

Changes, indeed! The elk sighted by the Press Exploring Expedition were hunted nearly to extinction, but now they are protected and are wintering again near Madison Creek, just as they did a century ago. The Gray Eagle Mine that was later used by the Sweet family for cold storage has been closed by earth and rockfall. In 1975, the acreage pioneered by Smith and Matteson and by Bowman and Sweet became part of Olympic National Park. Nature dominates the scene once more.

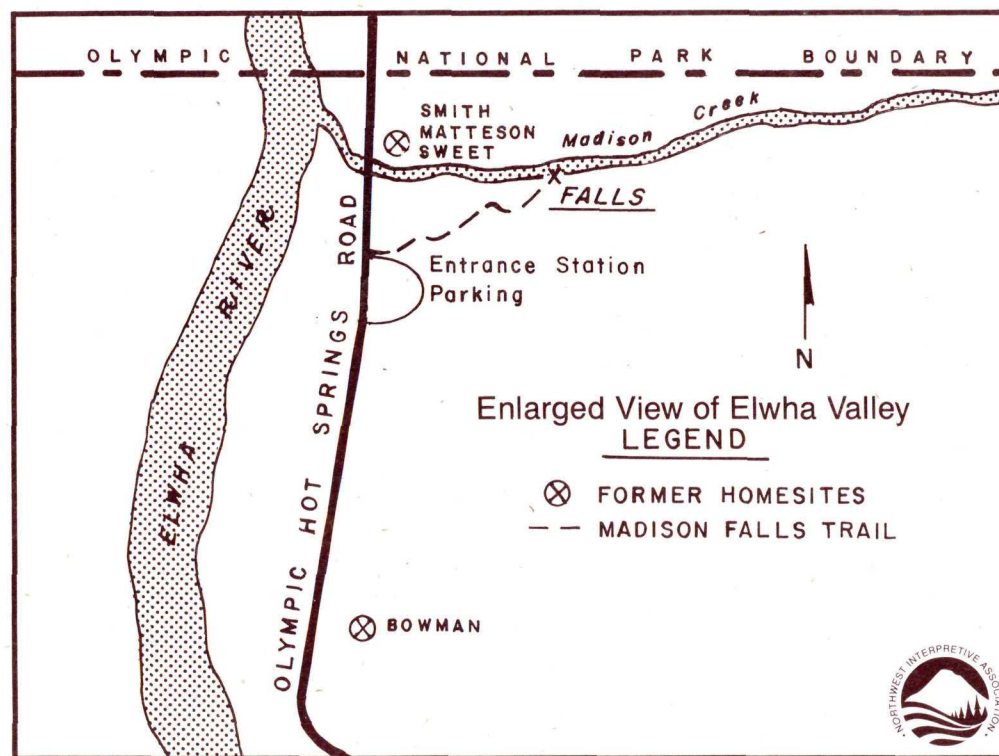
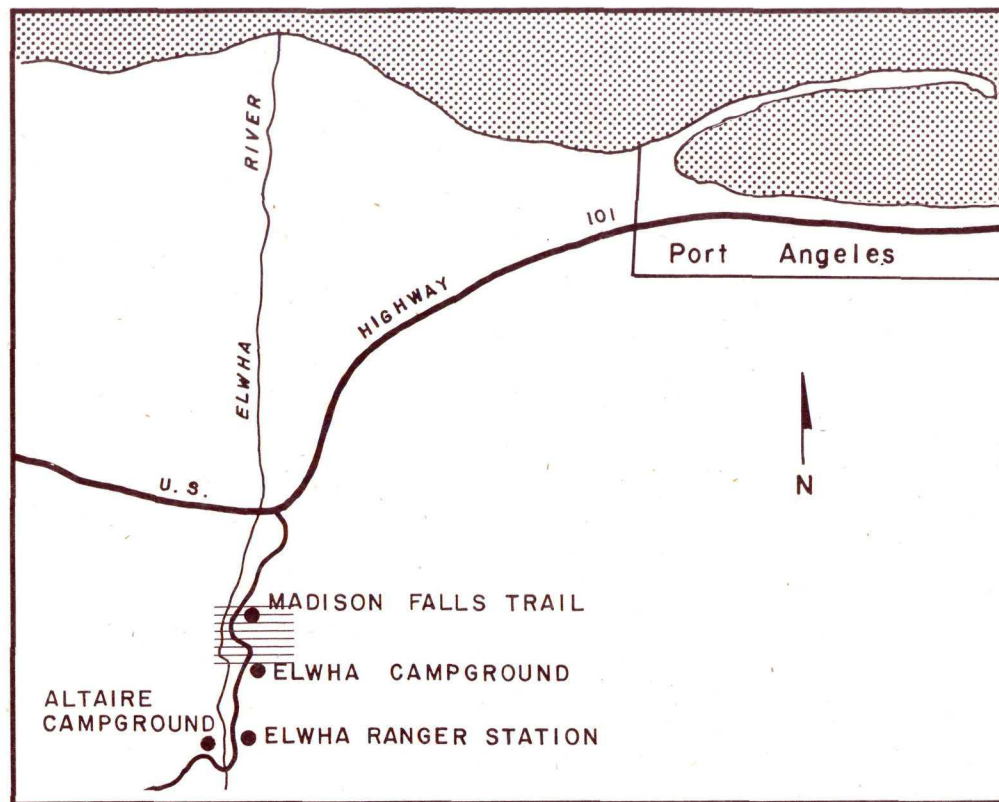
Today's visitor to Madison Falls can reflect on these human changes while admiring the on-going work of nature.

