NPS Form 10-900
(Oct.1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

1035

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Siskiyou Smokejumper Base

other names/site number Siskiyou Aerial Project, "Gobi Desert," Cave Junction, CJ

2. Location

street & number Smokejumper Way, 4 miles SW of Cave Junction off Oregon Highway 199 ☐ not for publication

city or town Cave Junction vicinity X

state Oregon code OR county Josephine code 033 zip code 97523

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ____ nationally X statewide ____ locally.

Signature of certifying official/Title - Deputy SHPO — Date 10·3·06

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Action — Signature of the Keeper — Date of

✓ entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet. — for — 11/17/2006

___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain):

Siskiyou Smokejumper Base
Name of Property

Josephine County, Oregon
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many as apply)

___ private
__X__ public - local
___ public - state
___ public - Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

____ building(s)
__X__ district
____ site
____ structure
____ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	1	buildings
0	0	sites
4	0	structures
0	0	objects
8	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT:
fire-station (smokejumper base)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION:
air-related (airport)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER:
Mid-twentieth century Rustic

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE
walls: WOOD: Shingle
roof: ASPHALT / WOOD: Shingle
Other:

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

See continuation sheets.

Siskiyou Smokejumper Base
Name of Property

Josephine County, Oregon
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

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

_X_ 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.

_X_ 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.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
CONSERVATION
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance
1944-1955

Significant Dates

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

_____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes

_____ B removed from its original location

_____ C a birthplace or grave

_____ D a cemetery

_____ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure

_____ F a commemorative property

_____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance Within the past 50 years

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

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36CFR67) 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
_X_ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository: _____

Siskiyou Smokejumper Base
Name of Property

Josephine County, Oregon
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 4.5 acres

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	10	443770	4661380
2			
3			
4			

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Roger Brandt, Chief of Interpretation

organization National Park Service date October, 2006

street & number PO Box 2350 telephone (541) 955-4535

city or town Cave Junction state OR zip code 97523

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation sheets

Maps: A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name Josephine County

street & number 500 NW 6th Street telephone (541) 955-4535

city or town Grants Pass state OR zip code 97526

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The Siskiyou Smokejumper Base, a former United States Forest Service facility, is located in the Siskiyou Mountains of southwest Oregon approximately 4 miles southwest of Cave Junction, Oregon. The base, now a part of the Illinois Valley airport and owned by Josephine County, features a runway that affords an open vista for as far as can be seen to the south, west, and north. The central part of the base, to the east of the runway, is defined by a pleasant park-like setting with grassy areas interspersed by a combination of ornamental and native shade trees. The majority of historic buildings are dispersed within this landscaped area, while the visible concrete structures, namely the warm-up and ready pads have been integrated into a macadam and grass taxiway that connects to the runway immediately to the west. All of the contributing buildings are wood frame and sheathed in either wood shingles, weatherboard, or board-and-batten with the roofs covered with asphalt shingles or wood shakes.

The centerpiece of this historic district is the 1949 parachute loft. The building's T-shape massing housed all of the functions necessary for smokejumper deployment including spaces for parachute materials storage, repair, preparation, parachute storage, record keeping, and dispatch. Other buildings that supported the smokejumpers' mission include a one story shed, a fire pump house, and a 1936 United States Forest Service administrative building from the Redwood Ranger Station that was moved to the site in 1962, but that briefly served as the original Smokejumpers administrative building in 1943. Other contributing structures on the base include two warm-up pads (1945 and 1950) and a ready pad (1954). A non-contributing, metal clad mobile home lies to the east of the administrative building. Several buildings historically related to the smokejumper base are situated to the south of the district boundary, but are both visually distant and/or exhibit diminished levels of integrity. A listing and description of these other buildings is included as "Additional Information" in this nomination.

SETTING

The Southwest region of Oregon is characterized by seasonally high levels of rainfall influenced by the Pacific Ocean about 50 air miles to the west. The landscape is characterized by dense Douglas-fir forests that are largely managed by the United States Forest Service. Tourism and timber are the largest sources of commerce in the region and both of these industries have influenced the base environment from the time it was established, with a lumber mill and major tourism route (Highway 199) both bordering the east side of the base.

Highway 199 is a route used by tourists who for the most part are traveling between Crater Lake National Park in the Cascade Mountains and Redwood National Park on the scenic coast of California and Oregon. Cave Junction is located four miles north of the base in a valley that looks up to the Red Buttes wilderness, Siskiyou wilderness, Kalmiopsis wilderness, TJ Howell Botanical Drive and Oregon Caves National Monument. The Rough and Ready Creek Botanical Area is about a fourth of mile from the base along the south side of the airport. The base and this botanical area both sit on an alluvial fan of the West Fork of the Illinois River. This

area features the nation's largest outcrop of serpentine rock whose mineral composition produces poor soils capable of supporting sparsely vegetated plant communities made up of Jeffrey pine, incense cedar, manzanita and other shrubs typical of an arid environment, a paradox of what might be expected in a region with more than 50 inches of rain annually. The stark, desert-like surroundings inspired smokejumpers to call the base "The Gobi Desert", a nick-name that it continues to carry.

Table of Contributing and Non Contributing Buildings and Structures

The following is a summary list of contributing resources within the proposed boundary of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base historic district. These are listed from north to south.

Buildings (Parachute Loft Area)

Parachute loft	(1949)	Historic Contributing
Storage shed	(1950)	Historic Contributing
Fire pump building	(1950)	Historic Contributing
Administration office	(1936)	Historic Contributing
Mobile home residence	(1990s)	Non-Contributing

Structures (Aviation Tarmac Area)

North warmup pad	(1945)	Historic Contributing
Center warmup pad	(1950)	Historic Contributing
South warmup pad	(1946)	Historic Contributing
Ready pad	(1954)	Historic Contributing

DESCRIPTION OF THE DISTRICT

The historic district is located in a polygonal-shaped area between Highway 199 and the runway of Illinois Valley airport (See District Map). It can be generally divided into two general areas or zones of operation that directly relate to the period of significance (1945-1955) and the central function of the smokejumper base. These two areas are: 1) aviation tarmac area; 2) parachute loft area. Further to the south of these areas are three other functional areas that were not included within the historic district, but are included at the end of this nomination as "additional information."

