

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT  
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

SL-BAL-004  
CS 6934  
Pillsbury Mine Overlook

<b>Historic Name Other Name</b>	Pillsbury Mine Overlook	<b>CS # SHPO Inv #</b>	6934 SL-BAL-004
<b>Location</b>	Both sides of TH 169/TH 73 4 mi. N of jct TH 169 and CSAH 5	<b>Hwy District Reference</b>	TH 169/73 1B 345
<b>City/Township County Twp Rng Sec USGS Quad UTM</b>	Balkan Township St. Louis 58N 20W Sec 29 Hibbing Z15 E507190 N5257740	<b>Acres Rest Area Class</b>	4
<b>Designer</b>	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)	<b>SP #</b>	
<b>Builder</b>	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)	<b>SHPO Review #</b>	
<b>Historic Use Present Use</b>	Roadside Parking Area Vacant/ Closed	<b>MHS Photo #</b>	014746.02-14
<b>Yr of Landscape Design</b>	1962	<b>MnDOT Historic Photo Album</b>	
<b>Overall Site Integrity</b>	Very Altered		
<b>Review Required</b>	Yes		
<b>National Register Status</b>	Not Eligible, see Statement of Significance		
<b>Historic Context</b>	Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960		

**List of Standing Structures**

Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built
01	Marker	1962
NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table		

**Fieldwork Date**  
10-18-03

**Prep by**  
Gemini Research  
May. 04 G1. 113

**Prep for**  
Site Development Unit  
Cultural Resources Unit  
Environmental Studies Unit

**Final Report** Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minn Trunk Hwys (1998) **Addendum**

■ **BRIEF**

Pillsbury Mine Overlook is located on both sides of T.H. 169/T.H. 73 just north of the junction of CSAH 5 and T.H. 169/73. The property is located in Balkan Township between the corporate limits of Hibbing and Chisholm. The wayside rest is now closed and deteriorating and includes bituminous parking areas and a stone marker.

■ **STANDING STRUCTURES**

**Stone Marker.** Built 1962 by the Minnesota Department of Highways (MHD). This free-standing, lectern-style stone marker is positioned near the northern end of the eastern parking area. It is built of randomly laid, ore-laden rock that was probably gathered locally. The footing is presumably concrete. The marker is about 9' wide by 4' deep by about 4' tall. The sides of the marker are stepped to form two low stone seats. A metal plaque was originally mounted on the marker's southern side and is now missing. The marker is situated so that the person reading the plaque has a view down into an open-pit mine to the northeast.

■ **OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS**

The site is bisected by T.H. 169/73, a busy four-lane highway with a narrow concrete median. It is unsafe to stop in the vicinity because of the speed and quantity of the traffic.

The site has a pair of parking areas that flank the highway. Each about 150' long, the parking areas are similar in size and shape except that the eastern parking area has a rectangular extension to its east.

Metal chain-link fencing runs along the outer edges of the parking areas, preventing visitors from walking into the mine pits or up the rocky hillsides. Modern post-and-rail highway guardrail now separates the parking areas from the highway. There is a large electrical high-line running along the western side of the highway at this location.

A portion of the open-pit Pillsbury Mine and surrounding land are visible from the parking areas. The eastern parking area, which is where the stone marker is located, also offers a view of railroad tracks that run very close to the site and probably served the mine. There are few buildings in sight.

**Vegetation**

The site is surrounded by acres of open pits and artificial hills covered with relative young deciduous trees such as aspen, birch, poplar, and fir. There do not appear to be any remaining plantings specifically associated with the wayside rest.

■ **SETTING**

See "Other Landscape Features and Plantings" above.

■ INTEGRITY

**Alterations**

The plaque has been removed from marker. Highway guardrail has been added along the parking areas. All built features are deteriorating. The site has been closed to the public.

**Notes on Condition**

The stone marker is deteriorating and missing stones and its plaque. Both parking areas are cracked, deteriorating, and overgrown with weeds.

The noise and motion of highway traffic is intrusive and makes stopping here unsafe.

■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In April of 1962, a brief article in an MHD publication, *Minnesota Highway News*, reported on the letting of bids for a T.H. 169 construction project west of Hibbing. It is likely that the lookouts described in the article refer to the Pillsbury Mine Overlook. The article reads:

The E. W. Coons company of Hibbing is the apparent low bidder on a T.H. 169 construction project west of Chisholm with its bid of \$1,024,642, the lowest of five bids received.

The new construction will tie into an earlier-awarded contract which has aroused considerable public interest as an added tourist attraction. Lookouts will be built along a one-fifth mile portion of the road that traverses the Pillsbury open-pit mine for better viewing of the pits.

The project will consist of grading, gravel base, concrete paving and plant-mixed bituminous surfacing on 2.4 miles between .2 mile south of the north corporate limits of Hibbing and the intersection of Lake Street Southwest and 4th Avenue Southwest in Chisholm, and the construction of a bridge to carry the Oliver Iron Mining division railroad tracks over the relocated highway.

The work, which is scheduled to be completed by October 5, will begin May 7 ("Hibbing Firm" 1962).

The Pillsbury Mine Overlook was probably designed by Roadside Development Division staff. The lectern style marker is almost identical to others designed by the Roadside Development Division during this period including those at Bolles Mill (built 1959; WA-AFC-035), Clifton-French River (built 1959-1960; SUL-DUT-002), and Minnesota Woman (built 1959; OT-PEL-001). (See those inventory forms.)

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

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

■ **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Pillsbury Mine Overlook is a roadside parking area developed in 1962 by the MHD. Its stone marker is nearly identical to others built during the same period and also included in the Mn/DOT Historic Roadside Development Structures Inventory. A series of these lectern-style markers (most tan limestone) were built by the MHD in the 1950s-1970s.

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 due to recent construction date and loss of integrity.

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

■ **OTHER COMMENTS**

T.H. 169/73 is very busy past the site.

■ **REFERENCES**

Granger, Susan, Scott Kelly, and Kay Grossman. *Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways*. Prepared for Mn/DOT. Dec. 1998.

"Hibbing Firm Bids Low on Iron Range Project." *Minnesota Highway News*, April 11, 1962.

■ **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Pillsbury Mine**

The Pillsbury Mine, on Minnesota's Mesabi iron range, was operated from 1898 to 1969 by the Oliver Mining Company. For an overview of Minnesota's iron and taconite industry see Theodore C. Blegen, *Minnesota: A History of the State*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, rev. ed. 1975.