

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

LP-CAM-003
CS 3706

Camp Release State Memorial Wayside

Historic Name	Camp Release State Memorial Wayside	CS #	3706
Other Name	Camp Release State Monument	SHPO Inv #	LP-CAM-003
Location	S side of TH 212/TH 59 .75 mi E of the Minnesota River	Hwy District Reference	TH 212/59 8B 34.5
City/Township	Camp Release Township	Acres	6
County	Lac qui Parle	Rest Area Class	4
Twp Rng Sec	117N 41W Sec 24	SP #	3706
USGS Quad	Montevideo	SHPO Review #	Z-505
UTM	Z15 E283200 N4978890	MHS Photo #	013504.01-15
Designer	Unknown	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	Ols 2.45
Builder	Minnesota, State of	Yr of Landscape Design	Ca. 1894
Historic Use	Roadside Parking Area	Overall Site Integrity	Intact/Slightly Altered
Present Use	Roadside Parking Area	Review Required	Yes
National Register Status	Listed, see Statement of Significance This property was transferred to the City of Montevideo by quit claim deed on February 8, 2007		
Historic Context	Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960		
List of Standing Structures			
Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built	Fieldwork Date
01	Marker	1894	10-16-96
02	Marker	1989	
03	Other Feature	1862	
NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table			Prep by Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 8
			Prep for Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit
Final Report	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)		

■ BRIEF

Camp Release State Memorial Wayside (also known as Camp Release State Monument) is a six-acre site located on the southern side of T.H. 212/T.H. 59, .75 miles east of the Minnesota River. It is located in Camp Release Township just west of Montevideo's western city limits.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Stone Monument. Erected 1894 by the State of Minnesota. The monument is a 50'-55'-tall granite obelisk made of approximately 21 stacked pinkish-gray stone blocks, each rusticated and rockfaced. The obelisk shaft has a smoothly-dressed pyramidal top. The base is about 9'6" square and 1' tall (exposed). The block above the base is about 7' square and 1'6" tall. The fourth block from the bottom (about 4' square) is smoothly-dressed and inscribed on all four sides. The inscription commemorates six battles and the release of prisoners-of-war during the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862. (See text of monument at the end of this document.) The area around the base of the obelisk has been paved with asphalt in a rough square with about 2'6" of asphalt exposed around each side of the base.

Metal Marker. Erected 1989 by MHS. North of the obelisk is a black metal marker (with gold lettering) standing on a black pole. Both sides of the marker have identical text, describing Camp Release. (See text at the end of this document.)

Entrenchment. Dug 1862 by U.S. troops. A segment of a "perimeter entrenchment" is still visible on the site southeast of the stone monument. The entrenchment was dug by Henry Sibley's troops during their six-week-long occupation of this site in September and October 1862. The visible segment extends from a point 18' south of the current access road in a line to the southwest. See sketch on map on page 205 of Peterson 1985.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

This rectangular site has an asphalt drive (about 20' wide) that enters the site from the eastern side and then encircles the stone monument, which is located roughly in the center of the site on the highest point. The metal marker is standing about 73' north of the stone monument. There is one asphalt parking stall at the southwestern corner of the circular asphalt drive.

The stone monument stands in the middle of a grass circle that is about 70' in diameter. Within the grass circle is a circle of granite boulders (about 56' in diameter) that surrounds the stone monument. The boulders are about football- to breadbox-sized. Most of the boulders have been covered by the grassy sod and are barely exposed. Many along the northern and western sides of the circle are missing or buried. Some early photos show wood timber posts lining a portion of the drive west of the monument, plus a few portable wooden picnic tables. A circa 1915 photo shows a rectangular steel 3' by 5' marker and a wooden hanging-arm roadside parking area sign, both on the T.H. 212/T.H. 59 shoulder at this site (Olson vol. 2, p. 45, Ca. 1942/ca. 1954).

There is apparently a well on the site several feet northwest of the stone monument. (Fieldworkers during this study did not see the well.) The Trunk Highway Archaeological

Camp Release State Memorial Wayside

Reconnaissance Survey Report (Peterson 1985) mentions "abandoned toilet facilities" south of the stone marker that were extant in 1985.

The park has a rather formal, instead of rustic, site design. Most of the site is planted with grass. Rows of small trees and overgrown brush run along the western and southern edges of the site. North of the monument, the site is planted with mature pine, spruce, ash, and other deciduous trees scattered about 40' apart. The area south of the monument, known as the parade ground, is generally open except for a few crab apple and other small trees. The site is located on a plateau. It gently slopes downward to the north.