Look about you in July, and you may find wild strawberries. In November, the elk return to their winter range. In January, the falls may freeze solid, while only weeks later, hummingbirds are busy at work here, seeking the earliest blooms of spring.

Enjoy your visit to this place of wonder, the Madison Falls Trail!

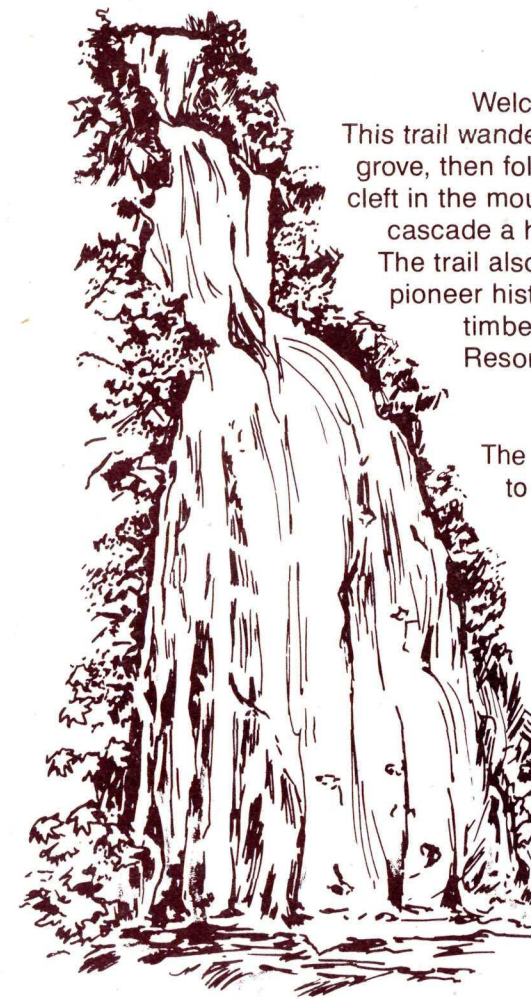


The Madison Falls Trail is accessible to all, graded and paved for wheelchair use.



