

*100 years at*



# LONGMIRE VILLAGE



TEXT BY SARAH ALLABACK & VICTORIA JACOBSON



PHOTOGRAPHY BY RONALD WARFIELD



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 Early advertising  
 enticement for booking a  
 stay at the Historic National  
 Park Inn at Longmire.

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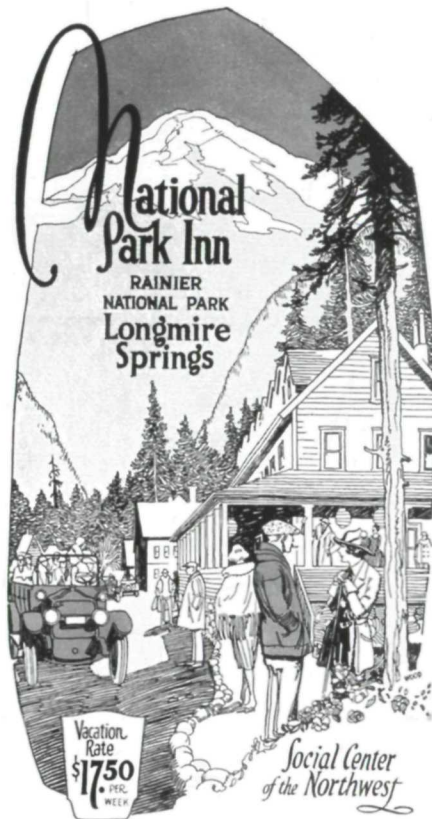


*Open stage arrives at the original National Park Inn, June 1911.*

## A Brief History of the District and Park Service Rustic Architecture

Welcome to Longmire Village! In celebration of Mount Rainier's 100th anniversary, we invite you to learn more about the oldest developed area in the park. Since the 1880s, Longmire has been a place for visitors to rest and enjoy the scenery. Today, it is also the location of many National Park Service offices and the center of park maintenance operations. This brief history and walking tour of Longmire Village will introduce you to the area's original landscape plan and some of its most important historic buildings.

In 1997, Mount Rainier National Park was designated as one of three National Historic Landmark (NHL) Districts in the national park system displaying an historically significant landscape design. The park achieved NHL status, not for its natural beauty, but for its importance in the history of American park design and landscape



*Rainier National Park Company  
brochure, 1925*

architecture. During the 1920s, Park Service landscape architects implemented their most comprehensive “master plan” for a national park at Mount Rainier. Through careful design and planning, they laid out the extensive road and trail system, scenic view points, and developed areas that we enjoy today. At Longmire Village, Paradise, and Sunrise, park architects and landscape architects experimented with the bold forms, fine craftsmanship, and local materials of “Park Service Rustic” architecture. This walking tour focuses on the Longmire Village portion of the Historic District, the historic headquarters of the park, where you will see outstanding examples of rustic buildings that have formed the core of a Park Service village since the 1920s. As indicated on the map, the village was divided into four main regions: Longmire Meadow, the Plaza, the Residential



Village and the Utility Area. Although part of an historic district, Longmire Village is also still a place where Park Service personnel live and work. During your tour, notice how the Park Service has adapted older buildings for modern use. This evolution is an important part of sustaining an historic district, which might otherwise fall into disrepair.

Longmire Village takes its name from a resort development that preceded the establishment of the national park in 1899. During the early 1880s, James Longmire developed this area as a rest stop for visitors on their way to the mountain and a health resort for those interested in “taking the water cure.” Longmire blazed a trail that became the primary approach for future mountain ascents, many of which he accompanied as a guide, and built a few crude shelters for visitors. Over the years, the Longmire family business prospered. When Mount Rainier became a national park in 1899, Longmire Medical Springs offered visitors hotel accommodations, bath houses, and other resort services. The



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*The Longmire Meadow is the original site of the Longmire Springs Spa, developed by the James Longmire family in the late 1880s. Today the Trail of the Shadows circumnavigates the meadow. Along it are two masonry encased springs, Soda Springs and Iron Mike, and the reconstructed 1888 Longmire Cabin (considered to be the oldest structure in the park). The masonry work on the springs was executed in the 1920s as recommended by the Park Service’s first landscape engineer, Charles P. Punchard, during the site visit to the park in 1919. According to his June 9, 1919, report to the park superintendent, Owen Tomlinson, “The small mineral springs should be walled up in a neat orderly way, and made more interesting . . . the brook confined to a definite channel . . .”*



Rainier National Park Company, the private organization responsible for building Paradise Inn in 1917, purchased the Longmire buildings as part of its effort to monopolize park concessions.

