

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

DL-ALE-067
CS 2106

Kensington Runestone Replica R.P.A.

Historic Name	Kensington Runestone Replica R.P.A.	CS #	2106
Other Name	Runestone Park	SHPO Inv #	DL-ALE-067
Location	S side of TH 27 1.2 mi E of jct TH 27 and TH 29	Hwy	TH 27
City/Township	Alexandria, City of	District	4B
County	Douglas	Reference	82.4
Twp Rng Sec	128N 37W Sec 21	Acres	1.2
USGS Quad	Alexandria East	Rest Area Class	4
UTM	Z15 E318240 N5083810	SP #	2106-04
Designer	Smith, Glanville Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)	SHPO Review #	
Builder	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD) Cold Spring Granite Co.	MHS Photo #	013521.10-22
Historic Use	Roadside Parking Area	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	Ols 1.83
Present Use	Roadside Parking Area	Yr of Landscape Design	1951
Overall Site Integrity	Intact/Slightly Altered	Review Required	Yes
National Register Status	Not Eligible, see Statement of Significance Now eligible: see http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadsides/historic/files/wayrep-suppl.pdf for additional information.		
Historic Context			
List of Standing Structures			
Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built	Fieldwork Date
01	Marker	1951	06-01-97
02	Bench(es), Stone	1951	
03	Flagpole, Stone	Ca. 1955	
04	Other Feature	1957	
Prep by Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 34			
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

The Kensington Runestone Replica Roadside Parking Area is located within the eastern city limits of Alexandria at the intersection of T.H. 27 (formerly T.H. 52) and 6th Ave. E. It is a 1.2-acre triangular-shaped site.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Granite Marker. Erected 1951 by the MHD and Alexandria Kiwanis Club. Designed by Glanville Smith, fabricated by the Cold Spring Granite Company. The marker's primary feature is a 12.5' foot tall, 18-ton replica of the Kensington Runestone. The replica is constructed of "Crystal Gray" Cold Spring granite. The replica has incised runic lettering on the face (eastern side) and along the southern edge that replicates lettering on the actual runestone. (See text at the end of this document.)

The replica sits on a 3.5'-tall granite base that consists of a two-level polished granite pedestal, 4'-long polished granite wings that flank the pedestal, and a series of mortared fieldstone boulders at the base of the monument. The words "Kensington Runestone A.D. 1362" are carved on the pedestal. (See text of wings at the end of this document.)

In front of the marker is a 18' by 10' flagstone plaza. The two granite benches described below rest on the plaza. Behind (west of) the marker is a large metal tripod that supports a tall metal light pole. The light hangs over the front of the marker.

Granite Benches. Erected 1951 (by same parties as marker). Fabricated by the Cold Spring Granite Company. The marker is flanked by a pair of smooth granite benches that rest on the flagstone plaza. The benches have simple slab seats and pedestals. They are about 5' long, 18" wide, and 18" tall.

Flagpole. Erected circa 1955. An approximately 40'-tall flagpole is located at the top of the hill west of the marker. Supporting the metal pole is a 4'-tall, cylindrical fieldstone base that rests on a 5' circular poured concrete pad. A plaque has been removed from the fieldstone base leaving a 10" by 20" indentation.

Mooring Stone. Moved to the site in 1957. An alleged Viking mooring stone is located approximately 6' southwest of the granite marker. The stone is 4'8" wide, 1'8" high, and 3'6" deep. A 1' by 10" metal plaque is riveted to the southern side of the rock. The plaque reads: "Jesse Lake Mooring Stone moved from east side of Lake Jesse February 19, 1957. See Holand's book 'Explorations in America Before Columbus,' page 189."

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

The triangular-shaped site is bisected by an asphalt-paved drive that is aligned north and south, entering the site from either T.H. 27 or 6th Avenue. (Historic photographs indicate that the drive was originally gravel.) The marker is located west of the drive and a grassy triangular island is located east of the drive. A 60' poured concrete sidewalk (original) runs along the western side of the drive, with a 20' sidewalk branch leading west to the marker.

The site also contains a wooden picnic table north of the marker and three rectangular wooden flower boxes (constructed of 4" by 4" timber) west of the marker. The entire site is curbed.

The site is planted with grass, deciduous trees, and scattered evergreen shrubs and trees, none of which appear to be original. The original planting plan specifies 16 American Elm, 5 Lombardy Poplar, and 7 Red Cedar trees, as well as 22 juniper and 8 evergreen shrubs to be planted. There is no evidence of these plantings today.

■ **SETTING**

The site is located within the eastern city limits of Alexandria. It is bounded on the north by T.H. 27 (formerly T.H. 52) and on the south by 6th Ave. E. At the eastern end of the triangular island, 6th Ave. E. enters T.H. 27. The site is surrounded by what appears to be a gravel pit across the highway to the north, a residential area to the west, a large bluff to the south, and wooded areas to the east.

■ **INTEGRITY**

Alterations

The site appears to closely follow the 1951 construction plan with the exception of the landscaped hillside with the flagpole west of the marker, which is not included on the plan.

The gravel drive has been paved with asphalt. The mooring stone was added to the site in 1957. Most plantings have apparently been replaced.

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

Notes on Condition

The standing structures are in good condition. The site is well-maintained, however several of the shrubs are in poor condition.

■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Kensington Runestone Replica R.P.A., or Runestone Park, was established in 1951 to accommodate the placement of the Runestone replica. The rest area was created jointly by the MHD, which established and landscaped the wayside rest, and the Alexandria Kiwanis Club, which erected the marker. The Kiwanis Club raised over \$8,000 for the marker. (Donors who contributed \$200 or more toward the construction of the marker are listed on the southern wing of the replica's granite base.)

