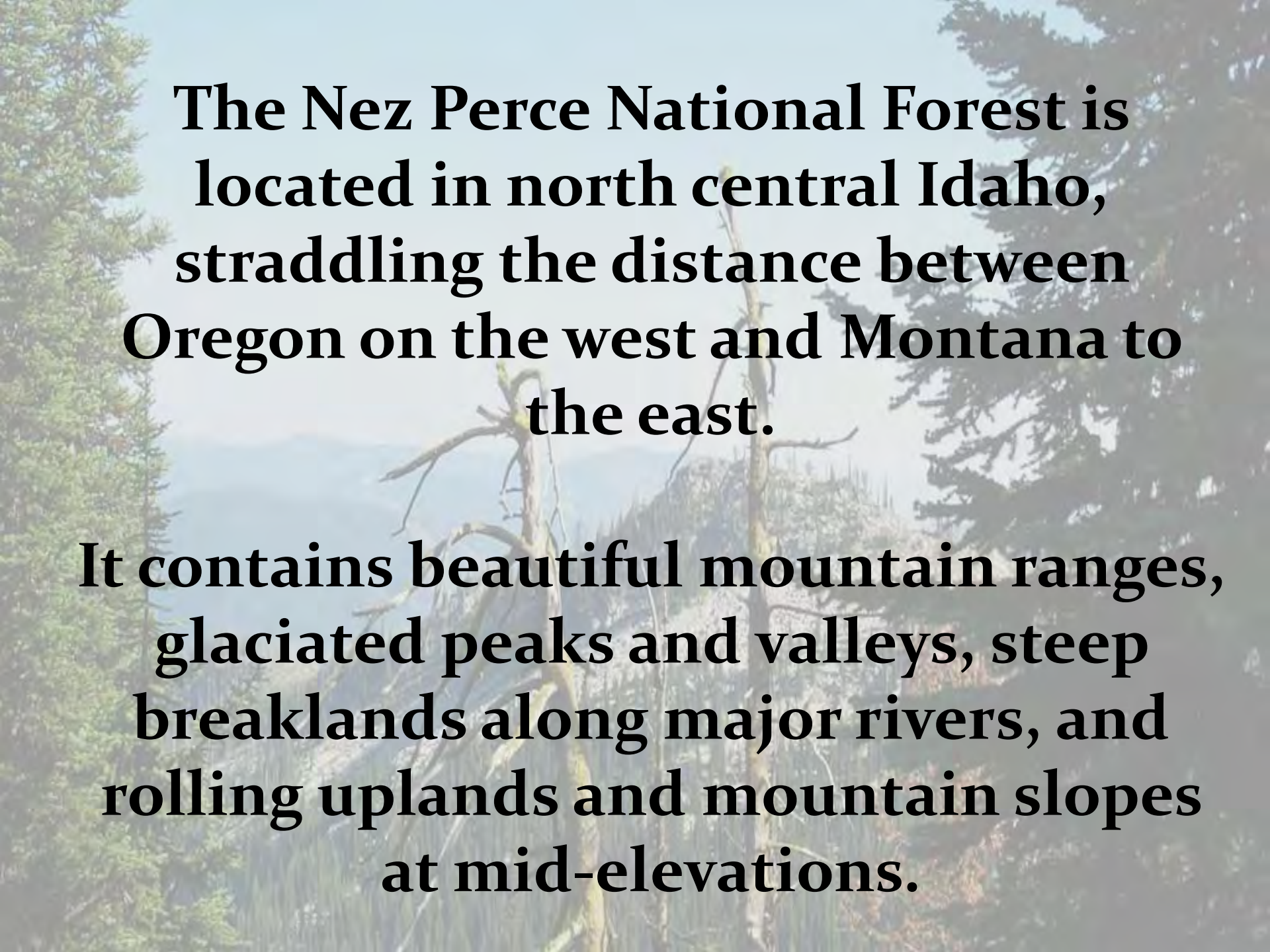


History of Forest Fire Lookouts on the Nez Perce National Forest



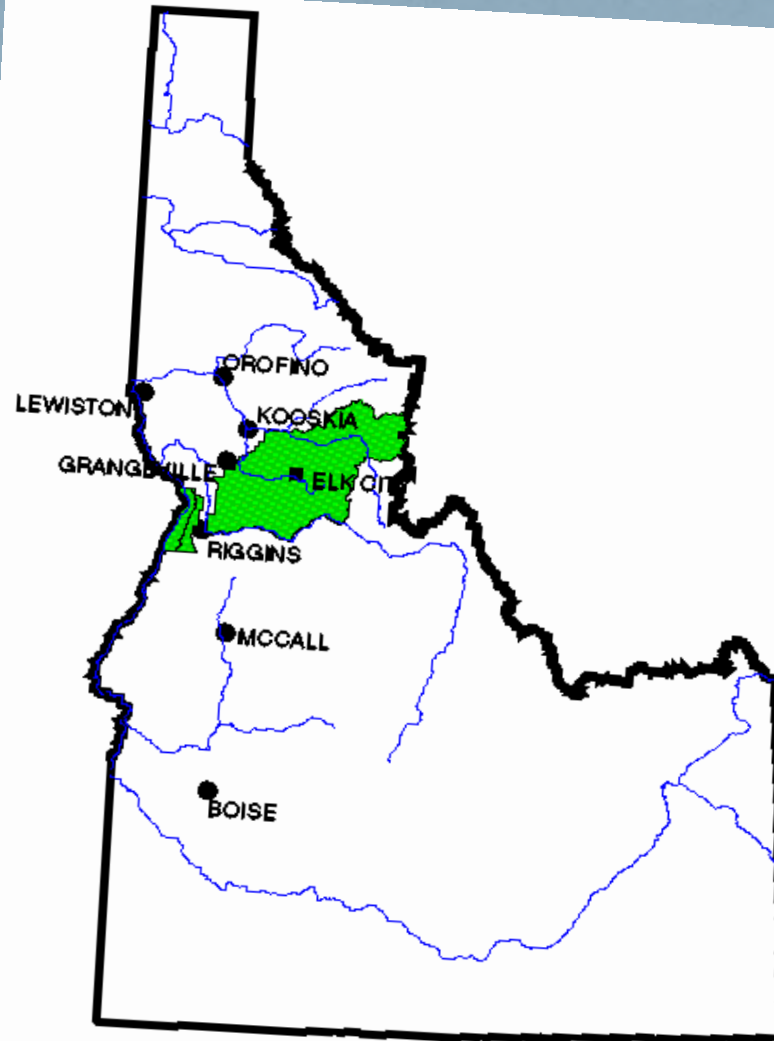
Bear Point Lookout in 1961.



The Nez Perce National Forest is located in north central Idaho, straddling the distance between Oregon on the west and Montana to the east.

It contains beautiful mountain ranges, glaciated peaks and valleys, steep breaklands along major rivers, and rolling uplands and mountain slopes at mid-elevations.

Vicinity Map - Nez Perce National Forest Located in North-Central Idaho





Steve Armstrong photo

Salmon River at Mackay Bar



Cindy Schacher photo

East Fork of Moose Creek drainage,
Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.



Nick Gerhardt photo

South Fork Clearwater River



Cindy Schacher photo

Along O'Hara Creek.



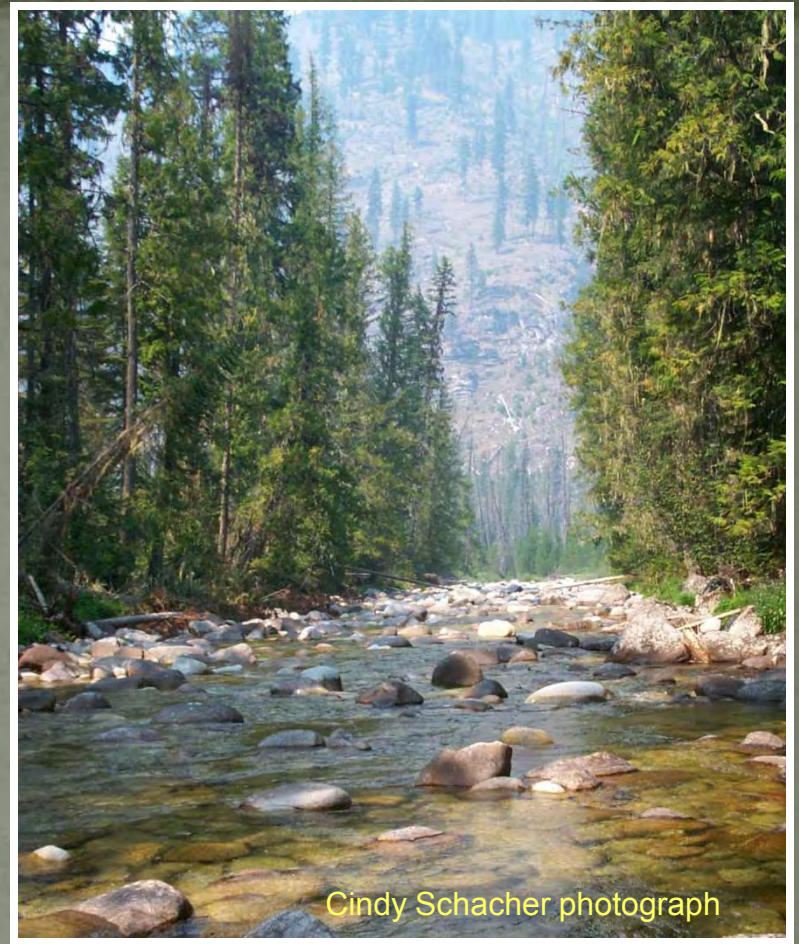
Wilderness

Gospel-Hump Wilderness Area

Marci Gerhardt photograph

"A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

1964 Wilderness Act



Portions of the Selway-Bitterroot, Frank Church River of No Return, and the entire Gospel-Hump Wilderness areas comprise 40% of the Nez Perce National Forest's total 2.2 million acres.



Roger Inghram photo

Packstrings on Moose Creek bridge,
Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area

- ❖ Designated by Congress September 1964, under the Wilderness Act.
- ❖ Encompasses 1.3 million acres.
- ❖ Managed by the Nez Perce, Clearwater, and Bitterroot National Forests.



Roger Inghram photograph

Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area

Gospel-Hump Wilderness Area

- ❖ Designated a Wilderness Area by Congress in 1978.
- ❖ Buffalo Hump takes its name from a prominent peak which rises in elevation to 8,926 feet. Early miners thought it resembled the hump of a buffalo; and the Nez Perce called it “see-nimp”, meaning the “buffalo hump”.
- ❖ Encompasses 206,000 acres and is managed solely by the Nez Perce National Forest.

Gospel-Hump Wilderness Area



Cindy Schacher photo

Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area

- ❖ Designated as the “River of No Return Wilderness”, by Congress in 1980.
- ❖ Renamed the “Frank Church-River of No Return” Wilderness Area in 1984, to honor Idaho Senator Frank Church.
- ❖ Encompasses 2.3 million acres; and is managed by the Nez Perce, Salmon-Challis, Payette, Boise, and Bitterroot National Forests.



Howard Lyman photograph

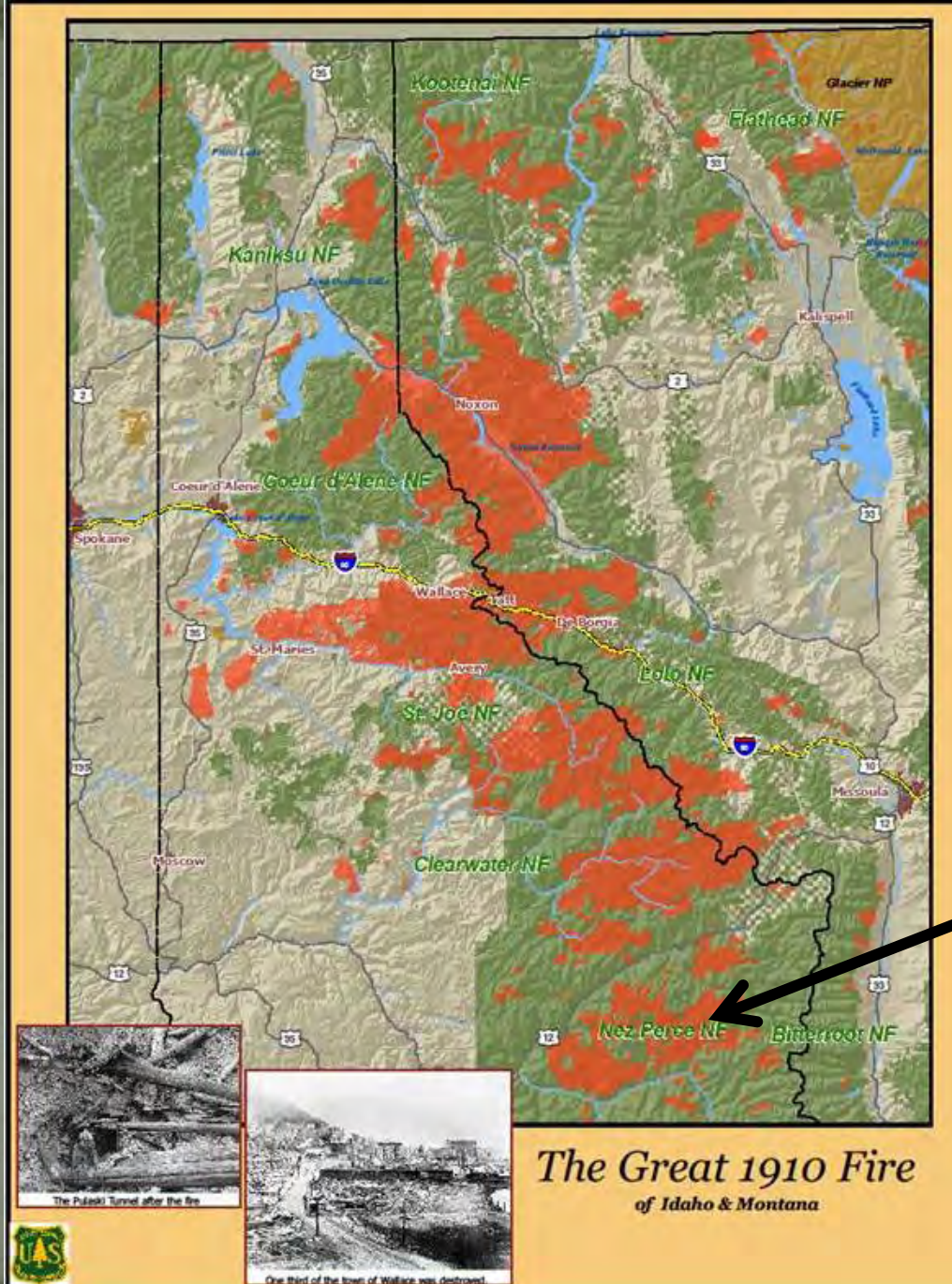
Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness Area



The Nez Perce National Forest was created by Executive Order No. 854, signed by President Theodore Roosevelt, and became effective on July 1, 1908.



