

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT  
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

IC-SPG-004  
CS 3115

Spang Spring Roadside Parking Area

<b>Historic Name</b>	Spang Spring Roadside Parking Area	<b>CS #</b>	3115
<b>Other Name</b>	Grand Rapids Spring	<b>SHPO Inv #</b>	IC-SPG-004

<b>Location</b>	W side of TH 169 2.2 mi N of Co Rd 241	<b>Hwy</b>	TH 169
<b>City/Township</b>	Spang Township	<b>District</b>	1B
<b>County</b>	Itasca	<b>Reference</b>	293

<b>Twp Rng Sec</b>	53N 26W Sec 24	<b>Acres</b>	1
<b>USGS Quad</b>	Mountain Ash Lake	<b>Rest Area Class</b>	4
<b>UTM</b>	Z15 E455520 N5212650		

<b>Designer</b>	Nichols, A R, Consult Land Arch	<b>SP #</b>	169-35-24B 3115
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<b>Builder</b>	FERA/SERA, Suspected	<b>SHPO Review #</b>	
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<b>Historic Use</b>	Roadside Parking Area	<b>MHS Photo #</b>	013558.01-06
<b>Present Use</b>	Roadside Parking Area		

<b>Yr of Landscape Design</b>	1935	<b>MnDOT Historic Photo Album</b>	Nic 5.04 Ols 2.40
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<b>Overall Site Integrity</b>	Intact/Slightly Altered		
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<b>Review Required</b>	Yes		
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<b>National Register Status</b>	<del>Eligible, see Statement of Significance</del> Now ineligible: see <a href="http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadsides/historic/files/wayrep-suppl.pdf">http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadsides/historic/files/wayrep-suppl.pdf</a> for additional information.
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<b>Historic Context</b>	Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960
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**List of Standing Structures**

Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built
01	Spring Water Outlet	1935
02	Retaining Wall	1935

NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table

<b>Fieldwork Date</b>	08-09-97
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<b>Prep by</b>	Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 69
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<b>Prep for</b>	Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit
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<b>Final Report</b>	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)
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■ BRIEF

Spang Spring Roadside Parking Area is located on the western side of T.H. 169, approximately 2.2 miles north of County Road 241. It is a one-acre site with an asphalt-paved entrance drive, a granite retaining wall, and a granite spring enclosure.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

**Stone Spring Enclosure.** Erected 1935 by the Minnesota Department of Highways, probably with local relief labor. The spring enclosure is constructed of pink and gray coursed granite that includes both rubble and roughly-cut blocks. The enclosure has a rather complex shape. There is a horseshoe-shaped inner wall that surrounds the spring tap itself, and a rectangular outer wall that wraps around the eastern side of the inner wall. The outer wall originally enclosed the spring's spigot and drain. (See original plans.) The spring enclosure is built into a slope and its walls, piers, and floors were set at several different levels to adjust for the terrain. The walls are anchored by corner piers that measure about 30'-square. The tops of the piers are generally flush with the walls except on the eastern side of the inner wall where two piers project about 4" above the walls.

The inner wall is approximately 19'6" square overall. It extends about 10' farther west than the outer wall. There is a 5'6" opening on the western side of the inner wall that forms an entrance to the spring enclosure. Near the center of the inner wall is a 6'6"-square granite structure that tapped the spring. It is topped by a 4"-thick poured concrete cap and is approximately 20" tall. A mound of concrete has been crudely poured on top of the spring enclosure structure to close it to the public. The eastern portion of the inner wall consists of two curving stone steps that are about 15" wide. The steps create a 6" drop down onto a flagstone floor that is surrounded by the outer wall.

The outer wall is approximately 29'6" long (north and south) by 15' wide (east and west). The wall surrounds a floor that was originally paved with flagstone, little of which remains intact. The spring's spigot and drain were originally located within a 5'-square area that was sunk a few inches below the elevation of the flagstone floor. The spring water drained into a 2'-wide rectangular sunken basin. The spigot (through which the spring water continuously flowed) was attached to the wall above the basin. The drainage area is now covered by a concrete lid that has metal hooks in the top so that the lid can be removed.

**Granite Retaining Wall.** Erected 1935 by the Minnesota Department of Highways, probably with local relief labor. A curved retaining wall is located on the western edge of the site about 24' west of the spring enclosure. It was built to curve along the western side of the pull-off drive and retains the slope above the spring. The wall is constructed of roughly-coursed pink and gray granite split rock and is approximately 90' long, 3' high, and about 18" thick.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

There is an asphalt-paved, curving drive that enters the eastern side of the site from T.H. 169 and separates the site into two areas -- a curb-lined grassy island that contains the

spring enclosure, and the western slope that contains the curved retaining wall. The island and drive were originally lined with concrete curbing.

Most of the site is planted in grass. There are a few evergreens on the grassy backslope, but most of the hill has become overgrown with volunteer poplars. Weeds and dense brush have completely taken over the site.

