

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT  
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

SW-MOY-007  
CS 7603

Pomme de Terre Roadside Parking Area

<b>Historic Name</b> <b>Other Name</b>	Pomme de Terre Roadside Parking Area	<b>CS #</b> <b>SHPO Inv #</b>	7603 SW-MOY-007
<b>Location</b>	Both sides of TH 12 at Pomme de Terre River	<b>Hwy</b> <b>District</b> <b>Reference</b>	TH 12 4B 23.8
<b>City/Township</b> <b>County</b> <b>Twp Rng Sec</b> <b>USGS Quad</b> <b>UTM</b>	Moyer Township Swift 121N 42W Sec 18 121N 42W Sec 19 Hancock SW Z15 E266350 N5018530	<b>Acres</b> <b>Rest Area Class</b>	51 4
<b>Designer</b>	Nichols, A R, Attributed	<b>SP #</b>	12-26-25-1 7603
<b>Builder</b>	Natl Recovery Work Relief (NRWR) Works Progress Administration (WPA)	<b>SHPO Review #</b>	96-2027
<b>Historic Use</b> <b>Present Use</b>	Roadside Parking Area Roadside Parking Area	<b>MHS Photo #</b>	013556.02-19
<b>Yr of Landscape Design</b>	1935	<b>MnDOT Historic Photo Album</b>	Nic 1.27 Ols 3.162
<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>			
<b>List of Standing Structures</b>			
<b>Feat#</b>	<b>Feature Type</b>	<b>Year Built</b>	<b>Fieldwork Date</b>
01	Fireplace(s), Other	Ca. 1936	11-08-97
02	Privies	Ca. 1960	
03	Picnic Table(s), Other	Ca. 1990	
NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table			<b>Prep by</b>
			Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 59
			<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)		

■ BRIEF

Pomme de Terre Roadside Parking Area is a 51-acre site located on both the northern and southern sides of T.H. 12 on both the eastern and western banks of the Pomme de Terre River, adjacent to Bridge 5359.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

*Picnic Fireplaces.* Built circa 1936 by the WPA and NRWR. The site contains two deteriorating, low, square, poured concrete picnic fireplaces in poor condition. One is located southwest of the well in the eastern picnic area. The other is located southeast of the wading pool in the western picnic area.

*Privies.* Built circa 1960. There are two plywood privies with shed roofs located near the northeastern corner of the picnic area.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

The site runs along a 1200'-long (east to west) length of T.H. 12 right-of-way. It is located at what was a sharp bend in the Pomme de Terre River that was straightened by the highway department circa 1934. Only the northern portion of the site, north of T.H. 12, was developed by the MHD -- the portion south of T.H. 12 remained undeveloped.

The northern portion was developed around a stone rubble dam in the river that was built in 1936. It was part of a series of dams that the WPA built along the Pomme de Terre for recreational and conservation purposes. The river divides the northern, developed portion of the site (north of T.H. 12) into two units, the eastern picnic area and the western picnic area. Circuitous walking paths were developed in both units (they are barely visible today).

The eastern picnic area is accessed by a gravel drive that enters the site near the southeastern corner and circles through the picnic area. The privies are located near the northeastern corner of the picnic area. Near the northern edge of the picnic area is a 10'-square concrete pad that surrounds a capped well. About 53' northwest of the well is a circa 1990 poured concrete picnic table on a poured concrete pad. About 85' southwest of the well is a deteriorating poured concrete picnic fireplace in poor condition.

The western picnic area was originally entered via a drive (now asphalt) that is now closed from T.H. 12 (its entrance obliterated by the recent T.H. 12 bridge work). The asphalt on the drive is broken up and overgrown. The drive changes to gravel and loops through the western picnic area. There was originally a wading pool near the river that is now a mucky hole with a little water in it. There was once a stone rubble dam at the northern end of the wading pool, and another stone dam at the southern end. The northern dam is not visible and all that is left of the southern dam is an iron sluice gate sticking out of the mud. There is a deteriorating poured concrete picnic fireplace in poor condition southeast of the wading pool. There was a 36'-long, 8'-wide wooden footbridge with a rustic timber railing located several feet east of the wading pool that crossed the pool's drainage into the river. The footbridge is gone. The western portion of the western unit consists of a tall wooded bluff. The stone overlook specified on the plans to be built on top of the bluff was apparently

never built. A current USGS topo map indicates that there is a small graveyard on top of the bluff at that location. (No graves were seen during fieldwork.)

