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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

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

NAME					
HISTORIC	о о тт о				
AND/OR COMMON	Camp Curry HIS	TORIC I	DISTRICT		
AND/ON COMMON	Curry Village				
LOCATIO	N	•			
STREET & NUMBER					
	Yosemite Valle	∍y		NOT FOR PUBLICATION	
CITY, TOWN				CONGRESSIONAL DISTRI	СТ
	nite National Pa			Fifteenth	
STATE	California		CODE D6	county Mariposa	CODE 043
CLASSIFIC					
CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	PRESI	ENTUSE
X DISTRICT	PUBLIC			AGRICULTURE	MUSEUM
BUILDING(S)	PRIVATE		UNOCCUPIED	X COMMERCIAL	PARK
STRUCTURE	Хвотн		WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDENC
SITE	PUBLIC ACQUI	SITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS
OBJECT	IN PROCESS		YES: RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
	BEING CONSIDERED		YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIAL	TRANSPORTATION
			NO	MILITARY	OTHER:
AGENCY		NATION	AL PARK SERVICE		
REGIONAL HEADQU	ARTERS: (<i>If applicable)</i>	17 +			
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7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	NE	
EXCELLENT	DETERIORATED	UNALTERED	XORIGINAL	SITE
_XGOOD		X ALTERED	MOVED	DATE
FAIR	UNEXPOSED		· · · ·	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Camp Curry (Curry Village) is located at the shadowy base of Glacier Point in the eastern end of Yosemite Valley. The site is strewn with huge bounders from the adjacent talus slopes. Numerous conifers, predominantly cedar, are scattered throughout. Over 400 canvas "tent cabins" as well as wooden cabins without baths, and less primitive bungalow accommodations are massed in closely aligned cleared areas, with an "administrative area" at the entrance to the Camp.

"ADMINISTRATIVE" AREA

When opened in 1899, the Camp had large canvas tents for sleeping, cooking, and dining. In 1901, the first permanent structure, a wooden dining room and kitchen was built, followed in 1904 by a registration office. Fire destroyed the dining building in 1912 and a new structure was erected on the site with connecting buildings to house a gift shop and cafeteria. In 1913 an auditorium/ dance hall was built west of the registration office. That same year a 40'x90' swimming tank featuring a cobblestone railing and diving platform and a cobblestone bathhouse were added adjacent the dining room. Of this original complex only the old registration office, now used as a lounge, and the pool (minus its cobblestone rail and platform) remain. The 1912 dining room had been replaced in 1929 by a spacious rustic structure designed by Architect Ted Spencer and featuring interior motifs and lighting fixtures designed by Jeanette Dyer Spencer. (Both Spencers had been integrally involved in the interior design features of the Ahwahnee Hotel which had opened the previous year). The auditorium/dance hall was completely altered when converted to guest units in the late 1960's. A series of recent fires destroyed the Spencer dining room (1973), the original gift shop and half of the old cafeteria (1975), and the cobblestone bathhouse (1977). A new food service facility and a gift shop have been constructed and plans are underway for a bathhouse replacement.

In addition to the facilities described previously, the administrative area of the camp also has a Post Office/Registration Office facility currently undergoing interior modifications. The original post office dates from the early 1920's and was a log post and beam structure with a wood shingled roof overhanging a veranda that circled the building. The building has been altered several times: a shed addition was built on the west side, enclosing the veranda and extending the roof several feet. In the mid-1950's a space was built on the north side to house the registration office. The construction of this addition again eliminated the veranda and extended the roof, and consists of log posts and beams with multi-panel window panes in between (recent construction has expanded the existing office space into the postal segment and the post office function is now housed in the lounge).

Two architecturally and historically significant structures remain at the entrance to Camp Curry. They are in good condition and are on their original sites: Form No. 10-300a (Rev. 10-74)

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CONTINUATION SHEET Camp Curry ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The (Original) Registration Office

The Registration Office was built at Camp Curry in 1904 and presently is used as a lounge with postal facilities recently incorporated into office space on the north side.

It is a one-story, three room wood frame building, measuring 50' x 70'. The building consists of an unpeeled log frame, vertical posts, and horizontal beams with infill panels of wood shingles on the upper half of the wall and, below, strips of natural cedar bark and arranged in panels diagonally, creating a herringbone pattern. The porch is supported by unpeeled log columns, 10' on center. The overhanging hipped roof is wood shingled, with several skylights. The building has double casement windows, each with six lights. The interior features a large, free-standing fireplace built of river-run granite boulders, laid in an uncoursed rubble bond. The roof structure is exposed and consists of king-post trusses.

There have been numerous alterations to the building, including a shed addition across the west side, skylights, and the replacement of two original French doors.

