

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT  
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

DK-MDC-011  
CS 1902

Sibley Pioneer Church Monument

<b>Historic Name</b>	Sibley Pioneer Church Monument	<b>CS #</b>	1902
<b>Other Name</b>	Mendota Historical Marker	<b>SHPO Inv #</b>	DK-MDC-011

<b>Location</b>	N side of TH 13 500' W of D St	<b>Hwy District Reference</b>	TH 13 Met E 107.9
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<b>City/Township</b>	Mendota, City of	<b>Acres</b>	.1
<b>County</b>	Dakota	<b>Rest Area Class</b>	4
<b>Twp Rng Sec</b>	28N 23W Sec 27		
<b>USGS Quad</b>	St. Paul West		
<b>UTM</b>	Z15 E486900 N4970200		

<b>Designer</b>	Unknown	<b>SP #</b>	1902
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<b>Builder</b>	Dendolph, K., Const	<b>SHPO Review #</b>	93-1836
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<b>Historic Use</b>	Roadside Parking Area	<b>MHS Photo #</b>	013548.18-21 013549.01-05
<b>Present Use</b>	Roadside Parking Area		

<b>Yr of Landscape Design</b>	1955	<b>MnDOT Historic Photo Album</b>	Ols 1.69
<b>Overall Site Integrity</b>	Intact/Slightly Altered		
<b>Review Required</b>	Yes		

<b>National Register Status</b>	Not Eligible, see Statement of Significance Also member of listed NR district: Mendota Historic District
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<b>Historic Context</b>	
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**List of Standing Structures**

Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built
01	Marker	1955
02	Bench(es), Stone	Ca. 1955

NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table

<b>Fieldwork Date</b>	11-02-97
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<b>Prep by</b>	Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 45
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<b>Prep for</b>	Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit
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<b>Final Report</b>	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)
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Sibley Pioneer Church Monument

■ BRIEF

The Sibley Pioneer Church Monument is located on a .1-acre site on the northern side of T.H. 13 about 500' west of D Street within the City of Mendota.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

**Stone Marker.** Built 1955 by Karl Dendolph Construction for the DAR. The principal feature on this small site is a stone marker that is built of roughly-cut tan limestone, most of which is coursed. The stone was obtained from the remains of a non-denominational church that Henry Sibley had constructed nearby in 1847. The marker consists of an approximately 15'-tall shaft with a gable at the top. At the base of the shaft is a large limestone datestone reading "1955". Near the top of the marker is an inlaid stone cross. Set into the shaft's rectangular niche is a bronze plaque. The symbol of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and an image of the Sibley House are cast near the top of the plaque. The text of the plaque commemorates General Henry Hastings Sibley. (See text at the end of this document.) In front of the marker is a two-level poured concrete terrace with elliptically shaped corners.

**Stone Benches.** Built circa 1955 by Karl Dendolph Construction for the DAR. The stone marker shaft is flanked by two limestone benches with rounded limestone arms and backs and poured concrete seats. (The benches resemble davenport.) They are located on the upper level of the terrace adjacent to, but separate from, the marker.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

Both the site and T.H. 13 are located midway down a river bluff that descends northward toward the Minnesota River floodplain, north of the marker. The Henry Sibley House is located on the floodplain north of (and below) the marker. Historic photos show that the buildings on the floodplain (and possibly the Sibley House) were originally visible from the marker -- the view is now blocked by trees.

The marker is currently located several feet below the elevation of T.H. 13. Historic photos show that it was originally slightly above the grade of the roadway.

The site was originally a simple highway pull-off, but has been altered so that cars can no longer pull into the site. (This is the site's second alteration--see Historical Background below.) Today the marker is approached via an asphalt-paved pedestrian trail that leads from a circa 1994 parking area located about one-half block west of the marker (S.P. 1901-29). This new parking area west of the site is surrounded by newly planted grass and deciduous shrubs. Between the parking area and the marker is a paved city street or entrance road heading north.

The site is roughly rectangular and is planted with grass. There are currently tall mature pines behind the marker that form a backdrop. These pines and several mature deciduous trees now blend into the dense woods north of the marker. There are two clumps of mature deciduous shrubs at the two front corners of the marker. There are newly-planted deciduous

trees and a flower garden on the grassy boulevard south of the marker. No original planting plan has been located.

