

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

TR-FOL-006
CS 7804
Browns Valley Historical Marker

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Historic Name Other Name | Browns Valley Historical Marker | CS # SHPO Inv # | 7804 TR-FOL-006 |
| Location | S side of TH 28/TH 7 .2 mi W of TH 27 | Hwy District Reference | TH 28/7 4B 0.7 |
| City/Township County Twp Rng Sec USGS Quad UTM | Folsom Township Traverse 125N 49W Sec 32 Browns Valley Z14 E667780 N5051450 | Acres Rest Area Class | 2.5 4 |
| Designer | Nichols, A R, Consult Land Arch | SP # | 7804-07 |
| Builder | Minn Dept of Highways (MHD) | SHPO Review # | 99-0359 |
| Historic Use Present Use | Roadside Parking Area Roadside Parking Area | MHS Photo # | 013510.10-16 |
| Yr of Landscape Design | 1945 | MnDOT Historic Photo Album | Ols 3.167 |
| Overall Site Integrity | Intact/Slightly Altered | | |
| Review Required | Yes | | |
| 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 | Fieldwork Date |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01 | Marker | 1935 | 05-04-97 |
| 02 | Picnic Table(s), Other | Ca. 1970 | |
| NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table | | | Prep by Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1.7 |
| | | | 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 Browns Valley Historical Marker, also known as the Wadsworth Trail Historical Marker, is located on a 2.5-acre site on the southern side of T.H. 28/T.H. 7, about .2 miles west of T.H. 27. It stands in Folsom Township just outside the western city limits of Browns Valley.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Stone Marker. Erected 1935 by the DAR, improved 1945 by the MHD. This marker consists of a large, gray granite boulder mounted on a stone base that rests on a concrete footing. The boulder originally sat on a very simple, poured concrete base. This base was replaced by the current red quartzite base and terrace in 1945. (The 1945 improvements were drawn in 1939 and possibly had been the intention ever since the DAR first erected the marker in 1935.) The boulder is about 3' wide, 4' tall and 2' deep. The stone base is built of coursed, roughly-cut, quartzite rubble and is approximately 5' by 4' by 2' tall. The quartzite flagstone terrace that surrounds the base measures about 6' by 12'. A 15" by 20" bronze plaque is mounted on the boulder. The text of the plaque addresses the Wadsworth Trail. (See marker text at the end of this document.)

Concrete Picnic Table. Erected circa 1970s by Mn/DOT. A precast concrete picnic table is located 3' east of the marker. It sits on an 8' by 10' concrete pad.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

The site contains a curving, asphalt-paved highway pull-off drive edged with concrete curbing. The marker is located about 15' from the edge of the drive. Between the drive and T.H. 28/T.H. 7 is an elliptically-shaped, grass-planted island.

The site has an open, exposed feeling. The majority of the site is planted with grass and young trees. (There are only a few mature trees at the site.) Behind the marker are two mature poplar trees and several newly-planted deciduous trees. Along the western and eastern edges of the site are groups of mature evergreens. The topography of the site is flat but the site is flanked on the south and west by hills.

The landscape design dates from 1945 when the marker was rebuilt. The 1945 planting plan intended that the site would be fairly shady. The plan specifies a row of honeysuckle shrubs edging the marker and a group of Lombardy poplars serving as a backdrop to the marker. The land on either side and behind the marker was to be planted with American Elms and two groups of Black Hills Spruce. Only the island between the drive and T.H. 28/T.H. 7 was to be treeless.

■ SETTING

The property is located just outside the western city limits of Browns Valley. To the north across T.H. 28/T.H. 7 is a field surrounded by a grove of mature deciduous trees. Farmland and the Coteau des Prairies (French for "Hills of the Prairies") are visible behind the site to

the south and west. The Coteau is located approximately one mile west of the site. The base of the Coteau marks the border of Minnesota and South Dakota. A residential area is located east of the site.

■ INTEGRITY

Alterations

The marker base and landscaping appear to have been constructed close to the 1945 plans.

The quartzite base, flagstone terrace, the concrete curb, and the plantings were added to the site in 1945. Most of the original trees and shrubs died and have been removed. Some new plantings have been added. The drive has been covered with asphalt (it was originally gravel), and the picnic table has been added to the site.

In general, the site retains its 1945 integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Notes on Condition

The site is maintained fairly well. The marker is in fair to good condition.

■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The marker was erected in 1935 by the Dr. Samuel Prescott Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). (The location of the chapter is unknown -- perhaps Browns Valley.) The marker was dedicated on September 28, 1935, in a ceremony at which DAR member and historian Grace Hall of Morris delivered the keynote address. In 1938 Hall wrote a short book about the Wadsworth Trail. (The Morris chapter of the DAR had marked the Wadsworth Trail with a boulder marker in East Side Park in Morris in 1929.)

The Browns Valley marker is one of about 90 markers erected by Minnesota DAR chapters during the earliest years of the DAR's marking program, 1903-1941. About 30 of these markers were bronze plaques mounted on granite boulders like the Browns Valley marker. The others were generally brass plaques mounted on flagpole bases, on historic structures, and at cemeteries. The DAR marking program continued through at least the 1960s.

The marker was rebuilt by the Minnesota Department of Highways (MHD) in 1945 as part of a 1.9-mile long roadside development project (S.P. 7804-07). The plan sheet for the improvements was drawn in 1939, only four years after the marker was erected. The original marker's base was very stark and simple, suggesting that the improvements drawn in 1939 may have been the original intention for the site. The Department of Highways' work on the project may have been delayed until 1939, and then actual construction of the site was probably interrupted by World War II, which halted all nonessential transportation construction in the state.

