

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

GD-FLC-054
CS 2513
Frontenac R.P.A./Maiden Rock

Historic Name	Frontenac R.P.A./Maiden Rock	CS #	2513
Other Name	Lake Pepin Rest Area	SHPO Inv #	GD-FLC-054
Location	E side of TH 61/TH 63 1 mi S of the jct of TH 61/TH 63 and CSAH 2	Hwy District Reference	TH 61/63 6B 77.9
City/Township	Florence Township	Acres	14.2
County	Goodhue	Rest Area Class	1
Twp Rng Sec	112N 13W Sec 24	SP #	2513-01 2513-03
USGS Quad	Lake City	SHPO Review #	93-3608
UTM	Z15 E554700 N4926700	MHS Photo #	013554.01-25 013555.01
Designer	Nichols, A R, Attributed	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	Nic 5.10 Nic 5.20 Nic 5.34 Ols 1.101 Ols 1.102 Ols 1.103 Ols 1.104 Ols 1.105
Builder	National Youth Administration (NYA)	Yr of Landscape Design	1939-40
Historic Use	Roadside Parking Area	Overall Site Integrity	Very Altered
Present Use	Roadside Parking Area	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	Marker	1939	11-06-97
02	Bench(es), Other	1939	
03	Overlook Wall	1939	
04	Curb, Stone	1939	
05	Council Ring	1939	
06	Well/Pump	1939	
07	Retaining Wall	Ca. 1960	
08	Picnic Shelter(s)	1968-69	
Continued			Prep by
			Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 40
			Prep for
			Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit
Final Report	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)		

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Continue Table of Site Structures

Feat#	Type	Year Built	
09	Picnic Table(s), Other	1968-69	
10	Sea Wall	Ca. 1975	
11	Restroom Bldg	Ca. 1993-94	
12	Marker	Ca. 1993-94	

NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table

■ BRIEF

The Frontenac Roadside Parking Area (also known as Lake Pepin Rest Area) is located on the eastern side of T.H. 61/T.H.63 about one mile south of CSAH 2 in Florence Township. It is located on the western shore of Lake Pepin about 2.5 miles north of the town of Lake City, within the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Stone Marker. Built 1939 by the NYA. One of the principal features on the site is a stone marker built of grayish-tan, random ashlar, roughly-cut limestone on a stone footing. The marker is about 35' long and is trimmed with red brick. At the center of the western wall is a shaft that is flanked by curving sidewalls. The walls enclose a raised flagstone terrace that is approached by three flagstone steps, which span the front edge of the terrace. (A plan of the marker drawn in June 1939 shows an inset rectangular panel of brick in the terrace that was apparently not built. The plan also shows the steps as concrete.) Flanking the steps are two low endwalls that frame the curving sidewalls. Mounted on the front edge of the northern endwall is a small rectangular metal plaque that reads "NYA. Constructed by National Youth Administration Cooperating with Minnesota Department of Highways 1939." The central shaft has a rectangular niche that is edged with red brick around a bronze plaque. The marker is now surrounded by a semicircular curb of poured concrete with a poured concrete sidewalk in front of it. The marker is in poor condition. Its flagstone is heaving, bricks are broken, mortar is missing, and stones are cracked and missing. Some of the red brick bench pedestals have been poorly repaired.

The marker's rectangular bronze plaque has the seals of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the Minnesota Historical Society cast near the bottom. The text of the plaque addresses the Maiden Rock. (See text at the end of this document.)

Benches. Built 1939 by the NYA. Resting on the terrace on either side of the shaft are two curved benches with concrete seats and stepped red brick pedestals.

Stone Overlook Wall. Built 1939 by the NYA. Near the southern edge of the site is an approximately 125'-long curving overlook wall built of grayish-tan, roughly-cut limestone on a stone footing. The bulk of the wall is built of random rubble, while the wall's six piers are coursed ashlar. The wall is 18" wide and about 28" tall, with rectangular (rather than square) piers that are about 2' by 4' by about 3' tall. The wall stands on the eastern side of what was the original T.H. 61 alignment (this roadway now serves as a paved drive within the rest area). The wall's curve follows the natural curve of the bluff. The western (inside) face of the wall is lined with a 2'6"-wide gravel walkway edged with stone curbing. Asphalt paving now extends nearly to the western face of the wall. The wall is in poor to fair condition, with some stones missing.

Stone Curbing. Built 1939 by the NYA. Approximately 125' of grayish-tan limestone curbing lines the stone overlook wall near the southern end of the site. The curbing is in poor condition and much of it is covered with asphalt.

