

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

FL-CRL-011
CS 2304
Inspiration Point Wayside Rest

Historic Name	Inspiration Point Wayside Rest	CS #	2304
Other Name	Lanesboro Overlook	SHPO Inv #	FL-CRL-011
Location	NW side of TH 16 1.9 mi SW of the jct of TH 16 and CSAH 21	Hwy District Reference	TH 16 6A 237.2
City/Township	Carrolton Township	Acres	9
County	Fillmore	Rest Area Class	4
Twp Rng Sec	103N 10W Sec 26	SP #	16-9-25A 2304-01
USGS Quad	Lanesboro	SHPO Review #	
UTM	Z15 E580860 N4838190	MHS Photo #	013517.01-24 013518.01-03
Designer	Nichols, A R, Attributed	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	Ols 1.86 Ols 1.87
Builder	FERA/SERA, Suspected	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	1934	Historic Context	Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960

List of Standing Structures

Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built
01	Overlook Wall	1934
02	Wall	1934
03	Overlook Wall	1934
04	Picnic Table(s), Stone	1934
05	Fireplace(s), Stone	1934
06	Curb, Stone	1934
07	Marker	1998

NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table

Fieldwork Date
05-12-97

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Dec. 98 G1. 37

Prep for
Site Development Unit
Cultural Resources Unit
Environmental Studies Unit

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

■ BRIEF

Inspiration Point Wayside Rest (also called Lanesboro Overlook) is a 9-acre site located along T.H. 16 about 1.5 miles south of Lanesboro in Section 26 of Carrolton Township.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Circular Stone Overlook Wall. Built 1934 probably by FERA/SERA. Located near the eastern end of the site is a semicircular stone overlook wall (specified as dry stone on the original plan). The wall was built near the site's highest point and has gorgeous views of the Root River Valley to the north, east, and south, and the town of Lanesboro to the northeast. The overlook wall is built of grayish-tan, roughly-cut ashlar limestone. Some limestone rubble is included. Most of the masonry is coursed. It is approximately 90' in diameter, 2' thick, and varies from 16-18" tall. Twelve 3'-square, 2'-tall piers are spaced at intervals. Grass is planted along both the inner and outer sides of the wall. (The original plans indicate a parking area -- probably gravel -- up against the wall.) The wall has three 3'-wide pedestrian openings (northeast, east, and southeast) and a vehicle entrance on the west side, each flanked by piers. Two of the piers flanking the vehicle entrance are keystone-shaped. Within the circular overlook, the asphalt-paved drive is lined with a mortared stone curb (approx. 10" wide). The drive encircles a 25'-diameter island with a tall spruce tree in the center.

Southern Stone Wall. Built 1934 probably by FERA/SERA. A long stone wall runs east and west near the southern edge of the site parallel with, and visible from, T.H. 16. The wall has two units (eastern and western) that flank the main entrance. The wall is built of limestone, both roughly-cut ashlar and rubble, most of which is coursed. It is about 2' wide and 18" tall and was specified as dry stone on the original plan. (Its height varies by a few inches as it follows the terrain.) The eastern wall unit skirts the southern edge of some natural stone outcroppings or ledges of stone that the original plans specified be left in place. The eastern wall unit is about 330' long to the point where it curves to create half of the site's main entrance gate. The eastern unit steps upward in height as it approaches the main entrance. The western unit of the wall is 75' long to the point where it curves to form the western half of the site's main entrance gate.

Pedestrian Overlook Wall. Built 1934 probably by FERA/SERA. The pedestrian overlook wall is located in the middle of the site along the northern side of the site's drive. It is built of coursed ashlar rough-cut limestone. The wall is 2' thick, has four 3'-square piers, and was specified as dry stone on the original plan. The wall consists of a long, straight section that is flanked by two curved sections. The wooded hillside drops off sharply north of the wall so that the northern face of the wall is about 11' tall at its tallest point. The southern face of the wall is about 3' tall at its tallest point. Grass is planted along both the inner and outer sides of the wall (historic photos show gravel up to the inner face of the wall).