Aviation Tarmac Area

Warm up pads: Some of the oldest features at the base are the concrete pads used for anchoring airplanes when not in use and to prevent damage to the fabric coverings of the airplanes kicked up by the wind from the propeller as the engine warmed up for takeoff. The oldest two pads, the **north** and **south warmup pads**, were installed in 1945 and1946 respectively. These concrete structures feature a distinctive substrate of rounded river rocks ranging from the size of a fist to the size of a ping pong ball. These are contrasted with two later pads, the **center warmup pad** and **ready pad** installed around 1950 and 1954 respectively that have a substrate of pea gravel. Two of the pads also had small pits next to them for housing the fueling equipment, each of which was protected by a metal door cover. The fueling doors have been removed and fueling wells have been filled with dirt. Rings imbedded in the cement for tying down aircraft can be found on some of the pads. The oldest cement pads, subterranean fuel tank and pit-reel pumps were installed prior to or by 1946, the same year power was brought out to the airport, a requirement for the electric pumps used to pump gas.

Removed structures: The presence of aircraft and fuel required a certain amount of security so in 1946 a caretaker residence was moved to the field (*Illinois Valley News*, July 4, 1946). The structure was later used as a "pilot shack" (Green, 2005) and was in use until it was removed in the 1970s. The structure was about 10x10 feet in size with a shingle covered gable roof, one door and shingle siding. A small deck approximately 8x10 feet in size was located along the west side of the building that crews used for briefings and preparation for jumps. A small hanger was one of the first structures constructed by smokejumpers at the airport. It had a hand-hewn pole framing with siding of 1x8 boards salvaged from the abandoned Oregon Caves CCC Camp. The hanger was built in 1944 and in the following year, the north pad was installed on the west side of the building next to the runway. The hanger was torn down in the late 1940's. An underground fuel system was installed in 1946 and used during most of the base's history. The fuel system was removed after the base closed in 1981.

Parachute Loft Area

Parachute loft: The largest structure at the base is the **parachute loft**, which today retains the original shingle siding installed when it was constructed in 1949-50. The original cedar shake roof has been replaced with three-tab composite roofing and the only other visible exterior modifications since its construction is the closure of a window on the south wall and installation of a door on the west wall. The building is set on a concrete foundation about three feet high, a unique design compared to other parachute lofts constructed around the same time. Two doors access the building from south and west, and two sliding doors about six feet in width provide access to the building from the loading dock on the west wall adjacent to the tarmac. A character-defining feature in the design of the building is the parachute inspection loft. Parachute lofts are commonly constructed with roofs that are high enough for parachutes to be suspended from the ceiling, resulting in the familiar "tower" protruding from the building that is the hallmark profile of smokejumper parachute lofts. The loft at the Siskiyou base is different because the overall profile of the parachute inspection loft as seen from the exterior of the building rises just barely above the rest of the building. Interestingly, to get the additional height necessary

for hanging parachutes, the room has an open gabled ceiling and the floor was lowered in this room to make a three foot deep "well". This section of the building also features a distinctively steep roof pitch and on the east elevation the building features an extension of its roofline that shades a series of five six-light casement windows. This extension is supported by a series of four robustly dimensioned braces that spring from concrete columns that protrude from, but are integrated into the concrete foundation. Most of the building's windows are six-light casement windows that are hinged at their base. One disproportional, large window lights each gable end of the parachute loft portion of the building.

All aspects of this building's design reflect the myriad preparations that smokejumpers undertook each time a fire call was received. At the forefront of the smokejumper routine was the need for assuring the immediate and reliable opening of a parachute used by crews that jump from an airplane flying at low elevation. This included areas within the building dedicated to parachute repair, preparation, and storage. The basic requirements for supporting this type of operation includes equipment (sewing machines), storage for fabrics and threads, and an area for record keeping, dispatch, and administration. The building also handled the bundling of supplies to be dropped to fire crews, including fire fighting equipment, radios, water, fuel, and hot meals including home-cooked lemon meringue pie! (Clarke 2005). The design of the building is influenced by the need to mitigate hazards faced by smokejumpers. In 1949, work began on the parachute loft, which today is one of Oregon's most uniquely specialized historic buildings.

Storage shed: A small **storage shed** is located next to the parachute loft and was used to repair fire-fighting equipment but also for the storage of packaged food used in the field. This shed retains its original shingle siding and has one door on the west side of the building and a small nine-light window protected by metal bars. The building's low pitch roof features rafter tails that have been left exposed. The original interior had one large room where staff sharpened and repaired fire fighting tools and a smaller room on the south side where packaged food, candy bars and other treats were stored. Crews could pick up to ten pounds of food from this store which would be dropped to them while out on a fire call along with the less palatable C-1 rations. The wall to the food storage room has recently been removed by the present owner to make a single room workspace. The shed is included as part of the parachute loft operations in this nomination because of its direct, but subordinate role in support of the loft.

Administration Office: The parachute loft was originally constructed with an administration office and dispatch center included in the front portion of the structure, but, as the operation grew, a building was imported in 1962 to perform administrative and dispatch functions. This building is the Redwood Ranger Station **administration building**, constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps for the U. S. Forest Service in 1936 and originally located in Cave Junction. Although constructed prior to the Smokejumping base, the administration building temporarily served as the facility's administration building when smokejumping operations were first established at Cave Junction in 1943. Administrative functions were moved to the base in 1949 when the parachute loft was constructed. When the building was moved to the airport in 1962, it again assumed its role in administration of the smokejumping program until the base closed in 1981. Due to the building's association

with supporting the smokejumping mission, its relative integrity, and its compatible rustic-style design that it is considered a contributing resource to the historic district.

The building retains its original horizontal redwood weatherboard with board-and-batten siding covering the gable end above the eave-line. The interior retains much of its original oak flooring and pine paneling. The fenestration of the building's main elevation consists of a centrally placed door flanked on one side by an eight-over-eight double-hung sash window with lambs-tongue stops and a pair of sliding glass windows. All other windows are similarly treated eight-over-eight windows. The main doorway is recessed and situated within a projecting, gabled bay that is sheathed above the eave line with board-and-batten siding. Despite being constructed almost a decade before the parachute loft, the building's overall, rustic-style design is compatible with the other buildings within the historic district. Even though the gable roof was originally sheathed with wood shingles, it is currently covered with three-tab composite roofing.

