

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

CH-SHT-032
CS 1301
Taylors Falls Overlook - South

Historic Name Other Name	Taylors Falls Overlook - South	CS # SHPO Inv #	1301 CH-SHT-032
Location	Both sides of TH 8/TH 95 S of the N jct of TH 8 and TH 95	Hwy District Reference	TH 8/95 Met E 21.8
City/Township County Twp Rng Sec USGS Quad UTM	Shafer Township Chisago 34N 19W Sec 25 St. Croix Dalles Z15 E527120 N5027030	Acres Rest Area Class	4
Designer	Nichols, A R, Consult Land Arch	SP #	8-46-21 1301
Builder	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD) FERA/SERA, Suspected Minnesota, State of, Direct Labor	SHPO Review #	
Historic Use Present Use	Roadside Parking Area Roadside Parking Area	MHS Photo #	013511.01-22 013547.01-05
Yr of Landscape Design	1937	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	Nic 1.12 Nic 1.23 Nic 5.18 Nic 5.28 Ols 1.28 Ols 1.29 Ols 1.30 Ols 1.31
Overall Site Integrity	Intact/Slightly Altered		
Review Required	Yes		
National Register Status	Eligible, see Statement of Significance		
Historic Context	Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960		

List of Standing Structures

Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built
01	Overlook Wall	Ca. 1934-35
02	Overlook Wall	Ca. 1934-35
03	Overlook Wall	Ca. 1934-35
04	Guardrail, Stone	Ca. 1934-35
05	Overlook Wall	1937
06	Curb, Stone	1937
07	Retaining Wall	1937

NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table

Fieldwork Date
05-09-97

Prep by
Gemini Research
Dec. 98 G1. 77

Prep for
Site Development Unit
Cultural Resources Unit
Environmental Studies Unit

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

■ BRIEF

Taylors Falls Overlook - South is located on both sides of T.H. 8/T.H. 95, within the city limits of Taylors Falls, less than one-quarter mile south of the historic center of downtown. The site is about .2 miles south of the junction of T.H. 8 and T.H. 95, and is located within Interstate State Park.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

The site's features are listed from north to south:

Northern Overlook. Probably built 1934-35 by FERA/SERA, expanded 1937 by the Minnesota Department of Highways (MHD). Near the northern end of the site between Sta. 615 and Sta. 617 is an overlook that is about 160' long and about 40' wide (west to east) at its widest point. Its parking area is paved with asphalt and accommodates about 8 cars. A random rubble, roughly-cut basalt wall follows the contour of the cliff along the eastern edge of the overlook. The southern three-quarters of the wall was probably built in 1934-35 and the northern quarter was added in 1937. A 30"-wide pedestrian walkway opening has been cut into the northern wall of the overlook. The northern end of the wall ends with a quarter-circle and a final 3'-square pier. This pier marks the northern end of the site's existing stonework on the eastern side of the highway and matches similar treatment at the southern end of the Southern Overlook. (A section of the Rock Guardrail (see description below) originally extended north from the Northern Overlook. It has been removed.)

The Northern Overlook wall is 18"-24" thick and originally rose about 30" above a 42"-wide flagstone walkway that lined the wall. The flagstone walk was built in 1937. The northern 85 percent of the walkway has been covered with asphalt, reducing the effective height of the wall. Much of the southern 15 percent of the flagstone has been covered with gravel or eroded but parts of the flagstone are intact, particularly at the southern end of the parking area. The parking area and flagstone walkway were originally edged with a stone curb that was built in 1937. A small section of curb is intact. The parking area (built in 1937) was originally built with a 16'-wide island that was also lined with a stone curb. (See historic photos.) The island has been removed and the parking area is now blocked with a jersey barrier to prevent cars from entering it.

A 25'-tall rock outcropping marks the southern end of the Northern Overlook. A 5'-wide gravel footpath leads from the southern end of the Northern Overlook, along the western side of this rock outcropping, to the next feature, the Devil's Chair Overlook. The western edge of the footpath was originally lined with a stone curb. A wood and metal guardrail now separates the path from the T.H. 8/T.H. 95 shoulder.