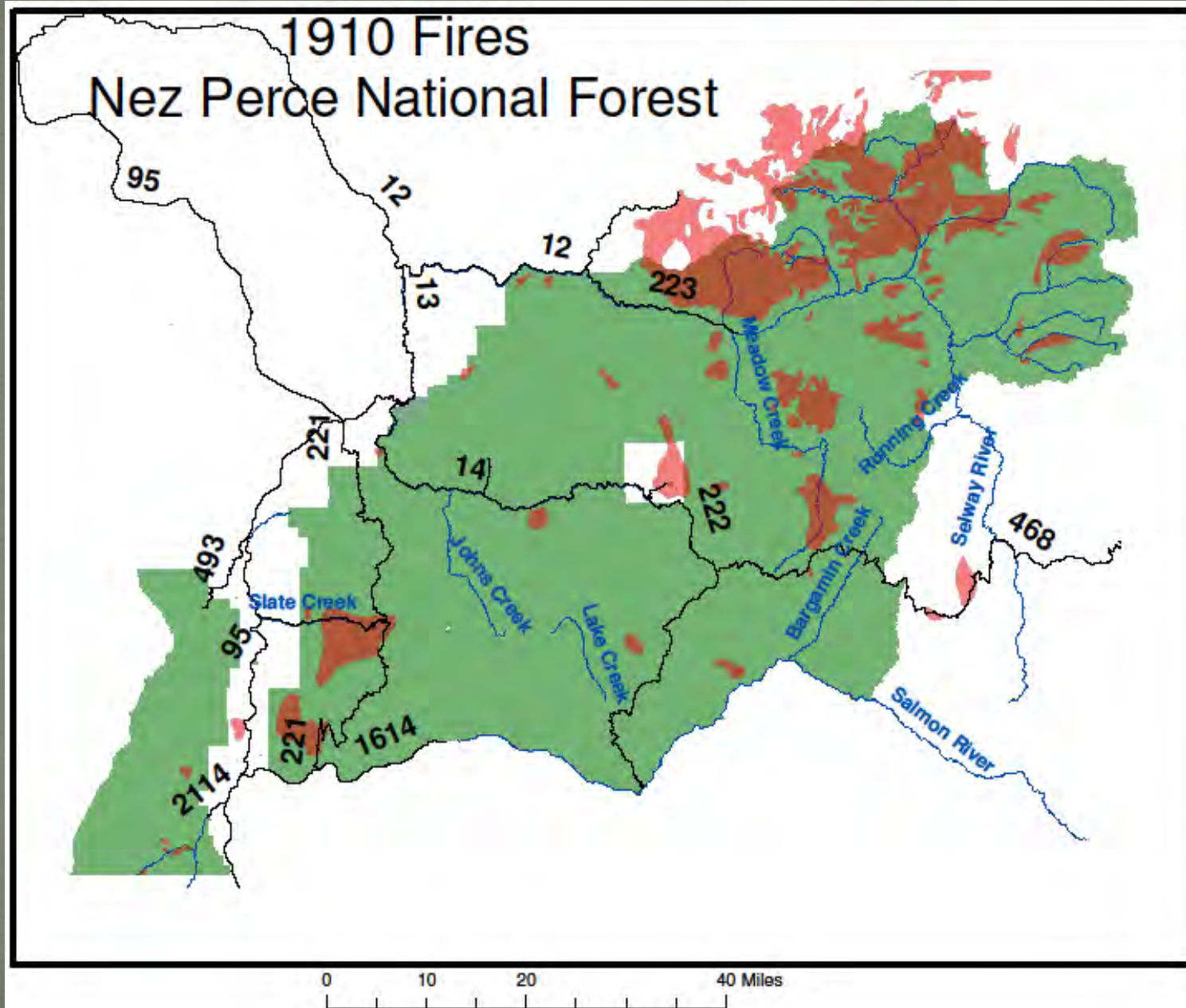
Forest Fires of 1910



Nez Perce National Forest



1910 Fires Nez Perce National Forest



After the 1909 fire season and before the big fires of 1910 the Rangers realized the inadequacies of their fire fighting capabilities. They knew they needed to readjust the whole scheme of fire protection.

Men should be immediately be sent out to select suitable lookout points, put in trails to reach the lookouts, string telephone line to communicate with the supervisors and rangers, have pack trains ready to be mobilized at a moments notice, and distribute caches throughout the forest”

1909—F.A. Silcox, Acting District Forester



USFS photo

First pre-season fire force on the Bitterroot Forest Reserve in 1907.



Sid Poppe photo,
Dick Walker Collection

Packing lumber for a lookout construction, Bear
Creek Ranger Station, Selway National Forest.

The Forest Service had no way of anticipating the coming holocaust of 1910. There had not been time to fully implement District Forester Silcox's plan. Even if there had been, men fighting fire with hand tools, no method of communication and relying on pack stock for supplies stood no chance in such a battle with nature.

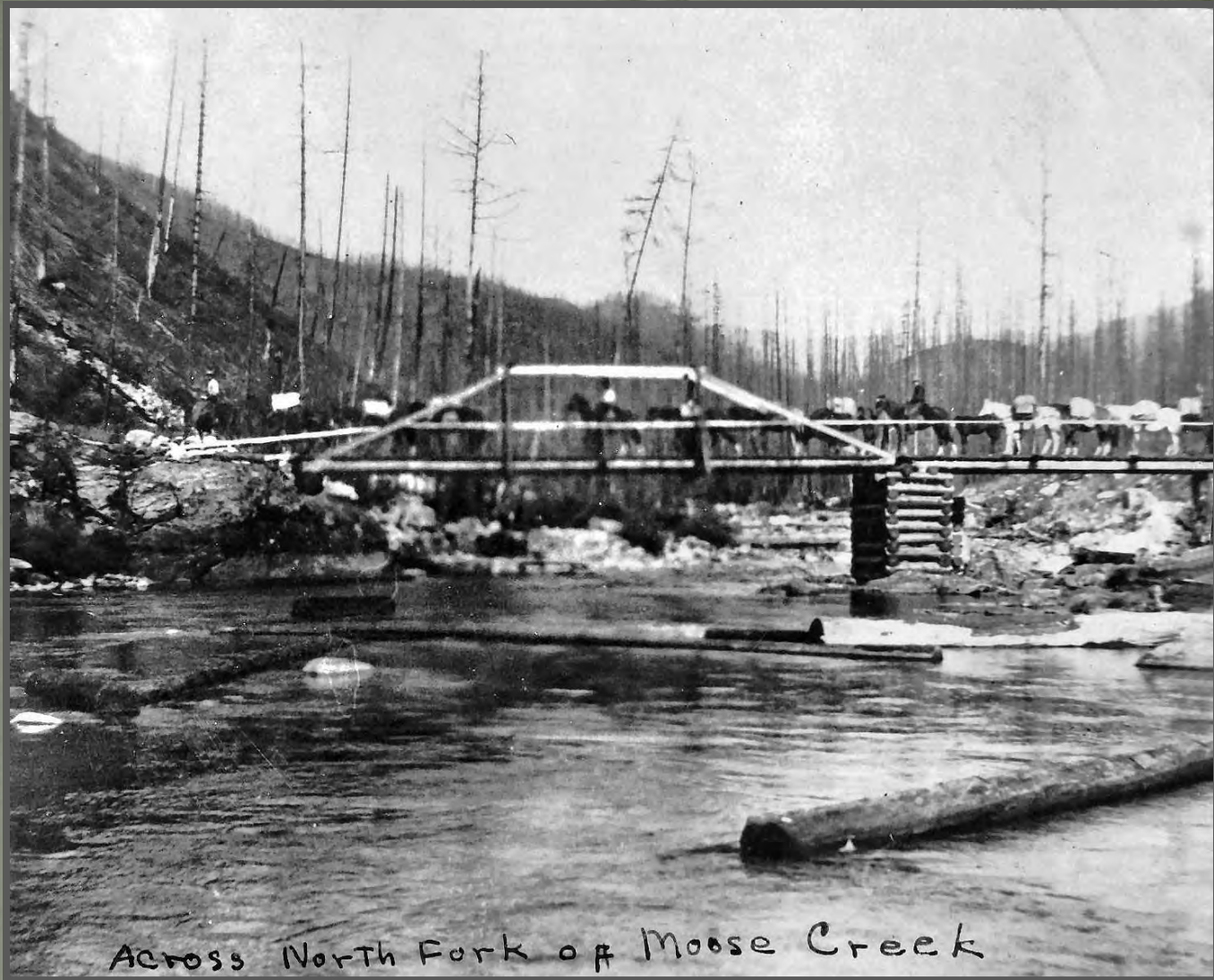


Unlike northern Idaho, we were fortunate that the areas burned in 1910 in the forests of north-central Idaho were primarily in remote locations where very few people lived.

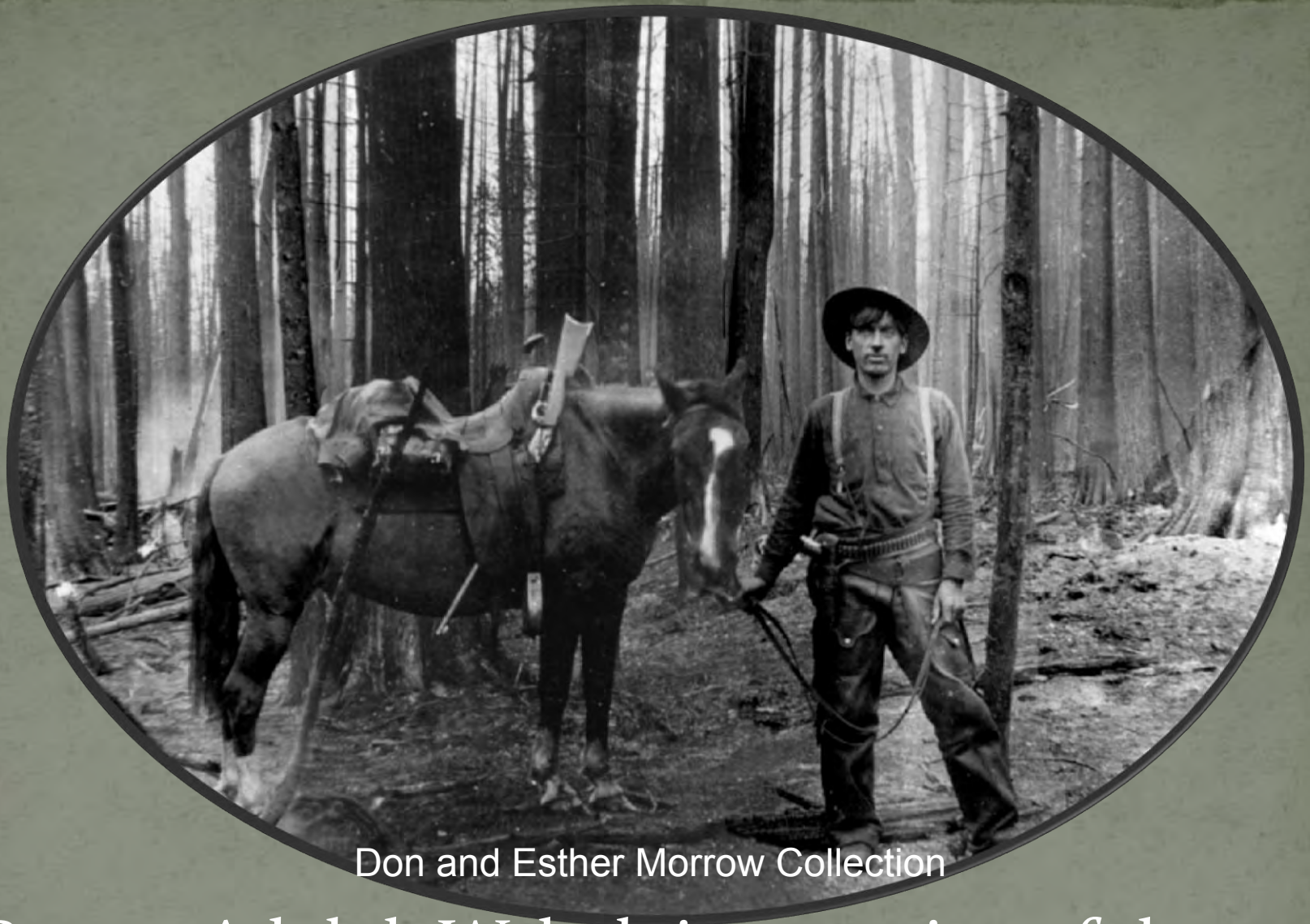


Although the area surrounding it burned, Three Forks Ranger Station on the Selway National Forest escaped the flames.

