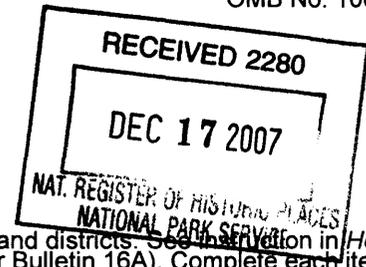


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



1473

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Gem Lake Trail

other names/site number 5LR.11810.1

2. Location

street & number Rocky Mountain National Park (ROMO) [N/A] not for publication

city or town Estes Park [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Larimer code 069 zip code 80510

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Signature of certifying official/Title: Joe Wallis
Date: DEC 20 2007
State or Federal agency and bureau: National Park Service

In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Signature of certifying official/Title: Mark Wolfe
Date: 12/4/07
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
[X] entered in the National Register [ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register [ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register
[ ] other, explain [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of the Keeper: Edson H. Beall
Date of Action: 1.29.08

Gem Lake Trail  
Name of Property

Larimer County/ Colorado  
County/State

### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

#### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

#### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

#### Name of related multiple property listing.

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Rocky Mountain National Park  
Historic Park Landscapes In National and State Parks

#### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor  
recreation  
LANDSCAPE/ park  
TRANSPORTATION/ pedestrian-related

#### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor  
recreation  
LANDSCAPE/ park  
TRANSPORTATION/ pedestrian-related

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS  
OTHER: Rustic

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation  
walls  
roof  
other EARTH  
WOOD  
STONE

#### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Gem Lake Trail Larimer County/ Colorado  
Rocky Mountain National Park MPS  
Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks MPS

Section number 7 Page 1

## DESCRIPTION

Location: The trail is on the east side of Rocky Mountain National Park, north of Estes Park. The historic part of the trail begins at the park boundary at the bottom of the south side of Lumpy Ridge. The trail moves northward, ascending a small ravine to reach the top of Lumpy Ridge and Gem Lake. Although the pathway continues to the north, the lake marks the end of the historic trail.

Setting: Lumpy Ridge, a rocky arm that extends eastward from the McGregor Mountain area, is characterized by large formations like "The Needles" and "The Twin Owls." Gem Lake is situated on top of the exposed eastern end of the ridge. The trail moves up a rocky gully, winding through a few ponderosa pines and house-sized boulders. To the hikers' back, southern views open up, offering long, direct glimpses over Estes Park and toward Longs Peak. The lake itself nudges up against a 60-foot bank of stone. No water runs in or out.

General route established: 1915

Trail built: 1923

Materials: Earth, local rock, and log/wood

Destination: Gem Lake

Length of main trail: 1 mile

Trail width: Ranging from 2 to 4 feet

Significant built features: Dry laid rock walls, log and rock water bars and drains, stone steps, and switchbacks

Significant natural features: Gem Lake and Lumpy Ridge

### Trail tour:

Gem Lake fits its name—an unlikely but pretty little puddle, situated on the exposed eastern edge of Lumpy Ridge. No waterway runs in or out. The southern trail runs up through large, knobby boulders, eventually reaching a rocky amphitheater fringed with ponderosa pines. The water itself backs up against a 60-foot bank of stone. Even though the setting suggests rattlesnakes and raptors more than a lake, Gem Lake's sandy beach attracts its share of visitors.

Gem Lake connects to a network of trails and can be accessed from both the north (using the Cow Creek Trailhead) and the South (using the Twin Owls Trailhead). However, only the upper mile of the southern trail is historic. In the summer of 2006, the National Park Service trail crew rerouted the lower part of the southern trail outside the park to accommodate private property.

The historic section begins at the park boundary, an approximately 8,200 foot elevation point at the southern base of Lumpy Ridge, an arm of rocky outcroppings gradually tapering from the McGregor Mountain area down to the east. Formations like "The Needles" and "The Twin Owls" distinguish the southern side of the ridge. The trail runs east and north, following the ridge up into a rocky gully. Slabs of stone form the walls of the little valley. Next to the trail, a few sparse pines squeeze up between the house-sized boulders. The variety of shapes and sizes lends a playful atmosphere to the hike.

