

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

BS-GRA-017
CS 0605
Graceville Historical Marker

Historic Name Other Name	Graceville Historical Marker	CS # SHPO Inv #	0605 BS-GRA-017
Location	N side of TH 28 .9 mi W of TH 75	Hwy District Reference	TH 28 4B 21.6
City/Township County Twp Rng Sec USGS Quad UTM	Graceville, City of Big Stone 124N 46W Sec 9 Graceville Z14 E699040 N5049000	Acres Rest Area Class	6.7 4
Designer	Nichols, A R, Consult Land Arch	SP #	0605-03
Builder	Work Projects Administration (WPA)	SHPO Review #	
Historic Use Present Use	Roadside Parking Area Roadside Parking Area	MHS Photo #	013510.01-09
Yr of Landscape Design	1940	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	Ols 1.10
Overall Site Integrity	Intact/Slightly Altered		
Review Required	Yes		
National Register Status	Eligible, see Statement of Significance Now listed: see http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadsides/historic/files/wayrep-suppl.pdf for additional information.		
Historic Context	Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960		

List of Standing Structures

Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built	Fieldwork Date
01	Marker	1940	05-04-97
02	Picnic Table(s), Other	Ca. 1970	
NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table			Prep by Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 31
			Prep for Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit

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

The Graceville Historical Marker is a 6.7-acre site that is located on the northern side of T.H. 28 about .9 miles west of T.H. 75. It stands just within the western city limits of Graceville.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Granite Marker. Erected 1940 by the WPA. The principal feature on the site is a large granite marker that is aligned parallel with the highway. Built of roughly-cut ashlar (most of which is coursed) on a stone footing, the marker is approximately 26' long. The stone is grayish-pink (almost purple) in color. The marker is comprised of a rectangular terrace that is surrounded on three sides by low, 2'-wide stone walls and 3'-tall square piers. Along the back wall of the terrace is a rectangular shaft with an inset 28" by 40" bronze plaque. The terrace is paved with granite flagstone. Across the front of the terrace are two 26'-wide granite slab steps.

Cast near the bottom of the bronze plaque are the seals of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the Minnesota Historical Society. The text of the plaque addresses the founding of the city of Graceville. (See text at the end of this document.)

Concrete Picnic Table. Erected circa 1970. The site has a rectangular, pre-cast concrete picnic table with two benches. The table and benches are attached to an 8' by 10' concrete pad. The picnic table is located within the central island, southwest of the marker.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

The site contains a curving, gravel pull-off drive. Approximately 190' of concrete curbing lines the northern edge of the drive in front of, and to the side of, the marker. The gravel drive is separated from the highway by a large grassy island.

The original plan specifies that the site be planted with 14 Black Hills Spruce, 35 American Elm, 7 Lombardy Poplar, and 50 Morrows Honeysuckle. The location of the plants is not specified on the available plan sheets. Today, there is a row of mature poplars behind the marker, a group of mature evergreens east of the marker, and very large, mature deciduous trees west of the marker. Widely scattered deciduous trees such as ash and poplar (both mature and newly-planted) shade the rest of the grassy site. The topography of the site is flat.

About one-half of the site's 6.7 acres is developed. The marker is located on the northern edge of the developed area. The undeveloped area is located north, east, and west of the marker. Presumably, during dry years, this area is covered in prairie grasses and shrubs. At the time of the fieldwork it was filled with water, marsh grasses, and many species of birds.

■ SETTING

The site is located in an agricultural setting just within the city limits of Graceville. Across T.H. 28 to the south is Toqua Lake. West of the site is the Graceville Golf Club. There is a residence to the east and farmland to the north.

■ **INTEGRITY**

Alterations

The site appears to have been constructed fairly close to the original plans.

The granite marker has been remortared in various places. Many plantings have presumably died or have been removed, and some new plantings have been added. The picnic table was added to the site.

The site retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Notes on Condition

The marker is in fair condition and needs mortar repair. The site is fairly well maintained.

■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Prior to the construction of this wayside rest, there was a 3' by 5' steel sign at or near this site. The sign was white with black lettering and a text identical to the text of the bronze plaque on the stone marker. The steel sign was one of the markers erected during the first cooperative marking program of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the Minnesota Historical Society. During 1930, the first year of the program, 40 of these steel signs were erected.

The wayside rest and granite marker were built in 1940 by the Work Projects Administration (WPA) in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Highways. The plans carry the notation "Final Plans Construction Division. W.P.A. Nov. 15, 1940." The wayside was part of a one-mile long roadside development project (S.P. 0605-03) during which the WPA also planted boulevard trees through Graceville. A. R. Nichols was Consulting Landscape Architect and Harold E. Olson was Engineer of Roadside Development. The plans were signed by Nichols, Olson, and five highway department officials: A. O. Torgerson (District Engineer), O. L. Kipp (Construction Engineer), J. T. Ellison (Chief Engineer), S. Rex Green (Engineer of Lands and Right-of-Way), and G. G. Gladman (Engineer of Surveys and Design).

