

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

CH-TFC-055
CS 1306
Taylors Falls Overlook - North

Historic Name Other Name	Taylors Falls Overlook - North	CS # SHPO Inv #	1306 CH-TFC-055
Location	NE side of TH 95 .5 mi E of Co Rd 71	Hwy District Reference	TH 95 Met E 73.7
City/Township County Twp Rng Sec USGS Quad UTM	Taylors Falls, City of Chisago 34N 19W Sec 24 St. Croix Dalles Z15 E527120 N5029190	Acres Rest Area Class	6.5 4
Designer	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)	SP #	1306
Builder	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD) Youth Conservation Commission (YCC)	SHPO Review #	
Historic Use Present Use	Roadside Parking Area Roadside Parking Area	MHS Photo #	013512.01-07
Yr of Landscape Design	1960	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	Overlook Wall	1960	05-09-97
			Prep by
			Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 78
			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

Taylor's Falls Overlook - North is a 6.5-acre site located on the eastern side of T.H. 95 within the City of Taylor's Falls, about one mile north of the center of the historic downtown area.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Overlook Wall. Built 1960 by the Youth Conservation Commission (YCC). A low, stone overlook wall is located along the bluffline near the southeastern corner of the site to provide a view of the St. Croix River Valley to the east. The wall consists of 23 stone piers built of tan, random ashlar, roughly-cut limestone, presumably on concrete footings. The piers are 26" square and about 3' tall. The piers are spaced about 18' apart. They support a guardrail comprised of two steel I-beams. The overlook has an irregular, somewhat awkward shape, rather than being a smooth or symmetrical curve or pattern. Within the overlook wall is a parking area that was originally asphalt and is now mostly gravel.

The wall differs from that specified in the plan. The plan specifies a "J"-shaped structure that is a solid wall (18" thick and 2' tall) with 19 stone piers (spaced 20' apart). The plan also specifies that the inside of the wall be lined with a 5'-wide poured concrete sidewalk with a poured concrete curb. The plan specifies a 60'-wide asphalt parking area with a capacity of 30 cars to be located adjacent to the wall. A poured concrete curb was to line the side of the parking area opposite the wall and a row of guardrail posts was to block its northern end.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

This 6.5-acre site is an open, grass-planted, gently sloping table with only a few widely scattered trees. A long, fairly straight gravel drive enters the site near its northwestern corner, turns south, and travels to the overlook wall. The drive loops in a circular shape at the wall. There are currently no concrete walks, curbing, markers, picnic tables, or features (other than the wall itself) at the site.

The land drops off sharply just past the overlook wall. Sumac grows on the bluff just below the wall. There are wooded areas east and south of the site. There is a row of mature juniper lining T.H. 95 near the southwestern corner of the site. Near the northern end of the site is another group of juniper. Elsewhere are a few widely scattered trees and woody shrubs.

■ SETTING

The site is located on the western bank of the St. Croix River within the St. Croix Dalles, an area of steep bluffs, rock outcroppings, and dramatic geological formations along the narrow, deep gorge of the river. The overlook faces east and southeast and provides a view of the river and Wisconsin side of the valley. Although it is within the city limits, the site is in a rural setting with pastures and forests nearby. It is bounded by T.H. 95 on the west, a pasture across the highway to the west, and wooded and open areas to the north, south, and east.

■ INTEGRITY

Alterations

The site was apparently not built according to plan. The wall differs from that specified in the plan. (See Standing Structures above for details.)

The site is essentially intact but losing its asphalt to gravel and weeds. In general, it retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Notes on Condition

The piers are in fair to poor condition. They are no longer level and straight suggesting that the ground beneath them has shifted. Some of the piers have been poorly remortared and some have been spray-painted with graffiti. The guardrails need to be painted. The parking area's asphalt has broken up and the parking area is now mostly gravel. The landscaping seems to be only minimally maintained and not very well mowed.

■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site was acquired circa 1949 and the wayside rest was constructed in 1958-1960. Site plans, drawn May 1958, were signed by Harold E. Olson, Engineer of Roadside Development, and ??? Walsh? [illegible], District Engineer.

A Mn/DOT construction report to Harold Olson, Engineer of Roadside Development, and L. H. Tschida, Field Engineer, described the site work:

On June 30, 1958, a crew of 5 lab. began clearing on sidehill for scenic value of St. Croix River. Two D-8 dozers began grading operations of area. July 11, 1958, the clearing was completed. The grading operation using the D-8 dozers was completed July 19, 1958.

