

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT  
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

CA-PLK-003  
CS 1106  
Whipholt Roadside Parking Area

<b>Historic Name</b> <b>Other Name</b>	Whipholt Roadside Parking Area Sugar Point Battle Historical Marker	<b>CS #</b> <b>SHPO Inv #</b>	1106 CA-PLK-003
<b>Location</b>	N side of TH 200 4.2 mi W of CSAH 39	<b>Hwy</b> <b>District</b> <b>Reference</b>	TH 200 2A 137.2
<b>City/Township</b> <b>County</b> <b>Twp Rng Sec</b> <b>USGS Quad</b> <b>UTM</b>	Pine Lake Township Cass 141N 29W Sec 9 Whipholt Z15 E396920 N5211380	<b>Acres</b> <b>Rest Area Class</b>	7.25 4
<b>Designer</b>	Nichols, A R, Attributed	<b>SP #</b>	1106-09
<b>Builder</b>	Work Projects Administration (WPA) Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)	<b>SHPO Review #</b>	
<b>Historic Use</b> <b>Present Use</b>	Roadside Parking Area Roadside Parking Area	<b>MHS Photo #</b>	013557.04-13
<b>Yr of Landscape Design</b>	1941	<b>MnDOT Historic Photo Album</b>	Ols 1.22
<b>Overall Site Integrity</b>	Intact/Slightly Altered		
<b>Review Required</b>	Yes		
<b>National Register Status</b>	Eligible, see Statement of Significance		
<b>Historic Context</b>	Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960		

**List of Standing Structures**

Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built	
01	Overlook Wall	1941	
NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table			

<b>Fieldwork Date</b>	08-09-97
<b>Prep by</b>	Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 84
<b>Prep for</b>	Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit

<b>Final Report</b>	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)
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■ BRIEF

The Whipholt Roadside Parking Area is located on the northern side of T.H. 200 (formerly T.H. 34), about 1.2 miles west of CSAH 39. The site is located just east of the Whipholt city limits on the southern shore of Leech Lake, on the Leech Lake Reservation.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

**Stone Overlook Wall.** Started 1941 by the WPA, completed circa 1951 by the MHD. The principal structure on the site is a granite overlook wall that is aligned east and west on the southern shore of Leech Lake. The wall forms a gentle curve that is about 98' in overall length and 18" deep. The wall was built in two stages. The central portion (about 38' long) was built by the WPA in 1941. The outbreak of World War II apparently interrupted the work and the outer portions of the wall were not completed. In circa 1951, the highway department apparently finished the wall by extending each end about 30' and building 6'-long return walls -- a modification from the original plans. The original wall section is built of randomly-laid, roughly-cut granite. The circa 1951 portion of the wall is built of randomly-laid split granite rocks. (Probably lake boulders or field rock.) Most of the granite is in various shades of pink and gray and the stones vary in size from about 3" to 10" in diameter.

Near the center of the wall is a buttressed granite pedestal (about 8'6" wide) on which a bronze plaque is mounted at a slant. The seals of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the Minnesota Historical Society are cast near the bottom of the plaque. The text of the plaque addresses the so-called Battle of Sugar Point, which was fought between a group of Ojibwe men and U.S. Government troops. (See marker text at the end of this document.)

The stones of the wall's upper course have been cut to form a smooth top surface. The southern face of the wall is 27"-32" tall. The northern (lakeside) face varies with the terrain, averaging about 56"-64" tall with the height rising to 90" near the center. The return walls are 4' wide and 32" tall.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

A 30'-long asphalt-paved drive enters the site from T.H. 200. The drive enters a 40' by 300' asphalt parking area that is located adjacent to the wall. (The parking area's paving extends up to the face of the wall.) A concrete boat launch is located at the eastern end of the parking area and there is a portable toilet and a water spigot on the eastern edge of the entrance drive. A gravel service road runs east and west through the site. It extends eastward along the shoreline from the townsite of Whipholt to the parking area, and then eastward from the parking area about 900' east. There is a narrow, grassy picnic area between the northern face of the wall and the sandy lakeshore. There are 4-6 round metal firepits with metal grates buried in the sand along the shoreline.