Stone Picnic Tables. Built 1934 probably by FERA/SERA. The original plans specify three stone picnic tables at the site, two at the western end, and one at the eastern end. The two western sets remain intact but only one bench of the eastern set remains. The table tops and seats consist of about 10'-long, 4"-thick poured concrete slabs that are attached to mortared, stepped, coursed ashlar, roughly-cut limestone piers. The seats are about 2' wide and 18" tall and the table tops are 3' wide. The eastern picnic table bench is located on its original site a few feet north of the circular overlook wall at the eastern end of the

site. The table and the other bench in this set are gone. (Three of the stone piers from the missing table and bench have rolled down the hillside into the woods northwest of the remaining bench.)

Picnic Fireplaces. Built 1934 probably by FERA/SERA. The original plans specify two picnic fireplaces, one at each end of the site, that were approximately 60" by 56". Each had a square metal grate supported by two 14"-tall stone piers. Only the base of the eastern picnic fireplace remains to mark its location (a few feet north of the circular overlook wall). The western fireplace was situated between the two western picnic tables at the approximate location of the current roadway loop through the western picnic area. The fireplace was probably removed when this loop road was built.

Stone Curbing. Built 1934 probably by FERA/SERA. There are short sections of stone curbing just inside the main entrance. Another 48'-long section of 8"-wide stone curbing trails off from the western end of the northern overlook wall. There is also stone curbing lining the island within the circular overlook wall.

Metal Marker. Erected 1998 by MHS and Mn/DOT. Near the southwestern corner of the site is a black metal marker with gold lettering. It was erected in 1998 by MHS and Mn/DOT. (See text at the end of this document.)

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

The wayside rest is located at the top of Duschee Hill, one of the region's large hills. The developed space consists primarily of a long, narrow oval that runs east and west. The center of the site is a relatively open, grassy area surrounded on the north and east by the oak-forested steep sides of the hill. South of the site is T.H. 16 and west of the site is a pasture.

The rest area's asphalt-paved drive enters the site from T.H. 16 near the site's southwestern corner and travels like a 12'-wide spine from west to east through the site, ending at the eastern circular overlook wall. Near the western end of the site, a newer extension of the drive branches west from the main entrance to loop through the western picnic area (which was originally accessible only on foot). This new road then exits the site at its southwestern corner. There are two recent signs near the southwestern corner of the site facing T.H. 16: one is a blue steel modern highway sign that reads "Inspiration Point Wayside Rest" and the other is a wooden timbered MnDNR-type sign that reads "Welcome to Minnesota Forest Areas."

The original landscaping made use of the area's natural oak forests. Much of the site was planted with grass that was shaded by oak trees scattered throughout the center of the site. A large number of tall junipers also were planted throughout the site. An original planting plan has not been located.

■ SETTING

The surrounding terrain consists of large hills and deep ravines with pastureland, some tilled fields, and natural hardwood forests. This portion of Fillmore County is part of the Minnesota Memorial Hardwood State Forest (later renamed the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest). The memorial forest was first established in 1962 when the forestry division of the

Department of Natural Resources began purchasing lands for inclusion in the state forest. The forest extends south along the Mississippi River, beginning in Goodhue County, and includes southern counties such as Wabasha, Winona, Houston, and Fillmore.

The site is located near the top of Duschee Hill (with an elevation of about 1150') that rises above surrounding ravines. A ravine about one-quarter mile east of the site carries Duschee Creek, and ravines one-half mile and 1 mile north of the site carry another creek and the South Branch of the Root River, respectively, all at elevations of about 860' (about 300' below the rest area).

The site is bordered by T.H. 16 on the south and a tilled field on the west, and is surrounded by undeveloped and pastured hilly land with many ravines and forested areas. T.H. 16 winds along the sides of the limestone hills and bluffs at this point, but northeast of the site, near Lanesboro, T.H. 16 drops down into the valley of the Root River and follows the river to the northeast.

■ INTEGRITY

Alterations

The original plans specify that the walls at the site should be dry stone walls built without mortar, with the exception of the top course of each wall (to be about 6" thick) in which mortar should be used. All walls have been repaired poorly and in sloppy fashion several times with various mortar materials. A thin poured concrete cap was added to all walls on the site circa 1950 or 1960.

