

Prop# 109898

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

historic name: Mineral King

other names/site number: The Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District

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2. Location

street & number Mineral King Road

city or town Mineral King vicinity Sequoia National Park
state California code CA county Tulare code 107 zip code 93271

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] September 5 2003
Signature of certifying official Date

National Park Service

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Stephen D. Nikesab, DSHPO 8-21-03
Signature of commenting or other official Date

CA Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

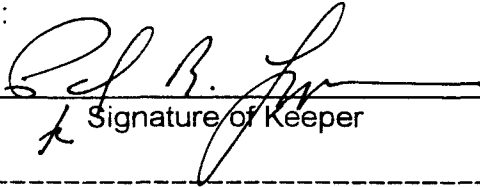
entered in the National Register _____
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register _____
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register _____

removed from the National Register _____

other (explain): _____


Signature of Keeper

10/24/03
Date Action

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5. Classification

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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

Contributing	Noncontributing
59	12 buildings
0	2 sites
4	1 structures
	objects
<u>63</u>	<u>15 Total</u>

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Recreation	Sub: Outdoor Recreation
Government	Public Works
Transportation	Road-Related (Vehicular)
Government	Government Office
Domestic	Single Dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Recreation	Sub: Outdoor Recreation
Government	Public Works
Transportation	Road-Related (Vehicular)
Government	Government Office
Domestic	Single Dwelling

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other
Historic vernacular
NPS Rustic

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Wood, Stone
roof: Wood, Tin, Aluminum
walls: Wood, Glass

other: Concrete, Asphalt

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

Four major elements lie at the heart of the Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District: the Mineral King Road, and the Cabin Cove, West Mineral King, and East Mineral King summer home tracts. The summer home tracts consists of 66 rustic vernacular cabins that were constructed before 1942. The Mineral king road is a two-lane track originally constructed in the 1870s but was heavily modified in the 1920s and later by the CCC in the 1930s.

X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance
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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.)

- a** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- b** removed from its original location.
- c** a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation
Architecture
Transportation
Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance 1915-1942

Significant Dates:

1915
1923
1926
1933

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder

- U. S. Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Civilian Conservation Corps

Narrative Statement of Significance

The most significant period of development for the road and associated structures lies between the years 1915 - 1942. This period of the Mineral King area's history is most closely associated with the development of outdoor recreational programs by the federal government in general and the United States Forest Service in particular. The principal legislation enabling recreational residences was the Term Occupancy Act of 1915. The Act allowed for the granting of renewable term permits for private homes on public lands.

X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

X See continuation sheet.

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: 408 Acres

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	11	341697	4033777	2	11	341697	4033772
3	11	341932	4033251	4	11	342001	4033045
5	11	342078	4033040	6	11	342125	4032845
7	11	342326	4033015	8	11	342768	4033015
9	11	343319	4032865	10	11	343922	4033499
11	11	344066	4033303	12	11	344066	4033303
13	11	344761	4033648	14	11	345286	4033427
15	11	347408	4034734	16	11	347393	4035388
17	11	348520	4035085	18	11	348731	4035667
19	11	349056	4035574	20	11	349895	4036686
21	11	352573	4036810	22	11	355554	4035090
23	11	357068	4035157	24	11	357084	4034559

Verbal Boundary Description

X See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification

The Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape is defined by a convergence of historical resources, and historic landscape features that together constitute a landscape of sufficient significance to be considered eligible for the NRHP with a local level of significance. This landscape contains designed elements, but overall it can be considered a historic vernacular cultural landscape, which developed over a period of decades in response to various activities, uses, and management. The Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District boundaries were drawn to encompass all significant features of this landscape.

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11. Form Prepared By

=====

name/title Thomas E. Nave / Historian

date Rev. 1/2003

street & number 1598 E. Desert Island Dr. **telephone** 559.439.9228

city or town Fresno **state** CA **zip code** 93720

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Additional Documentation
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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)

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Property Owner
=====

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

name _____

street & number _____ **telephone** _____

city or town _____ **state** _____ **zip code** _____

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**United States Department of the Interior
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape
Tulare County California

THE MINERAL KING ROAD

The geographic area known as Mineral King, California, has been open to mining and timber since the 1870s. Beginning early in the 20th century tourism became the predominant attraction of the area. The construction of the first mining road in 1879 was, and is, key to the development of each of these three major activities. The Mineral King Road was originally constructed in the 1870s as a wagon road to bring supplies from California's Great Central Valley to the mining interests in the Mineral King Valley. The Mineral King Road today is a two-lane, dead-end road that serves the primary function of providing access to the sub-alpine reaches of the Mineral King Valley. The use of the road as a regionally important recreation corridor spurred its improvement between 1915 - 1942. The route begins by branching off from State Highway 198 just east of the former community of Hammond, California, and ends 24.8 miles later in the Mineral King Valley. The most unchanged, and thus historically significant, portion of the route of the road lies within the Sequoia National Park boundary beginning just below the Lookout Point entrance station and progressing to the end of the road at East Mineral King.

Carr and McNiell call the Mineral King Road "The most important remnant of the mining era... ." But it is much more. The existing Mineral King Road is a hybrid of the original wagon road and the subsequent refinements made to the route in order to accommodate the automobiles of the burgeoning recreation traffic of the 1920s and 1930s. First completed in 1879, the road has been repaved, widened in some sections, and a portion has been rerouted. The rerouted portion, as noted below, is outside the park boundary and is not considered as part of the proposed landscape district. The experience of driving on the Mineral King Road today is more representative of a 1920s and 1930s automobile road than it is of an 1879 wagon road because of the changes to the road surface.

The route of the Mineral King Road within the park boundary, from the Lookout Point entry station to its eastern terminus, follows the original wagon road route established in 1879. Yet, by the late 1920s it had evolved into a well-known and well-used motor vehicle route for recreational travelers. Today, the Mineral King Road retains the 1920s location, design, and workmanship attributed to the period of significance. The setting, feeling, and association of the original 1920s road are still present, represented by the narrow, winding road, majestic views, the imposing giant sequoias, and the summer home tracts.

X See continuation sheet.

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Section number 7 Page 2

Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape
Tulare County California

The Mineral King Road today presents travelers to the High Sierra with the same beginning as in 1936. The first structures encountered belong to the Lookout Point entrance station (Figures 1 & 2). This adobe style residence with its matching garage, built by Civilian Conservation Corps labor, is still seen by visitors entering the park today. Travelers in the 1930s often had to stop to add water to the radiators of their automobiles as they struggled over the steep grades inherent in the route.

That water was, and still is, available from concrete tanks (Figure 3) along the route. After reaching the giant trees, travelers today, as they did in the 1930s, encounter another local landmark, the Atwell Mill Ranger Residence (Figure 4). This "NPS Rustic Style" structure was built in 1934 and remains in use as a ranger residence. Across the road, the Alles Cabin (Figure 5) and the Atwell Mill site (Figure 6) represent what may be one of the best-preserved examples of a sequoia logging camp in a national park (Carr and McNiel 1999:27). (As noted on page 6 below, this cabin and the mill site have been determined eligible for the National Register, but because they are associated with the area's logging history, they are outside the scope of this nomination.)

Shortly after passing the Atwell Mill site the traveler arrives, now as then, at one of the recreational centers of the Mineral King area, the summer home tracts. The first of these tracts is Cabin Cove. Between Cabin Cove and the other two tracts, East and West Mineral King, lies a section of private land excluded from consideration within the present proposal and known as Silver City. Beginning with the Term Occupancy Act of 1915, the Forest Service encouraged the recreational use of federal lands by issuing Term Special Use Permits to people who wanted to build summer homes. Most of the existing structures in the Mineral King tracts, though modified to some degree (e.g., windows or roofs), reflect the rustic, vernacular architecture that was used in their original construction. The Honeymoon Cabin (Figure 7) at the eastern end of the Mineral King Road stands as it has since the early decades of this century. As the figurative tie that binds together the various historic sites and structures the Mineral King Road is considered not just a contributing feature, but the heart of the Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District.

SUMMER HOMES

Tulare County families routinely sought refuge in Mineral King from the summer heat of the San Joaquin Valley (Carr and McNiel 1999:30). The Mineral King area came to follow a pattern of recreational development throughout the West: tourists and outdoor recreationalists flocked to wherever scenic areas became accessible. At Mineral King, the majority of recreation cabins were built between 1915 and 1942. By the 1920s the Forest Service had organized the area's summer homes into regular recreation residence tracts. A 1924 Forest Survey delineates lots drawn around existing cabins, as well as new lots for permits to be issued in the future (Carr and McNiel 1999:37).

X See continuation sheet.

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Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape
Tulare County California

Most of the Mineral King summer cabins share a basic vernacular architectural style. The cabins are typically utilitarian in spirit and vernacular in construction. Many were designed and built by the permittees themselves under the supervision of the Forest Service, which enforced what it felt were appropriately "rustic" guidelines. Standard plans and guidelines were published in books and magazines of the 1920s. Kit homes were available and the materials were mainly wood and stone with the recommended colors tending to browns, grays, and greens. Most of the cabins in all three Mineral King tracts still reflect simple rectangular plans. Typical features and additions, including porches, decks, and substantial stone chimneys, are commonplace. Wooden siding, whether board-and-batten, clapboard, or half-log, was almost always used. Roofs tended to be gable-ended, and both side and end entrances were used. Exterior stone steps, retaining walls, and path edges were typical site improvements undertaken around cabins.

Out of 66 summer cabins in Mineral King today, about a dozen are thought to have existed in some form before the Term Occupancy Act of 1915. At least 50 of the cabins were built entirely between 1915 and 1942, and so date to the peak of the Forest Service summer cabin permit program. Cabin permits continued to be issued through the 1930s, although the pace slowed because of the Depression. By 1942, the summer cabin tracts at Mineral King had taken on their current character and appearance. According to Christopher Brewer, a local historian, only seven of the cabins that exist today were built after World War II. Other cabins, however, have been repaired and reconstructed since that time, mainly due to damage from avalanches and the generally harsh conditions of the area.

The overall character of the summer cabin tracts at Mineral King clearly dates to the height of the Forest Service permit cabin program. The West Mineral King and Cabin Cove tracts, in particular, are almost completely the products of the 1920s and 1930s, and most of the structures in the East Mineral King tract date to this era as well. After the beginning of the Twentieth Century, the granting of permits for private summer homes (later called recreation residences) in national forests had strong support within the Forest Service as well as from the public.

The history of recreation residences on national forest lands is a significant chapter in the history of federal management of public lands, as well as in the history of outdoor recreation. Western cities, especially in California, grew quickly in the early 20th century, just as the interest in outdoor recreation was increasing in the United States. In California, in particular, outstanding scenic beauty and an early interest in automotive travel combined to create a boom in outdoor recreation. The Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District and the associated summer home tracts are a prime example of what resulted from this combination of social and economic forces.

X See continuation sheet.

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Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape
Tulare County California

Cabin Cove

The Cabin Cove tract consists of seven cabins, six contributing wood-framed structures and one non-contributing cabin clustered around a curve in the Mineral King Road. These structures have medium-pitched wood shingle roofs, vertical board-and-batten siding and stone fireplaces (Figures 6 & 7). All six of the contributing cabins date from the 1930s and are still in their original setting and location. Five of the cabins are nearly original in appearance and materials. The weathered exteriors blend gracefully with the surrounding environment. The original workmanship is evident in the rustic feel and sound condition of these structures. Carefully situated among the native vegetation, these cabins present the same hearty ambiance that their owners, and visitors to the area, in the 1930s experienced as they traveled up the Mineral King Road.

Cabin Cove, the first of the summer home tracts encountered by travelers on the Mineral King Road, makes a significant contribution to the Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District. Additionally, the cabins represent an intact example of a recreation residence tract developed under federal government programs within the Forest Service between 1915 and 1942.

West Mineral King

The cabins within the East and West Mineral King tracts are the earliest extant examples of a recreation cabin area developed in the southern Sierra national forests. At West Mineral King, two or three cabins already existed by the early 1920s around what was known as Barton's Camp. The Forest Service laid out an expanded tract just to the west of Barton's Camp and the new tract was quickly occupied by permittees, many of whom had built cabins of similar style by 1930 (Figure 8). Since many of the cabins were built by a group of teachers from Los Angeles, the tract became known as Faculty Flat. The West Mineral King tract currently includes a total of 35 cabins. Twenty of the West Mineral King cabins are considered to have retained sufficient integrity to maintain their 1920s - 1930s appearance. All 35 of the cabins are still in their original locations. The 26 structures considered to be contributing elements retain their original materials and appearance. Most of these structures are rectangular in floor plan and clad in vertical board-and-batten wood siding (Figure 9). Aluminum-framed sliding windows have replaced many of the original windows but the current windows appear to have been selected to match the original opening and have, therefore, not seriously compromised the historic integrity of the structures. Stone chimneys like the one in Figure 8 predominate throughout the tract, as do standing-seam metal roofs (Figure 9). Variations to the materials used on the Mineral King summer homes include corrugated metal and wood shingle roofing material as well as wood shingle siding. One unusual structure has a corrugated metal roof and sawn log sections attached vertically for cladding on the walls (Figure 10).

X See continuation sheet.

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Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape
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The feeling one derives from passing through the West Mineral King tract is no doubt similar to that enjoyed by the original builders of Faculty Flat: a sense of serenity created by rustic cabins sheltered among the trees. As is the case with Cabin Cove, the West Mineral King tract makes a significant contribution to the Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District. It also represents an intact example of a recreation residence tract developed under federal government programs within the Forest Service from 1915 to 1942.

East Mineral King

The eastern-most of the cabin tracts is East Mineral King, known historically as the Beulah Tract. The first known Special Use Permit issued in the Mineral King Valley dates from 1905 when the Forest Service issued Arthur Crowley a permit for a water line to his hotel in the Beulah Tract. Roughly half of the 24 cabins that today make up the East Mineral King tract are thought to have existed in some form when the Forest Service was able to survey the area in the early 1920s. Any pre-1915 cabins at East Mineral King were altered during the historic period.

Crowley's hotel no longer exists but Crowley's cabin still stands (Figure 11) on land owned by the Disney Corporation. One of Crowley's rental cabins, the Honeymoon Cabin (also known as the Point Cabin, Figure 5) was restored in the 1980s by the Mineral King Preservation Society and also sits on land owned by the Walt Disney corporation.

Twenty-one of the 24 East Mineral King cabins are clad in vertical board-and-batten siding, just as they have been since they were built. Medium-pitched, metal clad roofs predominate among the structures (Figure 12). Wood shingles are the next most commonly used roofing material. Examples of this second style are the Crowley Cabin (Figure 11) and the Honeymoon Cabin (Figure 5). These rustic cabins with their weathered siding and battered roofs blend into the rugged landscape and natural vegetation of this high sub-alpine valley (Figure 13).

Near the end of the Mineral King Road, a bridge crosses the east fork of the Kaweah River as the river passes through East Mineral King. Looking west from this spot, the cabins of the East Mineral King Tract can be seen scattered along the river as they have stood for more than sixty years (Figure 14). Looking east from the bridge the Crowley Cabin can be seen largely as it was in the 1920s and 1930s (Figure 15). The East Mineral King tract, like its neighbors to the west, makes a significant contribution to the historic integrity of the Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District. The cabins are a collection of rustic vernacular buildings built during a cardinal period of recreation development in the American West (1915 to 1942).

X See continuation sheet.

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Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape
Tulare County California

SCOPE OF THIS NOMINATION: CONTRIBUTING AND NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

The proposed district is entirely within the boundaries of Sequoia National Park and is geographically united by the Mineral King Road and defined by its summer home tracts. The applicable National Register eligibility criteria are "a" and "c." Themes of logging, mining, and hydro-electric power development will be examined in the future. The Alles Cabin and the Atwell Mill (Sawmill) Site, while previously determined eligible for listing in the National Register, are more directly associated with the area's logging history and so are not currently included as contributing to the proposed district.

