

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

HE-GVC-053
CS 2735

TH 100 at TH 55 Retaining Walls

Historic Name Other Name	TH 100 at TH 55 Retaining Walls	CS # SHPO Inv #	2735 HE-GVC-053
Location	NW corner of TH 100/TH 55 cloverleaf	Hwy District Reference	TH 100 Met W 8.8
City/Township County Twp Rng Sec USGS Quad UTM	Golden Valley, City of Hennepin 118N 21W Sec 33 Minneapolis South Z15 E472350 N4981220	Acres Rest Area Class	NA
Designer	Nichols, A R, Attributed	SP #	2752-07
Builder	Work Projects Administration (WPA)	SHPO Review #	
Historic Use Present Use	Hwy Retaining Wall/ Sea Wall Hwy Retaining Wall/ Sea Wall	MHS Photo #	013551.08-12 013560.01-02
Yr of Landscape Design	Ca. 1941	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	
Overall Site Integrity	Intact/Slightly Altered		
Review Required	Yes		
National Register Status	Not Eligible, see Statement of Significance Also member of eligible NR district: Lilac Way Historic District District razed as part of TH 100 reconstruction.		
Historic Context	Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960 Federal Relief Construction, 1933-1943		
List of Standing Structures			
Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built	Fieldwork Date
01	Retaining Wall	Ca. 1941	11-04-97
02	Retaining Wall	Ca. 1941	
NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table			Prep by Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 102
			Prep for Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit
Final Report	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)		

■ BRIEF

The T.H. 100 at T.H. 55 Retaining Walls consist of two limestone retaining walls that are located in the northwestern quadrant of the cloverleaf intersection of T.H. 100 and T.H. 55 in Golden Valley.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Retaining Wall A. Built circa 1941 by the WPA. Retaining Wall A is located on the western side of T.H. 100 near the northern end of the T.H. 100 and T.H. 55 cloverleaf. The wall is about 250' long and is built of gray, striated limestone ashlar, most of which is coursed. It is about 5' tall at its tallest point. The wall is anchored with capped piers that are spaced about 12' apart. There is a 6'-wide stairway located about 16' north of the southern end of the wall.

The wall curves along the western side of the frontage road (called Lilac Drive), matching the curve of the road. It retains the grassy hillside on the northwestern side of the T.H. 100 cloverleaf. (The wall runs along the front edge of the property of Clark Engineering, and retains the lawn on which the company's low-lying office building is located.) The northern end of the wall begins near the intersection of Lilac Drive and the paved road that runs between Clark Engineering and the Tennant Company.

Retaining Wall B. Built circa 1941 by the WPA. Retaining Wall B is located on the northern side of T.H. 55 near the western end of the T.H. 100 and T.H. 55 cloverleaf. The wall curves along the northern side of the entrance ramp that carries traffic from Southbound T.H. 100 onto Westbound T.H. 55. It is about 180' long and is built of gray, striated limestone ashlar, most of which is coursed. It is about 4' tall. The wall is anchored with capped piers that are spaced about 12' apart. Built onto the eastern end of the limestone wall is a recent concrete block retaining wall that is topped by a chain-link fence.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

Retaining Wall A curves along the western side of the frontage road (called Lilac Drive), retaining a grassy hillside (the property of Clark Engineering) on the northwestern side of the T.H. 100 cloverleaf. Retaining Wall B curves along the northern side of the entrance ramp that carries traffic from Southbound T.H. 100 onto Westbound T.H. 55.

Original T.H. 100 landscaping (including clumps of lilac hedges) is visible from the site.

■ SETTING

The walls are located at the northwestern side of the cloverleaf intersection of T.H. 100 and T.H. 55 in Golden Valley.

■ **INTEGRITY**

Alterations

The northern 15' of Retaining Wall A may have been demolished (the wall appears to be about 15' shorter than drawn on the plan sheet for the cloverleaf intersection that is cited below). Retaining Wall B appears to retain its original length, but has been extended to the east with a section of concrete block retaining wall. The T.H. 100 and T.H. 55 cloverleaf has been altered since the construction of the walls, the speed and volume of the traffic on the roadway has increased considerably, and the general setting of the intersection has changed from a largely rural setting to a busier light-industrial setting.

In general, the walls retain integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship. The integrity of setting, feeling, and association have been compromised by the changes described above.

Notes on Condition

The walls are in poor condition and the limestone is breaking off in layers.

■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

These retaining walls were probably built about 1941 by the Work Projects Administration (WPA) as part of the original construction of the T.H. 100 and T.H. 55 cloverleaf. (The Work Projects Administration had been established in 1939 to continue the programs of the Works Progress Administration, which had been working on T.H. 100 since 1936. Both were known as the WPA.) The WPA's construction of T.H. 100 was one of the largest federal relief projects in the state. The planning and construction of T.H. 100 is significant in the history of transportation in the state. (See Statement of Significance and Additional Background Information near the end of this document.)