This photo was taken on August 22, 1910.



Packstring crossing the North Fork of Moose Creek Bridge after the 1910 fire in the area.



Don and Esther Morrow Collection

Ranger Adolph Weholt in a portion of the
scorched Selway National Forest in 1910.

1910 became a point in which to mark time. After which fire control and resource protection were the main priorities of the Forest Service. This meant more men and the construction of more ranger stations, trails, phone line and establishing lookouts.



USFS photo

Salmon River Trail



Around 360,000 acres
burned on the Nez
Perce Forest in 1910.

**August 1910 Fire Near Elk
City, Idaho.**

There were a record of 33 fires the past season
(1910). The unceasing struggle..., the courage
displayed in the face of danger, speaks in highest
terms for the men of this forest.

George V. Ring, Nezperce National Forest Supervisor



George V. Ring photo

Nez Perce National Forest Rangers in 1910

A photograph of a wooden fire lookout tower on a mountain ridge. The sun is setting directly behind the tower, creating a strong lens flare and silhouetting the structure. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, and distant mountain ranges are visible in the background.

Forest Fire Lookouts

Bailey Mountain Lookout
Art Seamans photo

To aid in the young Forest Service mission of fire suppression, fire lookouts were established on nearly every high mountain peak.

Early lookouts were merely high points with an unobstructed view or a “crows nest” built in a tree.

*Seaburg Lookout Tree,
date unknown.*





C.H. Shattuck photo

Diablo Peak lookout station in 1910.

Sometimes referred to as “rag camps”, many lookouts were just a map board on a rock with a tent for the fireman to live in.

George Watkins and Levi Colgrove at camp on Pilot Knob in 1915.



Tom Crossley photo



Fish Creek Lookout, 1947.



Chair Point Lookout, 1931

Some lookout points required a tower to obtain a good view over the tree tops.



With advances in fire detection equipment and aircraft fewer lookouts were needed. In the late 1950s and early 1960s many lookouts were destroyed. Only a few of them remain today.

High Springs Lookout on the Moose Creek Ranger District, was “blown” down with dynamite in 1957.



The Nez Perce National Forest has had at least 148 different lookout points since the establishment of the Forest in 1908.



These lookouts have varied widely from a simple map board on a stump or rock to beautifully constructed log cabins or dramatic 100 foot steel towers.

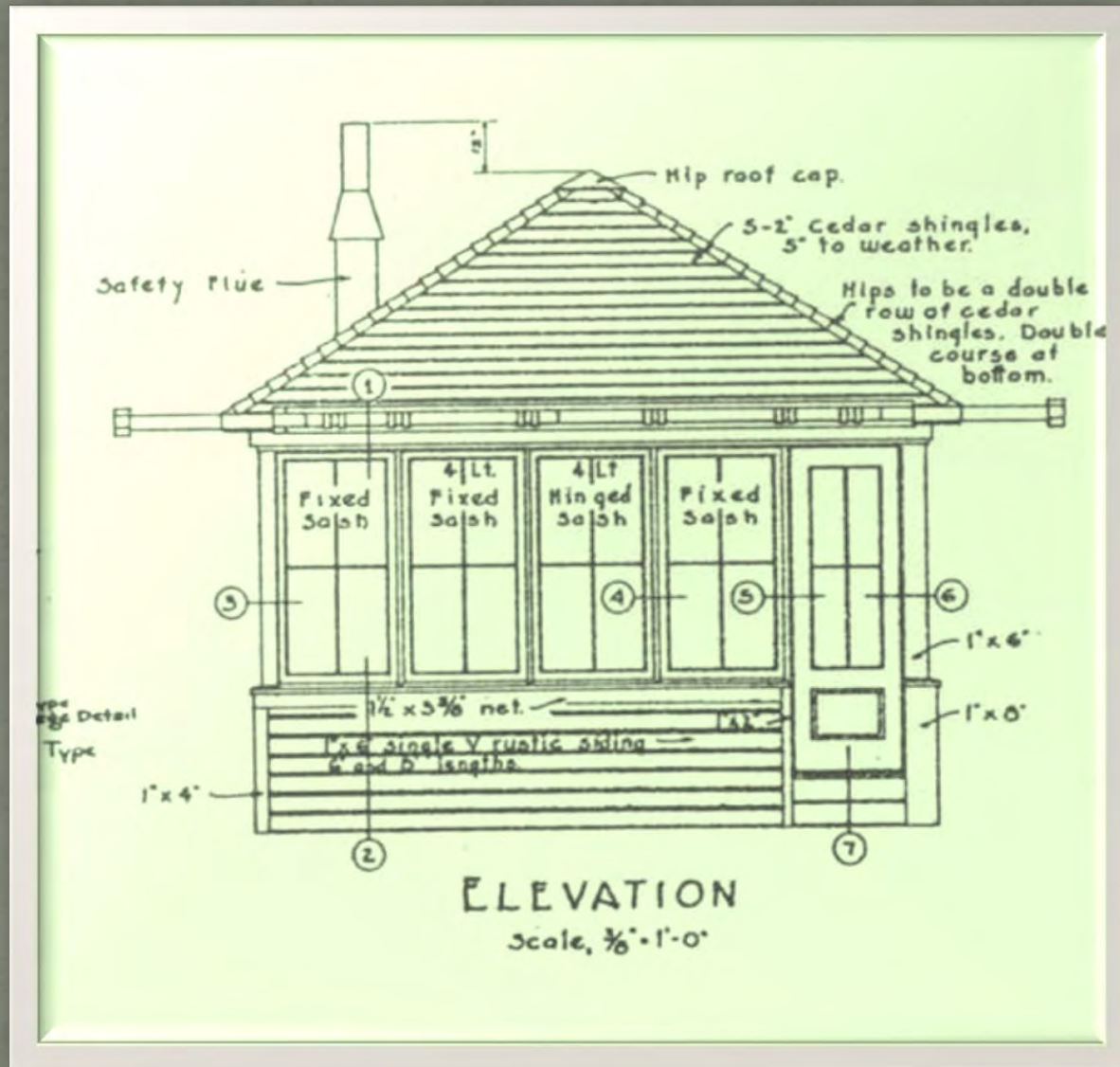
Today only twenty-one remain on the Forest.



Indian Hill Lookout in 2007.

Cindy Schacher photo

L-4 Lookouts on the Nez Perce NF



- There have been fourteen L-4 lookouts on the Forest.
- There were five L-4 lookout towers built in 1953—Anderson Butte, Coolwater, Corral Hill, Gardiner Peak, and Shissler Peak.
- Nine L-4 model lookouts remain.
- Pilot Knob Lookout, built in 1939, is the only L-4 model remaining with a pole tower rather than treated timber.

Pilot Knob Lookout



Built in 1939.

Located 14 miles NW of Elk City.

USFS photo



There are two L-4's on Coolwater Ridge.
One is a ground cab with a gable roof built in 1931.
The second sits on a 10' TT tower and was built in 1953.

Coolwater in 1998



The ground cab was moved down the hill to be used for storage when the 1953 lookout was constructed. The structure is in poor condition.

Grave Point Lookout

The L-4 at Grave Point was constructed in 1954. It is maintained for emergency use. It is located 15 miles NNW of Riggins, Idaho.



USFS photo

The Green Mountain L-4
lookout was built in 1956.
It is located 18 miles ESE
of Elk City, Idaho and is
maintained for
emergency use.

Green Mountain Lookout in 2008.



Steve Armstrong photo

Log Cabin with Cupola Lookouts

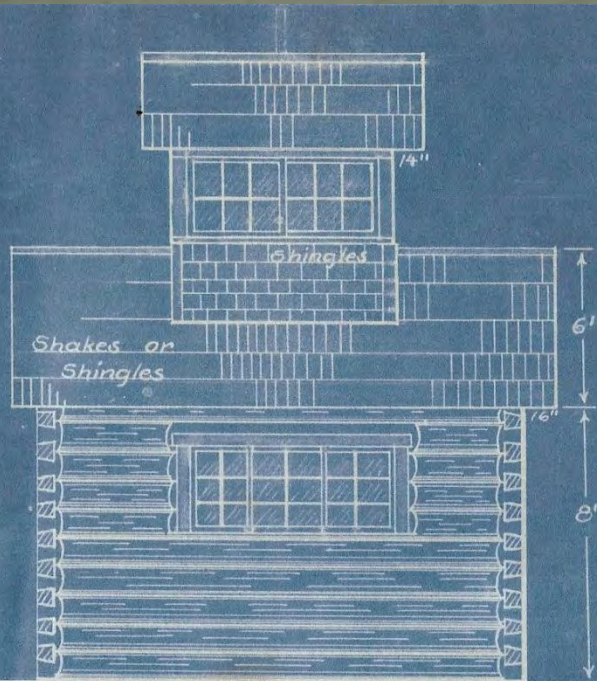
The exquisite craftsmanship of the builders of log lookouts on the Nez Perce is obvious. Although there only remains one of the original twenty, one can see through photographs the attention given to detail. The logs were carefully chosen to match diameter and the corners painstakingly notched to perfection.



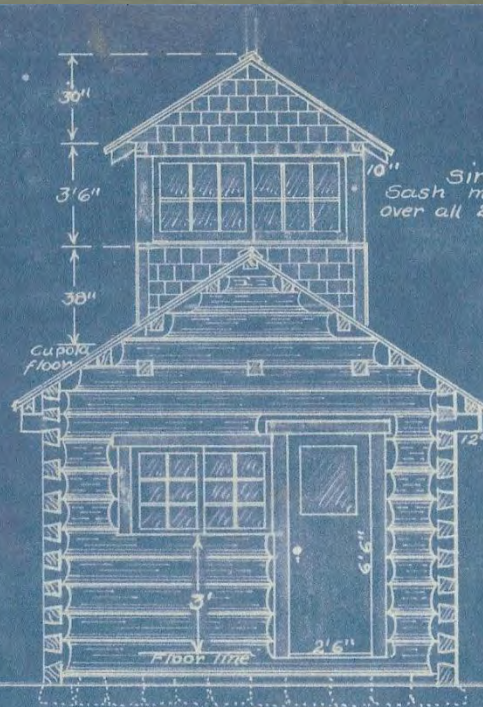
Nez Perce Log Lookout House

The Nez Perce Log Lookout House is a log cabin with a cupola. The idea for this style of lookout is said to have been borrowed from the R-3 log cabin with cupola of the Flathead National Forest. The plans call for the structure to be either 12' x 14' or 14' x 14'.

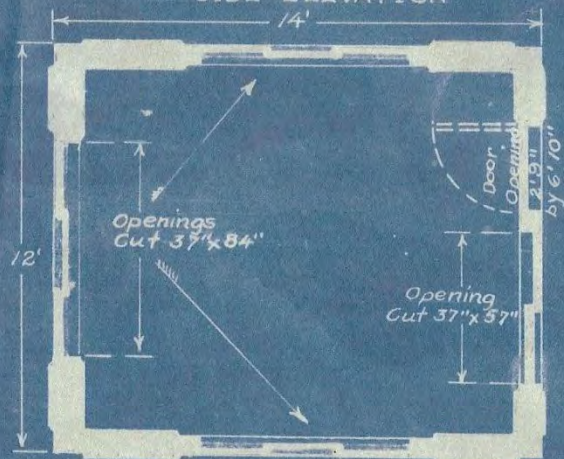
Although the formal plans for this style of lookout are dated 1928, lookouts of this type had already sprung up across the Forest.



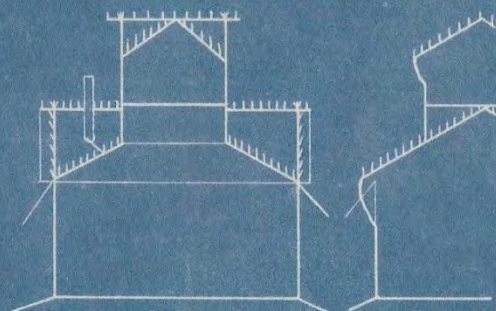
SIDE ELEVATION



END ELEVATION



FLOOR PLAN



SIDE
LIGHTNING PROTECTION
DIAGRAM

END

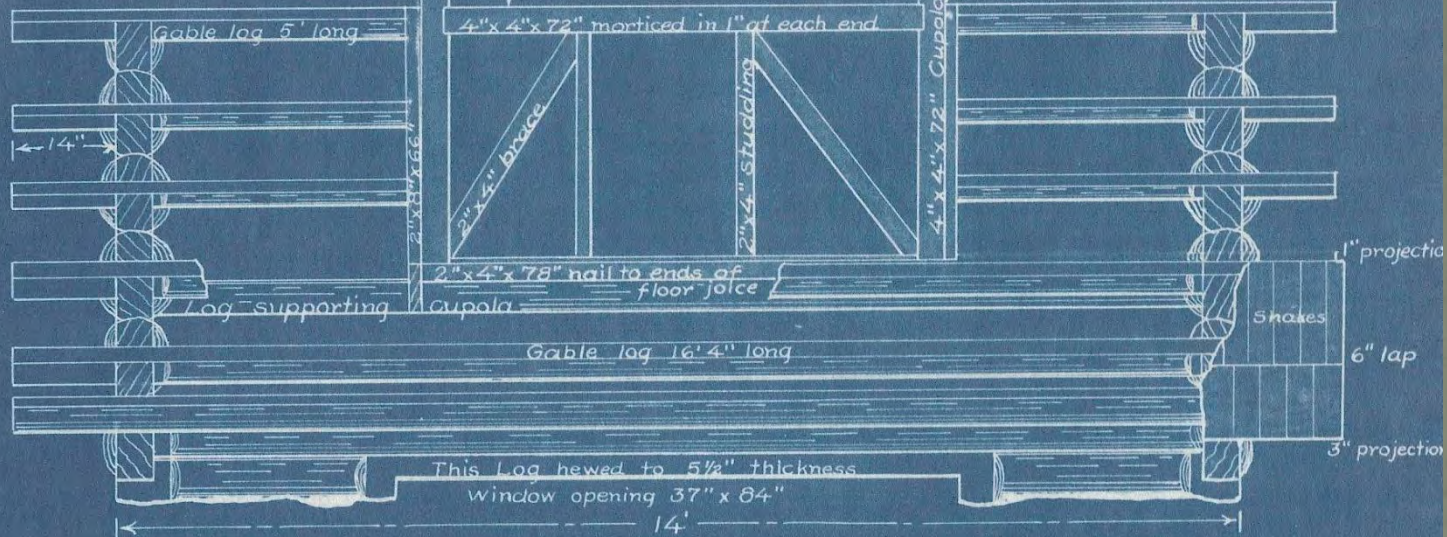
NEZPERCE
LOG L.O. HOUSE
PLAN
6-15-28, C.D.B.