Council Ring. Built 1939 by the NYA. On the eastern side of the site near the lakeshore is a council ring made of limestone rubble, most of which is coursed. The ring is about

21' in diameter and its wall is about 18" thick. There is a 5'-diameter fire ring in the center and a pedestrian opening on the southern side of the ring. The council ring is in poor condition and missing many stones.

Well Surround. Built 1939 by the NYA. Near the western edge of the site are the remains of a tan limestone well surround. It originally consisted of a 16'-diameter, raised, octagonal terrace paved with limestone flagstone. The terrace was approached via two limestone steps on the eastern side. There was a pump at the center of the terrace. Three limestone benches with slab seats and block-like pedestals were located on the northern, western, and southern sides of the terrace. An historic photo caption indicates that the structure was built of "Native Minnesota Yellow Limestone with Cut Blue Limestone Seats" (*Annual Report* 1939). Today, the terrace and steps are extant, although overgrown and in poor condition. The pump has been removed (only the capped pipe remains) and the seats of the benches are gone, leaving only the pedestals. The well surround is in poor condition.

Concrete Retaining Wall. Built circa 1960. A 150'-long retaining wall is located about 20' east of, and beneath, the stone overlook wall. It supports the bluff beneath the overlook wall, directly above the beach, and is about 5'6" tall. The wall is built of chunks of poured concrete rubble (probably salvaged) that have been broken up and then mortared into place. It is made in five 30'-long straight sections that combine to curve around the natural curve of the bluff. The wall has a tan, rockfaced limestone cap and there is limestone rubble rippapping at the wall's ends. The structure is in fair condition.

Picnic Shelters. Built 1968-69 by Komatz Construction. Designed by Toltz, King, Duvall, Anderson, and Assoc. Along the western side of the site are two picnic shelters with shed roofs that are supported by simple metal posts. Each shelter has two rectangular precast concrete picnic tables.

Concrete Sea Wall. Built circa 1975. Along the lakeshore (just above the beach) at the northeastern edge of the site is a poured concrete sea wall that is about 500' long and 1' thick. The wall varies in height but is about 4' tall at its tallest point. At a point about 165' from the northern end is a 6'-wide stairway with six poured concrete steps and a pipe railing. The steps lead from the shoreline picnic area down to the beach. The wall is in good condition.

Restroom Building. Built circa 1993-94 by Mn/DOT. Near the northwestern corner of the site is a recent restroom building. It has a gable-on-hipped roof and is built of concrete block faced with brick veneer.

Metal Marker. Built circa 1993-94 by the Mn/DNR. In front of the restroom building is a rectangular metal and plastic marker erected as part of the Great River Road marker program. The text of the marker addresses the Clamming Industry. (See text at the end of this document.)

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

This 1600'-long, narrow site is located between T.H. 61/T.H. 63 on the west and Lake Pepin on the east. An asphalt-paved drive runs the length of the site, with entrances from T.H. 61/T.H. 63 near the site's midpoint and at the northern end. The original T.H. 61 roadway

forms the southern part of this drive. There are timber posts along the eastern side of the old T.H. 61 roadway. The posts were once linked by cables to form a guardrail.

The site has three parking areas. Near the southern end of the site is a small, curbless, asphalt-paved parking area near the stone overlook wall. Near the northeastern corner of the site is another curbless, asphalt-paved parking area that serves the shoreline picnic area. An asphalt-paved walkway (1996) leads from the parking area through the flood wall and to the lakeshore. Near the center of the site in front of the restroom building is the largest and newest parking area. It is paved with asphalt and lined with concrete curbs. The current configuration of parking areas and drives dates from 1968-69. These features were resurfaced and slightly altered in 1996.

There are seven circular concrete picnic tables on circular concrete pads along the shoreline that date from 1968-69. There is one round concrete picnic table (1968-69) and two rectangular picnic tables in the island between the two northern parking areas. There are nine circular concrete picnic tables (1968-69) and several picnic grills on poles west of the restroom building.

Near the northwestern corner of the site is a new rockfaced concrete retaining wall that curves around a garbage dumpster area. There is a flagpole (circa 1968-69) and a Great River Road marker (circa 1993-94) in front of the restroom building.

Historic photos show two gable-roofed, wooden picnic shelters with portable wooden tables that were located west of the historic marker. They were removed in 1968-69. A September 1939 photo indicates that there were several wooden picnic tables in a row along the lakeshore, with at least one limestone picnic fireplace near the shore. The picnic tables and fireplace are gone.