Devil's Chair Overlook. Probably built in 1934-35 by the FERA/SERA. South of the Northern Overlook at about Sta. 613+75 is a small quarter-circle stone overlook that is about 7' wide (west to east) and about 14' long (north to south). It was designed to provide a view of a tall column of rock known as the "Devil's Chair." It is the most intact feature from the early phase of construction at the site. The overlook is built of random rubble basalt that appears to have been originally laid dry. There are stone steps at the entrance. Projecting from the upper course are carefully placed, narrow, triangular rocks (about 18" apart) that resemble the merlons of a battlement. These battlement-like stones, combined with the

overlook's curved shape and large sheltering neighboring rocks, create the sensation of being within the protected bastion of a fortification. There is a 10'-long section of pointed rocks, set in place vertically, which runs south from the overlook. This wall section resembles the Rock Guardrail. A 5'-wide, gravel footpath extends northward from the Devil's Chair Overlook to the Northern Overlook and southward from the Devil's Chair Overlook toward the Southern Overlook. The western edge of the footpath was originally lined with a stone curb. A wood and metal guardrail now separates the footpath from the T.H. 8/T.H. 95 shoulder and a 3'-tall wooden balustrade has been built along the eastern edge of the path south of the Devil's Chair Overlook.

Eastern Overlook Wall. Probably built 1934-35 by the FERA/SERA, expanded 1937 by the MHD. Along the eastern edge of the site between the Devil's Chair Overlook and the Southern Overlook (about Sta. 610-613+75) is a stone wall that follows the natural edge of the cliff. The wall is about 400' long. Approximately the northern 40 percent and about the southern 10 percent were built in 1937. The remaining 50 percent is an approximately 200'-long wall that was probably built in 1934-35. Portions of the circa 1934-35 wall were raised 1' in 1937. The entire wall is now about 2' thick, 30" tall, and was built of random rubble basalt. After 1937, the top of the wall had a series of large rocks that projected upward at intervals like the merlons of a battlement. The northern 40 percent of the wall was lined with a gravel footpath, which was edged with a curb of massive stones that matched the wall's crenelation. The southern 60 percent of the wall was lined with a flagstone walkway edged with a stone curb. The stone curb and flagstone walk were built in 1937.

Large sections of the Eastern Overlook Wall (or perhaps an associated retaining wall) have been washed out or have fallen over the cliff as the bluff has collapsed. In some sections the wall is at-grade. Some of the walkway's curbing stones are covered with sod and protruding through the earth. There are also some areas of asphalt curbing exposed near the wall that suggest an early parking area. (Most of this asphalt curbing is covered with sod and overgrown grass.) There is a drainage hole covered with a metal grate near the grass-covered flagstone.

There was a parking area (originally gravel) near the southern end of the Eastern Overlook Wall that was separated from T.H. 8/T.H. 95 by a narrow curb-lined island, which was about 6' wide and about 130' long (between Sta. 610+3 and Sta. 611+72). The island was built in 1937 and has been removed.

Southern Overlook. Built 1937 by the MHD. A stone overlook with a geological marker is located near the southern end of the site near Sta. 610. The overlook is octagonally-shaped with a 15' radius. It was built of roughly-coursed basalt. The octagonal wall is about 2' thick and 30" high. The southern end of the wall takes a quarter-circle turn and then ends with a final 3'-square pier. This pier marks the southern end of the existing stonework on the eastern side of the highway and matches similar treatment at the northern end of the Northern Overlook. A flagstone walkway, now mostly covered with gravel, lines the inside of the wall and leads north and south from the overlook. Portions of the path's stone curbing are exposed while others are covered with gravel. The center of the octagonal overlook was originally gravel, which was graded at a lower level than the flagstone walkway. (The gravel now extends up to the level of the walkway.) The walkway is edged with railroad-tie-sized treated wood south of the overlook. A section of the Rock Guardrail originally extended south from the Southern Overlook. A small portion of the Guardrail remains (see Rock Guardrail below). A geological marker, consisting of a lectern-style basalt pier, was

added to the eastern edge of the octagon in 1949. The marker has a rectangular bronze plaque. The text of the plaque addresses the geology of the region. (See text at the end of this document.)

Rock Guardrail. Probably built in 1934-35 by the FERA/SERA, expanded 1937 by the MHD. Long crenelated sections of basalt wall originally extended north of the Northern Overlook and south of the Southern Overlook along the cliff edge at the eastern edge of the site. From historic photos, it appears that these were dry stone walls comprised of tall pointed rocks set in place for a crenelated effect. A section of this wall still exists at the southern end of the site, just south of the Southern Overlook Wall. A short section of similar wall exists just south of the Devil's Chair Overlook. The Rock Guardrail may have been built in 1937 on top of earlier construction.