Before you begin the tour of Longmire Village, you may wish to visit the bubbling thermal springs that so inspired James Longmire. The Trail of the Shadows, located across the road from the National Park Inn, is a 3/4-mile loop through Longmire Meadow and old-growth forest. To see the springs, proceed to your right down the trail. The springs are protected by low masonry walls constructed by the Rainier National Park Company during the 1920s. A replica of a cabin built by James Longmire's son, Elcaine, is located about a quarter mile farther down the path.

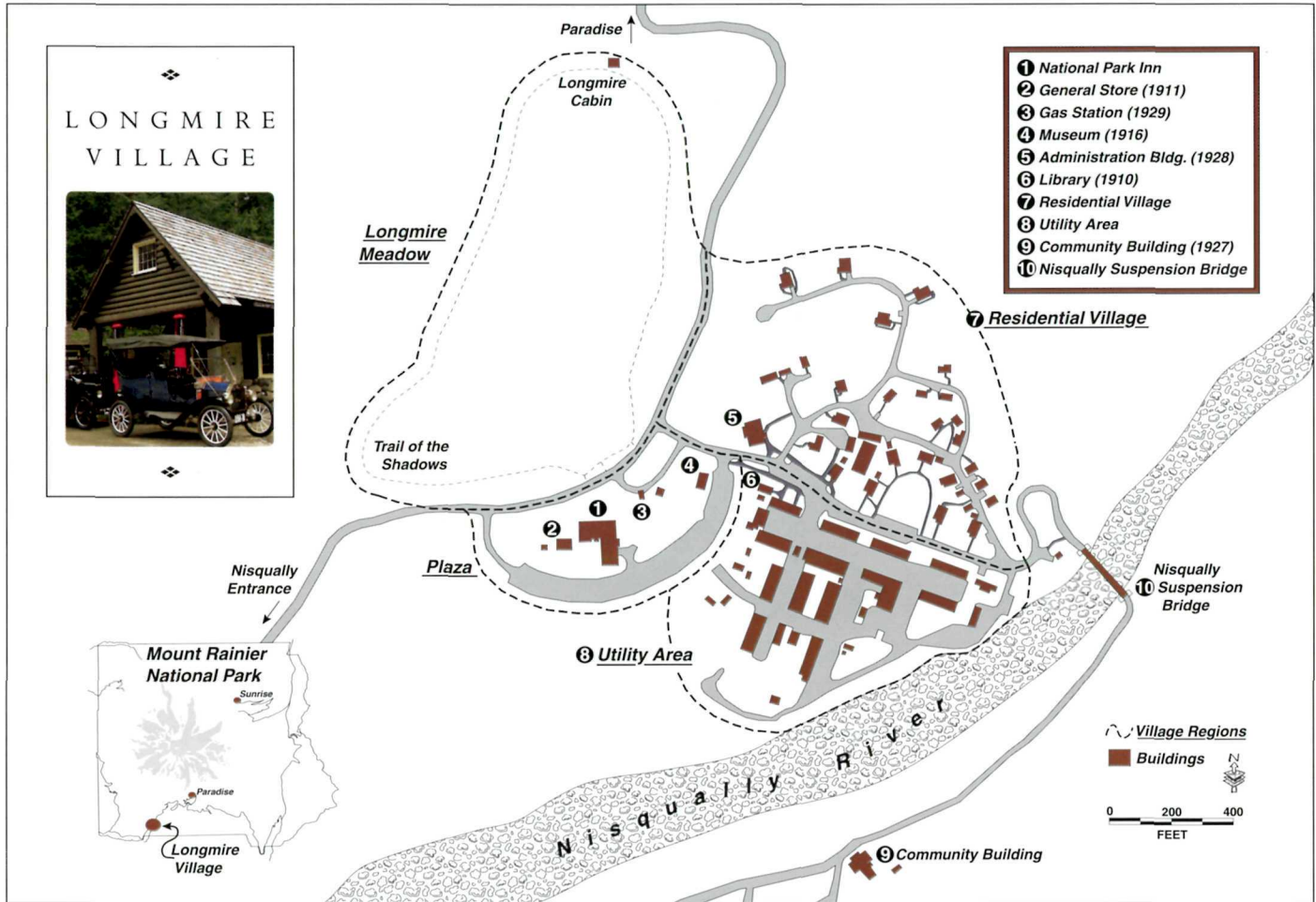
### “PARK SERVICE RUSTIC”

