

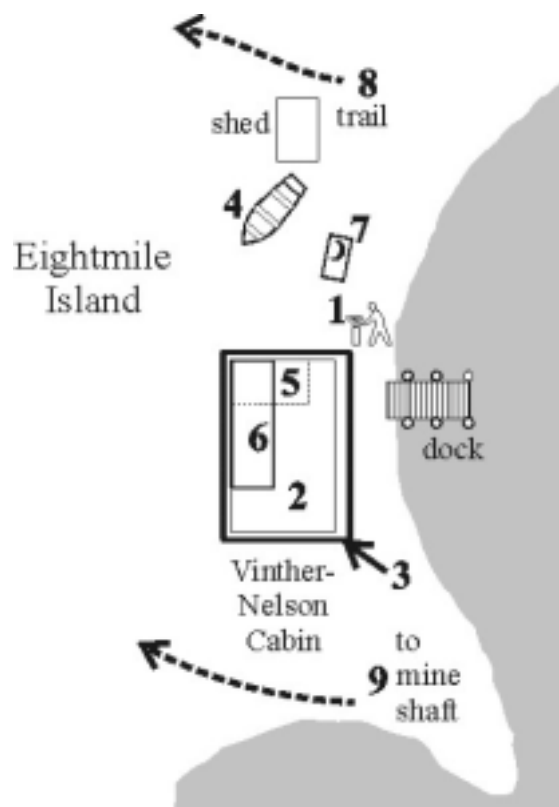


Vinther-Nelson Cabin

National Historical Site

Walking Guide
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Wednesday – Sunday

Priest Lake Ranger District



VINTHER-NELSON HISTORICAL SITE

WALKING GUIDE

1. U.S. FOREST SERVICE HISTORICAL MARKER

In 1989, the U.S. Forest Service erected this marker to provide visitors a brief history of the Vinther-Nelson Historic Cabin. One year later a wind storm caused a large tree to fall, landing dead center on the structure. Fortunately, the metal plaque popped off the mounting and was unharmed. The support structure was destroyed and had to be rebuilt.

The cabin sits on Federal Forest Service land and in 1967, it was determined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that all cabins situated on U.S. Government owned islands in Priest Lake must be torn down. In 1982 after many years of negotiations and effort on the part of the Vinther and Nelson families, an agreement was reached that the cabin would remain as an historic site and was declared such by its acceptance on the National Register of Historic Places.

The cabin was then donated to the U.S. Government by the Vinther and Nelson families and the families now serve as permanent caretakers and curators of the cabin.

2. THE CABIN

The Crenshaw brothers were remarkable log cabin builders. The logs of the cabin are the original logs, as are the purlins which support the shakes of the roof. Note how each log has been cut flat on the sides, both inside and outside to give the appearance of a flat wall.

Small strips of wood were used to fill the cracks below ceiling level and a mud mixture above. Each log was cut from the wealth of trees on the island that existed at that time. Each log was cut by hand, and shaped to fit snugly together using a broad axe.

3. INITIALS FROM THE PAST

Trappers, miners and hunters often visited the Vinther-Nelson cabin, leaving their initials on the corners of the logs. If you look closely, you can see the initials which were formed by hammering spent bullet casings into the wood.

4. TRANSPORTATION

Travel from the city was an arduous task, requiring three days. First day by train, then a horse drawn buckboard and finally a boat trip. The first night was spent at a half-way house located between Priest River and Priest Lake.

The second night was spent at the Northern Hotel in Coolin. (Built in 1904 and destroyed by fire in 1938.)

The trip on the lake was either by rowing or by hitching a ride on the steamer which carried supplies up the lake from Coolin to the miner's campsites.

Rowing eight miles in all kinds of weather required strength and endurance. Note the rowboat has double oar locks. Usually two men would row together, carrying their families and often towing a second boat full of supplies.

5. KITCHEN

The original kitchen extended completely across the back of the cabin. In the early

1930's, however, as both the Vinther family and the Nelson family grew in numbers and in generations, "too many wives in the kitchen" brought a decision to divide the kitchen in half, providing a "Vinther Kitchen" and a "Nelson Kitchen." Each family had its own table in the main living area.

Finally, in the 1940's the whole cabin was divided by a wall, giving each family its own privacy. All this was done without any outward conflict between them. The wall was removed in 1983, restoring the cabin back to its original structure.

The restoration of the kitchen you see here was the Nelson side and represents what it looked like in the early days.

6. MUSEUM

A collection of many articles have been placed in the cabin museum. Things include a series of pictures dating back to the 1920's and 1930's. Note also the fashionable swim suits, both male and female.

The bear skin represents a major contribution made by one of the wild life which inhabited the island and shot by a family member when it attempted to break into the cabin.

The marimba was handmade by Reverend Cecil T. Axworthy, a Spokane minister, who vacationed with families one summer. Each piece was hand carved to the exact tone and the tubes were fashioned from paper rolls.

7. OLD OUTHOUSE DOOR

Many visitors to the Vinther and Nelson cabin also made use of the modern two-holer. Signing their names and date was part of the ceremony. The door itself was the original door on the first Vinther and Nelson outhouse.

If you look closely you will find the signature of steamboat Captain W.E. Slee, dated '08.

8. TRAIL TO ISLAND TOP

A beautiful clearing exists at the top of Eight-Mile Island, the remains of a farmers attempt to make the land productive. In 1898, one year after the Creshaws built the cabin, W.J. Anders and his family purchased the cabin and attempted farming.

Clearing the land, bringing in cattle and planting crops, proved too much for a family with young children, so in 1900 the sale was made to two cousins, Sam Vinther and Nels Nelson, who were anxious to make their fortune working the mine started four years earlier. No minerals of value were to be found so they were unable to obtain a patent for their mining claim.

The hike to the top still reveals a clearing started in 1898. It is a favorite grazing area for deer, rabbits and sometimes a moose and elk. An easy trail will take you around the top and back to your starting point in approximately one hour.

9. TRAIL TO OLD MINE

Long since producing anything of value, the "Deer Trail Lode" mine can be seen only as an indentation in the bank of the island. A short walk along the waters edge on the east side of the island, one can find tailings brought from the mine, which has long since caved in. With only your imagination can you visualize two men working 14-16 hour days, digging deep into the island side and in their spare time building the beautiful structure now know as the Vinther and Nelson Historic Cabin.

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Priest Lake Area

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