The site is planted with grass, deciduous trees, and a few evergreens. Poplar, birch, willow, and ash trees line the shoreline along the service road west of the wall. Between the service road and T.H. 200 west of the wall are tall natural grasses and wildflowers. Between the service road and T.H. 200 east of the wall are dense trees. There are no plantings in the

40'-wide area between the overlook wall and the water with the exception of two approximately 20-year-old ash trees near the mid-point of the wall. The topography of the site is flat.

The 1941 construction plans specify the planting of 18 Colorado Green Spruce to flank the ends of the overlook wall. Clumps of Savin Juniper were to flank the entrance to the parking area. Green Ash and American Elm were to be planted throughout the site and along the highway and lakeshore. Many of these plants were either not planted or have been removed.

#### ■ **SETTING**

The site is located in a wooded area just east of the Whipholt city limits on the southern shore of Leech Lake. It is bounded on the north by Leech Lake, on the south by T.H. 200 and a pine forest, and on the east and west by forests.

#### ■ **INTEGRITY**

##### **Alterations**

The site was not built according to the plans approved in 1941. See Historical Background below.

The parking area has been paved with asphalt. Many of the plantings specified on the 1941 plans either were not planted or have been removed.

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

##### **Notes on Condition**

The overlook wall is in poor condition. Several stones are missing and the mortar needs repair. Weeds are growing near the wall. The site is minimally maintained.

#### ■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Prior to the erection of the overlook wall, a 3' by 5' steel sign with white background and black lettering was at this site as early as 1930. These steel signs were erected under the first cooperative historic marker program of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the Minnesota Historical Society that was established in 1929. The text of the steel sign was identical to the text on the bronze plaque.

The Whipholt Roadside Parking Area was constructed by the Work Projects Administration (WPA) in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Highways. The construction was part of a .9-mile-long roadside development project. Work began in 1941 but was apparently interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. The WPA was only able to build a gravel parking area, complete the central 38'-long section of the wall, and lay a few courses of the outer walls before war broke out. (See September 1949 photos.) A notation in the highway department construction log indicates that the wall was only 20 percent complete when work

stopped, and was still only 20 percent complete in 1943 when the WPA was officially dissolved.

The wall was finally finished circa 1951 when each end of the central section was extended 30', and 6' return walls were built (a modification of the original design). In its final form the wall is about 98' long, rather than 300' as specified on the plans, and two polygonal lookout bays, two staircases, six benches, and a 5'-wide walkway along the wall's inner side that were specified in the original plan were never built. The circa 1951 split boulder stonework does not match the original rough-cut blocks of stone, perhaps because the stone quarry that was being used in 1941 had closed. The post-war work was presumably done by the highway department, although the work is not reflected on Mn/DOT construction logs.

The 1941 construction plans were drawn in December 1940, probably by A. R. Nichols. The plans were signed in January 1941 by S. Rex Green (Engineer of Lands and Right of Way), Harold E. Olson (Engineer of Roadside Development), C. W. Lilly (Engineer of Plans), G. G. Gladman (Engineer of Survey and Design), A. W. Moulster (District Engineer), O. L. Kipp (Construction Engineer), and Jay T. Ellison (Chief Engineer).

Arthur R. Nichols of the firm Morell and Nichols served as Consulting Landscape Architect for the Minnesota Department of Highways in the 1930s and designed most Roadside Development sites built during this period. Nichols was one of Minnesota's most prominent landscape architects and his career spanned many decades. The original design for the Whipholt wall with its staircases, lookout bays, benches, and walkway is characteristic of Nichols' work.

Mn/DOT Site Development Unit files indicate that in 1961 there were two fireplaces, two toilets, and drinking water available at the site. By circa 1964 the site also had a boat launch.

#### **■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS**

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

#### **■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Whipholt Roadside Parking Area, started in 1941 by the WPA and completed circa 1951 by the MHD, is one of 37 stone overlook walls recorded in this inventory. It is one of 23 properties in the inventory that were built by (or suspected to have been built by) the WPA. The overlook 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 Whipholt Roadside Parking Area 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 Whipholt Roadside Parking Area 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 an example of the work of the WPA 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. Whipholt was probably one of the last sites on which the WPA assisted the MHD with roadside development work. The interruption of the site's construction illustrates the effect of World War II in halting MHD roadside development work and non-defense-related federal relief construction in Minnesota. (National Register Criterion A.)