During the 1920s, the Park Service Landscape Division, based in San Francisco, began to create a new style of architecture for national parks—a

style that would come to be known as “Park Service Rustic.” In developing an appropriate form of architecture for park buildings, the Park Service found precedents in the great camps of the Adirondacks built during the late 19th century. These upstate New York vacation cabins became symbolic of outdoor living, and their use of naturally gnarled wood as “gingerbread” ornament along eaves, balconies, and verandahs gained popularity as a motif of the rugged, sporting lifestyle. Privately funded park hotels and lodges designed in the eclectic “Swiss,” “chalet,” and “alpine” styles around the turn of the century provided on-site examples of architecture suited to the wilderness. The developing Craftsman style, characterized by fine workmanship in wood, metal, and glass, also influenced attitudes toward building in park environments, as did the prairie style of Frank Lloyd Wright and its many imitators.

Led by architect Thomas Vint, the Landscape Division sought to design buildings that would both acknowledge

their natural surroundings and symbolize Park Service ideals. By the late 1920s, Vint's office had a clear idea of what rustic design should accomplish, and Mount Rainier proved an ideal opportunity to implement the new planning concepts. The plan for Longmire Village introduced a central plaza to unify the space between the National Park Inn, the future administration building, and other public buildings. Park Service landscape architects carefully developed a “wilderness” mood by employing the materials and construction techniques of an earlier era. On the other side of the mountain, at Sunrise, the twin blockhouses recall frontier days and the pioneering spirit of early Park Service planners. The community building at Paradise, designed during the 1930s and destroyed in 1965, mirrored the rugged “alpine” style of the Paradise Inn. Because Park Service Rustic could be adapted to any natural environment, the new style of building proved as versatile as the parks themselves.



The walking tour begins at the National Park Inn, as shown on the map, and proceeds to each historic building or area in numerical order.

The complete tour is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile and should take between 30 to 45 minutes. Allow extra time to explore the Trail of the Shadows and to visit

the General Store, National Park Inn, Wilderness Information Center (inside the Administration Building), and Longmire Museum.



The creation of Mount Rainier National Park in 1899 promised increased tourist travel to the area, and in 1906 the Tacoma Eastern Railway Company built a hotel just south of Longmire's Springs. The National Park Inn, as the new hotel was called, provided rooms for thirty-six guests as well as additional tent camping sites. In 1915, the Longmire Springs Company leased land from the Longmire family to build its own private hotel. A few years later, this building became the property of the Rainier National Park Company, which renamed it the National Park Annex. It



*Above: Mount Rainier looms over the National Park Inn and General Store. Top: "New" Longmire Springs Hotel, 1916.*



*Refurbished in 1989,  
the Inn offers the comforts of home  
and a fabulous view of the mountain  
from the wide "front" porch.*

was moved across the street in 1920 to become part of the National Park Inn and clubhouse complex. The original Longmire establishment was destroyed. The National Park Inn and the Annex (New Longmire Springs Hotel) competed for business until 1926, when the Inn burned in an electrical fire. The Annex was then renamed the National Park Inn. The building in use today is a remodeled version of the original Annex.

As you approach the Inn from the parking lot, notice that you enter the rear of the building. The hotel was originally designed as the centerpiece of the plaza and approached directly from the road by a circular driveway. This entrance road and the location of buildings were chosen to take advantage of the site's dramatic views of Eagle Peak and Mount Rainier. The Administration Building, Museum, National Park Inn, and other important buildings were grouped around the plaza, where visitors could park and explore the area. Through careful planning, Park Service landscape architects separated tourist facilities and park administration from the residential and utility areas to the east. Borders of native shrubs were planted to form a natural wall between these spaces. The original plaza, which served as a town square welcoming visitors to the heart of the village, was redesigned in the 1990s to accommodate greater numbers of visitors and relocate parking to allow for uninterrupted views in front of the hotel.

