

Lookout Park (Minnesota Valley) Wayside, Eden Prairie



AMERICANS FELL IN LOVE with the automobile in the 1920s. The car, and the unprecedented go-anywhere-anytime freedom that it offered, appealed to the country's independent-minded citizens and quickly resulted in the budding national pastime of motor touring. By the 1930s, the automobile's reach was great, but good roads and public services were in short supply. State and federal agencies responded by building a network of highways enhanced by roadside amenities for the growing number

of tourists motoring their way across the vast American landscape.

Lookout Park Wayside provided a welcome respite and a panoramic view of the Minnesota River Valley to travelers crossing the North Star state. Constructed in 1938 by the National Youth Administration (NYA), a New Deal relief program, the five-acre wayside consisted of a stone concourse and—for hungry travelers—a picnic area equipped with tables, fireplaces, and ample room to stretch. To edify the visitor, a historical marker interpreted the valley's glacial origins, significance as a settlement route, and importance as the site of the 1858 Battle of Shakopee between the Ojibwe and Dakota. The finely crafted stonework of the concourse was characteristic of the Rustic Style, which sought to minimize intrusive manmade structures through careful design and use of native materials. In its understated beauty and sensitive landscaping, Lookout Park Wayside was an en-

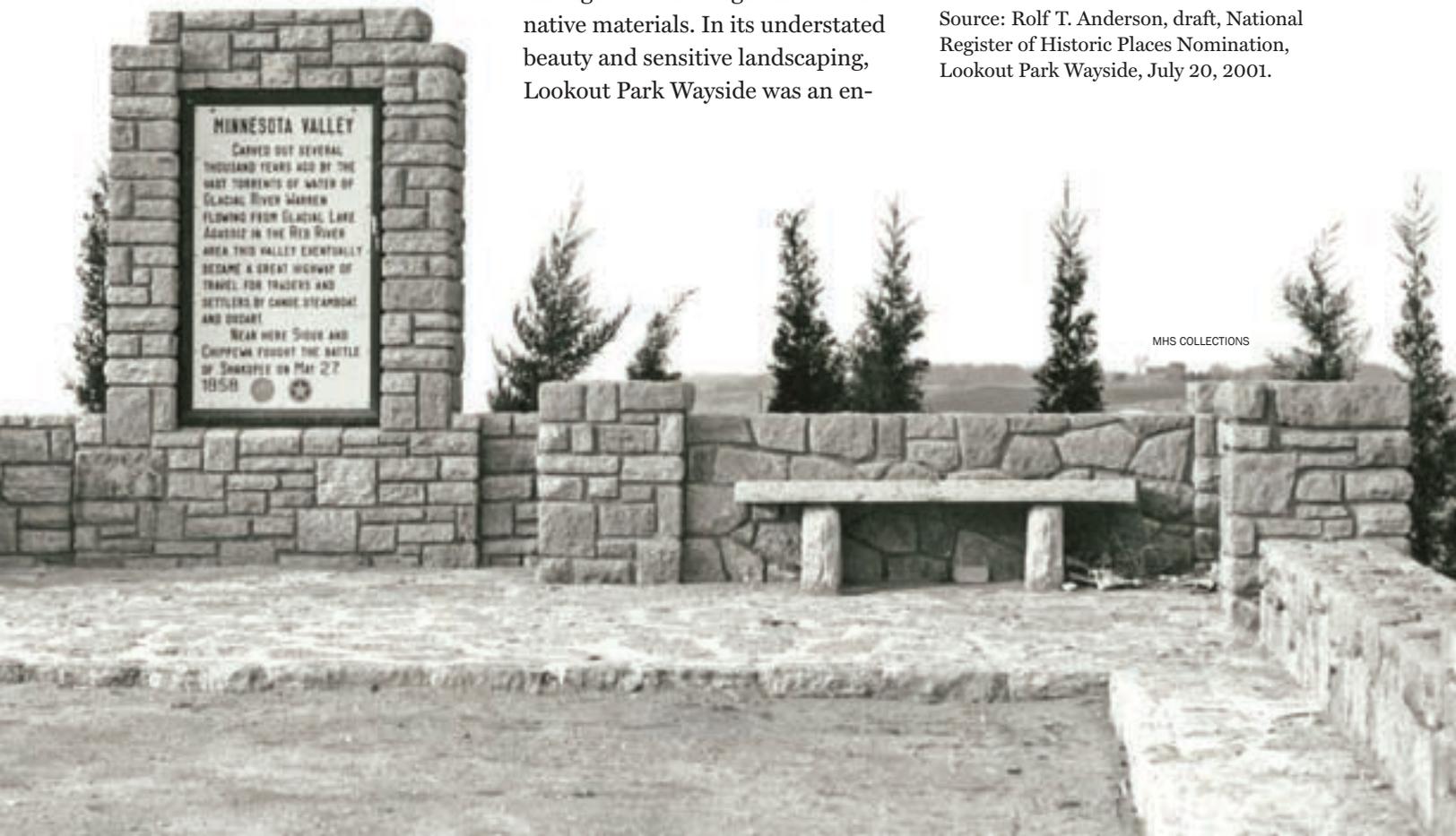
hancement—not an imposition—on the terrain. In fact, it resembled a more rigorously organized version of the land upon which it stood.

Now, cars are faster and travelers linger less along the road. Truth be told, even the most eagle-eyed motorist would be hard pressed to find Lookout Park today, obscured as it is by overgrowth, diminished as it has become from vandalism and neglect. Only remnants of hand-hewn stonework and a still-inspiring view suggest this was the spot from which hundreds of thousands of adventurous motorists once took their first long look at Minnesota.

—JANE KING HESSION

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Source: Rolf T. Anderson, draft, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Lookout Park Wayside, July 20, 2001.





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