

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

OT-LLT-001
CS 5624
Leaf City Historical Marker

Historic Name Other Name	Leaf City Historical Marker	CS # SHPO Inv #	5624 OT-LLT-001
Location	E side of TH 108 on isthmus between W and E Leaf Lakes	Hwy District Reference	TH 108 4A 54.0
City/Township County Twp Rng Sec USGS Quad UTM	Leaf Lake Township Otter Tail 134N 38W Sec 22 Heinola Z15 E310460 N5142180	Acres Rest Area Class	.2 4
Designer	Unknown	SP #	5624
Builder	Unknown	SHPO Review #	
Historic Use Present Use	Roadside Parking Area Roadside Parking Area	MHS Photo #	013524.18-20
Yr of Landscape Design	Ca. 1938	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	Ols 2.99
Overall Site Integrity	Intact/Slightly Altered		
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	1938	06-29-97
			Prep by
			Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 38
			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

The Leaf City Historical Marker is located on the eastern side of T.H. 108 on an isthmus between West Leaf Lake and East Leaf Lake in Otter Tail Township.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Stone Boulder Marker. Erected 1938 by the Otter Tail County Historical Society. The marker consists of a large, pink granite boulder that is about 6' wide and about 4' tall. The front (western side) of the boulder appears to be naturally flat. Affixed to this side is a small metal plaque (about 11" by 8"). (See text at the end of this document.) The boulder marker is located a few feet northwest of the boat landing, about 64' east of the center line of T.H. 108, in an irregularly-shaped patch of grass near the lakeshore.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

The site appears to be roughly triangular in shape. It is located on the western shore of East Leaf Lake, and its primary attraction is a boat landing and gravel parking area. The boulder marker is located a few feet northwest of the boat landing. The gravel drive that enters the site from T.H. 108 branches southeast to the boat landing and northeast to private property (a resort with cabins along the shore that was known in the 1940s as the Leaf Lake Pleasure Grounds). There is a small grassy island near the middle of the parking area with a mature oak tree. There are several smaller oak trees and grassy areas near the perimeter of the site. The trees appear to be native and were probably not intentionally planted. There is a grassy ditch along T.H. 108 west of the site.

■ SETTING

The site is located on a narrow isthmus between West Leaf Lake and East Leaf Lake. It is surrounded by resorts, lake cabins, and the two lakes. The property is bounded by a resort and West Leaf Lake on the east, T.H. 108 on the west, West Leaf Lake on the south, and a grassy pasture on the north.

■ INTEGRITY

Alterations

No original plans of the site have been located.

There are no apparent alterations. The site retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Notes on Condition

The marker is in fair condition.

■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Little is known about the establishment of this site. Prior to the erection of the boulder marker, there was a 3' by 5' steel sign at this site. The sign was white with black lettering. The text of the sign was similar to the text of the metal plaque on the stone marker. The steel sign was one of the markers erected during the first cooperative marking program of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the Minnesota Historical Society. During 1930, the first year of the program, 40 of these steel signs were erected.

The boulder marker on the site was erected by the Otter Tail County Historical Society and dedicated June 26, 1938. The text of the metal plaque addresses one of the earliest fur trading posts in Otter Tail County.

■ **PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS**

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

■ **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Leaf City Historical Marker is a roadside parking area with a simple site design that was apparently developed in the 1930s. It is one of the smallest and most informal sites in this inventory, and one of several sites with boulder markers.

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960." It is recommended that the property is NOT ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this historic context because it does not meet the context registration requirements.

■ **OTHER COMMENTS**

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

T.H. 108 is fairly quiet past this site.

The text of the historic marker is associated with the village of Leaf City. It is not specifically associated with the site of the wayside rest.

It is recommended that the marker text be updated for cultural sensitivity.

■ **REFERENCES**

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, Works Progress Administration. St. Paul: May 1940.

"Markers and Monuments in Otter Tail County." Unpublished manuscript. Otter Tail County Historical Society, Jan. 1980.

"Summer Meeting of the Otter Tail County Historical Society at Balmoral." *Fergus Falls Daily Journal*, June 26, 1939.

■ **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND MARKER TEXT**

East and West Leaf Lakes are part of a chain of waterways and trails that link the Red River of the North and the Mississippi River. The first trading post on these lakes was erected by Robert Dickson of the American Fur Company in the late 1700s. In 1826 the Columbian Fur Company established a post on the old Crow Wing Trail at Leaf Lake. A small settlement called Leaf City was located at the narrows of the two lakes (near the site of this rest area) as early as 1857, and in 1858 a colony of settlers from Massachusetts settled at Leaf City. A post office was established in 1857 and continued until 1860. The U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862 drove the settlers from Leaf City and the village was abandoned. Leaf Lake Township was organized in 1879 after farmers returned to the area. By 1940, a summer resort known as Leaf Lake Pleasure Grounds had been established on or near the site of the former town.

Text of Metal Plaque on Boulder

"Leaf City. Trading post on the Red River Trail in 1857 and United States Post Office from 1857 to 1860. The settlement was broken up by the Sioux outbreak of 1862. Dedicated by the Otter Tail County Historical Society, June 26, 1938."

Text of Previous 3' by 5' Steel Sign

"Leaf City. Already a trading post on the Red River trail in 1857, a colony from Cambridge, Massachusetts settled here in the spring of 1858, and a U.S. Post Office was maintained from December 2, 1857 to April 11, 1860. The community disappeared with the Sioux Outbreak of 1862, and Leaf City became one of Minnesota's many vanished towns." [Seals of Minnesota Historical Society and Minnesota Department of Highways]