

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

BE-MPC-031
CS 0703
Mapleton Historical Marker

Historic Name Other Name	Mapleton Historical Marker	CS # SHPO Inv #	0703 BE-MPC-031
Location	W side of TH 22 at Central Ave	Hwy District Reference	TH 22 7A 35.8
City/Township County Twp Rng Sec USGS Quad UTM	Mapleton, City of Blue Earth 105N 26W Sec 4 Mapleton Z15 E423130 N4864750	Acres Rest Area Class	1 4
Designer	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)	SP #	0703-08
Builder	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)	SHPO Review #	
Historic Use Present Use	Roadside Parking Area Roadside Parking Area	MHS Photo #	013502.10-14
Yr of Landscape Design	Ca. 1962	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	
Overall Site Integrity	Intact/Slightly Altered		
Review Required	Yes		
National Register Status	Not Eligible, see Statement of Significance		
Historic Context			
List of Standing Structures			
Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built	Fieldwork Date
01	Marker	1962	10-18-96
			Prep by
			Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 43
			Prep for
			Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit
NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table			
Final Report	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)		

■ BRIEF

The Mapleton Historical Marker is located on the western side of T.H. 22 (the "Victory Highway") at Central Avenue, just within the northern edge of Mapleton.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Stone Marker. Erected 1962 by the MHD. The principal feature on the site is a free standing lectern-style marker. It measures approximately 4'11" wide by 3'8" deep and is 2'11" tall on the low (northern) edge. 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 that is edged with 9" wide, smoothly-dressed rectangles of buff-colored limestone. On the eastern and western sides of the marker are two attached poured concrete bases that once held two round granite curling stones. The stones are gone. The marker is located on the southern edge of the parking area and is aligned east and west. The text of the marker addresses the birth of curling and the founding of the town of Mapleton. (See text at the end of this document.)

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

The site contains an asphalt-paved, curb-lined parking area that is entered from the local street on the west or from T.H. 22 on the east. The marker is located on the southern edge of the parking area. There is a pay telephone near the northeastern edge of the parking area. There is a large timber and plywood sign, reading "Welcome to Mapleton," at the northern edge of the site facing north.

The marker is landscaped with a semicircle of large pebble rocks and shrubs spreading to the east, south, and west. Most of the site is planted with grass. There are widely scattered deciduous trees (both mature and newly-planted) such as ash and poplar. There are three junipers north of the parking lot and one pine and one arbor vitae near the southwestern corner of the site. The topography of the site is flat.

The original plans specify seven Colorado Blue Spruce as a backdrop to the marker, six Savin Juniper flanking the marker, nine Savin Juniper on the northern edge of the parking area, 19 Silver Maple and Sugar Maple scattered throughout the site, and three groups of rose bushes.

■ SETTING

The site is located on the northern edge of Mapleton. There is a house across the street to the west, a house and fields across the street to the east, and an auto body shop across the street to the south. The triangular site is bounded by T.H. 22 on the east, a local street on the west, and a local street on the south.

■ INTEGRITY

Alterations

The site appears to have been built according to plan.

The two curling stones are missing from the marker. A new sign was mounted on the face (northern side) of the marker in October of 1996. It is a metal rectangular war memorial that completely covers the northern facade. The "Welcome to Mapleton" sign was probably added to the site circa 1990.

In general, the site retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Notes on Condition

The marker is in good condition.

■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The City of Mapleton and the Minnesota Department of Highways agreed in 1961 to cooperatively develop this wayside rest. The highway department constructed the site, and the city maintains it. The marker was erected in 1962 by the Maple River Burns Club, the Heather Curling Club, and the Mapleton Civic and Commerce Association, with the cooperation of the Village of Mapleton and the Minnesota Department of Highways.

The plans are dated 1961 and were signed by Harold E. Olson (Engineer of Roadside Development), and three officials of the highway department: L. F. Harris (Assistant District Eng.), Edward J. Heinen (Assistant Maintenance Engineer), and J. J. Idzorek (District Engineer).

Two members of the Robert Burns Society in Mapleton -- Robert L. Lange and Dave Will -- were instrumental in establishing the wayside and historic marker. They spoke with the district highway engineer in November 1960 about their plans to erect a marker. The marker observed the 100th anniversary of curling in Mapleton. They requested that the marker be erected on a triangular piece of land owned by the state along T.H. 22.

