

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

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August 23, 2004

Dr. Stephanie Toothman
National Park Service
Pacific West Region
909 First Street
Seattle, Washington 98104-4159

Dear Dr. Toothman:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the National Register Multiple Property nomination for Yosemite National Park. I concur that the properties identified and evaluated in the nomination do constitute a coherent group of geographically dispersed resources that are eligible for listing in the National Register. The nomination does an excellent job of defining separate, but related contexts that make clear the significance of the individual resources, as well as the reasons that they collectively constitute a multiple property. The inclusion of a number of the park's less elaborate, high altitude resources is particularly noteworthy. The context statements synthesize a large amount of historic documentation in a clear and concise manner and the descriptive material that is provided for the individual resources or resource groupings is excellent.

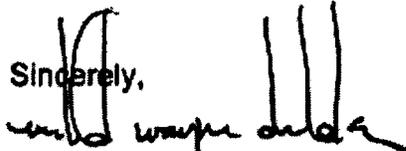
We concur in all of your findings regarding the resources enumerated in the multiple property nomination. We agree that the following properties are eligible for the National Register as a part of a multiple property.

Lake Vernon Cabin Building #2450
May Lake High Sierra Camp Historic District
Hetch Hetchy Comfort Station Building #2104
Henness Ridge Fire Lookout Building #5300
The Golden Crown Mine
Glen Aulin Sierra Camp Historic District
Chinquapin Historic District
Buck Creek Cabin Building #4800
Snow Flat Cabin #Building #3501
Snow Creek Cabin Building #3450
Sachse Springs Cabin Building #2452
Ostrander Ski Hut Building #5110
Old Big Oak Flat Road
New Big Oak Flat Road
Merced Lake Ranger Station Building #3400
Merced Lake High Sierra Camp Historic District

Wawona Tunnel
Vogelsang High Sierra Camp Historic District
Tuolumne Meadows High Sierra Camp Historic District

I have signed the application as commenting authority. If you have any questions, please call Gene Itogowa of my staff (916) 653-8936.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Milford Wayne Donaldson". The signature is written in a cursive style with some vertical lines above the main text.

Milford Wayne Donaldson
State Historic Preservation Officer

Cc: Kimball Koch

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Henness Ridge Fire Lookout
other names/site number Building #5300

2. Location

street & number N/A not for publication
city or town Yosemite National Park (YOSE) vicinity _____
state California code CA county Mariposa code 043 zip code 95389

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide ___ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
___ entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
___ determined eligible for the
National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
___ determined not eligible for the
National Register

Signature of Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

Heness Ridge Fire Lookout

Mariposa, CA

Name of Property

County and State

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one)

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Contributing Noncontributing buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic Resources of Yosemite National Park, California

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/NPS Fire Lookout

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: NPS Rustic

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone - granite rubble masonry

walls Wood - redwood siding

roof Wood - shingle

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Conservation

Period of Significance

1934-1938

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

National Park Service

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register

Primary location of additional data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University

Heness Ridge Fire Lookout _____

Mariposa, CA _____

Name of Property

County and State

___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

___ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

X Other
Name of repository:
Yosemite National Park, California

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 11 259925 4169100 **3**
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
2 **4**
___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

The National Register boundary includes only the historically and architecturally significant fire lookout and its immediate surroundings.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

The National boundary includes the one significant structure and its immediate site.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Andy Kirk, Richard Coop, Charles Palmer

organization UNLV Public History date 3/8/04

street & number 4505 Maryland Parkway Box 455020 telephone (702)895-3544

city or town Las Vegas state NV zip code 89135-5020

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Heness Ridge Fire Lookout

Mariposa, CA

Name of Property

County and State

nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Mariposa, California
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Summary

Hennes Ridge is one of several fire protection buildings constructed in the Sierra under the guidance of John D. Coffman as a part of a comprehensive fire prevention plan developed in response to difficulties encountered during a 1928 fire near Sequoia National Park. The Hennes Ridge lookout was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1934, and is a fine example of the rustic architecture style developed by the Park Service during the New Deal.

General Description

The Hennes Ridge fire lookout is a three story redwood structure built on a granite rubble masonry foundation. The bottom floor was a garage, with living quarters above on the second floor. The third story is a 13' x 13' observation cab with surrounding catwalk. An outside stairway wrapping around two sides of the building provides direct access to the catwalk and cab from ground level. The building was provided with fixed equipment consisting of three cupboards and an observation platform with a table. A flue chimney was also installed; plumbing consisted of one sink. The structure was insulated against lightning in accordance with Forest Service specifications for fire lookout towers. Construction began the end of July and finished in October 1934. Periodic maintenance work has retained the structural integrity and original appearance of the structure, which was last used in 1966.

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Significance

Property Type: Resources Associated with State and Federal Administration of Yosemite (1864-1966)

Subtype: National Park Service Administration

Property Type: Resources Associated with Architecture and Design (1856-1964)

Subtype: New Deal Rustic

Period of Significance: 1934-1938.

The Henness Ridge Fire look out in Yosemite National Park is an exceptional example of National Park Service (NPS) Rustic architecture. It is significant and eligible for nomination under Criterion C because of its style of architecture and period of construction. The state of California retains four fire lookouts built in the Rustic style. Of the four, two of those date from the 1930's and both are in Yosemite.