Not surprisingly, most of the trail construction utilizes rock, although log checks occasionally help sustain the tread. Stone steps wind around the big obstacles, and dry rock walls support switchbacks. Perhaps more than any other trail in the park, the Gem Lake Trail's stonework takes its cue from the surrounding scenery. Near the lake, a trailside block of granite takes the form of compressed,

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

Gem Lake Trail Larimer County/ Colorado  
Rocky Mountain National Park MPS  
Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks MPS

Section number 7 Page 2

pancake-like horizontal ripples; the adjacent rock wall mimics this form with flat, wide rocks. In other areas, the stone steps retain a rounded, unchiseled quality blending in with their counterparts off the trail. Nonetheless, the makers of this trail did not totally hide their presence; drill holes are frequently visible in the rockwork.

This section of trail finishes at the 8,900-foot Gem Lake. To the hikers' back, views have opened up to the south, offering a direct view across Estes Valley and toward Longs Peak.

**Trail construction and alterations:**

As early as 1910 a tourist could travel a few miles north from town along Devils Gulch Road, travel to the north side of Lumpy Ridge, and wrap southward to Gem Lake. By 1915, a hiker or horseback rider could take the shorter route through the small ravine on the southern side of Lumpy Ridge. This is roughly the route that most hikers take today. The approximately 1-mile section through the ravine constitutes the only part of the Gem Lake Trail that has not been significantly changed since the historic period. However, access to this trail has typically crossed private property, and has required periodic realignment (as was done in 2006).

It is unclear who was responsible for first building this short but interesting tourist trail. However, the early and frequent use by tourists suggests that the route developed under some combination of repeated use and effort on the part of local lodge owners. Lodges whose guests might easily have used the trail includes all of the Estes Park hotels, McCreery's, Lester's Hotel, and the Dennis Hotel.

Although Rocky Mountain National Park was created in 1915, it did not inherit the Gem Lake Trail until 1917, when the original park boundaries expanded to encompass Gem Lake and other landmarks.

Significantly, the dryness, brevity, and low elevation of the Gem Lake Trail ensured that it would require comparatively less concern from trail builders. However, its popularity—especially with horseback riders—demanded some degree of attention from the park. In 1923, the *Estes Park Trail* announced that Ranger Jack Moomaw and three others had improved the trail to formally accommodate "saddle parties." The trail remained a popular route through at least the 1960s.

Although it probably received routine maintenance through the 1920s and 1930s, the next substantial construction work did not occur until late in 1940. The trail was slated for winter work by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The CCC began rebuilding the trail around Thanksgiving and finished by the middle of February 1941. Their work encompassed parts of the modern trail, including the section up the ravine. Most likely, the extensive stone work in the ravine can be attributed to the CCC. NPS trail crews dynamited out parts of Gem Lake Trail in 1968 to provide greater safety to horses. The crew repaired or rebuilt stonework adhering to the previously established style.<sup>1</sup>

**Gem Lake Trail integrity:**

The nominated mile of the Gem Lake Trail retains a high degree of integrity compared to its 1923 alignment and its 1940-1941 Civilian Conservation Corp rock work (rock walls and stone steps). Park trail crews widened portions of the trail through the ravine to make horseback riding safer, but these changes did not diminish the overall integrity of the trail; it conveys its historic character, reaches the same destination, and maintains its historic alignment.

<sup>1</sup> *Estes Park Trail*, August 10, 1912 and July 13, 1923; William Ramaley; Superintendents Annual and Monthly Reports.

Gem Lake Trail  
Name of Property

Larimer County/ Colorado  
County/State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record
- # \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/ RECREATION  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
POLITICS/ GOVERNMENT

### Periods of Significance

1915-1945

### Significant Dates

1923

1940

### Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

National Park Service

Civilian Conservation Corps

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Rocky Mountain National Park  
Colorado Historical Society

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

# United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

Gem Lake Trail Larimer County/ Colorado  
Rocky Mountain National Park MPS  
Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks MPS

Section number 8 Page 3

## SIGNIFICANCE

The Gem Lake Trail is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C, meeting the registration requirement set forth in the *Rocky Mountain National Park Multiple Property Documentation Form*. Under Criterion A, the trail is eligible in the area of *Entertainment/Recreation* for its association with the early resort industry and tourism in the Estes Park region. The trail proved particularly popular as a equestrian route. The period of significance begins with the completion of the 1923 alterations and ends in 1945, reflecting the significant decline in the use of horses after World War II. Also under Criterion A, the trail is significant in the area of *Politics/Government* for the involvement of New Deal federal relief agencies, specifically the Civilian Conservation Corps, during the period of 1940 to 1941. The trail is eligible under Criterion C in the area of *Landscape Architecture*; the trail design reflects National Park Service (NPS) Naturalistic Design of the 1920s through the 1940s.