The most significant period of development of the road, the associated 20th century structures, and the three tracts of cabins lies between the years 1915 and 1942. This period of the Mineral King area's history is most closely associated with the emergence of outdoor recreation in the West and the development of associated public lands programs by the federal government, in general, and the USDA Forest Service, in particular. The principal legislation enabling recreational residences was the Term Occupancy Act of 1915. The Act allowed for the granting of renewable term permits for private homes (recreational residences or cabins) on public lands. A proposed period of significance that was discussed (1873 – 1942) is here scaled back in partial response to the SHPO's comments. Indeed, discontinuous historic elements related to 19th century mining and logging and early 20th century hydro-electric development are not now considered as part of the proposed landscape district. Though discussed in the DOE and still of considerable historic importance, these discontinuous elements are to be further investigated in the future, at which time they will likely be proposed as additions to the landscape district.

In short, the Mineral King Road and three recreation residence tracts are eligible for the National Register under Criterion A, for their association with developments (1915 – 1942) which marked nationally administered recreation programs on federal lands in the American West. The Mineral King Road itself is additionally eligible under Criterion A for its 1930s association with Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) projects as well as National Park Service (NPS) management activities related to the maintenance and preservation of this narrow, mountain road and the construction of associated buildings, structures, and features (e.g., ranger cabins, residences, garages, and watering troughs). The three cabin tracts are also eligible for listing under Criterion C for their architecture, design, and general integrity as recognizable examples of a class of recreation residences built in the rustic vernacular style. These four elements, together, constitute a cultural landscape integral to understanding the early 20th Century history of the Mineral King area. Eligibility under Criterion D is not currently being advanced, pending further examination of the potential for Mineral King buildings, structures, sites, or features to address important research questions.

X See continuation sheet.

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Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape
Tulare County California

For purposes of this nomination, the number of recognized resources within the district is 78; 63 are identified as contributing and 15 as non-contributing. As noted in the list below, certain of the non-contributing resources were labeled "potentially contributing" in the Carr and McNiel report assessing this cultural landscape. The non-contributing status of these "potentially contributing" resources should be re-evaluated as more information becomes available, and should not be considered definitive at this time.

BUILDINGS- CONTRIBUTING (total=59)

Lookout Point Ranger Residence (total=1)

Lookout Point Ranger Residence Garage (total=1)

Atwell Mill Ranger Residence (total=1)

Atwell Mill Ranger Residence Garage (total=1)

Cabin Cove Cabins nos. 1 through 5 and 7 (total=6)

West Mineral King Cabins nos. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17 through 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33 (total= 26)

East Mineral King Cabins nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 12, 14 through 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 34, 36, 37, 38, and the Crowley and Honeymoon Cabins (total=23)

BUILDINGS- NON-CONTRIBUTING (total=12) Cabins numbered in boldface were "potentially contributing" in Carr and McNiel's report.

Cabin Cove Cabin no. **6** (total=1)

West Mineral King Cabins nos., 4, **8**, **16**, **26**, 28, 43, 44, 45, 47 (total= 9)

East Mineral King Cabins no. 10 (total=1)

Mineral King Ranger station (modern) (total=1)

SITES- NON-CONTRIBUTING (total=2)

Trauger's Farmstead, described on page 22 of section 7 (total=1)

Slapjack Creek Ranger Station, described on page 9 of section 8 (total=1)

STRUCTURES- CONTRIBUTING (total=4)

Mineral King Road (total=1)

Slapjack Creek water station trough (total=1)

Trauger's water station trough (total=1)

Redwood Creek water station trough (total=1)

X See continuation sheet.

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**Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape
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STRUCTURES- NON-CONTRIBUTING (total=1)

Lookout Point Entrance Station (modern kiosk) (total=1)

Conclusions

Within the boundaries of Sequoia National Park, the Mineral King Road, associated other structures, buildings and sites along the road's route, and the three summer home tracts are, together, eligible under Criterion A and Criterion C. The road retains a very high degree of historic integrity. The most significant period of development for the road and associated structures, sites, and buildings lies between 1915 and 1942. During this period, the Forest Service instituted programs designed to increase the use of federal lands for various recreational activities. A key piece of legislation enacted during this time, the Term Occupancy Act of 1915, allowed for the issuing of term permits for the construction of summer homes.

The 20th century history of the Mineral King area's development is tied directly to the promotion of recreational programs by the federal government and the U.S. Forest Service in the West. The road corridor and associated features (Figures 18-22) evoke the look, feel, and setting of the cultural landscape as it appeared during its most historically significant period of development, 1915-1942. The road is essentially unchanged since the early days of the automobile. The route, characterized by the 1930s adobe-style entrance station, the roadside water troughs, the narrow turns, the majestic mountain views, and the sudden appearance of small tracts of rustic cabins set amongst the trees, is nearly identical to the one early recreational visitors experienced. Due to the high degree of integrity, rustic architecture, the presence of CCC activities, and close association with the development of recreational activities on public lands (managed initially by the U.S. Forest Service), the Mineral King Cultural Landscape District is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mineral King Road Cultural
Landscape District
Sequoia National Park
Tulare County, CA

Section number 7 Page 9

* The Inventory and Rating Process

Operational Definition: "Mineral King" refers to the entire that portion of the North Fork of the Keweah watershed, while "Mineral King East" refers to the residential residence tract of that name at the upper end of the valley.

This section of the report is intended to explain the evaluation methodology in more detail and offer suggestions for others who will use the methodology to inventory or interpret vernacular, mountain architecture or similar resources. The process was developed in response to a need to evaluate thousands of resources (approx. 12,000 similar cabins in U.S.) that defied categorization or evaluation using the familiar architectural typologies based on high-style buildings. While no typology existed to define what was actually out there in terms of recreational residences - because a comprehensive inventory had not been completed, some evidence did exist about what people used as inspiration and direction when it came their time to build. These existed in the form of pattern books for pre-fab or build-it-yourself cabins in the woods. For simplicity's sake, these cabins had few corners and few fine details, however, a large number of them have hints of high-styled forms built into the plans. But as is true in many pioneer architectural works, often they just started out building, and the current building is a combination of scores of incremental acts of improvement and repair.

One of the products of this approach is that a typology, in the case of building features, is generated as part of the analysis so that future inventories can directly compare themselves to the entire sample, kept on various data bases and GIS files.

There were three units of analysis for this study, 1) the individual site/building unit, 2) the tract unit, 3) and the cultural landscape unit. There were specific questions asked at each scale to guide the evaluation and conclusions. At the site/building level of analysis, each building was observed in the field and given a holistic rating, indicating its level of integrity. Buildings were determined to be contributing or noncontributing to a potential tract-level national register district based on these values. The overall eligibility of the tract was, in turn, based upon a threshold where a minimum of 60% of the individual sites/buildings must be contributors.

At the scale of the entire cultural landscape, each tract was compared with each other and the Northern California Summary Sample (McNiel CD ROM 1997), looking for consistent and unique characteristics in the Mineral King sample. The question to be answered at that scale was, whether the entire collection of historic settlement patterns, infrastructure elements and evidence of human enterprise presented a coherent and identifiable pattern that conveyed a sense of history and could be interpreted, and whether the individual parts of these patterns and the patterns themselves retained sufficient integrity to be considered candidates for nomination. Following is a set of verbal descriptions have been developed to communicate the criteria used to assess the level of integrity represented by different sites and structures.

- * The discussion on pages 7.9-7.16 is taken from an undated summary of the inventory and rating process undertaken by Ethan Carr and Steve McNeil in the course of preparation of the January 25, 1999 "The Cultural Landscape of Mineral King, Sequoia and Kings Canyon: Determination of Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places."

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Criteria for the Holistic Assessments

Level #6 - These cabins appeared to retain their integrity intact. There were no significant changes in evidence. The building exhibited a strong sense of architectural design and a positive relationship to its site.

Level #5 - The building retained its integrity essentially intact. There were few, if any, changes in evidence and these were limited to features such as deck railings, minor inconsistencies in siding, one or two changes in windows, and other easily reversible changes such as paint color or landscape treatment.

Level #4 - The building retained a fair amount of integrity and historic character. Buildings had moderate changes, which were still not considered too visually intrusive to destroy its historic integrity. Level #4 structures often included new metal roofs of appropriate form and color, one or more aluminum windows and doors, new architecturally appropriate additions, modified details and finishes.

Level #3 - Most of the integrity of the building had been compromised through poorly designed additions, extensive replacement of original windows and doors with inappropriate materials, changes in siding, or extensive landscape features inappropriate to the rustic surroundings. These buildings and sites might be considered candidates for rehabilitation to bring them into line with historic guidelines.

Level #2 - Much of the integrity of the building and/or site had been lost through major alterations and/or additions. Changes such as roof massing and pitch, replacement of siding with materials such as stucco or T1-11 plywood, replacement of the majority of windows and doors or changes in the patterns of windows, their size or shape characterize Level #2 buildings. These structures were generally considered beyond the ability to rehabilitate to bring them into line with historic criteria.

Level #1 - The integrity of the building had been totally lost through complete or extensive reconstruction using inappropriate architectural scale, forms and/or materials. The building had lost its historic feeling and identity. These buildings are considered permanently noncontributing structures with little or no opportunity for rehabilitation to bring the structure into conformance with the character of the remainder of the tract. New buildings that might have a high level of architectural integrity but do not reflect a style appropriate to the time period identified in the historical context were also rated as Level 1 buildings.

Data Analysis

The recording of holistic values was accomplished in the field by completing an electronic data record for each site. A brief justification is offered and a value assigned.

These data were transferred to Filevision IV™ G.I.S. software, and linked to maps. The value given to each site/building reflects a holistic assessment. Individual building characteristics are summarized and bar charts illustrating the levels of occurrence for each site and building feature provide a typology of construction details that characterize the three different cabin tracts and the entire sample.

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In applying the rating system to Mineral King, it was important to develop a sense of what was a normal or average condition for a building to be in, so that the extent of modifications could be judged and the relative uniqueness or representativeness of the site could be determined by comparing them to other buildings, sites and tracts.

Mineral King has harsh weather and an occasional avalanche that has continually made minor adjustments to the cabins despite the best efforts of the permittees to keep them together. In some cases, more drastic rebuilding has occurred, with little emulation of the original characteristics of the lost building. These types of major reconstructions often will keep a building from retaining its massing integrity or all of the materials might have been changed in the process. In these cases, the holistic assessment method probably favors those structures that retain a visual sense of integrity, even if much of the fabric has been changed. Often, its the scale of replacement elements that belies their difference, shingles too short or long, siding too wide, or lacking of saw marks.

It is only logical that all cabins will have required and been given incremental maintenance and adjustments to their original condition in order to repair damage and deterioration. An example was submitted in response to a request for evidence of incremental maintenance for cabins at Pinecrest Tract near Sonora, and is very informative as illustration of some of the normal activities that might threaten the architectural and historic integrity of a building. (McNiel, 1997). This list is probably very modest compared to the type and extent of some remodels and complete reconstructions. However, it does provide actual evidence of at least one cabin's history of change. Given this expectation that all buildings and sites have been modified, then the researcher asked the question, has this one been modified to the point where visually, it has lost its integrity? Said another way, has the visual image of the historic resources (building and site) changed so much that it no longer contributes to the overall historical ambiance of the tract as a whole and especially its immediate neighbors and neighborhood? Although several of the following changes were made to the interior of the cabin, only the exterior is considered in the evaluation of integrity.

- 1) Replaced wood window with aluminum due to damage to the original window.
- 2) Replacement of the original wood roof with an asphalt composite roof.
- 3) Replaced lower building siding due to rotting boards.
- 4) Installed tongue and groove knotty pine in upper bedroom over rafters.
- 5) Replaced deck in the 1970's due to original deck wearing out.
- 6) Installed linoleum in the kitchen and bathroom for ease of maintenance.
- 7) Replaced plumbing pipes due to old age and leakage of the original pipes.
- 8) Replaced the existing septic tank toilets with flush toilets per the USFS.
- 9) Moved shower from present pantry area to the basement.
- 10) Added interior siding to the downstairs bedroom.
- 11) Replaced existing downstairs bedroom floor with concrete due to weather damage.
- 12) Replaced wood stove vent stack due to weather damage.

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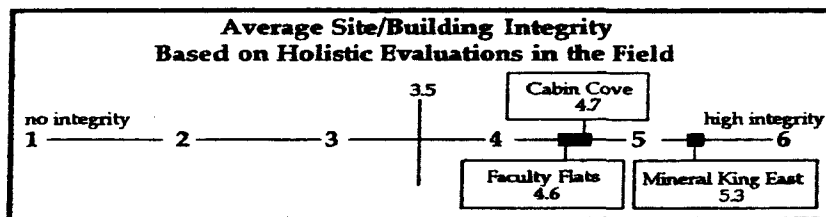
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Holistic Evaluation Results:

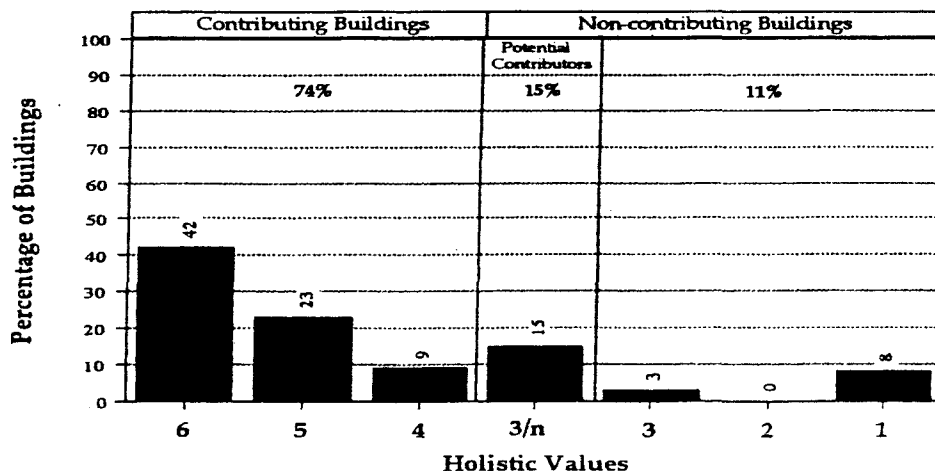
Holistic Evaluation Results

The holistic evaluation is a measure of the architectural integrity of the site and building. Buildings without major changes are considered intact and retain their integrity. Since virtually all buildings change due to maintenance and minor adjustments, the holistic assessment is a matter of judging degrees of change and the impact of those changes on the overall appearance of the site. Though this strongly visual method of inventory overlooks certain subtleties of order of construction and in some cases complete replacement of original fabric, it does directly relate to the experience of the viewer and by extension, the resource's potential to convey a sense of history. The ideal cabin in this model is a building highly representative of design and materials norms and one that retains all or most of its original fabric and which has not lost its relationship to its site and historical context. Any changes in massing, fenestration, materials or finishes should not disrupt the design integrity of the building nor the overall impression that one gets when viewing it.

The average integrity rating for Mineral King East Tract was 5.3 on the six point scale while the Faculty Flats Tract average was 4.6. Cabin Cove Tract averaged 4.7. All three average holistic values are higher than the 3.5 threshold adopted for minimum integrity and the average for Mineral King East Tract may be significantly higher.



