

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

SL-SOC-001
CS 6904
Soudan Roadside Parking Area

Historic Name	Soudan Roadside Parking Area	CS #	6904
Other Name	Pioneer Miners Memorial	SHPO Inv #	SL-SOC-001

Location	N side of TH 169/TH 1 2.4 mi E of TH 135	Hwy	TH 169/1
City/Township	Soudan, City of	District	1B
County	St. Louis	Reference	265

Twp Rng Sec	62N 15W Sec 34	Acres	3.5
USGS Quad	Soudan	Rest Area Class	2

UTM	Z15 E556970 N5295600	SP #	6904
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Designer	Unknown	SHPO Review #	
Builder	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD) Federal Relief, Suspected		

Historic Use	Roadside Parking Area	MHS Photo #	013558.07-14
Present Use	Roadside Parking Area		

Yr of Landscape Design	1934	MnDOT Historic Photo Album	Ols 3.126 Ols 3.127
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Overall Site Integrity	Moderately Altered		
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Review Required	Yes		
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National Register Status	Not Eligible, see Statement of Significance		
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Historic Context			
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List of Standing Structures

Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built	
01	Marker	1934	
02	Flagpole(s), Other	1934	
03	Restroom Bldg	1995	
04	Picnic Table(s), Other	Ca. 1995	

NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table

Fieldwork Date	08-10-97
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Prep by	Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 68
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Prep for	Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit
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Final Report	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)
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■ BRIEF

The Soudan Roadside Parking Area, also known as Pioneer Miners Memorial, is a 3.5-acre site located on the northern side of T.H. 169/T.H. 1 (originally known as T.H. 1) about 2.4 miles east of T.H. 135 within the city of Soudan.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Stone Marker. Erected 1934 by the Vermilion Range Old Settlers' Association. The principal feature on the site is a stone marker constructed of randomly laid granite pieces. The stones are neatly fit together. Most of the granite pieces are irregularly shaped and about 1' square. Most are yellowish-gray in color, with a few pink and purplish stones. The marker is about 8' tall, 12' wide, and 4.5' deep. It has an unusual design with a series of three stepped stone bases that support three pieces of iron ore rock. The largest rock on the top of the marker is a red, irregularly shaped, slab that contains a vein of dark iron ore. (There are also four pieces of this red ore-bearing rock set randomly into the granite of the marker's base.) The other two displayed rocks are resting on the second level of the stepped granite base. They are irregularly shaped, silvery-black, mica-like rocks. The upper level of the granite base has metal plaques affixed to the northern and southern sides. The larger, 2' by 3' metal plaque on the northern side is inset into the marker. The text of the plaque addresses the First Iron Mine. The smaller, 18" by 14" bronze plaque on the southern side is bolted onto the marker. The text of this plaque addresses the establishment of the marker. (See marker texts at the end of this document.)

Flagpole. Erected 1934, probably by MHD. A 25'-tall metal flagpole that is mounted in a small, ground-level, rectangular, concrete pad is located approximately 10' north of the marker.

Restroom Building. Built 1995 by Mn/DOT. A 16' by 14' concrete block vault toilet building with an asphalt-shingled hipped roof is located on the eastern edge of the site.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

The site contains a semicircular, asphalt-paved, curb-lined entrance drive. The drive widens into a parking area large enough to accommodate about eight cars. There is a concrete walkway along the northern side of the parking area. The eastern end of the walkway extends eastward to the Restroom Building. A branch of the walkway also extends northward and then winds west and north around a 40' by 50' grassy knoll on which the stone marker is located. The marker rests on a concrete oval. Between the drive and the highway is a large, semicircular grassy island. There is a gravel road on the western edge of the site that has been blocked off.

Historic photographs indicate that there was originally a set of 15 concrete steps north of the drive that led up the knoll to the marker. The drive was originally gravel.

The site also contains two metal picnic tables (with wooden benches) that are fastened to 13' by 11' concrete pads.

The topography of the site is slightly hilly and forested. Most of the site is planted with grass, but there are about 15-20 large, old evergreen trees scattered throughout. An original planting plan has not been located.

■ **SETTING**

The site is located within the city limits of Soudan. It is bounded on the south by T.H. 169/T.H. 1 and a dense growth of deciduous trees, on the north by a residential area and the view of the Soudan Mine, and on the east and west by a dense growth of deciduous trees.

■ **INTEGRITY**

Alterations

The northern plaque was added to the stone marker at a later date.

A footbridge was removed from the site at an unknown date. The site was altered in 1995 with the following changes (S.P. 6904-44): the restroom building (sited somewhat unobtrusively), new sidewalks, and picnic tables were added. The drive was paved, and curb and gutter added. A long set of concrete steps leading from the parking area to the marker was removed. A 3' by 5' steel marker at the bottom of the steps was removed. The entrance drive was originally gravel and has been paved with asphalt. Some plantings have been removed.

The site generally retains integrity of location, setting, workmanship, and association. However, its integrity of design, materials, and feeling have been compromised by the 1995 alterations.

