

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

WA-AFC-035
CS 8208
Bolles Mill Historical Marker

Historic Name	Bolles Mill Historical Marker	CS #	8208
Other Name	Afton Rest Area	SHPO Inv #	WA-AFC-035

Location	E side of TH 95 800' S of Valley Branch Creek	Hwy District Reference	TH 95 Met E 115.0
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City/Township	Afton, City of	Acres	.3
County	Washington	Rest Area Class	4
Twp Rng Sec	28N 20W Sec 14		
USGS Quad	Hudson		
UTM	Z15 E517330 N4972640		

SP #	8208
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Designer	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)
Builder	Minn Dept of Highways (MHD)

SHPO Review #	
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Historic Use	Roadside Parking Area	MHS Photo #	013515.18-22
Present Use	Roadside Parking Area		

Yr of Landscape Design	1959
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MnDOT Historic Photo Album	
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Overall Site Integrity	Intact/Slightly 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	1959
NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table		

Fieldwork Date	05-10-97
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Prep by	Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 1
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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 Bolles Mill Historical Marker stands on a small, .3-acre site that is located on the eastern side of T.H. 95 about 800' south of Valley Branch Creek. The site is within the City of Afton near the northern city limits.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

Stone Marker. Built 1959 by the MHD. This free-standing, lectern-style stone marker is positioned about 4' east of the parking area at the midpoint of its eastern edge. It is built of long, thin slabs of tan limestone that are randomly laid. The footing is concrete. The marker is approximately 9' wide by 4' deep and is about 4' tall. On the western side is an aluminum plaque mounted at a slant. The sides of the marker are stepped to form two low stone seats (about 1'4" by 2'6"). The text of the marker addresses the first commercial flour mill in Minnesota. The seals of the Minnesota Historical Society and the Minnesota Department of Highways are located near the bottom of the marker. (See marker text at the end of this document.)

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

The site is dominated by an asphalt-paved parking area that measures about 64' by 32'. A 4'-wide, asphalt-paved sidewalk runs along the eastern side of the parking area in front of the marker. There is a concrete curb along all but the western side of the parking area. A chain-link fence runs north and south, about 7' east of the marker along the eastern side of the site, and extends into the distance to the north and south along or near the edge of the highway right-of-way. An asphalt-paved bike path also runs north and south along T.H. 95 and through the parking area of this site. The site plan is basically symmetrical and the topography of the site is flat.

The original plans specify that five Red Cedar be planted behind the marker to serve as a backdrop, six Savin Juniper flank the front edges of the marker, two rows of honeysuckle frame the northeastern and southeastern corners of the parking area, groups of seven Black Hills Spruce be planted north and south of the parking area, and 28 Green Ash be widely spaced on both sides of T.H. 95. Only some of the spruce and ash trees are on the site today. Most of the site is planted with grass.

■ SETTING

The site is a small rest area located on the eastern side of T.H. 95 within the City of Afton near the northern city limits. It is located in a sparsely populated area about 2000' west of the St. Croix River (the river is not visible from the site).

The site is bounded on the west by T.H. 95. East of the site is a forest that is separated from the site by a chain-link fence. Across T.H. 95 to the west and along the highway right-of-way to the north and south are widely-spaced modern houses on large lots.

■ **INTEGRITY**

Alterations

It appears that the site was built fairly close to plan.

The parking area has been recently blacktopped and a bike path has been routed through the site. Timber posts and a wooden, hanging-arm sign (that probably read "Roadside Parking Area") have been removed. Assuming that the site was landscaped to plan, most original plantings have been removed.

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

Notes on Condition

The marker is in fair condition but a few of the stones are missing. The site appears to be fairly well maintained.

■ **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The site was built in 1959 by the Minnesota Department of Highways. Final plans were approved by Harold E. Olson (Engineer of Roadside Development Division), H. E. Palmer (Assistant District Engineer), K. Pearson (Assistant Maintenance Engineer), and [illegible] (District Engineer).

The marker text was approved at the June 15, 1959, meeting of the Minnesota Historic Sites and Markers Commission. Members present at the meeting were Russell W. Fridley (Minnesota Historical Society), Udert W. Hella (Director of the Division of Parks and Recreation, Department of Conservation), Harold Olson (Engineer of Roadside Development), and June Holmquist (Associate Editor for the Minnesota Historical Society).

■ **PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS**

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

■ **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Bolles Mill Historical Marker is a roadside parking area with a simple site design that was developed in 1959 by the MHD. Its stone marker is nearly identical to the markers at Clifton-French River and Minnesota Woman, also in this inventory. Numerous lectern style, tan, limestone markers in this series 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 under this historic context because it does not meet the context's registration requirements.

■ **OTHER COMMENTS**

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

T.H. 95 is a busy highway at this point making it difficult to slow down to locate the rest area's entrance road and turn into it. The movement and noise of the traffic is somewhat disruptive, even though the marker is positioned more than 100' from the centerline. The lack of plantings creates a fairly uninviting site which lacks complexity, and makes the marker seem like an afterthought attached to a parking area.

This site may be associated with local historic contexts established by the City of Afton's Heritage Preservation Commission.

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

■ **REFERENCES**

Minutes of Minnesota Historic Sites and Markers Commission. Mathilde Rice Elliot Papers. Minnesota Historical Society. June 15, 1959.

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

■ **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND MARKER TEXT**

The St. Croix River near this site was designated the St. Croix River National Scenic Riverway circa 1968. Limestone outcroppings in the bluffs of the St. Croix have been quarried in the valley since the mid-1800s. It is possible that the marker at this site was constructed of locally quarried St. Lawrence or Shakopee limestone.

Afton, located on the western shore of Lake St. Croix, was named for Robert Burns' poem "Afton Water." Afton was settled by Euro-Americans in the late 1830s, platted in 1855, and organized governmentally in 1858.

Text of Marker

"About 1843, six years before Minnesota became a territory, Lemuel Bolles erected on this creek the first commercial flour mill in Minnesota country. Bolles salvaged wood from the shore of Lake St. Croix and carried it on his back to the mill site a mile and a half upstream. Lacking nails, he used wooden pegs in the construction of a small mill. First built for grinding corn and wheat, the mill was later remodeled and was in operation as late as 1875 when Bolles died. The stream on which the mill was built became known as Bolles Creek." [Seals of the Washington County Historical Society, Minnesota Historical Society, and Minnesota Department of Highways]