The granite used to construct this marker was probably obtained from a quarry near the Ortonville area, which produces dark pink or red granite. A granite outcropping extends along the Minnesota River Valley from Ortonville, through Morton, and southeast to New Ulm, rising 30'-40' above the river valley. In 1938 the WPA Guide to Minnesota reported: "Large quantities of ruby-red granite, valued for its beauty and texture, are quarried here and shipped to other sections of the state to be polished. Seven large quarries operate throughout the year and provide an income to hundreds of families" (*WPA Guide to Minnesota* 1938: 388).

■ **PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS**

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

■ **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Graceville Historical Marker was built in 1940 by the MHD and the WPA. It is one of 18 stone, free-standing, shrine-type historic markers recorded in this inventory. It is one of 23 sites in the inventory which are known or suspected to have been built by the WPA. It is one of more than 60 sites in the inventory that were designed by, or whose design is attributed to, Arthur R. Nichols.

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960." It is recommended that the Graceville Historical Marker 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 Graceville Historical Marker is among the 68 Depression-era properties in the inventory that represent the MHD's first large-scale effort to construct roadside development facilities in the state. The site is important as a well-preserved example of the accomplishments of the WPA working in cooperation with the MHD. The property is an 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.)

Design Significance. The Graceville Historical Marker is a well-preserved example of the MHD Roadside Development Division's small pull-off style roadside parking areas -- this one with a shrine-type historic marker. The marker is an intact example of the "National Park Service Rustic Style." It has stonework of excellent quality, and 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. Furthermore, the Graceville Historical Marker is an important example of the roadside development work of prominent landscape architect A. R. Nichols. (National Register Criterion C.)

The property may also be associated with the "Federal Relief Construction, 1933-1943" and "Tourism and Recreation in the Lake Regions, 1870-1945" historic contexts.

■ **OTHER COMMENTS**

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

T.H. 28 is fairly quiet past this site.

The text of the historic marker is associated with the Graceville area. It is not specifically associated with the site of the wayside rest.

■ **REFERENCES**

Anderson, Rolf T. "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Oct. 9, 1990; amended Aug. 30, 1993.

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Guide to Historic Markers Erected by the State Highway Department, Cooperating with the Minnesota Historical Society. Prepared by the Minnesota Historic Records Survey, Division of Professional And Service Projects, Work Projects Administration. St. Paul, May 1940.

Regan, Ann. "The Irish." In *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*. Ed. June Drenning Holmquist. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1981.

Shannon, James P. *Catholic Colonization on the Western Frontier*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957.

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

WPA Federal Writers' Project. *WPA Guide to Minnesota*. 1938; Rpt. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1985.

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND TEXT OF MARKER

Graceville

Graceville was founded in 1877-1878 by Catholic immigrants who were settled in Big Stone County as part of a Catholic resettlement program that placed 4,000 Catholic families in west central and southwestern Minnesota during the years 1875-1885. The program was the brain child of Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul. Ireland's program was the largest and most successful Catholic colonization program in the United States. Graceville was one of ten villages in five counties in western Minnesota that were established by Ireland to serve as trade centers for the colonists. Most of the Catholics settled by Archbishop Ireland were Irish who had been living in the eastern U.S. or in Ireland, but the program also attracted Catholics from France, Belgium, Germany, and England. Ireland's Catholic Colonization Bureau worked in cooperation with James J. Hill's St. Paul and Pacific Railroad and four other railroad companies to settle the colonists on 369,000 acres of land that had been granted to the railroads by Congress (as part of original railroad land grants) and was sold to the immigrants for a few dollars per acre.

Graceville was named for Thomas Langdon Grace who served as the Bishop of St. Paul from 1859 to 1884. Prior to the establishment of the town of Graceville, a trading post had been located as early as 1866 on the shore of Toqua Lake (which is located across T.H. 28 from this site). This post was on the Fort Wadsworth Trail, which extended from St. Cloud to Fort Wadsworth (now Fort Sisseton, South Dakota).

Text of Plaque on Granite Marker

"Graceville. About 1866 a trading post on the Fort Wadsworth Trail was established on Tokua [Toqua] Lakes a mile west of town. Early in 1878 Archbishop Ireland, after erecting a church on the present town site, located several hundred families in the vicinity through the Catholic Colonization Bureau, and named the settlement for Bishop Thomas L. Grace." [Seals of the State of Minnesota Department of Highways and Minnesota Historical Society]