Fire Pump House: The potential for structural fire became a significant threat as the number of buildings increased at the base. Fire protection was first provided by a small sump dug next to an irrigation ditch running along the east side of the base. A concrete foundation used for mounting a gas-powered pump can be found about 40 feet east of the cook house to the south. The foundation also goes around the sump, which is covered by a hand-made cement cap. In 1951 a permanent fire well was established for fighting structural fires. This was a twenty-foot deep, hand-dug well lined with a five-foot diameter culvert that smokejumping crews forced down into the hole. A **pump house** was constructed over the top, and a small gas-powered pump was used for pressurizing fire hoses. The pump house is still present on an unusually large, circular foundation that covers the culvert-lined well. The building has its original shingle siding and a gable roof covered with wood shakes. A single door is constructed of vertical tongue-and-groove boards and the roof rafters have been left exposed. Writing on the interior wall shows where an assortment of tools were hanging for repair of the pump or to control wild fires that might be caused by burning buildings. The gas pump has been removed and an electric pump is now in its place.

Other Features

Landscaping: The importance of landscaping was appreciated by crews who endured heat and dusty conditions when the base was first established. It was in this setting that the first landscaping was established. The labor involved was intensive because of the density of rounded rocks deposited on the alluvial fan where the airport and base are situated. The installation of a lawn required digging up rocks and moving them out of the way so soil could be prepared for the lawn. Most of the rocks were moved out of the area but piles can still be found adjacent to the road immediately south of the residence area. Some of these rock piles were lined up and cemented together to make decorative walls as seen at the southern most foreman residence. Many trees were planted to provide shade, an important asset for keeping the base cool in the sparsely vegetated landscape surrounding the base. The desolate appearance and heat prompted crews to give the base the nickname of "Gobi Desert". Trees that were planted included mulberries planted near the parachute loft, mimosa and locust planted

around residences and the tending of native Jeffrey pines to create the forested, park-like setting once used as a training site south of the staff residence area. These trees are now fully grown to create the shaded environment envisioned by the crews who originally installed the landscaping. Similar landscaping was done for the foreman residences at the south end of the base. Lawns were installed, shrubbery planted and native trees tended to create a shaded and pleasant atmosphere. Every aspect of landscaping around the base was done by hand and labor of smokejumpers.

The landscaped areas of the base provided a pleasant atmosphere for crews but also served other functions as well. Training sessions were conducted on the shaded lawns and fitness training could be conducted when heat in the exposed, un-shaded parts of the base and airport posed a threat to health. Shade was needed to help keep buildings cool. The design and layout of landscaping was entirely created by crews who planted trees and installed lawn areas as measures to mitigate environmental hardships they may have been experiencing or to create a recreation area they needed for playing their favorite games, or perhaps a measure they took to create an environment that made the base feel more like home.

Access Road: The access road, Smokejumper Way, was constructed in 1946 and entered the property from this particular location because it was the point on Highway 199 that divided private land from airport property. The road was originally dirt with a reputation for being uncomfortably bumpy due to the presence of large, rounded alluvial rocks. Crews removed these rocks, just as they did for landscaping, the tarmac and other projects around the base and in 1949 covered the road with gravel that was hand shoveled into trucks at the source, transported to the site and spread by smokejumpers using shovels and rakes. The road may have been paved in 1953 at the same time as the runway.

Power Pole: One power pole located near the fire pump may be historic in age. A junction box on the pole contains fuses rather than trip switches. The age is undetermined.

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Siskiyou Smokejumper Base is a collection of wood frame buildings and concrete warmup pads that recall trends in federally legislated efforts to protect and conserve vital timberlands prone to catastrophic fires. Arising as a result of the 1924 Clarke-McNary Act that supplied financial support for conservation measures and fire suppression, the Siskiyou Base served as an early center for United States Forest Service parachutists trained in quick-response, back-country firefighting. For much of the period of significance, from 1945-1956, the core of the facility, consisting of four warm-up pads, parachute loft, administrative building, storage shed, and fire pump house served as an airbase for transporting and supporting smokejumpers. The facility effectively captures the multiple functions endemic to smokejumping. The centerpiece of the entire complex is the parachute loft. This distinctive, mission-specific building housed all of the necessary functions for parachutists that included parachute storage, repair, and preparation, dry-food storage, loading docks, administrative offices, and a dispatch room. Reflective of the early developmental stage of Forest Service smokejumping, the facility helped to train and set up other bases along the Pacific Coast including Redding, California. Due to the relative rarity and integrity of the facility's property types and its role in the broader development of smokejumping along the Pacific Coast, the base is significant under National Register Criteria A and C at the state level.

CONTEXT

Early Smokejumper History(1930s-1943)

Fire suppression, whether it is in a city or forest, has always based its success on the ability to rapidly deploy equipment and personnel to the site of a fire before it has a chance to grow to a size that is both dangerous and expensive to put out. At the time smokejumping was first implemented experimentally in the late 1930's, catastrophic forest fires burned millions of acres in the western states often with significant loss of life and property. These large fires inspired legislation such as the Clarke-McNary Act of 1924, which played a prominent role in enhancing the federal and state fire-suppression partnerships. These grew to become the Private Forestry Division of the U.S. Forest Service, under which Fire and Aviation Management and smokejumping are administered.

Suppression partnerships improved fire-fighting organization, but the problems associated with attacking fires in remote, roadless forests of the western states continued to be an issue that resulted in expensive fire control operations. It was clear that a great deal of valuable timber could be saved if fire fighters could be quickly delivered to the site of a forest fire while a blaze was small and easy to control. It was in this setting that the idea of parachuting fire fighters from airplanes began to attract increasing attention.

