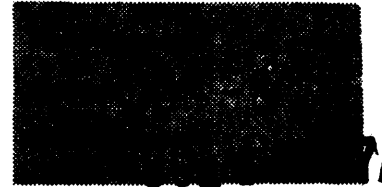


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NAME: Three Fingers Lookout

LOCATION: Mt. Baker - Snoqualmie National Forest; Congressional District 2, Darrington Ranger District, Darrington, Washington (53), Snohomish County (061).

ADDRESS: USDA Forest Service  
Mt. Baker - Snoqualmie National Forest  
1022 First Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

CLASSIFICATION/CATEGORY: Building CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES: 1 building  
NONCONTRIBUTING: 0

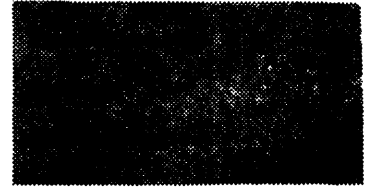
DESCRIPTION:

Condition

Good/fair     Altered     Original Site

Three Fingers Lookout is remarkably situated on a basaltic pinnacle of the southernmost peak for which it is named. The Lookout is well above timberline at +6,854 feet with dramatic sheer drop-offs on the north and south sides of the cabin. In order to access the cabin, one must transverse a 6.7 mile long Forest Service trail which crosses a permanent snow/ice field and ascend a vertical rock face equipped with wooden ladders and hand ropes. The Lookout commands a panoramic 360 degree view the length of the Cascade Range and of Puget Sound.

This one story, single room, 14' x 14' cabin is wood-frame construction and built according to standard Forest Service Lookout House plans first issued c. 1929. The floor framing system rests directly on and is anchored to the rock peak. Additional guy anchorage which utilizes cables bolted to adjacent rock outcrops is employed to secure the vulnerable structure against severe wind velocities and seasonal ice and snow loads. Portions of the guy system have continuously failed. The roof is a simple gable form covered with new cedar shingles and wood cap. A lightning rod and protection system are in place. Exterior walls are clad with 6" beveled cedar siding with corner boards and five 9-light fixed and casement sash are located at each elevation with the exception of the door opening. One sash is temporarily covered due to damaged mullions and glazing. Original window shutters, constructed of 1 x 6 shiplap with z-bracing remain in place on the east and west elevations. Shutter support hardware of 1/2" Ø bent steel rods secured through eye-bolts is stored in the cabin. Original shutters were blown off the south elevation which has historically been exposed to severe climatic conditions in conjunction with extremely difficult and dangerous shutter operation. Shutters on the north elevation have also been blown off and plywood shutters which utilize original hardware were recently installed as a temporary protective measure. The original panel door with nine upper-lights, including door shutter, remains in place. A "user organization" has recently undertaken deferred maintenance, restoration and repair of the Lookout. Other than noted shutter and sash deterioration, damage and removal and minor structural repairs, the Lookout remains essentially unaltered. Original intact interior finishes are beaded board paneling on walls and ceiling and 1 x 4 fir flooring. A chain with turn buckle at the ceiling level appears to tie the east and west walls against lateral forces. The interior also exhibits typical simply-constructed furnishings which include original firefinder with variant pipe stand, lightning stool, rather crudely constructed wood bunk, chair and cabinets and a spice

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rack. Current access ladders, constructed from milled lumber, appear to be relatively recent replacements for the original ladders which are said to have been constructed from small trees cut at timberline below.

## SIGNIFICANCE:

Specific Dates: 1930-33

Builder/Architect: Constructed per earliest standard Forest Service Plan L-4 (c. 1929). Built by Harold Engles, Harry Bedel, and Frank Benesh and crew.

History

A three year long effort was required to construct Three Fingers Lookout, which is an incredible feat of engineering and carpentry skills. In the fall of 1929, Harold J. Engles, then the Darrington District Ranger, and Harry Bedel climbed to the top of Three Fingers Peak to determine if it would be a feasible location for a fire lookout house. Engles chose to investigate this sheer rock pinnacle because he realized it was visible from areas all around the District and believed it would provide a strategic view for surveillance purposes. In order to construct the Lookout, several preparatory tasks were accomplished: a trail was built; a telephone line strung from Boulder River valley to the peak; and the top 15 feet of the peak were blasted off in order to create a base for the lookout house. The District's and Engles' intention was to construct a 12' x 12' standard D-5 Lookout House, the cupola style which was standard until the development of the standard L-4 lookout house plan in 1929. Thus, the site was prepared for a smaller building, and the new pre-cut 14' x 14' cabin, which was provided to the District, could barely fit on the site, and the limited space and topography did not allow for the construction of a catwalk.

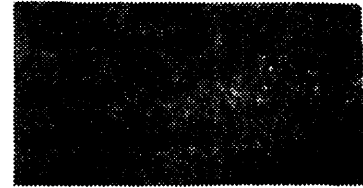
Horses and pack mules were used to carry bundles of construction materials and equipment up the trail to within 600 feet of the site. A tram was constructed to transport the supplies most of the remaining distance. Reportedly, some cable and wood remnants from this system still remain on the mountain. A series of three ladders and hand ropes had to be installed to mount the steep rock face at the top of the peak. Frank Benesh, a Forest Service carpenter, who constructed several other Lookouts on the old Snoqualmie Forest, was involved with the construction of the cabin over two field seasons. The Lookout was seasonally staffed from 1933 until 1942, when it was abandoned for economic reasons. Since about 1965, the Everett Mountaineers have addressed deferred maintenance issues, including the construction of new and safer access ladders. Most recently, during September 1986, they replaced the deteriorated original cedar shingles with new in-kind roofing and made minor structural and window repairs. Realizing its historical significance, the organization intends to continue to restore and maintain the Lookout for use by club members and the general public.

Statement of Significance

Three Fingers Lookout is one of two gable roof ("Grange Hall") style lookouts, the earliest of the Plan L-4 Lookout House types, which remain on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. These early lookout houses, constructed before 1932, are the oldest remaining fire lookout buildings on the Forest and represent a crucial part of a fire detection and suppression system

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which functioned for over 50 years to protect and conserve timber and natural resources. This remarkable Fire Lookout is an exceptional example of the extraordinary engineering and carpentry skills required to construct this unique building type in extremely isolated and challenging terrain. Three Fingers Lookout possesses exceptional significance due to the extraordinary constraints and characteristics of this particular site, believed to be unequalled within the region or nation.

**GEOGRAPHIC DATA:**

Acreage: less than one acre

**UTM Reference:**

<u>Point</u>	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
A	10	597675	5335825

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**

Three Fingers Lookout (#2604) is located in a portion of the SE1/4 of SE1/4, Section 18, 7.31N, R.9E, Willamette Meridian. Proposed nomination to include lookout house, related rock foundation, guy anchorage and lightning protection system, access ladders and ropes within a 50 foot radius of the center of the Lookout per Green Trails map SILVERTON, WA - NO 110.