The site slopes eastward from the elevation of the current T.H. 61/T.H. 63 roadway down to the lakeshore. Along the lakeshore is a sandy beach, brush, and limestone riprapping. Historic photos indicate that the rest area was grass planted, with both mature and newly-planted deciduous and evergreen trees. Today most of the site is planted with grass and both mature and newly-planted deciduous and evergreen trees. There are low juniper bushes and deciduous shrubs planted around the back of the historic marker and around the restroom building. The site is lighted with modern lights.

A planting plan dated September 1940 specifies that the site be planted with 74 evenly-scattered American Elm, 25 evergreens, and 66 other trees, as well as 238 deciduous shrubs. Many of these plantings are no longer extant.

■ SETTING

The site is located on the western shore of Lake Pepin in a generally residential, lakeside setting. It is surrounded by Lake Pepin on the east, residences and some commercial buildings on the north, T.H. 61/T.H. 63 and a residential neighborhood on the west, and T.H. 61/T.H. 63 and more houses to the south. The town of Frontenac is located about 2 miles to the north. The bluffs of Wisconsin are visible across Lake Pepin to the east.

■ **INTEGRITY**

Alterations

The site appears to have been originally built fairly close to plan.

The gable-roofed, wooden picnic shelters and four privies were removed in 1968-69. The limestone picnic fireplaces have been removed. In 1968-69, a restroom building was added and parking areas and drives were redesigned. The sea wall was added circa 1970s. The historic marker is now surrounded by a semicircular curb of poured concrete with a poured concrete sidewalk in front of it (circa 1993-94). The well enclosure is missing its pump and benches and is overgrown and deteriorating. A restroom building was added circa 1993-94 replacing the 1968-69 building. Picnic shelters, picnic tables, parking areas, paved drives, and associated landscaping were added in 1968-69 and improved circa 1993-94. The parking areas and drives were improved in 1996 and the site was made handicapped accessible.

In general, the site retains integrity of location, setting, and association. While the stone overlook wall, historic marker, and council ring are intact, a dominant restroom building and large parking area have been added, changing the site's design and landscaping to the point that it now resembles a modern highway rest area. These changes have compromised the site's integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

Notes on Condition

The historic marker is in poor condition -- its flagstone is heaving, bricks are broken, mortar is missing, stones are cracked and missing, and some of the red brick bench pedestals have been poorly repaired. The stone overlook wall is in poor to fair condition with some stones missing. The stone curbing is in poor condition. The stone retaining wall is in fair condition. The council ring is in poor condition and missing many stones. The well surround is in poor condition and missing most components. The sea wall is in good condition. The newer structures are in good condition.

■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Prior to the development of this site, a 3'x5' steel sign with white background and black lettering was at this site as early as 1930. (The steel sign was located closer to the roadway than the current Maiden Rock stone marker.) This sign was one of the markers erected in the first cooperative marking program of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the Minnesota Historical Society. The text of the sign was identical to the Maiden Rock marker's current text. When the stone marker was built in 1939, the steel sign was placed temporarily within its niche, and then replaced with the current bronze plaque.

The Frontenac Roadside Parking Area was constructed in 1939 by the National Youth Administration (NYA) working in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Highways. Development of the picnic area was sponsored by the Lake City Chamber of Commerce with labor provided by the NYA. One plan sheet has the notation: "In cooperation with Lake City Chamber of Commerce."

One plan sheet that has been located for the site was drawn in March of 1939. Another plan sheet, a layout plan, is stamped "Final Plans Construction Division N.Y.A. Program 1939."

A planting plan drawn in September 1940 shows a circular recreational area, a rectangular parking area (with a curved eastern side) in front of the historic marker, the octagonal well surround, and privies at the northern edge of the site (privies were removed in 1968-69). Another plan sheet shows the recreational area containing a children's playground, softball field, and horseshoe courts. It is not known if any of these amenities were ever constructed.

The plans for the construction of the Maiden Rock marker were drawn in June 1939. The plans are stamped "Final Plans Construction Division N.Y.A. S.F.[?] Program September 21, 1939."

Historic photos show that the stone picnic fireplaces, portable wooden picnic tables, and the southern overlook wall were completed by September 1939, and the gable-roofed picnic shelter was completed by March 1940.