If time and weather permit, enjoy the mountain view from one of the chairs on the front porch of the Inn. These chairs are modeled after rustic furniture produced by the Indiana Hickory Company of Martinsville, Indiana, in the early 20th century. The original chairs were made of natural hickory poles bent into shape and pegged together; their seats were woven from the inner bark of hickory trees, leather, or reed. In the 1920s, the company sent train cars of furniture to Mount Rainier for use at the National Park Inn and Paradise Inn. Many original examples of these chairs and tables are still in use on the mezzanine of Paradise Inn. The next site on our tour is the General Store, located just south of the Inn.



*Previously located across the roadway from its current site,  
the National Park Inn today appears very much as it did in 1926, when pressed into service  
as a full-service hotel after the original National Park Inn was destroyed by fire.*



In 1911, the Tacoma & Eastern Railroad constructed this building as a clubhouse for the original National Park Inn. By 1920, a covered walkway connected it to the hotel. This comfortable meeting and gathering place for Inn patrons featured a stone chimney, complete with mounted moose head, and Indiana hickory tables and chairs. Lantern light fixtures hung from rough-hewn beams. Over the years, this building also served as the hotel manager's residence, a hiker center, and employee dormitory before becoming the park concessioner's general store. To continue the tour, walk past the Inn to the Gas Station.

*The General Store has led many lives since its construction in 1911 as a clubhouse for guests of the Inn. This true log cabin is one of the oldest structures remaining in the park.*





In the early 20th century, visitors drove their automobiles right up to the front of the National Park Inn. A shining Standard Oil gas station was provided for their convenience. The facility was modeled after a station recently constructed at Yosemite National Park. During the period of rustic improvement at Mount Rainier, the Park Service replaced it with a more compatible building. Beginning in 1929, visitors had the luxury of filling up at this rustic pumping station, a collaboration between Park Service architects and the Associated Oil Company. The building is one of three National Historic Landmarks in Longmire Village, a rare example of a gas station designed to harmonize with wilderness scenery. Although the facility was closed in 1994, it reopened in June 1998 as an exhibit of the history of transportation in the park. The next building on the tour is the Longmire Museum, immediately north of the station.

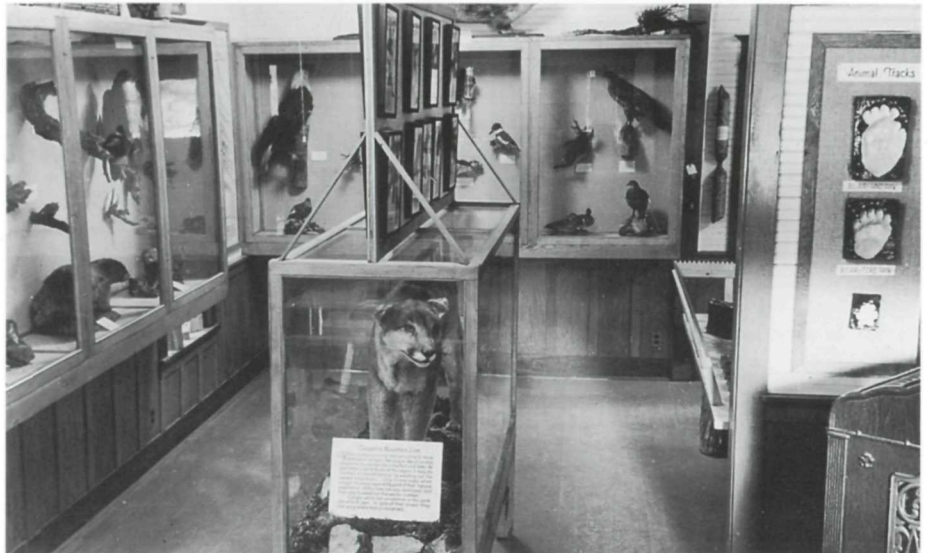
*The first park “auto barn”, constructed in 1911, accommodated America’s growing affection for its “machines”. Not until 1919 was the first commercial service station constructed in Longmire. In 1929, that original prototypical Standard Oil station was replaced by the rustic station we see today. Note that what appear to be log walls are really a novelty siding, milled to look like “logs”.*



The Longmire Museum dates back to 1916, when it was constructed across the street as the park's first administration building. After completion of the new administration building in 1928, this building became a museum of native flora and fauna. Some of the original exhibits created by the Works Progress Administration during the 1930s are still on view. The Museum stands across the road from the imposing Administration Building at the northern entrance to the park village.



