

## Shorty Lovelace, Fur Trapper Sierra National Forest

Walter “Shorty” Lovelace was a fur trapper who worked the North Fork of the Kings River country of the Sierra National Forest from 1940 to the early 1960s.

He began trapping fisher, wolverine, and marten in what was to become Sequoia - Kings Canyon National Park around 1920. The story goes that only in the mountains could he escape his craving for alcohol, away from the temptations of civilized life. His life fell into a pattern for the best of four decades: in the fall, he’d stock a series of cabins he built in the mountains with food and firewood; in the winter he’d be alone in the high country with his trapline; in the spring he’d bring his furs to market; and he’d drink his summers away in town. But in 1940 Congress created the National Park, and Shorty was forced to move.



Shorty Lovelace, 1920s



Shorty's Big Maxon Cabin, 1993

He moved into the Sierra National Forest with his traps and built another series of cabins throughout the backcountry. Shorty built them himself, usually scavenging down logs, and cutting shakes for the roof. Shorty's cabins fit the man, being rarely over six feet high, about eight feet in length and width, with a small bunk and rock fireplace. Bob Flynn, the Kings River District Ranger from 1950-1955, said that the Forest Service had no official relationship with Shorty... “He had no permits for trapping or building his cabins—but we knew about his cabins and we knew he was trapping—we saw little reason to bother him when all was friendly enough”.



Shorty's Crown Valley Cabin

By 1961, Shorty was no longer trapping, and he died at 73 years old in 1963, having lived many of his winters alone in the deep snows of the high Sierra. His old haunts are now mostly in the John Muir Wilderness, but his story lives on in his small log cabins that can still be found throughout the backcountry.

Shorty's cabins on the Sierra National Forest are a disappearing historic resource. Information suggests that there are as many as twenty-six cabins in the wilderness. Shorty's headquarters cabin at Sand Flat at Courtright Lake has been restored by the Forest Service, and can be easily visited.



Shorty Lovelace at Sand Flat Cabin, Courtright Lake, 1959

The rest of his cabins are remote, hidden, and in some cases, collapsing and disappearing. Many haven't ever been relocated.

Here's your opportunity! If you're in the backcountry, find and photograph one of Shorty's Cabins! You'll not only have a unique encounter with part of our Forest's history, but you'll also be ensuring that the story of Shorty lives on.