Holistic Values for Combined, 3 Tract Sample



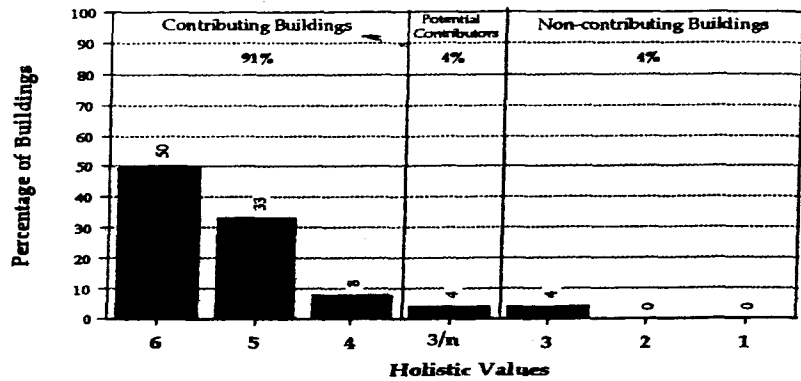
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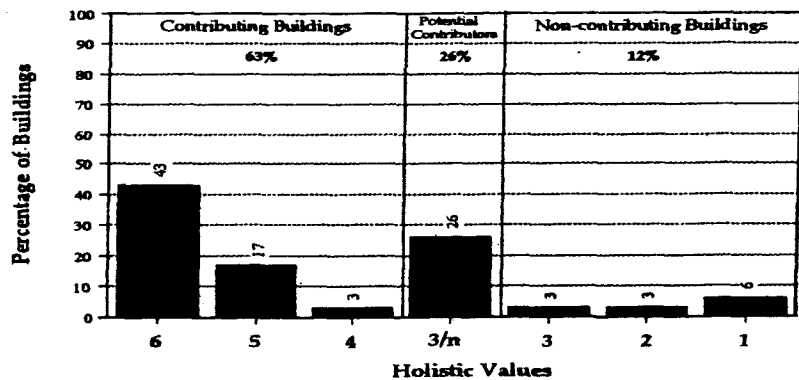
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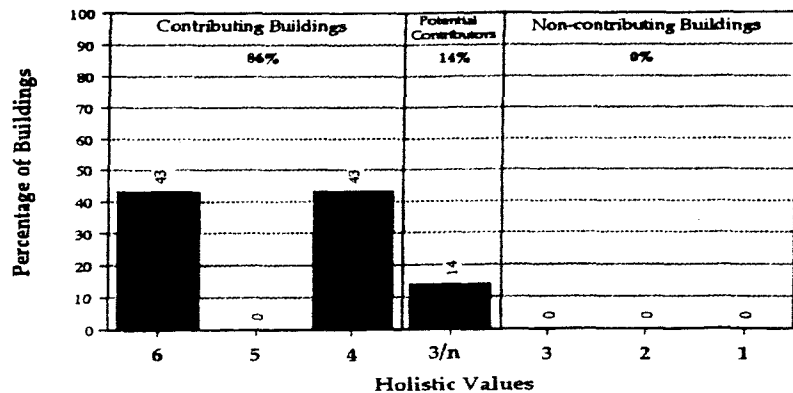
Holistic Values for East Mineral King Tract



Holistic Values for West Mineral King Tract



Holistic Values for Cabin Cove Tract



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When the holistic assessments for the tracts were plotted on maps, a matrix of intact houses with buildings of low integrity scattered among them resulted. The spatial patterns showing where these buildings occur in the tract are very interesting. Mineral King East Tract is broken into three distinct clusters with one lone cabin existing south of the others. This tract has 98% contributing buildings and is continuous in its eligibility with the exception of one cabin at the southern end of the largest cluster which was rated as a potential contributor. A pair of cabins located higher on the mountain-side than the others, is hidden visually from the other two clusters. These two cabins were rated as having "excellent integrity", despite their weathered condition. The other two clusters are a combination of "highest integrity" buildings, "excellent integrity" buildings and those of only "good integrity". When the patterns of buildings rated 4, or "good integrity" are observed, they appear to cluster into a small group of three adjacent buildings at the northern fringe of the middle cluster with another in the southern cluster. A single lot, rated as having "excellent integrity" exists alone, south of the others.

Faculty Flats Tract is less uniform in its levels of building integrity. It has a total of 12 non-contributing buildings with 9 of these being "potential contributors" located in three pockets of two buildings each, with an additional three lone non-contributors near the eastern end of the tract. Three of the four sites placed higher on the mountain-side have either "low integrity" or are "new buildings". The majority of the contributing buildings fall in the top two rating categories with only one "good integrity" building in the tract. The overall mix of contributors interspersed with non-contributors, seems homogenous throughout.

Cabin Cove Tract is in the form of an arc with 6 cabins north-west of and sited above the road. Two cabins exist south-west of the road, one with an elevation lower than the road. One of these two lower cabins is considered non-contributing. The location of two buildings rated 4 at the north-east end of the tract shows that the integrity diminishes at that end.

In all three tracts, where buildings had lost some of their integrity, several seem to exist in close proximity and the same is true for those buildings with very high levels of integrity — they appear to occur in clusters of three and two. This is possibly the result of the influence of neighbors. Once one person adds an aluminum window or inappropriate siding, it appears that it is more likely that their neighbor will do the same. The same appears to be true for those who have kept their buildings intact. Where you find one building of high integrity, it appears that you are likely to find others nearby.

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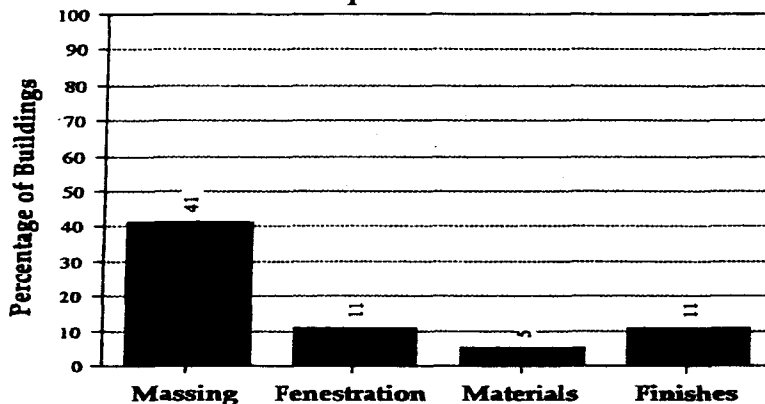
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Modifications

Percentage of buildings in 3 Tract
Sample with Modifications



Modifications to buildings and landscapes are expected to occur with the passage of time. The patterns of past changes are reflected in the graphs and offer help in predicting what types of maintenance and development activities are likely to occur in the future and, what elements of the building and its fabric are likely to be affected in the process.

The graphs allow for comparison of the percentage of buildings exhibiting a particular type of change. Building characteristics are represented by the labels along the bottom axis in the graphs. In the case of the Mineral King - Three Tract Sample (above), it is clear that 41% of the buildings have had their massing modified in some way, usually through the addition of living or storage space. When the massing changes, it could represent a potential impact on the architectural and visual integrity of the building. One can see in the graph that the actual impact on the fenestration — windows and doors—occurred on eleven percent of the buildings and the roof and siding materials were modified on only 5 percent. Finishes have been changed on eleven percent of the buildings as well.

Most of the additions in the three-tract sample appeared to have occurred very early in the history of the building as they exhibited essentially identical materials, construction methods and design as the original section. Another subset of buildings had additions that came after the original construction period had ended, sometimes when the ownership changed. These are more likely to produce contrasting patterns in building materials, such as aluminum windows or plywood siding. All three of the individual tracts are similar in the proportions of the kinds of changes made to buildings. It appears that East Mineral King Tract, possibly because is the oldest and most exposed to the climate of the three, has slightly higher percentages of change than West Mineral King Tract. Cabin Cove by contrast, exhibits few visible changes to building fabric.

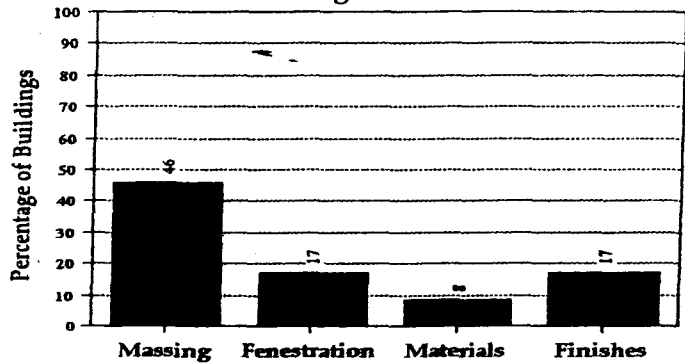
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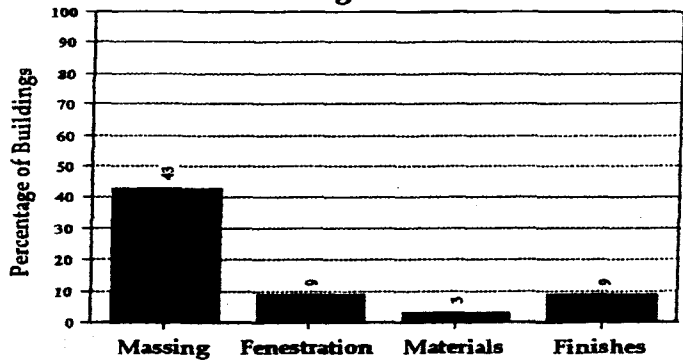
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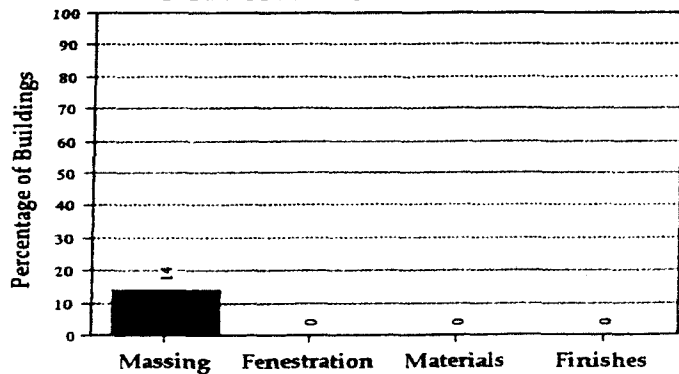
Percentage of Buildings in
East Mineral King Tract with Modifications



Percentage of Homes in
West Mineral King Tract with Modifications



Percentage of Homes in
Cabin Cove Tract with Modifications



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* Description Section

The following description of the contributing resources of the Mineral King cultural landscape district is divided into

Spatial organization

Circulation

Topography

Vegetation

Land use

Buildings

Spatial organization refers to the composition and sequence of outdoor spaces within the district. Circulation refers to the means and patterns of movement through the district. Topography refers to the ways in which the landscape planning responds to the topographic features of the site, and also to modifications of that topography. Vegetation also refers both to the response to existing vegetation, and to the management of vegetation through pruning, removal, or addition of trees, shrubs, or herbaceous plants. Land use refers to historic and existing patterns of human activities. Structures include all the contributing structures in the district, including roads, trails, retaining walls, etc. Buildings are defined as structures intended to shelter a human activity. Sites are defined here as discrete historical archeological sites. No prehistoric archeological resources have been considered in this survey. The Silver City area has also not been included in this survey.

Spatial organization

The Mineral King Road is a narrow, winding road, unpaved for significant lengths, that extends approximately 24.8 miles from the small community of Hammond, just outside the main (southern) entrance to Sequoia National Park, up to the subalpine basin of Mineral King. The road was originally located and built in the 1870s. Although the road was subsequently widened for motor vehicles and portions were relocated in the 1920s and 1930s, it remains narrow and winding. The width of the road varies from as little as 10-12 feet wide in places, to more than 20 feet in others (the average is about 12-15 feet). The varying but overall narrow width of the road is characteristic of the spatial organization of the Mineral King Road.

As a road designed for animal traction, steep grades were to be avoided, where possible. The road also was built largely by hand, however, and swift completion of the road was vital. The many tight curves of the road (estimates vary, but there seem to be more than 600) were necessary to try and find the easiest grade up to Mineral King. Climbing 6,700 feet in just under 25 miles, the road has an average 5% grade, meaning of course that in many places it is far steeper. Steep grades and tight curves are defining spatial characteristics of the Mineral King Road. Sight distances on the road are limited

* The discussion found on pages 7.17-7.26 is taken from "The Cultural Landscape of Mineral King, Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks; Determination of Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places," National Park Service, Denver Service Center, prepared by Ethan Carr, Historical Landscape Architect, NPS and Steve McNeil, Professor of Landscape Architecture, UC-Davis, dated January 25 1999. Excerpted portions reflect those dealing specifically with the description and evaluation of the Mineral King cabin tracts.

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by these tight geometries, a fact which forces drivers to slow down. Limited sight distances are another characteristic of the spatial sequence of the road.

In contrast to the short sight distances² on the road itself, views of distant mountain scenery are quite unrestricted in many places. The contrast between the limited sight distances on the road, and almost unlimited vistas of Sierran scenery off the road, is a characteristic of the spatial experience of the Mineral King Road.

As the road works its way higher in elevation, the roadsides become more enclosed. At elevations of 4,000 to 5,000 feet, about at the midway point of the road, the vegetation shifts from low shrubs, to mixed forests, to giant sequoia groves all in rapid succession. The openness and long vistas of the road give way to enclosed forest spaces, and massive tree trunks sometimes immediately adjacent to the travel lane. Farther up still, thick forests break up into scattered stands of trees in Mineral King Valley, and spectacular vistas of surrounding peaks open to the viewer. The overall spatial sequence of the 90-minute drive is from very open, to very closed, to very open again.

In the valley, the spatial organization of the three cabin tracts is a characteristic feature of these resources. The tracts were laid out primarily between 1906 and 1942, and most of the cabins were built after 1915. This period coincided with the height of the Forest Service recreation residence program, in which forest subdivisions were laid out by Forest Service engineers and consultants in order to provide sites for permit summer homes. The three Mineral King tracts all possess site plans typical of these cabin tracts during this period. Each is laid out in a relatively level area, taking advantage of forests or isolated stands of trees to reduce the visibility of the cabins. In addition, the two tracts located by the Forest Service (East Mineral King had already been located) were sited outside the subalpine valley, within the forest immediately to the west. These two tracts, Cabin Cove and West Mineral King, are laid out on either side of the access road—the Mineral King Road—in the forest just below the subalpine valley itself. This siting prevented the far greater visual and other impacts that would have occurred if these tracts were sited higher up, in the open valley. At West Mineral King, the amenity of the nearby river added to the desirability of the location, and the cabins are along the river, as well as along the road.

At East Mineral King, the site of the cabin tract was chosen before the Forest Service laid out the subdivision; it had been the location of the mining settlement of Beulah, and later became the site of summer cabins and camps. In this case the planners regularized and surveyed the tract, which they arranged in groups on either side of the river. Spur roads from the Mineral King Road provide access to each side separately. At East Mineral King the lot sizes were probably originally larger. After 1915, the Forest Service favored one half acre lots, and so probably subdivided and fit more cabins in the tract. By 1942, as the tract was filled out, the spatial organization of East Mineral King today probably owes more to Forest Service planning than to the original layout of the mining town of Beulah.

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In all three cabin tracts, the availability of water and the need for road access yielded an essentially linear arrangement of cabin sites, stretched along the road, and where possible the along the road and the East Fork of the Kaweah, which runs through the valley. The location of all three cabin tracts, as well as the organization of cabins in the tracts, was affected by the course and location of the river. In the East Mineral King tract, all but three of the cabins are sited immediately above the high water level of the river itself and generally are placed adjacent to each other in two main clusters. The three exceptions are on higher ground, and do not relate directly to the river.

The West Mineral King tract has two linear cabin groups separated by the road. One line of cabins is immediately above the river and one at the base of the steep canyon side-wall west of the road. These higher sites are particularly prone to avalanche damage and five newer sites have been located even higher up on the canyon wall, presumably protected from known avalanche chutes. The road that separates the two sets of cabins also serves as a connector and community open space, when on occasion locals stroll, meet and socialize there. Local tradition divides the tract into three informal sections: the Gate, near the site of a historic gate at the mouth of Mineral King Valley; Barton's Camp, named for an early cabin builder who also grazed cattle in the valley; and Faculty Flat, the area surrounding the original four faculty cabins.

The Cabin Cove tract occupies a bend in the Mineral King Road. A gentle slope with two stream beds defines the location of individual cabin sites. Two residences occupy sites to the west, or downhill, from the road, and four exist to the east, above the road. Cabin Cove building sites, as a group, are generally steeper than those at East Mineral King or West Mineral King.

The spatial organization of the natural setting of Mineral King Valley is that of a high, isolated valley, surrounded on almost all sides by peaks and ridges. Entering from the west, the valley turns to the south in a broad bend, as does the East Fork, which flows through the center of the valley. This broad turns is characteristic of the entry sequence into the valley. Views of Farewell Gap and the peaks to the south open up as the visitor turns to the south and continues further into Mineral King.

Circulation

Circulation through the Mineral King cultural landscape is defined primarily by the Mineral King Road itself, a historic 24.8-mile road that is a long spur into the high country from State Highway 198 below.

Along the road corridor, circulation is defined by the two-way traffic to and from Mineral King. At Lookout Point, and several other locations, there is the opportunity to pull over on the roadside at scenic vistas. There are no formally developed overlooks. At Atwell Mill, the historic mill site, the Alles Cabin, and the campground offer an important interpretive and rest stop. Further up, Silver City has another major pull off at the store and restaurant.