Stone curbing is missing throughout the site.

The table and one of the benches are missing from the eastern picnic table set. (Three of the stone piers from the missing table and bench have rolled down the hillside into the woods northwest of the remaining bench.)

Only the base of the eastern picnic fireplace remains. The western fireplace is missing. It may have been removed when the loop road through the western picnic area was added.

The rest area's drive, originally gravel, has been paved with asphalt. A newer extension of the drive branches west from the main entrance to serve the western picnic area (originally accessible only on foot), and exits the site at its southwestern corner.

Despite these changes, the overall impression of the site is that it is very intact. The site retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Notes On Condition

All walls on the site are in poor condition and need repair. They have been repaired poorly and carelessly several times with various mortar materials. Portions of the picnic tables, fireplaces, and stone curbing are missing.

■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Inspiration Point Wayside Rest was constructed by the Minnesota Department of Highways in 1934 in association with a 2.9-mile-long road paving project past this location. (The paving plans were signed August 9, 1933, by C. W. Lilly (Engineer of Plans), J. C. Robbers (District Engineer), O. L. Kipp (Construction Engineer), and Jay T. Ellison (Chief Engineer and Deputy Commissioner).)

The plan sheet for the rest area was drawn April of 1934. The plan sheet indicates that the site was a former stone quarry. It is presumed that the stone for the site's features was quarried directly on the site. (Most stone in the Lanesboro vicinity consists of outcroppings of Shakopee and St. Lawrence limestone that are found in the bluffs along the Root River.)

The site was probably designed by Arthur R. Nichols of the prominent landscape architecture firm Morell and Nichols. Nichols served as Consulting Landscape Architect for the Roadside Development Division of the Minnesota Department of Highways during the 1930s and designed most roadside development sites built during this period. One of the highway department's early photographs of the site is labeled "photo by Nichols."

It is suspected, but has not been confirmed, that the park was built by unemployed workers who were hired locally by the City of Lanesboro or Fillmore County. Local relief offices registered and coordinated the use of unemployed workers on public projects, often using funds from the State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA) which administrated federal funds allocated through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA).

The local newspaper did not mention the source of any relief labor in the following article written in November of 1934:

Work on the Duschee Hill park project is being rushed these days in an effort to complete the work before the ground freezes. The work of grading for the entrance and the parking places will be finished this week according to George Jenks, engineer, and Louis Kusnerek, foreman, if the weather permits. Although the ground was extremely wet Monday, the workmen continued their operations so that the project may be completed on schedule time.

This is one of a number of Road Side Development projects being carried on in the state with federal funds but under the supervision of the state highway commission. This particular project has been allotted \$4,200 and the men in charge say that the entire amount will be needed to complete it in good shape.

The park when completed according to plans will have three concrete picnic tables, two at the west end and one at the east end on the high point from which a wonderful scenic view of the Root River basin may be obtained. Two ovens will also be constructed for the use of the public. A stone wall is being built along the entire south side next to the highway and will add much to the beauty of the place.

It is estimated that at least three or four weeks work will still be required to complete the project. According to present plans the grading will be seeded and shrubbery set out in the spring. This will make a beautiful scenic spot and no doubt will be a popular place for picnic parties and steak dinners when the weather is fine (*Lanesboro Leader*, Nov. 22, 1934.)

Mn/DOT Site Development Unit files indicate that in 1961 there were 5 picnic tables, 2 fireplaces, 2 toilets, and a well or pump at the site.

■ **PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS**

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

■ **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Inspiration Point Roadside Parking Area, built in 1934, is a wayside rest with a complex site design. It is one of seven properties in this inventory that were built by, or are suspected to have been built by, the FERA/SERA. 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, 1889-1960." It is recommended that the Inspiration Point R.P.A. is ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this historic context because it meets the following registration requirements:

Rare Federal Relief Property Type. This wayside rest is one of only seven properties in this inventory that retain stone picnic tables. (National Register Criterion A.)

Significant to the History of Roadside Development. Inspiration Point 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. It is important as an example of the work of the MHD in partnership with federal relief labor. Together, the MHD and various New Deal agencies built a number of distinctive and well-constructed public facilities that met the objectives of roadside development while providing essential work and job training to the nation's unemployed. (National Register Criterion A.)