Entrance Sign:

The rustic Camp Curry Entrance Sign is located near the present Registration Office. While supporting members may be replacements, the design of the sign is original as built ca. 1914 by Foster Curry.

The sign was constructed in the rustic style, the standard for the original Registration Office and subsequent buildings at the Camp. The sign is about 20' high and consists of unpeeled log supports with the words, "CAMP CURRY" and "WELCOME" spelled out in unpeeled saplings. Fretwork, also in unpeeled saplings, adds rustic decoration to the sign.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The original nomination of Camp Curry as an historic site included several buildings determined to possess intrinsice value for interpreting the history and architecture of this founding enterprise of the present Yosemite Park and Curry Co. The structures are. Old Registration Office; Camp Entrance sign; Swimming Tank Bathhouse (burned 1977); and two units in the accommodations section - Mother Curry's Bungalow and the Foster Curry Cabin (Tresidder Residence). The other accommodations are, for the most part, exemplary of the Camp Curry ideal and enhance the historic setting, but their significance is minimal and exists only in a collective sense. The units are listed in order of importance:

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CONTINUATION SHEET Camp Curry ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

1. Foster Curry Cabin (Tresidder Residence)

This cabin was built by Foster Curry in 1916 against the talus at the base of Glacier Point. It is surrounded by large boulders and a hand-split palisade fence. It is a one-story wood frame structure, containing about 1000 square feet. It is a U-shaped cabin, and the western wing was rebuilt shortly after it was constructed because it was demolished by a fallen tree uprooted in a rock slide. The building is comprised of an unpeeled log frame with infill panels of cedar bark and log slabs, similar in style to both the Curry bungalow and the Registration Office. The primary decorative element of the exterior is the porch and the overhanging gable on the east wing.

The interior of the cabin is undistinguished except for the bathroom which is very elaborate and completely original and intact. Reportedly, in 1916, it cost \$1000 to install and included custom-built cabinets and very fine tilework. The building is presently used as a single family employee residence.

Mother Curry's Bungalow:

The Curry residence was built by Foster Curry in 1917 and currently is divided into three apartments, serving as employee housing. It is a one-story (with attic) wood frame structure containing about 1200 square feet. It is T-shaped, with an early addition off the west side of the cabin. The building consists of an unpeeled log frame, vertical posts, and horizontal beams with infill panels of natural cedar bark strips arranged vertically. The upper portion of the walls is sheathed with tongue and groove beaded siding, stained brown, and the gable is filled with log slabs arranged in a decorative pattern. The cabin has river-run stone foundations, steps, fireplace, and chimney. The covered porch and railing are the primary decorative element of the design. Two pairs of multi-light French doors are located on the north facade.

2. Bungalows with Bath

48 units (2 fourplex and 46 duplex) built between 1918 and 1922, and still on their original sites. They are designed in the rustic style and are, (with the exception of No. 90), smaller and simpler versions of Mother Curry's Bungalow and the Foster Curry Cabin. The cabins consist of half-log frame, sheathed on the exterior with diagonal 1 inch by 4 inch tongue-and-groove siding in herringbone patterns. They have split-log gable ends, wood-shingled roofs with overhanging eaves, paneled doors, foundations of river run stone, casement windows and wooden porches. The bungalows are well maintained and are structurally sound. The interiors have recently been refurbished with new bathroom facilities, etc. The bungalows are in three sizes - duplex units are either 14'w x 30'1 or 14'w x 35'1. The fourplex units measure 28'x30'.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Camp Curry ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

3. "Canvas Cabins"

The tent cabins are either 2 bed (measuring 9'10" x 11'10") or 4 bed (measuring 11'10" x 14'0"). They have wood framing, platforms and doors and heavy canvas covers. The original "Canvas Cabins" did not have doors. The wooden frames with doors date mostly from the late 1920's and early 1930's--although the tent idea has been part of Camp Curry from the beginning. Yosemite Park and Curry Company maintenance confirms that the canvas and various wooden structural members are replaced over the years and that an extensive investigation of over 400 tents to check the notching and rails for age is hardly warranted. This type of canvas cabin is not unique architecturally to Yosemite Valley, and is the standard seasonal accommodations in the High Country gamps of Yosemite.

4. Cabins Without Bath

23 Juplex whits - 2 rooms back to back (measuring 12'w x 28'6"1); wood frame with horizontal siding and composition asphalt shingles on low pitch gable roof. These buildings were thought to date from the same era of the bungalows but have had considerable modernization done to the exteriors. Recent interviews and a study of early Camp Curry maps show that they were built after 1928 -- most likely in the early 1930's. The cabins were refurbished in 1978 with thermal pane glass and several units now have handicapped accessibility inside and out.