*Chief Naturalist C. Frank Brockman collected an amazing quantity of flora and fauna, now displayed in the Museum. Floyd Schmoe, the park's first naturalist, performed his first, and only, effort at taxidermy on Charlie the Cougar, "Old Glasseyes". To quote Bob McIntyre, volunteer park researcher and historian: "If you look into Charlie's eyes, you can see that he is still puzzled [as to] why he is crowded into such a tiny museum."*





The Administration Building, a National Historic Landmark, is a classic example of the rustic style developed by the Park Service landscape division during the 1920s. Designed by landscape architect Ernest A. Davidson, the timber-frame building is characterized by its cedar-shingle gable roof, glacial boulders, hand-peeled log beams, and log slab siding. The interior is warmed by natural wood trim and a stone fireplace. During the late 1960s, the park's administrative facilities were

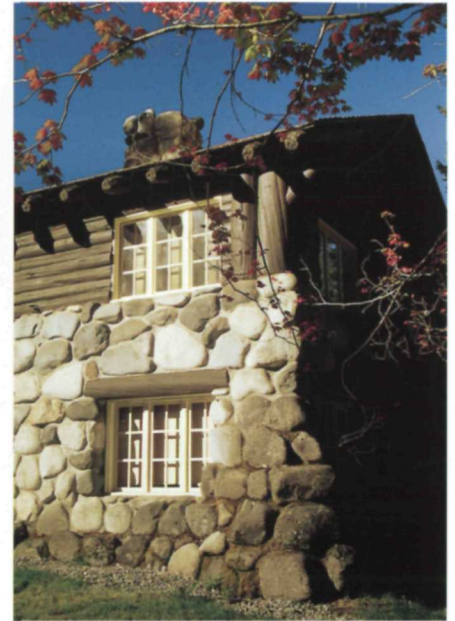
*The formality of the approach and the setting of the Administration Building, coupled with its flagpole, announce that this is the most important structure in Longmire Village.*





*Stephen T. Mather—first National  
Park Service director*





*While not the first park headquarters, nor the current one, the Administration Building fulfilled that role for many years and epitomizes the sense of place that characterizes rustic Park Service architecture at its best.*



moved outside the park to Tahoma Woods. Today, this building houses offices for rangers and natural and cultural resource staff. The Wilderness Information Center is located in the far end of the building and can be entered from the stone porch facing the main road. Notice the massive boulder fireplace decorated with mountaineering gear, the original rustic tin “chandeliers,” and the relief map of Mount Rainier cast in the 1930s. While you are admiring the view from the porch, look for the Mather Plaque to the right of the steps. The plaque commemorates the legacy of Stephen Mather, founder and first director of the National Park Service. After Mather’s death in 1932, plaques were erected and dedicated in several parks and National Park Service offices. Proceed across the street to our next site, the Library.



This unassuming wood frame building is actually the oldest government structure in the village. Built in 1910 as a kitchen for construction workers and park employees, it was later converted to a recreation room. Today the library contains reference books for park staff and archival records. The Residential Village is located across the road from the library, between the administration building and the river.