Despite the initial appeal of smokejumping, it was met with a great deal of caution. No equipment had yet been conceived to address the hazards of parachuting into a forest, no guidelines existed for how to set up a smokejumper program, no plan existed for how to develop the facilities necessary to keep a smokejumping program operational and parachuting itself was considered to be dangerous at this stage in its development. It was in this air of skepticism and caution that the smokejumper program was initiated in 1940, with one operation set up at Winthrop, Washington and another operation at the Nine Mile Canyon Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp near Missoula, Montana.

In its first years of operation, smokejumping was a program of improvisation. Facilities were set up in abandoned buildings, make-shift sheds, or in open fields. Camps were often located several miles from the nearest air field, and repair facilities were sometimes set up in a location where power was available such as the lobby of a motel (Cohen, 1983). The challenges and dangers specific to smokejumpers created a number of supply needs at the base and in the field. Backup parachutes carried on the chest, for instance, had to be ready for immediate deployment. Crew members wore protective suits to prevent fatal injury as they hit the tree tops at speeds up to 20 miles an hour where sharp branches on trees and shrubs can slice open vital arteries or impale organs. If a parachute snags on a tree top, crew members needed equipment to get to the ground and climbing gear to go back up the tree after fighting a fire to retrieve their parachute. If their parachute or jump suit is damaged, they needed the equipment and supplies to make repairs. In spite of these unique challenges facing the program and its staff, smokejumping dramatically demonstrated itself to be effective at reducing the cost of fighting wildfires and support for the program enjoyed strong momentum.

In 1941, with only two seasons of field trials to validate its value, the future of the smokejumping program was suddenly threatened by the entry of the United States into World War Two. Crews dwindled as able-bodied men were recruited to fight the war and funding became increasingly limited. Despite this, the program continued to show significant success partially for its efficiency and partially for its public appeal as was pointed out by Stephen J. Pyne in his book "*Fire In America*";

> *"Especially in the case of smokejumpers, the experiments had the effect of romanticizing and publicizing fire control to the public. They not only made firefighting more efficient; they made it glamorous."*

Soon after the start of World War II, the smokejumping program solved its staffing problems by using conscientious objectors in this dangerous work. Furthermore, in 1943, the national smokejumper program was increased in size with the establishment of two new bases. One of these bases became the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base, which was initially set up at the Redwood Ranger Station in Cave Junction, Oregon, about four miles from the Illinois Valley airport. In the following year, 1944, the Clarke-McNary Act of 1924 was amended in order to increase appropriations for cooperative fire protection, with an emphasis on fire prevention. Later in the same year, Smokey Bear made his debut through efforts by the Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention Campaign to protect the nation's supply of lumber through fire prevention.

Despite the popularity of the smokejumping program and the positive image it enjoyed, the War continued to draw funding and manpower away from the fledgling program. The facility at Redwood Ranger Station in Cave Junction, Oregon was accordingly impacted, leading to problems of achieving goals for rapid delivery of fire fighting crews to forest fires, the fundamental strategic purpose of smokejumping. The two most prominent issues facing this base included the distance of the base (at Cave Junction) from the airport (4 miles to the southwest), which added 20-30 minutes of loading and transport time, and the fact that the airplane contracted to transport smokejumpers to fires was located three hundred miles away in southern Washington, a distance that required about two hours for the plane to arrive unless bad weather prevented the plane from coming at all (Heintzelman 1943, *Illinois Valley News*, July 22, 1944). The effectiveness of the program was also influenced by the lack of facilities for providing mandatory smokejumper training and there was inadequate equipment for the repair of parachutes. For this reason, crews and equipment had to be sent to Missoula, Montana for training and repair, an added expense to the program. These conditions along with a growing national awareness and support for smokejumping helped to set the stage for the creation of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base at Illinois Valley airport, the historic feature under consideration in this nomination.

Airport Development and the Early Smokejumper Base (1940-1954)

The Illinois Valley airport was initially constructed by Civilian Conservation Corps crews from the National Park Service-managed Oregon Caves camp in 1940. Built specifically for the U.S. Forest Service, the airport proved to be a vital location for fueling airplanes used in regional fire observation and supply drop operations. In 1943, the first smokejumping operation was set up at the Forest Service's Redwood Ranger Station in Cave Junction, about four miles north of the airport.

There has been a great deal of discussion within the smokejumper community as to why Cave Junction was selected as a place to establish one of the first four smokejumper bases in American history. Some believe the base was established in this location because of incendiary bombs dropped by a Japanese airplane in September, 1942 about 20 air miles from where the base was established the next spring. The explanation is tempting, but no documentation has been found that indicates that fear of incendiary bomb attacks had anything to do with the decision to put a smokejumper base in this part of the country. The strongest rationale points to the fact that this site is located in the center of then very remote and inaccessible forested region of southwest Oregon and northwest California (the Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains), which was known as the "fire forest of the nation" because of the frequent and large fires started by lightning (Nelson 1980). This region also has some of the richest chrome deposits in the nation and there was a history of many fires set by miners to clear the ground for mineral exploration (Pyne 1982 p. 376). This chrome-bearing region is fully visible from the base and is the primary backdrop landscape that visitors see when driving into the proposed historic district which was most likely established at this location because of the history of natural and human-caused fires in remote inaccessible mountainous terrain.

Nonetheless, the ranger station served as an important staging area in the early years of the smokejumpers because the airport lacked the necessary cooking facilities, showers and electricity to support staff. Sparked by improved funding for fire suppression, in 1945, improvements were made at the airport as the Forest Service took steps to move the base to this location. Electricity was brought out from Cave Junction, a water well was drilled, the north and south warm-up pads was laid, and by 1946 a road was constructed into the site. A caretaker's house was constructed that same year for security of equipment and fuel. The clearing and preparation of the site for barracks, and other facilities began in 1947 (Courson, 2005). Some buildings were erected the following year, 1948, using a combination of onsite construction and relocated buildings. These included a barracks built at the airport and two other structures, a cook house and bath house, imported from a decommissioned Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp near Oregon Caves National Monument (Siskiyou Smokejumper Base annual reports, 1948). A well and water system were installed in the same year (*Illinois Valley News*, June 10, 1948). Crews were moved into these facilities in 1949 (Siskiyou Smokejumper Base Annual Reports, 1949) the same year that construction on the parachute loft began (Looper, 2005). Improvements were also made to the runway and tarmac, and by 1950, the parachute loft had been completed and the crew was completely moved into the new facility. In the years immediately after World War II, the facilities of the base had reached a new level of maturity with a staff that doubled in size as war veterans returned home.