5. Stoneman House

The former auditorium and dance hall is now fitted with 10 rooms with individual baths. The original window detailing is missing and composition roofing replaces the wood shingle roof.

Miscellaneous

Included within the boundaries of the Historic District are several bathhouses and toilet facilities; an ice skating rink and snack bar/warming room (built in the late 1960's) two employee housing sections with the canvas cabins described earlier, and some cabins without baths behind the central maintenance area used for employee housing.

The new food service facility, a cafeteria, was built in the silhouette of the 1929 Spencer building; however, it appears much more massive because of its light color, centered stone chimney, and lack of structural elements that break the building down visually as one approaches the front entrance. (see photo $\#_{14^{-}}$)

Form No. 10-300a (Řev. 10-74)

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CONTINUATION SHEET Camp Curry ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

The new gift shop was built within the site boundaries of the old cafeteria and is painted a more compatible dark brown; however, it has a shed roof with clerestory windows - a design element totally out of context with the existing structures in Camp Curry. (see photo $\#_{12}$).

Construction, including rehabilitation of existing structures, has been on-going in Camp Curry since its earliest days. Replacement of some accommodations or other facilities is part of the on-going process of a commercial venture - this activity should be allowed to continue at Camp Curry if a sensitivity to the existing built environment is established.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AF	EAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC 1400-1499 1500-1599 1600-1699	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC AGRICULTURE ARCHITECTURE	COMMUNITY PLANNING CONSERVATION ECONOMICS DUCATION	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE LAW LITERATURE MILITARY	RELIGION SCIENCE SCULPTURE SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
$\frac{1}{X} \frac{1700-1799}{1800-1899}$ $\frac{1}{X} \frac{1800-1899}{1900}$	ART X_COMMERCE COMMUNICATIONS	ENGINEERING EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT INDUSTRY INVENTION	MUSIC PHILOSOPHY POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	

SPECIFIC DATES 1899-1924

BUILDER/ARCHITECT David A. Curry, Foster Curry

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Through the history of Yosemite National Park's chief concessioner, Yosemite Park and Curry Company, one may trace the evolution of concession philosophy, and the relationship between the concessions and administration in the park over the last 77 years. The Camp Curry Historic tis is illustrative of the Techer foundation and early development of the Curry family enterprise and their unique contribution of a character of accommodation still available in Yosemite and other national parks today. The site is of <u>local</u> significance in <u>exploration-settlement</u> and <u>commerce</u>. There are four structures on the site that are important survivors of early Camp Curry and of local <u>architectural</u>, as well as historical, significance.

David and Jennie Curry established their innovative guest camp at the base of Glacier Point in 1899. At that time, only the Sentinel Hotel, part of the Washburn Brothers transportation/accommodation monopoly, was available to the Yosemite Valley visitor who wished to sleep somewhere other than a public campground. The Currys believed that a tent camp, offering a minimum of services and thus economical for guests, would be a success. The Camp was also to be a place where the city dweller could be in close touch with nature, yet have the security and camaraderie that a well managed resort hotel might provide. Camp Curry (briefly called Camp Sequoia) opened with 7 tents, furnished with beds and washstands, a cook, and a student labor force that worked for room and board. Growth was immediate and steady with 292 guests in the pioneering summer.

David Curry was a voluble host who emphasized the "family-style" orientation that evolved from the rustic simplicity of his camp. He began a nightly campfire program, in which guests and staff participated, and reinstituted the firefall, a spectacular attraction initiated by pioneer James McCauley. Over many summers, the nightly firefall (discontinued in 1969) and the campfire program became synonymous with the name Camp Curry. Curry encouraged his guests to make use of the "natural" recreational opportunities in Yosemite hiking, fishing, and swimming in the river, with only croquet provided as a diversion for those who spent their day in camp. The atmosphere was relaxed and cordial and inspired an enthusiastic, loyal following.

By 1904, a registration office was built to facilitate the increasing flow of visitors. Success bred competition in the form of a Washburn operated "hotel camp" that flourished, but never matched Camp Curry's phenomenal popularity.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

	pers, Yosemite Nat'l Park,Flying Spur Press,1975 aport of the Acting Superintendent:Yosemite
National Park (1906 - 1916), Yosemite Mu U.S. Department of the Interior, National (1916 - 1928), Yosemite Research Library	seum Collections. Park Service, Annual Report of the Director
continued	
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feet to the southern edge of main road. fol	llow the west edge of the service road north 30 low this southern road edge in NE direction to
the intersection. At intersection stay on t	hecamp Cuppy side of the need following the
Southwestern edge to starting point. LIST ALE STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTI	ES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES
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CONTINUATION SHEET Camp Curry ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Although this popularity was firmly rooted in the Camp's democratic atmosphere and the personality of its proprietor, certain embellishments were being added to insure continued success. Accommodations remained "primitive" and inexpensive, but by 1913, Curry guests could entertain themselves at the new "plunge" (whose cobblestone bathhouse boasted both beauty and barber shops), a billiards room, and an auditorium that doubled as a dance pavillion.