A 1922 plan of the site entitled "Camp Release State Park" (drawn by "the Commissioner of Highways") shows features that differ from the modern plan. (It is not known whether the 1922 plan was drawn to show existing or proposed features, however.) The 1922 plan shows deciduous and evergreen trees radiating in straight lines from the upper half of the circular drive around the monument. The southern portion of the site has similar trees planted in a grid. A clearing south of the monument is labeled "infantry parade grounds." The site has a second access road on the plan, which runs east and west along the site's southern edge. The drive ends in a circle at the southwestern corner of the site. Above the circle is a clearing labeled "tourist camp sites."

■ SETTING

The site is bounded by the T.H. 212/T.H. 59 right-of-way on the northern side, a gravel and asphalt-paved section of road on the eastern side, and fields on the southern and western sides. The road along the eastern side is paved from T.H. 212/T.H. 59 to the southern edge of the rest area and then becomes gravel. The general setting is agricultural, with farms surrounding the site.

■ INTEGRITY

Alterations

The access drive was originally gravel and is now paved with asphalt. A small asphalt square has been added around the base of the obelisk. A metal marker was erected in 1989 to replace the previous rectangular steel marker. See "Other Landscape Features and Plantings" above for other possible alterations.

In general, the site retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Notes on Condition

The edges of the inscribed granite block in the monument are chipping. Snow plows or mowers have cut and scraped the grass circle and the circle of boulders, particularly on the northern and western sides.

■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On April 24, 1889, the state legislature appropriated \$500 for the purchase of approximately ten acres of land on the site where General Henry H. Sibley freed 269 prisoners-of-war during the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862. The \$500 paid for land and fencing (Meyer 1991:3). The stone monument was approved by the 1889 and 1893 legislatures and \$2,500 to build it was appropriated in 1893. It was dedicated on July 4, 1894, "in the presence of such dignitaries as former governor Alexander Ramsey and some of the survivors of this conflict" (Meyer 1991:4).

Camp Release is one of 23 "state monuments" that were erected by the Minnesota legislature between 1873 and 1929. The earliest of these monuments, including Camp Release, represent one of Minnesota's first public efforts to mark historic sites. Most of the 23 monuments are stone obelisks, and about one-half were erected in cemeteries. Many of the others were built in existing parks or on other parcels of public land, and some (like Camp Release) were built on specially-created sites. Like Camp Release, several of the monuments remember events of the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862 and are located in the Minnesota River Valley. Others are dedicated to forest fire victims and prominent persons. State monuments, including Camp Release, were first administered by the State Auditor's office. (There is one other state monument in this inventory, Floyd B. Olson Memorial Statue, which dates from the 1930s but was named a state monument by the legislature in 1983.)

By the 1920s Camp Release had become a popular picnic spot for tourists and was serving as a wayside rest. "In 1928 its facilities consisted of two tables, with a fire grate near each one, and two toilets. In order to provide a water supply, the legislature increased the appropriation to \$555 for the fiscal year 1930 and to \$235 for fiscal 1931" (Meyer 1991:4). The legislature granted small appropriations of \$100 each biennium for the upkeep of the site. By 1939 site encompassed 17.8-acres.

In 1925 the state monuments were placed under the jurisdiction of the newly-created Department of Conservation. In 1931 the new Division of State Parks, created within the Department of Conservation, inherited them. Camp Release became one of several small parcels of land in the state park system that were classified as "state waysides" because of the location on highways and use as rest areas. (There were eight state waysides in 1939.) By the mid-1930s state park administrators were advising against acquiring any more of these small parcels, and even removing some of them from the state park system. Camp Release was eventually transferred to Mn/DOT in 1973 after serving as a state-run highway wayside rest for more than 50 years. The name of the site was changed by legislative action in 1973 from Camp Release State Memorial Wayside to Camp Release State Monument.

The highway department and the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) erected a rectangular steel, 3' by 5' marker here as early as 1930. (The marker was white with black lettering and bore the seals of the MHD and the MHS.) This was one of a series of identical markers erected during the first cooperative trunk highway marking program of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the Minnesota Historical Society, which was established in 1929. The text of the steel marker was identical to the text of the current metal marker. It was located on the T.H. 212/T.H. 59 shoulder and was still standing in 1972. (The current metal marker was erected in 1989.)