The highway department's 1939 *Annual Report of the Accomplishments of Roadside Development* described work at the site:

This project located five and one half miles northwest of the south Goodhue County line between Lake Pepin and Trunk Highway No. 61 was developed as a roadside parking area because it is an unusually scenic area. In travelling from the north, it is the first point where Lake Pepin is brought into view of the traveller. Here an overlook has been constructed so as to permit the traveller to park off of the highway to enjoy this beautiful view. Picnicking facilities such as combination tables and benches, fireplaces, council rings and drinking water have also been provided. The Lake City Chamber of Commerce sponsored this project and has agreed to maintain the area during the tourist season (*Annual Report 1939:18-19*).

According to the report, the NYA built eight fireplaces, 16 picnic tables, three masonry seats, one council ring, and a water well at the site.

The report also described the construction of the historic marker:

This project consisted of the construction of a permanent historic marker to perpetuate the legend of the point of Maiden Rock. The construction consisted of a stone masonry enframement for a bronze plaque with masonry seats on either side. The old marker was located on the side of the highway but by placing the new marker in the roadside parking area, a better setting was provided together with a safety measure as the travellers can now park off of the highway when reading the legend, thus eliminating traffic congestion and preventing accidents (*Annual Report 1939:18*).

The Frontenac Roadside Parking Area was probably designed by Arthur R. Nichols of the firm Morell and Nichols. Nichols served as Consulting Landscape Architect for the Minnesota Department of Highways in the 1930s and designed most roadside development sites built during this period. Photographs of the site and its structures appear in an album of photographs that Nichols compiled for the highway department circa 1940. The photographs serve as a sort of portfolio of Nichols' work for the Department, and the inclusion of photos from this rest area strongly suggests that he designed the site. Additional early highway department photos of the site were taken by Nichols.

Retired Roadside Development employee Ken Madole indicated during an interview for this study that he worked on the Frontenac R.P.A.

Mn/DOT Site Development Unit files indicate that in 1961 this site had a parking area, well, 14 picnic tables, 10 fireplaces, a council ring, two toilets, an overlook, and an historic marker.

The Frontenac Roadside Parking Area was improved in 1968-69 (S.P. 2513-49, 2513-51). It was one of 35 existing rest areas that were redeveloped following the highway department's 1935 inventory of facilities and resulting recommendations for new development, as well as facilities that needed modernization. The 1968-69 improvements were designed by Toltz, King, Duvall, Anderson, and Assoc. The contractor was Komatz Construction Company.

In 1991 the state legislature renamed this parking area as the Disabled American Veterans Rest Area. T.H. 61 was named the Disabled American Veterans Highway.

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

In 1993 a Section 106 review was conducted by Mn/DOT and the SHPO in preparation for the improvement of the rest area (93-3608). In a letter dated September 1, 1993-94, to Richard D. McAtee of Mn/DOT, Britta L. Bloomberg of the MHS concurred that the rest area is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Bloomberg 1993). The file that chronicles this Section 106 review includes items of correspondence and brief reports.

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Frontenac R.P.A., built in 1939, is a Rustic style roadside parking area with a complex site design. Frontenac is one of eight properties in this inventory that retain stone council rings, and one of only two sites that retain the remnants of an elaborate stone pump structure. The wayside rest is an example of the roadside development work of prominent landscape architect A. R. Nichols, to whom its design is attributed. It is one of a group of Depression-era sites that represent the MHD's earliest roadside development facilities, and is one of 19 properties in the inventory that were built by the NYA in partnership with the MHD.

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960." It is recommended that, despite the factors listed above, the property IS NOT ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this historic context due to loss of integrity. The study found that, while some structures (such as the council ring, stone marker, and stone wall) are relatively unaltered, the property's overall landscape design has been changed and dominant modern features have been added.

OTHER COMMENTS

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

T.H. 61/T.H. 63 is busy past this site in the summer months. However, the rest area is large enough and it is below the level of T.H. 61/T.H. 63 so that the traffic noise and motion are not overly intrusive.

T.H. 61 at this location has been designated part of the Great River Road.

The text of the stone marker is not specifically associated with the site of the wayside rest, but uses the phrase "opposite this point." The text of the Great River Road marker is associated with the general area, not the site of the rest area.

■ **REFERENCES**

Anderson, Rolf T. "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Oct. 9, 1990; amended Aug. 30, 1993.

Annual Report of the Accomplishments of Roadside Development Along the Trunk Highways in Minnesota. Minnesota Department of Highways. 1939.

Bloomberg, Britta L. (Minnesota Historical Society). Letter to Richard D. McAtee (Mn/DOT). September 1, 1993.