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The next major break point is the Mineral King Ranger Station and the Cold Springs Campground, where many visitors stop for orientation. Just down the road, the Tar Gap trailhead offers the first of three small, unpaved parking lots which are typical of the Mineral King area. The second is at the site of the historic Dog Town mining settlement, first known as Harry's Bend. The third is at the end of the road, at what was the site of Arthur Crowley's resort. None of the parking lots retain a prewar appearance, and none are contributing structures.

The most characteristic aspect of circulation at Mineral King is the shift from vehicular to pedestrian circulation. Ever since 1879, Mineral King has been the "jumping off point" for vast areas of the high country accessible only on horseback or on foot. Mineral King is the end of the road; a trailhead of great importance because of its high altitude and proximity to many backcountry trails. The shift from vehicles—originally horse drawn, later motorized—to foot or pack animals was been a characteristic of Mineral King's circulation throughout the historic period.

Most of the cabins in all three cabin tracts are reached by small individual or shared driveway spurs that exit directly from the main road. In East Mineral King a frontage road provides access. In several cases these small side roads are articulated as small loops or long driveways that serve several cabins. None of the driveways, access spurs or loops are paved, through the main road is when adjacent to cabins.

Topography

Mineral King Valley is a subalpine valley, surrounded by high peaks and ridges that enclose the valley on three of four sides. Although they are not part of the historic district, views of these rocky slopes, snowy gaps, and jagged peaks are significant aspects of the Mineral King cultural landscape. To the south, Farewell Gap (10,587 feet), Florence Peak (12,432 feet), and Vandever Mountain (11,947 feet) make up some of the most characteristic views from the valley. Farewell Gap was the first entrance to Mineral King. Directly opposite to the north, Timber Gap (9,450 feet) was the entrance to Sequoia National Park from Mineral King. To the east, Empire Mountain (11,509 feet), Sawtooth peak (12,393 feet), and Mineral Peak (11,550 feet) dominate views.

All around the valley, the topography eroded into cirques, or bowls, at high elevations above the tree. This is the topography that so excited ski promoters, who felt that the conditions for downhill skiing would be more like the Alps than at any other North American resort. Small lakes, more than 15 all together, occupy the bottoms of many of these bowls. Four of these lakes were inundated to make larger reservoirs out of the existing topographic conditions.

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While glaciers carved dramatic, nearly vertical valley walls out of the hard granites of other Sierran valleys, such as Kings Canyon to the north, at Mineral King the softer metamorphic rock eroded into more moderate slopes. The valley's upper sidewalls typically have a slope of 50%, while the alluviated valley floor has slopes of 2% to 10%. Mineral King Valley, as a result, has a more open and sunny aspect than many comparable valleys in the Sierra Nevada. Snow melt coming down the steep upper slope forms long cascades, and several significant waterfalls. The Black Wolf Falls of Monarch Creek, which has a prominent location near Dog Town (Harry's Bend) is one of the most notable. The steep upper slopes of the valley are also typically scarred by incised drainages and avalanche chutes. Avalanches, directly related to Mineral King's elevation and topography, have shaped both the landscape and the history of the area.

In the three cabin tracts, individual cabins often relate more to the layout of access roads than to the natural features and topography. All three tracts are sited to take advantage of relatively flat terrain, running water, and the surrounding forests. Tracts also were located in or near groups of trees, where avalanche dangers were lower. At Cabin Cove and West Mineral King, siting of cabins to take advantage of views in the area seems to have been secondary to concerns for avalanche protection and the need for flat topography. While excellent views do exist at East Mineral King, they seem merely accidental and a function of siting cabins in relation to the functional road layout, and are made possible mainly by the more open forest in this area.

Vegetation

Vegetation in the historic district is characterized by the species and associations found in undisturbed Sierran environments at elevations between 1,000 and 8,000 feet. The most notable characteristic relating to vegetation in the Mineral King cultural landscape is the degree to which it has been protected since the 1890s. According to contemporary newspaper accounts, mining activities resulted in serious depletion of Mineral King's forests in the 1870s. In the early 20th century, a significant number of Big Trees were cut at Atwell Mill, where their stumps remain. But overall, the vegetation along the Mineral King Road corridor is notable for the protection it has received in most areas for over 100 years. Since the 1890s, the roadside vegetation of the Mineral King Road has remained relatively undisturbed, which is unusual for mountain roads even in national parks and forests.

The Mineral King Road climbs from 1,100 feet in elevation, up through the Sierran foothills to Mineral King Valley, at about 7,800 feet. Along the way the road passes through several different forest communities associated with different elevations. At just over 4,000 feet, over 10 miles along on the road (just past the boundary of Sequoia National Park) the chaparral zone of low shrubs begins to give way to oak trees. With more elevation, a few pines begin to appear, and beginning at about 5,700 feet, the Mineral King Road passes through a grove of giant sequoias, the Redwood Creek Grove. Three miles later, the road passes through the Atwell Grove of sequoias. The East Fork sequoia groves are among the most extensive in the Sierra. The Atwell Grove covers over 1,500 acres, at elevations of 5,200 to 8,800 feet, and includes Big Trees growing at the

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higher elevations than any others, as well as numerous very large specimens. Between the sequoia groves and Mineral King Valley (about four miles away), the Mineral King Road also passes through impressive pine and fir forests.

The larger landscape of Mineral King Valley is characterized by natural subalpine meadows and scattered stands of pines and firs. Mineral King Valley and its surrounding slopes are in what are described as the Canadian, Hudsonian, and Arctic-Alpine zones. Aspen, cottonwood, and willows are the deciduous trees found in association with the red and white fir that make up the majority of trees in the valley. Significant stands of juniper are found on some higher slopes, as are groves of Foxtail pines, including the largest known specimens of these pines, near Timber Gap. Common understory plants at Mineral King are manzanita, ceanothus, amelanchiers, sage, and elderberry.

The history of logging is particularly important in relation to the vegetation of the Mineral King cultural landscape. Very little evidence of pine logging in the 1870s remains. The logging of giant sequoias at Atwell Mill in the early 20th century, however, left large sequoia stumps around the Atwell Mill site.

For an area that has had such a rich history of human activity, very little evidence of historic homesteading persists in the landscape today. One exception is the Trauger farmstead, about 12.5 miles from Hammond on the Mineral King Road. This site is included in the historic district, and the apple trees and sweet peas, vestiges of Mary Trauger's garden, are contributing vegetation in the historic district.

In the three cabin tracts, recreation residences have left their mark through selective tree cutting, the intrusion of driveways, access roads and pedestrian paths, and the addition of non-indigenous plants at a few individual home sites. Compared to most northern Californian national forest recreation residence tracts, there is relatively little gardening or site work associated with individual cabins at Mineral King. The overall character of the immediate landscape settings of the cabins is undeveloped and natural. This is consistent with others in the region, where higher altitude and severe weather tend to discourage landscape improvements. The Mineral King tracts do possess, however, a variety of site improvements associated with a few cabins. In a few cases, systems of stone walls, stairways, terracing and stone edging provide a strong sense of unity and cohesiveness to sites and adds to the sense of place.

Land use, historical and existing

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The only historical land uses to continue today are those of resource protection and recreation. Over 20,000 cars enter Mineral King every summer, and the number is growing. Scenic views and a pleasant summer climate make Mineral King, as it has been for over 100 years, a desirable destination and a welcome alternative to the heat of the San Joaquin Valley. But Mineral King's visitors also come from all over the country and the world, since Mineral King is part of Sequoia National Park. Probably the most significant form of recreation once visitors arrive is walking and hiking. Mineral King is a superb trail head and "jumping off point" for access to Sierran high country that might otherwise take days to reach. Camping is also a significant activity, and at the Atwell and Cold Springs campgrounds (neither is included in the historic district because of lack of integrity) there are some 61 campsites. Preserving park resources, while accommodating these demands for recreation, has been the job of the Forest Service, and after 1978 the Park Service, since 1893.

One particularly characteristic recreational land use that has continued at Mineral King over the last 100 years has been the establishment of summer camps and cabins. In the early 1920s, the Forest Service established about 70 permit lots covering about 31 acres, for an average close to the one half acre standard set by the Forest Service in 1915. There are currently 66 cabins, or recreation residences, which continue to be located on public land and are occupied through the provisions of special-use permits issued by the Park Service. Summer cabin use differs from other recreational activities at Mineral King. Day use visitors come and go, after a brief hike. Back country users use Mineral King as a base camp, but are headed for extended trips to the high country. Campers, too, rarely stay as long or come as regularly to Mineral King as do permittees with summer cabins. Some of the families that have permit cabins at Mineral King stay for periods of weeks each summer, and they have been doing so for many years. Several of these families have multi-generational ties to the Mineral King landscape. This extended and continued historic land use has obviously resulted in strong emotional ties and a sense of stewardship of the Mineral King landscape on the part of these families.

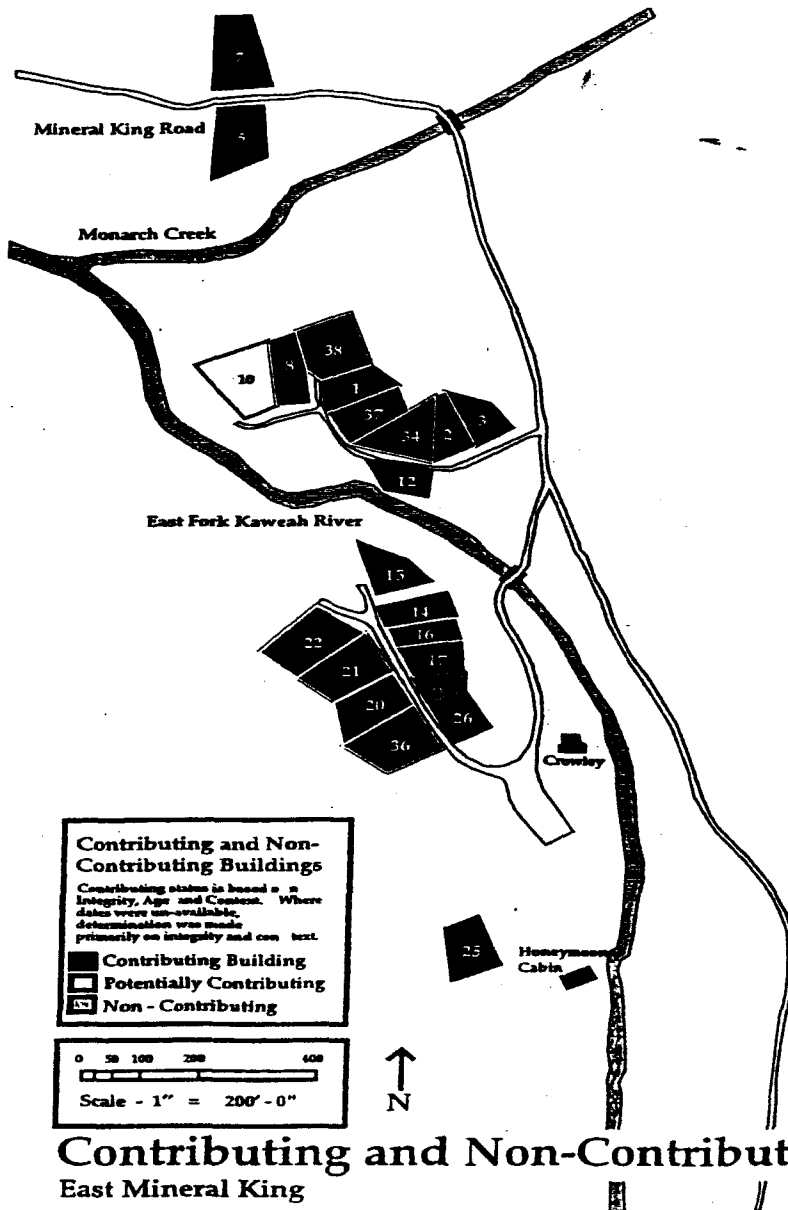
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Contributing and Non-Contributing Buildings East Mineral King

Categories *Potentially Contributing* and *Non-Contributing* are considered non-contributing for the purposes of this National Register nomination.

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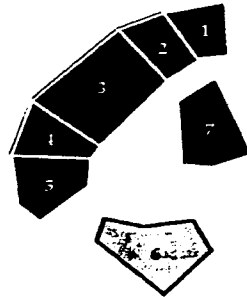
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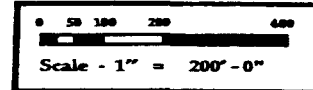
Cabin Cove



Contributing and Non-Contributing Buildings

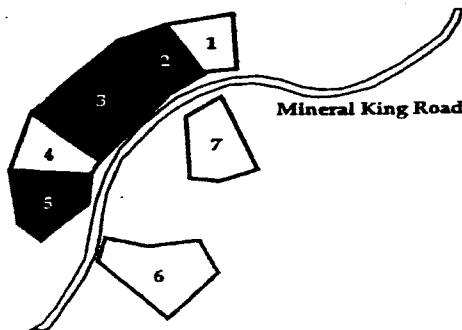
Contributing status is based on integrity, Age and Context. Where data were un-available, determination was made primarily on integrity and case text.

- Contributing Building
- Potentially Contributing
- Non - Contributing



Contributing and Non-Contributing Buildings

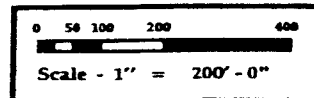
Cabin Cove



Holistic Evaluation

Holistic Integrity Ratings

- 6 - Highest Integrity
- 5 - Excellent Integrity
- 4 - Good Integrity
- 3 - Moderate Integrity *
- 2 - Low Integrity
- 1 - New Building
- Other Properties



• Categories *Potentially Contributing* and *Non-Contributing* are considered non-contributing for the purposes of this National Register nomination.

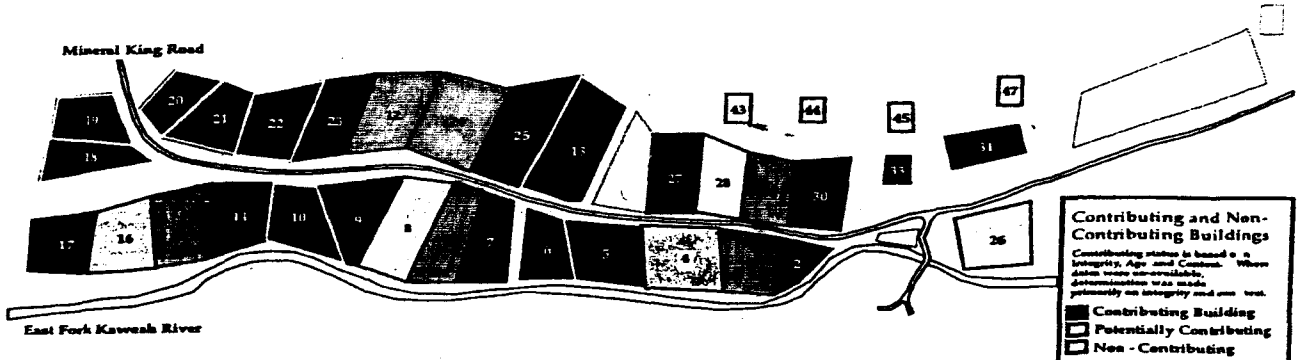
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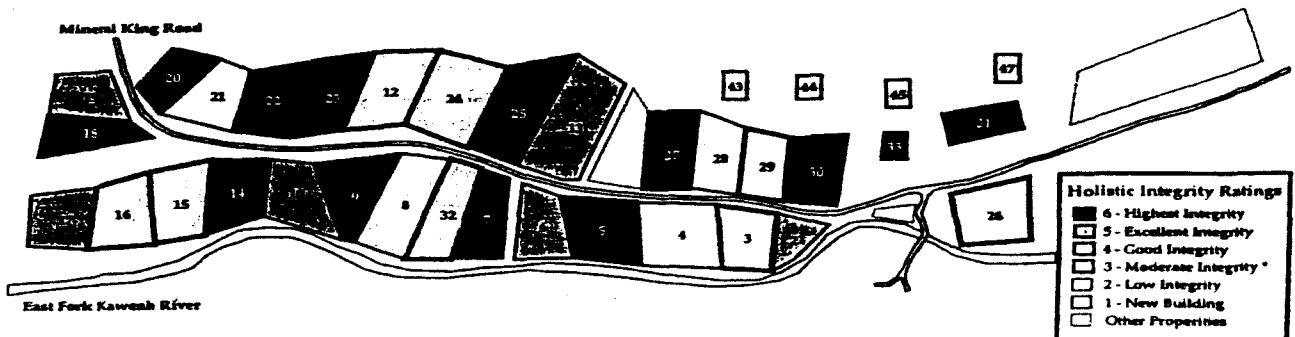
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Contributing and Non-Contributing Buildings
West Mineral King



Holistic Evaluation
West Mineral King

Categories *Potentially Contributing* and *Non-Contributing* are considered non-contributing for the purposes of this National Register nomination.

