MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURES INVENTORY

SN-CSC-024
CS 7305
Cold Spring Roadside Parking Area

Historic Name	Cold Spring Roadside Parking Area
Other Name	

CS #	7305
SHPO Inv #	SN-CSC-024

Location	Both sides of TH 23 on E bank of Sauk River
City/Township	Cold Spring, City of
County	Stearns
Twp Rng Sec	123N 30W Sec 23
USGS Quad	Cold Spring
UTM	Z15 E388860 N5034090

Hwy	TH 23
District	3B
Reference	191

Acres	10
Rest Area Class	2

SP #	7305 23-23-28-1

Designer	Nichols, A R, Consult Land Arch
Builder	Works Progress Administration (WPA)

SHPO Review #	

Historic Use	Roadside Parking Area
Present Use	Roadside Parking Area

MHS Photo #	013507.01-12 013528.06-23

Yr of Landscape Design	1936
Overall Site Integrity	Moderately Altered
Review Required	Yes

MnDOT Historic Photo Album	Nic 1.27 Nic 5.02 Nic 5.09 Nic 5.16 Nic 6.25 Nic 7.35 Ols 3.155

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
01	Overlook Wall	1936
02	Council Ring	1936
03	Other Feature	1936
04	Fireplace(s), Stone	1936
05	Retaining Wall	1936
06	Trail Steps	Ca. 1936
07	Trail Steps	1936
08	Spring Water Outlet	Ca. 1936

Continued

Fieldwork Date
07-11-97

Prep by
Gemini Research
Dec. 98 G1. 14

Prep for
Site Development Unit
Cultural Resources Unit
Environmental Studies Unit

Final Report	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)

Continue Table of Site Structures

Feat#	Type	Year Built	
09	Spring Water Outlet	Ca. 1936	
10	Dam	1936	
11	Dam	1936	
12	Restroom Bldg	Ca. 1980	

NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table

■ BRIEF

The Cold Spring Roadside Parking Area is a 10-acre site located on the eastern bank of the Sauk River within the city of Cold Spring. The site is bisected by T.H. 23, which runs roughly east and west.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Large Stone Overlook. Built 1936 by the WPA. A stone overlook is located on the southern side of T.H. 23 near the site's highest point. It overlooks the Sauk River to the west and north, and provides an excellent view of the business district of Cold Spring to the west. It is specified on the original plans as the "Large Overlook." (A smaller, similar overlook is specified on the plan to be located about 150' to the northwest. It could not be identified in the field and was apparently not built. The remnants of what appears to be a stone bench or stone fireplace stand at this location.) The Large Overlook is built of roughly-cut (and some smooth), coursed ashlar slabs of Cold Spring granite in shades of pink, gray, and black. It measures about 23' by 53' overall. The northern side of the structure has a curved lookout bay while the western, southern, and eastern sides are straight. The 18"-thick walls, which are about 18"-20" tall, are anchored by 2'-square corner piers. There is a 5'-wide pedestrian opening on the western side (facing the river) from which a set of five granite slab steps descend. The overlook is in poor condition. It is overgrown, damaged by graffiti, and missing stones. It stands on a secluded, overgrown spot surrounded by woods. The Large Overlook had been completed by September of 1936, according to dated historic photos (Nichols Vol. 5, pp. 9 and 16).

Council Ring. Built 1936 by the WPA. A council ring is located near the northwestern corner of the site on top of a secluded granite outcropping, surrounded by woods, on the bank of the Sauk River. The 23'-diameter ring is built of coursed ashlar, rockfaced, Cold Spring granite in shades of black and gray. Some of the granite pieces are polished, including the stones that comprise the entire upper course of the ring. The ring has a fire ring in the center (5'6" in diameter) and a pedestrian opening on the northeastern side. The ring is in poor condition with stones missing. Its site provides an excellent view of the Sauk River, the Cold Spring Granite Company granite works across the river to the west, the Sauk River dam to the northwest, and the T.H. 23 bridge to the south. The site is overgrown and is accessed via a footpath approaching from the east.

Circular Boulder Overlook. Built 1936 by the WPA. On a high, secluded, wooded hill on the northern side of T.H. 23 (in the western half of the park) are the remnants of what is labeled on the original site plan as an "Overlook," which was to be made of 12 cubic yards of placed boulders. The hill is an exposed granite outcropping which is rounded on top. Several very large pieces of granite appear to have been placed to form a circle that is about 40' in diameter. Many stones are missing -- the southern side of the ring has the most remaining stones. The plans specify another, smaller circle of boulders to be located near the river bank on the southern side of T.H. 23. This circle either was never built or has been dismantled.