SHEET-1.

Nez Perce Log Lookout House Plans 1928

Scale 1 in. = 2 ft.
10-19-28, - C.D.B.

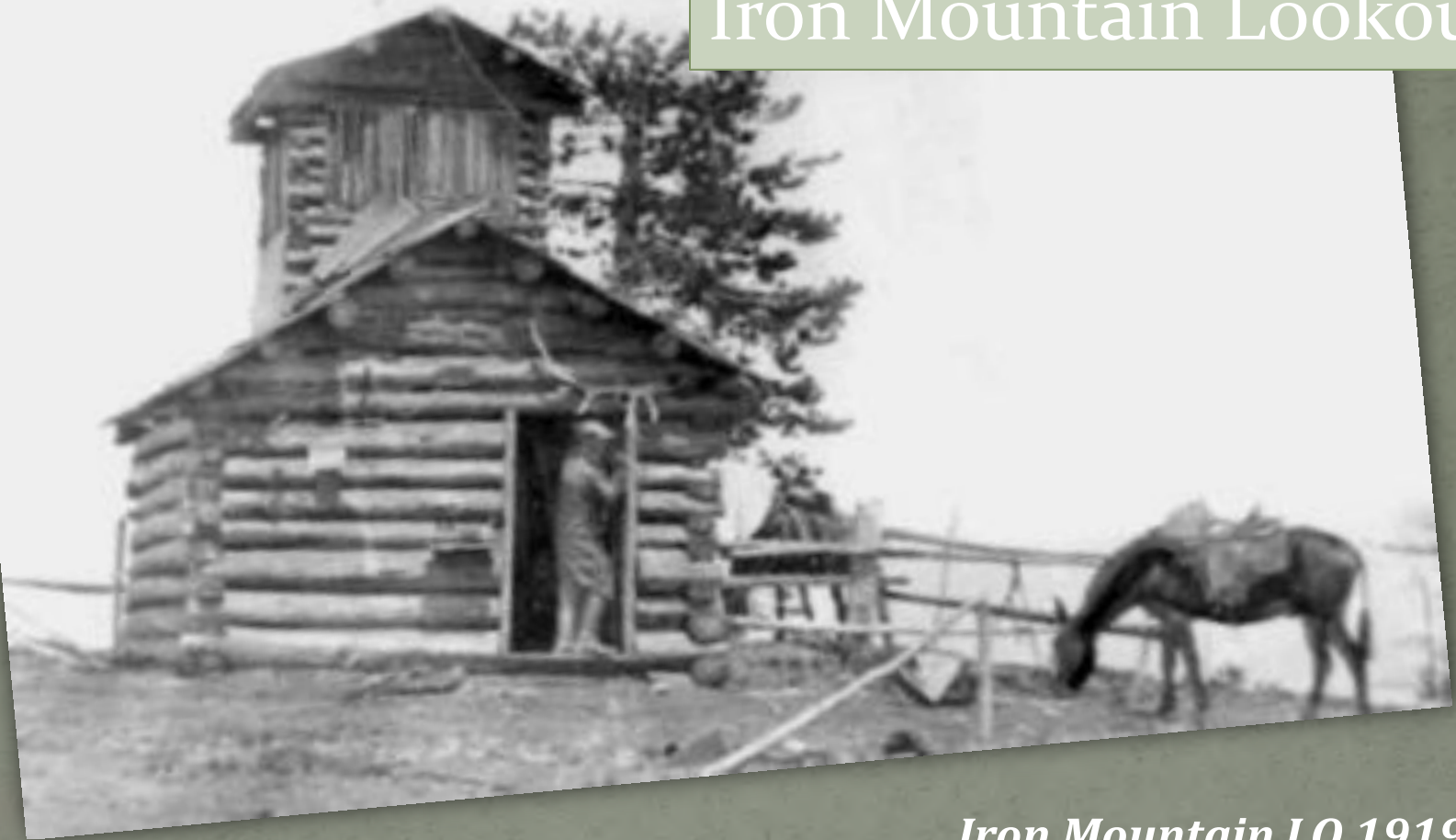
Technical drawing of a wall section. The drawing shows a cross-section of a wall with a top plate labeled $1' \times 6' \times 8'$ and a bottom plate labeled $4' \times 4' \times 8'$. The height of the wall is indicated as $30''$. The width of the wall is indicated as $70''$. The base of the wall is indicated as $10''$. The wall is labeled "Sheeting" and shows a brick pattern on the right side.



SIDE ELEVATION

Of the twenty log cabin with cupola lookouts on the Nez Perce National Forest, only one remains. Unfortunately we don't know much about most of them as they have long been absent from the landscape. However, we are lucky to have photographs of each one.

Iron Mountain Lookout



- Located 11 miles NNW of Elk City, ID.

-

- Built in 1919.

*Iron Mountain LO 1919
George V. Ring photo*

Freeman Peak Lookout

- Located 6 miles ENE of Moose Creek Ranger Station.
- Built in 1923.



*Freeman Peak LO, date unknown
USFS photo*

Vermillion Peak Lookout

- Located 16 miles NE of Elk City, ID
- Built in 1924



*Vermillion Peak LO, 1929
Del Cox photo*

Fog Mountain Lookout



*Fog Mountain LO, 1924
Wanda Buller Collection*

- Located 15 miles WSW of Moose Creek Ranger Station
- Built in 1924

Grave Point Lookout

- Located 15 miles NNW of Riggins, ID
- Built in 1924



*Grave Point LO, date unknown
USFS photo*

Heaven's Gate Lookout



- Located 9 miles SW of Riggins, ID
- Built in 1924

*Heaven's Gate LO, 1940
Gary Weber Collection*

Gardner Peak Lookout

- Located 13 miles SE of Moose Creek Ranger Station

- Built in 1925



*Gardiner Peak LO, 1929
Dick Walker Collection*

Bailey Mountain Lookout



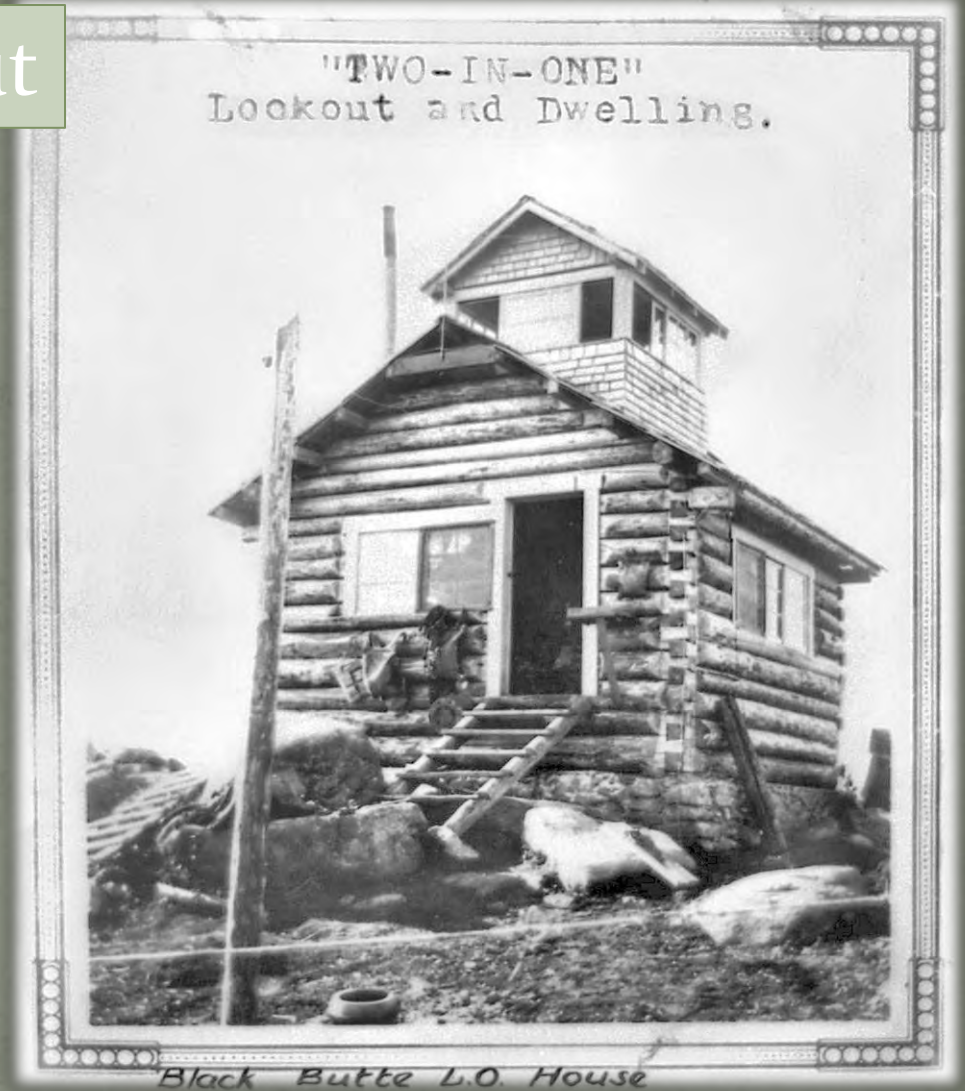
- Located 9 miles NNE of Moose Creek Ranger Station

*Bailey Mountain LO, 1959
Deane Hess photo*

- Built in 1927

Black Butte Lookout

- Located 22 miles ENE of Riggins, ID
- Built in 1928



*Black Butte LO, date unknown
George V. Ring photo*

Grouse Ridge Lookout

- Located 25 miles ENE of Elk City, ID
- Built in 1928



*Grouse Ridge LO, no date.
Sid Poppe photo, Dick Walker Collection*

Sheep Hill Lookout

- Located 24 miles SE of Elk City, ID
- Built in 1928



*Sheep Hill LO, 1928
USFS photo*

Oregon Butte Lookout

- Located 24 miles SSW of Elk City, ID
- Built in 1929



*Oregon Butte LO, 1963
USFS photo*

Puzzle Point Lookout

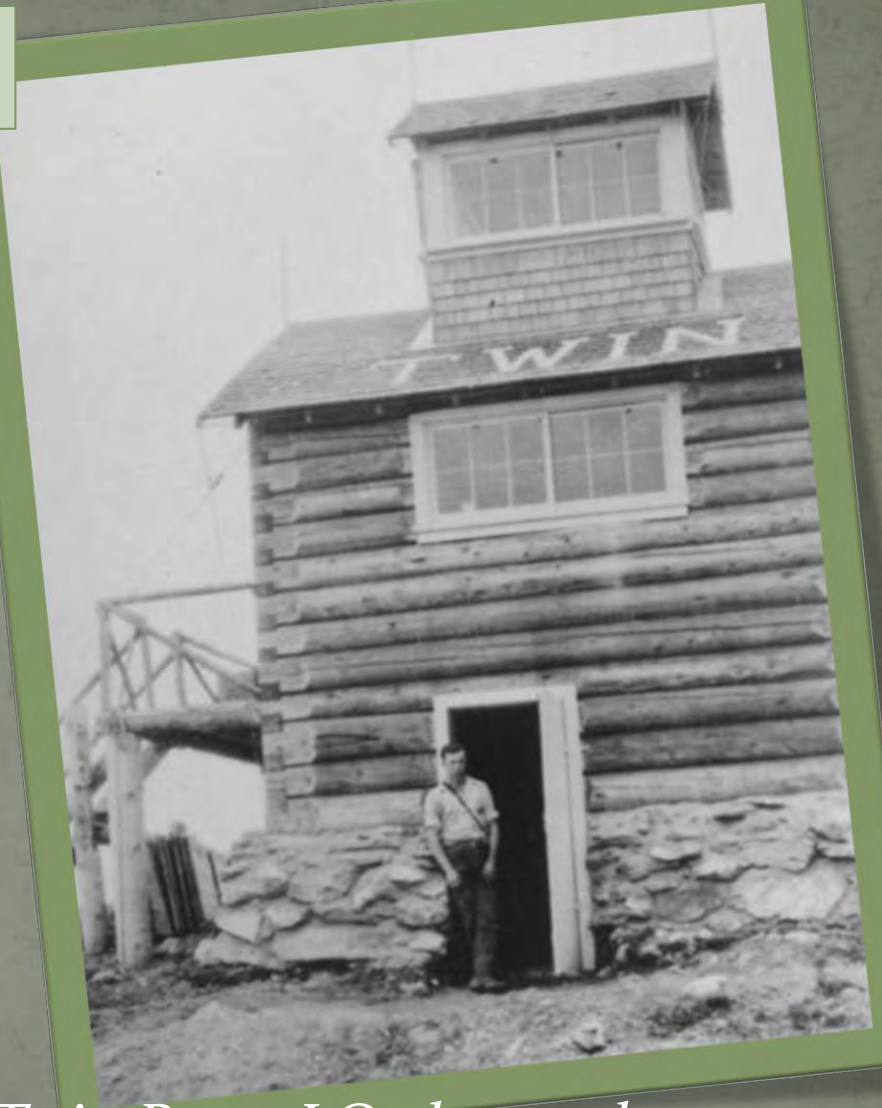
- Located 3 miles SW of Moose Creek Ranger Station
- Built in 1929