Notes on Condition

The marker is in good condition and the wayside rest is well-maintained.

■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Historic photos show that a 3' by 5' steel sign with white background and black lettering was originally located at the base of the staircase that led up to the stone marker. The text of this sign was identical to the text of the northern plaque on the current stone marker. Historic photos also show a nearly identical 3' by 5' steel sign with white background and black lettering that had the seals of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the Minnesota Historical Society at the bottom. The sign was located in a flat area near a wire fence line. The text of the two steel signs was identical. (One of the signs probably served as a replacement for the other.) The steel sign with the two seals at the bottom is one of the markers erected as early as 1930 in the first joint trunk highway marking program that was established by the Minnesota Historical Society and the Minnesota Department of Highways in 1929.

The wayside rest and the stone marker were constructed in 1934, apparently by the highway department. No original plans have been located. (Historic photographs indicate that the

semicircular entrance drive and marker were probably constructed at the same time.) The stone marker was built in 1934 by the Vermilion Range Old Settlers' Association. It originally had only one bronze plaque on the southern side. (The text of this plaque commemorates the marker.) The northern plaque was added to the stone marker at a later date.

The site was probably built with labor provided by a federal work relief program, although research has not yet identified such a program. The site predates the establishment of the WPA and the NYA, but may have been built by the CCC or, more probably, with funds from the FERA/SERA. The designer of the site has not been identified.

Mn/DOT Site Development Unit records indicate that in 1961 there was also a footbridge at this site.

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

The 1995 improvements (S.P. 6904-44) were apparently excluded from formal SHPO review under the Programmatic Agreement between FHWA, Mn/DOT, and the SHPO (Stipulation #3, items I and J) that exempts certain landscaping, curb, gutter, and sidewalk work. See "Exclusion Determination and Design Standard Summary" (signed May 1995).

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Soudan Roadside Parking Area was built in 1934, probably by the MHD in cooperation with a local organization, and probably with the use of workers from a federally-funded Depression work relief program. It is one of several sites in this study with unusual, non-standard historic markers. The marker displays a unique design and distinctive craftsmanship and use of local materials.

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960." It is recommended that, despite the factors listed above, the Soudan R.P.A. is NOT ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this historic context due to loss of integrity.

■ OTHER COMMENTS

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

T.H. 169/T.H. 1 is a fairly well-traveled highway. However, the marker and picnic area are far enough removed from the highway that the noise and movement of the traffic are not intrusive.

The text of the historic marker is associated with the general vicinity. It is not specifically associated with the site of the wayside rest.

■ REFERENCES

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

Lissandrello, Stephen. "Soudan Iron Mine." National Register of Historic Places nomination form. Jan. 3, 1976.

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

Thiel, George A. and Carl E. Dutton. *The Architectural, Structural, and Monumental Stones of Minnesota.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1935.

Walker, David A. *Iron Frontier: The Discovery and Early Development of Minnesota's Three Ranges.* St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979.

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND MARKER TEXTS

Local Stone

The stone for the marker may have come from a local quarry such as the quarry located about 18 miles southeast of Ely. The Arrowhead Granite Company opened this quarry circa 1934. The stone from this quarry is a coarse-grained gabbro with mineral striations of yellowish-green. The granite was sold under the commercial names of "Arrowhead Black Granite" and "Hibbing Granite."

Soudan Mine

The Soudan Mine is the oldest and deepest mine in Minnesota. Located in the Vermilion Iron Range, the mine opened in 1884. The first shipment of iron ore left the Breitung pit of the Soudan Mine on July 31 of that year. The Soudan was first mined from seven open pits, but eventually became an underground mine. The mine operated from 1884 until 1962 when the mine and 1,000 acres of land were donated to the State. The mine is now part of the Soudan Underground Mine State Park, which was dedicated on July 1, 1965. The Soudan Mine was placed on the National Register in 1966 and became a National Historic Landmark the same year.

The city of Soudan developed as a mining village and was named by D. H. Bacon, general manager of the Soudan Mine. Apparently Bacon had a sense of humor, for he named the town for the Sudan in Africa whose weather greatly contrasted with Minnesota's frigid winters. In an agreement with the village of Tower, Soudan was to be only a residential village and not to have a business district.

Text of the Northern Plaque on the Stone Marker

"First Iron Mine. From the Breitung Pit of the Soudan mine just north of this town the first commercial shipment of Minnesota iron ore was made by the Minnesota Iron Company July 3, 1884, over the Duluth and Iron Range Railroad.

"This line had just been built by Charlemagne Tower and Associates to open the Vermillion [sic] Range."

Text of the Southern Plaque on the Stone Marker

"July 30, 1884. July 30, 1934. Erected by the Vermilion Range Old Settlers' Association on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the first shipment of iron ore from Soudan Mine and State of Minnesota. To commemorate that industrial event, and in remembrance of those sturdy pioneers who made it possible."