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#### FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

#### SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

7-Prop.

NAME USDA Forest Service Fire Lookouts on the Mt. Baker-HISTORIC Snoqualmie National Forest

AND/OR COMMON

Fire Lookouts

## LOCATION

147	STREET	& NUMBER	Mt.	Baker-	-Snoqu	almie	National	Forest	in	,
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STATE			CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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# **3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRES	ENTUSE
DISTRICT			AGRICULTURE	MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)			COMMERCIAL	PARK
STRUCTURE	BOTH	WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDENCE
SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS
OBJECT		YES: RESTRICTED		SCIENTIFIC
	BEING CONSIDERED	X YES UNRESTRICTED	_INDUSTRIAL	TRANSPORTATION
	XNZA	NO	MILITARY	X_OTHER Recreation

# AGENCY

CITY, TOWN

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS (If epplicable) USDA Forest Service

STREET & NUMBER

Regional Office, 319 SW Pine Street, P.O. Box 3623

CITY, TOWN 97208 Portland, OR

## VICINITY OF LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Units of Lands and Minerals, Lands Status Records COURTHOUSE. REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Supervisor's Office STREET & NUMBER

1022 First Avenue

Seattle, WA 98104

# **REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Cultural Resource Inventory

Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Nat	ional Forest	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
DATE	×	

1976-1986	<u></u>		FEDERAL	_STATE	COUNTY	_LOCAL
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# 7 DESCRIPTION See Individual Inventory Sheets

	CONDITION	CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
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GOOD	RUINS	ALTERED	MOVED DATE
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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The properties which comprise this thematic group nomination are all USDA Forest Service administered Fire Lookouts, located on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, constructed between 1931 - 1938 and which exhibit physical and architectural integrity. The principal unifying theme of all of the properties within this nomination is their association with the historical development of the USDA Forest Service and its stewardship and conservation of our National Forests, as part of a comprehensive forest fire surveillance and detection system. A secondary theme to which all of the thematic group relate is as they embody the distinctive characteristics of a uniquely functional building type designed for and constructed in isolated and challenging mountain terrain.

Each of the Fire Lookouts within the thematic group exhibit similar although uniquely differing site characteristics, topographic conditions and degrees of accessibility. The purpose of the network of Fire Lookouts from its inception was to provide comprehensive surveillance in order to rapidly detect and extinguish forest fires. Inherently, sites were strategically selected on high mountain peaks with clear visibility of extensive forest lands. Congruently, all of these buildings are located between +5,400 feet and +6,850 feet above sea level and command panoramic views of the Cascade Range. According to elevation above timberline and site geology and topography, the immediate site conditions vary from massive granitic and basaltic outcroppings to subalpine ridgetops and meadows. Currently all of the subject Lookouts, with the exception of one, are only accessible by Forest Service trails of varied lengths and terrain. These trails range from 1-1/2 miles to 16 miles in length, and commonly traverse dense fir and hemlock forest, alpine meadows, permanent snow fields, glacial meltwater, subalpine ridges, loose rock and rock outcrops. Accessibility to several of the Lookouts remains, as it was historically for the entire group, fairly difficult. Accessibility is a significant factor in current and historic levels of alteration, maintenance and vulnerability to vandalism.

The Fire Lookouts within this theme group were each constructed according to a similar standard Lookout House plans. This basic plan was initially adopted by the Region 6 Forest Service in 1929 and was referred to as "Plan L-4" (i.e. Lookout #4). The form of this one-story, single room,  $14' \times 14'$  cabin appears to have evolved from previous standard plans which had been in use in Region 6 (then District 6) since c. 1916. The earliest standard L-4 plan specified the construction of a simple gable roof form, often referred to as "grange hall" style. By 1932, this plan had been revised to call for a more structurally efficient pyramidal (or hipped roof) form. Both roof forms are exhibited within the thematic group. In 1936, the standard Plan L-4 was again revised to show a variant window shutter support system. An example of this additionally revised plan is also included within the thematic group. The standard Plan L-4 included several distinctive design features which reflect the functional nature of the building type and the conditions involved in the construction and use of it.

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NPS Form 10-900-a (7-81)			NO. 1024-0018

#### Structural Frame

The building design is based on a 14' x 14' x 6'-9" high structural frame which made it feasible to limit nearly all pre-cut framing and finish members to 8'-0" lengths. The logistics required to transport pre-cut materials by pack teams and to construct the buildings in isolation were addressed in the symmetrical structural frame, length limitations and uniform finish materials and millwork.