In 1963, the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Resources Commission recommended restoring the entrenchments of the U.S. Government troops for a cost of \$500, and installing appropriate markers for \$250.

Camp Release State Memorial Wayside

By 1979, the site was classified by Mn/DOT as a Class III rest area that included the monument and marker, toilets, picnic tables, and a well with hand pump. The site had been reduced to six acres by this time, and provided parking for 15 cars. In 1979, the Mn/DOT Office of Engineering Services recommended upgrading this wayside rest from a Class III to a Class II, which would require installing a vault toilet building and improving the parking area, as well as additional site development and landscaping.

See "Additional Background Information" at the end of this document for a summary of the events that Camp Release commemorates.

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

A Section 106 review was conducted in 1985-1986 in association with the proposed alteration of the site's access road and parking area and the proposed addition of toilet facilities (S.P. 3706; SHPO review number Z-505). As part of the review, the Trunk Highway Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey (THARS) investigated the site (see Peterson 1985). In a letter to Clem Kachelmyer (Mn/DOT) dated Jan. 23, 1986, the MHS concurred with the THARS recommendation that the project as proposed would adversely affect the northern end of Sibley's entrenchment. The review apparently stopped, pending Mn/DOT's revision of plans. The project is apparently still in the planning stage. The documents that chronicle this Section 106 review contain items of correspondence and an excerpt from Peterson's 1985 report.

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Camp Release State Memorial Wayside, established in 1889, is the oldest wayside rest on the Mn/DOT trunk highway system. It was originally established as one of Minnesota's "state monuments" and was being used as a wayside rest by the 1920s. It was operated by various state agencies (the Auditor's Office and the Department of Conservation) until being transferred to Mn/DOT in 1973. Because of its memorial park origins, the design of the site is unique in this study. It has a formal, somewhat somber quality that differs from most sites in this study, which were designed in the Rustic Style. Camp Release has one of several markers in the inventory with unusual designs. The granite obelisk is one of approximately 20 state-built stone obelisks in Minnesota.

This property fits within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960" and has been evaluating using its registration requirements. It is recommended that Camp Release is ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this historic context because it meets the following:

Significant to the History of Roadside Development. Camp Release is significant as one of the first state-owned and -operated wayside rests in Minnesota. It was used for roadside development purposes by the state beginning in the 1920s when it was furnished with picnic tables, and was eventually transferred to Mn/DOT jurisdiction.

Design Significance. Camp Release State Memorial Wayside is a fairly well-preserved memorial roadside park. It has a formal landscape design and a granite obelisk that is an excellent example of a rare and distinctive design tradition. (National Register Criterion C.)

Camp Release State Memorial Wayside

The Camp Release State Memorial Wayside was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in March of 1973 for its associations with the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862.

The property may also be associated with the "Minnesota State Park Development, 1889-1943" and "Tourism and Recreation in the Lake Regions, 1870-1945" historic contexts.

■ OTHER COMMENTS

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

Camp Release is one of three sites in the study that commemorate events associated with the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862. (The others are Birch Coulee Historical Marker and Morton Pioneer Monuments R.P.A.)

It is recommended that interpretation be added to the site to describe the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862 in a culturally-sensitive manner.

The text of the markers is specifically associated with the site of the wayside rest.

■ REFERENCES

Blegen, Theodore C. *Minnesota: A History of the State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975.

Carley, Kenneth. *The Sioux Uprising of 1862*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1976.

Fridley, Russell W. Letter to Clement P. Kachelmyer. Jan. 23, 1986.

Gonsior, LeRoy. "Camp Release." Minnesota State [Archaeological] Site File Form. Minnesota Trunk Highway Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey, 1973.

Guide to Historic Markers Erected by the State Highway Department, Cooperating with the Minnesota Historical Society. Prepared by the Minnesota Historical Records Survey, Work Projects Administration. St. Paul: May 1940.

Holmquist, June Drenning, Sue E. Holbert, and Dorothy Drescher Perry, comps. *History Along the Highways: An Official Guide to Minnesota State Markers and Monuments*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1967.

Meyer, Roy W. *Everyone's Country Estate. A History of Minnesota's State Parks*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991.

Minnesota State Park and Recreational Area Plan. Minnesota Department of Conservation, Division of State Parks, March 1939.

Mitchell, Diana Mitchell. "Camp Release." National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. State Historic Preservation Office, ca. 1972.