Details of the construction of the cloverleaf intersection are shown in plans for S.P. 2752-07 (T.H. 55-188), which were signed in April and May of 1941. One plan sheet of the intersection shows the locations of at least three sections of "rock wall." Three are located in the northwestern corner of the intersection, and one is located in the southwestern corner of the intersection. Only two of these four wall sections were observed during fieldwork for this inventory. It is presumed that the others have been demolished.

Aerial photos from 1937 show that T.H. 100 had been completed through the intersection of T.H. 100 and T.H. 55 by that year, but that the "upgrading of T.H. 55 was just beginning" and the cloverleaf had not been built (Meyer et al. 1995:40). The cloverleaf had been completed by 1945. Bridge 5974 that carries T.H. 100 over T.H. 55 was built in 1941 and widened in 1969.

The 1937 aerial shows that at the time the walls were built there was a house or farmhouse above Retaining Wall A.

Between 1966 and 1968, ". . . the T.H. 55 cloverleaf was modified, including realignment of the original cloverleaf ramps and pavement widening at the bridge approaches" (Meyer et al. 1995:64).

The walls were probably designed by A. R. Nichols who was the Consulting Landscape Architect for the Minnesota Department of Highways during the 1930s through about 1940. Nichols designed the landscaping and roadside parks along the entire length of the "Lilac Way," as the original portion of T.H. 100 was called (Meyer et al 1995:81-82).

This interchange is considered a Contributing element in the Lilac Way Historic District. This cloverleaf was only the second built in the state. The first was the T.H. 100 and T.H. 12 interchange which was built in 1937 (Meyer et al. 1995:79).

This site is one of seven properties (five parks, a culvert, and these walls) recorded on T.H. 100 as part of this Mn/DOT Historic Roadside Development Structures Inventory. The seven properties are listed below as they appear on T.H. 100 from north to south:

- Graeser Park
- Graeser Park - South
- T.H. 100 and T.H. 55 Retaining Walls
- Blazer Park
- T.H. 100 Culvert (Bridge 5442)
- Lilac Park
- St. Louis Park Roadside Parking Area

At least two other parks along T.H. 100 have been demolished:

- Excelsior Blvd Roadside Parking Area (T.H. 100 at Excelsior Blvd)
- Glenwood Avenue Roadside Parking Area (T.H. 100 at Glenwood Ave.)

See Additional Background Information below for more information on T.H. 100.

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

A series of Section 106 reviews was begun in 1993 in association with the proposed reconstruction of T.H. 100 (SHPO 93-0130, 94-3607, and 98-0306). A portion of T.H. 100 has been determined by the Minnesota Historical Society to be eligible for the National Register as the Lilac Way Historic District. The eligible district includes the roadway itself, as well as bridges, roadside landscaping features, and roadside parks. Survey and evaluation of the segment of T.H. 100 between T.H. 7 (on the south) and 50th Ave. N. (on the north) was conducted in 1994-1997, in part pursuant to a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the FHWA, the SHPO, the ACHP, and the SHPO that was signed in 1997.

The 1997 MOA stipulated the following: For the northern segment of the project area (between Glenwood Ave. N. and 50th Ave. N.) -- photo documentation of National Register-eligible landscape features and development of a video presentation on the history and significance of T.H. 100. For the southern segment of the project area (between the Soo Line RR bridge south of Glenwood Ave. N. and W. 27th St.) -- an inventory of structures adjacent to T.H. 100 that predate 1947, and photo documentation of National Register-eligible landscape features. At the time of this writing (Spring 1998), the inventory had been completed and work on the other stipulations was underway. The documents that chronicle the Section 106 reviews (filed under SHPO review numbers 93-0130, 94-3607, and 98-0306) contain the MOA, several items of correspondence, and several reports (see primarily reports by Meyer et al. 1995 and Henning 1997).

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The T.H. 100 at T.H. 55 Retaining Walls were built circa 1941 by the WPA. The site is one of 23 properties in this inventory that were built by (or suspected to have been built by) the WPA. The walls are one of more than 60 properties in this inventory that were designed by, or attributed to, A. R. Nichols. They were built as part of one of the state's largest federal relief projects -- the construction of T.H. 100 (the "Lilac Way") in 1934-1941. The Lilac Way was also one of the Roadside Development Division's largest, most well-publicized, and most visible, single projects. The retaining walls apparently represent a standard MHD trunk highway design of the 1930s and 1940s. They are nearly identical to the Point Douglas Road Retaining Wall, also in this inventory.

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 retaining walls are NOT INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this historic context because they do not meet the context registration requirements.

However, this property is located within the Lilac Way Historic District, which the SHPO has already determined ELIGIBLE for the National Register under the "Federal Relief Construction, 1933-1943" historic context. It is recommended that the Lilac Way Historic District ALSO MEETS the registration requirements of the Roadside Development historic context. The retaining walls are contributing elements within the potential historic district.

As a member of the Lilac Way Historic District, this property may also be associated with the "Urban Centers, 1870-1940" and "Tourism and Recreation in the Lake Regions, 1870-1945" historic contexts.