The site is planted with grass. There are mature deciduous trees (elm, ash, maple, box elder, etc.) scattered throughout the open portions of the site, while its northern and western borders are densely wooded. The site was cleared considerably of vegetation during the summer of 1997 as the T.H. 12 bridge was replaced, the highway shoulder altered, and the river's rubble dam removed by the DNR.

Most of the site is low-lying river bottom land. There is a tall wooded bluff on the western edge of the site.

#### ■ **SETTING**

The site is located along both the eastern and western banks of the Pomme de Terre River in a rural area surrounded by farmland. It is located on both the northern and southern sides of T.H. 12, although only the northern side was developed. It is surrounded by cornfields, marshland, and the wooded riverbanks. There is a gravel pit east of the site.

#### ■ **INTEGRITY**

##### **Alterations**

The stone overlook specified on the plans to be built on top of the bluff near the western edge of the site was apparently never built. (This site is one of few sites in this inventory in which actual construction varies from the historic plan on file at Mn/DOT.) Historic photos indicate that the rest of the Pomme de Terre site was built fairly close to plan.

The site has been extensively altered. Nearly all standing structures have been removed. A 90'-wide masonry rubble dam that crossed the river between the two picnic areas (built in 1936) was removed during the summer of 1997 by the DNR to maintain or improve northern pike and walleye populations in the Pomme de Terre watershed. The T.H. 12 bridge over the Pomme de Terre River (Bridge 5359), a truss bridge built in 1934 that was a prominent site element, was replaced during the summer of 1997. The bridge replacement project restructured the highway slope through the site and removed vegetation.

The site has lost integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It retains integrity only of location and setting.

##### **Notes on Condition**

The structures and landscapes are all in poor condition. The site is very minimally maintained.

#### ■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

This site was constructed in 1935-1936 by the Minnesota Department of Highways in cooperation with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as a .24-mile-long roadside development project. National Recovery Work Relief (NRWR) funds were also apparently used.

Pomme de Terre Roadside Parking Area

Referred to as WPA Project No. 1431, development of the park involved turning an overgrown wooded area into a picnicking and camping area. (Bridge 5359 at this site had just been completed in 1934.) Initially a 20-acre site (10 acres on each side of T.H. 12), the site also included a dam in the river (as well as two smaller dams) and bridge.

Work began in mid-November of 1935, when approximately 20 men were employed. When the dam was poured during the winter of 1935-1936, 46 men were employed.

On April 3, 1936, the *Appleton Press* reported that, when completed, the park will be,

a beauty spot with facilities for community gatherings, family picnics or overnight tourist stops. It will be of special benefit to a large farming area, in which the residents are considerable distances from park facilities as well as to the residents of a large number of villages and cities, to many of whom it proved attractive last year, even in an incomplete state (*Appleton Press*, Apr. 3, 1936).

The article described construction:

The major single job on the project was the installation of a dam, the purpose of which is to create a pool in the river and divert some water into a lagoon. In preparation for this the river channel was straightened for a considerable distance. Plans for the completed park include the construction of fireplaces, picnic tables and sanitary conveniences in addition to the beautification of the grounds, the building of parking space, paths, wading pool, dam and bridge, and a gateway entrance of field stone. .

This [dam construction] work was done in a heated enclosure, during some of the most severe weather of the past winter, in order to assure completion of the dam before the spring thaws brought down a heavy volume of water.

Residents of the immediate vicinity are enthusiastic about the development and are looking forward to many years of enjoyment of a community recreational spot that, except for WPA, would not have been possible (*Appleton Press*, Apr. 3, 1936).

The original plans included the construction of a stone overlook on top of the tall wooded bluff near the western edge of the property. A current USGS topo map indicates that there is a small graveyard on top of the bluff at that location. (No graves were seen during fieldwork.) A local history book indicates, "There are two private burial plots in Moyer [Township]. They are located on the hilltop of the park along Highway 12. Johann Beyer bought this land in 1881. Dorthea Giese, a great-granddaughter of Johann Beyer, lives in this area" (*Swift County History Book* n.d.:503).

The dam was part of a larger WPA conservation project along the Pomme de Terre River. A series of dams were constructed by the WPA on the river for recreational and conservation purposes, including dams at Elbow Lake, Barrett Lake, Morris, Appleton, and at this site. The dam projects were under the sponsorship of the Minnesota Department of Conservation, with the exception of this site, which was sponsored by the state highway department.

