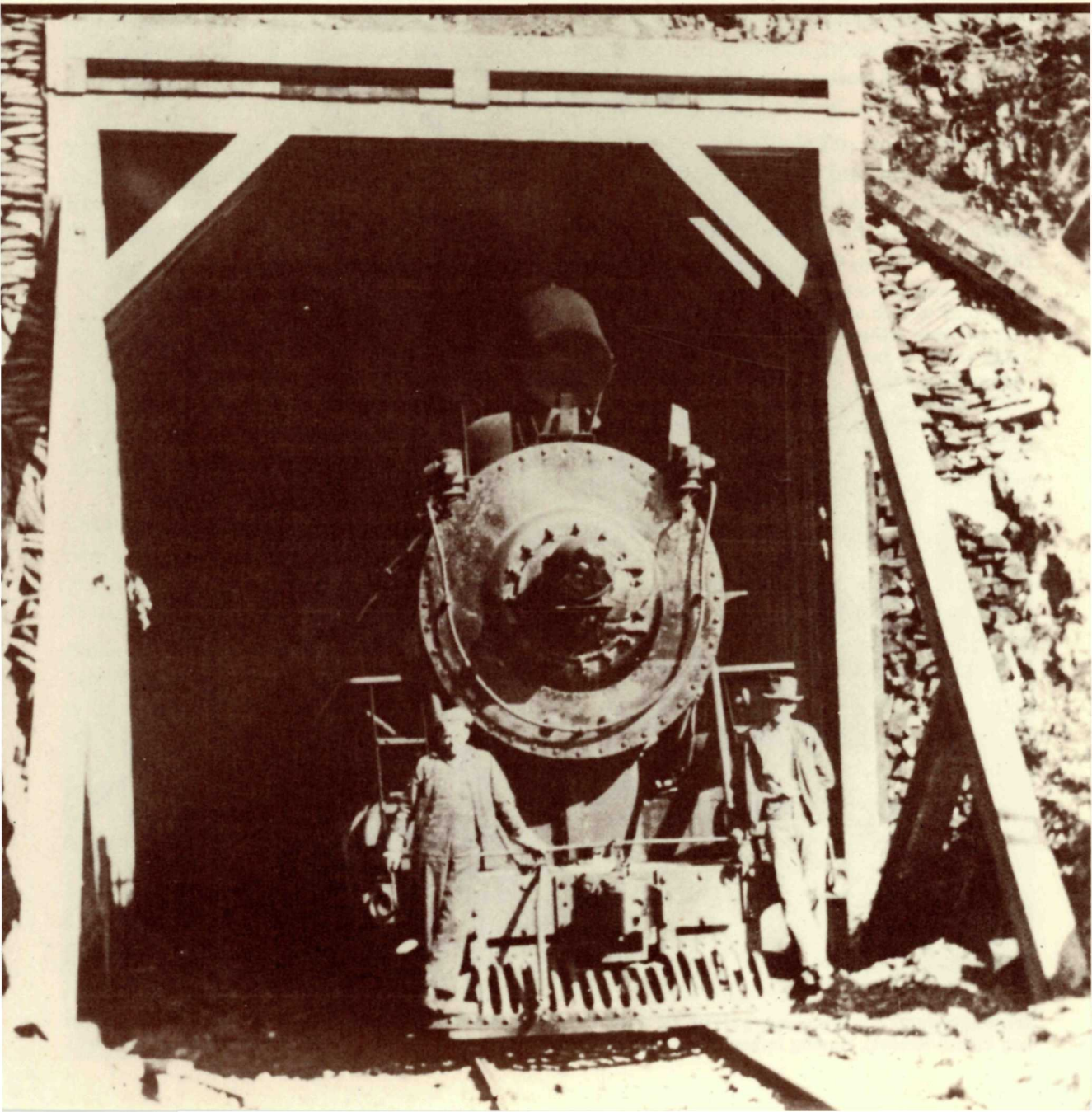


# SPRUCE RAILROAD TRAIL

Olympic National Park — Lake Crescent





# Ties with History



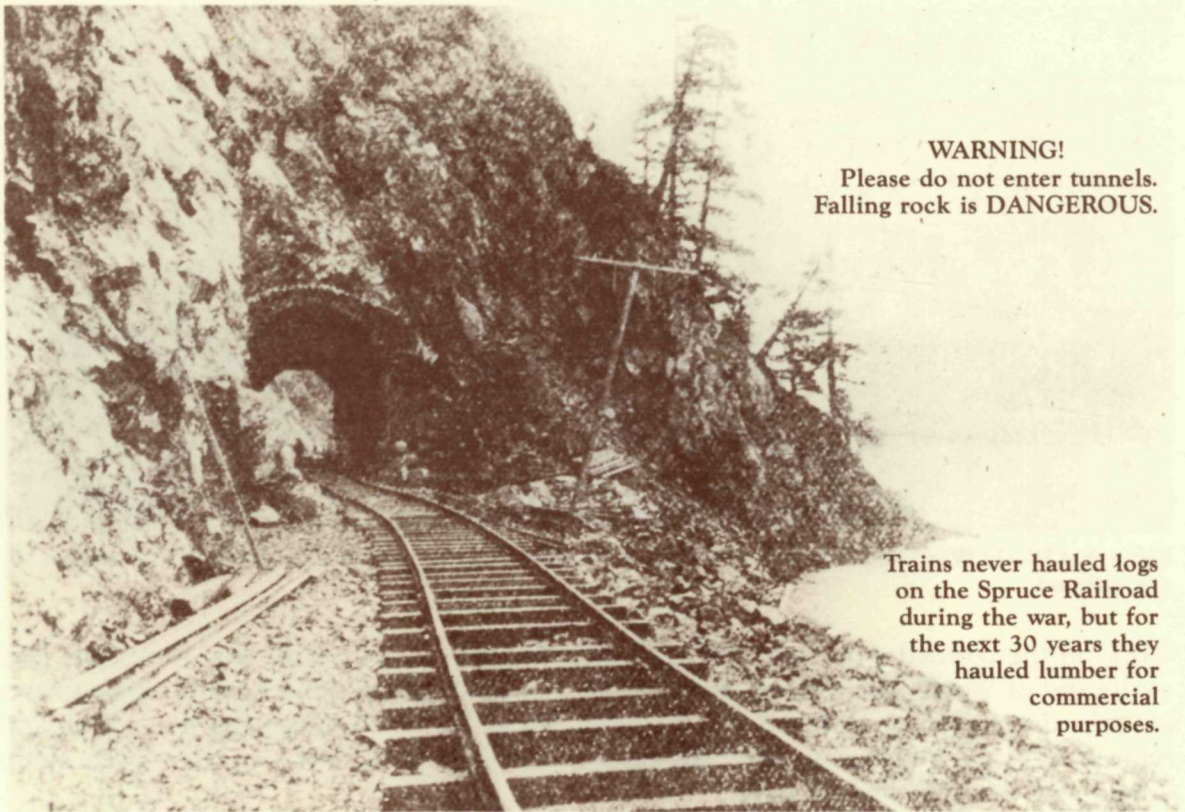
Spruce Railroad Trail winds along the north shore of 600-foot deep Lake Crescent, offering ever changing vistas of the lake and surrounding peaks. The trail has few hills and stays below 800 feet in elevation, allowing year-round access. You can reach the trail via the Camp David Jr. Road at the western end of Lake Crescent, near Fairholm, or by following the East Beach Road for 4 miles, at the lake's eastern end. Follow the signs to trailheads.

The north shore of Lake Crescent is not typical of the Olympics. Along the trail, you emerge from moist lowland forest into a brushy, open forest with a drier microclimate. Living things uncommon to the Olympics grow in rocky outcrops. Watch for the three shiny leaves of **poison oak** and for **ticks** concealed in foliage near the trail. Sun-loving Pacific madrone trees, with peeling red bark, shade these lower slopes of Pyramid Peak.



Tents and teams of horses were part of the workers' encampment at Piedmont, Lake Crescent (near present Log Cabin Resort), during construction of the Spruce Railroad.





**WARNING!**  
Please do not enter tunnels.  
Falling rock is **DANGEROUS.**

Trains never hauled logs  
on the Spruce Railroad  
during the war, but for  
the next 30 years they  
hauled lumber for  
commercial  
purposes.

The Spruce Railroad story begins with World War I. The United States and its allies needed Sitka spruce to build frames for airplanes, as this was the strongest and lightest material available. The Army's Spruce Production Division was formed in 1917 to supply 10 million board feet of spruce per month for airplane construction.

