

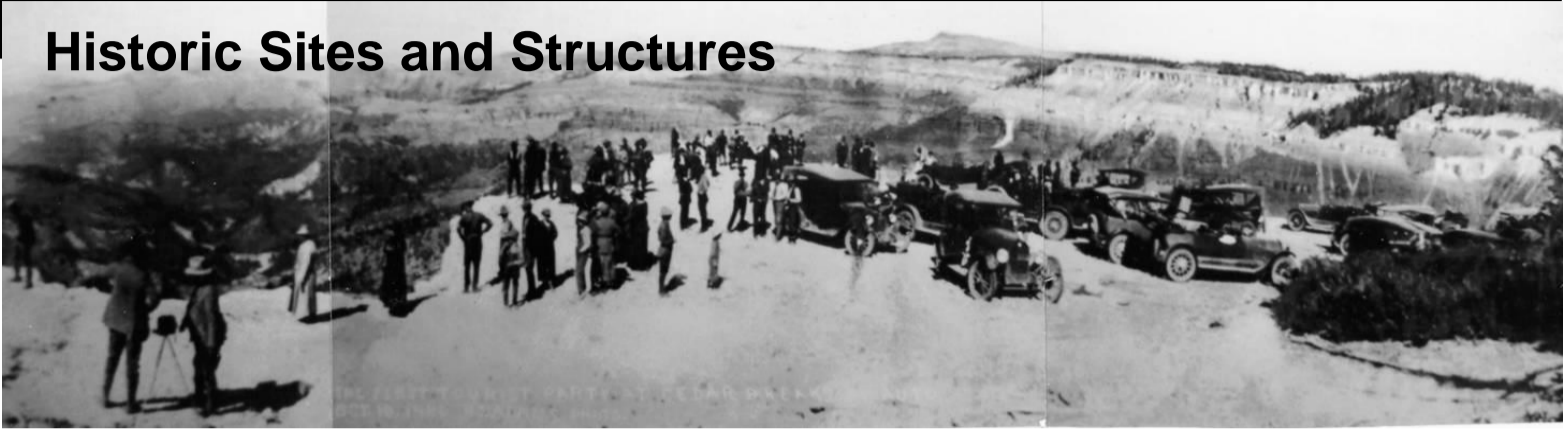
Cedar Breaks

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Cedar Breaks National Monument
Cedar City, Utah



Historic Sites and Structures



The First Visitors

People have been visiting the Cedar Breaks area for at least 9,000 years. Seasonal campsites left by Desert Archaic people indicate that they came to hunt and to collect chert on the lower slopes of Brian Head Peak. Chert can easily be fashioned into arrowheads and other tools; archeological evidence suggests that the Desert Archaic people collected it primarily for use as a trade item. Since that time, visitors to the area have enjoyed its resources in a variety of ways.

Minnie's Mansion

European Americans had settled below Brian Head Peak by 1868. Because most of the settlers were of Irish descent, the area became known as "Little Ireland." Like the Desert Archaic people before them, their habitation of the high plateau was seasonal: most families owned small herds of dairy cattle which they moved up to the mountains for summer pasture.

By 1921, the Adams Family had built a lodge, known as "Minnie's Mansion," in

what is now the northern section of the Monument. The Mansion offered dining, lodging, and dancing to area residents. Old timers recall that people came from as far away as Nevada to attend Utah Pioneer Day celebrations on July 24.

Minnie's Mansion was short-lived—the summer seasons weren't long enough to turn a profit, and the establishment closed within five years. Today only traces of its foundations can be found.

Cedar Breaks Lodge

By the time Minnie's Mansion ceased operation, a new establishment had opened on the south rim of Cedar Breaks: Cedar Breaks Lodge. Built in 1924, the lodge was owned by the Utah Parks Company, a subsidiary of the Union Pacific Railroad.

The railroad hoped to attract rail passengers by developing a "loop tour" starting in Cedar City and connecting Zion, Bryce, the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, and Cedar Breaks. "Dudes," as the tourists were known, traveled in small tour buses driven by "gear-jammers."

All the Utah Parks Company lodges were designed by Gilbert Stanley Underwood, who would later design the famous Ahwahnee Lodge at Yosemite. Cedar Breaks was the smallest of the lodges.

Utah Parks tour buses stopped at Cedar



Breaks for dinner before heading back to the train depot in Cedar City. A dollar twenty-five bought a chicken dinner, complete with mashed potatoes, gravy, homemade bread and dessert. The Lodge seated 120 people—some nights the tables were set three times to accommodate tour buses and locals who had come up to spend the evening.

The Civilian Conservation Corps at Cedar Breaks



On August 22nd, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared Cedar Breaks a National Monument. Once the Monument was established, however, it still had to be developed. Fortunately, 1933 also saw the establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps, otherwise known as the CCC. This program was designed to provide work for unemployed men during the Great Depression.

Enrollees were young men between the ages of 18 and 25 whose families were on federal relief. They agreed to send \$25 of their \$30 monthly paycheck home to support their families. In addition, they received room, board, clothing, and technical training.

In 1937 a detail of 27 men from the Zion CCC camp were detailed to Cedar Breaks to begin construction of a Visitor Center and Ranger Cabin.



Visitor Center under construction, 1937

These structures exhibit classic National Park Service rustic architecture. The log cabin style recalls America's pioneer heritage. The buildings are also designed to appear as if they are a natural part of the environment. The massive fireplaces and sweeping cut of the log ends make the buildings appear to rise out of the earth organically. Both buildings are on the national register of historic places.



The Visitor Center Today

"We got hailed on, we got snowed on, but we had a lot of fun doing the job."

Henry A Bott, Jr.,
CCC worker at Cedar Breaks

The End of an Era

After World War II, the increase in automobile travel led to a decline in rail travel. Never profitable in themselves, the lodges became a drain on UP resources. The Utah Parks company donated the lodges to the National Park Service in 1970. It was determined that Cedar Breaks Lodge was uneconomical to maintain, and it was torn down in 1972.

"What upset me most in my life, really, was to go up there one time and find that beautiful old lodge, Cedar Breaks Lodge, was torn down, cleaned up, and hauled away. So many of us didn't know it was happening at all."

Ray Knell
Former "gear-jammer"
Utah Parks Company

Further Reading



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