

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

AK-FIS-017

CS 0115

Pine-Hickory Lakes Roadside Parking Area

Historic Name	Pine-Hickory Lakes Roadside Parking Area		CS #	0115
Other Name			SHPO Inv #	AK-FIS-017
Location	Both sides of TH 169 on isthmus between Little Pine Lake and Hickory Lake		Hwy	TH 169
City/Township	Farm Island Township		District	3A
County	Aitkin		Reference	246.0
Twp Rng Sec	46N 27W Sec 27		Acres	28
USGS Quad	Spirit Lake		Rest Area Class	2
UTM	Z15 E443380 N5143400		SP #	0115 169-35-21
Designer	Nichols, A R, Attributed		SHPO Review #	
Builder	National Youth Administration (NYA)			
Historic Use	Roadside Parking Area		MHS Photo #	013533.17-25 013534.01-09
Present Use	Roadside Parking Area			
Yr of Landscape Design	1938		MnDOT Historic Photo Album	Nic 1.16 Ols 1.03
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	Council Ring	1938	08-04-97	
02	Overlook Wall	1938		
03	Restroom Bldg	1974		
04	Info Board	1974		
Additional standing structures discovered :				
Stone council ring		Concrete dam	Stone fireplace	
Stone refuse container		Concrete highway bridge		
See http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadsides/historic/files/wayrep-suppl.pdf for additional information.				
NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table				
Final Report	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)			

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- **BRIEF** Note: original plans now discovered indicate property is larger than previously described;
see <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadsides/historic/files/wayrep-suppl.pdf> for additional information.

The Pine-Hickory Lakes Roadside Parking Area is a 28-acre site, located on both sides of T.H. 169, on a narrow strip of land between Little Pine Lake and Hickory Lake in Farm Island Township, about six miles south of Aitkin. The site has two units. The oldest structures are located in the unit east of the highway on the Hickory lakeshore, while the newer structures are located west of T.H. 169 on the Little Pine lakeshore.

■ **STANDING STRUCTURES**

Stone Council Ring. Built 1938 by the NYA. The Council Ring is located on an open knoll in the eastern unit of the site. It is made of randomly-laid split boulders of red, gray, white, and pink granite. (Probably lake boulders or field rock.) The ring is about 22' in diameter and its wall is about 18" thick and 2' tall. There is a 5'-diameter fire ring in the center and a pedestrian opening on the southern side of the ring. The ring is in fair condition. It has been poorly remortared, is overgrown with weeds, and needs repair.

Stone Overlook. Built 1938 by the NYA. The Stone Overlook is located in the woods near the highest point in the eastern unit of the site, overlooking Hickory Lake to the east. It is made of randomly-laid split boulders of red, gray, white, and pink granite. (Probably lake boulders or field rock.) The eastern side of the overlook has a curved lookout bay, while the western, northern, and southern sides of the structure are straight. The walls, which are 18" thick and 2'6" tall, are anchored by 2'-square corner piers. There is a 5'-diameter fire ring in the center of the overlook (possibly added). The overlook has a 6'-wide pedestrian opening on the western side. It is in poor to fair condition. Some stones are missing, it has been poorly patched with mortar, and the fire ring needs repair. The road leading up the hill to the overlook was originally gravel and is now a grassy path.

Restroom Building. Built 1974 by Mn/DOT. A concrete block vault toilet building is located north of the parking area in the western unit.

Information Board. Erected circa 1974 by Mn/DOT. An information board, which is sheltered by a hipped roof, is located north of the parking area in the western unit.

■ **OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS**

The site has two units -- an eastern unit on Hickory Lake and a western unit on Little Pine Lake -- that are separated by T.H. 169. The southern edge of the site is marked by a creek that links the two lakes and runs under T.H. 169.

The eastern unit has a gravel drive that leads to a rectangular parking area on the western shore of Hickory Lake. The parking area is lined with concrete posts with slanted tops (posts spaced about 5'-6' apart), which are hidden in the overgrown brush. The shape of the parking area is no longer discernible, and the gravel drive just circles through a roughly-mowed clearing. North of the parking area, a branch of the original gravel drive (now simply a grassy path) leads past the Council Ring and up the hill to the Stone Overlook. An historic photograph shows a hand pump located east of the Council Ring (pump not observed in field -- may be gone).

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The western unit has a large, rectangular, asphalt-paved parking area on the shore of Little Pine Lake. It has concrete posts with slanted tops along the northern and southern sides. There is a boat launch ramp on the parking area's western side. Asphalt-paved paths lead from the parking area to the restroom building.