Stone Curbing. Built 1937 by the MHD. Sections of basalt curbing run the entire length of the site east of T.H. 8/T.H. 95. Many portions of curbing are intact, others have been covered or removed.

Western Retaining Wall. Built 1937 by the MHD. On the western side of T.H. 8/T.H. 95 there is a retaining wall that runs for about 1,600' along the edge of the highway. The wall is built of unmortared chunks of basalt. The northern end of the retaining wall begins near the intersection of T.H. 8/T.H. 95 (near the east-west segment of T.H. 8 that crosses the St. Croix River). The northern portion varies in height from about 6' to 20', turns at a 45 degree angle, and meets a natural outcropping of rock. This taller section of wall is approximately 345' in length. The retaining wall extends southward and is, at some points, only 6"-12" tall, resembling stone curbing. Across the highway from the site's overlooks (such as the Devil's Chair Overlook), the wall is about 18" to 24" tall and about 2' thick. The stones in the wall vary in size from as large as 2' by 4' to as small as 1' by 1'. The Western Retaining Wall and associated plantings were installed on railroad right-of-way by easement.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

The eastern portion of the site is a narrow parcel of land squeezed between T.H. 8/T.H. 95 and the abrupt cliff-edge that drops down to the St. Croix River. Across the road on the western side of T.H. 8/T.H. 95 is a 1,600'-long stone retaining wall that comprises the western portion of the site. The abandoned railroad bed just west of the Western Retaining Wall is now a hiking trail.

Sections of gravel footpath and flagstone walkway combine to run the length of the site on the eastern side of T.H. 8/T.H. 95, following the contours of the bluff and linking the stone features. This footpath is part of Interstate State Park's 1.25-mile-long "River Trail" that links the northern and southern parking areas (and building clusters) of the State Park. A metal guardrail runs along the western edge of this pedestrian path for most of its length. This path joins the hiking trails of Interstate Park and descends down into the park both north of the Northern Overlook and south of the Southern Overlook.

The site's overlooks and footpaths provide amazing views of the river gorge and rock outcroppings. There are steep drops of many feet from the overlook down to the rocks below. The design of the site makes excellent use of natural rock outcroppings.

The site is generally dry and rocky. There are mature pines and sumac scattered throughout. There are mature evergreens on the western side of T.H. 8/T.H. 95. Some original plantings appear to be extant but are sparse and scraggly.

The 1936 planting plan specifies that 25 Colorado Green Spruce (divided into three groups) and 200 Lycium Chinese vines be planted above the Western Retaining Wall. The plan specifies the "Spruce for reinforcement plantings and screen, [and the] Matrimony Vine for ornamental purposes."

■ **SETTING**

The site is located on the western bank of the St. Croix River within Interstate State Park. It overlooks the St. Croix Dalles, an area of steep bluffs, rock outcroppings, and dramatic geological formations along the narrow, deep gorge of the river. Roy Meyer writes: "The sheer rock palisades, rising from the turbulent river, the remarkable potholes (one sixty feet deep), and the variety of vegetation to be found in such small compass all add up to a place of unusual interest" (Meyer 1991:20). Upham describes the river here as flowing through a chasm walled by cliffs of rock 75 to 150 feet high and the gorge as being unsurpassed by any other known locality in the world (Upham 1969:113). A paddlewheel tour boat docks on the shore just east of the site.

■ **INTEGRITY**

Alterations

No plans have been located for pre-1937 work. The 1937 work appears to have been built fairly close to plan, although in some areas the positioning of wall sections varies from plan due to the natural terrain.

After its 1937 improvement, the site was longer than its current length, with sections of the Rock Guardrail extending farther north and south along the highway than the length of the current stonework. Most of this extending guardrail has been removed.

Throughout the entire site, much of the stone curbing lining the western side of the footpath has been removed. Sections of wooden and metal guardrail and new wooden balustrade have been installed to protect visitors from the T.H. 8/T.H. 95 northbound lane and from the edge of the cliff. Some walls have been poorly patched with mortar.

Northern Overlook: A pedestrian walkway opening has been cut into the northern side of the Northern Overlook. The island has been removed from the Northern Overlook. The Northern Overlook's parking area has been paved with asphalt. About 85 percent of the flagstone walkway lining the Northern Overlook has been covered with asphalt. Most of the stone curbing has been removed from this area or covered. A jersey barrier has been installed to close this parking area to vehicles.