Context

Until the 1920s, the National Park Service had no central fire control organization. Fire control expertise primarily came from park rangers who had graduated from forestry school or who had transferred from the Forest Service and who propagated Forest Service beliefs about the spread of fire and control techniques. Many early parks, formed out of national forests, inherited the remains of the previous Forest Service fire organizations, such as lookout towers, roads, and trails.

The Park Service considered fire a threat to the scenic and recreational values of the parks, as had the earlier Yosemite state commissioners and, with some notable exceptions, the U.S. Army. The Park Service's major fire control thrust was suppression, although no money specifically for that purpose had ever been appropriated. In 1922 the Park Service finally received a special fire control appropriation—an emergency account to be used only in case of fire. Four years later it was combined with other moneys into a general disaster fund to cope with emergencies and repair damage. No pre-suppression activities were allowed, however.

In 1926, while the forest fire danger continued to grow, Chief Naturalist Ansel Hall became head of a Park Service Division of Education and Forestry, headquartered in Berkeley, CA. The position primarily was to be concerned with interpreting forest resources to visitors, but it soon included fire planning duties. In 1928 the actions of Park Service crews in fighting a large fire near Sequoia National Park brought much criticism and led to the creation of the post of Fire Control Expert under the Chief Forester. A veteran Forest Service supervisor, John D. Coffman, was named to the new position. Under Coffman the Park Service and other members of the Forest Protection Board prepared a comprehensive fire prevention plan detailing the facilities and other requirements necessary for fire control within the National Park System. This laid the foundation for later Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) fire programs in the parks. Congress then made its first national appropriation of \$10,000 for park fire protection and also stressed

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the need for presuppression capabilities, an activity actively carried out by the CCC. Fire lookouts, however, were not authorized until 1931.

Crane Flat Fire Lookout

The first fire lookout in Yosemite was Crane Flat. This lookout was the first of its kind in the park. The main proponent of a fire protection plan was developed for Yosemite by J.D. Coffman. The Park Service's Landscape Division prepared the plans for the structure, and John Wosky, landscape architect, planned the site. The first story functioned as a garage and the second for observation. The structure overlooked the Rockefeller grant recently added to the park. Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) in the national parks and forests included construction and maintenance of fire breaks, construction of fire-related structures, and forest fire suppression. Prior to the ECW, forest fires had posed the gravest threat to the parks, but the Park Service had always lacked sufficient fire fighting personnel and had been unable to implement fire protection programs in each park. The CCC personnel managed to reduce park fire losses tremendously beginning in the first nine months of 1933. The men not only located and suppressed fires, but constructed fire towers and telephone lines as well as roads, trails, and other firebreaks. The following year, refinements were made to park fire-fighting programs and specific enrollees were selected for fire protection training. In general, each park's fire protection plan became better implemented by use of ECW enrollees.

Heness Ridge Fire Lookout

The construction of the fire lookout at Henness Ridge in 1934 was another step in the implementation of a fire protection program for Yosemite National Park and worked with Coffman's assistance. The lookout was built by local forces under the supervision and direction of the Yosemite engineering department. A survey party laid out a meridian to assist in building placement and for future fire control orientation.

Mark Thornton, an authority on "Manned fixed point fire detection" systems (fire lookouts) in California, has found only four rustic style lookouts in the state, all within national park areas. The two in Yosemite are the only ones dating from the 1930s; two others, at Lassen Volcanic National Park and Lava Beds National Monument, were constructed later. All stand in stark contrast to U.S. Forest Service lookouts, which are primarily metal and extremely functional in nature. The other rustic-style lookout in Yosemite, at Crane Flat, has been altered by the addition of a ply board lean-to housing the helitack crew. The only other extant fire suppression unit in the park is at Miguel Meadow. This single-story structure was constructed as a fire guard station in 1934 and is now used as a patrol cabin.

Rustic Style

Rustic architecture is characterized by its natural setting and its use of log and stone for building materials. Designed to blend with the environment, these structures are a natural fit for buildings in the National Parks. The defining characteristics of the rustic style are log construction, stone foundations, small paned windows, overhanging roofs,

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stone chimney's and battered walls. These materials are the basis of the fire lookout at Henness Ridge. Moreover, the rustic style of architecture is intimately linked with the Great Depression era in American history. Rustic was appropriate to rural environments like Yosemite because of its ability to blend artfully and sympathetically with its natural environment. Furthermore, the Rustic style represents an early-20th-century movement in American architecture. Based on a philosophy of nonintrusiveness it was picturesque, romantic architecture that recalled the American past. Rustic was developed as a solution to the problem of providing facilities for the public, in national parks and forests, and in state parks. Rustic helped create an image for the National Parks and has strongly influenced public expectations about the appearance of recreational and administrative buildings in parks and forests. In the eloquence of its expression and its divergence from the trend toward functionalism in urban architecture, rustic made an important contribution to 20th-century American architectural thought.

Impact

The Great Depression brought many changes to the social landscape. The rustic style of architecture is a direct result of these changes in popular thought, especially in the form and function of architecture. The standards of the larger national community placed upon such construction with respect to design, functionality, appearance, and utility.

Within this historical context the Henness Ridge lookout best illustrates the rustic style of architecture as applied to fire control towers in the National Park Service during the 1930s. Moreover, it is also a lasting monument to the spirit and the style of the people who settled and developed this community within the harsh elements of Yosemite National Park.

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Bibliography

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