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The cabins are a collection of rustic vernacular structures built in the beginning of, and throughout, a pivotal period of recreation development in the history of the American west between 1915 and 1942.

The four combined elements within the proposed cultural landscape district are eligible for the National Register under Criterion A, for their association with the development of the Forest Service recreation programs between 1915 – 1942. The road itself is specifically eligible under Criterion A for its 1930s association with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and subsequent National Park Service (NPS) activities that were responsible for the maintenance of this narrow, mountain road and the construction of associated structures. The three summer home tracts are eligible for National Register listing under Criterion C for their architecture and design as notable examples of recreation tracts built in the rustic vernacular style. These four elements, then, constitute a cultural landscape integral to understanding the 20th Century history of the area. . . A cultural landscape, as defined in the National Park Service's *Cultural Resource Management Guideline, Release No. 5*, is " a reflection of human adaptation and use of natural resources. . . often expressed in the way land is organized and divided, patterns of settlement, land use, systems of circulation, and the types of structures that are built." The Park Service defines four categories of cultural landscapes, including historic vernacular. The Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape qualifies under this category.

Origins of the Mineral King Road

Colorful outcrops of metamorphic rock within the Mineral King area attracted 19th-century miners. Prospectors hoped that such color was a sign of mineralization, and the high expectations of the day were captured in the valley's name. From the start of the Mineral King silver rush in 1873 expectations of great profits continued to grow, and not just among claim holders. Businessmen in nearby Visalia knew that if the rival town of Porterville continued to be the center of mining preparations and activity, businesses in that town would flourish. Access to the high valley of Mineral King was the key issue. The trail from Porterville made its way to Mineral King from the south over Farewell Gap; but the East Fork river valley offered superior possibilities for a wagon road that would enter Mineral King from the west. Such a road would lead downstream directly to Visalia, not Porterville. In December of 1873 a group of Visalians formed a toll road company, and work proceeded at lower elevations through the winter. By spring a wagon road connected Visalia to the point just above Three Rivers where the East Fork joins the Middle Fork of the Kaweah (along what is now State Highway 198), and from there a trail had been built up the valley of the East Fork. Eventually the trail reached Mineral King from the west, although the difficult terrain prevented completion of a true wagon road along the route until 1879.

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As prospecting and speculating resumed early in the spring of 1874, the Visalians succeeded in making the East Fork route the preferred means of access to Mineral King.

In March of 1874, a group of Visalians led by John M. Meadows headed up to the valley via the East Fork trail. Winter had not ended in the high Sierra, and the group stopped at a lower elevation to the west of the valley, where they founded a community they called Silver City. Located on a forested plain just below the more exposed Mineral King Valley, Silver City soon had a population of 50 to 60 people, including a significant number of women and children. To the east, loggers and sawyers set up camp at Harry's Bend, but were unable to keep up with an insatiable demand for lumber, wood shakes, and timbers. Houses and businesses of many descriptions were being built in the Mineral King valley.

By May, an entire town was under construction on four adjacent mill sites south of Harry's Bend, near the center of the valley. Miner's cabins, saloons, and stores all went up quickly in the new town. That month the miners held a mass meeting, and by a popular vote they christened their mushrooming settlement Beulah, after the Biblical Promised Land. Some of the original organizers of the Mineral King mining district were not pleased with the new name, and when they founded another town that summer at the southern extreme of the valley (near Aspen Flat) they called it Mineral King. Other towns and camps were going up in the valley as well. Harmonville was located in Lone Horse Canyon, and boasted regular Sunday services. Harry O'Farrell, who was a fixture in the valley, built a house at Harry's Bend; this area grew into another community that later became known as Dog Town. The poetic name of the community, however, never caught on. The Mineral King mining district was becoming known throughout the state, and all of the valley's camps and settlements were soon collectively known by the Mineral King name. In the summer of 1875, hoping to cash-in on the silver boom, the New England Tunnel and Smelting company paid over \$2,500 for claims or parts of claims, and another \$175 for five mill sites in the valley, including most of Beulah.

It was soon evident that the New England Company was having trouble raising sufficient amounts of capital through stock sales. In the meantime, mining company superintendent George W. Brown tried to get the operation underway on a meager budget. At Beulah, Brown ordered a survey to map lots and streets hoping to sell or lease the property and raise cash. This 1875 survey has never been located, but historian John F. Elliott believes some of the recreational cabin lots in the valley today owe their locations to this early plat. By-laws were drafted to limit the number of animals residents could graze in the valley's meadows. Another by-law urged miners to keep rocks and debris from excavations on their claims, since boulders tumbling down steep hillsides had become a serious hazard the settlements below.

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Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape
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In the spring of 1877, the Smith House, a two-story boarding house with a bar, a store, and beds with real mattresses, opened for business in Beulah. Prospecting continued, and more claims were filed.

A mail service was begun between the Smith House and Visalia. Charles Baker, who now had strengthened his position in the New England Company, continued work on the wagon road and tried to smelt ore and produce silver bullion. It was soon clear that the silver and other valuable minerals, though present, simply could not be extracted in an economical manner. Even when they were present, the valuable minerals were imbedded in complex compounds that would not yield pure silver even after expensive reduction processes.

Not a single bar of bullion had been produced so far at Mineral King, and Baker failed to do so again in the summer of 1877. In September, the New England Tunnel & Smelting Company filed for bankruptcy protection. The company's creditors unwisely decided to try tunneling at the White Chief mine site through the winter. That February an avalanche destroyed the New England Company bunkhouse near the White Chief tunnel. Although the people sleeping inside, after a horrifying ordeal, somehow escaped with their lives, the New England Company was now dead. Historians Lary M. Dilsaver and William C. Tweed observe that the "mining history of Mineral King should have ended with a whimper in 1878." The fact that it did not is testimony to the energy, wealth, and poor judgement of one individual, Thomas Fowler. After immigrating to New York from his native Ireland in 1829, Fowler became an early settler of Tulare County in the 1850s. He made a fortune selling beef to hungry California miners, and by the 1870s he was one of the biggest ranchers in the state. Active in Democratic politics as well, Fowler was elected a state senator in 1869. Fowler had visited Mineral King during the initial excitement in 1873, and since then he had watched events unfold from his ranch near Visalia. Beginning in 1878, Fowler poured all his energy and resources into trying to make Mineral King the next Comstock.

In the spring of 1878, Mineral King was again a beehive of speculation and construction. In March, a toll road company was organized in Visalia in order to finish a serviceable wagon road from the existing road near Three Rivers all the way to Beulah. Thomas Fowler, an active proponent of mining in Mineral King, reportedly underwrote the cost of the Mineral King Road. Under construction supervisor Thomas C. Mayon, 125 laborers were divided into four crews, and made fast progress on the Mineral King Road. In August of 1878 the road opened and hundreds of wagons began pouring into Mineral King Valley.

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In Mineral King Valley today, very little evidence remains of the silver bonanza that never happened. Most construction was ephemeral to begin with, and fierce conditions quickly began to obliterate Tom Fowler's Mineral King. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake took a particularly hard toll at Mineral King, where it triggered massive avalanches. The two-story Smith House in Beulah, and many other structures in the valley were destroyed that winter.

In the late 19th century a recreational cabin community grew up on and around the site of Beulah. The recreational cabins that remain in the Beulah area today, however, all date to the 20th century. Although some were undoubtedly sited where earlier structures had been (and used materials salvaged from earlier structures), the current grouping of cabins probably represents an arrangement that developed over the years based on both the early settlement pattern and on later Forest Service planning.

The completion of the original road in 1879 changed the history of the Mineral King region permanently. Because of its widening and partial relocation, the experience of the road today is more representative of a 1920s automotive mountain road than an 1870s wagon road. The road still follows its early Twentieth Century vertical and horizontal alignments. The Mineral King Road is considered a contributing structure, and is the heart of the Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape.

Resource Preservation and the Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape

In the 1880s, after the sensational failure of Mineral King as a mining district, tents and cabins were taken down, businesses left, and the valley began reverting to its quiet and natural condition. The Mineral King Road remained, however, and that investment still promised to pay other dividends. By the 1880s, many entrepreneurs in the southern Sierra were looking to lumber, not silver, as a resource that could make them rich. It was the battle to save the giant sequoias—the incomparable Big Trees—that would, above all, lead to the creation of Sequoia National Park in 1890. And although Mineral King would not become part of the national park until 1978, the Mineral King Road and Mineral King Valley would nevertheless be an integral part of the national park's history from its earliest beginnings.

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The western slope of the southern Sierra is covered by coniferous forest beginning at an elevation of about 5,000 feet above sea level. The 24.8-mile Mineral King Road climbs from Hammond, at 1,100 feet above sea level, up through the Sierran foothills to Mineral King Valley at about 7,800 feet. Along the way the road passes through several different forest communities associated with different elevations. At just over 4,000 feet, over 10 miles along on the road (just past the boundary of Sequoia National Park) the chaparral zone of low shrubs begins to give way to oak trees. With more elevation, a few pines begin to appear, and beginning at about 5,700 feet, the Mineral King Road passes through a grove of giant sequoias, the Redwood Creek Grove. Three miles later, the road passes through the Atwell Grove of sequoias. The East Fork sequoia groves are among the most extensive in the Sierra. The Atwell Grove covers over 1,500 acres, at elevations of 5,200 to 8,800 feet, and includes Big Trees growing at higher elevations than any others, as well as numerous very large specimens. Between the sequoia groves and Mineral King Valley (about four miles away), the Mineral King Road also passes through impressive pine and fir forests.

The dearth of wood in the valley below meant a ready market for lumber in the farming communities and growing cities from Fresno to Bakersfield. Adequate roads for hauling wood out of the mountains, however, limited logging activities in the 1850s and 1860s. Steep mountainous terrain meant that only in a few areas could wagon roads be built economically to exploit Sierran forests. Sawmills had been part of the scene at Mineral King since the spring of 1874, when the silver rush created an instant demand for lumber. Numerous small operators quickly moved to exploit the valley's pine and fir forests, and the New England Company operated a sawmill on the East Fork near Harry's Bend beginning in 1875. Several sawmills operated also at Silver City. In 1879, with the second silver rush underway, the mills in the valley were busier than ever. The *Visalia Delta* even published one opinion that the forests of Mineral King Valley would soon be completely destroyed.

As mining activities in Mineral King ended between 1880 and 1882, most of Mineral King's sawmills shut down and moved out, just as other businesses did. By that time, however, parcels of land along the road associated with logging and mill sites had passed into private hands, mainly through the provisions of the 1878 Timber and Stone Act. One such tract was acquired by a J. A. Atwell, a judge in Visalia, who in 1885 constructed a steam powered sawmill in the midst of the giant sequoia grove that today bears his name. In 1890 the judge acquired title to another 160 acres of the surrounding sequoia forest. At an elevation of 6,400 feet and 19 miles up the road from Hammond, the mill was probably too remote to be profitable in the 1880s. Atwell was willing to lease the land and mill, however, to anyone willing to try to make a profit by converting the Big Trees into shakes, fence posts, and lumber.

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In 1890, the history of the Mineral King Road and Atwell Mill became intertwined with the history of the creation and early management of Sequoia National Park. By the 1880s, sequoia groves and pine forests in the Sierra Nevada were attracting growing logging operations. The editor of the *Visalia Delta*, George W. Stewart, organized a campaign to create a federal reservation that would protect alpine meadows and giant sequoias in the southern Sierra. His cause gained momentum when farmers became convinced that overgrazing and deforestation in the mountains threatened the seasonal water flow of the streams that irrigated their land in the valley below. Water for irrigation increased land values and made agricultural and commercial development possible over large areas, and so preserving watersheds interested the powerful Southern Pacific Railroad as well.

Stewart had pursued federal legislation to protect the sequoias since 1880; but not until Representative William Vandever introduced a bill, based on Stewart's recommendations, in 1890 did Congress consider the proposal seriously. Vandever may have been acting on behalf of executives at the Southern Pacific; in any case, both houses passed the legislation with little or no debate. In fact, Congress also passed a second bill introduced by Vandever that created Yosemite National Park around the state park at Yosemite Valley. When the Yosemite bill came before the House of Representatives for a vote, however, Vandever had it replaced at the last moment with substitute legislation that delineated a Yosemite National Park five times the size originally envisioned. In addition, the substitute bill tripled the size of Sequoia National Park and established General Grant National Park, the latter designed to preserve a giant sequoia grove just north of Sequoia National Park.

This remarkable legislative action meant that as of October 1890 the entire middle portion of the Mineral King Road, including the Atwell Mill Grove of sequoias, lay within national park boundaries, although the road itself within the new park remained under the control of Tulare County until 1980. The township that included the Mineral King Valley and the last 4.4 miles of the road was not included in the new park either. There were no sequoias in the township that included Mineral King, which explains in part why it was left out. Memories of the 1870s silver rush were also still fresh in 1890. Many mineral claims remained active in Mineral King Valley, and there remained dim hopes, among some, that the silver bonanza still might arrive if new smelting technology could be developed.

If there was sufficient reason to exclude Mineral King from the new national park in 1890, the Mineral King Road was nevertheless the best means of access into the new park. And if Mineral King was itself outside the park's boundaries, the valley soon became the national park's front door, and what we would call today a gateway community.

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From Mineral King, the trail over Timber Gap was one of the easiest routes into Sequoia National Park. In addition, Mineral King had begun to grow into a summer resort, including a small hotel and store that began operating out of the old Smith House in 1890, just about the time the national park was established.

The access provided by the Mineral King Road, and the amenities of the summer resort community taking shape in Mineral King Valley, made Mineral King the natural location for the first national park headquarters. In the spring of 1891, when the new military superintendent of Sequoia National Park, Captain Joseph H. Dorst, arrived to begin the administration of the park, he rode up the Mineral King Road with his US Cavalry troop and set up camp in Mineral King.

Captain Dorst passed his first challenge in the administration of the new park on his way up the Mineral King Road. Just that spring, Judge Atwell had leased his mill and property to a group of utopian communitarians, known as the Kaweah Colony, who intended to log the Atwell Grove of sequoias. Captain Dorst was concerned. The land at Atwell Mill was private property, but it lay within the boundaries of the new park, and the park had been created in large part to protect the Big Trees. The Kaweah colonists, for their part, were faced with the extinction of their socialistic community. The colonists had come from San Francisco five years earlier in a quixotic attempt to create a community in which each member received direct benefit from their labor, free from the interference of capitalist exploitation. Logging must have seemed a perfect enterprise: the initial capital investment was low, and once title to government land was secured, the resource to be exploited was essentially free.

The poignant story of the Kaweah Colony began in 1885, when the colonists had filed on 10 square miles of Sierran forests through the provisions of the Timber and Stone Act. The colonists' claim included much of the Giant Forest, at the heart of what would become Sequoia National Park. In 1886 a group of the colonists arrived in the Three Rivers area and established a community they named Kaweah on the banks of the North Fork of the Kaweah River. Without an adequate wagon road their logging operation would be impossible, and so the group started on the arduous construction of a road up the North Fork.

During four years of hard work they built 20 miles of mountain road to a point just short of the Giant Forest, where they established a mill site called Colony Mill. During the same period, George Stewart and his allies were desperately working to create a federal reservation that would save the sequoias.