Eastern Overlook Wall: Portions of the Eastern Overlook Wall or an associated retaining wall have fallen over the cliff. The crenelation has been removed from the top of the Eastern Overlook Wall and the wall has been rebuilt with a flat mortared stone top. The island,

which created a parking area near the southern end of the Eastern Overlook Wall, and the grassy oval near the northern end of the parking area have been removed.

Southern Overlook: A geological marker with stone pedestal and bronze plaque was added to the Southern Overlook in 1949. Railroad-tie-sized treated wood has been installed on the edge of the walkway south of the Southern Overlook.

Rock Guardrail: Most sections of the Rock Guardrail have been removed, with the exception of a short section just south of the Southern Overlook.

Western Retaining Wall: The Western Retaining Wall on the western side of the highway has been mortared in places.

Despite the changes listed above, the site retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, based on its 1937 development.

Notes on Condition

Much of the flagstone walkway at the Northern and Southern Overlooks is eroded or covered with gravel. Portions of the walls have eroded and have fallen down the cliff. Some walls have been poorly patched with mortar. The walls are in fair condition but need repair. Fortunately, few stones seem to be missing from existing walls.

■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Taylors Falls Overlook is located within the boundaries of Interstate State Park, a park that had been established in 1895 and was first called State Park of the Dalles of the St. Croix. The stone structures that comprise the Taylors Falls Overlook are located along a footpath that runs parallel with T.H.8/T.H. 95. This footpath is part of Interstate State Park's 1.25-mile-long "River Trail" that links the northern and southern parking areas (and building clusters) of the State Park.

The stone features appear to represent two periods of construction, a 1934-1935 phase and a 1937 phase, both of which are briefly described below:

1934-1935 Phase

Portions of the Northern Overlook (Original Portion), Devil's Chair Overlook, and Eastern Overlook Wall (Original Portion) were apparently built by the Minnesota Department of Highways with relief labor supplied through the State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA), which used funds from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). This work was accomplished in conjunction with the construction of T.H. 8 through the park. A 1935 SERA report states:

At Taylors Falls in Chisago County, one of the most beautiful scenic drives in the state, a new highway constructed along the side of towering stone bluffs bordering the St. Croix river at the approach to Interstate Park, was beautified by removal of construction scars and erection of red sandstone safety walls. This project also was sponsored by the state highway department (*Minnesota Work Relief History* 1935:134).

No plans for this work have been located and it is not known who did the design work. It may be the work of landscape architect A. R. Nichols.

When the 1934-35 structures were built T.H. 8 had just been constructed at this location following plans that were signed in March of 1931 (S.P. 846-21). The highway was built on the rail bed of the Northern Pacific Railroad, which had been built along the edge of the river bluff in the 1880s. The rail bed was moved westward to its current location when T.H. 8 was built. (This rail bed is now a hiking trail.) Between April of 1931 and August of 1932, T.H. 8 was graded, gravelled, and a guardrail built. A "waterbound macadam base course" was laid between February and August of 1934 and bituminous surfacing for a roadway with two 15'-wide lanes was laid between October of 1934 and the summer of 1935.

Construction of T.H. 8 in the 1930s had a major impact on the use of the northern portion of Interstate Park. Highway construction physically separated the park's "Glacial Gardens" from the railroad right-of-way and the western edge of the park. Construction also removed a large part of the northern picnic grounds near the Glacial Gardens (resulting in the abandonment of picnicking here and the eventual removal of early park structures in the vicinity). Original views were altered, and trails were rerouted due to the T.H. 8 construction (Strohkirch 1993:8-10).

Note: It is possible that portions of the 1934-1935 stone structures may have existed as early as the 1920s as part of the state park development, or it is possible that pre-1934 structures existed here and were replaced. (The history of the stone structures in Interstate Park is unclear and is under investigation by park personnel. See Strohkirch 1993.) The foot trail past these structures was apparently in place prior to the construction of T.H. 8, running along the edge of the bluff adjacent to the Northern Pacific railroad trackbed (on which T.H. 8 was built).