*Puzzle Point LO, 1929
USFS photo*

Twin Butte Lookout

- Located 12 miles ESE of Moose Creek Ranger Station
- Built in 1929



*Twin Butte LO, date unknown
Leroy Lewis photo—Dick Walker collection*

Bear Wallow Lookout

- Located 7 miles W of Moose Creek Ranger Station
- Built in 1930



*Bear Wallow LO, 1950
USFS photo*

Green Mountain Lookout

- Located 18 miles ESE of Elk City, ID
- Built circa 1930



*Green Mountain LO, 1951
USFS photo*

Rabbit Point Lookout

- Located 23 miles S of Elk City, ID
- Built in 1930



Rabbit Point LO 1939
Harry Hendron photo

Jersey Mountain Lookout

- Located 24 miles SSW of Elk City, ID
- Built in 1931



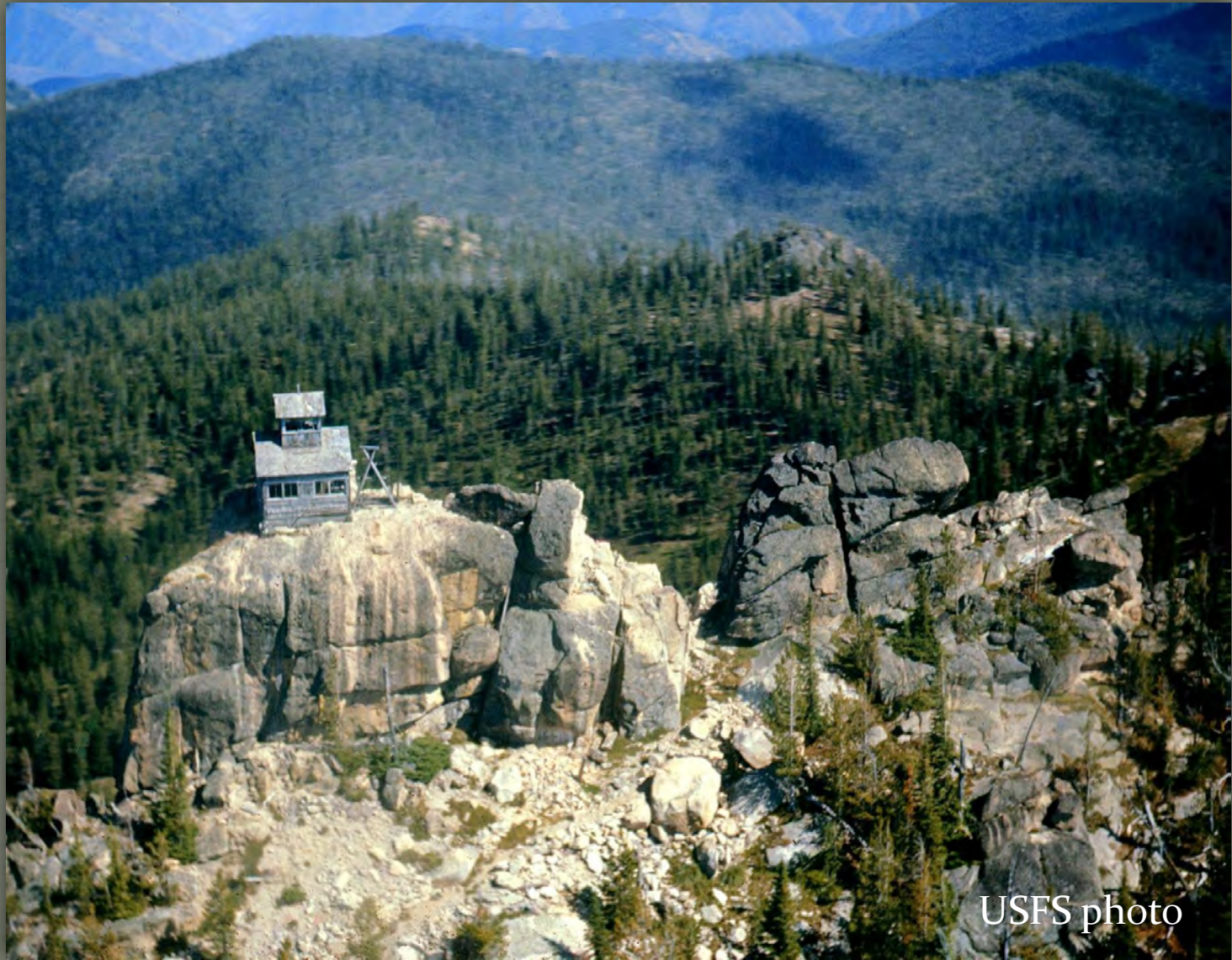
*Jersey Mountain LO, 1951
USFS photo*

Wylies Peak Lookout

The most memorable and spectacular of the Nez Perce National Forest lookouts.

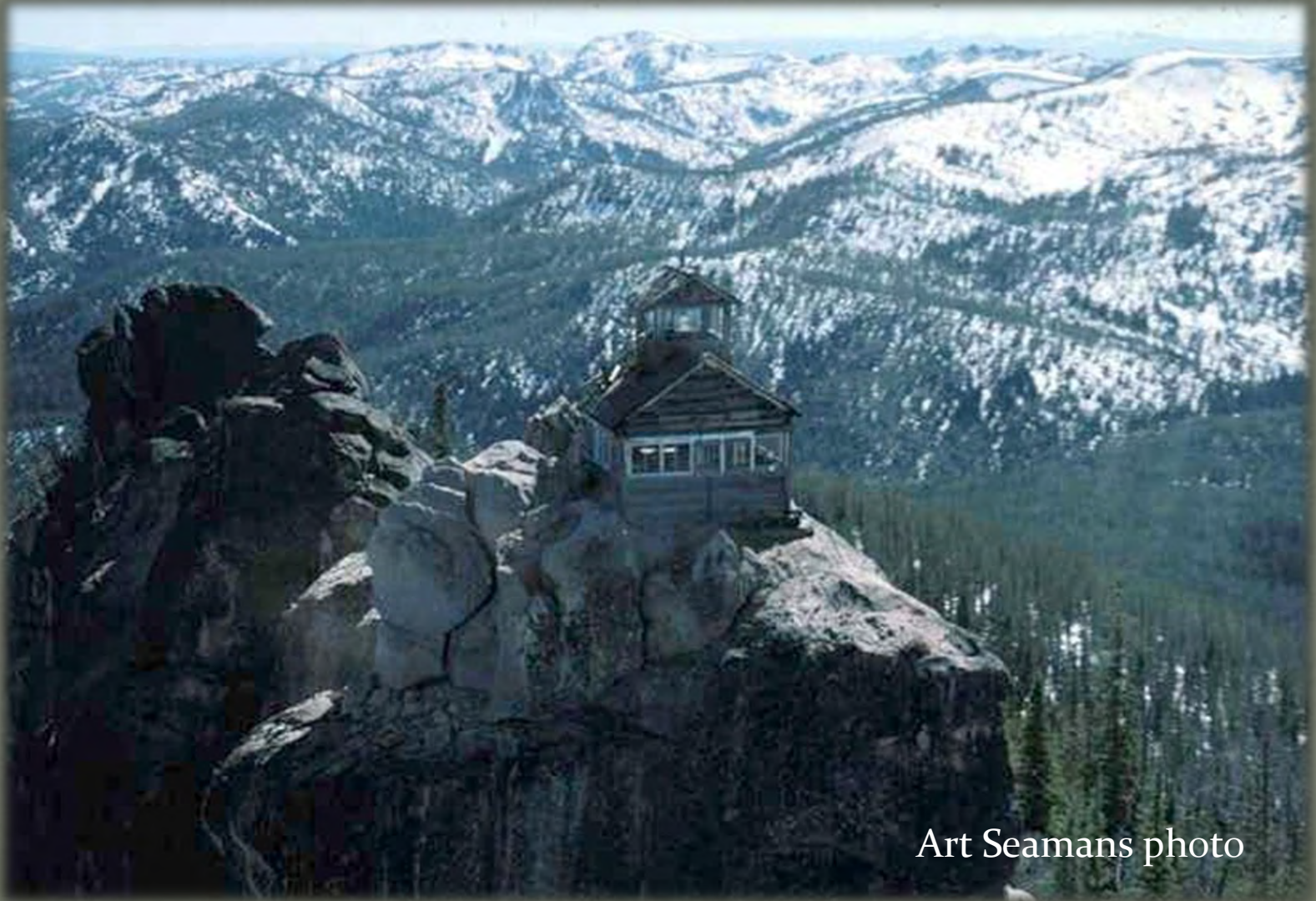


Wylies Peak Lookout



USFS photo

Built atop a large granite boulder in 1925, Wylies remained a landmark of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness until 1983 when lightning struck a fatal blow.

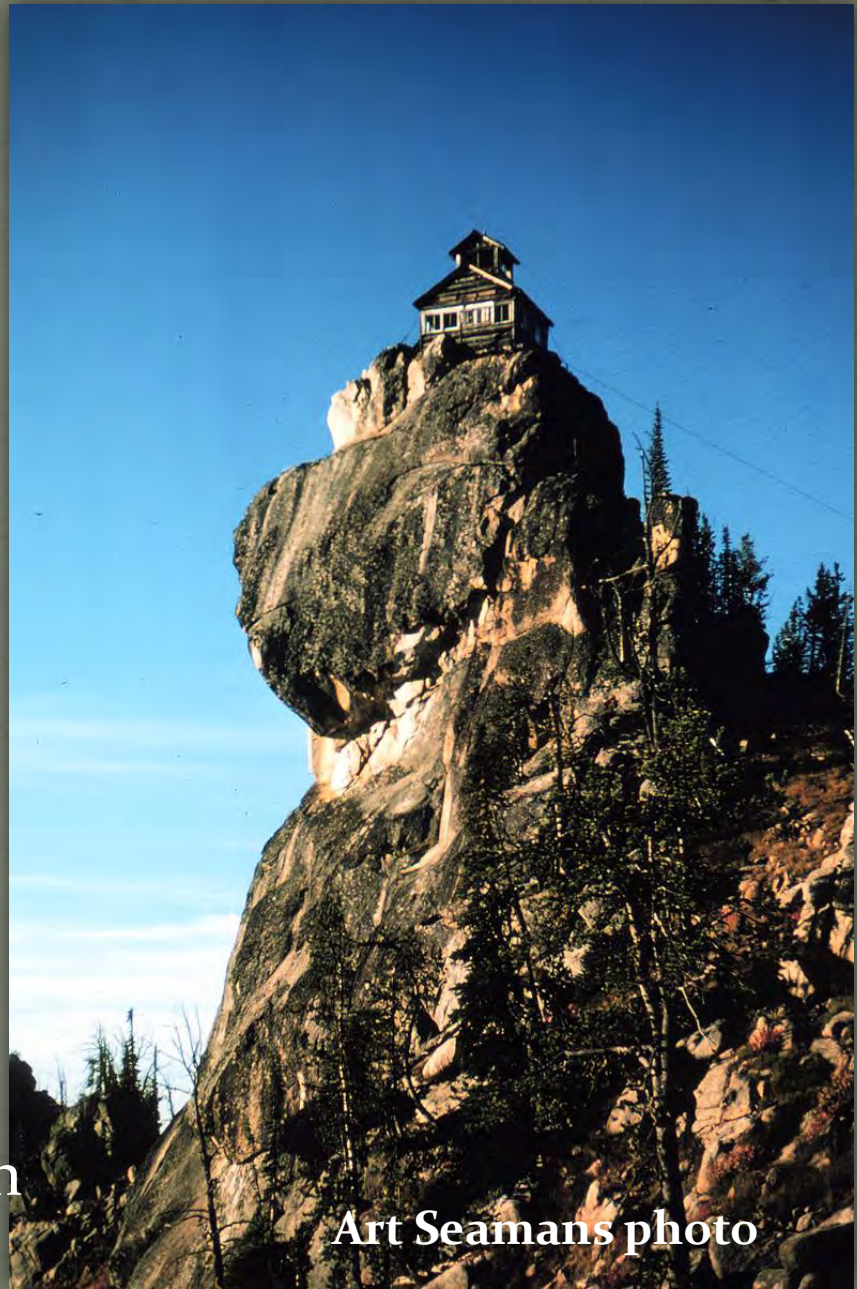


Art Seamans photo



Art Seamans photo

Forest Supervisor Don Biddison
at Wylies Peak, 1979.



Art Seamans photo

Sourdough Peak Lookout—the last remaining log cabin with cupola lookout on the Nez Perce NF.