St. Cloud historian Glanville Smith designed the monument and it was fabricated by the Cold Spring Granite Company of Cold Spring. Otto Dallmann and Harris Peterson, employees of Cold Spring Granite Company, were two of the carvers. The replica is constructed of a solid piece of Crystal Gray Granite, quarried between Rockville and Waite Park along the Sauk River. The authentic runestone, which had been on display at the Alexandria Chamber of

Commerce, was loaned to the Cold Spring Granite Company for reference during the pattern making. The replica is five times the size of the original runestone.

The monument was dedicated on August 12, 1951. Master of ceremonies was Dr. E. J. Tanquist. State Treasurer Val Bjornson gave the dedicatory address, and Hjalmar Holand, the Norse scholar who first translated the Runestone and brought it to public attention, was the guest speaker.

The original construction plans, dated 1951, were signed by R. J. Wolfangle (Engineer of Plans), O. L. Kipp (Chief Engineer), and S. Rex Green (Engineer of Lands and Right Of Way).

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

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

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Kensington Runestone Replica R.P.A. is a roadside parking area that was developed in 1951 by the MHD and the Alexandria Kiwanis Club. The marker is one of several unique, non-standard markers in this inventory.

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960." It is recommended that the property is NOT ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this historic context because it does not meet the registration requirements (particularly the fifty-year age criterion). However, the wayside rest has a unique design with notable aesthetic qualities and craftsmanship. It is recommended that its National Register eligibility be reevaluated again in the future when it can be compared to MHD roadside development work of the 1950s and 1960s.

■ OTHER COMMENTS

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

The site is difficult to access from T.H. 27, which is a busy highway, in part because the site is not well marked. Parking space does not seem adequate.

The text of the marker is not specifically associated with the site of the wayside rest.

■ REFERENCES

"Alex, Local Kiwanians View Runestone Replica." *St. Cloud Daily Times*, July 24, 1951.

Blegen, Theodore C. *Minnesota: A History of the State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975.

"Holand Presents New Runestone Evidence." *Park Region Echo*, Nov. 18, 1958.

"H. R. Holand, Noted Historian, Reviews History of Runestone." *Park Region Echo*, Aug. 16, 1951.

Johnson, R. O. *Tour Guide of Minnesota*. St. Paul: Department of Business Research and Development, State Capitol. Spring 1949.

"Monument at Alexandria To Be Copy of Runestone." *St. Cloud Register*, July, 1951.

Park Region Echo, Aug. 14, 1951.

Pinckney, Roger. "On the Viking Trail." *Minneapolis Star Tribune* April 12, 1998.

"Runestone Replica Unveiling Event Planned in August." *Park Region Echo*, Feb. 22, 1951.

Smith, Glanville. "Monument of Historic Interest Being Cut Here." *Cold Spring Record*, April 18, 1951.

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND TEXT OF MARKER

The Kensington Runestone was discovered by farmer Olaf Ohman in 1898 near Kensington, several miles southwest of Alexandria. The stone is a native rock called "Graywacke" and measures 31" long, 16" wide, 6" thick, and weighs 202 pounds. Nine lines of runic writing were carved on the face of the stone, and three lines along its edge. H. R. Holand of Wisconsin, a noted Norse scholar and historian, obtained the stone from Ohman and spent years researching and translating the runes. He purports that the Kensington Runestone was carved in 1362 by members of an expedition sent by King Magnus of Norway to Greenland to find colonists who had vanished. In 1979 the Minnesota Historical Society concluded that the runestone was a fraud, citing a tape-recorded interview with the children of a man named John Gran who apparently admitted on his death bed in the 1920s that he had carved it. The Runestone is on display at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC.

The city of Alexandria was named for Alexander Kincaid, one of the town founders who settled there in 1858. Alexandria's initial growth was due to an overland trail (the St. Cloud-Fort Abercrombie Road) that was cut through the woods in 1859, linking St. Cloud and Breckenridge. (Interstate 94 follows this route.) The town was also a stopping place along the Red River Oxcart Trail, one of the state's most important pre-railroad transportation routes.

Text of Marker

The face of the replica has nine lines of incised runic writing. The southern edge of the replica contains three lines of runic writing. The text on the southern portion of the granite base reads:

"The inscription in English from the Holand translation. On front of stone: 'We are 3 Swedes and 22 Norwegians on an exploring journey from Vinland through the West. We had a camp by a lake with two rocky islands one day's trip north from this stone. We were out and fished one day; after we came home we found 11 of our men red with blood and dead. Ave Maria. Save us from evil.' On side of stone: 'We have ten of our party by the sea and two look after our ships fourteen days trip from this island. Year 1362.'"

The text on the northern portion of the granite base reads:

"This replica is five times larger than the original stone which was discovered in Solem Township in this county in 1898, and rescued for the study of scholars in 1907 by Hjalmar R. Holand. Erected 1951 by the Alexandria Kiwanis Club through the generosity of Geo. E. Buscher, Ed W. Fluegel, Robert F. Chan, A. P. Husted, Robert F. Brown, E. J. Tanquist, M.D., Engstrom Brothers, Sam C. Nelson, Richard Harris, Carl V. Anderson, Andrew Jacobson, Edward Seim, A. C. Schneiderhan, H. V. Wussaw, Phil J. Noonan, L. R. Helgeson, Otto Tessmer, Kenneth H. Dell, Alfred L. Peterson, Ralph E. Reber, T. A. Syvrud, Mike D. Kniss, A. J. Dubeau, George S. Lewis, H. E. Kiger."