

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

DL-OSA-021
CS 2106
Stage Station Historical Marker

Historic Name	Stage Station Historical Marker	CS #	2106
Other Name	Osakis Historical Marker	SHPO Inv #	DL-OSA-021
Location	S side of TH 27 at Nokomis St	Hwy District Reference	TH 27 4B 91.4
City/Township	Osakis, City of	Acres	1.8
County	Douglas	Rest Area Class	4
Twp Rng Sec	128N 36W Sec 25	SP #	2106-01
USGS Quad	Osakis	SHPO Review #	
UTM	Z15 E332640 N5081350	MHS Photo #	013520.01-08
Designer	Nichols, A R, Attributed	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	Ols 1.82
Builder	Work Projects Administration (WPA)	Overall Site Integrity	Intact/Slightly Altered
Historic Use	Roadside Parking Area	Review Required	Yes
Present Use	Roadside Parking Area	National Register Status	Eligible, see Statement of Significance
Yr of Landscape Design	1942	Historic Context	Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960

List of Standing Structures

Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built
01	Marker	1942
02	Bench(es), Stone	1942

NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table

Fieldwork Date
06-01-97

Prep by
Gemini Research
Dec. 98 G1. 54

Prep for
Site Development Unit
Cultural Resources Unit
Environmental Studies Unit

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

■ BRIEF

The Stage Station Historical Marker stands on a 1.8-acre site that is located on the southern side of T.H. 27 (formerly T.H. 52) at Nokomis St. W. within the city of Osakis.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Stone Marker. Erected 1942 by the WPA. The site's principal feature is a stone marker located near the southern edge of the site, facing northeast. The marker is built of random rubble, roughly-cut granite of various shades of pink and gray, laid on a stone footing. The stonework is very well executed in comparison to similar markers. The marker's overall dimensions are approximately 18' by 7'. It has a rectangular shaft that supports a rectangular metal plaque within a niche that has a brick sill. The shaft is faced with vitrofied reddish-brown brick that is laid to project outward in alternating courses. At the top of the shaft is a 10" tall, dark gray granite cap. Set into the center of the cap above the plaque is a 4" by 10" black granite block with an etching of covered wagons traveling across a prairie. (This stone is not specified on the plans.) The shaft rests on a base of random rubble granite that measures about 5'6" across. At the center of this base beneath the plaque is a 14" square of decorative brick.

The marker's rectangular shaft is flanked by two 7'-wide granite wings. There is a 7"-tall granite cap with a polished upper surface at the top of each wing. (One of the wings has a small stone heart and arrow set into the stone.) Beneath the cap is a three-course decorative brick band. The first and third brick courses are set flush with the stonework and the middle course is set at an angle. Beneath the brick band is an area of granite (specified as limestone on the plans). The wings have a base of dark gray granite. There are three curving granite steps at the front of the marker. Beneath the steps is a 22' by 10' terrace that is paved with granite flagstone. Set into the center of the flagstone is a 5-pointed granite star. (The star is not specified on the plans.) The ends of the terrace project east and west to support two benches. In front of, and one step lower than the terrace is a second flagstone terrace (adjacent to the asphalt drive) that measures about 18' by 10'. The text of the marker's bronze plaque addresses the Osakis Stage Station. The seals of the Minnesota Historical Society and Minnesota Department of Highways are cast near the bottom. (See text at the end of this document.)

Stone Benches. Erected 1942 by the WPA. Two stone and concrete benches are located on the flagstone terrace in front of the marker. The concrete seats are 6' long and 20" wide. Each seat rests on two granite pedestals.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

A 20'-wide, curving, asphalt-paved pull-off drive enters the site from T.H. 27 and forms a curved island between the drive and T.H. 27. There is a 50' by 100' triangular grass planted island across T.H. 27 to the north of the curved island. The island is lined with a concrete curb. There is a 5'-wide sidewalk in front of the marker that is lined with flowering trees, deciduous trees, and a few evergreen shrubs. There are mature evergreens located behind the marker. There are three young deciduous trees on the curved island and several mature deciduous trees on the triangular island. A picnic area, located within the triangular island,

contains a martin house and a metal-framed wooden picnic table resting on a concrete slab. The topography of the site is flat.

The original planting plan specified clumps of Savin Juniper flanking the marker and a group of Colorado Spruce behind the marker forming a backdrop. Rows of six kinds of shrubs (Russian Olive, Rosy Tartarian Honeysuckle, Mountain Currant, Red Rugosa Rose, Garland Spirea, and Common Lilac) were to be planted along the edges of the site. Twenty-one Lombardy Poplar and 18 American Elm were to be scattered throughout the site for shade. The plan specifies clumps of Savin Juniper on the western and eastern ends of the semicircular island. A few original plantings appear to be intact.

■ **SETTING**

The site is located within the city of Osakis. It is bounded on the north by T.H. 27 and Nokomis St. W. A hotel and residential area are located north of T.H. 27, an auto body shop is located directly behind the marker to the south, to the east is a residential area, and to the west is a circa 1940 county and municipal maintenance garage.