Picnic Fireplaces. Built 1936 by the WPA. The remains of approximately five picnic fireplaces are located along wooded trails on both the northern and southern sides of T.H. 23. The

rectangular fireplaces are made of mortared pieces of Cold Spring granite. (See the historic photo of a low stone fireplace with a metal grate in Olson Volume 3, p. 155).

Retaining Wall and Bridge Underpass. Built 1936 by the WPA. At the western edge of the site is a granite retaining wall that forms the western edge of a 5'-wide, sandy footpath that passes under the eastern end of the T.H. 23 bridge over the Sauk River. The path creates a link between the northern and southern halves of the Cold Spring site. The wall retains the path and acts as a barricade between pedestrians and the river. The retaining wall is 18" thick and built of coursed ashlar, rockfaced, pink and gray Cold Spring granite. The wall is collapsing and is missing many stones. The retaining wall had been completed by September of 1936, according to dated historic photos (Nichols Vol. 5, p. 16).

Trail Steps. Built circa 1936 by the WPA. At the northern end of the Retaining Wall under the T.H. 23 bridge are several granite slab trail steps. The trail steps move visitors from the sandy footpath under the bridge to a trail that continues northward along the eastern bank of the Sauk River over various granite outcroppings and boulders.

Stone Steps. Built 1936 by the WPA. On the northern edge of T.H. 23 near the Spring Water Outlet With Continuous Flow are the remnants of a set of granite steps. Historic photos show the steps (with a log handrail) descending from the T.H. 23 roadbed (Nichols Vol. 5, p. 2). The remnants consist of several rectangular pieces of Cold Spring granite. The steps had been completed by September of 1936, according to the dated historic photos.

Spring Water Outlet With Pump. Built by the WPA circa 1936 and possibly moved to current location. A stone-faced spring water pump structure is located close to the western edge of the current parking area on the northern side of T.H. 23. It is a cubelike structure that is faced with random ashlar (with some irregular pieces), rockfaced and smoothly-dressed Cold Spring granite in shades of black, gray, and pink. (It is presumed that the granite is a veneer applied to a poured concrete core.) The structure measures about 4' square and about 2'3" tall. It is topped by a poured concrete slab that is about 3" thick. The spring is capped so that the water no longer flows and the pump has been removed. The original plans and historic photos do not show a spring water pump at this location, but they do show a very similar pump structure on the southern side of T.H. 23 (Olson Volume 3, p. 155). The pump was located on a square concrete pad near the northern edge of the southern parking area (on the southern side of T.H. 23). The plans specify that the pump on the southern side of T.H. 23 be surrounded by a larger rectangular stone spring enclosure that was apparently never built. It is possible that the pump structure was moved to its current location when the southern parking area was closed around the late 1970s.

Spring Water Outlet With Continuous Flow. Built circa 1936 by the WPA. A poured concrete spring water outlet structure is located on the northern side of T.H. 23 near a site where a "Spring Bypass Outlet" is specified on the original plans. The structure has a simple rectangular form and is about 2' square and about 3' tall. Historic photos show that it was originally faced with coursed ashlar granite and had a poured concrete cap (Nichols Vol. 5, p. 2). The top now has a concave depression and the end of an iron pipe is exposed, and there are two iron outlet pipes projecting near the top on the western and northern sides. The water flowed continuously through these pipes. The spring is now capped so that the water no longer flows. The water flowed into a drainage stream (still existing) that is lined with granite riprapping. The dated historic photos indicate that the structure had been completed by September of 1936.

Small Dam. Built 1936 by the WPA. A small poured concrete dam is located on the spring drainage stream just west of the current northern parking area. The dam is about 15' long. It originally created a small pool that was riprapped with stones and was crossed by a foot trail. The drainage stream below the dam was similarly riprapped. The pool has now been filled and a metal culvert carries the water. The filled pool now forms a land bridge that carries a grassy trail over the stream. The stones and poured concrete that form the southern side of the land bridge are located about 24' south of the dam. The dam had been completed by October of 1936, according to dated historic photos (Nichols Vol. 1, p. 27; Olson Volume 3, p. 155).

Large Dam. Built 1936 by the WPA. The original plans show a 40'-long poured concrete dam located along the stream that flows through north of T.H. 23. The dam was designed to create a pool at the center of the northern half of the site. (See drawing in Nichols Vol. 6 and photo in Nichols Vol. 7, p. 35.) The pool still exists in the woods, although its water level has been reduced. The dam still exists, and is topped by several granite stepping stones. A trail crosses the stream at this location. (During fieldwork, the dam area was too dark to photograph due to the trees.)