**Design Significance.** The Whipholt Roadside Parking Area, although not completed according to plan, represents a cohesive, albeit simple, design that embodies the design principles of the "National Park Service Rustic Style," and the New Deal federal relief emphasis on economical indigenous building materials, labor intensive methods, and fine craftsmanship. The post-war completion of the wall continues these principles and was built in the spirit of federal relief construction. Furthermore, Whipholt is an example of the roadside development work of prominent landscape architect A. R. Nichols, to whom its design is attributed. (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.

It is recommended that the text of the plaque be revised, or additional site interpretation be added, to provide cultural sensitivity.

The text of the marker is associated with the vicinity of the battle. It is not specifically associated with the site of the wayside rest, but uses the phrase "opposite here on the northeast shore."

T.H. 200 is a busy highway, but entry to the site is clearly marked and safe. The traffic noise and motion are not overly intrusive to the experience of visiting the wall.

#### ■ REFERENCES

Construction Log. Minnesota Department of Transportation, St. Paul.

*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.

Matsen, William E. "The Battle of Sugar Point: A Re-Examination." *Minnesota History*, Fall 1987:269-275.

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

■ **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND MARKER TEXT**

**The Battle of Sugar Point**

The Ojibwe were occupying the area from Red Lake to present day Little Falls, including Big Sandy Lake and Leech Lake, by the 1780s. The Pillager bands of Ojibwe lived near Leech, Cass, and Otter Tail Lakes. The land around Leech Lake was lost by the Pillager in 1855 as part of a large Ojibwe land cession to the U.S. Government. The Pillager retained small parcels as reservations on the northern shore of Cass Lake and the southern and eastern shores of Leech Lake. By 1874 the Leech Lake Reservation, which includes this roadside parking area, had reached its final size. In the 1970s there were approximately 3,000 Ojibwe living on the Reservation.

The last armed conflict between Native Americans and U.S. Government troops in Minnesota (also one of the last in the U.S.) occurred in October 1898 at Sugar Point on the eastern shore of Leech Lake. William E. Matsen's account of the battle explains that Ojibwe frustrations were fueled by persistent mistreatment of the bands by unfair government policies, the frequent unnecessary arrest of Ojibwe men, and ongoing efforts by Pillager leaders to urge U.S. President McKinley to stop logging companies from stealing Leech Lake Reservation pine (Matsen 1987). Sparking the trouble was a government attempt to re-arrest Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig (Hole in the Day), 62-year-old Pillager leader, who had escaped from a U.S. marshal after being arrested on September 15th. The battle occurred on October 5th when 77 troops, several U.S. marshals, other government officials, and four newspaper reporters arrived to arrest Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig and several others. The government troops, with their backs against Leech Lake, retreated after a battle with 19 Ojibwe men. Six soldiers were killed and ten wounded, and one civilian was killed and at least four wounded. Apparently, only one Ojibwe was wounded.

The U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, William A. Jones, arrived at Leech Lake on October 10th and over the course of a week held council with Ojibwe leaders until the immediate dispute was settled. After the council Commissioner Jones condemned "the frequent arrests of Indians on trivial causes, often for no cause at all, taking them down to Duluth and Minneapolis for trial, two hundred miles away from their agency, and then turning them adrift without means to return home" (Matsen 1987:270). Matsen quotes Commissioner Jones' report to the Secretary of the Interior which summarized: "The Indians were prompted to their outbreak by the wrongs committed against them and chafed under unfair treatment. They now will go back to their homes and live peaceably if the whites will treat them fairly, which is very likely, as the whites were thoroughly impressed with the stand taken by the Indians. In this respect the outbreak has taught them a lesson" (Matsen 1987:275).

**Leech Lake**

Leech Lake and the adjacent town were named for a huge leech that, according to legend, was seen swimming in the lake. Leech Lake is the third largest lake in the state and is approximately 40 miles wide and has approximately 640 miles of shoreline.

**Text of Bronze Plaque on Stone Marker**

"Sugar Point Battle. When a federal marshal with about 100 troops of the 3rd Infantry tried to arrest the Chippewa chief Bugonaygeshig at Sugar Point opposite here on the northeast shore of the lake, a sharp fight occurred October 5, 1898. The whites lost 7 killed and 16

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wounded and the arrest was never accomplished." [Seals of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the Minnesota Historical Society]