■ **INTEGRITY**

Alterations

The site appears to have been constructed fairly close to plan.

The marker is intact. The asphalt drive was originally gravel. Lilacs, shrubbery, and other plantings are missing from the area behind the marker, and other original plantings have been removed. The setting of the site has been disrupted. A gravel drive bounds the site on the east and enters and widens south of the marker. A body shop, with numerous cars, trucks, and buses parked around, now provides an obtrusive backdrop for this site. (The land behind the site was originally vacant.) This may have once been a quiet residential area, but the flow of traffic on T.H. 27 has resulted in a busy and noisy site.

The site retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The character of the setting has been altered by commercial encroachment.

Notes on Condition

The marker appears to be in fair to good condition although it has been poorly repointed near the top. The site seems to be fairly well maintained with the exception of the curbing along the asphalt drive, which is broken in several places.

■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Prior to the construction of this wayside rest, there was a 3' by 5' steel sign at or near this site. The steel sign was white with black lettering and bore a text identical to the text of the bronze plaque on the stone marker. The sign was one of the markers erected during the first cooperative marking program of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the

Minnesota Historical Society. During 1930, the first year of the program, 40 of these steel signs were erected.

This wayside rest was built by the Work Projects Administration (WPA), in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Highways. (The WPA may also have built the adjacent County garage.) The wayside rest was built in 1942 as a .4-mile-long roadside development project that focused on the construction of this site. The plan title sheet is marked "Final Plans Construction Division W.P.A. Nov. 11, 1942." The plans were signed in January of 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. O. Torgerson, (District Engineer), O. L. Kipp (Construction Engineer), and Jay T. Ellison (Chief Engineer). The sign was probably designed by A. R. Nichols, who served as the MHD's Consulting Landscape Architect in the 1930s (through circa 1940) and who designed several sites nearly identical to this site.

The stone used to construct this marker may have been obtained from a quarry near St. Cloud. Granite was quarried in the St. Cloud region as early as 1868 when the first quarries opened near Sauk Rapids. The St. Cloud-Cold Spring granite region produces a fine-grained granite that ranges in color from black, to varying shades of red and pink, to a clear white.

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

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

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Stage Station Historical Marker was built in 1942 by the MHD and the WPA. It is one of 18 stone, free-standing, shrine-type historic markers recorded in this inventory. It is one of 23 sites in the inventory known or suspected to have been built by the WPA. Stage Station is one of more than 60 sites in the inventory that were designed by, or whose design is attributed to, Arthur R. Nichols. The marker has especially well-executed detailing including an etched stone above the plaque, a stone heart and arrow set into one of the wings, and a five-pointed star set into the flagstone.

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960." It is recommended that the Stage Station Historical Marker 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 Stage Station Historical Marker 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 a well-preserved example of the accomplishments of the WPA working 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. (National Register Criterion A.)

Design Significance. The Stage Station Historical Marker is a well-preserved example of the MHD Roadside Development Division's small pull-off style roadside parking areas that incorporate a shrine-type historic marker. The marker is an intact example of the application of the "National Park Service Rustic Style" to an interpretive marker. It has stonework of excellent quality with unusual details. It 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 Stage Station Historical Marker is an important 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.

T.H. 27 is busy past this site, but because it is within the city the traffic speed is moderate. The site is not well marked.

The text of the historic marker is associated with the town of Osakis and the stage coach route. It is not specifically associated with the site of the wayside rest.

■ REFERENCES

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. "Minnesota State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic Resources." National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form. Sept. 3, 1988.

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.

Rose, Nancy E. *Put to Work. Relief Programs in the Great Depression.* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1994.

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

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

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND TEXT OF MARKER

Osakis

The word Osakis is derived from an Ojibwe word, "Sakis," meaning "place of danger." This area was once along a dividing line between territory controlled by the Dakota and Ojibwe

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nations. Euro-American settlers first came to Osakis in 1859. The townsite was established in 1866 on the south shore of Osakis Lake, its namesake, and was incorporated as a village in February of 1881.

Osakis became a stage stop on the Minnesota Stage Company route in 1859. The Minnesota Stage Company, owned by James C. Burbank, had begun as a stage and mail delivery company in the early 1850s, and by 1865 had gained a statewide monopoly, operating over 1,600 miles of routes. The 1856 legislature had authorized the opening of the St. Cloud to Fort Ambercrombie (near Breckenridge) Road, on which Osakis was located, but by 1859 it had yet to be developed. The route, which began at St. Cloud and traveled up the Sauk River Valley to Fort Ambercrombie on the Red River, was developed by crews of the stage company under the general management of Captain Russell Blakely. For the next ten years, this route was used by the military and the Red River stagecoaches.

Text of Metal Plaque on Stone Marker

"Osakis Stage Station

"Osakis was one of the stops on the Burbank Minnesota Stage Company line to the Red River, established in the spring of 1859 upon the opening of the Fort Abercrombie military road. During the Sioux Outbreak of 1862 the maintenance of this line of communication was vitally important, and the route was constantly patrolled by troops." [Seals of the Minnesota Historical Society and the Minnesota Department of Highways]