

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

BE-DEC-008
CS 0704
Victory Memorial Rest Area

Historic Name Other Name	Victory Memorial Rest Area	CS # SHPO Inv #	0704 BE-DEC-008
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Location	W side of TH 22 2.5 mi N of CSAH 15	Hwy District Reference	TH 22 7A 46.4
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City/Township County Twp Rng Sec USGS Quad UTM	Decoria Township Blue Earth 107N 26W Sec 9 Beauford Z15 E423700 N4881710	Acres Rest Area Class	2 4
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Designer	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)	SP #	0704-46
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Builder	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)	SHPO Review #	
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Historic Use Present Use	Roadside Parking Area Roadside Parking Area	MHS Photo #	013501.16-24 013502.00-09
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Yr of Landscape Design	1948	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	
Overall Site Integrity	Intact/Slightly Altered		
Review Required	Yes		

National Register Status	Not Eligible, see Statement of Significance
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Historic Context	
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List of Standing Structures

Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built
01	Marker	1958
02	Trail Steps	1973
03	Spring Water Outlet	1973
04	Info Board	Ca. 1973

Fieldwork Date	10-18-96
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Prep by	Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 41
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Prep for	Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit
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NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table

Final Report	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)
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■ BRIEF

Victory Memorial Rest Area is a two-acre rest area located along a wooded stream on the western side of T.H. 22 (the "Victory Highway") about 2.5 miles north of CSAH 15. The site is about eight miles south of Mankato.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Stone Marker. Erected 1958 by the MHD. The rest area contains a stone lectern-style marker that measures approximately 4'10" wide by 3'8" deep and is 3'7" tall on the eastern (lower) side. It is built of tan, random ashlar, roughly-cut limestone on a poured concrete footing. Set into the upper surface of the marker is a rectangular metal plaque. The plaque is edged with 9" wide band of smoothly-dressed limestone. The marker is located immediately west of the parking area. The text of the marker honors war veterans. (See text at the end of this document.)

Trail Steps. Erected 1973 and post-1973 by Mn/DOT. There are two sets of steps leading from the parking area westward down a hill to the picnic area. The northern set is poured concrete and about 2' wide. These concrete steps may replace a set of stone steps that existed in 1972. The southern set is made of timber, about 6' wide, and was built in 1973 to replace an earlier set of steps.

Spring Water Supply. Erected 1973 by Mn/DOT. A few feet northwest of the marker is an artesian water supply structure. An iron supply pipe is supported by a rectangular slab of poured concrete.

Information Board. Erected circa 1973 by Mn/DOT. Standing a few feet north of the marker is the framework of a wooden information board with a truncated hipped roof. The board has been removed and the structure now appears to be used as a sheltered bench. The information board stands on a rectangular concrete plaza that is about 10'10" wide and 24' long.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

The site contains an asphalt-paved, curb-lined parking area that is entered from the north via an asphalt-paved drive. The parking area was once lined with concrete posts. (The concrete posts have been cut off at curb level.) There is a 5' wide concrete walkway along the western side of the parking area. Between the walkway and the parking area is a row of concrete posts that are spaced about 5' apart. The cable that was once threaded between the posts has been removed.

The picnic area is located in a low-lying, curved, creek-bottom west of the parking area. It has a few metal picnic grills on poles and a few portable picnic tables.

The site is wooded and planted with grass. Next to the parking area is a grassy lawn with mature deciduous trees and a few evergreens. The low area west of the parking lot has mature maple, birch, ash, and elm trees and a clump of junipers near the northern end of the site. A creek curves along the site west of the picnic area.

The parking area is located several feet below the grade of T.H. 22 and the picnic area to the west is even lower in elevation.

■ **SETTING**

The site is located in a hilly, wooded, rural setting. There are thickly-wooded, steep hills west of the site and across T.H. 22 east of the site. The site is just south of a bridge that carries T.H. 22 over the LeSueur River.

■ **INTEGRITY**

Alterations

The stone fireplaces, woodboxes, and toilet facilities that were built in 1948 have been removed. A toilet building added in 1973 has been removed. The steps were replaced in 1973 (southern set) and post-1973 (northern set).

Because it has lost most of its structures, the site's integrity of design, materials, and workmanship has been compromised. However, it retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.