The improvements drawn in 1939 were designed by Arthur R. Nichols, the MHD's Consulting Landscape Architect. The plan sheet for the marker improvements had been drawn six years

earlier in June of 1939 and was signed by A. R. Nichols (Consulting Landscape Architect), Harold E. Olson (Engineer of Roadside Development), and R. O. Torgerson (District Engineer).

Daughters of the American Revolution

The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) is a hereditary patriotic society for women established in 1890 in Washington, D.C. The club's strict, exclusive membership standards require that its members be women who are directly descended from people who helped establish American independence. By 1897 the DAR had chapters in 38 states and had become the largest and most influential club of its type. In the early to mid-twentieth century, the preservation of history and genealogy were important to the group, and the National Society urged local chapters to mark historic sites in their areas. Local DAR chapters also identified and marked unmarked graves, recorded the service records of veterans, sponsored essay contests, and distributed patriotic materials to children.

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

A Section 106 review was conducted in late fall of 1998 (1999 federal fiscal year) in preparation for a Mn/DOT project to rehabilitate the Browns Valley Historical Marker (SHPO Rev #99-0359). The review occurred while this Mn/DOT Historic Roadside Development Structures Inventory was underway, and a draft version of the inventory form was submitted to the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) as part of the review. In a letter to Allyson Brooks (Mn/DOT) dated Nov. 19, 1998, Dennis A. Gimmetstad (MHS) concurred with the Inventory's draft recommendation that the property is eligible for the National Register (Gimmetstad 1998). The documents that chronicle this Section 106 review contain a few items of correspondence.

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Browns Valley Historical Marker, erected 1935 by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and improved in 1945 by the MHD, is one of three markers in this study that were erected by the DAR in partnership with the MHD. (The other two are the Mendota Granite Arrow Marker (1928) and the Sibley Pioneer Church Monument (1955).) Browns Valley is one of several markers in this study with unusual, non-standard designs. The 1945 improvement of the site was designed by MHD Consulting Landscape Architect 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 Browns Valley Historical Marker is ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this context because it meets the following registration requirements:

Non-Federal Relief Property That Closely Resembles a Federal Relief Property. Browns Valley is an excellent example of a Non-Federal Relief property which was built during the decade immediately following the end of the federal relief programs and which strongly represents a continuation of the design principals of the federal relief-built roadside development sites. The site layout and the use of indigenous building materials and skilled craftsmanship in the Browns Valley Historical Marker are characteristic of federal relief design and construction. (National Register Criterion A.)

Significant to the History of Roadside Development. The Browns Valley Historical Marker 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. (National Register Criterion A.)

Design Significance. The Browns Valley Historical Marker is a basically intact example of the MHD Roadside Development Division's small pull-off style roadside parking areas -- this one with a boulder-type historic marker. The marker is an intact example of the application of the "National Park Service Rustic Style" to an interpretive marker. 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. Furthermore, the marker is an example of the MHD roadside development work of prominent landscape architect A. R. Nichols. (National Register Criterion C.)

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

■ OTHER COMMENTS

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

There is very little traffic on T.H. 28/T.H. 7 past this site. Although the site is located close to the highway, it has a quiet and almost secluded feeling because the highway is so quiet.

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

■ REFERENCES

Guide to Historic Markers Erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Prepared by the Minnesota Historical Records Survey Project, Division of Community Service Programs, Work Projects Administration. 1941.

Gimmestad, Dennis A. (MHS). Letter to Allyson Brooks (Mn/DOT). Nov. 19, 1998.

Plank, Tami. *The Prairie Outlook*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Winter 1996). [Newsletter of the Stevens County Historical Society, Morris.]

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

Vaughan, Mrs. James A. *Markers Placed in Minnesota by Chapters of the Minnesota Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, Commemorating Historic Places and Noted Persons.* Minneapolis: 1970.

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND MARKER TEXT

Browns Valley, located in the valley between Lake Traverse and Big Stone Lake, was founded by Euro-Americans in 1866-1867 and platted in 1878. The town was first called Lake

Traverse, but was renamed Brown's Valley in 1870 after the death of its founder, Joseph R. Brown. Brown and his son, Samuel, were early and influential settlers to this area and to south central Minnesota where Brown County was named for the family.

The Wadsworth Trail was improved as a military road in 1864 and was the route many settlers followed to travel to homestead land in the Dakotas. The trail began in St. Cloud, followed the Red River Trail westward to Sauk Centre, and then branched off to the southern side of Lake Minnewaska in Glenwood, led west to Morris, and then followed the general route of current T.H. 28 to Browns Valley and Fort Sisseton (located west of Sisseton, South Dakota). Fort Sisseton was one in a series of forts that were constructed by the U.S. military in eastern Dakota Territory and in Minnesota in reaction to the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862. Fort Wadsworth, named for Civil War General James E. Wadsworth, was built on the Coteau des Prairies in 1864. Its name was changed in 1876 to Fort Sisseton because it was learned that another Fort Wadsworth existed in New York. The fort was abandoned in 1889.

Local Stone

Red quartzite for the marker was probably obtained from southwestern Minnesota. Quartzite is a form of sandstone. Depending on the amount of iron present, the color of quartzite may be white, pink, or red.

Text of Plaque on Stone Marker

"Wadsworth Trail. This tablet marks the Wadsworth Trail extending from St. Cloud, Minnesota, to Ft. Wadsworth, now Fort Sisseton, South Dakota, blazed by pioneers in 1864. Dr. Samuel Prescott Chapter D.A.R., 1935."