Sitka spruce grows only along the coastal region from Northern California to Alaska, with vast stands located on the roadless western Olympic Peninsula. To move the huge logs to a Port Angeles mill, one phase of the Spruce Production Division's work was to build a railroad around Lake Crescent (there were no roads around Lake Crescent until 1921). Survey and construction of the 36-mile Olympic Spruce Railroad No. 1 began during the summer of 1918.

For the next five months, work continued at a frenzied pace. A narrow shelf was blasted out along the steep, tortuous north shore of the lake. Along the route, two tunnels had to be constructed, the Daley-Rankin bore on the west and the costly 460-foot McFee bore on the east.

*"The 36 miles of main line construction through the tunnels of forest and of solid rock, over spidery trestles, around dizzy, rocky curves...is being completed practically within five months! It is the most remarkable speed feat in the history of American railroading." (Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen, January 1919)*



## WHEN THE PEACE NEWS CAME



News that World War I had ended reached Spruce Railroad workers in Seattle prior to completion of the railroad.

Work on the railroad was completed on November 30, 1918, 19 days after Armistice Day — the end of World War I. After the expenditure of millions of dollars, not a single spruce log passed over Spruce Railroad No. 1 during World War I. However, the track, bed, and right-of-way were sold and used to haul logs commercially until 1954, when they were abandoned and the rails sold as scrap.

Olympic National Park staff completed the Spruce Railroad Trail in 1981, blending history with today's landscape. As you walk the trail, imagine railroad ties vibrating with the rumbling of passing trains, half a century ago.