Notes on Condition

The structures and landscaping are in fair condition.

■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Victory Memorial Rest Area was created in 1948 when the Minnesota Department of Highways cleared 3.5 acres and landscaped the site. Picnic tables and benches were installed. The Mankato Garden Club raised funds for the installation of three stone fireplaces, woodboxes, and toilet facilities.

The marker dedicating the Victory Highway to veterans of World War I and World War II was installed in 1958.

In 1973 a vault-type toilet building was added. Forty new and replacement ash, maple, and black walnut trees were planted at that time, and picnic tables, bituminous and gravel walkways, and stairs were added to the site.

In 1975 the Victory Memorial Rest Area was one of four trunk highway rest areas in which overnight camping was permitted.

Victory Highway

In the 1940s, the highway department made plans to reconstruct and realign T.H. 22 between Mapleton and Mankato, which was a winding stretch of road. The more direct route extended from nine miles north of Mapleton to .08 miles south of Mankato (at the junction of T.H. 83), a distance of about nine miles. Construction of the 150'-wide highway began in the

fall of 1947. The contract of \$229,383 was let to Nelson, Mullen, and Nelson of Minneapolis. The highway project was completed in 1952.

Harriet Barney, president of the Mankato Garden Club, began lobbying in the early 1940s for the new highway to be named "Victory Highway." She envisioned lining the stretch of highway with trees and plants to honor local servicemen and women. She proposed planting 1,400 12- to 15-foot trees. Citizens purchased trees for \$2.50 each in the name of a family member or friend who was serving in the armed forces. By May 1948, ten percent of the tree planting had been completed. Groups of Black Hills spruce, green ash, American elm, and poplars were planted along a seven-mile stretch of the new highway. Over 1,000 trees and an additional 5,000 conifer seedlings were purchased by the garden club. Barney was awarded a bronze medal by the Minnesota State Horticultural Society in 1954 for her work in developing the Victory Highway.

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

There apparently have been no previous SHPO cultural resource reviews of the property.

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Victory Memorial Rest Area is a roadside parking area with a complex site design that was developed shortly after World War II by the MHD. Its stone marker is very similar to the marker at Mapleton, located about nine miles to the south on T.H. 22. It is also similar to markers at eight other properties in this inventory. Numerous lectern style, tan, limestone markers in this series were built by the MHD in the 1950s-1970s.

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1889-1960." It is recommended that the property is not eligible for the National Register due to loss of integrity.

■ OTHER COMMENTS

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

T.H. 22 is very heavily-traveled at this point. Traffic noise and the movement of cars on the highway are somewhat intrusive. The parking area feels unsafe for small children and pets who might stray near the busy roadway.

The text of the marker is associated with the Victory Highway. It is not specifically associated with the site of the wayside rest.

■ REFERENCES

Blue Earth County Enterprise, July 31, 1947; Sept. 4, 1947; Oct. 2, 1947; and Mar. 8, 1962.

Mankato Free Press, Sept. 27, 1944 and Aug. 17, 1972.

Mankato News, Sept. 14, 1944 and May 20, 1948.

"Minnesota Department of Highways. Waysides and Rest Areas Overnight Parking and Camping Policies." Typewritten manuscript. 1975. Site Development Unit files.

Site Plans. Minnesota Department of Transportation, St. Paul.

"Victory Highway." Unpublished manuscript. Blue Earth County Historical Society. Nov. 1985.

■ **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND MARKER TEXT**

Local Stone

The marker was probably constructed from locally quarried Mankato limestone (dolomite). Large outcroppings of this stone are exposed in the bluffs of the Minnesota and LeSueur Rivers. Early settlers in the Minnesota River Valley used the stone for constructing foundations and buildings. The Mankato and Kasota region became an early leader in limestone quarrying because of the variety of colors of limestone. Cream, yellow, gray, buff, pink, and red limestones, generally given trade names such as "Mankato Cream" or "Mankato Pink Buff," for example, have been quarried since 1868.

Text of Plaque on Stone Marker

"Victory Highway. In honor of the men and women who served in World Wars I and II. Sponsored by the Mankato Garden Club and the American Legion of Mapleton with the cooperation of the Department of Highways. Centennial Year 1958."