■ OTHER COMMENTS

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

The section of T.H. 55 through this intersection is C.S. 2752.

The traffic on the interchange's ramps and roadways is very busy past the site.

■ REFERENCES

Annual Report of the Accomplishments of Roadside Development Along the Trunk Highways in Minnesota. Minnesota Department of Highways. 1938 and 1939.

"An Appraisal Inventory of Work Done with W.P.A. and Other Federal Relief Funds Through the Functioning of the Department of Highways, State of Minnesota." Unpublished manuscript, 1938.

Biennial Report of the Commissioner of Highways of Minnesota. 1935-1936 (pub. Jan. 1, 1937; 1937-1938 (pub. Mar. 1, 1939); 1942-1944 (pub. Dec. 1, 1944).

Lee, Rudolph. "Highway Department Approves 'Lilac Way' West of City." *Minneapolis Journal*, July 28, 1935, pp. 1 and 4.

"Lilac Way Here Soon." *Minneapolis Journal*, Jan. 30, 1938, p. 2.

Henning, Barbara J. *Phases I and II Cultural Resource Historical Investigation, T.H. 100 (Lilac Way), St. Louis Park, Minnesota*. Prepared for Minnesota Department of Transportation by Rivercrest Associates, Inc. September 1997.

Meyer, Scott B., Richard L. Mattson, Andrew J. Schmidt. *Phase I and II Cultural Resources Investigation for Trunk Highway 100 Reconstruction*. Prepared for Minnesota Department of Transportation by The 106 Group Ltd., Feb. 15, 1995.

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

T.H. 100 -- The Lilac Way

The Lilac Way Historic District has been determined to be eligible for the National Register as the most intact portion of the original western segment of T.H. 100. The eligible district is in two distinct segments, a northern segment (about 4.5 miles long) between Glenwood Avenue in Golden Valley and T.H. 52 (now CSAH 81) in Robbinsdale, and a southern segment (1.4 miles long) in St. Louis Park located between a set of Soo Line tracks south of T.H. 7 and W. 26th St.

Built between 1934-1941, largely by the WPA, Lilac Way (originally 12.5 miles long and running from T.H. 5 in Edina to T.H. 52 in Robbinsdale) was one of the state's largest federal relief projects. Lilac Way was the first section completed of the western leg of T.H. 100. The western leg of T.H. 100 was the first portion of a "Belt Line Highway" that, by 1950, encircled the Twin Cities with 66 miles of roadway. The National Register-eligible segment of Lilac Way is significant to the history of suburban development in the Twin Cities and regional transportation (affecting residential development, economic development, tourism, etc.), and significant as one of the state's largest federal relief projects. It is also significant for its distinctive roadside landscaping that features wayside parks, hundreds of native lilac bushes, other intact landscaping elements, and as an excellent example of the work of landscape architect Arthur R. Nichols.

T.H. 100 was originally a Public Works Administration (PWA) project funded by the Economic Recovery Act (ERA). When the WPA was created in 1935, T.H. 100 became a WPA project that employed between 2,500 and 3,000 men during that year alone. The project used almost 800 workers daily in 1935 and approximately 1,500 men daily at the peak of construction in 1937 (Meyer et al. 1995:78). The building of T.H. 100, like the Thompson Hill Overlook and T.H. 61 in Duluth (also in this inventory) was a large federal relief construction project that was established close to one of the state's large urban centers where unemployment was high. Some of the workers on the T.H. 100 project were ". . . formerly unemployed masons hired to build the stone benches, grills, and posts in the roadside parks" (Meyer et al. 1995:79).

Historian Barbara J. Henning writes that,

The belt line was intended to provide safe, efficient traffic flow, but also an aesthetically pleasing experience. Features designed to enhance the parkway experience included grade separations at railroad crossings and major intersecting highways, cloverleaf connections, limited access points to the highway, absence of private frontage, two

lanes in each direction, a median between them, extensive landscaping, and small parks (Henning 1997:10).

Henning describes landscaping along the segment of T.H. 100 in St. Louis Park:

Landscaping for the highway, including the number and types of vegetation, was extraordinary in scope. A dozen types of evergreen trees totaling 420 plants headed the plant material list for St. Louis Park. There were 37 varieties of deciduous trees, shrubs, and vines. The total number of deciduous plants called for in the plan came to 23,505. The largest units were American elm (1,890) in several sizes, sumac (9,478), three kinds of spirea (2,199), Persian lilac (2,487), and common lilac (5,408). Uncommon examples, perhaps representing in-place plants, included limited numbers of butternut (1), ironwood (5), horse chestnut (1), and Chinese matrimony vine (32) (Henning 1997:12).

The Lilac Way's lilac bushes were an exception to the Roadside Development Division's general policy of not planting flowers or flowering shrubs along highways. The landscaping include more than 7,000 bushes of 12 varieties of lilacs and thousands of other vines and trees ("Lilac Way Here Soon" 1938).

See sources cited under References for more information.