A new, wide concrete sidewalk now runs east and west in front of the marker, roughly parallel with T.H. 13. A concrete plaza has been installed in front of the marker. At the center of the plaza is a square island planted with low junipers.

#### ■ **SETTING**

The site is surrounded by woods and the Sibley House property down the bluff to the north, a public parking area to the west, T.H. 13 to the south, and the townsite of Mendota to the east. St. Peter's Church is located a short distance to the west. The site is within the Mendota Historic District, which was listed on the National Register in 1970.

#### ■ **INTEGRITY**

##### **Alterations**

The site appears to have been built close to plan.

The site has been the subject of two phases of alteration: In about the 1960s the island in front of the marker was enlarged and the shape of the highway pull-off drive was altered when the alignment of T.H. 13 was shifted slightly south. More recently (in about 1994) the island was removed and the site was closed to vehicular traffic (S.P. 1901-29). A concrete plaza and new sidewalk were installed in front of the marker during this project. (The marker is currently located several feet below the elevation of T.H. 13. Historic photos show that it was originally slightly above the grade of the roadway.)

In general the site retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, although the design and feeling have been altered somewhat by the redesign of the front of the site and its relationship to the highway.

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

The marker's two-level concrete terrace seem to be tipping forward (perhaps this is intentional). The marker is in fair condition.

#### ■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Dated historic photos indicate that the marker shaft was completed by October of 1955 but the concrete terrace and limestone benches had not yet been installed. In these photos there is a painted wooden sign in front of (and slightly west of) the marker that reads "Karl Dendolph Construction Co St. Paul, Minn. DE 7788," suggesting that the Dendolph Company built the marker. (Original plans have not yet been located.)

The site was apparently developed by the MHD in cooperation with the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). The monument was erected in 1955 by the St. Paul Chapter No. 178 of the DAR. Dedication ceremonies were held June 5 and 6, 1955. The marker

**Sibley Pioneer Church Monument**

is one of many historic markers that were erected in Minnesota by the DAR. For example, about 90 markers were erected during the earliest years of the DAR's marking program from 1903-1941. The DAR marking program continued through at least the 1960s.

The Sibley Pioneer Church Monument is one three markers in this Mn/DOT Historic Roadside Structures Inventory that were erected by the DAR. The other two are the Mendota Granite Arrow Marker located a few blocks south of this site (erected in 1928), and the Browns Valley Historical Marker in Browns Valley (erected in 1929).

The limestone used to construct the marker was obtained from the remains of a non-denominational church that Henry Sibley constructed on a hill across from this site. The limestone was probably quarried locally, perhaps from the same quarry where the stone for the Sibley House was obtained. The limestone in this marker may therefore have been some of the first quarried in Minnesota. Geologist and historian Warren Upham writes:

The earliest quarrying in Minnesota was in the Trenton limestone, which forms the upper part of the Mississippi River bluffs at St. Paul and thence up the river to Fort Snelling and the Falls of St. Anthony. It was quarried in 1820-21 for building Fort Snelling, and in 1836 [sic] for Gen. Sibley's house at Mendota, the first residence built of stone in this state (Upham 1898:296).

In about the 1960s, T.H. 13 was realigned slightly to the south beginning at the western end of the marker (about sta. 94.5). The plans indicate that there was a 4'-wide sidewalk and a concrete curb in front of the marker. The realignment project included enlarging the 4'-wide "sidewalk island" that was in place in front of the marker and altering the western side of the pull-off drive. (When the alignment of T.H. 13 was shifted southward, space for a larger island was created.) The plan specifies that the new island be covered with topsoil and sod.

### **Daughters of the American Revolution**

The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) is a hereditary patriotic society for women that was established in 1890 in Washington, D.C. The club's strict, exclusive membership standards require that its members be women who are directly descended from people who helped establish American independence. By 1897, the DAR had chapters in 38 states and had become the largest and most influential club of its type. In the early to mid-twentieth century the preservation of history and genealogy were important to the group and the National Society urged local chapters to mark historic sites in their areas. Local DAR chapters also identified and marked unmarked graves, recorded the service records of veterans, sponsored essay contests, and distributed patriotic materials to children.