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But Stewart, like many others in Tulare County, had come to believe that the Kaweah colonists had complied with the provisions of the Timber and Stone Act, and therefore they had legal claim to the land whether the park was created or not. Nevertheless, the year after the national park was created, the Department of the Interior ruled that the colony's claims on the Giant Forest area were invalid. Over five years of the colonists' labor was negated by the fact that they would be prevented from logging the land they had claimed. In 1915 the grove was acquired by a private individual and donated to the park.

The Mineral King Road and Atwell Mill were the scenes of significant events and episodes in the early history of Sequoia National Park. Mineral King Valley also was a major part of this early history, despite being outside the park's boundary at that time. Captain Dorst and his successors made Mineral King their annual base of operations from 1891 through about 1900. The military superintendents set up camp in various locations in Mineral King in the 1890s, but they eventually settled on Weishar's Mill, an old sawmill site in Silver City, as their regular camp.

Mineral King remained an important gateway into the park until 1903, the year that the Kaweah Colony's old Colony Mill Road up the North Fork Valley was extended to the Giant Forest. At that point the Colony Mill Road became the favored direct route to the Giant Forest for growing numbers of tourists. By 1900 the administration of the park had shifted from Mineral King to the Colony Mill Road corridor, and by 1903 to the Giant Forest itself. But a significant number of tourists (22% in 1913) still entered the park through Mineral King.

With the creation of Sequoia National Park, the era of federal administration of public lands in the southern Sierra had begun. In 1891, a year after the creation of the national park, new legislation was passed in Congress that allowed the president to declare "forest reserves" out of the remaining public domain in the West. George Stewart, joined by other advocates including John Muir, urged the proclamation of a forest reserve that would protect mountainous areas that had been left out of Sequoia National Park, including Kings Canyon, Mount Whitney, and the Kern River watershed. In 1893, at the end of his term, President Harrison declared the four million-acre Sierra Forest Reserve, which together with Sequoia National Park, permanently withdrew most of the central and southern Sierra from sale to the public. Included in the vast forest reserve was Mineral King. In 1905, jurisdiction over the forest reserves was transferred from the Department of the Interior to the newly created Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture. In 1907 the reserves were renamed national forests, and in 1908 the southern portion of the Sierra National Forest, including Mineral King, was made an independent unit named the Sequoia National Forest.

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Although the distinction was not immediately apparent, there was a great difference between national parks and national forests. National parks could only be created by Congress and their status as scenic reservations and public parks implied that their primary or even their only use should be the public enjoyment of unspoiled scenery. National forests, on the other hand, could be declared by the President, and beginning in 1897 policies were developed that suggested that forests, as opposed to parks, should have multiple uses, including logging, mining, grazing, and dam construction for power and irrigation. After 1916, when the National Park Service was created within the Department of the Interior to manage the parks, the differences in these policies became more defined. And so Mineral King, so intimately connected with the natural systems and the early history of Sequoia National Park, fell under a different set of management policies determined by its status as a forest, not a park.

The distinction between national forest and national park policies would eventually affect the development of the Mineral King cultural landscape. Before 1905, however, the national parks and the national forests were both managed through the General Land Office of the Department of the Interior, and policies for the management of natural resources in the two types of reservations were not always distinct. The existence of the Mineral King Road made early development possible by making lumber for a flume available, and by providing access up the East Fork Valley.

The Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape also has features associated with the creation and early administration of Sequoia National Park, the nation's second national park. Nothing remains of the early encampments of the US Cavalry troops that administered Sequoia from Mineral King, but the Mineral King Road was the main entrance between 1891 and 1903, and it continued as a main entrance to the park until at least World War I. Other historic resources along the Mineral King Road relate to the history of resource preservation at Mineral King. In 1891, a detachment of Cavalry troops was assigned guard duty at the new national park's boundary on the road. At Slapjack Creek, fourteen and a half miles from Hammond, the remains of the foundation of a Park Service ranger cabin of the 1920s can be seen below the road. The site at Slap Jack Creek is not now considered a contributing element of the historic district.

The modern entrance station (Kiosk) at Lookout Point is a postwar structure and is non-contributing. The station ranger residence and garage, however, are fine examples of adobe, California rancho style, built by the CCC in 1936.

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The CCC and other New Deal programs contributed enormously to the development of the national park system, and the Lookout Point complex is an excellent example of the NPS Rustic style of architecture favored by Park Service architects of the period. At Atwell Mill, 19 miles from Hammond, another CCC ranger residence and garage are located across from the Alles Cabin and the Atwell Mill site. The ranger residence and garage are significant and contributing features of the Mineral King cultural landscape and relate to the history of resource preservation. Indeed, the ranger residence and garage were previously determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (1997). Similarly, though not currently viewed as a contributing feature of the landscape district, the Atwell Mill site was previously determined Eligible (1976).

Recreation and the Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape

There is evidence that even during the heady silver rush days, the prospectors, some of whom brought their families into the mountains, noticed and appreciated the magnificent scenery and cool climate of Mineral King. Once the Mineral King Road was opened, the area became popular with Tulare County families seeking to escape the summer heat of the San Joaquin Valley. As Mineral King was abandoned as a mining district, interest in recreational uses of the valley started to grow.

This pattern was repeated throughout the West. Roads and railroads were usually built to exploit mineral deposits and timber; but wherever such development made scenic areas accessible, tourists and outdoor recreationalists often followed close behind. Both at Mineral King and in Sequoia National Park, the roads and trails originally built for mining and logging made new recreational and resort activities possible. The Mineral King Road was already being used for recreational purposes by the 1870s, and it became the main entrance to the new national park in 1890. The old Colony Mill Road, built by the star-crossed Kaweah colonists for logging purposes, became part of the new national park entrance road in 1903.

It is understandable that once the Mineral King Road was completed, the area would quickly draw attention as a tourist destination. A few major scenic areas or sequoia groves of the Sierra Nevada were accessible by wagon road already in the 1870s. One other area that was, of course, was Yosemite Valley itself. Set aside as a state park since 1864, the first wagon roads into Yosemite were completed in 1874; visitation immediately increased since groups of tourists could come into the valley with their own rigs and camp. The recreational opportunities presented by the opening of the Mineral King Road in 1879 did not take long to recognize.

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An 1883 history of Tulare County describes Mineral King as the "wildest and most romantic scenery in the United States," and the Mineral King Road as a winding route through "the spires of the Sierra Nevada Mountains," the sequoias. Local farmers and businessmen who first saw Mineral King during their brief stints as prospectors were soon drawn back to the area for its potential as a summer resort for their families. Summer camps could be easily assembled, and there were few restrictions on the use of public land at Mineral King before 1893. The remnants of the mining district undoubtedly provided materials for some camp and cabin construction.

Recreation at Mineral King, however, became a more established activity beginning in 1890, the year Sequoia National Park was created. Captain Dorst had perhaps not been the only person to notice the privileged situation of Mineral King in relation to the new national park. That year, Arthur Crowley purchased the old Smith House, the two-story boarding house that was still standing in Beulah. Crowley may or may not have known anything about the park legislation, but his timing was felicitous in any case. By 1891, the year Captain Dorst and his troops arrived in Mineral King, interest in the recreational potential of the area increased considerably. Mineral King was now the front door to the nation's second national park, and Crowley owned the only business in the area.

Crowley had grown up in Tulare County and already had a long association with Mineral King. His father, John W. Crowley, had been appointed president of the toll road company that built the Mineral King Road in 1879, and Arthur had been employed as a timekeeper for the construction project at the age of 21. Since then, the economic potential of Mineral King, either as a mining district or a resort area, had captured Crowley's imagination.

He had moved to Los Angeles in 1887, but returned in 1890 to buy the Smith House. As part of his plans, he also filed new mineral and mill site claims at Mineral King. Mining was almost certainly not part of his plans. But Crowley knew that mineral and mill site claims could lead to full ownership of federal land, and he made sure to include the Smith House acreage as a "mill site" claim. By 1891, Crowley's hotel was in business, and apparently doing reasonably well. In 1896 a seasonal stage service again came up the Mineral King Road, and in 1897 a post office was established with Crowley as postmaster. In 1902 telephone service connected Mineral King to the valley. By 1905, the growing resort had a store, a butcher, a canvas dance hall, and over six guest cabins. Mineral King had come back to life, this time as a small resort community at the gateway to Sequoia National Park.

The declaration of the Sierra Forest Reserve in 1893 does not seem to have had much of an impact on Crowley's business at first, but within 10 years the Department of the Interior was trying to better enforce its regulations and procedures for forest reserve management.

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Arthur Crowley's situation — running a small resort on what had been claimed as a mining site — was not uncommon. Claims were often made under various pretexts in the hope of patenting the land for other purposes. In 1904 the Department of the Interior challenged Crowley's occupancy permit, pointing out that no mining of any kind was being done on his mineral claim and the lands were clearly being used for an unrelated business. The matter went to court, where finally in 1908 Crowley won his case, based on the fact that his mineral claim had preceded the creation of the forest reserve. After 1908, Crowley owned his land in Mineral King Valley outright. But an era of more attentive federal management of Mineral King had also begun. In 1905 the Forest Service issued a permit for Crowley to construct a water line to his hotel from Spring Creek; this was the first known permit issued in the valley for a special use. There were other difficulties involved with operating a summer resort in the high Sierra. The 1906 earthquake that destroyed much of San Francisco also caused huge snow slides in Mineral King Valley. The Smith House was completely destroyed and most of the other cabins and structures in the area were as well. That summer, Crowley joined the ruins of two cabins and created a "Mineral King Store & Post Office," which became the new center of his resort, which offered cabin and tent accommodations.

By this time a number of seasonal camps were also typically being set up in Mineral King Valley, mainly by Tulare County families looking to escape the heat of their farms and residences below. Although the 1906 earthquake destroyed or severely damaged most of the structures in the valley, the nascent summer community at Mineral King continued to grow. The recently created Forest Service probably used the opportunity of that winter's widespread destruction to bring some order to the summer camp situation. As the summer residents arrived to salvage their camps and rebuild their simple cabins, it is probable that forest managers assigned new lots and locations for at least some of the tent camps and rebuilt cabins.

The current arrangement of lots in the East Mineral King cabin tract may reflect, in part, the planning efforts of the forest managers in 1906. The older layout of the mining community of Beulah, and possibly the 1875 plat drawn up by the New England Tunnel & Smelting Company, also may have influenced the eventual configuration of the developing summer community.

The situation was about to change for Mineral King again, however, as the larger patterns of American outdoor recreation shifted with the times. The automobile remained somewhat of a luxury before 1910, but in 1908 Henry Ford introduced his Model T. By 1920 over 8,000,000 automobiles were registered in the United States. In California, these were boom years in which the populations of San Francisco and Los Angeles grew rapidly.

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In Sequoia National Park visitation soared from under 3,000 a year in 1912 to over 30,000 a year in 1920. The trend only accelerated in the 1920s, and the increase in visitation consisted almost entirely of people arriving in their own cars. If families from local communities in the San Joaquin Valley were the first to enjoy scenic areas in the southern Sierra, they were soon joined by families from Fresno, Bakersfield, Los Angeles, and more distant communities.

The Forest Service and the Park Service responded to the influx of automotive tourists in very different ways. The Park Service had been created to preserve the national parks as completely as possible, and developing parks for recreational uses was considered the surest means of creating a constituency for complete preservation. The Forest Service already had a constituency of commercial interests, however, including logging, mining, and hydroelectric companies.

Recreation was recognized as an important use of the forests as early as 1897, but the Forest Service was not interested, at first, in acquiring and spending large appropriations for visitor facilities. The first appropriation for recreational development in national forests, \$10,000 for sanitary improvements, was not made until 1923. Although a campground development program was initiated in the 1920s, major public funds for recreational development in the forests would only arrive with the New Deal programs of the 1930s. The Park Service, on the other hand, spent millions of dollars in the 1920s modernizing national park visitor facilities and making the parks accessible to larger numbers of tourists and automobiles. The Park Service had been created in large part to develop parks, and that agency soon acquired a cadre of landscape architects, engineers, and administrators to undertake the necessary design and construction work.

Since 1897, however, the federal government had approached the task of managing the national forest reserves primarily by issuing permits. Under Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the Forest Service, this system had been extremely successful. The forest reserves were opened to logging, grazing, and other uses, but these activities were now planned by government foresters and other scientists, and were controlled through the issuance of permits and the collection of fees. The system was intended to end the most egregious abuses of resources in the public domain, while assuring that sustainable commercial exploitation could continue on a permit basis. This basic approach was extended to meet the need for recreational facilities. By 1902, permits were being issued for the construction of hotels and sanitariums, particularly those associated with mineral springs. By 1905, Pinchot had added summer residences to the list of uses for which permits could be issued, and regulations were published regarding restrictions and requirements for summer home permits.

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The idea was extremely popular. By 1912, Pinchot's successor, Henry S. Graves, reported that "the demand is growing rapidly for sites on which summer camps, cottages, and hotels may be located. In some of the most accessible and desirable localities the land has been divided into suitable lots of from 1 to 5 acres to accommodate as many visitors as possible." By 1914, more detailed regulations began to be promulgated, although in its early years the program appears to have been somewhat ad hoc, with forest supervisors in different forests making arrangements for permits as needed.

Granting permits for private summer homes (later called recreation residences) in national forests had strong support at the Forest Service as well as from the public. In California, in particular, the pressure to use national forests for second home purposes became intense in the early 20th century. This was especially true at first in forests near large cities; but as roads and cars improved, demand increased in most of the national forests in the state. California was probably where the Forest Service first issued summer home permits, and it certainly became the state where the idea reached its fullest expression. In 1915, California Congressman John E. Raker introduced unsuccessful legislation that would have allowed the public to make homestead claims on national forest land. This would have resulted in private ownership of summer home properties in the forests, if certain requirements were met. The Forest Service responded with an alternate bill that it supported, called the Term Occupancy Act, which Congress approved later in 1915. The legislation allowed "term permits" to be issued for periods up to 30 years. Previous "terminable permits" had been subject to termination annually at the forest supervisor's discretion. The new "term permits" allowed permit holders, both for residences and resort establishments, to make capital investments with adequate assurance of long-term permit use.

The 1915 Term Occupancy Act established a refined set of rules for how summer homes should be developed and maintained. The law required that permit holders spend at least \$2,000 on the construction of a cabin, and resort operators were required to spend \$20,000. The forest supervisors also set design guidelines for recreation residences as part of the permit requirements. A 10-foot setback from lot limits was typical, as was an injunction against the unnecessary removal of trees or other vegetation. Plans for all construction (including later additions) had to be submitted for review. Forest supervisors typically insisted on appropriately "rustic" construction. Construction materials were to be rough sawn lumber, logs, or log siding, often with wood shingle roofs. Exterior colors were to be brown, gray, gray-green, or other subdued colors that would not stand out visually in a forest setting. Fenestration was to be uniform in shape and pattern, and foundations were to be kept low, and usually made of stone.

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Permittees were responsible for securing an adequate water supply, and for disposing of sewage and refuse as directed by the forest supervisor. Later permittees would be required to install sewerage in many cases. The permittees of individual tracts, as the forest subdivisions were known, were encouraged to organize associations, which, it was hoped, would lift some of the burdens of administering the tracts from the forest supervisor.

The Forest Service also gave instructions to the Forest Supervisors and engineers who were expected to locate the best areas for summer home tracts and often to lay out the subdivisions. Individual lots were not to exceed one half acre, and subdivisions were not to be within 100 feet of the centerline of a state road or 25 feet of the high water mark of any stream or lake. Subdivisions were typically designed according to principles of land subdivision advocated by leading landscape architects of the day, such as Frank A. Waugh, who worked as a consultant for the Forest Service throughout this period. This meant, above all, responding to the topography and other natural features of the site; the cabin tracts typically featured curvilinear access roads and layouts to minimize any unnecessary grading or other disturbance. Access by road was a major consideration, but many tracts were laid out with only trail access. The opening of a new forest road or highway often resulted in the laying out of new tracts to meet the growing public demand. Tracts were also typically located near major recreational amenities, where demand was highest. This could mean an area with exceptional views, or, more often, adjacency to a lake or stream. Several types of tracts soon emerged, with somewhat standardized approaches to subdividing land either on a lakeshore, along a stream corridor, or in relation to a road. In some cases tracts were laid out by landscape architects; but the duty often fell to forest engineers, working with forest supervisors and rangers who were most familiar with the terrain.

