

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

NL-CTT-006
CS 5202

New Ulm Spring Roadside Parking Area

Historic Name Other Name	New Ulm Spring Roadside Parking Area	CS # SHPO Inv #	5202 NL-CTT-006
Location	NE side of TH 14 1 mi SE of jct TH 14 and TH 15	Hwy District Reference	TH 14 7B 105.3
City/Township County Twp Rng Sec USGS Quad UTM	Courtland Township Nicollet 110N 30W Sec 22 New Ulm Z15 E385990 N4907340	Acres Rest Area Class	4.6 4
Designer	Nichols, A R, Consult Land Arch	SP #	5202-05 14-7-28
Builder	National Youth Administration (NYA)	SHPO Review #	
Historic Use Present Use	Roadside Parking Area Hwy Retaining Wall/ Sea Wall Vacant/ Closed	MHS Photo #	013502.15-21 013523.01-05
Yr of Landscape Design	1938-39	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	Nic 5.04 Nic 5.08 Nic 5.20 Nic 5.26 Ols 2.76 Ols 2.77 Ols 2.78
Overall Site Integrity	Intact/Slightly Altered		
Review Required	Yes		
National Register Status	Eligible, see Statement of Significance		
Historic Context	Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960		
List of Standing Structures			
Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built	Fieldwork Date
01	Spring Water Outlet	1938-39	10-17-96
02	Trail Steps	1938-39	
03	Fireplace(s), Stone	1938-39	
04	Bench(es), Stone	1938-39	
Additional standing structures not previously noted: 2 Stone fireplaces Stone check dam 2 brick and concrete spring boxes			Prep by Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 51
See http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadsides/historic/files/wayrep-suppl.pdf for additional information.			Prep for Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit
NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table			
Final Report	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)		

■ BRIEF

New Ulm Spring Roadside Parking Area is a 4.6-acre site that is located on the northeastern side of T.H. 14 approximately one mile southeast of the intersection of T.H. 14 and T.H. 15 in Courtland Township.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Stone Retaining Wall and Spring Outlet. Erected 1938-39 by the NYA. The principal feature on the site is a stone retaining wall that is faced with thin random rubble slabs of red quartzite, a type of limestone that was quarried on this hillside. The wall is about 156' long, 1'6" thick, and 7'10" tall at the center. It has a 12'-wide central section that is flanked by curving wing walls that are each approximately 72' long. The wings step down in height in 1' increments. At the center of the wall is an iron supply pipe through which spring water continuously flowed. The water spilled into a rectangular stone basin (outside dimensions about 4' long by 3' wide) that has 1'-thick stone sides. Mounted in poured concrete above the iron pipe is a small rectangular metal plaque that reads "NYA. Constructed by National Youth Administration Cooperating with Minnesota Department of Highways 1939."

Trail Steps. Erected 1938-39 by the NYA. There are two sets of trail steps that lead up the hillside from the outer ends of the walls. The stairs on the northern side are constructed of slabs of red quartzite. Approximately 26 of these steps remain exposed, while others are buried beneath or hidden by overgrowth. Above the southern end of the wall is the second set, a steep set of concrete trail steps that climb through the woods. The set has a few quartzite steps and about 40 narrow, poured concrete steps. The remains of a handrail are located on the southern edge of the concrete steps.

Other Structures. Erected 1938-39 by the NYA. In the overgrown woods of the hillside near the top of the hill there is a stone picnic fireplace, a quartzite bench, and possibly other small stone features that may be hidden in the brush. The stone fireplace is made of red quartzite that matches the wall and has an inset metal grill. The quartzite bench is made of a small slab of stone. A section of 2"-diameter metal pipe is also located in this area. Apparently it is the discarded piping that was originally used to supply the spring water to the spigot in the wall.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

Several springs flow out of the wooded hillside above the wall. There are also two creeks, one located on the southern edge of the steps above the northern end of the wall and the other in a ravine near the southern end of the wall. The northern creek appears to have been riprapped, especially in the area around the picnic area. The creeks flow through culverts at the base of the hill and under T.H. 14.

There is a curving, poured concrete curb running the length of the wall. The curb is located 10' from the wall at the wall's midpoint. The wall and curb are overgrown with tall grasses.

The wooded hillside above the wall was intended for picnicking, hiking, and viewing the Minnesota River Valley. Historic photos show an area of grass-planted lawn above the wall. Wooden picnic tables are shown within the trees above the wall.

The hillside is now thickly wooded with deciduous trees (maple, oak, etc.) and scattered evergreen trees. There appear to have been no additional plantings at the site.

■ **SETTING**

The site is located at the base of a large hill known as "Old Redstone" which was a source of red quartzite that was quarried here around 1859. (See Historical Background below.)

