

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT  
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

RA-SPC-2927  
CS 6220  
Burns Avenue Overlook

<b>Historic Name</b>	Burns Avenue Overlook	<b>CS #</b>	6220
<b>Other Name</b>	St. Paul Overlook	<b>SHPO Inv #</b>	RA-SPC-2927
<b>Location</b>	NE side of TH 61/TH 10 just SE of Burns Ave	<b>Hwy District Reference</b>	TH 61/10 Met E 135.3
<b>City/Township</b>	St. Paul, City of	<b>Acres</b>	10
<b>County</b>	Ramsey	<b>Rest Area Class</b>	4
<b>Twp Rng Sec</b>	28N 22W Sec 3	<b>SP #</b>	6220
<b>USGS Quad</b>	St. Paul East	<b>SHPO Review #</b>	
<b>UTM</b>	Z15 E496920 N4976850	<b>MHS Photo #</b>	013527.18-25 013528.01-05
<b>Designer</b>	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)	<b>MnDOT Historic Photo Album</b>	Ols 2.111
<b>Builder</b>	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)	<b>Yr of Landscape Design</b>	Ca. 1950
<b>Historic Use</b>	Roadside Parking Area	<b>Overall Site Integrity</b>	Intact/Slightly Altered
<b>Present Use</b>	Roadside Parking Area	<b>Review Required</b>	Yes
<b>National Register Status</b>	Eligible in Near Future, see Statement of Significance Now eligible: 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.		
<b>Historic Context</b>	Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960		

**List of Standing Structures**

Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built	Fieldwork Date
01	Overlook Wall	Ca. 1950	07-10-97
02	Curb, Stone	Ca. 1950	
NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table			<b>Prep by</b> Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 66
			<b>Prep for</b> Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit

<b>Final Report</b>	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)
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■ BRIEF

The Burns Avenue Overlook is a 10-acre site that is located on the eastern side of T.H. 61/T.H. 10 just south of the intersection of T.H. 61/T.H. 10 and Burns Avenue within the City of St. Paul.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

**Stone Overlook Wall.** Built circa 1950 by the MHD. The principal structure on the site is an overlook wall constructed on the top of a hill overlooking the Mississippi River Valley to the west. The wall is built of rockfaced, random ashlar stone that includes pink, gray, and green granite and tan limestone. It is about 18" thick. The inner side of the wall is 2'6" tall and the outer side is about 7' tall at its tallest point. The wall has limestone piers that measure about 2'3" square and project about 4" above the wall. The top of the wall has an unusual masonry treatment with stones laid in an even line down the center of the wall's top edge, rather than being randomly laid. Near the midpoint of the wall is a semi-circular lookout bay. There is an asphalt-paved walkway (probably originally gravel) along the inside of the wall.

**Granite Curbing.** Built circa 1950 by the MHD. Granite curbing (about 4" wide) lines the entrance drive, parking area, and grassy island. Most of the curbing appears to be intact.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

There is an elongated, triangular, grassy island near the center of the site that is lined with granite curbing. The site's asphalt-paved drive is about 24' wide. It has small parking areas both adjacent to the wall and on the eastern side of the island. A gravel walkway originally extended from the end of the wall in a "V" toward the southeastern edge of the site. Early photos show a wooded picnic table along this walkway (Olson vol. 2, p. 111).

Much of the site is planted with grass. Tall natural grasses grow down the bluff southwestward, toward the highway. Most of the trees are mature. There are seven spruce standing on the island, a maple and several ash scattered throughout the site, a spruce and a juniper near the northwestern end of the wall, and rows of sumac near the northwestern and southeastern ends of the wall. There is a grassy meadow and a distant pine forest near the southeastern end of the site. An original planting plan has not been located, but the Olson photo shows newly-planted deciduous and evergreen trees.

■ SETTING

The overlook was built on top of a hill with an excellent view of the Mississippi River Valley. It is surrounded by residential neighborhoods to the north, east, and southeast, and T.H. 61 and an industrial area to the west and southwest. It has a secluded, parklike feeling.

■ **INTEGRITY**

**Alterations**

An original site plan has not been located so it is not known how closely the site was built to plan. Photographs taken soon after the site was completed show that it has changed little since it was built, although the walkways and drives were probably originally gravel (Olson vol. 2, p. 111). The wall has been repaired several times with various mortar materials.

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

**Notes on Condition**

The wall is in poor condition. It is cracking and appears to be falling down the hill, particularly near the curved lookout bay. Many stones are missing and broken. The wall has been repaired several times with various mortar materials.

The site is fairly well maintained.

■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

No original plans have been located for this site, and the construction log for this control section also could not be located.

The site appears to have been constructed circa 1950, probably by the MHD Roadside Development Division's own stonemasons. It may have been designed by the Roadside Development Division's staff Landscape Architect, Fred Vogt. The site appears to postdate a circa 1944 planting plan for a 1069'-long section of T.H. 61/T.H. 10 just south of Burns Avenue (S.P. 6220-25, title sheet signed Aug. 1944). Undated historic photos of the site (Olson vol. 2, p. 111) show the newly-constructed site with a car that dates from the early 1950s, suggesting that the year of construction may be about that time. The site postdates the era of New Deal federal relief programs (which ended in 1943) and undoubtedly postdates World War II.

■ **PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS**

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

■ **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Burns Avenue Overlook was built circa 1950 by the MHD. It is one of 37 stone overlook walls recorded in this inventory. The property has an unusually large amount of intact granite curbing.

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960." The site was developed circa 1950 and therefore does not meet the registration requirements' 50-year age criterion. However, it is recommended

that the property WILL BE ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this context when it is 50 years old, because it meets the context registration requirements listed below:

Non-Federal Relief Property That Closely Resembles a Federal Relief Property. The Burns Avenue Overlook is important as an excellent example of a Non-Federal relief property that was built during the decade immediately following the end of the federal relief programs (1943-1953) and which strongly represents a continuation of the design principles and philosophy of the federal relief-built roadside development sites. The Roadside Development Division's stonemasons continued the federal relief era's tradition of quality craftsmanship when they constructed the wall. (National Register Criterion A.)

Design Significance. The Burns Avenue Overlook is an intact example of the application of the "National Park Service Rustic Style" to a wayside rest with an overlook wall. It 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. (National Register Criterion C.)

The property may also be associated with the "Tourism and Recreation in the Lake Regions, 1870-1945" and "Urban Centers, 1870-1940" historic contexts.

#### ■ OTHER COMMENTS

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

Visitors to the site are quite a distance northeast of (and above) T.H. 61/T.H. 10 so that the highway noise and motion are not intrusive. The site has a secluded, comfortable feeling. Finding the entrance to the site is tricky, especially during times of high traffic volume.

T.H. 61 at this location has been designated part of the Great River Road.

This site may be associated with local historic contexts established by the City of St. Paul's Heritage Preservation Commission.

#### ■ REFERENCES

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.

#### ■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

##### **Point Douglas Road**

The Point Douglas and Fort Ripley Road was an early overland route used by Native Americans and traders. It was officially surveyed as a military road in 1849, and that year it became one of five Territorial roads authorized by the newly-formed Minnesota Territorial Legislature. It followed the Mississippi River from Point Douglas in southeastern Minnesota to St. Paul and northward to Fort Ripley, located a few miles north of Little Falls. It was improved in 1856. Portions of T.H. 61 follow the old route.