NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION, GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

REGION: Rocky Mountain PARK/AREA NAME: Glacier National Park PARK NUMBER: 1430

STRUCTURE NAME: Ptarmigan Tunnel STRUCTURE NUMBER: 1700

LOCATION OF STRUCTURE: North of Ptarmigan Lake QUADRANGLE NAME: Many Glacier, MT

	Zone	Easting	Northing
UTM A:	12	301450	5414500

QUADRANGLE SCALE: 7.5-minute

CLASSIFICATION:

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:	CATEGORY:	NUMBER OF RESOURCES: CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING	
___ Private	___ Building(s)	___	___	Buildings
___ Public-Local	___ District	___	___	Sites
___ Public-State	___ Site	___	___	Structures
x Public-Federal	x Structure	1	___	Objects
___ Mixed/private & public	___ Object	1	___	TOTAL

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

The Ptarmigan Tunnel is the only trail tunnel in Glacier National Park. Construction of the 250-foot passageway began on July 27, 1930, and was completed by contractor Ole Westman and crew on September 30, 1930. Two jackhammers drilling from either side of the tunnel and a series of ten-hole rounds of dynamite gradually broke through the mountain. A wide area, originally for guide and tourist horses, extends from each portal with a masonry retaining wall similar to those along the Going-to-the-Sun Highway. Natural rock lines the interior walls. Heavy iron doors were hung across the tunnel adits during the summer of 1975. They remain open from mid-July until October 1, weather permitting. The 250-ft. long Ptarmigan Tunnel is a unique man-made feature in Glacier. This trail tunnel, open from mid-July until October 1 (weather permitting), embodies exceptional qualities of landscape architecture and engineering in a pedestrian-scaled tunnel, cut through a sheer mountain wall. The Ptarmigan Tunnel is a significant man-made feature of the park.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION: DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1930

The Ptarmigan Tunnel is significant as the only trail tunnel in Glacier. Construction of the 250-ft.-long passage connected the Belly River country with the Many Glaciers area. Spectacular views from the portals frame Elizabeth Lake, Belly River Valley, and Canada to the north, and Mt. Wilbur, Mt. Gould, Going-to-the-Sun Mountain, and Ptarmigan Lake to the south. Ole Westman contracted the engineering feat, which was completed in less than three months. According to the final construction report, two opposing steel jackhammers drove through the mountain to meet midway along the tunnel's length.[1]

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Ptarmigan Tunnel represents a significant engineering achievement that illustrates the National Park Service's commitment to developing transportation facilities to remote areas of Glacier National Park. Therefore, Ptarmigan Tunnel meets the eligibility requirements for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C.

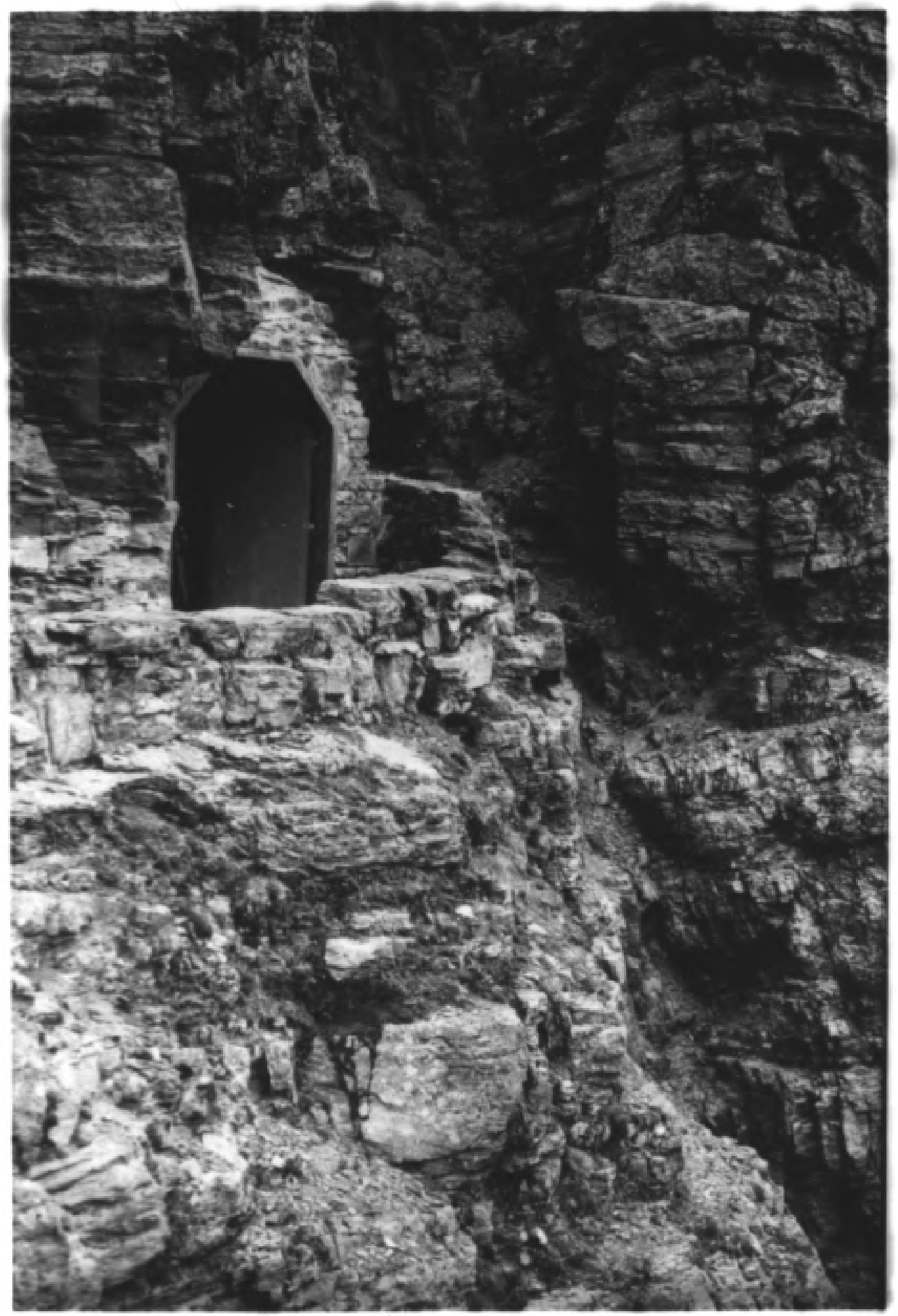
BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCE:

[1]"Final Construction Reports, 1929-1932, Ptarmigan Trail Tunnel," File: Trails, D30, Glacier National Park Headquarters.

FORM PREPARED BY: DATE: June 1984

NAME/TITLE:

ORGANIZATION: Historical Research Associates, P.O. Box 7086, Missoula, MT 59807-7086



NAME: Ptarmigan Tunnel MR 1
LOCATION: Glacier National Park, MT
PHOTOGRAPHER: Glacier National Park
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: May 1983
LOCATION OF NEGATIVE: Rocky Mountain Regional Office, National Park Service, Denver, CO
PHOTO NUMBER: 1