The Gem Lake Trail demonstrates the national trends described in Linda Flint McClelland's *Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks Multiple Property Documentation Form*. In this second context, the trail is eligible under Criterion A in the area of *Entertainment/Recreation* for its connection to the twentieth-century movement to develop national parks for public enjoyment. The trail is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of *Landscape Architecture* for a design reflecting NPS Naturalistic Design of the 1920s through the 1940s.

## Historical Background

Situated close to Estes Park, Gem Lake regularly received visitors from a variety of lodges in the neighborhood. The *Estes Park Trail* published various accounts of the trip, and, in 1923, formally encouraged tourists to see it themselves:

...The following description of the lake and the trails to it is published in the hope that it may assist some of our visitors in taking the trip and add to the enjoyment of their stay in the Park.

...Gem Lake is located in picturesque surroundings three miles in an air line, northeast of Estes Park. It is one of the best short trail trips from the village, and may be taken either on foot or on horseback.

...Gem Lake, as its name suggests, is small and attractive. In size it is not more than 300 feet long by 200 feet wide. It lies in a shallow rocky bowl, on the very crest of a ridge. This ridge starts at Mummy Mountain, descends easterly, and includes the Needles, the Owls and many other prominent rock forms, with Gem Lake at the eastern end of the ridge. The Arapahoe Indians called this "the Lumpy Ridge" (tha-thay-ai-aytha).

From any viewpoint near the lake, the panorama, from left to right, includes the following mountains: (The mountains that appear below the sky-line are shown in brackets). Twin Sisters, The Crags, Meadow Mtn, St. Vrain, (Prospect Mtn.), (Lily Mtn.), (Estes Cone), (Gianttrack Mtn.), Mt. Meeker, Longs Peak, Storm Peak, McHenry's Peak, (Thatchtop), Taylor Peak, Otis Peak, Hallet Peak and Flattop Mtn.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Estes Park Trail*, July 13, 1923.

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**Gem Lake Trail Larimer County/ Colorado  
Rocky Mountain National Park MPS  
Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks MPSSection number 8 Page 4

The dryness, brevity, and low elevation of the Gem Lake Trail ensured that it would require comparatively less construction work. However, its popularity—especially with horseback riders—demanded some degree of attention from the park. In 1923, the *Estes Park Trail* announced that Ranger Jack Moomaw and three others had improved the trail to formally accommodate “saddle parties.” The trail remained a popular horseback route through at least the 1960s.

Although it probably received routine maintenance through the 1920s and 1930s, the next substantial construction work didn't occur until late in 1940. The trail was slated for winter work by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC began rebuilding the trail around Thanksgiving and finished by the middle of February 1941. Their work encompassed parts of the modern trail, including the section up the gully.

Most likely, the distinctive stonework in the ravine can be attributed to the CCC. Perhaps more than any other trail in the park, the Gem Lake Trail's stonework takes its cue from the scenery. Stone steps thread through big obstacles and dry rock walls support switchbacks. Near the lake, a trailside block of granite takes the form of a rippling stack of pancakes; the adjacent rock wall repeats this form with stacks of flat, wide rocks. In other areas, the stone steps retain a rounded, unchiseled quality that makes them blend in with their counterparts off the trail. However, the makers of this trail did not totally hide their presence; drill holes are frequently visible in the rockwork.

In 1955, Gem Lake became the longest “nature trail” in the park. Visitors encountered 21 numbered signs on the trail, and could use a 32-page booklet developed by seasonal ranger Richard G. Beidleman of Colorado College. However, isolation from other park areas and frequent horse use made the nature trail difficult to maintain. Additionally, perhaps, the signs were difficult for mounted riders to read. Superintendent Hanks removed the signs in 1963.

**National Register of Historic Places  
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Gem Lake Trail Larimer County/ Colorado  
Rocky Mountain National Park MPS  
Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks MPS

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Section number 9 Page 5

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Buchholtz, C.W. *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History*. Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1983.

Clatworthy, Fred Payne. *Road and Trail Map of Estes Park and Vicinity, Colorado*. Estes Park, CO, 1915.

*Estes Park, Colorado, and Surrounding Region*. Burlington Route, 1910.