#### Foundations

Wood frame floor systems are typically supported by and anchored to indigenous rock materials which vary from rock pinnacles and ridge outcrops to relocated loose rock. Guy anchorage systems are also utilized, to additionally secure the vulnerable structures against severe wind, snow and ice exposure, and the guy cables are typically secured to rock outcrops.

#### Catwalk

Lookouts constructed on towers or ridgetops with adjacent steep drop-offs generally included a 3'-0" wide porch area around them. These catwalks were typically constructed with 2x decking with  $2 \times 4$  guard rails. Catwalks provided easy access for shutter operation and additional living space.

#### Roof Form

As discussed above, a variation in roof form distinguishes the earlier from the later standard Plan L-4 cabins. The more common pyramidal (or hipped roof) form functioned to carry a greater snow/ice load, thus rapidly superseded the earlier design.

#### Fenestration

An essential feature of the lookout house as a building form and as a functional building type is the arrangement and placement of windows. The L-4 Plan incorporated a band of windows around the entire upper two-thirds of the exterior walls. This expanse of glazed areas functioned to provide 360 degree views for fire surveillance and plotting fire locations. The standard Plan L-4 (1930) called for nine-light operating and fixed sash while the revised 1932 plan specified two-over-two fixed and pivoting sash. The 1932 plan also included 2 x 2 interior window supports which were suspended from the ceiling and propped the upper sash rail oper inwardly. This feature provided cross- ventilation in addition to an inobscured open area for azimuth and vertical bearing readings from the firefinder. Typical exterior door is a panel type with upper lights which match the muntin/mullion patterns of the window sash.

#### Window Shutters

An important and multi-functional feature of the standard Plan L-4 was the provision of window shutters. Not only did the shutters function to cover and protect the wide expanse of vulnerable glazed areas, but when secured closed, provided necessary structural support for a relatively weak frame under snow/ wind loads, and when open, served to provide shade and reduce sun glare. Original shutters were constructed on the site with 1 x 6 shiplap and reinforced with double z-bracing. Three basic systems were used to support shutters; 1/2" Q bent steel



rods secured through single eye-bolts; 2 x 2 wood braces secured with carriage bolts through double eye-bolts; and per the revised 1936 plan, a system secured shutters with lag bolts through perimeter blocking at projecting ceiling joists. Window shutters have typically been subjected to severe weather exposure and have suffered a greater degree of damage, deterioration, removal and replacement than other architectural features of the L-4 Plan. They are currently a general maintenance and safety concern due to the short- term and transitory nature of current lookout users and visitors.

#### Lightning Protection System

This system is an essential feature of this building type and functions to protect these vulnerable mountaintop structures and their inhabitants from the distinct possibility of a direct lightning strike. Each of the thematic group Lookouts exhibit a sharp-pointed, solid copper rod, approximately an inch thick at the roof peak or ridge. Quarter-inch copper wires descend from it, around the roof eave line, and down each corner of the cabin (and tower) to patches of moist soil on the mountain slope. Branches of wire also connect to typical steel and metal interior furnishing including the firefinder and woodstove.

#### Interior Furnishings

The standard Plan L-4 included construction details for on-site construction of pre-cut wooden furnishings. Such furnishings are found in each of the subject Lookouts and typically include: a firefinder stand on which the Osborne Firefinder is mounted; a  $2'-8" \times 4'-0"$  table used for dining and other purposes; and, in some cases, a bunk constructed from bolted 1 x 6 lumber with a rope base for mattress support. Other simply constructed furnishings typically found in the Lookouts include a lightning stool (referred to as a "prayer chair"), kitchen cabinets and open storage shelves. The Lookouts also typically include an original metal flue and woodstove.

All properties within this thematic group exhibit strong similarities as a distinct building type based on a standardized building plan constructed from pre-cut lumber. Despite the strong design similarities and common construction techniques, the Lookouts feature variations in workmanship and site engineering, roof forms and finish materials, and general maintenance level and physical conditions. Construction materials were typically packed in by a Forest Service packer with mule or horse teams for construction by crews made up of available Forest Service employees and a hired carpenter. The siting of the buildings and execution of rock foundations, guy anchorage systems and towers required innovative engineering and specialized skill, not to speak of outright courage and physical stamina. The physical condition of the Lookouts vary greatly due to several influential factors; degree of use, accessibility and climatic exposure. Several of the buildings continue to be voluntarily staffed by the Forest Service during the fire season and/or are used and maintained by active hiking and mountaineering organizations.