1937 Phase

The remainder of the stonework was constructed in 1937 by the Minnesota Department of Highways as part of a roadside development project that occurred just after T.H. 8 was built. The 1937 roadside development project was an improvement and expansion of the 1934-35 structures. The 1937 work included construction of the Southern Overlook and the Western Retaining Wall, and expansion of the Eastern Overlook Wall and the Northern Overlook. Historic photos suggest that the Rock Guardrail below the Southern Overlook (below Sta. 610) and above the Northern Overlook (above Sta. 617) were also built in 1937. Most of the 1937 stone features incorporated the 1934-35 work. The stone features from both periods were built of basalt that was native to the site. Some of the 1934-35 features like the Devil's Chair Overlook can be distinguished from the 1937 work because the earlier structures differ slightly in design and style and some were built without mortar.

Work on 1937 features began on April 22, 1937, and was completed on Oct. 22, 1937. The original plans and the MHD construction log state "Work Done by Direct Labor." The 1938 *Annual Report* of the Department of Highway's Roadside Development Division briefly describes State direct labor projects:

The State direct labor projects consisted of the development of roadside parking areas, perpetuation of historic markers, and landscaping of available right of way. These improvements were located in areas where no relief labor was to be had and where

we had requests from civic organizations and the District and District Maintenance Engineers (*Annual Report 1938:2*).

Plans for the 1937 work (S.P. 8-46-21) were signed in 1937 by A. R. Nichols (Consulting Landscape Architect), Harold E. Olson (Engineer of Roadside Development), C. W. Lilly (Engineer of Plans), O. L. Kipp (Construction Engineer), and Jay T. Ellison (Chief Engineer). The Progress and Final Estimate Profile for the work is signed by Project Engineer W. G. Klett (signature somewhat illegible). Historic photos of the project in the Site Development unit's historic photo albums were taken in May, June, July, August, and September of 1937, all by W. G. Klett (see first page of this inventory form for album page numbers).

The 1937 roadside development project was built at approximately the same time that the CCC and the WPA were improving Interstate Park and constructing numerous stone structures, walls, and trails within the park. (See Additional Background Information at the end of this document.)

The geological marker was added to the Southern Overlook Wall in 1949. It was the first tablet to be erected by the Geological Society of Minnesota in its geological marker project. A dedication ceremony was held October 40, 1949, and was attended by residents, city officials, and members of the Geological Society.

Two building clusters within Minnesota's Interstate Park -- "Interstate State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Campground" and "Interstate Park CCC/WPA Rustic Style Historic District" -- were listed on the National Register in 1992. The National Register-listed property does not include the Taylors Falls Overlook - South that was recorded in this inventory.

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

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

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Taylors Falls Overlook - South is a complex site that was built in two stages. Work in 1934-35 was apparently done by the FERA/SERA, and work in 1937 was apparently done by the MHD. The site is one of 37 stone overlooks recorded in this inventory. It is one of seven sites in the inventory known, or suspected, to have been built with FERA/SERA funds. It is one of more than 60 sites 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 property 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 Taylors Falls Overlook - South is one of the 68 Depression-era properties in this inventory that represent the MHD's first large-scale effort to construct roadside development facilities in the state. It is an excellent 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. The geological marker that was added to the site in 1949 was the first geological marker to be erected in the state by the Geological Society of Minnesota. (National Register Criterion A.)

Design Significance. The Taylors Falls Overlook - South is a distinctive, complex series of stone features that were built above a steep cliff that drops dramatically to the river and rocks below. The design of the site makes excellent use of natural rock outcroppings, and its overlooks and footpaths provide spectacular views of the deep river gorge, its fanciful rock formations, and the surrounding forests. The site is an excellent example of the application of the "National Park Service Rustic Style" to a roadside development facility. It has masonry of excellent quality with stones that were skillfully selected and laid. The site 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 Taylors Falls Overlook - South 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.

This stretch of T.H. 8/T.H. 95 is very busy. Traffic is passing very fast, quite close to the site features and to visitors. The site is difficult to turn into and the movement and noise of the traffic is intrusive.

During the course of site research the consultant was informed that Vince Bennett, a stonemason from the Taylors Falls area, has repaired a number of structures within Interstate Park during the past ten years. He is considered to be a local expert in basalt stone construction.

The text of the marker is associated with this general vicinity and uses the phrase "the rocks of the St. Croix gorge at this point."

■ REFERENCES

Anderson, Bill. Telephone interview. Sept. 20, 1997. [Naturalist at Interstate Park.]