Olson, Harold E., comp. *Historical Markers in Minnesota*. 4 vols. Photo albums prepared by Department of Roadside Development, Minnesota Department of Highways, circa 1942, updated circa 1954. Mn/DOT Site Development Unit.

Peterson, Leslie D. *The Minnesota Trunk Highway Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey Annual Report - 1985*. Submitted to Mn/DOT, FHWA, and MHS by Minnesota Trunk Highway Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey, 1985.

Rubenstein, Mitchell E. and Alan R. Woolworth. "The Dakota and Ojibway." In *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*. Ed. June Drenning Holmquist. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1981.

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND TEXT OF MARKERS

Camp Release

In 1862, the site of Camp Release was the site of the Wahpeton Dakota village led by Red Iron. Red Iron did not participate in the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862 and so his village became the site where 269 settlers, who had been captured by the Dakota, were brought by Native American "friendlies." Other leaders in charge at the camp were Chief Wabasha, Standing Buffalo, and Taopi (a Mdewakanton chief). Chief Red Iron's people dug rifle pits around the camp, expecting that they would have to defend the captives from Chief Little Crow and his men. However, Little Crow was defeated at Wood Lake and the camp was not attacked.

On September 26, 1862, Henry H. Sibley's army arrived at Red Iron's camp and released the prisoners. Kenneth Carley (historian of the 1862 war) writes:

Sibley, unmounted but with an escort of troops, entered the Indian camp 'with drums beating and colors flying' at about two o'clock on the afternoon of September 26. . . . The friendlies at once released 91 whites and about 150 mixed-bloods. Additional captives, freed in the next few days, brought the total to 107 whites and 162 mixed-bloods -- 269 in all. Most of the whites rescued were women and children, there being not more than four men (Carley 1976:65).

The campsite was renamed Camp Release to commemorate the return of the captives. Within a few weeks of the prisoner release, the camp (still under the control of Sibley) became the site where Native Americans gathered to seek protection from the U.S. army. By the end of October 1862, well over 2,000 Native Americans were under Sibley's charge at Camp Release.

U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862

The events that led up to the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862 are described by historians Rubenstein and Woolworth:

The late arrival of annuity payments promised by the government [in 1851 treaties], failure to provide agricultural aid, and dissatisfaction with the restrictions of reservation life prompted many Dakota to return to their old homes. . . . These areas were now occupied by white settlers, and distrust between the earlier and later masters of the

land deepened as the decade wore on. . . . Friction and local outbreaks of violence, spurred by the whites' growing intolerance of the Indians and Dakotas' increasing disrespect for the United States government, created an inflammable situation. . . . [In] August, 1862, driven by hunger and disgusted by unfulfilled promises, the Dakota attacked settlements in the Minnesota River Valley in what rapidly became a desperate attempt to drive the whites out of southern Minnesota. The Dakota War of 1862 lasted only a few weeks, but it had far-reaching repercussions for Indian-white relations in the three decades that followed. The death of about 500 whites and the widespread destruction of property evoked cries for the removal, if not the extermination, of all Dakota from the state. . . . From a population of upward of 7,000, the number of Dakota in Minnesota dropped to 374 in 1866 (Rubenstein and Woolworth 1981:22-23).

Text of Stone Monument

Southern side: "Camp Release"

Eastern side: "Battles Redwood Aug 18 1862 Fort Ridgely Aug 20-22 New Ulm Aug 23-24 Birch Coulee Sept 2 Fort Abercrombie Sept 6 Wood Lake Sept 23."

Northern side: "To Commemorate the surrender here of a large body of Indians and the release of 269 captives, mostly women and children, September 26, 1862. The result mainly of the signal victory over the hostile Sioux at Wood Lake by Minnesota troops under command of General Henry H. Sibley. All being incidents of the Great Sioux Indian Massacre."

Western side: "Erected in 1894 by the State of Minnesota in accordance with an act of the Legislature, approved April 11, 1893, and under supervision of the committee therein named C. C. Andrews, A. E. Hoard, W. H. Grant, Wm. M. Wills, and A. H. Reed. - Committee."

Text of Metal Marker

"In this vicinity stood the Sioux Village of Red Iron, a friendly chief during the Outbreak of 1862. His opposition checked the hostile retreat and allowed other friendlies to gain possession of the white captives. Here on September 26, 1862 some 269 prisoners were released to Gen. Sibley. Now a State Park."