Since 1981, two fairly extensive independent studies have been published regarding Fire Lookouts in the Pacific Northwest; Fire Lookouts of the Northwest by Ray Kresek and Lookouts: firewatchers of the Cascades and Olympics by Ira Spring. Each of these publications was based on extensive field investigations, research and review of Forest Service records. Based on a corroborative review of these works and Forest Service records, USDA Forest Service Archaelogist Madonna Moss identified the eight subject properties for possible inclusion in a thematic

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nomination. Additional field investigations were conducted by Preservation Specialist/ Architectural Historian Katheryn H. Krafft, a consultant to USDA Forest Service. The physical integrity and historic significance of the subject properties were confirmed and the eight Fire Lookouts are included in this thematic group. The thematic group, although varied in physical condition and maintenance levels, represent the only remaining Fire Lookouts under current USDA Forest Service jurisdiction on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, which possess and exhibit the quality of historic significance.

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## SPECIFIC DATES 1931-1938

**8 SIGNIFICANCE** 

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Clyde P. Fickes & J.B. Helm USDA Forest Service

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#### Summary Statement

The USDA Forest Service Fire Lookouts which comprise this thematic group nomination are the only extant structures of this unique building type to currently remain on Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and possess historic significance and exhibit physical integrity. The properties within this nomination possess historic significance as they relate to two principal unifying themes: firstly, their association with the historical development of the USDA Forest Service, the steward of our National Forest lands, as an essential part of the comprehensive forest fire surveillance and detection system which functioned to conserve and protect natural resources for over 50 years; secondly, as they embody the distinctive characteristics of a uniquely functional building type designed for and constructed in isolated and challenging mountaintop environments. Individual Fire Lookouts within the theme group are also historically associated with the accomplishments of the Civilian Conservation Corps and as they relate to domestic defense during World War II as part of the U.S. Army Aircraft Warning Service.

#### Establishment of USDA Forest Service

Concern for the protection of publicly held forest lands prompted the establishment of the first National Forest Reserves in the Pacific Northwest in 1892. Mt. Baker National Forest was established originally as part of the Washington Forest Reserve by presidential proclamation in 1897, the same year that Federal legislation was enacted which provided Federal protection and management, primarily custodial, of the Reserves by Forest Rangers. In 1905, when the USDA Forest Service was created, the Forest Reserves became known as National Forests and Rangers and Supervisors began to develop a comprehensive system for administration of the forests which included the construction of forest trails and roads, fire lookouts and ranger stations. In 1908, Snogualmie National Forest was established and the Forest Service also began that year to formally recruit paid fire crews, greatly strengthening forest fire suppression abilities. Previous to this period, fire detection and suppression had been basically provided by the volunteer efforts of miners, loggers, ranchers and homesteaders, the travelers and users of the forests. The creation of this Federal agency, however poorly equipped and meagerly financed, was a tremendously important historic advance in public attitude and recognition of natual resource conservation and the need to anticipate and respond rapidly to the threat of forest fires.

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## Development of a Surveillance and Detection System

In order to provide surveillance of vast areas of relatively unpopulated mountainous country, a specialized detection and communication system, the network of fire lookouts, was begun early in the administration of the National Forests. The essential feature of this system was the placement of men, during the fire season, on selected mountain peaks (where the largest possible area of forest land could be seen) for the sole purpose of discovering and reporting fire. Concerns based on risk (the probability of fire starting) and hazard (the probability of rapid spread of fire) or accessibility were not important governing factors in the selection of early lookout sites. Due to extensive forest fires of 1910 and subsequent Federal aid to States and forest owners, the lookout system rapidly expanded between 1911 and 1915. Little emphasis was placed on providing a type or kind of structure which would enhance the working conditions and performance of the lookoutman. Typically, the lookoutman, also commonly referred to as the "fire lookout" or "lookouts") camped in a tent below the peak and hiked daily to and from his station which was a tree platform or a pile of rocks provided with a compass or crude firefinder and a means of communication by either telephone line or a heliograph.

## Development of Specialized Lookout Structures

The development and construction of specialized lookout structures began in the Pacific Northwest with the construction of a prototype lookout house placed on Mt. Hood in 1915. This 12' x 12' pre-cut wood frame house was developed by Lige Coalman and was the basis for the standard D-6 (District 6, now known as Region 6) Lookout House. The D-6 plan featured windows all around the upper portion of the structure and included a hipped roof with a glassed in, second-story observatory (cupola) and shutters. Eventually a few hundred lookouts, based on this design were placed on forests in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana. The earliest structures of this type built on Mt. Baker- Snoqualmie National Forest were at Sourdough Mountain (1917, demolished 1933), Mt. Pugh (1919, destroyed 1965) and Mt. Pilchuck (1921, demolished 1938). None of approximately ten cupola style lookout houses built on the Mt. Baker and Snoqualmie National Forests remain. Several different lookout house styles of varied form and building fabric were also built within and between Forest Service Regions, a reflection of variable topography, capital investments, site locations, and available materials and builders' skills.