"Civil Defense" & Program Refinement, 1950-1955

The success of the smokejumper program may have eventually carried it to further improvements on its own, but in the fall of 1949 the priorities of the nation changed dramatically with the detonation of an atomic bomb in the Soviet Union. Fresh in the minds of the American public were the images of the catastrophic conflagrations at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the possibility that America could be attacked by nuclear weapons led to the quick declaration by legislators that future wars would be "fire wars" (Pyne 1982). In 1950, the Forest Service initiated "Operation Smokejumper" and introduced the plan by observing that "we are entering a period marked by military expansion, preparation for a war economy, and an intensive national civilian defense program" and claiming that smokejumping was integral to those developments (Pyne 1982).

The smokejumper program took a significant step forward in 1952 with the release of the *Air Operations Handbook*, a comprehensive manual for administrators outlining every aspect of setting up an airfield, smokejumper operation, and operations for dropping cargo by parachute. Fire fighting also received at that time a boost when the Korean War ended. This made war-surplus materials and equipment available, to which the Forest Service and its collaborators had priority access. The sudden mechanization of fire fighting, more particularly through large aircraft that could chemical suppressants and water, extended the reach of fire suppression, and the prevalence of military hardware on the fire line reinforced the metaphor of firefighting as a moral equivalent of national defense. The perception of smokejumping as a military necessity was fortified by the declaration by officials in the Department of Commerce that "lumber is a key material for all-out war" (*Illinois Valley News*, October 5, 1950). The nation's smokejumping program was given additional notoriety

around this same time with the release of the Hollywood movie "The Red Skies of Montana", a story romanticizing the drama and danger of smokejumping based on a true story of the Mann Gulch fire that killed several smokejumpers in 1949.

During the period of 1950-1955, the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base was improved with the establishment of a training area, the construction of a permanent mess hall, bath house, barracks, supervisor's residence and the paving of the runway and tarmac. These were some of the last major improvements to be made at the base. From its opening in 1943, the base covered fire calls in Oregon and northern California, but beginning in 1955 members of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base began assisting with the set up and, in some cases, supervision of other bases, which in turn took over responsibility of covering fire calls in areas that were once covered by the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base.

For the purposes of this nomination, the final period of the base's significance is set at 1955, the date when planning began for the Redding Smokejumper Base in northern California. Staff from the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base played an important role in setting up this new facility, and this is interpreted in the nomination to reflect a level of maturity that marked a transformation of the base from a fledgling program to a program capable of mentoring the establishment of smokejumping in other parts of the nation. However, the base continued to reflect changes, especially new innovations in fire fighting that eventually played a role in closing this base and others in 1981. The following section was added to provide a snapshot of this history.

From a Core Mission to Functional Obsolescence, 1956-1981

During the 1970's roads had been constructed into virtually every remote region of the nation, making rapid response to fires by ground crews more feasible. In addition, many areas for which smokejumping was especially well designed, such as remote, rugged wilderness areas with heavy lightning concentrations, were withdrawn from traditional fire suppression. After the Viet Nam War, helicopters became increasingly prevalent in fire fighting and questions began to rise as to whether helicopters might be a better tool than smokejumping for delivering fire fighters to remote fires. The combination of these factors may have been what triggered the conclusion among administrators that smokejumping was on its way out, and this in turn nudged the decision to close some bases, including the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base, in the early 1980s. After the base closed in 1981, the Forest Service transferred the airfield and smokejumper base to Josephine County in 1983. The county remains the owner of the property.

It may seem that the story ends here but in 2002, one of the largest fires in recent history, the Biscuit Fire, burned 500,000 acres of forest in the mountains west of the base, some of which is within view of the base itself. The Biscuit Fire brings to light an important reminder that the human relationship with fire is held historically in the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base, and the future of this relationship will continue to be played out in the mountains within view of the historic base. In this setting, preservation of the base can perform the two-

fold function of commemorating smokejumping as an innovation in fire fighting and a reminder that the saga between humans and fire is far from over.

Period of Significance Justification

For the purposes of this nomination, the final period of the base's significance was set at 1955, the date when planning began for the Redding Smokejumper Base in California. Personnel from the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base were instrumental in setting up this new facility as well as others. This is interpreted in the nomination to reflect a level of maturity marking a transformation of the base from a fledgling program to a program capable of mentoring the spread of smokejumping to other parts of the Pacific coast. Smokejumper bases that were constructed after 1955 had a higher level of sophistication, making them distinctly different from what is preserved at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base. Most bases equivalent in age to the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base have since been destroyed or replaced by modern facilities. For this reason, the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base may be the only site remaining in the United States that preserves the developmental stages of the smokejumper program from 1945 to 1955. It is most certainly the first fully functional smokejumper base in Oregon history. The base, therefore is significant under National Register Criteria A and C at the state level.

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Geographical Data

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From a point situated on the airport property line to the west of Highway 199 but situated between the USFS warehouse and the parachute loft and then proceeding west between the warehouse and parachute loft for 100 feet to the access road running along the front of the parachute loft. Turn north and follow the access road northward for 265 feet just past a small metal building. Turn west and proceed for 215 feet to the edge of the runway. Follow the runway south for 400 feet to the south end of the tarmac. Follow the southern edge of the tarmac east for 215 feet to the east side of Smokejumper way. Turn south and proceed parallel to Smokejumper Way for approximately 130 feet to a point south of the administration building, but north of the cook house site and then proceeding eastward to a point situated just south of rock work to the airport property line. Then the boundary proceeds northward along the property line to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary encompasses the features that contribute to the significance of the base during the period of 1944 to 1955.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photograph List Page 1

Siskiyou Smokejumper Base
Name of Property

Josephine County, Oregon
County and State

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* For all photographs, unless otherwise noted, the following information remains constant:

Siskiyou Smokejumper Base
Cave Junction vicinity, Josephine County, Oregon
Photographer: Roger Brandt
Date of Photograph: 2005
Location of Original Negative: Roger Brandt, Cave Junction, Oregon