Madison Falls Trail

Elwha Valley - Olympic National Park



Welcome to the Madison Falls Trail. This trail wanders through meadow and forest grove, then follows Madison Creek through a cleft in the mountainside to splendid falls that cascade a hundred feet down basalt cliffs. The trail also wanders through a century of pioneer history, commencing near Smith's timber claim and Sweet's Cedarvale Resort, ending at Matteson's mining claim by the falls.

The Madison Falls Trail is accessible to all, graded and paved for wheelchair use, with resting benches along the way. The trail is open and accessible year 'round, with each season a change of delights.

The Elwha Valley was occupied by Indians who hunted and gathered here for centuries. But like the rest of the Olympic Mountains, the valley was not explored by white settlers until the late 1800's.

Responding to an appeal by a Seattle newspaper, six men organized the Press Exploring Expedition to cross the Olympic Mountains in the winter of 1889-1890. Early on their route they stayed with various settlers. Warriner Smith's timber claim and vacant cabin near the mouth of Madison Creek were at the edge of settlement, and for a week the explorers made it their camp. From their diary came these entries:

"Some of the cedar trees along the river measure 30 feet"

February 6, 1890: "Packed three loads each and our bedding and kitchen kit clear through to Smith's cabin. (It) is of logs with spaces between . . . from one to three inches . . . a breezy and well-ventilated cabin for this kind of weather."



Dwarfed by a giant cedar, early pioneer Grant Humes maintained a diary in which he recorded many of the activities of the Madison Falls area in the late 1800's.

February 8, 1890: "We are getting into the game country now. Not 50 yards from Smith's cabin . . . is a perfect stable for elk. A band of 100 have evidently been wintering there."

February 10, 1890: "Some of the cedar trees along the river measure 30 feet around - great giants. I cut a chip from one of them with my axe." (Nearly a century later, an explorer will find such a tree near the river with just such a chip, though nearly healed over.)

Around 1900, a Dr. A.L. Matteson followed Smith to the claim, digging a mine tunnel at the base of the falls. Today his abridged name (Madison) is given the creek. The mine tunnel is closed. His pioneer efforts were followed by one Caddis Bowman, who received a homestead patent for 160 acres in 1905. A two-story log house and orchard were located on cleared land south of the creek. At the far end of the pasture the remains of a stone chimney and the aged orchard are visible yet today from the road.

From 1910 to 1913, the land changed ownership many times, finally resting with Lester and Anna Sweet, for whom it was home for more than 50 years. The Sweets lived in Bowman's old cabin while they built a new home by Madison Creek. While Anna was away, teaching and superintending at area schools, Lester worked the ranch. He raised strawberries and cattle, sold shakes and shakebolts, and later developed the Cedarvale Resort.

An up-river neighbor and pioneer, Grant Humes, noted the changes in the valley and the ebb and flow of settlers along Madison Creek. He wrote in his diary:

'Old Miner' was never too tired to fiddle!

April 14, 1900: "Ate at Doc's (Matteson) and was washing dishes when he came in, tired, about out. Waited to hear him fiddle. The 'Old Miner' was never too tired to fiddle."

June 14, 1923: "(The new road being built) will help put Sweet with his Bowman place right on its feet. He is working up a large strawberry ranch (over an acre) and plans to tap Madison Falls with an irrigation ditch."



An unknown photographer recorded this scene of Warriner Smith's camp near Madison Creek around 1888. The robust fellow with the rifle is believed to be Smith himself. It was at his abandoned camp that members of the Press Exploring Expedition stayed during the winter of 1889-90.

April 26, 1928: "Under the big cedars, in sight of Doc Matteson's cabin where once was heard the cheery Voice 'Come in, whoever you are,' Sweet is building a swimming pool about 40' by 80' for the amusement of guests who patronize his camp 'Cedarvale.' The water falls down the ledge in a beautiful silver ribbon just as it did years ago when Doc made the surrounding hills reverberate with dynamite shots fired within the tunnel of the 'Gray Eagle' (Mine), while the savage cougar stalked his quarry along the moss-covered rocks above. Again, what changes."