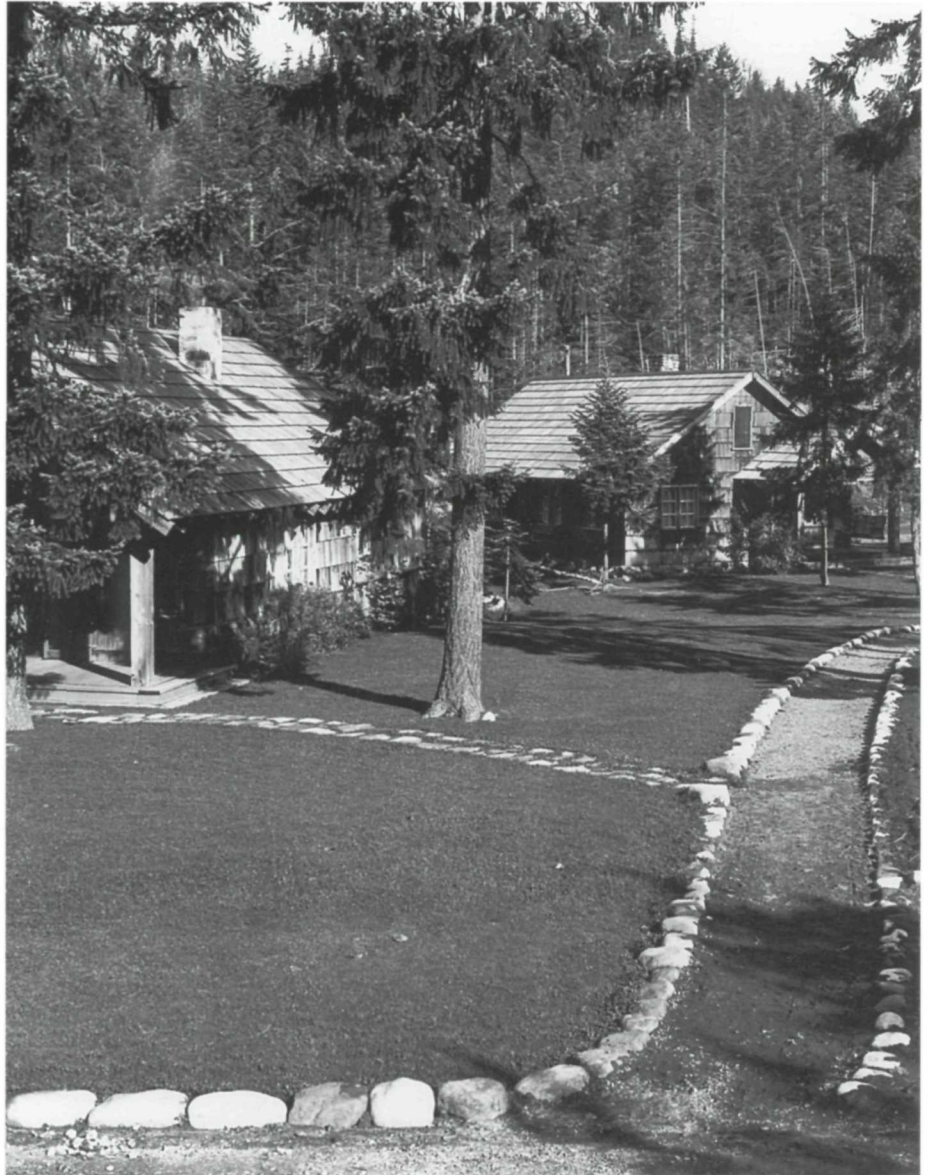


*A beautifully simple framed building of pleasing proportions and scale, the Library is another Longmire structure originally built to serve a very different function. Constructed as a community kitchen, it was converted into a library during the 1920s, and during the 1950s served as a branch of the Pierce County Library System. Through the 1970s the building again served a variety of uses including a stint as Youth Conservation Corps clubhouse, but in 1981 it returned to its current status: park library.*

## R E S I D E N T I A L   V I L L A G E



A few residential cottages were built as early as 1923, when the park decided to improve employee housing, but the core of this village was planned in 1926 as part of the park's first master plan. Park Service architect Daniel Hull developed four basic cottage types clustered about a semi-circular lawn and walk, which served as the focal point of the residential arrangement.