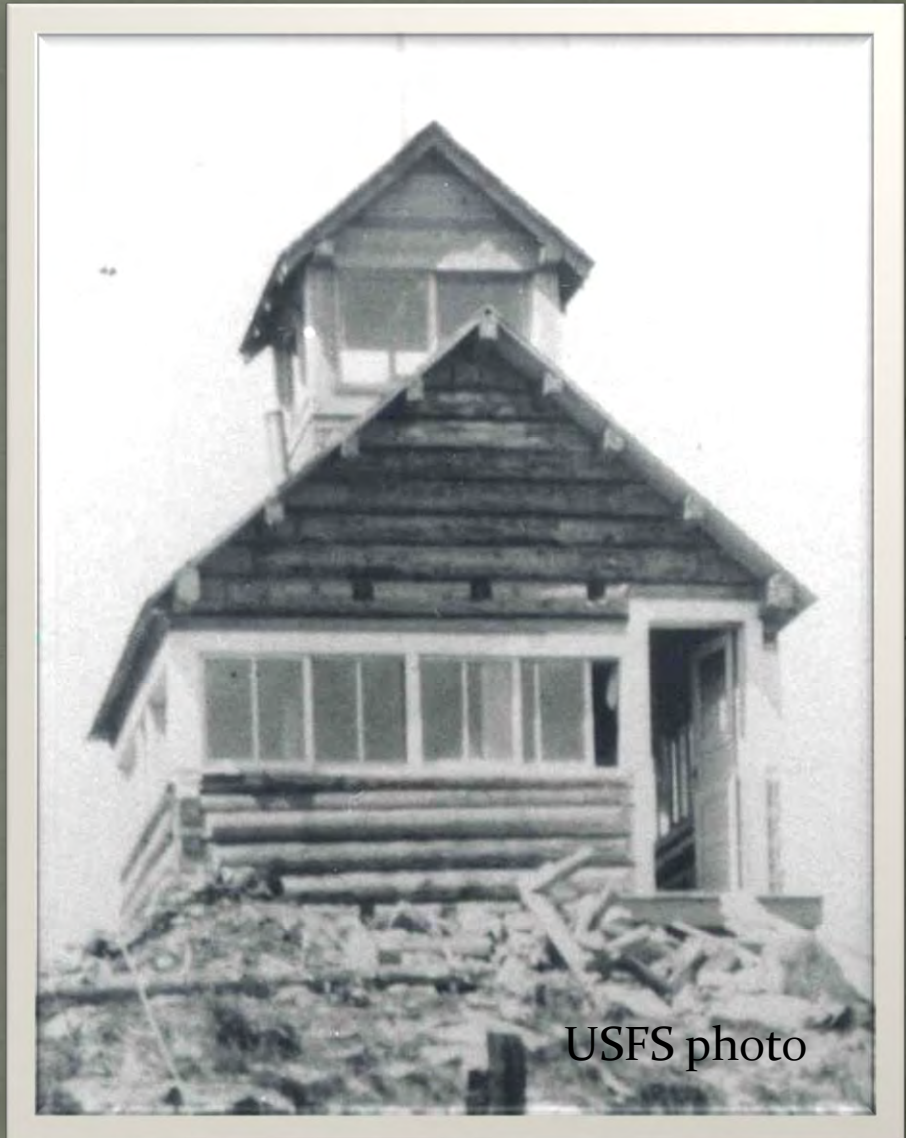


USFS photo

1987

Sourdough Peak Lookout
was built in 1927.

The lookout closely
resembles the “Nez Perce”
log cabin with cupola. It
varies from the standard
plan with its expansive
windows and dimensions
of 15' x 15'.



USFS photo

Date unknown



USFS photo

Sourdough
Lookout in 1949.

Sourdough Lookout is located twenty miles SE
of Grangeville on the Red River Ranger District.



Cindy Schacher photo

Sourdough Peak lies near the northern boundary of the Gospel-Hump Wilderness.

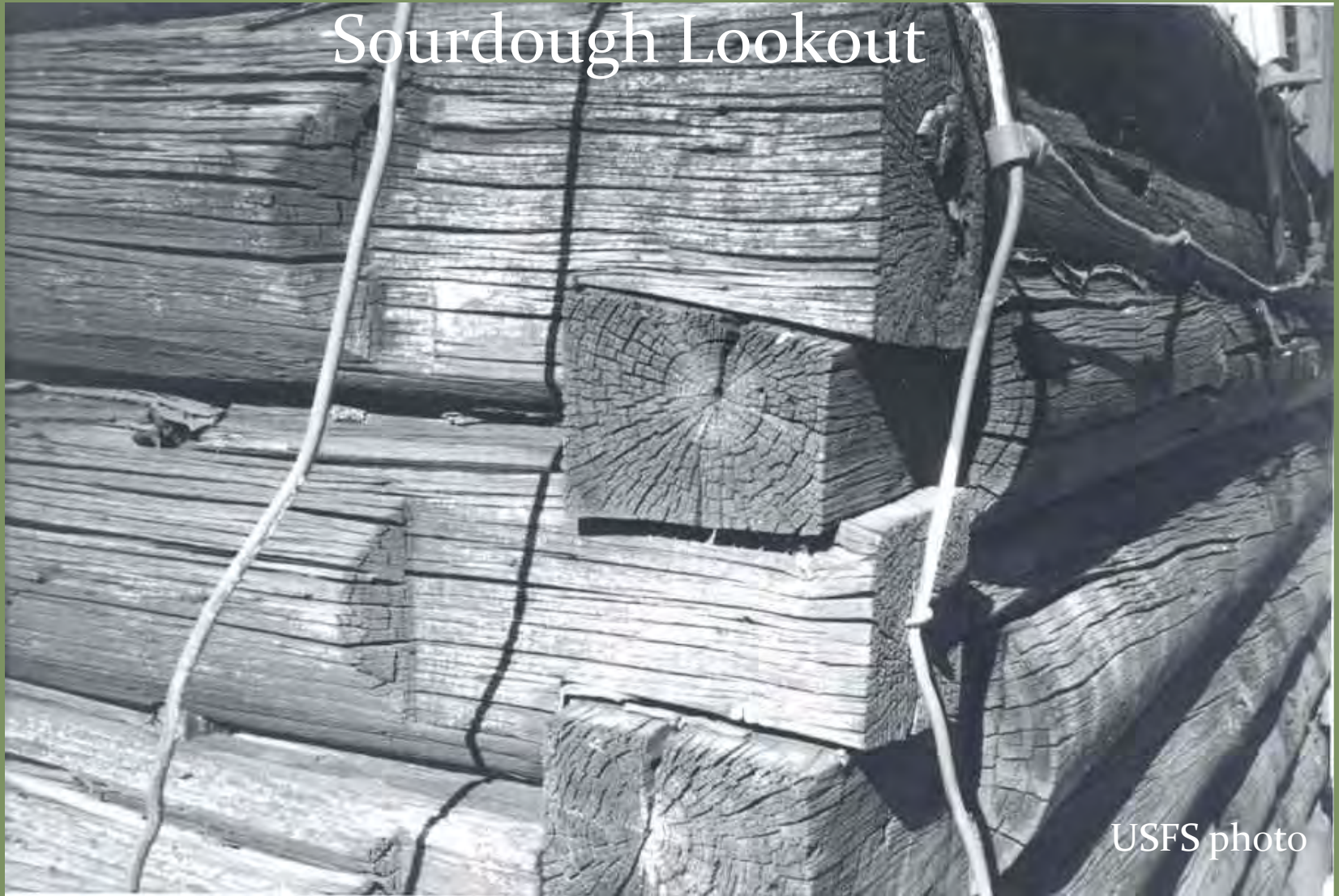
Sourdough Lookout



USFS photo

Wall logs were coped for a nearly perfect fit.

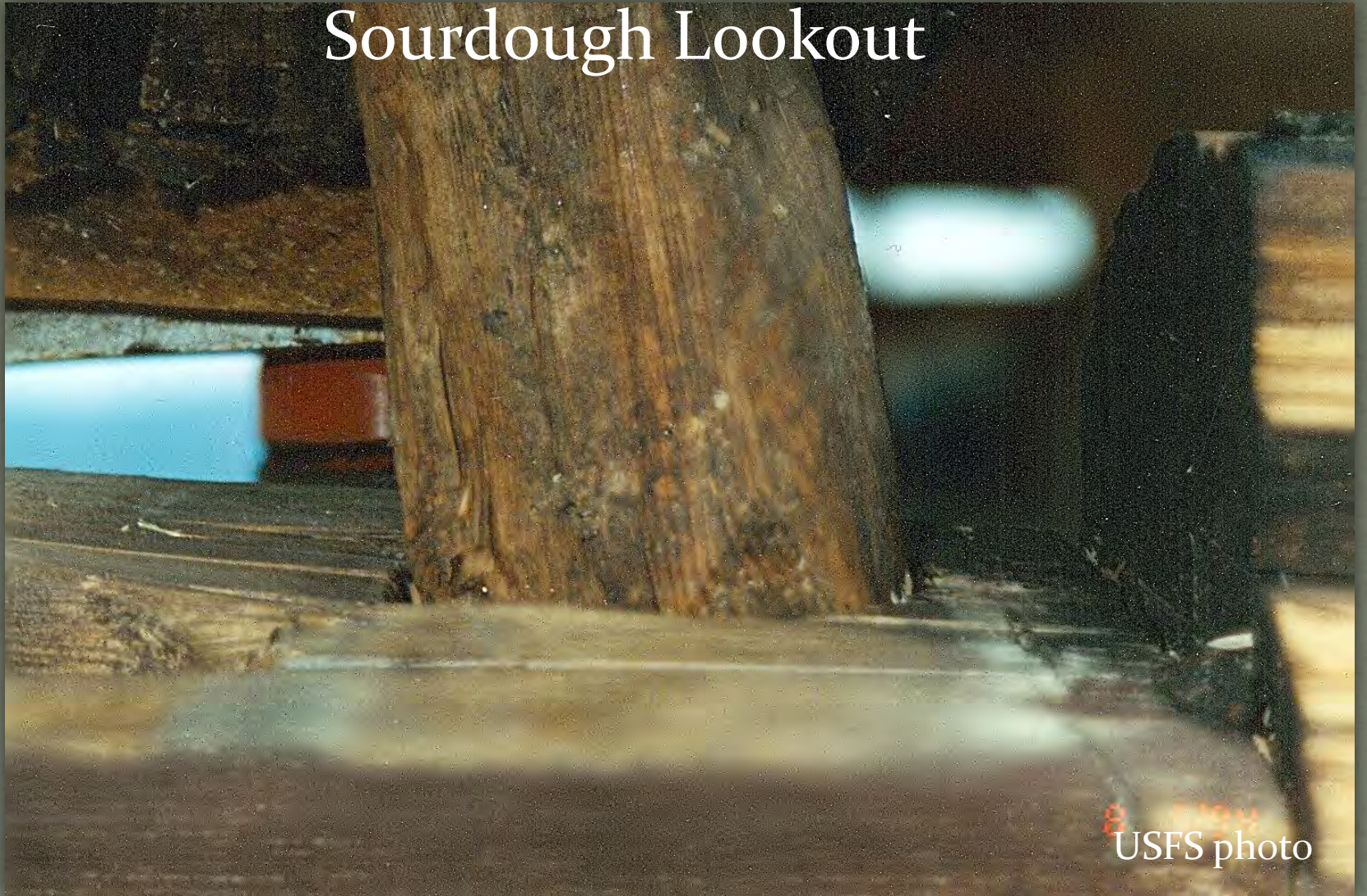
Sourdough Lookout



USFS photo

Intricately detailed dovetail corner notches.

Sourdough Lookout

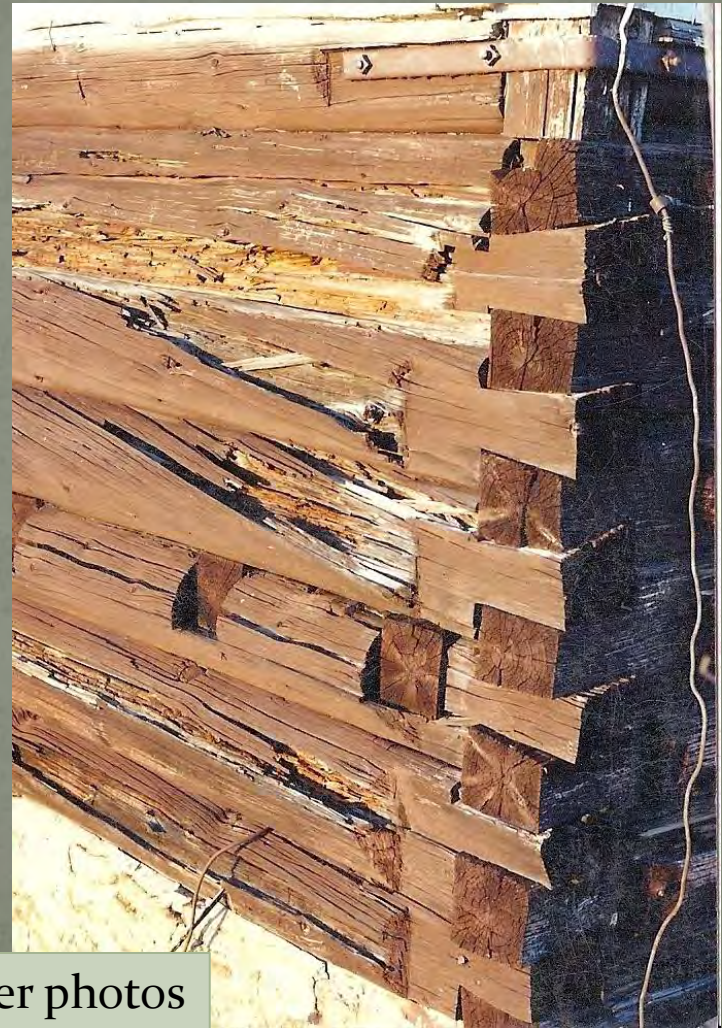


USFS photo

Hand carved wooden dowels were placed in the corners within the notches for reinforcement.