*Estes Park Trail Gazette*, August 10, 1912; July 13, 1923.

McClelland, Linda Flint. *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

McClelland, Linda Flint. "Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks," National Register of Historic Places multiple property documentation form, August 8, 1995.

McWilliams, Carl and Karren McWilliams. "Multiple Resource Nomination for Rocky Mountain National Park," National Register of Historic Places multiple property document, August 1985, with revisions by Gregory Kendrick, February 1987. Sierra Standish, "Rocky Mountain National Park MPS (Additional documentation- Trails)," September 27, 2004.

Musselman, Lloyd K. *Rocky Mountain National Park Administrative History, 1915-1965*. Washington, D.C.: Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, July 1971.

Ramaley, William C. *Trails and Trailbuilders of the Rocky Mountain National Park*. Unpublished manuscript, 1970s. Estes Park, CO, RMNP library.

"Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado," United States Department of the Interior, 1931.

Superintendent's Annual Reports. RMNP library.

Superintendent's Monthly Reports. RMNP library.

*Topographic Map of Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado*. USGS, 1947.

Gem Lake Trail  
Name of Property

Larimer County/ Colorado  
County/State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.42 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1.	13	456592	4472214	(NAD27)
	Zone	Easting	Northing	
2.	13	456583	4472288	
	Zone	Easting	Northing	
3.	13	456729	4472278	
	Zone	Easting	Northing	
4.	13	456746	4472409	
	Zone	Easting	Northing	

The UTM points were derived from heads up digitization on Digital Raster Graphic (DRG) maps provided to OAHP by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

[x] See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sierra Standish, contract position ( RMNP contacts- Cheri Yost)  
organization Rocky Mountain National Park date 14 November 2006  
street & number 1000 Highway 36 telephone (970) 586-1394  
city or town Estes Park state Colorado zip code 80517

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Rocky Mountain National Park, U.S. Department of the Interior  
street & number 1000 Highway 36 telephone (970) 586-1206  
city or town Estes Park state Colorado zip code 80517

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

Gem Lake Trail Larimer County/ Colorado  
Rocky Mountain National Park MPS  
Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks MPS

Section number 10 Page 6

**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The trail is located entirely within Rocky Mountain National Park. The trail begins at the southern base of Lumpy Ridge, and must be accessed using newer trails. As of summer, 2006, park trail crews were relocating these newer trails. The historic Gem Lake Trail climbs northward up a ravine, eventually reaching Gem Lake. The trail is 1 mile long. The boundary of this nomination extends a distance of 10 feet on either side from the centerline of the trail.