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-foot wide highway began in the fall of 1947. The contract of \$229,383 was let to Nelson, Mullen, and Nelson Inc. 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, 10% of the tree planting had been completed. Groupings of Black Hills Spruce, green ash, American elms, 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 Horticulture Society in 1954 for her work in developing the Victory Highway.

The stone used to construct the marker may have been obtained from a quarry in or near Mankato. The Shakopee and St. Lawrence layers of limestone are exposed in the bluffs of

the Minnesota River and its tributaries (including the Maple River which is located near Mapleton). Quarrying of limestone began in Mankato in 1853. The Mankato and Kasota Region is extensively quarried for its dolomitic and marble-like limestone.

■ **PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS**

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

■ **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Mapleton Historical Marker is a roadside parking area with a triangular-shaped site that was developed in the early 1960s by the MHD in partnership with local government. Its stone marker is very similar to the marker at Victory Memorial Rest Area (located about nine miles to the north 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, 1920-1960." It is recommended that the property is NOT ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this historic context because it does not meet the context registration requirements.

■ **OTHER COMMENTS**

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

The wording of the plaque is somewhat confusing. Unfortunately, the curling stones are missing from the marker. The new sign that has recently been installed on the front of the marker is not sensitive to the design of the marker and site.

The text of the marker is associated with the town of Mapleton. It is not specifically associated with the site of the wayside rest.

T.H. 22 is fairly quiet past this site.

■ **REFERENCES**

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

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

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

Newell, Ron [Mapleton resident]. Telephone Interview. July 1996.

Rubinstein, Sarah P. "The British: English, Scots, Welsh, and British Canadians." In *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*. Ed. June Drenning Holmquist. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1981.

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

"Victory Highway." Blue Earth County Historical Society. November 1985.

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND MARKER TEXT

Mapleton, the Scots, and The Sport of Curling

Mapleton was settled by Euro-Americans in 1856 and was first named "Sherman" for one of its early settlers. When the local government was organized on April 2, 1861, the city was renamed after the Maple River. (The river had been named by government surveyors in 1854 because of the many maple trees that lined its banks.) When the railroad arrived in 1871, a "new" city of Mapleton, platted in January of 1871, replaced the older village.

Mapleton's ethnicity includes a large concentration of Scots. In 1854, a group of East Coast settlers, responding to a New York newspaper advertisement, formed a group called the Minnesota Settlement Association, and all paid membership fees. Each member and his family were guaranteed transportation to the West, 160 acres of farmland, and access to a townsite. "Deciding that southern Minnesota offered the best opportunities, the founders sent a member already familiar with the area to select a specific location. By this time 239 persons had signed up; almost all had English or Scottish surnames" (Rubinstein 1981:117). In May of 1856, approximately 139 Scottish families (calling themselves the Mapleton colony) arrived in Mapleton. Scottish migration to Mapleton continued throughout the remainder of the 19th century. By the 1880 census, there were 76 foreign born Scots and 159 native born in Mapleton, and by 1905, there were 62 and 275, respectively.

The Scots in Mapleton have maintained their ethnic identity for over 140 years. The organizations that developed this wayside rest were formed shortly after the Scottish arrived. The Burns Club was organized in 1866 and met first in members' homes, and later in the Mapleton Opera House to accommodate the large group. The club met several times a year, but its largest event was held January 25 of each year to celebrate Robert Burns' birthday. As late as 1980, there were eight descendants of Scots who had formed the Burns Club still residing in Mapleton. The sport of curling arrived with the first Scottish settlers in 1856. Several curling clubs were formed, one of the earliest being the Heather Curling Club, organized in 1905. Curling has remained a popular sport in this community for more than 100 years.

Text of Plaque on Stone Marker

"Cradle of Curling in Minnesota. When this area was opened to settlers in 1856 those who took claims were of several nationalities. Among them were Scots in the Mapleton Colony, who began curling before 1860 on the ice of Lura and Bass Lakes and the Maple River. The game attracted their fellow settlers and is now the chief winter sport in the community. Plaque erected by Maple River Burns Club, Heather Curling Club, Mapleton Civic and Commerce Association with the cooperation of the Village of Mapleton and the Minnesota Highway Department 1962."