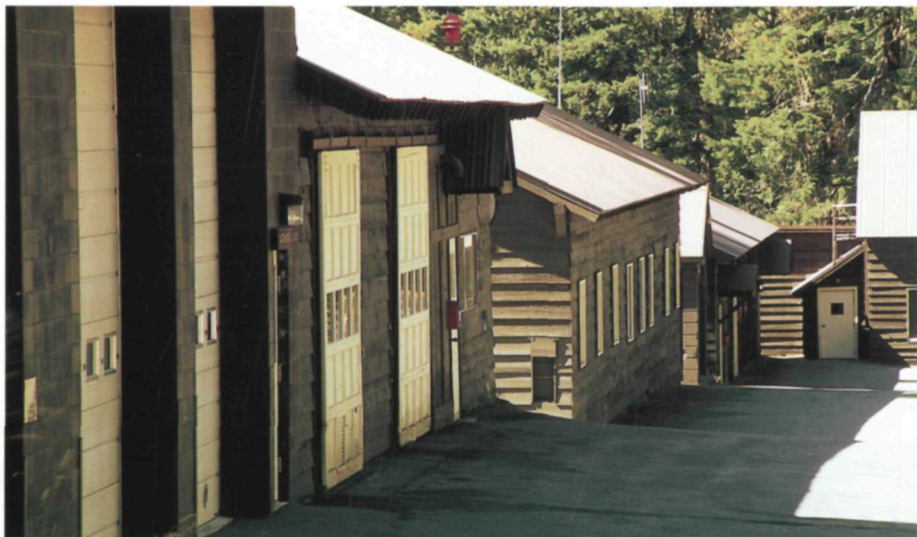


Additional houses were built along the hillside behind the cottage area during the late 1930s. Curving streets and paths were created and lawns planted to make the residential area appear suitably domestic. The park “neighborhood” was shielded from the maintenance yard by a screen of trees planted in front of the warehouses and native plantings along the river. The road perpendicular to the river, which leads across the bridge to the community building, separates the residential village from the Utility Area.



*Bungalow-style cottages in the Longmire Residential Area are clustered in typical residential fashion, originally adorned with lawns, trees, and foundation plantings. Contrary to popular opinion, the majority of these houses were built during the late 1920s and early 1930s, prior to the CCC era in the park. Only the cottages on the hill and along the back loop road were constructed by the CCC from plans provided by the Park Service's Design and Engineering Branch in San Francisco.*





On the south side of the road, a row of warehouses marks the edge of the utility area. In contrast with the residential village's curving streets, this area is organized on a functional grid plan. Maintenance work is conducted more efficiently in a paved area with standard streets for work vehicles and delivery trucks. This "maintenance yard" contains room for storage, as well as workshops, the sign shop, garage, and park gas pumps. Offices for maintenance personnel are also located in this area. The core of the utility area dates back to the master plan of the 1920s.



*The distinctive layout of the Utility Area (Maintenance Area) was developed in the park's 1926 master plan. The predominance of brown painted wood, lap siding, and the simple rectangular massing and relatively low pitched roofs of these utilitarian buildings maintain visual cohesiveness. This area in particular has faced more pressure for physical change as the motorized equipment used and housed here has become larger and more sophisticated over the past seven decades.*

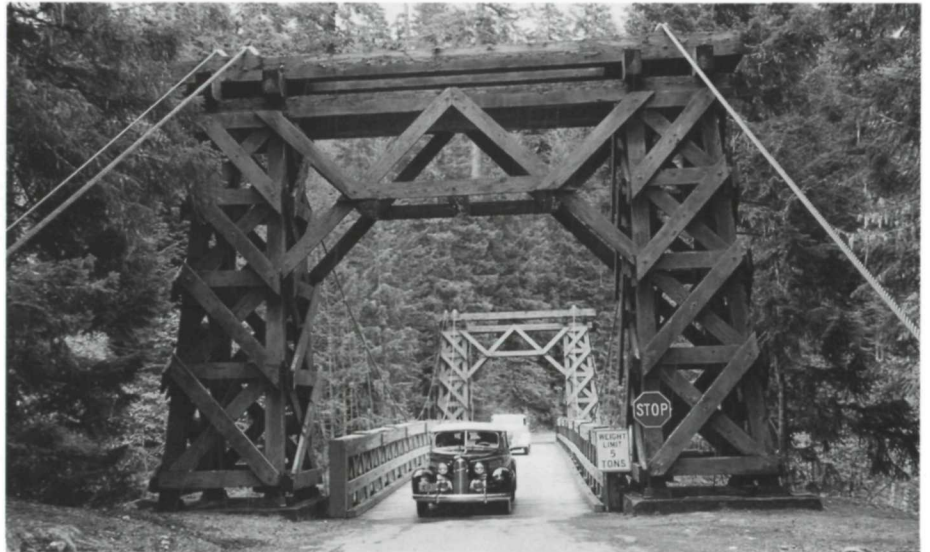
*Evidence of this pressure has been the replacement of cedar shingle roofs with corrugated metal and wooden side-hinged doors with metal overhead garage-style doors. As a non-public area it has tended to be more of a hodgepodge of recycled and relocated buildings sited along the existing street grid, but varying in architectural and historic significance and integrity. Thus many buildings in this portion of the historic district are considered non-contributing to the district.*



Our tour ends at the community building, a rustic structure located across the Nisqually River. Follow the road dividing the residential village from the maintenance yard to the Nisqually Suspension Bridge. A pedestrian bridge existed here as early as 1911, but in 1924 it was replaced with a vehicular bridge to provide access to the newly opened Longmire Public Auto Camp. During the 1930s, Ernest Davidson supervised Civilian Conservation Corps members working on improvements to the adjacent campground. In 1927, Davidson designed the Community Building as a public meeting hall for the campground.