The 1935 site plan specified that the spring enclosure be surrounded by 74 Mountain Current shrubs (planted in 4 clumps) and one Chinese elm tree planted on each side of the island.

#### ■ **SETTING**

The site is located approximately 12 miles south of Grand Rapids in a forested area. It is bounded by T.H. 169 on the east and is surrounded on all sides by birch trees, evergreens, and forested area. The topography of the site is hilly.

#### ■ **INTEGRITY**

##### **Alterations**

The site was built fairly close to plan.

The entrance drive was originally graveled and was later paved with asphalt. Portions of the curbing are missing. The original plans specify that the backslope was planted in grass. Volunteer growth of poplars has almost completely overgrown the grassy backslope. Weeds and dense brush have almost completely taken over the site. The site was closed several years ago. At that time a mound of concrete was poured over the spring tap. Wooden posts now block the entrances to prevent traffic from driving into the site.

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

##### **Notes on Condition**

The entire site is overgrown with weeds and vegetation. Most of the spring enclosure has deteriorated and fallen into ruin. The retaining wall is in similar condition. The remaining concrete curbing is in poor condition and overgrown with weeds. The entire area is swampy, with stagnant water standing in pools around the site. It appears that the spring continues to flow, or at least ground water is seeping out at some point near the spring enclosure.

#### ■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The site was built by the Minnesota Department of Highways in 1935. It was developed as part of a roadside development project that improved approximately 1.5 miles of right-of-way just north of the Itasca County/Aitkin County line. Final plans were approved by A. R. Nichols (Consulting Landscape Architect), Harold E. Olson (Engineer of Roadside Development), C. W. Lilly (Engineer of Plans), [illegible] (District Engineer), O. L. Kipp (Construction Engineer),

and Jay T. Ellison (Chief Engineer and Deputy Commissioner). The plans are signed October 31, 1935.

The county historical society could not provide any information on possible federal relief agency funding. Telephone interviews were conducted with two elderly local residents who supplied slightly different information on the source of the labor:

Samson Peterson, a lifelong resident of Spang Township, worked on the highway improvement project as a young man "in 1934". His job was to blast and remove the tree stumps along the right-of-way. He indicated that it was a local project, and the jobs were important to the workers. He doesn't believe the site was built by "federal relief boys." He recalls that the contractor was required to hire local men for the job "because of the state funding." Two crews were hired and they worked from May to August (Peterson 1998).

Earl Lipsey, another lifelong resident, moved to his farm site adjacent to the spring enclosure in 1935. He remembers that the spring structure was a "WPA project." He said that local unemployed men were hired to work on "WPA" projects in Hill City (located four miles south of the spring) and he believes that these WPA crews also built the Spang Spring site. Mr. Lipsey recalls that the rock for the structure was obtained from rock piles on his property which had been placed there after the construction of "old highway 35" (Lipsey 1998).

It is probable that the project was built using local relief labor. Funding for the labor probably came from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). FERA programs were administered through the State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA).

Earl Lipsey and his wife, Marion Lipsey, reported that not only tourists but many local residents obtained their drinking water from this artesian well. Mr. Lipsey said, "The water was so clear and cold. Some of the people who lived in this area couldn't afford to have wells drilled or even the pipes for the wells, so they got all their water from the spring, hauling it in cream cans." Mrs. Lipsey said, "People would come from miles around for the water just so they could make good coffee" (Lipsey 1998).

The spring continued to be used by local residents through at least 1976, according to Mrs. Mike Baltus who moved to the area that year. She said that her family obtained drinking water from the spring until a new well was drilled on their property (Baltus 1998).

The site is located in Spang Township, named for Matthew A. Spang, a lumber manufacturer in Grand Rapids. Presumably, the spring was named for the township.

#### **■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS**

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

#### **■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Spang Spring Roadside Parking Area, built in 1935, is a wayside rest with a simple pull-off 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, 1920-1960." It is recommended that the Spang Spring 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. Spang Spring R.P.A. is one of five properties in this inventory that include a spring outlet structure, and one of only three properties in which the spring is the focal point around which the wayside rest was created. (The other two are Dickinson Spring R.P.A. and New Ulm Spring R.P.A.) (National Register Criteria A.)

Significant to the History of Roadside Development. Spang Spring 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 Depression relief labor in partnership with the MHD. Together, the MHD and various New Deal agencies built a number of distinctive 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. Spang Spring R.P.A. is an excellent example of a MHD wayside rest that incorporates a tapped natural spring for roadside drinking water. Although in poor condition, Spang Spring is nonetheless a good example of the "National Park Service Rustic Style" as applied to a roadside development facility. The rest area 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. Spang Spring is also an important example of the roadside development work of prominent landscape architect A. R. Nichols. (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. 169 is fairly quiet past this site.

This portion of T.H. 169 has been designated part of the Great River Road.

#### ■ REFERENCES

Baltus, Mrs. Mike. Telephone interview. July 1998.

Lipsey, Earl and Marion Lipsey. Telephone interview. July 1998.

Peterson, Samson. Telephone interview. July 1998.

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