Restroom Building. Built circa 1980 by Mn/DOT. A concrete block restroom building with a hipped roof is located on the western side of the current northern parking area.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

The site originally had two parking areas, both rectangular in shape with one curved side (a shape that matches the Large Stone Overlook). Historic photos show that the southern parking area (south of T.H. 23) was gravel and edged with a timber guardrail and plantings (Olson Volume 3, p. 155). This parking area was closed around the late 1970s and its site is now a wooded hillside whose ground is soft with springs and rivulets that flow southward. Historic photos show that the northern parking area was also gravel and was edged with a timber guardrail and plantings (Olson Volume 3, p. 155). Today this parking area is paved with asphalt and lined with 23 timber posts. There are two portable picnic tables and a picnic grill on a pole near the northern parking area. There is a fenced electrical transformer station at the northwestern corner of the northern parking area that has existed since the site was created in 1936.

The original plans specify a southern picnic area on the southern side of T.H. 23 with approximately 11 picnic tables (presumably wooden) and three picnic fireplaces. North of T.H. 23, the plans specify approximately 14 picnic tables (presumably wooded) and three picnic fireplaces. Both picnic areas are currently overgrown. Approximately five stone picnic fireplaces were identified in these locations. Two sets of privies are specified in the plans to be located at the northern and southern edges of the site. One of the privies may still remain. The structure is located next to the electrical transformer station and is now used as part of that facility.

The southeastern portion of the site was originally a low-lying, abandoned gravel pit. This area is designated on the original plans as a softball field. It is not known whether the playing field was ever created, but there is little reason to believe that it was not. At this location today is a flat, open, Mn/DOT borrow pit with a circular gravel drive.

The western portion of the site (both north and south of T.H. 23) consists of tall, wooded, granite bluffs that form the eastern bank of the Sauk River.

Most of the original footpaths through the woods (on both sides of T.H. 23) appear to be in their original locations but overgrown.

Spring water is collected near the former southern parking area and passes under T.H. 23 via a culvert. It was originally routed eastward along the northern side of T.H. 23 via an open ditch where it flowed to the stream and dams (west of the northern parking area) and into the Sauk River. The water no longer flows eastward after it emerges on the northern side of T.H. 23, and instead flows in a larger stream northward into the river.

The original planting plan specified extensive plantings, particularly in the eastern part of the site, was relatively open at the time that the site was developed. The plans specify the planting of 34 Red Cedar, 28 Silver Maple, 30 Carolina Poplar, 16 Wisconsin Weeping Willow, 70 White Ash, 45 American Elm, 210 Tartarian Maple shrubs, 490 Coral Dogwood shrubs, 730 Smooth Sumac, 1080 Red Rugosa Rose shrubs, 295 American Elder shrubs, plus 600 pounds of ground cover. Many of the original plantings are still visible, although the site is overgrown.

■ SETTING

The site is located on the eastern bank of the Sauk River within the City of Cold Spring. T.H. 23 runs east and west, bisecting the site. The site has a secluded, wooded feeling. It is bounded by the Sauk River on the west, a city park and the Cold Spring granite works across the river to the west, a granite quarry to the southeast, and residential and industrial areas to the north, south, and east.

■ INTEGRITY

Alterations

The site appears to have been built fairly close to plan, with a few exceptions: 1) It is not known whether the Small Overlook was built. 2) The original plans specify a stone enclosure around the Spring Water Outlet With Pump that does not appear in historic photos and was apparently never built.

The Large Overlook and the Council Ring are basically intact.

The Boulder Overlook is missing many stones. The Picnic Fireplaces are in ruins. The Retaining Wall beneath the T.H. 23 bridge is missing many stones and collapsing. The Trail Steps near the Retaining Wall are missing stones. The Spring Water Outlet With Pump has probably been moved north of T.H. 23, the spring has been capped, and the pump has been removed. The Spring Water Outlet With Continuous Flow has been capped and its stone veneer has been removed. The Stone Steps north of the Spring Water Outlet With Continuous Flow are in ruins. The pool created by the Small Dam has been filled, although the dam still exists. The Large Dam is fairly intact. The Restroom Building was added to the parking area north of T.H. 23 circa 1980. Three (possibly four) of the original privies are gone.

The parking area south of T.H. 23 was apparently removed in the late 1970s. The northern parking area has been paved with asphalt. The park's landscapes are overgrown.

Despite the changes listed above, in general, the Cold Spring Roadside Parking Area retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Many of the site alterations have resulted from lack of maintenance and vegetation overgrowth, and appear to be reversible.

Notes on Condition

All stone structures are in poor condition and missing stones. The Large Overlook has spray-painted graffiti. All landscapes are overgrown with the exception of the area around the northern parking area.

