

self-guiding trail

TRAIL OF THE SHADOWS



MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK

TRAIL OF THE SHADOWS

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Published by
Pacific Northwest National Parks and Forests
Association
a
Non-profit organization providing assistance
to
the interpretive programs
at
Northwest National Parks and Forests

Inquire
at any visitor center for information
about the Association.



Pacific Northwest National Parks & Forests Association

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5000/May 1988

Take a half hour out of your busy schedule to walk this half-mile loop trail. This self-guiding trail tells the story of the Longmire family and the lowland meadow that they pioneered. It is a walk with shadows of the past to view some of the remains from an earlier era and to see how the meadow has changed. A second booklet, "Historic Walk Through Longmire", contains additional interesting information about the present village and is available at the Longmire museum or the hikers center.

The trail is not difficult and comfortable walking shoes are adequate. However, during rainy or freezing weather, portions of the trail will be slippery. Be especially cautious at these times.



BLACK BEAR

Longmire's

- - Springs

On the Road to Mount Tahoma.

A Word to the Afflicted. An Antidote for Disease, prepared
in Nature's Own Laboratory.

Longmire's Medical Springs,

WITHIN EASY REACH OF OUR PEOPLE.


Are now open for the public. Why go abroad when you
may find Nature's own restoratives at your very doors?

The best recommendations of the wonderful curative
properties of these waters is afforded by the cures performed
of those afflicted with rheumatic pains, catarrh, piles and
other affliction that have been pronounced incurable.

The present means of reaching the Springs from Yelm
Station, on the N. P. R. R., is by gentle saddle-horses, trains
of which will leave August 1st and 15th, and September 1st
and 15th.

Passage including board, for round trip, \$12. Board
and treatment at the Springs, \$8 per week.

ELCAINE LONGMIRE, Yelm, Wash.

 In corresponding please mention that you saw this ad-
vertisement in EVERY SUNDAY.

Elcaine Longmire placed this ad in *Every Sunday* (Tacoma)
August 9, 1890.

- 1 **LONGMIRE MEADOW.** In 1883 James Longmire, a well-known explorer and trail blazer of the region, camped at this meadow with P. B. Van Trump and George Bayley. The party went on to successfully climb Mount Rainier. Upon his return, the 63 year old Longmire considered that these springs might be commercially developed.

Step out along the short spur trail to view the wayside exhibit. It contains information and photographs of the early Longmire operation.

- 2 **SODA SPRINGS** - By 1884 Longmire had returned to found "Longmire Medical Springs". This establishment grew from a single cabin in 1885 to a collection of buildings somewhat later. This spring contains soda, magnesium, iron, and sodium chloride. Water from similar mineral springs was popular as a health tonic in the 1890s. Longmire located a mineral claim of 20 acres in 1887 to protect his investment in the infant health spa.

In 1888 Longmire suggested to John Muir, who had come to climb Mount Rainier, "...drink at these springs and they will do you good. Every one's got medicine in 'em. A Doctor said so - no matter what ails you."

CHIPMUNK



- 3 **LONGMIRE SPRINGS HOTEL** - By 1890 Longmire had developed several springs and bath houses, and built the two story Longmire Springs Hotel. The four brown posts behind the numbered stake approximate the dimensions of that building. Longmire's accommodations were rustic but served as the only overnight lodging in the park until 1906. Following the deaths of James (1897) and his son Elcaine (1915), the Longmire family leased their property to the Longmire Springs Hotel Company who dismantled the hotel in 1920.

LONGMIRE HOTEL, ca. 1910



4 **FEEDING STATION TREE** - Travelers to the Mountain looked forward to rest, food, and relaxation following the long train, stage, and horse ride to the park in the early days. They indulged in Longmire's healing waters and baths and enjoyed the natural scene as well. Bird watching was a favorite pastime of the camp-bound. The secretive pileated woodpecker probably made an exciting picture as it sat on this tree trunk, pecked its feeding hole in search of carpenter ants or termites and then flew on. Watch for the pileated woodpeckers today as the crow-sized birds are still park residents.



PILEATED WOODPECKER

The tree has recovered from the woodpecker's visit by walling off the wounds with corky scar tissue. Other wounds are healing as well. Note how the insulator a little higher up on the trunk has been engulfed by the tree.

- 5 Take the small spur trail down to the pond. At the pond's edge, continue reading.

BEAVER PONDS - Beavers have come and gone from the meadow over the years. Several cycles of beaver habitation have been interspersed with periods of absence that have, curiously, lasted about 20 years. These cycles may be linked to the meadow's own cycles. Sightings of beaver have become intermittent in recent years.



- 6 LONGMIRE CABINS** - In 1888 James Longmire's son Elcaine built this cabin, intending to apply for a homestead claim adjacent to his father's mineral claim. The Longmires hoped to further develop the meadow as a resort. By 1907, time, competition, and the establishment of Mount Rainier National Park overtook the Longmires and the claim was never approved.

This cabin is one of a few shadows of Longmire's time. It is the oldest structure in the park and has served as a meat house, a watchmen's house and as housing for some of Elcaine Longmire's helpers.

- 7 IRON MIKE** - Iron Mike was a popular name for this iron rich spring. Both Iron Mike and Soda Spring were developed by James Longmire, but owe their stonework to a later landscaping project. Sections of the Trail of the Shadows itself were also constructed and gravelled as part of the same project in 1920.

- 8 PIONEERS** - The fringes of the meadow were cleared by Longmire and his family to develop their resort. Similar natural clearings occur when trees fall or are blown down. Clearings are colonized by pioneer plants such as these red alders. Like human pioneers, plant pioneers are very hardy and are usually replaced by later arrivals with the passage of time and changing environment.