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph #1 of 16
Aerial View of Siskiyou Smokejumper Base
Looking East
Photo by: Unknown
Date of Photograph c. late 1950s

Photograph #2 of 16
Aerial View of Siskiyou Smokejumper Base
Photo by: Unknown
Date of Photograph c. early 1970s
Looking Northeast

Photograph #3 of 16
Perspective view of Base buildings with south warm-up pad in foreground
Looking Southeast
(NOTE: 35 mm photo only – no digital image)

Photograph #4 of 16
Parachute Loft
Looking West

Photograph #5 of 16
Parachute Loft
Looking North/South wall

Photograph #6 of 16
Parachute Loft
Looking Northeast/Southwest corner

Photograph #7 of 16
Parachute Loft
Photo by Bob Nolan
Date of Photograph: 1950
Looking North/South wall

Photograph #8 of 16
Parachute Loft
Photo by: Jim Allen
Date of Photograph: c. 1952
Looking Northeast

Photograph #9 of 16
Interior, Parachute Loft
Photo by: USFS, Photograph Collection
Date of Photograph: c. 1954
Looking West

Photograph #10 of 16
Storage Shed
Looking Northeast/Southwest corner

Photograph #11 of 16
Fire pump house
Looking northeast/Southwest corner

Photograph #12 of 16
Administration Building
Looking Northeast/Southwest corner

Photograph #13 of 16
North warm-up pad (Paul Block in photograph)
Looking North

Photograph #14 of 16
North warm-up pad in use by smokejumpers
Date of Photograph: c. 1948
Photographer: B.U. Green
Looking Southwest

Photograph #15 of 16
North warm-up pad under construction
Date of Photograph: 1945
Photographer: Neal Pauls
Looking North

Photograph #16 of 16
Aviation tarmac with base in background
Date of Photograph: 1956
Photographer: USFS Photograph Collection
Looking south toward Indian Hill

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

* The following text is provided as additional information. Due to the lack of relative integrity and visible distance from the core of the historic district, the following resources have not been included within the main historic district, but nonetheless retain associations with the smokejumper base. All buildings can be plotted on the map provided.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Crew Residence Area

1954 cook house, bath house, and barracks: In 1954 a new cook house, bath house, and second barracks were constructed, all of which were built on concrete slabs and finished on the outside with shingle siding. The exteriors of these buildings were later modified to plywood siding which is the visible exterior seen today. The cook house used propane from a tank located several feet behind the building on the east side. In 1964, the cook house was severely damaged by fire and was reconstructed the following year on the original cement pad with basically the same interior floor plan as the original building. Doors on the reconstructed building were installed so existing walkways and entry pads from the original building could be used.

Removed structures - 1948 cook house, bath house, and barracks: The staff residence area performed the three basic functions of providing food, shelter, and sanitation for crews stationed at the base. This began with the drilling of a water well, installation of water systems, excavation of septic systems and construction of buildings. The work on these began in 1948, and by the end of the year a barracks, cook house, and bath house were completed. Concrete piers served as a foundation for all of these structures. Four doors provided access to the building and each of the eight bedrooms had a window. The central part of the building had a commons room with chairs. Behind the building on the east side was a bath house about three feet from the barracks. On the north side of the barracks and about 50 feet away was a cook house. Both the cook house and bath house were also imported structures from the decommissioned Oregon Caves Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp each set up on concrete piers with water for showers heated by a wood stove located outside of the north side of the bath house. Cooking was done with oil brought to the base in 50 gallon barrels. The 1948 cook house and bath house were both removed in 1954 when newer facilities were constructed. The barracks was removed in the mid 1990s.

"Bust" Parking: The parking area along the west side of Smokejumper Way, labeled "Bust Parking" on the map, was used by support crews who came to the base when there was a "fire bust". This term refers to a severe breakout of fire in the local region that was more than could be handled by the existing crew.

Training area

The only training area preserved within the historic district is immediately adjacent to the staff residence area. This area has been used for training on tree climbing, let-down procedures, physical fitness, and for conducting

lecture training sessions during the period of significance (Clarke 2005). Equipment may have been set up here as early as 1949 and were removed as upgraded equipment was set up in an area a little further to the south. Since the closure of the base in 1981, all of the training equipment has been removed. Two metal airplane hangers are now in the location where the training equipment once stood.