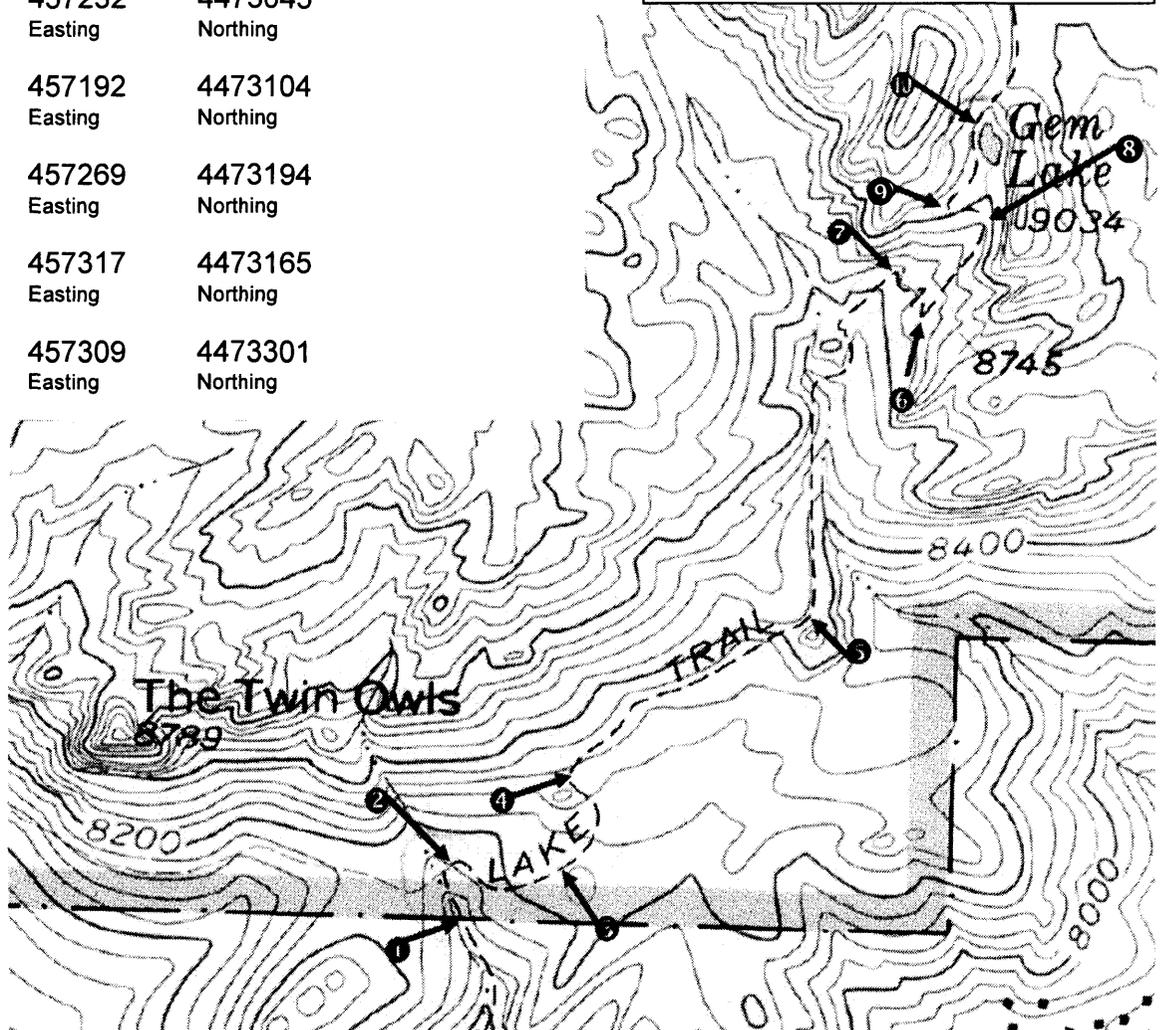
**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary includes the resource and associated features such as (but not limited to) switchbacks, signs, and rock walls. Though landscape features are important to the experience of the visitor traversing the trail and may contribute to the overall integrity of the trail, they are not included in this nomination.

**UTM REFERENCES (cont.)**

5.	13	457073	4472622 (NAD27)
	Zone	Easting	Northing
6.	13	457232	4473045
	Zone	Easting	Northing
7.	13	457192	4473104
	Zone	Easting	Northing
8.	13	457269	4473194
	Zone	Easting	Northing
9.	13	457317	4473165
	Zone	Easting	Northing
10.	13	457309	4473301
	Zone	Easting	Northing

**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**  
Estes Park Quadrangle, Colorado  
7.5 Minute Series, 1961,  
Photorevised 1977