*Imagine the towers of the Nisqually Bridge as peeled logs. Built in 1924, the original bridge was just that: a log-and-cable suspension bridge that carried automobile and pedestrian traffic into the "auto camp" for more than 25 years. In 1952 the log towers were dismantled and rebuilt using milled timbers in their stead.*





You may recognize the gabled cedar-shake roof and rough-hewn timbers employed in the community building. This meeting hall shares the rustic qualities of the administration building, also designed by Ernest Davidson. Although it appears to be built of notched logs upon a stone foundation, the building's wood frame actually provides structural support for the applied rustic exterior. Inside, the exposed log truss system contributes to the spaciousness and atmosphere of





this gathering place. The room features a bay window at one end and stone fireplace on the other. Wrought-iron wall sconces and chandeliers are still in use. The Community Building is a popular location for Park Service social events, meetings, and training programs.



*The third of Longmire's National Historic Landmarks, the Community Building is a classic rustic masterpiece both inside and out. Its most engaging original element—the rustic lighting and furnishings—is still intact. Originally designed to function as the hub of the newly opened auto camp, this building has been the scene of many adventures and events, both public and private, over the decades since it was constructed.*





Mount Rainier's 100th anniversary is perhaps best commemorated at Longmire Village, where the National Park Service designed one of its finest examples of a headquarters and community development. The legacy of Park Service planners, Longmire Village illustrates how landscape design determines our experience of park scenery. The Longmire Village Historic District preserves a carefully orchestrated planned village, which represents the Park Service's historical role in maintaining the park and its continued effort to promote both public use and the preservation of park resources. To gain a better appreciation of the historic planned areas of the park, we suggest that you visit Paradise and Sunrise. At Paradise, you will find Paradise Inn, a lodge constructed by entrepreneurs in 1917, and several Park Service buildings in the "alpine" or "chalet" style. Sunrise, or Yakima Park as it was originally known, is the site of a "frontier" stockade, the North and South Blockhouses, and the Sunrise Lodge, a concessioner's facility. Both locations offer a variety of excellent hiking trails suitable for every ability.

The next time you visit a national park, look for rustic structures similar to those you have just seen. Many national parks have preserved rustic buildings, often for continued use as small museums. As you will see, Mount Rainier's Longmire Village is exceptional in both the high quality of its architectural style and the integrity of its overall plan. With your help and continued interest, we hope to preserve Longmire Village for generations to come.

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S



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*Longmire Medical Springs Hotel - circa 1900*  
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Map: Darin Swinney, Geographic Information Specialist at Mount Rainier.

Historic Photographs: Front cover (top) and pages 2, 11, 23 (both): Asahel Curtis; pages 3 and inside front cover, Rainier National Park Company brochure, courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, WA. Page 7 (top): Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries, photo by F.A. Barnes, neg #433. Pages 13 (bottom), 18, 19 (bottom), 20 (bottom), (left) this page: Mount Rainier National Park Archives.

Vintage "Shine Times" Automobiles: 1912 Ford Model T, Marty and Sandy Pendriss, Tacoma WA; 1923 Ford Model T, Ray Schuller, Puyallup, WA; 1936 Ford, Joe and Donna Cody, Puyallup, WA; 1939 La Salle, Everett Ostlund, Carbonado, WA.

Models, page 8: Eleanor Hall; cover and page 1: Ray Schuller

Funding for this project was provided by the *Mount Rainier, North Cascades & Olympic Fund*, 1221 Second Avenue, Suite 350, Seattle, WA 98101—a non-profit organization committed to the restoration, enhancement, and preservation of Washington's national parks.

Published by *Northwest Interpretive Association*, 909 First Avenue, Suite 630, Seattle, WA 98104-1060—a non-profit organization benefitting the educational programs in the national parks and forests of the Pacific Northwest.



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