In 1916, Foster Curry built a two-room bungalow for his family in the talus slope behind the Camp. He felt that his rustic cabin should be a prototype of rental units that would replace tents, but his father was unconvinced. After David Curry's death in 1917, another bungalow was built for Jennie Curry and several more soon followed. A compromise evolved, and by the mid 1920's, some cabins with baths, and a greater number without baths, were available for rental along with the tents. The same choice is available today.

The administration of Yosemite Valley had changed hands three times during this era of development and expansion at Camp Curry. From 1899 to 1905, David Curry had dealt with the state-appointed Yosemite Commissioners. Regulations and inspections of concessions were seldom enforced and Curry's major concern was circumventing the Washburn interests. He expanded accomodations and the increased guest count soon overtaxed a nearly new sewage facility. The sanitation problem became a bone of contention between Curry and the Army administration that assumed responsibility for managing Yosemite Valley in 1906 when it was returned to federal jurisdiction as part of Yosemite National Park. Military administrators began an immediate, tough policy of enforcing the myriad regulations previously ignored. Concessioners were issued leases that had to be renewed each year pending approval from the Department of the Interior. Curry felt that the very existence of his camp was threatened by the inability of obtaining a long-term lease that would enable him to secure financing, etc. Where he had been charming to Camp Curry guests, he proved abrasively antiregimentarian to government administrators. He used the campfire programs as a platform for airing his grievances and elisted the letter-writing support of Camp Curry loyalists. In 1913, the new Secretary of the Interior, Franklin Lane, appointed Adolph Miller as his Assistant Secretary to oversee the National Parks. David Curry made a tactical blunder in appearing before Miller and demanding a long-term contract. Miller had witnessed some of Curry's campfire tactics and not only refused the demand, but censured him for the speechmaking. and its anti-authority content as conduct unbecoming to a concession operator. Miller barred the firefall to emphasize his point. Upon assuming responsibility for Yosemite in 1916, the National Park Service inherited the concession headaches as well. Director Stephen Mather sought a solution in a proposed monopoly. He selected an outside hotelman, D. J. Desmond, and gave him a 20 year lease to expand, improve, and consolidate concession operations. Pioneer

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET Camp Curry ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

businessmen responded swiftly and unfavorably--when the dust settled a few "special" leases had been arranged, among them one that guaranteed Camp Curry's independence from the Desmond operation. Later documentation showed that the monopoly might have been originally offered to David Curry, whose love for Yosemite and record of successful service was always evident, had he not been so singlemindedly and vehemently devoted to his Camp. After Curry's death, the Camp was operated by his widow and children: the firefall was reinstituted in 1918 and a 5 year contract was awarded to Jennie Curry. In 1920, her daughter Mary Curry married Donald Tresidder, a future president of Stanford University. Tresidder's vision was broader than David Curry's, and his tact and diplomacy won him support and admiration in Yosemite and Washington. The Desmond enterprise was a financial disaster that went bankrupt and was reorganized as the Yosemite National Park Company. Camp Curry's proprietors had organized as the Curry Camping Company, and in 1925, at the insistence of Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work, these major competitors were merged as Yosemite Park and Curry Company. Jennie Curry was on the Board of Directors and Donald Tresidder was the new president. It was the end of one era but the beginning of another -from a tent camp to a near monopoly that offered services and accommodations for all income levels and was soon imbued with the spirit of the family-run enterprise begun 26 years earlier.

The four structures considered most significant to this nomination are representative of the aesthetic which was established as a standard for building the Camp. With few exceptions today Camp Curry still exhibits a continuity of scale and texture. The theme was rustic and was characterized primarily by the use of native materials in their natural state, such as unpeeled logs, and strips of bark. Other elements include horizontal or diagonal sawn wood, river run stone foundations, and strongly expressed structural members. A low profile was expressed through gabled or hipped roofs with widely overhanging eaves and a uniform dark color to all buildings but the tents. The intent behind this style was for buildings to blend into the natural environment and to preserve a sense of primitiveness that enhances the character of the Camp.

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Oral interview and correspondance with Shirley Sargent, Foresta California, January 1978. (Miss Sargent is the YP&C Co. Historian).

Historic District

, 5 not shown on this map