On Monday, July 21, 1958, the Maint. Distr. No. 11 began hauling topsoil to area. This was completed July 24, 1958. A D-Z dozer and No. 12 Power Petrol was used for finishing operations using the D-Z to pull a spring tooth barrow to prepare area for seeding. The area was then seeded with a mixutre of Rye, Brome Grass, Red Top, and White Clover.

The entrance and parking overlook has approx. 4 inches of crushed gravel except for the north half which should have stabilized material placed. A snow fence was placed around the edge of the proposed overlook temporarily.

A planting plan should be prepared, also comfort stations, picnic tables, etc. should be placed. The stone wall, bit. surfacing of ent. and overlook is now under consideration by Mr. Palmer and Mr. Walsh (Construction Report 1958).

In 1960, the overlook wall was constructed using labor from the Youth Conservation Commission (YCC). The labor consisted primarily of youth on parole or probation from the Red Wing Correctional Facility. At a 1960 meeting of the steering committee planning "Community Planning and Roadside Parking Areas" with YCC labor, Harold E. Olson (Sub-Committee

Chairman and head of the Roadside Development Division) reported on two projects that were currently underway, one in Clearwater and the other in Taylors Falls. Of the Taylors Falls project, Olson reported:

Here we had an old abandoned gravel pit which was quite an eyesore. The Village council of Taylors Falls requested that a roadside parking area be constructed in that area. Upon receiving approval of the District Engineer, a dozer was used in levelling the old ugly banks and the area topsoiled and seeded, and off-road parking provided but we now need a bumper curb and a retaining wall at the point of overlook together with picnicking facilities. . . .

The Taylors Falls plan would also include a retaining wall as there is a high bluff overlook with a fine view of the villages of St. Croix Falls and Taylors Falls and the river. The plan calls for 65 cubic yards of concrete for the footing and 37 cubic yards of stonemasonry wall. Here a stonemason could teach the boys to lay stone, as was done during the relief days when we had one or two masons on a project with boys as helpers to learn the trade (Community Planning Minutes 1960).

By July of 1960, the construction of the retaining wall and curbing had begun. Governor Orville L. Freeman published a press release that announced this project and the plan for the improvement of another 34 roadside parking areas by the YCC. The estimated cost of the total improvement program was \$175,000, with 10 projects slated to be constructed in 1960. Freeman was quoted as saying:

. . . perhaps the most important benefit . . . is that insofar as possible, youths under the jurisdiction of the Youth Conservation Commission will be employed in the construction of these areas. I believe this is a very worthwhile and needed type of rehabilitation for these young men, and will give them gainful employment which they probably would not be able to secure from private employers ("Roadside Development Program" 1960).

The Youth Conservation Commission, established in 1947, was created to centralize the youth corrections process in Minnesota. This commission was given jurisdiction over the Red Wing Correctional Facility. In 1959, the Minnesota Corrections Department was created with a Youth Conservation Division. The Red Wing Correctional Facility and the Youth Conservation Commission were placed under the new department's jurisdiction.

Mn/DOT Site Development Unit files indicate that in 1961 there were three picnic tables at the site.

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

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

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Taylors Falls Overlook - North is a roadside parking area that was developed in 1958-1960 by the MHD in cooperation with the Youth Conservation Commission (YCC). It is one of two properties in this inventory that were built by the YCC, a program that employed youth

on parole from the Red Wing Correctional Facility. The wall's pier-and-beam design is similar to that used by the MHD for other overlook walls of this vintage.

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960." It is recommended that the site 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.

This stretch of T.H. 8 is curving and quite busy. Due to the speed and amount of traffic, it is difficult to safely turn into the site. Once on the site, however, visitors are quite far from the traffic noise and motion.

■ **REFERENCES**

Community Planning and Roadside Parking Areas Committee. Meeting minutes, April 28, 1960. [MHS Collections, MHD Subject Files Box 8.]

Construction report to Harold E. Olson and L. H. Tschida. July 29, 1958. [Mn/DOT Site Development Unit Files.]

"Roadside Development Program." Typewritten press release. July 21, 1960. [MHS Collections, MHD Subject Files Box 8.]

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

■ **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Euro-American settlement of Taylors Falls began 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, was the county seat for a number of years, and became an important lumbering center. Taylors Falls is located at the head of the Dalles of the St. Croix River. "Dalles" is a French name meaning "slab of rock." Part of the Dalles are now within Interstate Park, located a few miles from this site. This portion of the St. Croix has been designated the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway.