

# CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE ON THE ROUTT NATIONAL FOREST

*“Early Ranger Stations and Guard Stations of the Routt National Forest”*  
by Mary Peterson, Forest Supervisor

We can find remnants of our early Forest Service history in the historic administrative structures still existing on the Routt National Forest. Early ranger stations and guard stations tell us about the administrative development of the Forest Service. Our historic ranger stations, guard stations, and lookouts represent the expansion of the Service's mission from basic custodianship to extensive resource management.

A major effort to subdivide large forests began in 1910. 464 cabins were constructed throughout the nation in 1910. Internal correspondence during this time in USFS history, shows that placement of ranger stations within the region took into account proximity to the people who used the range and to schools for the ranger's children, the efficiency of site layout to reduce expenses to the public, and the design of individuality in every home which is "essential to the retaining of good and efficient men."

Rangers were highly mobile and required accommodations near the primary type of workload (eg., grazing, timber sales, or mining claims). The type of station (permanent, summer, or temporary) required and location were determined by the work the rangers would oversee. Stations served as staging areas for the re-supply of backcountry rangers, seasonal forest guards and lookouts. Temporary ranger stations were often established at intervals of one day's ride on horseback, approximately 11 miles. They were used for fire patrols and overnight camping. Many administrative site locations echoed seasonal grazing patterns. Some stations were constructed exclusively for timber sales (such as Michigan River GS near Gould).

## *Early Ranger Stations*

Early ranger stations of the Routt NF included the Hahns Peak RS, the Counting RS, the Buffalo Pass RS, the Camp Creek RS, the Eagle Rocks RS, the Rabbit Ears (or 5 Spruce RS), the Bears Ears RS, the Lynx Pass RS, the Pyramid RS, the Walden RS, and the Yampa RS.

The Hahns Peak, Counting, Buffalo Pass and Camp Creek Ranger Stations were all built in 1909. The Hahns Peak RS land and building were traded in 1927 and the Counting RS land and building were traded in 1926. The Camp Creek and Buffalo Pass ranger stations were destroyed in 1930 and 1941, respectively. The Eagle Rock RS built in 1912 was also later destroyed, though the date is unclear. The Rabbit Ears RS was built in 1912 and destroyed in 1945. The original Bears Ears RS located in the Elkhead Mountains was built in 1915 and destroyed in 1935. The Lynx Pass RS was built in 1934. The Walden RS was built in 1937. The original Yampa RS was built in 1938. The new Bears Ears RS was built in Hayden in 1938 but was sold to the town of Hayden in 1962. Later

the Bears Ears RS was built in Craig CO and was later sold. The original Yampa RS was destroyed in 2003 to make room for a new office building constructed in 2004. Use of the Middle Park RS located in Kremmling was discontinued after the Middle Park and North Park Districts combined. It was used as a work center for the consolidated Parks RD and was sold in special authority in 2004. None of the original ranger stations except Pyramid are utilized today. Current ranger stations reside in Yampa, Steamboat Springs, and Walden, Colorado.

### ***Guard Stations***

Early guard stations of the Routt NF included the Grizzly Creek GS built in 1908 and the Big Red Park GS built in 1910 and later destroyed. The Hog Park GS was also built in 1910. Whiskey Park GS was built in 1912 and destroyed in 1961. The original Seedhouse GS was built in 1912 and destroyed in 1940. The Summit Creek GS was built in 1912. The Michigan River GS was built in 1932. The new Seedhouse GS was built in 1933. The California Park GS was built by 1934. The Lost Park GS was built in 1967. All of these early guard stations still exist except for Whiskey Park.

Following is some brief information about some of these existing ranger stations and guard stations that depict some portion of the USFS and Routt National Forest history and architecture.

#### *Grizzly Creek GS (1908-1922)*

This site has been in administrative service since 1908. Several buildings were constructed for use as ranger summer quarters. By 1922 the site's improvements consisted of an office/shop (present bunkhouse), a wood garage, a three room log house, a log barn and hen house, a toilet and a dirt and log cellar. Many of the improvements including the office/shop were likely constructed by then North Park District Ranger George McClanahan. The Grizzly Creek bunkhouse displays typical pioneer log construction methods such as a gabled roof and stone foundation. The notching system used for the Guard Station was the full dovetail notch. This notch was among the most complicated of notching systems, but produced an extremely tight joint which shed water well and remained solid as the logs shrunk. The logs themselves were left round, resulting in a very solid building with little chinking between logs required. It is seen on only one other known USFS administrative building in Colorado--the Michigan River Ranger Station dwelling also on the Routt NF.

#### *Summit Creek GS (1912-1932)*

The Summit Creek RS/GS was constructed in 1912 by an unknown builder. At least twelve ranger stations and guard stations were constructed between 1906 and 1915 on the Routt NF at the behest of Paul Reddington from the USFS headquarters in Washington DC. Reddington spent a summer in the Park Range Forest Reserve in 1906 and he recommended that more stations be constructed in order to properly administer the

business of the Reserve.