Supervisor/Foreman residences

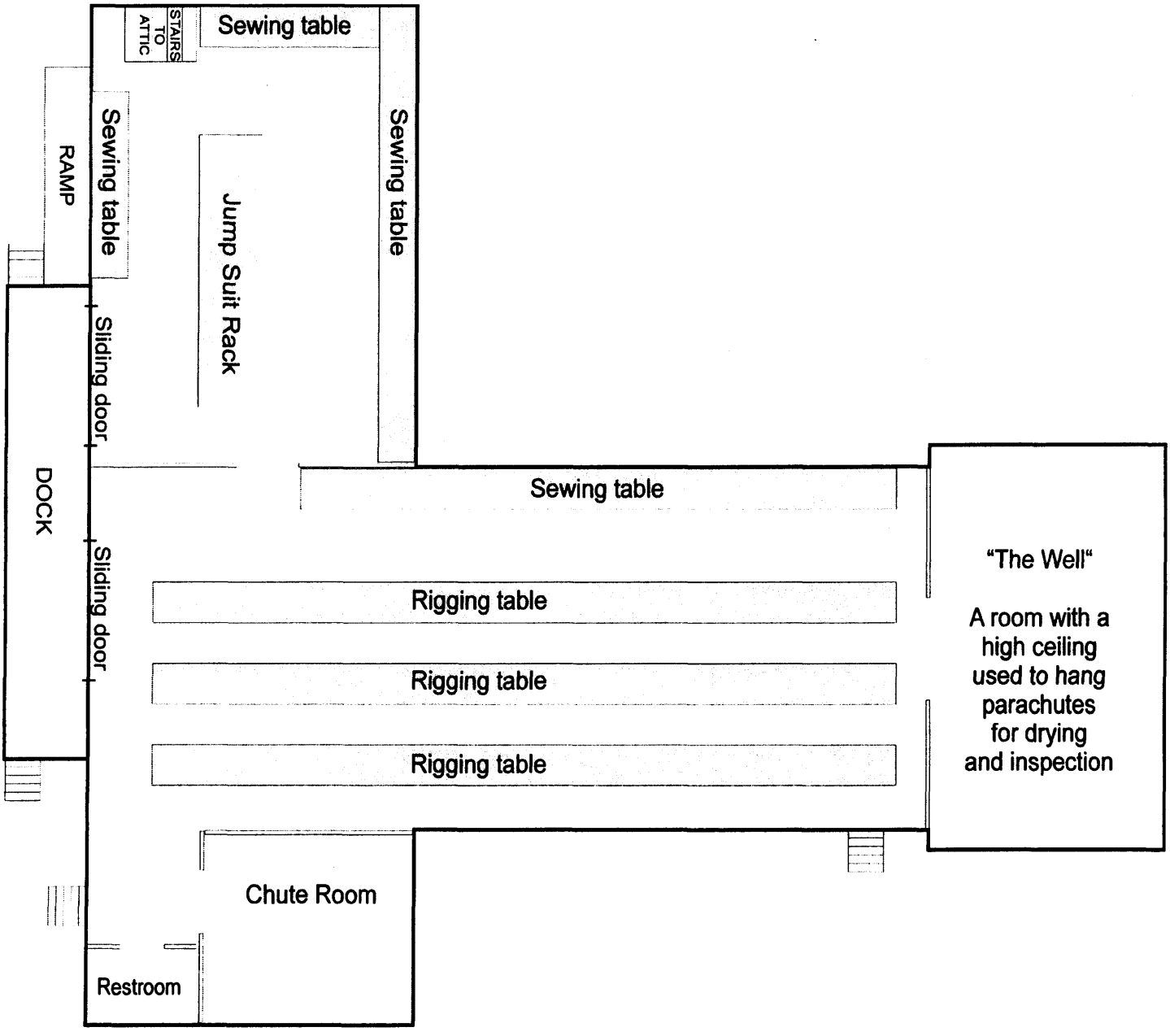
Two foreman residences are located at the southern end of the base.

1948 residence: The oldest foreman residence was installed around 1948, along with a well house and garage. The well house and garage are both shingle sided, most likely the original siding when the buildings were constructed. The residence is has a subsiding of 1x6 boards set at a 45 degree angle across the frame with an exterior siding of 1x4 tongue and groove boards set horizontally across the outside of the building. Holes were recently drilled in these boards to install insulation. The residence is painted gray, as are most of the other buildings at the base, but the garage and well house retain traces of red paint.

1957 residence: The 1957 residence sits on the south side of Smokejumper Way and was built in 1957 with an exterior finish of 1x8 boards standing perpendicular to the ground with 1x2 strips covering the cracks between each board. The yard is presently fenced in, and rock work lines the driveways into and out of the front yard.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Information Page number 3



Floor plan of the Parachute Loft by Gary Buck.

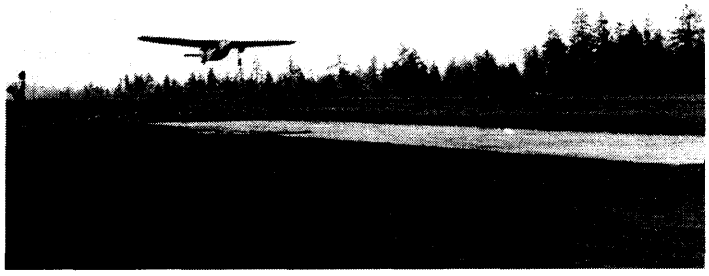
Additional Information

Siskiyou Smokejumper Base - Cave Junction, southwest Oregon

AVIATION TARMAC

A-01: Illinois Valley Airport tarmac
Photographer: unknown, 1944; Looking northwest
A Fairchild 71 sits on the tarmac with dirt runway in background. Woodcock Mountain is in the distance.

A-02: Construction of north warmup pad
Photographer: Nick Pauls, 1945; Looking northwest.
The pad was poured by the smokejumpers in the Civilian Public Service (CPS). Woodcock Mountain is in the distance.



A-03: North warmup pad, shadow of hanger
Photographer: Robert Moffitt, 1948; Looking southwest
A shadow from the hanger shows the position of the building to the north warmup pad. Ford Trimotor takes off.

A-04: North warmup pad with metal fuel door
Photographer: Bob Moffitt, 1948; Looking southwest.
A metal fuel door is angled into the cement warmup pad. A smaller hinge door is seen along the left.

A-05: North warmup pad and outline of fuel door
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking northwest.
The trace of the metal fuel door on the north pad is seen to right of Paul Block. Note outline of hinge door.

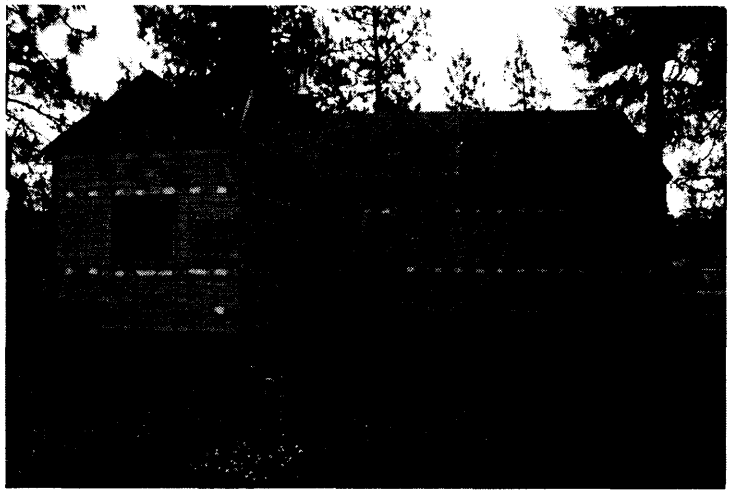
A-06: Central warmup pad
Photographer: Jack Rottier, USFS, 1954; Looking northwest
Twin Beech refuels at central warmup pad. Background plane sits on north pad. Fuel tank covers seen in middle right.