The site is naturally wooded. Both units are planted with grass. There are widely-spaced, mature maple, oak, pine, birch and ash trees shading the grassy areas, and dense woods with hiking paths in the northern portion of the eastern unit. The shore of Hickory Lake is swampy and the shore of Little Pine Lake is wooded and has a swimming area. There are wide grassy ditches along T.H. 169 through the site. No original planting plan has been located.

■ SETTING

The site is located in a comfortable, rural, forested setting between two lakes. The eastern unit is hilly and the western unit is basically flat.

■ INTEGRITY

Alterations

No original plans have been located.

One council ring, nine fireplaces, a well, a rustic footbridge, a rustic guardrail, and a marker have apparently been removed from the site (see Historical Background below). The rectangular gravel parking area in the eastern unit is overgrown. 1958 construction plans indicate that bituminous surfacing and concrete curbing were installed circa 1958. In 1974, a vault restroom and picnic tables were added, the western parking area was expanded, and the site landscaped.

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

Notes on Condition

The Council Ring is in fair condition. It has been poorly patched with mortar and needs repair. The Stone Overlook is in poor to fair condition. Some stones are missing and it has been poorly patched with mortar. (The mason signed and dated one of the patches on the overlook in 1978.) The rectangular gravel parking area in the eastern unit is overgrown.

■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Pine-Hickory Lakes Roadside Parking Area was constructed in 1938 by the National Youth Administration (NYA) in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Highways. (No original plans have been located.)

The highway department's 1938 *Annual Report of the Accomplishments of Roadside Development* summarized the project:

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T.H. #169 is located between Pine and Hickory Lakes. The lakeshore in this area has been developed into a roadside parking area with picnicking facilities and a large playfield. The area is well timbered and offers an attractive rest point for the travelling public (*Annual Report 1938:34*).

The report indicates that the 1938 work included a stonemasonry overlook (40 cu. yds.), two council rings, 27 picnic tables, nine fireplaces, one well, 4,736' of trail construction, one rustic footbridge, 960' of rustic guardrail [probably timber guardrail], one project marker, and excavation of 100 cubic yards for a wading pool (*Annual Report 1938:34*).

It is likely that the Pine-Hickory Lakes Roadside Parking Area was designed by Arthur R. Nichols of the firm Morell and Nichols. Nichols served as Consulting Landscape Architect for the Minnesota Department of Highways in the 1930s and designed most roadside development structures built during this period. Photographs of the site appear in an album of photographs that Nichols compiled for the highway department circa 1940. The photographs serve as a sort of portfolio of Nichols' work for the department, and the inclusion of Pine-Hickory photos strongly suggests that he designed the site. The stone overlook wall at Pine Hickory is also very similar in design to the Large Overlook at Cold Spring R.P.A., which was designed by Nichols and which is also in this inventory.

The western parking area may have been created in 1958 when Mn/DOT construction plans (dated July 1958) indicate that the western parking area was paved with bituminous and 296' of concrete curb were installed. The rest area was upgraded in 1974 under the 1970 National Highway Beautification Act. A vault restroom building was constructed, picnic tables added, the parking area expanded, and the site landscaped.

■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

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

■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Pine-Hickory Lakes Roadside Parking Area, built in 1938, is a wayside rest with a complex site design. It is one of 19 properties in this inventory on which the NYA worked. It is 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 Pine-Hickory Lakes 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. (National Register Criterion A.)

Significant to the History of Roadside Development. Pine-Hickory 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 NYA in partnership with the MHD. Together, the MHD and various New Deal agencies

like the NYA 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. Pine-Hickory Lakes R.P.A. is an example of the Roadside Development Division's naturalistic, rustic roadside parks. The site is a good example of the "National Park Service Rustic Style" as applied to a roadside development facility. The rest area's stonework 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. Pine-Hickory is a good example of the roadside development work of prominent landscape architect A. R. Nichols, to whom its design is attributed. (National Register Criterion C.)

The site 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. 169 is not heavily-traveled past this site. The site is quiet and parklike. It has good swimming and picnicking facilities.

■ REFERENCES

Annual Report of the Accomplishments of Roadside Development Along the Trunk Highways in Minnesota. Minnesota Department of Highways. 1938.

Final Report National Youth Administration for the State of Minnesota: Sept. 1935 to July 1943. U.S. National Youth Administration, Minnesota. 1943.

"Safety Rest Area Projects Get Funding." *Mille Lacs Princeton Union*, Apr. 16, 1974.

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

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.