The cabin was built in a period of relatively rapid construction without the use of standardized plans. It exhibits architectural features distinctive of both the pre-design and Pre-CCC phases of construction and modification. The original 1912 Summit Creek RS had a linear three-room configuration. Its saddle-notched log walls reflect the pioneer abilities of its builders. Both regular and irregular-shaped logs used in the construction add to the rustic look of the cabin's exterior. These were gathered locally, enhancing the visual association of the cabin and the surrounding National Forest. Based on the design of the addition on the west side of the cabin, it was likely constructed sometime before 1932. This addition was constructed in the same style as the original cabin, thus preserving its Rustic style. The single stall garage constructed in 1932, matches the style of the cabin. A log barn was constructed in 1918 but was later sold and removed to the town of Columbine.

#### *Seedhouse GS (1910-1934)*

The original Seedhouse operation dates to 1910 when facilities were established to provide for the collection and drying of lodgepole and spruce seeds. While in use the Forest Service employees would search out the abundant squirrel caches for pinecones and seeds. In 1912 the original log guard station, called the North Fork Administrative station, was built. It was constructed within the boundary of the existing district but was located to the southwest of the current building complex. The building was referred to locally as the Seedhouse and in the 1929 the name was officially changed to the Seedhouse Admin site. The operation became quickly outdated and expensive, and after 1913 the building was used as a seasonal guard station; however, sources vary on the fate of the original guard station. Most sources maintain the buildings were destroyed in 1945 while some claim the guard station building was relocated.

In 1933 plans were developed to replace the original Seedhouse station. A simple, two room frame building was constructed to the north of the original building in 1934. The dwelling was based on plans for administrative design published in the USFS Construction and Maintenance Handbook and was intended to house four people. The guard station was constructed with a concrete foundation, drop siding, a metal roof, and Celotex interior. Celotex was a processed wood product used in local USFS construction. The CCC may have built the Seedhouse guard station. Many of the simple and utilitarian hallmarks of the construction style are visible in the building; however, no primary documentation has been found to date to prove that claim.

#### *Pyramid GS (1934-1936)*

The Pyramid GS (also known as the Pyramid RS) was established to oversee part of what was then the White River National Forest's Williams Fork District near the Dunkley Flat Top Range. The dwelling was developed by James L. Brownlee, then head engineer in Denver. Brownlee produced much of the Region's design work prior to creation of the Architectural Division in 1936. Brownlee's designs prior to 1934 were strongly

influenced by the Bungalow Style. However, his design for the Pyramid dwelling included the use of relatively unrefined materials, substantial construction with heavy log walls, and a high degree of hand craftsmanship. These elements were characteristic of Rustic Style architecture and mark the first formal use of the style within the Region. The round (saddle) notch used for all buildings at Pyramid was later used extensively and almost exclusively by the CCC's in log construction. It was relatively easy to construct, as it could be hewn with basic hand tools by even a relatively unskilled carpenter. It also made a tight joint which would remain solid as the wood shrunk over time. The log crowns were kept short. Despite the harsh Colorado winters, the short crowns and log walls were fully protected the overhung roof, thus preventing moisture from reaching the logs.

The station was under construction by August 1934. Enrollees from the Bear River CCC camp provided the labor. The guard station was the first building completed. The combination office building and the barn were completed in 1935. The barn was apparently moved from another station and re-assembled at its current location. The blacksmith shop, which is the only one of its kind known to exist in Colorado, was also erected in 1936.

Pyramid is one of the first of the CCC-era complexes in Colorado. It is uniquely representative of its era in its layout, building design and construction. The station's layout was an early prototype of what would become a regional standard for rural design. The complex is one of the least modified in Colorado. In 1954, the Williams Fork and part of the Bear River districts of the White River NF were transferred to the Routt NF to become part of the Yampa RD. By this time these types of ranger stations were no longer occupied by district rangers, but rather were used by work crews. Exterior modifications to the Pyramid Station under the Routt NF jurisdiction are minimal, and none have permanently damaged the integrity of the buildings or the site.

#### *California Park GS (1932-1955)*

The California Park GS is located on the California Park Road. The station consists of a bunkhouse, a barn, and corral. The bunkhouse consists of a large CCC temporary building attached to an older one room guard cabin. Conflicting construction dates for the original one-story one-room wood frame cabin range from a 1932 estimate to a 1938 estimate. In 1955 John Sundberg and Roan Anderson donated personal time to construct a basement and foundation for an addition to the west side of the original dwelling. At this time a former CCC camp temporary building was assembled over the foundation. At that time a rear door was also cut into the original dwelling.

The Forest Service is working to protect, preserve, and interpret some of these important remnants of Forest Service and architectural history. The Grizzly Creek Guard Station is available for cabin rentals and the other stations are currently used to accommodate Forest Service employees working in remote areas. They may also eventually be available seasonally in the cabin rental program.

***Sources:***

***History of the Routt National Forest, 1905-1972.*** Developed in 1965 and partially revised in 1972.

website <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/print.php>

NPS Form 10-900a National Register of Historic Places site forms for Summit Creek RS

Historical Architectural Building/Structure Form, State Site # 5RB2882, Pyramid GS

Historical Architectural Building/Structure Form, State Site # 5JA544, Grizzly Creek GS

Historical Architectural Building/Structure Form, State Site # 5RT668, California Park  
GS

Historical Architectural Building/Structure Statement of Significance, Seedhouse GS