#### Design and Construction of the Plan L-4 Fire Lookout House

An important variation on the D-6 Lookout House design was the 1928 standard Plan L-2 (Lookout House #2) developed on Region 1 and credited to Clyde P. Fickes and J.B. Halm, important early Forest Service personnel. The L-2 plan was based on a strict budget, pre-cut and designed for delivery aboard eight mules with simple construction tools and easy-to-follow instructions. The basic idea was that the lookout could match the pre-cut and numbered pieces together and build a shelter by himself. Few Plan L-2 lookout houses were constructed and did not, rather understandably, stand up well. The design of the 1929 standard Plan L-4 (Lookout House #4) was the logical evolution of the basic concept of this earlier plan and is also credited to Clyde P. Fickes and J.B. Halm. The standard Plan L-4 was also pre-cut and shipped in bundles specifically limited in length and weight, to be packed by horses or mules, but was intended for more



permanent construction by a skilled carpenter and crew. Most importantly, it included several distinctive design features which addressed the functional nature of the building type and the associated site and living conditions.

The construction and site specific circumstances of each of the standard L-4 type Lookouts within this thematic group serve to illustrate the tremendous ingenuity, individual courage and physical stamina possessed by the men who packed-in and built such buildings on isolated mountaintop sites. In most cases, besides the specific Lookout construction, the work included the construction of lengthy trails to the site, as many as 20 pack trips with 6-8 horses or mules and the difficult removal of trees and rock outcroppings. Additionally, most of the packing and construction occurred in late summer and early fall during variable and unpredictable weather conditions.

The standard L-4 Plan was slightly revised twice between 1930 and 1936 and continued in use by the Forest Service until 1953. It proved to be a feasible and economic solution to the placement of lookoutmen in efficient shelters on mountaintop and/or tower locations, and a thousand were built throughout the National Forests. The development of the standard Plan L-4 and the general expansion of the fire lookout network coincided with two important events; the initiation in 1932 of an extensive ten-year national plan for forest projects and the establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1933. The CCC had an extremely significant impact on the development and improvement of National Forests in the Pacific Northwest. Between 1933 and 1942, the accomplishments of the CCC included the construction of hundreds of lookouts and towers and thousands of miles of telephone lines, foot trails and forest roads. Such contributions greatly improved the forest fire detection and suppression system and served to help conserve important forest and natural resources.

#### Subsequent Fire Lookout Use and Abandonment

During World War II, a number of new and existing fire lookouts in Washington, Oregon and California were used as part of the U.S. Army Aircraft Warning Service (AWS). The Forest Service and the War Department believed that the Japanese might attack the West Coast and set fire bombs in the western forests. Thus, AWS were staffed (most often by man and wife teams) 24-hours-a-day, 365-days-a-year in order to give early warning of enemy aircraft. Also during World War II, the Forest Service employed hundreds of women, as they had during WWI, to serve at lookout stations thoughout the Pacific Northwest.

After World War II, many outlying lookout sites were abandoned while centrally located lookouts remained in use. Change in fire management policy and the increasing ability to utilize aircraft patrols made an extensive network of lookouts no longer necessary. Airplanes were recorded in limited use for detection purposes by 1917, and early fire detection records are interspersed with fire reports "by aeroplane." The combination of fire lookouts and aircraft patrols proved to be a cost effective method to identify and locate forest fires, particularly after electrical storms when the greatest number of fires are ignited. Gradually as the numbers of abandoned lookout structures increased, they were considered both hazardous and dangerous to forest visitors, and vandalism became an increased management problem. Since 1960, several "user groups" have acquired special use permits from the Forest Service in order to repair and maintain abandoned lookouts for club and public use. During the late 1960's and early 1970's, many of the structures, particularly on the old Snoqualmie National Forest, were



demolished, burned, moved or sold and removed. Thus, very few historic fire lookouts remain intact and in use.

Among this thematic group are those few intact Lookouts on Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (the two Forests were combined into one Forest in 1974) which survive, primarily due to private initiatives. They remain in use by Forest Service volunteers who mainly provide visitor rather than fire detection services and users' organizations for recreation purposes. These extant Fire Lookouts, which remain in pristine mountainous forest environments, continue to evoke the isolated life and responsibilities of their original users. They represent an efficiently designed part of the comprehensive detection system which worked as a surveillance and communication network to protect and conserve National Forest lands and natural resources for over 50 years.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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