RED ALDER

- 9 **PACIFIC YEW** - Resort visitors, full of one of Virinda Longmire's camp suppers, might have passed this Pacific yew and startled a yellow-bellied sapsucker from its evening meal. The sapsucker pecks neat rows of holes in tree trunks then flies away while sap fills the holes. Later, the sapsucker returns to drink the sap and eat insects which have been attracted to it.



YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER

- 10 **FALLEN TREES** - Fallen trees not only provide openings for pioneer plants, but also serve as nutrient banks for other seedlings. Fungi decompose fallen trees over a period of many years, releasing nutrients slowly and ensuring the revegetation of the forest.

Fallen trees also serve as homes for termites, ants and other insects as well as raccoons, weasels, deer mice and chipmunks.

- 11 **WOUNDS** - Wounds from sapsuckers, lightning strikes and broken branches can serve as entrances for insects, fungi, or mistletoe. Toxins produced by these parasites can cause irregular growth like the "witch's broom" in this western hemlock.



WITCH'S BROOM

- 12 **MEADOW RECOVERY** - The meadow today closely resembles the meadow James Longmire discovered. Following the consolidation of development on the south side of the meadow and the purchase and restoration of the area occupied by the Longmire family operation, the disturbed areas have been allowed to return to a natural meadow life system. The springs continue to bubble, bringing up minerals which color the soil and hinder the growth of most plants. A few plants such as rushes, blue-eyed grass and cattails can grow in the mineralized areas. In fact, the high mineral content of the soil might be an important factor in keeping the meadow from being overgrown by trees and shrubs.
- 13 **NURSE LOG** -The fallen log behind this post has become a small forest community. The shade of the surrounding trees has kept the "nurse log" from drying out. As the young seedlings on the log grow, they absorb nutrients and moisture from the fallen tree's trunk. Finally, after many years, the entire log will be decomposed.

Though the log disappears, the minerals remain in the new trees. Recycling in natural systems assures full use of energy and nutrients. The same principle applies to composting or solid waste recycling you may be doing at home.

- 14 FIRE SCARS** -A fire charred this Douglas-fir. Fire has not played a significant role in the ecology of this forest, but it was a useful tool for clearing land in the early days. This fire may have been started by the Longmires or their visitors to rid the area of yellow jackets. In fact, the wasps were such pests that John Muir referred to the old trail into the park as the "mule and yellow jacket trail" in 1888.
- 15** The walkway to your left leads to another spring at the edge of the meadow. Go out on the boardwalk, then continue reading. Please stay on the boardwalk and help preserve the scene for those who follow.

MEDICAL SPRINGS - The bubbling is caused by carbon dioxide escaping from the water, like the bubbles in a soft drink. This particular spring was touted as "medical" by Longmire, though improvements in visitor's health could probably be attributed to fresh air, relaxation, or Virinda's cooking.

Swallows flying by overhead, band-tailed pigeons picking seeds and gravel in the clearing, and black-tailed deer bedded down in the alder thicket across the meadow are common sights during the summer.

- 16 WESTERN REDCEDAR** - James Longmire made use of the western redcedar to build his various buildings including the Longmire Springs Hotel. This tree was most useful because of its straight grain, ease of handling and shaping, and immense size. On this hill you will note several stumps left from those early days.

Redcedar is easily recognized by its fibrous grey bark, its small triangular leaves and small reddish cones. The redcedars in this forest are among the largest trees in the park.



17 SKUNK CABBAGE AND DEVIL'S CLUB

Skunk cabbage and devil's club are two more remarkable members of the meadow community. The large leaves of both plants are part of the deer's diet. Devil's club was well known to early pioneers who generally avoided walking through patches of it a second time, though both deer and elk run through it with abandon. Skunk cabbage has the largest dark green leaves, but is most remarkable for being the first flower to bloom at Longmire in the Spring.

18 **LOOK BACK** - The broadleaf tree near you is the red alder. The shade of this tree helps create the proper light conditions for the growth of the skunk cabbage and other delicate plants of this marshy section of meadow. The red alder also provides organic material and nitrogen needed for good evergreen growth. As time goes on, the alder will be shaded out and replaced by taller growing evergreen trees.



RACCOON

This lower end of the meadow appears little affected by the years since 1883. Traces of development are visible nearby such as an old road, a walkway and a foundation. In addition to the Longmire's arrival and departure, the beavers have come and gone and come and gone again, the springs have warmed and cooled, and the forest fringe has probably changed shape slightly. Despite many small changes, the meadow remains basically the same. As shadows can indicate the passage of a day or an era, so too can they indicate the arrival of a new day or era.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk around the Trail of the Shadows. If you do not want to keep this booklet, please donate it back to the park by leaving it in the box at the end of the trail.

You will find other self-guiding nature trails adjacent to the Paradise Visitor Center (Nisqually Vista Trail), at the Box Canyon parking area, just west of the Steven's Canyon entrance (Grove of the Patriarchs), at the Ohanapecosh Visitor Center (Forest Life Trail), and at Sunrise (Sourdough Ridge Trail). Other exhibits are conveniently located along the roadsides to enhance your understanding and appreciation of Mount Rainier.



We hope that you have enjoyed your trip. You will find other self-guiding trails in the Park at Ohanapecosh, Paradise, Sunrise, and Carbon River.

Your comments on the booklet and trail would be appreciated. Kindly leave them with a Park Naturalist at the visitor center or write:

*Superintendent
Mount Rainier National Park
Tahoma Woods, Star Route
Ashford, Washington 98304*