In many cases, the layout of the tracts shows considerable skill in the location and subdivision of lots, as well as the response to natural features and preservation of landscape character. Sites were sometimes chosen where early recreation pioneers had already decided to erect cabins. The establishment of the tract incorporated the earlier structures in the new survey. The surveys were done in conjunction with a planning report that was used to determine the best locations and configurations for subdivisions. Tracts often were sited in stands of evergreens, which screened them from distant view.

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Annual inspections of cabins to enforce permit conditions helped assure that the tracts maintained a subdued visual presence in the forest landscape. The combination of sound site planning, strict control over the design and maintenance of cabins, and the relatively narrow time period in which most of the tracts were developed resulted in a fairly characteristic appearance that many of the tracts shared. Individual permittees were responsible for design and construction of their summer camps, and many early permittees built their own cabins. Others made use of standardized plans, which were increasingly available from publishers. By the mid-1920s kit homes were also becoming more popular.

As the phenomenon grew, articles and advertisements about second homes in the national forests were published in the popular press, especially in *Sunset* magazine.

Summer homes, in fact, quickly became the largest single type of developed recreational use in California national forests. But already in 1928, a committee of the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation observed that once summer homes were built, it would be very difficult ever to revoke the permits. Residential use might also come into conflict with other recreational uses as demand for better access to lakes and scenic areas in national forests increased. Permits continued to be issued, however, although at a slower pace during the Depression. After World War II, demand for recreation residences increased again, but by this time it had become clear that the program could not continue to keep up with demand.

The history of recreation residences on national forests is a significant chapter in the history of federal management of public lands, as well as the history of outdoor recreation. Western cities, especially in California, grew quickly in the early 20th century, just as the interest in outdoor recreation was increasing in the United States. In California, in particular, outstanding scenic beauty and an early interest in automotive travel combined to create a boom in outdoor recreation.

Since so many potential resort areas in the state were already declared national forests by 1908, it was inevitable that the forests would be used for recreation of all types. The recreation residence program quickly became the most salient and characteristic aspect of the Forest Service's response to this demand in the 1920s. Congress had also created the National Park Service in 1916 partly in response to the tremendous interest in outdoor recreation and automotive tourism. But the Park Service's philosophy of complete preservation was very different from the utilitarian management policies of the Forest Service.

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In the realm of recreational planning, one of the greatest single differences between the respective policies of the two agencies involved the development of their attitudes towards allowing summer homes on publicly owned land. In 1918, the Secretary of the Interior specifically directed the new Park Service not to issue permits for summer homes. The Park Service saw summer homes as overly exclusive uses in areas that deserved more complete public access. As a result, Mineral King, as part of Sequoia National Forest, was managed differently than Sequoia National Park in this regard.

The most salient evidence of this different management history, today, is the presence of three tracts of permit summer homes in Mineral King. Some of these summer cabins date to the first decade of the 20th century, while some are later, postwar constructions. The great majority of Mineral King cabins, however, were built between 1915 and 1942, during the height of the Forest Service summer home program.

At West Mineral King, two or three cabins already existed by the early 1920s around what was known as Barton's Camp. The Forest Service laid out an expanded tract just to the west of Barton's Camp, and the new tract was quickly occupied by permittees, many of whom had built cabins of similar style by 1930. Since many of the cabins were built by a group of teachers from Los Angeles, the tract became known as Faculty Flat. The entire West Mineral King tract today includes a total of 35 cabins. Further to the west, along the Mineral King Road, a resort and more summer residences were also being developed at this time on the private land at Silver City (this area is not included in this nomination). To the west of Silver City, near what was then the boundary of Sequoia National Park, the Forest Service laid out another, smaller tract of seven private cabins, called Cabin Cove, which was developed mostly in the 1930s.

Out of 66 summer cabins in Mineral King today, about a dozen probably existed in some form before the Term Occupancy Act of 1915. At least 50 of the cabins were built entirely between 1915 and 1942, and so date to the peak of the Forest Service summer cabin permit program. Cabin permits continued to be issued through the 1930s, but the pace slowed because of the Depression. By 1942, the summer cabin tracts at Mineral King had taken on their current character and appearance. According to historian Chris Brewer, only seven of the cabins that exist today were built after World War II. Other cabins, however, have been repaired and reconstructed since that time, mainly due to damage from avalanches and the generally harsh conditions of the area.

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It is fair to say that the overall character of the summer cabin tracts at Mineral King dates to the height of the Forest Service permit cabin program, between 1915 and 1942. The West Mineral King and Cabin Cove tracts, in particular, are almost completely the products of the 1920s and 1930s, and most of the structures in the East Mineral King tract date to this era as well. Although the East Mineral King tract occupies the site of the historic settlement of Beulah, Forest Service planners were probably at work planning the cabin tract already in 1906, and the Forest Service influenced the locations of cabins from that point on. Some aspects of the spatial organization and layout of East Mineral King may reflect earlier locations of buildings and lots; but the appearance and character of the tract today is far more the result of 20th-century recreation residence planning than it is representative of a 19th-century mining community.

Today, the three summer cabin tracts at Mineral King (Cabin Cove, West Mineral King, and East Mineral King) survive as well preserved examples of Forest Service cabin tract planning. In many ways, the Mineral King tracts are typical of the hundreds of tracts that can be found in national forests all over California. Most of the thousands of permit summer cabins in California national forests share a basic vernacular architectural style. The Mineral King cabin tracts, however, are an integral and significant part of the larger cultural landscape of the Mineral King Road and Mineral King Valley. In this sense, all the historic resources of Mineral King relate to one another, and together describe a continuous history. The history of prospecting and mineral speculation at Mineral King, for example, led to the construction of the Mineral King Road, without which the recreational history of the valley never would have occurred as it did. All of these historical themes come together in and along the Mineral King Road corridor and in Mineral King Valley. By their association and their physical expression, these resources together comprise the Mineral King Road Cultural landscape District.

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Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape

Tulare County California

Name of repository: Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park Archives

Brewer, Christopher. *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form: Mineral King Historic Cabin District*. February, 1998.

Carr, Ethan and Steve McNeil. *The Cultural Landscape of Mineral King Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks: Determination of Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places*. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Three Rivers, CA. January 1999.

Nave, Thomas E. *Supplement To The Determination of Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places The Cultural Landscape of Mineral King Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks*, Three Rivers, CA. July 1999.

USDI - National Park Service

National Register Bulletin 15: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1995

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Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape
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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the proposed National Register district follow the Mineral King Road beginning at the park boundary west of the Lookout Point entrance station. The district ends with the road's termination at the trailhead parking lot in Mineral King Valley. The boundaries are typically 30 feet from the centerline of the road in either direction. All associated historic construction dating within the period of significance (including culverts, retaining walls, and swales) is counted as part of the road structure. The road corridor boundaries expand from the road as necessary to include other historic resources. The district expands to include the remains of the Trauger homestead site and the foundations of the Slapjack Creek ranger cabin.

In the Atwell Mill area, the district expands to include the ranger residence and garage. At Cabin Cove the district expands to include the entire tract of cabins. The district does not include the private tract called Silver City, but continues to follow the road. At West Mineral King (Faculty Flat), the district expands to include the entire tract. At the Cold Springs ranger station the district does not include the modern ranger station or the Cold Springs Campground, only the road. At East Mineral King (Beulah), the district expands to include the entire tract. Please see maps in Section 7 of this nomination showing individual cabin tracts as well as figures 18-22.

Those portions of the Mineral King Road outside Sequoia National Park's boundary (owned and maintained by Tulare County) have been removed from consideration as part of the proposed landscape district in partial response to the SHPO's comments, given changes in the location of a substantial segment of the original route of the road in this area (i.e., less integrity), as well as declination from Tulare County to being included in such a nomination.

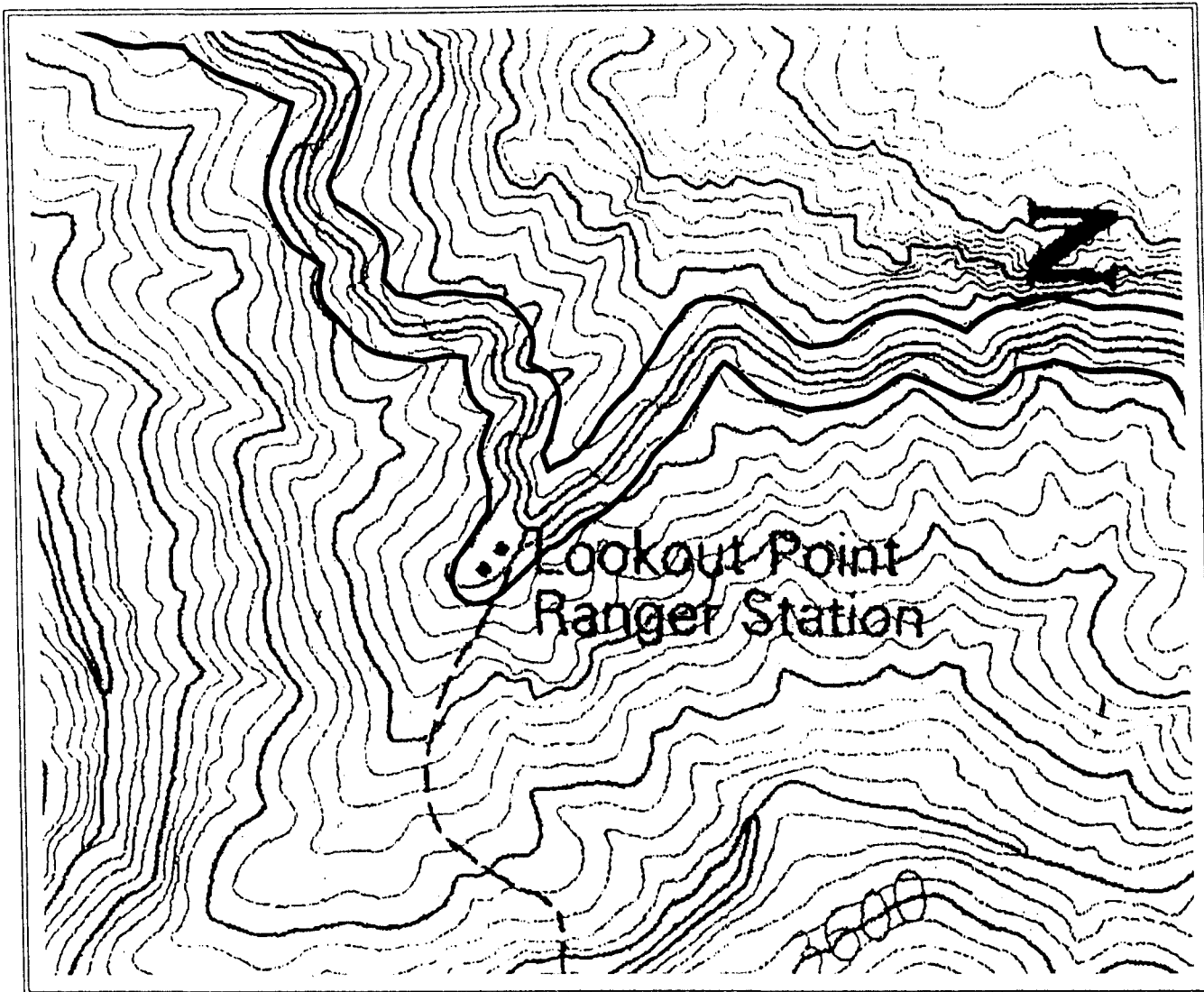


Figure 18: Lookout Point Ranger Station area district boundaries

Adapted from Case Mountain USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle



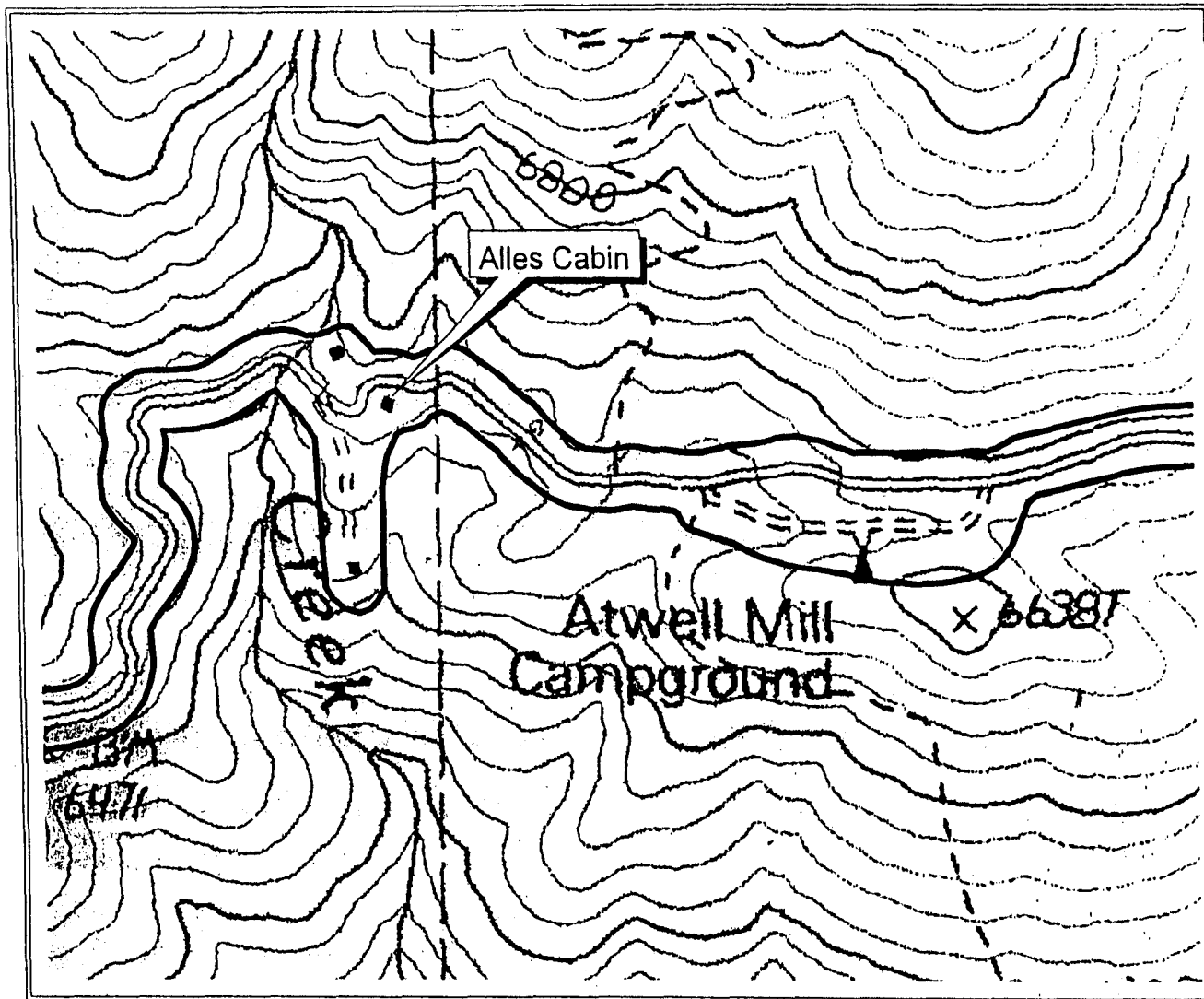
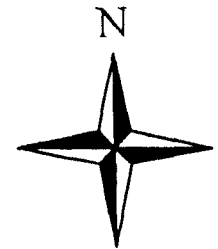
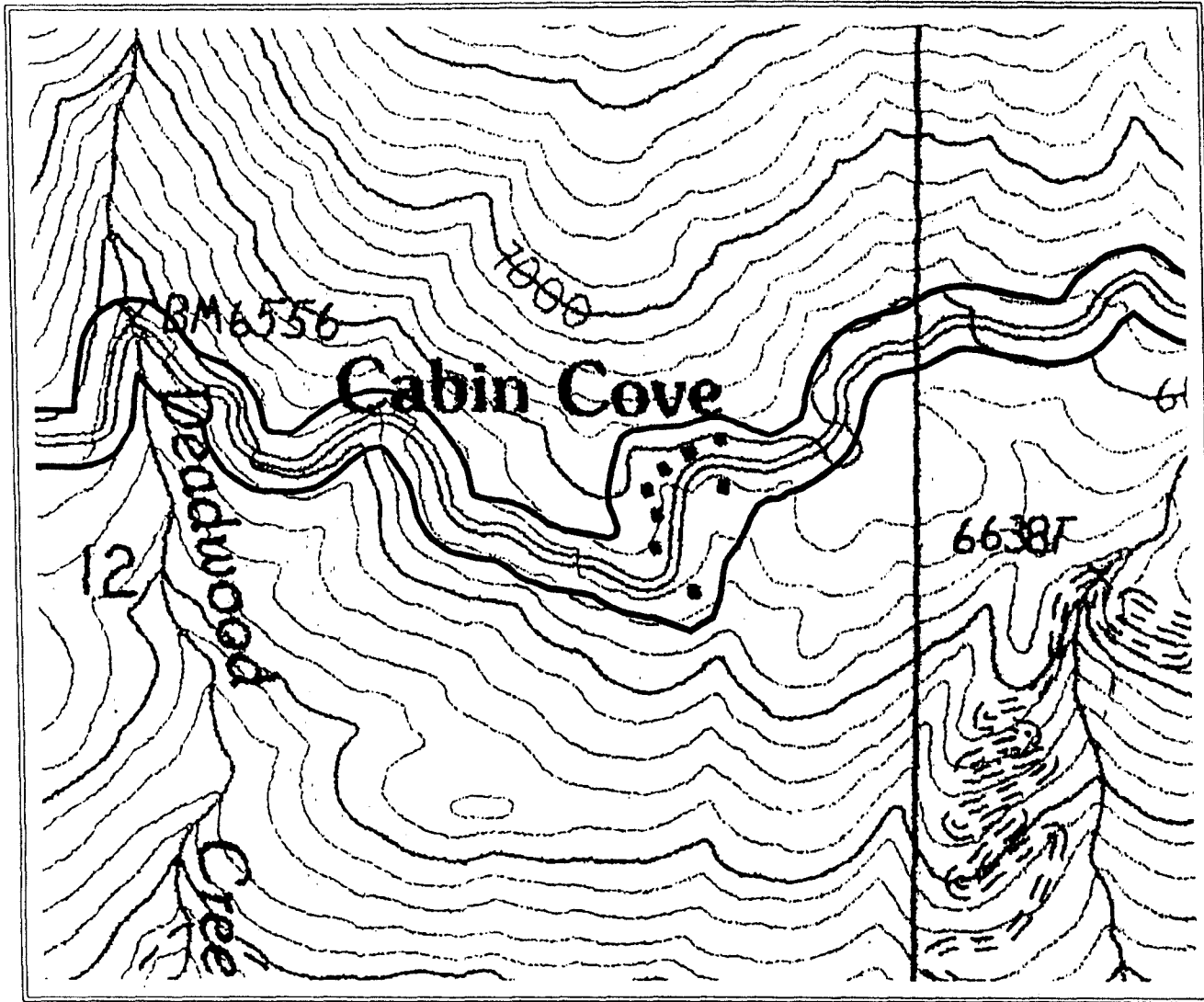