Final Report National Youth Administration for the State of Minnesota: Sept. 1935 to July 1943. U.S. National Youth Administration, Minnesota. 1943.

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.

Reiman, Richard A. *The New Deal and American Youth.* Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1992.

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 MARKER TEXTS**

Lake Pepin and Maiden Rock

Lake Pepin, originally called Pem-vee-cha-mday ("Lake of the Mountain") by the Dakota, was called Lac des Pleurs ("Lake of Tears") by Father Hennepin in 1680 and Lake Pepin as early as 1703. The origin of the name Pepin is not clear. This 34-mile-long widening of the Mississippi River was formed by the Chippewa River flowing into the Mississippi. The Lake Pepin clamming industry, headquartered in Lake City, was a thriving business in the early 1900s. Over 500 clammers worked the lake, bringing their catch to the several button factories in Lake City.

Maiden Rock received its name from a Dakota legend. The legend tells of a young Dakota woman named Winona who leapt to her death from a large rock on the eastern shore of Lake Pepin. The young woman chose death rather than agreeing to an arranged marriage.

Local Stone

The limestone used at the roadside parking area probably came from a local quarry. Layers of Shakopee and St. Lawrence limestone are located in the bluffs of the Mississippi River Valley, with quarrying beginning at Frontenac as early as 1855. For example, a quarry was located within the current boundaries of Frontenac Park on the bluff below the picnic area. Limestone from this quarry was used to construct the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City in 1883 (source: Frontenac State Park Brochure).

Text of Bronze Plaque on Stone Marker

"Maiden Rock. On the east shore of Lake Pepin, opposite this point, juts out a high rock. From this pinnacle, according to accounts of early travelers, a Sioux maiden of Wabasha's band prevented from marrying the warrior of her choice, leapt to her death that she might avoid union with another and older man." [Seals of State of Minnesota Department of Highways and Minnesota Historical Society]

Text of "Great River Road" Metal Marker

Text on northern side: "In Search of Summer. More than 100 songbirds species fly north to the Midwest when the weather is warm and food is abundant. In the fall, they follow summer south to the tropics of Mexico, the West Indies, and Central and South America." Surrounding this are drawings of six bird species. At the bottom it reads: "Photos and text courtesy of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Copyright 1988, State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resource."

Text on southern side: "Lake Pepin's Shell Game. Celebrated today as a resort area Lake Pepin had an earlier fame as a clamming center. In the late 1800s and early 1900s more than 500 clammers worked the lake from their flat-bottomed john boats using giant combs called crow-foot bars to rake the abundant mussel beds. In this way they gathered mussel shells to sell to the button factories at Lake City. With 32 species in its waters, Lake Pepin was unusually rich in mussels. Many bore colorful names, such as the pig-toe, pimpleback, pocketbook, washboard, elephant ear, heelsplitter, spectacle-case, sheepnose, and wartyback. Many were prized for their beautiful shells -- and now and then a lucky clammer might land a pearl in the bargain.

"The Clamming Industry. By 1898 there were nearly 50 button factories in cities along the Mississippi River. But the industry grew so rapidly that it soon began to exhaust the mussel supply. In 1914 Lake Pepin yielded 8 million pounds of marketable shell; by 1929, the harvest was less than 1/20 of that amount. In recent years, however, there has been a resurgence of commercial clamming in Lake Pepin. Pellets made from mussel shells are used by the Japanese cultured pearl industry to induce oysters to form pearl.

"Endangered Mussels. Although some species of freshwater mussels remain abundant, many others are in danger of extinction. Mussels are extremely sensitive to changes in water temperature, water flow, and sedimentation rates. Pollution from cities and eroded soil from agricultural land have had a major impact on water quality as have pesticides, fertilizers, sewage effluent, and other contaminants. Even such activities as channel dredging and bridge construction can adversely affect mussels." At the bottom it says: " 'The clammer at Work' and 'Buttons and Pearls' illustrations are by Bill Cannon 'Fresh Water Mussels' illustrated by Don Luce 'Fresh Water Mussels' illustration courtesy of Minnesota Department of Natural

Resources 'Fresh Water Mussels' Copyright 1988 State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources."

There is a sidebar that reads: "Most mussels require the presence of fish to survive. They begin life as parasitic larvae, attaching themselves to the gills or fins of host fish for thirty days or more. More than 40% of the 290 known species of freshwater mussels in North America are threatened with extinction. Including its tributaries, the Mississippi River is North America's longest and largest river system, with a basin of 3.25 million square kilometers (1.25 million square miles)."