The site is located in the wooded hills that form the Minnesota River Valley near New Ulm. The site is bounded by T.H. 14 on the western side and thick woods on all other sides. There are a few houses across T.H. 14 to the east and west.

The retaining wall and asphalt pull-off are located very close to the northbound lane of the highway. The wooded hillside rises to an elevation of approximately 1,000 feet above the highway.

■ **INTEGRITY**

Alterations

The site appears to have been built close to plan.

The pull-off drive was originally gravel and is now paved with asphalt. There was originally a narrow, curb-lined island between the drive and the highway. In 1965, one of the department's standard brown wooden hanging-arm signs was still located in the island. (The sign probably read "Roadside Parking Area.") The spring no longer flows through the wall. There was originally a gravel walkway running in front of the wall. The hillside is very overgrown. The view from the hillside above the wall is now partially blocked by residences and mature trees.

In general, the site retains integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, although the picnic area is badly overgrown.

Notes on Condition

The wall is in poor condition. It needs repointing and many stones are missing. The stone fireplace is also in poor condition. The spring has been diverted so that water no longer runs through the iron supply pipe. The wall and pull-off are overgrown with tall grasses. The upper picnic area is closed and the trail steps are blocked with timbers. The steps are overgrown and some are missing.

■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

This wayside was constructed in 1938-1939 by the National Youth Administration (NYA) in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Highways. The original construction plans were drawn in July of 1938 and revised in August of 1938. The plan sheet contains the notation "Final Plans Construction Division NYA," dated November 1938. The plans are signed by Harold E. Olson (Engineer of Roadside Development), A. R. Nichols (Consulting

Landscape Architect), illegible (District Engineer), S. Rex Green (Engineer of Lands and Right-of-Way), and O. L. Kipp (Construction Engineer).

The Highway Department's 1938 *Annual Report of the Accomplishments of Roadside Development* states:

Near the City of New Ulm where T.H. #14 skirts the banks of the Minnesota River lies a natural scenic spot containing a spring of excellent drinking water. This spring is used to so great an extent by the traveller that parking at this point creates a traffic hazard. A development is now under construction at this location which will give accessibility to the spring by the construction of a turnout road where cars may park off of the main highway. The spring has been encased and safeguarded for public use and picnicking facilities are being installed (*Annual Report 1938:33*).

The site was developed at the base of a large hill (about two square miles) that is known locally as "Old Redstone." The hill is a source of quartzite, a hard crystalline sandstone, that was quarried near New Ulm beginning in 1859. (The stone is more common to southwestern Minnesota near Jasper.) The *WPA Guide to Minnesota* describes the hill:

"A famous outcrop of rock . . . known as Old Redstone, is a conspicuous hill of about two square miles uplifted into the wide valley of the Minnesota. Older than the glaciers, this mass of pink quartzite, one of the hardest and oldest of rocks, survived the weathering of the Paleozoic era and stood out -- a lone island in the Cretaceous seas that leveled the land and deposited a thick layer of what is now limestone (*WPA Guide to Minnesota 1938:403*).

By circa 1964, the site had two privies and picnic tables. It had been closed to the public by August of 1971.

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

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

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The New Ulm Spring Roadside Parking Area, built in 1938-1939, is a wayside rest with a simple pull-off site design and an adjacent picnic area. It is one of 19 properties in this inventory on which the NYA worked. 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 New Ulm 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. New Ulm 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 Spang Spring R.P.A.) (National Register Criteria A.)

Significant to the History of Roadside Development. New Ulm 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 the NYA in partnership with the MHD. Together, the MHD and various New Deal agencies like the NYA 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. Despite its poor condition, New Ulm Spring R.P.A. is an excellent example of a MHD wayside rest that incorporates a tapped natural spring for roadside drinking water. New Ulm Spring is 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. New Ulm Spring is also an important example of the roadside development work of prominent landscape architect A. R. Nichols. (National Register Criterion C.)

The site 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.

Because of the speed and close proximity of the adjacent traffic and the topography, it is dangerous to enter and leave the site. The pull-off is very shallow and very close to the northbound lane of T.H. 14.

■ REFERENCES

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

Nichols, A. R., comp. *Album of Roadside Development Projects.* 7 vols. Photo album prepared for the Roadside Development Division, Minnesota Department of Highways. Ca. 1937-1941.

Olson, Harold E., comp. *Historical Markers in Minnesota.* 4 vols. Prepared by the Roadside Development Division, Minnesota Department of Highways. Ca. 1942, updated ca. 1954.

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

WPA Federal Writers' Project. *WPA Guide to Minnesota.* 1938; Rpt. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1985.

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

New Ulm, the seat of Brown County, is located at the confluence of the Minnesota and Cottonwood rivers. The city was founded in 1854 by German immigrants and named for the city of Ulm in Germany.