Figure 19: Atwell Mill area district boundaries

Adapted from Silver City USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle





 District Boundary

Figure 20: Cabin Cove area district boundaries

Adapted from Silver City USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle

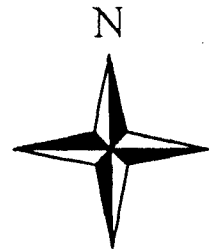
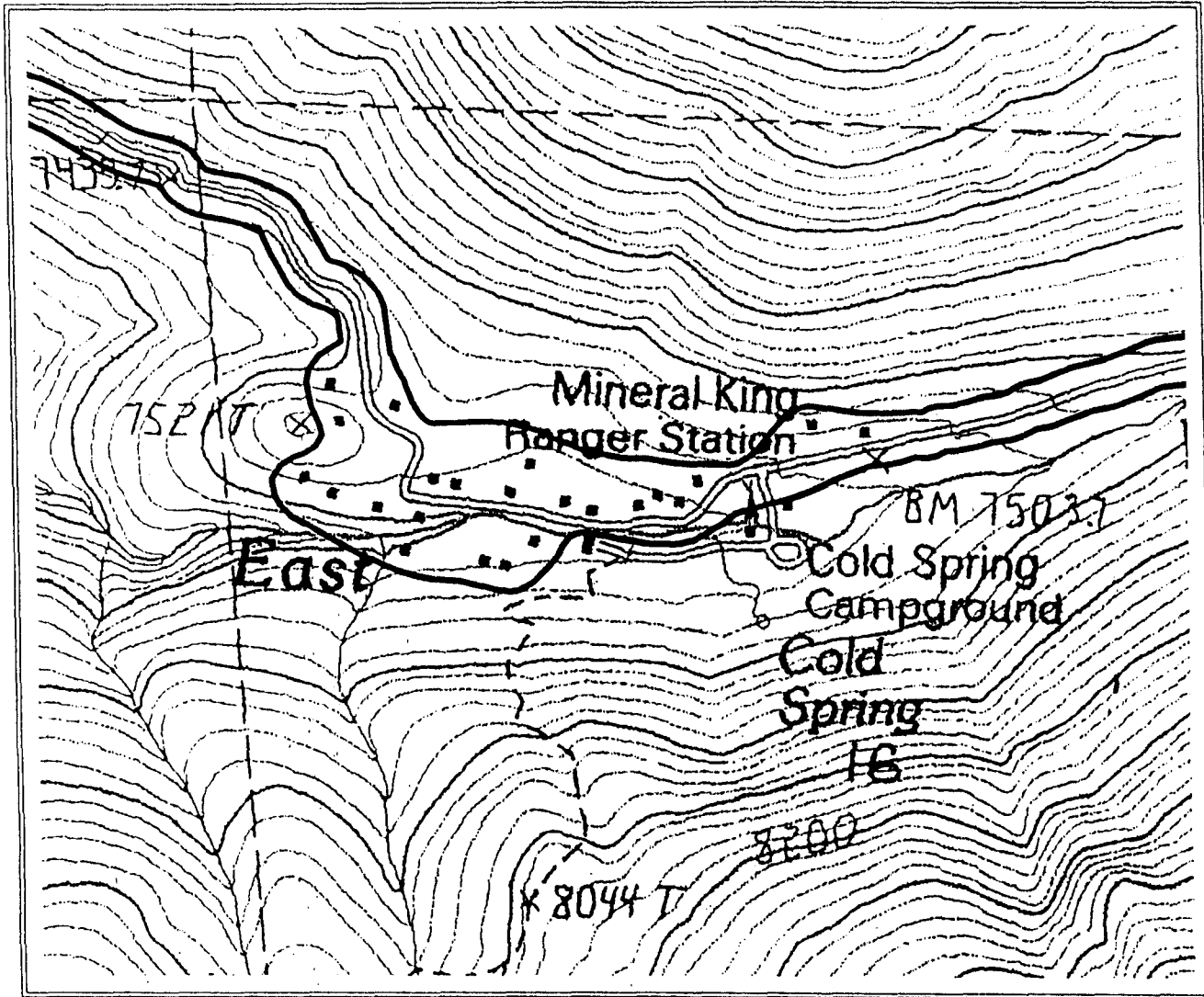
400

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400

800 Feet





 District Boundary

Figure 21: West Mineral King area district boundaries

Adapted from Mineral King USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle



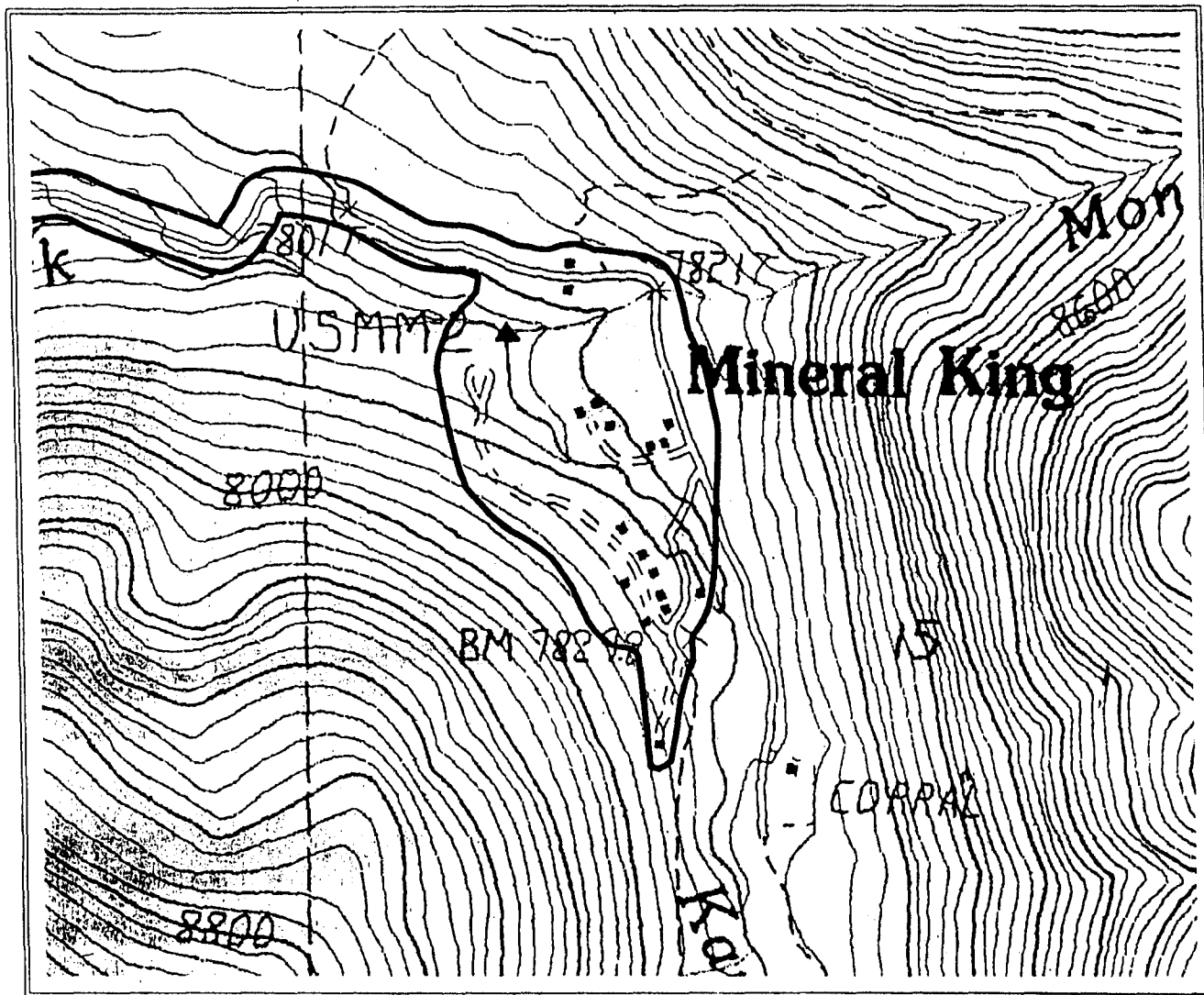
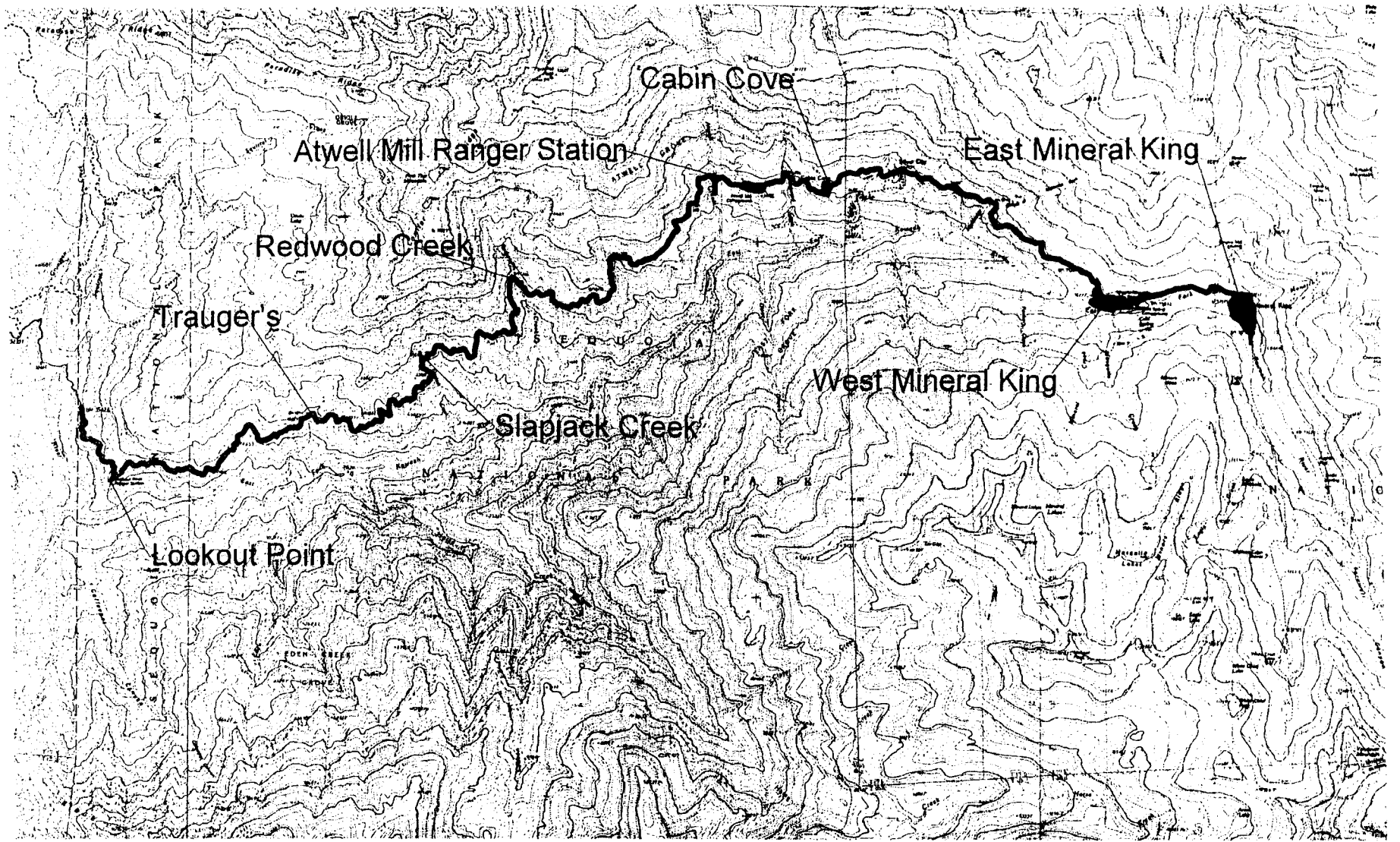


Figure 22: East Mineral King area district boundaries

Adapted from Mineral King USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle





Mineral King Road Cultural Landscape District
General location of contributing buildings, sites, and structures



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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 03001063

Date Listed: 10/24/2003

Mineral King
Property Name

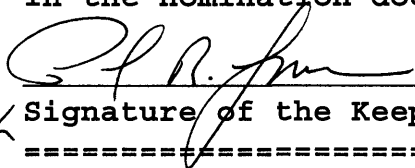
Tulare
County

CA
State

N/A

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.


Signature of the Keeper

10/24/03
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

Description:

The narrative text for West Mineral King on page 7.4 should read: *Twenty-six of the West Mineral King cabins are considered to have retained sufficient integrity to maintain their 1920s-1930s appearance.*

The resource count and contributing/non-contributing evaluations match those presented in the initial 1997 Brewer NR nomination for Mineral King. The Brewer documentation is attached as supporting documentation to provide additional individual building descriptions and historical information.

Photographs:

The black & white photographs do not appear to meet current National Register archival standards and were likely processed and printed using color print film and/or papers. For purposes of listing the current photographs will be accepted, but new (updated) photographs must be provided. The photographs need to meet the standards for archival preservation outlined in our guidance and should include a master identification list.

These revisions were confirmed with the NPS FPO staff.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)