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

Anderson, Rolf T. "Interstate Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Campground." National Register Nomination Form. March 22, 1992.

Anderson, Rolf T. "Interstate State Park CCC/WPA Rustic Style Historic District." National Register Nomination Form. March 22, 1992.

Crawford, Dave. Telephone interview. Oct. 24, 1997. [Former longtime Interstate Park employee.]

"Emergency Relief Administration." Minnesota State Archives Administrative History. In Minnesota State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society.

"The Geology of Interstate Park. The St. Croix Dalles -- Home of the World's Deepest Potholes." Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation Interpretive Services. [Brochure.]

Meyer, Roy W. *Everyone's Country Estate. A History of Minnesota's State Parks.* St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991.

Minnesota Work Relief History During the Period From April 1, 1934 to June 30, 1935. State Emergency Relief Administration, 1935.

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

Strohkirch, John. "Interstate State Park Pedestrian Bridge ISTEPA Funds Match Project." Unpublished manuscript. March 7, 1993. [Park Development and Real Estate Manager, Division of Parks and Recreation.]

Thiel, George A. and Carl E. Dutton. *The Architectural, Structural, and Monumental Stones of Minnesota.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1935.

Tweton, D. Jerome. *The New Deal at the Grass Roots: Programs for the People in Otter Tail County, Minnesota.* St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1988.

Upham, Warren. *Minnesota Geographic Names: Their Origin and Historic Significance.* 1920; Second Rev. Ed. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1969.

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND TEXT OF GEOLOGICAL MARKER

Taylors Falls is located at the head of the Dalles of the St. Croix River. "Dalles" is a French name meaning "slab of rock." This portion of the St. Croix has been designated the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. The local basalt is a dark gray stone that is also known as "traprock." The rock was formed more than a million years ago when the earth's crust cracked and lava erupted to the surface. The cliffs along the St. Croix River are the result of these ancient lava flows.

The Taylors Falls Overlook is located within the St. Croix Interstate Park. The park is one of the oldest in the state and was established in 1895 when Minnesota and Wisconsin developed state parks along the St. Croix River across from one another. (It is one of the first examples of an interstate park to be established in the United States.)

Many of the stone structures within Minnesota's and Wisconsin's Interstate Parks were built during the mid-1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), apparently in cooperation with the Works Progress Administration (WPA). CCC Camp Interstate Company 633 established a camp on the Wisconsin side of the river during the summer of 1935 and worked until December 1937. The 4610th Company, Camp Interstate SP-13, began work in July 1938.

The camp had 125-200 enrollees who worked six hours a day, five days a week to improve both state parks. A former CCC employee related that the CCC provided the general labor and the WPA provided skilled stonemasons for the two state park projects (Crawford 1997).

Minnesota's Interstate Park's two historic building clusters, "Interstate State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Campground" and "Interstate Park CCC/WPA Rustic Style Historic District" were listed on the National Register in 1992. These building clusters include several native basalt stone buildings (including a sanitation building, a shelter/refectory, women's restroom, men's restroom, and a combination building). Other structures in the park attributed to federal relief construction include three water fountains, three gate structures, and many feet of basalt stone retaining walls, and stone curbing. The basalt was quarried from glacial potholes by the CCC at a site near the boundary of the park and T.H. 8/T.H. 95 (Anderson 1992).

The city of Taylors Falls was first settled by Euro-Americans in 1838 when Jesse Taylor established the first timber claim. First named Taylor's Place, and later Taylors Falls, the town was platted in 1850-1851, incorporated in 1858, and was the county seat for a number of years until the seat was moved to Center City in 1875.

Text of Geological Marker

"Geology of Minnesota - Taylors Falls Region

"About 750 million years ago the Lake Superior region was the scene of tremendous volcanic activity. Of the 500 or more lava flows which issued from great fissures, some reached as far as Taylors Falls. The rocks of the St. Croix gorge at this point are composed of that lava. Many millions of years later, when the eastern outlet of the Great Lakes was blocked by glacial ice, the St. Croix was one of the outlets of Lake Superior, at which time this gorge was eroded. The abrading action was caused by sand and gravel carried by the great volume of water moving at high velocity. The pot holes in the state park one-half mile north of this site were formed by similar action.

"Erected by the Geological Society of Minnesota in memory of its founder, Edward P. Burch, in cooperation with the Department of Highways State of Minnesota."