

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT  
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

WB-WBC-183  
CS 7903  
Wabasha Overlook

<b>Historic Name Other Name</b>	Wabasha Overlook	<b>CS # SHPO Inv #</b>	7903 WB-WBC-183
<b>Location</b>	E side of TH 60 about 1.2 mi S of the jct of TH 60 and TH 61	<b>Hwy District Reference</b>	TH 60 6A 216.9
<b>City/Township County Twp Rng Sec USGS Quad UTM</b>	Wabasha, City of Wabasha 110N 10W Sec 5 Wabasha South Z15 E577260 N4911620	<b>Acres Rest Area Class</b>	.1 4
<b>Designer</b>	Unknown	<b>SP #</b>	7903
<b>Builder</b>	Local Government	<b>SHPO Review #</b>	96-0653
<b>Historic Use Present Use</b>	Roadside Parking Area Roadside Parking Area	<b>MHS Photo #</b>	013518.13-16
<b>Yr of Landscape Design</b>	Ca. 1930	<b>MnDOT Historic Photo Album</b>	
<b>Overall Site Integrity</b>	Intact/Slightly 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	Guardrail, Stone	Ca. 1930	05-13-97
			<b>Prep by</b>
			Gemini Research Dec. 98 G1. 83
			<b>Prep for</b>
			Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit
NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table			
<b>Final Report</b>	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)		

■ BRIEF

The Wabasha Overlook is a small, .1-acre site located on the eastern side of T.H. 60 about 1.2 miles south of the junction of T.H. 60 and T.H. 61. It is on Coffee Mill Bluff, about 1.5 miles south of the center of the city of Wabasha.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

**Stone Guardrail.** Built circa 1930, possibly by the county highway department. This stone guardrail is a low wall-like structure built of tan, random rubble (or very roughly-coursed rubble) limestone. It is approximately 200' long and about 16" tall on the inner side and 2'-3' tall on the bluff side. The guardrail was laid in a curve that follows the natural bluff line. Its upper course has projecting stones spaced at about 4' feet intervals to create a battlement-like effect. The wall was rather crudely constructed and is in poor condition. It was originally laid dry (without mortar), according to 1935 MHD plans (S.P. 7903) which direct that the upper course of the structure be mortared.

■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

This is a dramatic setting on a steep bluff known as Coffee Mill Bluff. It is located near the place where the deep, wooded Zumbro River valley converges with the wide floodplain of the Mississippi River. The overlook provides an excellent view of both rivers and their confluence.

The guardrail lines what is essentially an asphalt-paved widening of the highway shoulder. The land drops off steeply just below the structure. The guardrail is surrounded by natural forests and brush. There do not appear to be any plantings associated with the site.

■ SETTING

The site is located in an undeveloped area surrounded by forests and limestone bluffs. It is within, or near, the Minnesota Memorial Hardwood State Forest. Across the highway to the west of the pull-off is a steep limestone bluff that rises upward from the shoulder of the highway. No buildings are visible from the site except for structures in the far distance down in the valley.

■ INTEGRITY

**Alterations**

The upper course was mortared from plans signed in 1935 (S.P. 7903). The guardrail has been crudely repaired. The pull-off has been paved with asphalt.

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

**Notes on Condition**

The structure is in poor condition and seems to be sliding over the hill. Many stones are missing and it needs remortaring and other repair.

**■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

This stone guardrail was apparently built in the 1920s or perhaps circa 1930, possibly by the county highway department. This structure was in place when this stretch of roadway was added to the trunk highway system in 1934. The MHD mortared the upper course of stone from plans signed in 1935 (S.P. 7903).

The site later became known as "Wabasha Overlook" by the MHD.

**■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS**

A Section 106 review was conducted in 1996 in preparation for a proposed reconstruction of the Wabasha Overlook (SHPO rev. #96-0653). In a letter to Bloomberg (MHS) to Hudak (Mn/DOT) dated January 9, 1996, the Minnesota Historical Society determined that the Wabasha Overlook is not eligible for the National Register. The documents that chronicle this Section 106 review include correspondence between Mn/DOT and SHPO staff.

**■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Wabasha Overlook was built in the 1920s or circa 1930, probably by the county highway department. This road was later incorporated into the trunk highway system. The guardrail is crudely constructed in comparison to other masonry structures recorded in this inventory.

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960." It is recommended that the Wabasha Overlook is NOT ELIGIBLE for the National Register under this historic context because it does not meet the context registration requirements.

The site was also determined to be ineligible for the National Register by the SHPO in a 1996 Section 106 review.

**■ OTHER COMMENTS**

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

The site is difficult to stop at, and turn into. It is located on a curve with little visibility from approaching traffic.

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

■ REFERENCES

Bloomberg, Britta L. Letter to Joe Hudak. Jan. 9, 1996.

Construction Logs. Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Johnson, R. O. *Tour Guide of Minnesota*. St. Paul: Department of Business Research and Development, 1949.

Site Plans. Minnesota Department of Transportation.

■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The city of Wabasha is located on the northern edge of the Winnishiek Bottoms, a series of sloughs and bayous that extend 300 miles southward to Rock Island, Illinois. They comprise 175,000 acres of land and 100,000 acres of water. This area had become a national game refuge by the 1940s (Johnson 1949).

Wabasha was named by Euro-Americans in 1843 for three generations of Dakota chiefs, all named Wapashaw. The Euro-American town, first called Cratte's Landing for the earliest white settler, was named the seat of Wabasha County in 1849. Wabasha was platted in 1854 and incorporated as a city in 1858.