in 2016