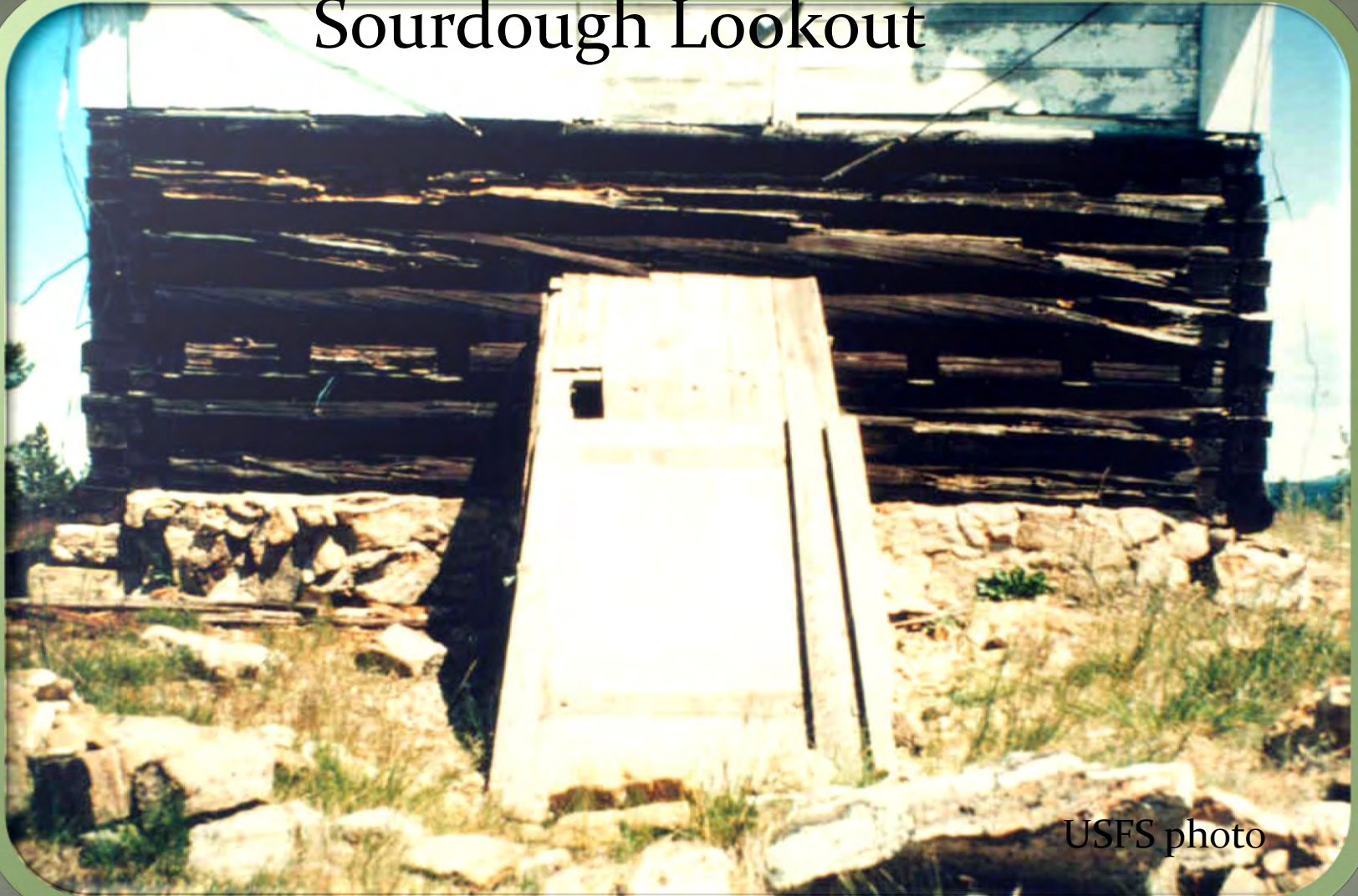
Sourdough Lookout

By the 1990s the lookout was badly in need of repair.



Bruce Dreher photos

Sourdough Lookout



USFS photo

West elevation with cellar bulkhead.

Sourdough Lookout



Bruce Dreher photos



In 1990 the shake roof was replaced
by historic building preservation
specialist Bruce Dreher.

Sourdough Lookout

From 1994 through 1998 restoration work continued on the lookout.



USFS photo

Volunteers including several from the Passport In time program assisted with the restoration. The Region One Historic Building Preservation Team also played a vital role in restoring the lookout.



Sourdough Lookout

Restoration work included replacement of some wall and gable logs.



USFS photo

Sourdough Lookout

Where possible, the decayed portions of the wall logs were removed while retaining the interior portion of the logs that were in good condition.



Sourdough Lookout



USFS photo

Sourdough Lookout



After removal of decayed surfaces of log.

New logs were cut to closely match the dimensions of the existing wall logs . The logs were then peeled.

Sourdough Lookout



USFS photo

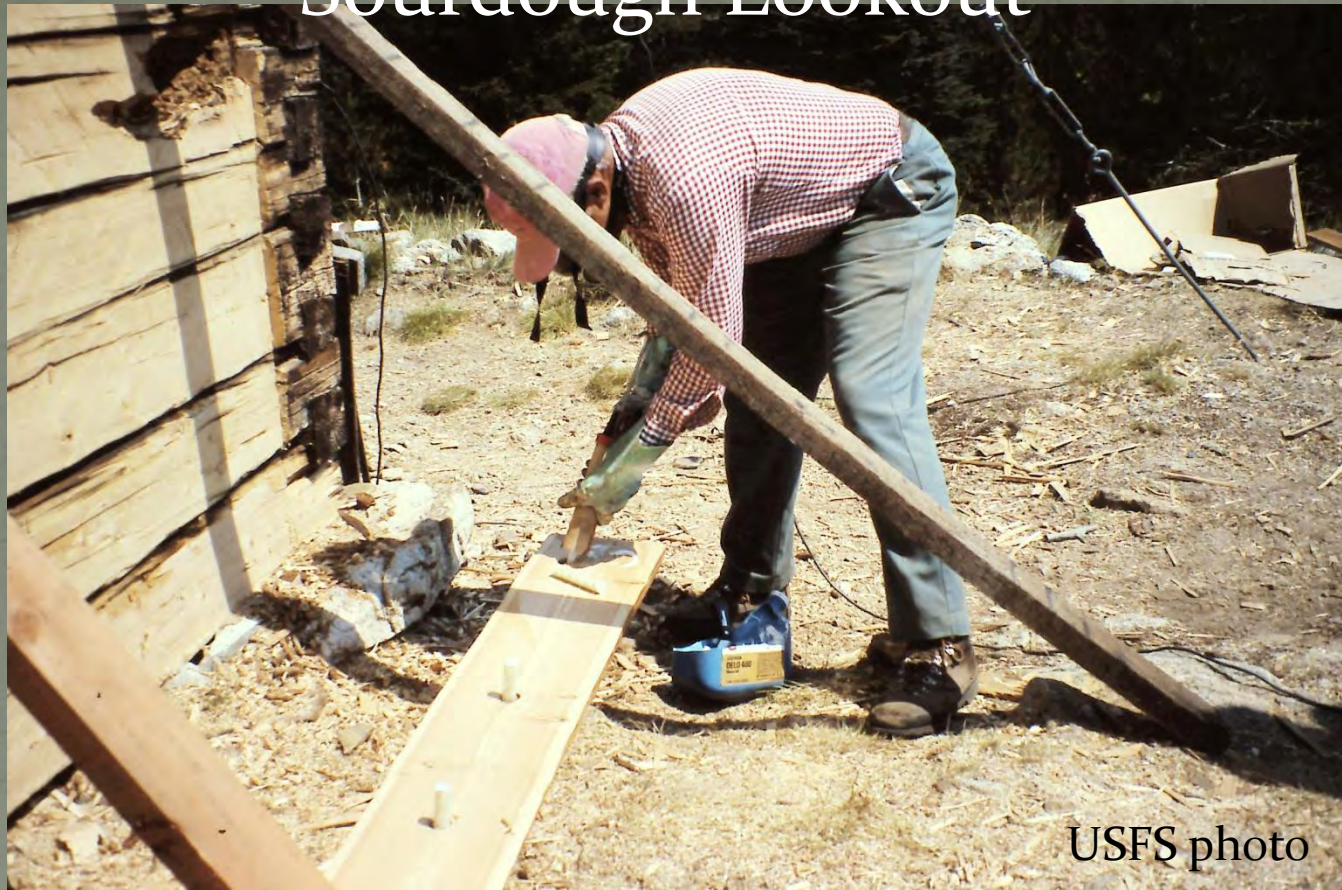
Sourdough Lookout



USFS photo

The logs were then cut in half and planed.

Sourdough Lookout



USFS photo

The halved new logs were then attached to the existing wall logs using a special type of epoxy and wooden dowels. This method allowed the retention of as much as possible of the original wall logs.

Sourdough Lookout



USFS photo

Sourdough Lookout



Complete new wall logs

Halved log replacement

Sourdough Lookout



USFS photo

The native rock foundation and cellar bulkhead was rebuilt.

Sourdough Lookout



Looking out from within the
native rock foundation.

Sourdough Lookout



The native rock foundation and cellar entry was rebuilt.

Sourdough Lookout



USFS photo

The maple flooring was repaired,
sanded, and refinished.

Sourdough Lookout Restoration



USFS photo

Before



USFS photo

After

Sourdough Lookout



Steve Armstrong photo

Plans are to place Sourdough Lookout on the Forest Service Cabin Rental Program.

Another historic
lookout
restoration
project—Square
Mountain.



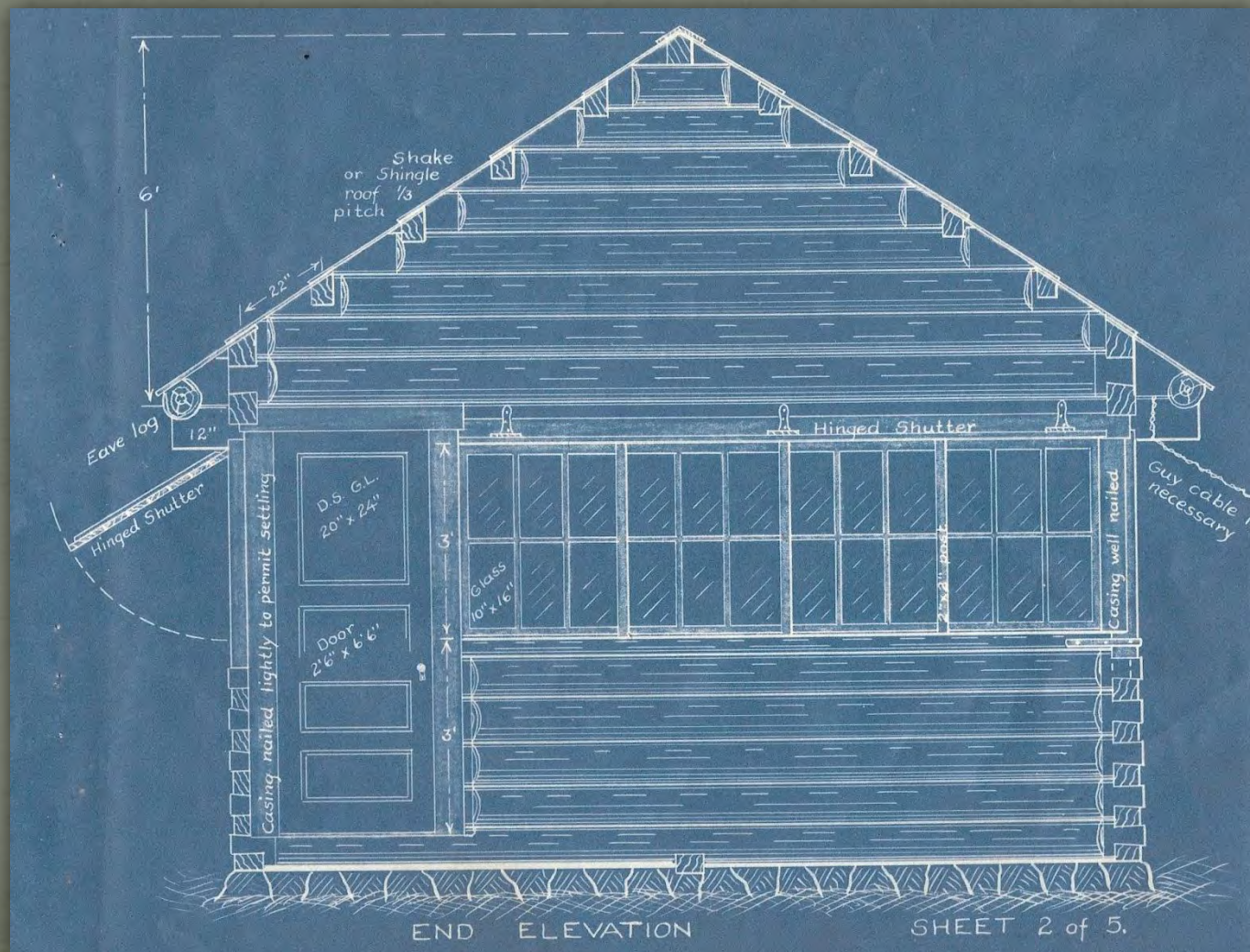
USFS photo

Square Mountain Lookout in 1960.



USFS photo

Built in 1931 on Square Mountain. This lookout is an L-5 model log lookout measuring 14' x 14'.



By the late 1990s and after years of neglect, Square Mtn. lookout was in poor condition.



USFS photo

Square Mountain Lookout



USFS photo

From 1999 through 2003 restoration work was completed at Square Mountain. The work would not have been possible without the help of the Region One Historic Preservation Team, Forest Service personnel, Bruce Dreher, and numerous volunteers including many wonderful people from the Passport In Time program.