Design Significance. Inspiration Point R.P.A. is a well-preserved example of the Roadside Development Division's naturalistic, rustic roadside parks. The site is a good example of the "National Park Service Rustic Style" as applied to a roadside development facility. It is one of few properties in this inventory that contains stone walls that were laid dry, without masonry. The rest area's stone features display the special labor-intensive construction techniques and distinctive use of indigenous materials that characterize both the Rustic style and federal relief construction in Minnesota. The site is also 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 "Tourism and Recreation in the Lake Regions, 1870-1945" and "Federal Relief Construction, 1933-1943" historic contexts.

■ **OTHER COMMENTS**

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

The quality of the stonework on the circular overlook wall is poor in comparison to many other wayside rests of the same period that are included in this inventory. (For example, the circular overlook's stone walls waggle rather than being laid straight, they are not vertically true, and there is some twist to the piers.)

This stretch of T.H. 16 is relatively quiet.

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

■ REFERENCES

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

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

Lanesboro Leader, Nov. 22, 1934.

McClelland, Linda Flint. *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916-1942*. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1993.

Preston Republican, July 15, 1937.

"Roadside Development Projects." State of Minnesota Department of Highways. Dec. 31, 1961. MnDOT Site Development Unit Files.

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

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

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

Lanesboro

Lanesboro was platted in 1868 as a railway village. The town, located in a valley where the south branch of the Root River had cut a deep gorge, was founded by settlers from Lanesboro Township in Berkshire County, Massachusetts.

Johnson's *Tour Guide of Minnesota* describes Lanesboro, and the vicinity of the rest area south of town, as follows:

This scenic village nestles along the deep gorge of the Root River in a setting of almost indescribable beauty and charm. . . . The highway skirts Lanesboro on the south and

begins a long climb [southward] out of the valley as it ascends a rugged hillside. From the summit is a panorama which is both fascinating and breath-taking. In the distance the spires of Lanesboro reach toward the blue while far below a small lake, set like a gem in a sylvan park, adds further to an already enchanting view. Beyond this point the road follows a high ridge for a few miles before it again drops gradually into the river valley (Johnson 1949: 170).

Text of Metal Marker

Minnesota's Norwegian Americans

"Like immigrants from many European nations in the mid-19th century, Norwegians left their homeland to escape overpopulation, food shortages, and farm foreclosures. They began arriving in Minnesota in the 1850s, drawn by rich farmland and job opportunities. Eventually they grew to become the state's third largest ethnic group, and Minnesota became a national cultural center for Norwegian Americans.

"Among the first to arrive were immigrants who had first settled in Wisconsin and then migrated into southeastern Minnesota. There they formed rural communities anchored by Lutheran churches, which were social and religious centers and visible links to the traditions of Norway.

"As these farming settlements grew, newcomers moved on to the prairies of central and western Minnesota. When the railroad reached Moorhead in 1872, Norwegian immigrants poured into the Red River Valley. The earliest and most numerous group of European settlers in the valley, they quickly became leaders of business and local affairs.

"Norwegian immigrants in the 1880s and 1890s found other employment as good farmland became scarce. Some pioneered commercial fishing on the North Shore of Lake Superior. Others gravitated to the cities and the iron ranges, where they worked in mills and mines and as domestic servants.

"To serve their growing numbers around the state, Norwegians formed their own institutions -- schools, fraternal societies like the Sons of Norway, political organizations, businesses -- that fostered the development of a Norwegian-American culture. Novelists like O. E. Rolvaag and Martha Ostenso wrote about Norwegian-American experiences. With an active Norwegian-American press as their forum, Norwegian-Americans rose to prominence in Minnesota politics, religion, and higher education.

"Immigration quotas, the Great Depression, and World War II slowed the flow of new immigrants to the state. Yet Norwegian-American culture thrives in Minnesota today, supported by such organizations and the Norwegian-American Historical Association in Northfield, thanks to an enduring interest in their heritage by Minnesota's Norwegian-Americans.

"Erected by the Minnesota Historical Society 1997 [sic]."