The title sheet for a set of probable original plans contains the notation "Final Plans Construction Division N.R.W.R. 76-2 Nov. 20, 1936." (These plans are probably revised plans since the project began in 1935.) The plans were signed by Harold E. Olson (Engineer of Roadside

**Pomme de Terre Roadside Parking Area**

Development), C. W. Lilly (Engineer of Plans), C. J. Swift (District Engineer), O. L. Kipp (Construction Engineer), and J. T. Ellison (Chief Engineer). Ellison dated his signature September 9, 1936.

The site was probably designed by A. R. Nichols, Consulting Landscape Architect for the MHD in the 1930s. Photographs of the site appear in Nichols' several-volume photo collection (Nichols ca. 1937-1941) that seems somewhat like a portfolio of his work. Nichols designed the only other roadside development site in this inventory with similar dams and wading pool -- the Cold Spring Roadside Parking Area (see inventory form).

MnDOT Site Development Unit files indicate that there were six picnic tables, drinking water, two toilets, and a footbridge at this site in 1961. Circa 1964 there were four toilets, two wells, picnic tables, and fireplaces. In 1979, there was parking for 20 cars and pit toilets, picnic tables, a fireplace, and water available at the site.

**■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS**

In 1996-1997 a Section 106 review was conducted by Mn/DOT and the SHPO in preparation for the replacement of Bridge 5359 at this site (96-2027). In a letter dated April 15, 1997, to Joe Hudak, Dennis Gimmestad of the MHS concurred with Mn/DOT's assessment that there were no properties within the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the bridge replacement project that were eligible for the National Register (Gimmestad 1997). This APE includes most of the wayside rest.

The file that chronicles this review includes items of correspondence and a reference to a draft report of the Phase I archaeological survey (prepared for Mn/DOT by Rose and David Kluth of the Leech Lake Heritage Sites Program, Feb. 27, 1997). The file also contains materials describing the DNR plan for stream management that specified removal of the dam.

**■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Pomme de Terre R.P.A. is a roadside parking area with a complex site design. It was built in 1935-1936 by the MHD in cooperation with the WPA. (National Recovery Work Relief (NRWR) funds were also apparently used.) 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 in the inventory that were designed by, or whose design is attributed to, Arthur R. Nichols. It is one of two sites in this inventory that originally had a series of dams and wading pools. (The other site is the Cold Spring R.P.A. in Stearns County, also designed by Nichols.)

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 due to loss of integrity.

**■ OTHER COMMENTS**

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

T.H. 12 is very quiet past this site.

■ REFERENCES

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

*Appleton Press*, Nov. 22, 1935; Feb. 21, 1936; Apr. 3, 1936; and Apr. 10, 1936.

Gimmestad, Dennis (MHS). Letter to Joe Hudak (Mn/DOT). Apr. 15, 1997.

Nichols, A. R., comp. *Album of Roadside Development Projects*. 7 vols. Photo albums prepared for Roadside Development Division, Minnesota Department of Highways, circa 1937-1941. Mn/DOT Site Development Unit.

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

*Swift County History Book*. N.d. ["Moyer Township", pp. 502-503. Uncited photocopy provided by Swift County Historical Society.]

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.

Upham, Warren. *Minnesota Geographic Names: Their Origin and Historic Significance*. 1920; Second Rev. Ed. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1969.

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**Pomme de Terre**

The Pomme de Terre River begins in Stalker Lake, northwest of Dalton, and flows approximately 100 miles to the south. Southwest of Appleton it enters Marsh Lake, and from there flows into the Minnesota River, a short distance above the Lac qui Parle River. French voyageurs named the lake and river Pomme de Terre, meaning "apple of the earth" (or potato), for the prairie turnip (*Psoralea esculenta*) that was a main food source for the Dakota. This plant was also known by the Dakota word "Tipsinah," meaning wild potato. This root plant was common on the generally dry upland prairies throughout southwestern Minnesota.

**WPA Dam-building Activities**

Historian Rolf Anderson writes about the WPA's dam building:

Conservation structures were constructed throughout Minnesota in order to manage forests, wildlife, and the state's water resources. The WPA alone was responsible for more than 250 conservation projects. . . . Hundreds of dams were constructed throughout the state in order to provide more dependable domestic water supply and more uniform flows for power production. . . . The most common dam was the 'Type C,' a small structure usually constructed at the outlet of a lake" (Anderson 1990/1993:17).

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT  
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**CS 7603**

**Pomme de Terre Roadside Parking Area**

The dam at Pomme de Terre R.P.A. and the related dams on the Pomme de Terre River were apparently typical of these projects.