Art Seamans photo

Sourdough Lookout



USFS photo

Passport In Time Volunteers in 1999

Sourdough Lookout



USFS photo

Passport In Time Volunteers in 2000.

Sourdough Lookout

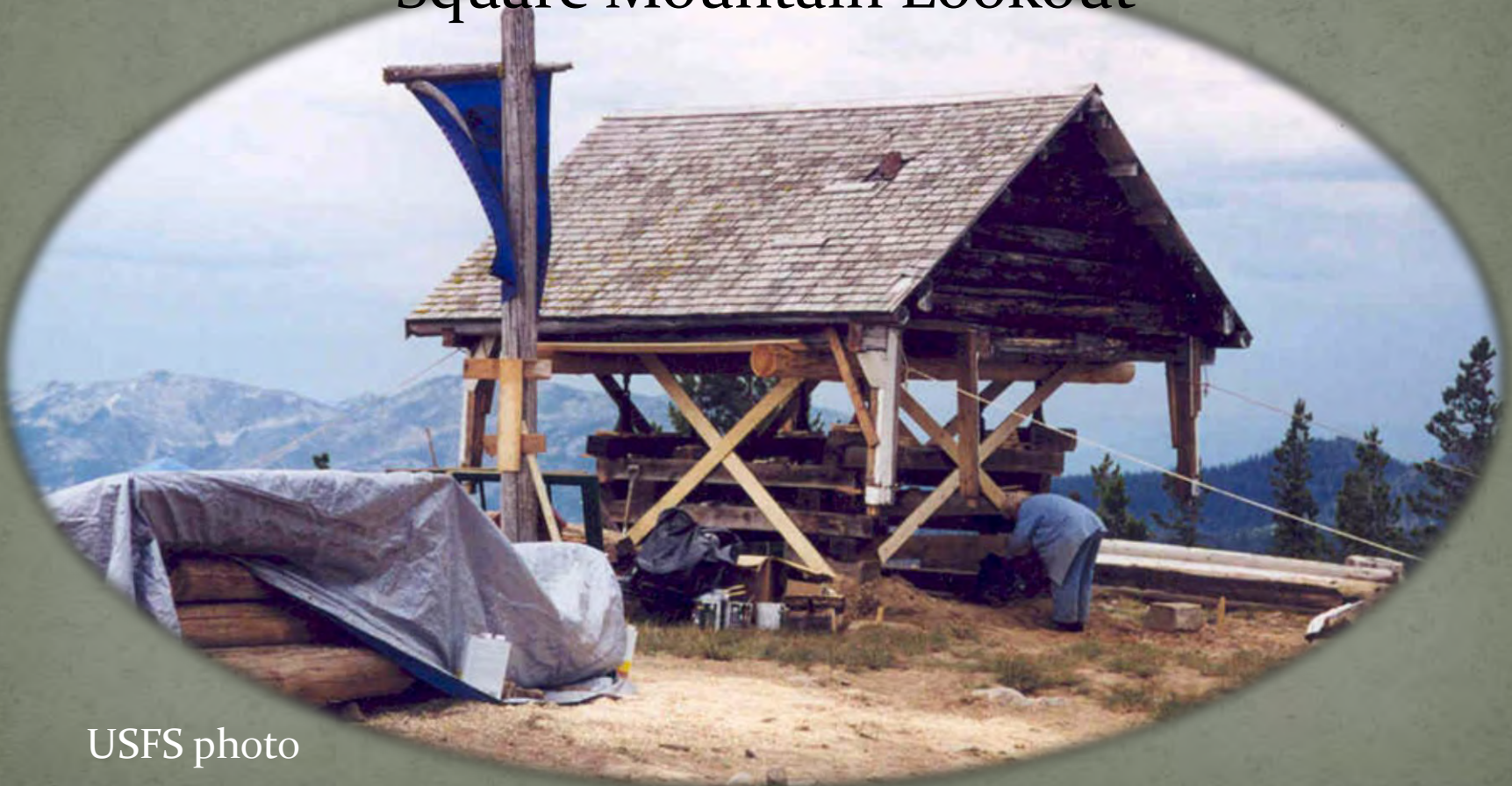
The wall logs were severely decayed requiring that they all be replaced.



USFS photo

The lookout was jacked up and cribbing was placed within the interior to support the weight of the roof and gable logs while all of the wall logs were removed.

Square Mountain Lookout



USFS photo

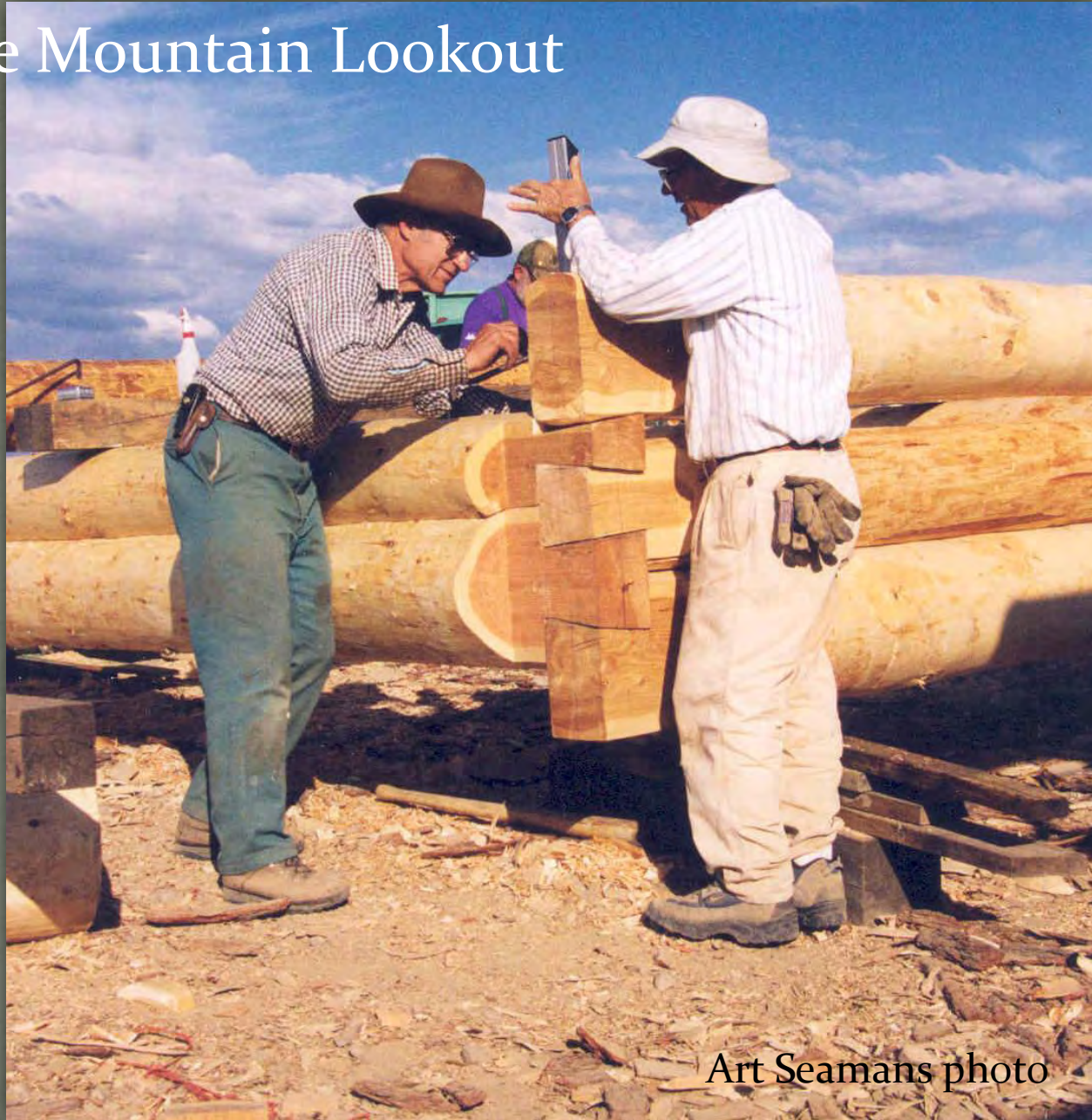
The new wall logs were cut and peeled with corner notches carefully crafted at a site just below the lookout.

Square Mountain Lookout



USFS photo

Square Mountain Lookout



Art Seamans photo

Square Mountain Lookout



The new logs
were coped with
hand tools.

Art Seamans photo

Square Mountain Lookout



After the walls of the lookout were constructed, they were moved into their position under the roof of the lookout.

Square Mountain Lookout



USFS photo

The old shake roof was removed and a new one installed.

Square Mountain Lookout



USFS photo

Putting on new tar paper.

Square Mountain Lookout



USFS photo

New shake roof

Square Mountain Lookout



One gable log was replaced.

John Crawford, former veteran lookout on Indian Hill built all new windows for Square Mountain.



USFS photo

9/27/2003

Square Mountain Lookout



USFS photo

Window and door trim
was repaired or replaced
and painted.



USFS photo

Square Mountain Lookout



The native rock foundation was rebuilt where needed.

Square Mountain Lookout



USFS photo

Hauling rock in a mechanized wheel barrow.

Square Mountain Lookout



USFS photo

New window shutters were built, primed and painted.

Square Mountain Lookout



The subfloor and maple flooring were in extremely poor condition requiring replacement.

Square Mountain Lookout

Removing the rotten
floor boards.



USFS photo

Square Mountain Lookout



Some floor joists were deteriorated and were replaced.

Square Mountain Lookout



Installing new maple flooring.

Square Mountain Lookout



Cindy Schacher photo

Interior of Square Mountain Lookout in 2009.

Square Mountain Lookout



In 2009, the FFLAs Gary Weber installed lightning protection equipment helping to ensure that the lookout will endure the wrath of mother nature.



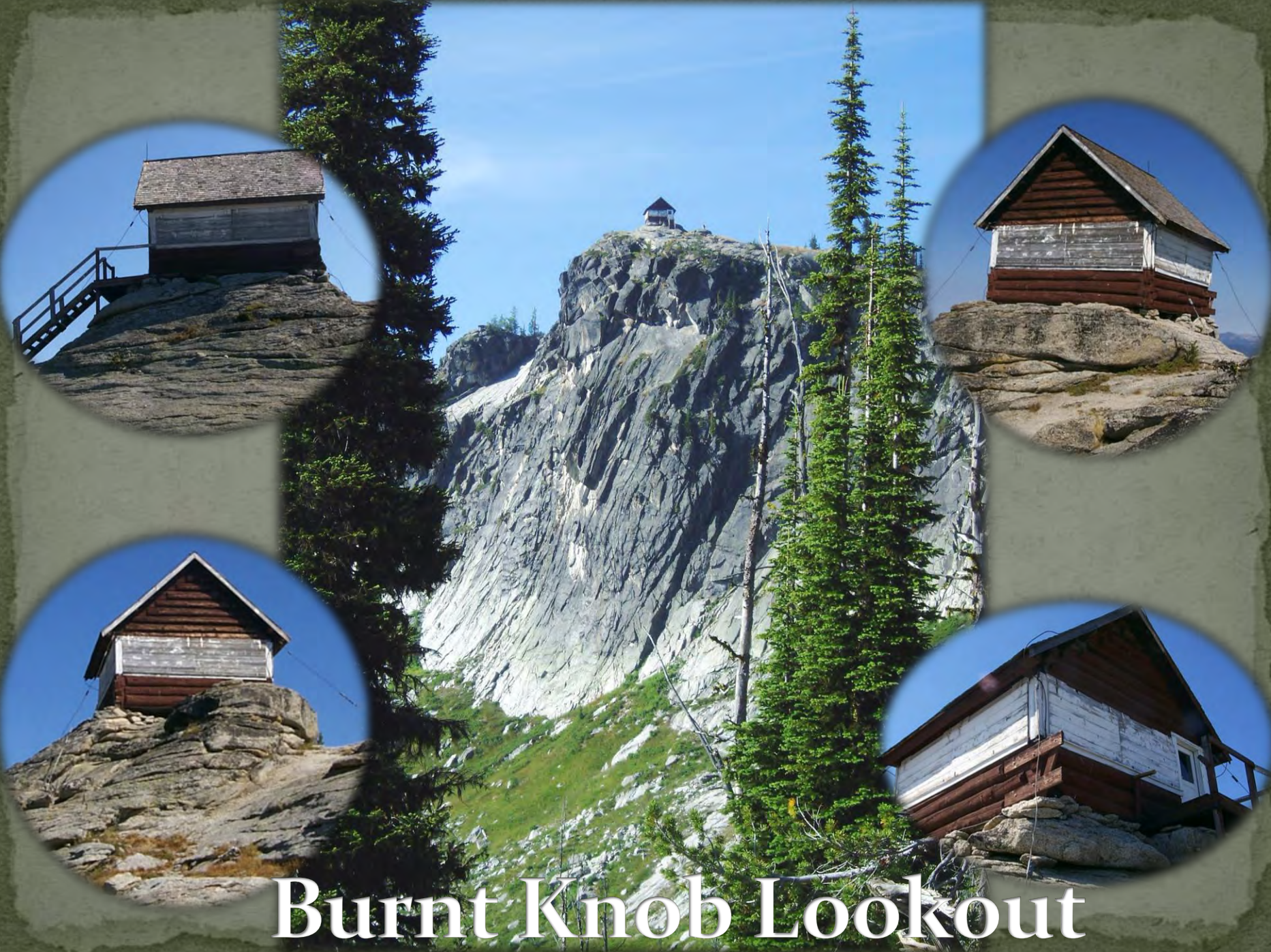


Cindy Schacher photo

Although, some of the gable logs will need to be replaced in the future, the lookout is stabilized, perched on the mountain for future generations to enjoy.



The End



Burnt Knob Lookout