### **■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS**

In 1993, a Section 106 review was conducted in preparation for rebuilding portions of T.H. 13, T.H. 55, and T. H. 110 near this site (SHPO# 93-1836). The documents that chronicle this Section 106 review contain several items of correspondence between Mn/DOT and SHPO staff regarding the design of the project near the historic marker.

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sibley Pioneer Church Monument is a small wayside rest with a simple site design that was developed in the 1950s by the MHD in partnership with the DAR. Its stone marker has a design that is unique in this inventory. It is most recent of three markers in this inventory that were erected by the DAR. (The others are the Mendota Granite Arrow Marker (1938) and the Browns Valley Historical Marker (1929).)

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960." It is recommended that it is NOT ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this historic context because it does not meet the context registration requirements.

The property is located within the Mendota Historic District, an historic district that was listed on the National Register in 1970 for its associations with the early history of the settlement of Mendota. The wayside rest is a non-contributing element within the historic district.

■ OTHER COMMENTS

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

T.H. 13 is busy past this site during some times of the day. At those times, the noise and motion of the traffic are somewhat intrusive.

This section of T.H. 13 is apparently being turned back to Dakota County.

The text of the historic marker is associated with Henry Sibley and uses the phrase "the church stood upon a hill opposite this site." It is not specifically associated with the site of the wayside rest.

■ REFERENCES

*Guide to Historic Markers Erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution.* Prepared by the Minnesota Historical Records Survey Project, Division of Community Service Programs, Work Projects Administration. 1941.

Holmquist, June Drenning and Jean A. Brookins. *Minnesota's Major Historic Sites: A Guide.* St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1972.

Upham, Warren. "History of the Mining and Quarrying in Minnesota." *Minnesota Collections*, vol. 8 (1898).

Vaughan, Mrs. James A. *Markers Placed in Minnesota by Chapters of the Minnesota Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, Commemorating Historic Places and Noted Persons.* Minneapolis: 1970.

■ **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND TEXT OF PLAQUE**

The Sibley House, located below this site, was constructed in 1835 and is considered to be the oldest private residence in Minnesota. Henry Hastings Sibley resided here from 1836 to 1862. Stone mason John Muller constructed the house of limestone which was obtained from a nearby quarry. The Catholic church purchased the residence in 1862 and the home served as a parochial school from 1867 to 1878. The St. Paul Chapter of the DAR acquired the house in 1910. The residence was restored and opened to the public. The Sibley House was individually listed on the National Register in January of 1972.

The Sibley House is also part of the Mendota Historic District, which was listed on the National Register in June of 1970. The district encompasses seven historic structures including the Henry Sibley House, the Alexander Faribault House, and the Church of St. Peter.

Mendota is the oldest permanent Euro-American settlement in Minnesota. This settlement was called (at various times) St. Peter's, New Hope, and The Entry. The name Mendota, a Dakota word meaning "the mouth of a river" or "the meeting of waters," was adopted circa 1837. The Minnesota River joins the Mississippi River near this site. Fur traders explored this area as early as 1799 and, by 1820, permanent trading camps had been established at the junction of the two rivers. With the construction of nearby Fort Snelling in 1819, Mendota became an economic trade center. Several treaties with the Dakota were signed at or near Mendota, the first as early as 1805. Mendota was also the home of Henry H. Sibley, a fur trader who arrived at the settlement in 1834. Sibley later became Minnesota Territory's first Congressman (1849) and the state's first governor (1858-1859). Mendota served as the seat of Dakota County from 1854-1857 and, by 1887, the town had begun to decline due to the growth of nearby urban areas and the diminishing fur trade.

**Text of Metal Plaque on Stone Marker**

"To the glory of God and in memory of Henry Hastings Sibley. Born February 20, 1811, died February 18, 1891. A great patriot - soldier - statesman. This historic marker is built of the only remaining stone from the pioneer church erected by General Sibley in 1847 as a place of worship 'for Christians of all denominations.' The church stood upon a hill opposite this site.

"Dedication services in Holiness onto the Lord Sunday, June 5, 1955 and Monday, June 6, 1955. Given by Nathan Hale Chapter Number 178 National Society Daughters of the American Revolution St. Paul, Minnesota."