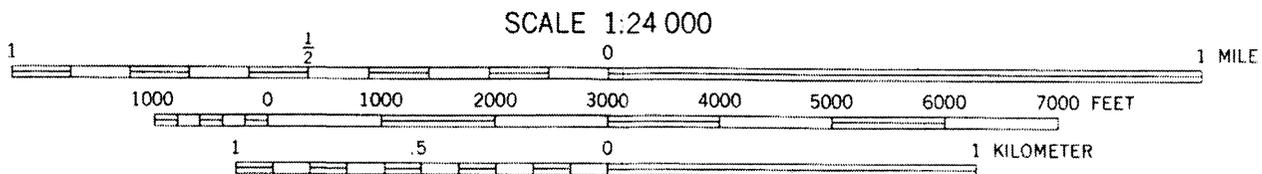
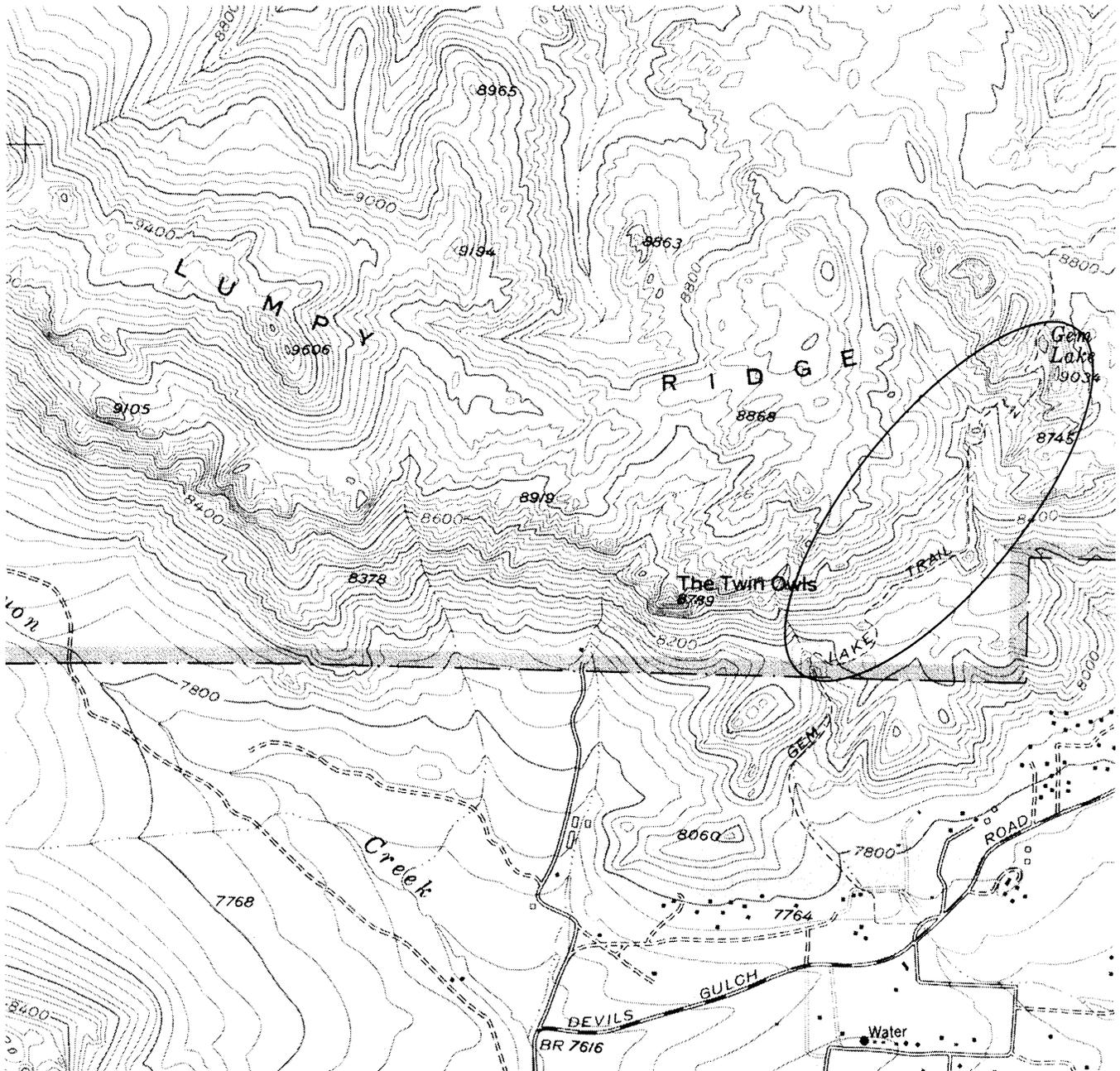
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
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Gem Lake Trail Larimer County/ Colorado  
Rocky Mountain National Park MPS  
Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks MPS

Section number 10 Page 7

**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**  
Estes Park Quadrangle, Colorado  
7.5 Minute Series, 1961, Photorevised 1977



CONTOUR INTERVAL 40 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929



**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior  
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Gem Lake Trail Larimer County/ Colorado  
Rocky Mountain National Park MPS  
Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks MPS

Section number \_\_\_ Page 8**PHOTOGRAPH LOG**

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-6:

Name of Property: Gem Lake Trail  
Location: Larimer County/ Colorado  
Photographer: Sierra Standish  
Date of Photographs: November 2003  
Negatives: Rocky Mountain National Park

<u>Photo No.</u>	<u>Photographic Information</u>
1	Drainage climbed by the Gem Lake Trail. View to north.
2	Switchback built between large boulders. Note old, lichen-covered stonework in rock walls.
3	Close-up of rock wall supporting a switchback.
4	Stone steps. Note drill holes in steps.
5	Low rock wall supporting trail. Wall construction mimics the natural pancake appearance of nearby boulder.
6	Gem Lake.