■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Cold Spring Roadside Parking Area was designed by Arthur R. Nichols (Consulting Landscape Architect to the Roadside Development Division) and constructed in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Highways (MHD).

State and Federal WPA officials approved the development of a scenic wayside here in September 1935. The *Cold Spring Record* reported that month:

> One of the principal projects which has already been approved by state and federal officials, and which is now assured, is a beautiful scenic park. This park will be situated on ground now owned by the Minnesota State Highway Department and will be located within the village limits of Cold Spring, on the east side of the Sauk River. Grounds on both sides of highway number 23 will be utilized in the park project. The portion south of the highway, which was formerly the gravel pit will be made into a modern ball diamond, and the grassy knoll on the north side will be transformed into a scenic park (*Cold Spring Record*, Sept. 4, 1935).

The same article also reports that "Mr. Olson and Mr. Nicholson [sic], two of the state highway engineers [sic], spent considerable time here recently and left with blue prints and sketches for the development of the grounds."

The WPA began construction of the wayside rest in April of 1936, initially employing 25 men from Cold Spring. Construction was expected to take six months. The plans specify that all borrow material was to be taken from the gravel pit at the southern end of the site.

The title sheet for the original plans indicates that they were drawn in 1935. The title sheet was signed by A. R. Nichols (Consulting Landscape Architect), Harold E. Olson (Engineer of Roadside Development Division), C. W. Lilly (Engineer of Plans), [illegible] (District Engineer), O. L. Kipp (Construction Engineer), and J. T. Ellison (Chief Engineer and Deputy Commissioner).

Mn/DOT Site Development Unit records indicate that in 1961 the site had four springs or wells, three picnic tables, four fireplaces, two council rings [one probably refers to the Boulder Overlook], and an overlook. The southern side of the site was closed to the public around

the late 1970s. Site Development Unit records indicate that in 1979 the site had parking for five cars and two car trailers, and pit toilets, spring water, picnic tables, and fireplaces.

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

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

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cold Spring R.P.A., built in 1936, is a wayside rest with a complex site design. It is one of 23 properties in this inventory that were built by (or suspected to have been built by) the WPA, and 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 Cold 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. This wayside rest is one of only eight properties in this inventory that retain stone council rings. It is one of only two properties in the inventory that were built with dams and wading pools. (National Register Criterion A.)

Significant to the History of Roadside Development. Cold 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 WPA in partnership with the MHD. Together, the MHD and various New Deal agencies like the WPA built a number of distinctive and well-constructed 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. Cold Spring R.P.A. is an example of the most well-developed of the Roadside Development Division's roadside parks. It was designed to provide several types of activities including spring development, picnicking, hiking, softball, campfires, and enjoyment of scenic vistas. Although in poor condition, the site's landscaping and structures are good examples of the "National Park Service Rustic Style." The rest area's masonry was well-executed. The stone features display the special labor-intensive construction techniques and distinctive use of indigenous materials that characterize both the Rustic style and federal relief construction in Minnesota. Cold Spring R.P.A. is also an important example of the roadside development work of prominent landscape architect A. R. Nichols. (National Register Criterion C.)

The property 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.

T.H. 23 is moderately busy through the site.

The Large Overlook at Cold Spring is very similar to the stone overlook wall at Pine-Hickory Lakes R.P.A., which is also in this inventory.

■ REFERENCES

Anderson, Rolf T. "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Oct. 9, 1990; amended Aug. 30, 1993.

"Cold Spring: Town Grew from Granite, Natural Spring." *St. Cloud Times*, Mar. 12, 1989.

"New State Park Is Under Construction Here." *Cold Spring Record*, Apr. 29, 1936.

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.

Rose, Nancy E. *Put To Work. Relief Programs in the Great Depression*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1994.

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

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

Tweton, Jerome D. *The New Deal at the Grass Roots. Programs for the People in Otter Tail County, Minnesota*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988.

"WPA Projects Contemplated." *Cold Spring Record*, Sept. 4, 1935.

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The city of Cold Spring was platted in 1856, just one year following the establishment of Stearns County. German immigrant Michael Sargi named the city after its natural mineral springs. Sargi built a brew-house and began brewing Cold Spring brand beer. The brewery grew to become one of the largest employers in Cold Spring.

Granite quarrying began in Stearns County in the 1860s. Henry Alexander, immigrant from Scotland, founded Cold Spring Granite Company in 1898. Cold Spring Granite is now one of the world's largest granite suppliers. Today it employs third- and fourth-generation granite workers. The St. Cloud-Cold Spring granite region produces a fine-grained granite that ranges in color from black, to red and pink of varying shades, to a clear white.