Additional Information

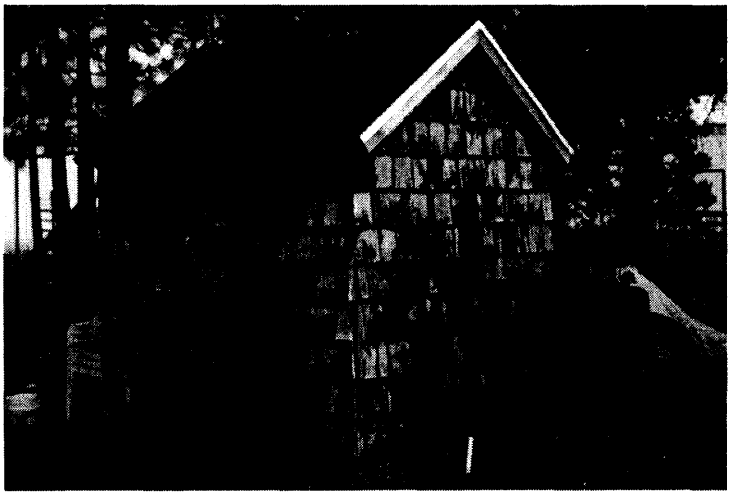
Siskiyou Smokejumper Base - Cave Junction, southwest Oregon

FOREMAN RESIDENCE AREA

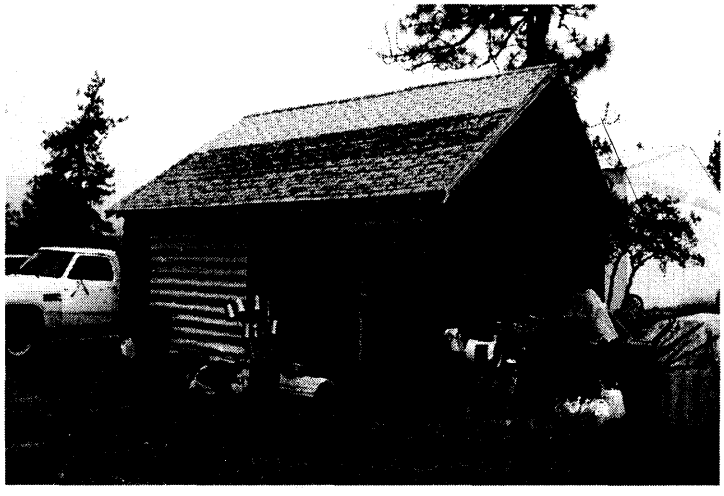
F-01: 1948 foreman residence
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking west
The 1948 residence is located near to the entrance to the base. This side faces Highway 199 about 100 yards away.



F-02: 1948 foreman residence
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking east
This side of the building faces the garage and airfield. Holes were recently drilled in exterior wall to install insulation.

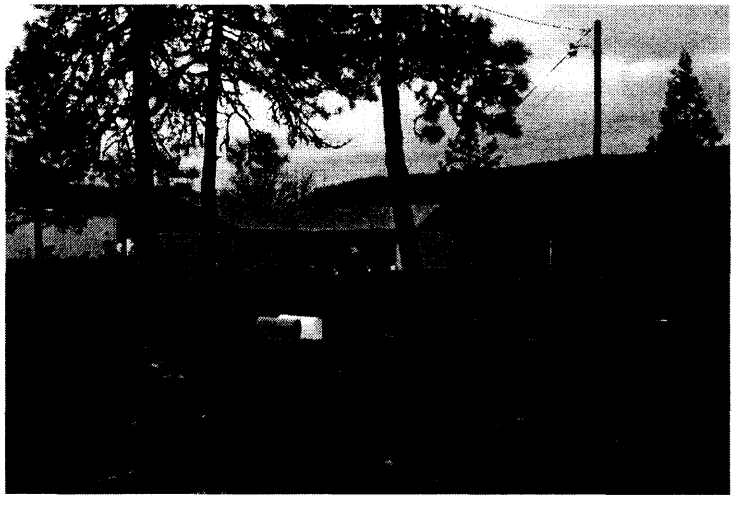


F-03: 1948 foreman residence well house
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking northwest
The well house and garage are both painted red.



F-04: 1948 foreman residence garage
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking northwest
The door to the garage appears to be the only exterior modification to this building since its construction.

F-05: 1957 foreman residence
Photographer: Unknown, USFS, circa 1958; Looks southwest
This building has an external siding of 1x8 and a car port on the north side. No rockwork along driveway is yet installed. .



F-06: 1957 foreman residence
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005, Looking southwest
Rock work along driving lanes was added by smokejumper crews within a year or two after the building was constructed.

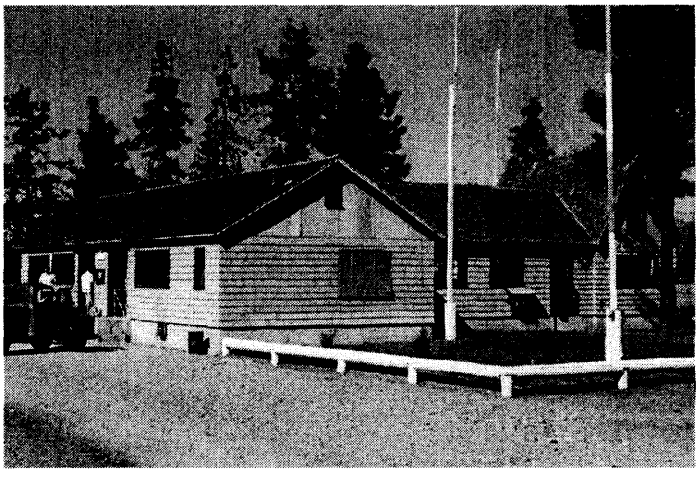
Additional Information

Siskiyou Smokejumper Base - Cave Junction, southwest Oregon

PARACHUTE LOFT

P-01: Parachute loft
Photographer: Bob Nolan, 1950; Looking north
View of south wall of the parachute loft. Parachute inspection tower on right, office on left, rigging room center.

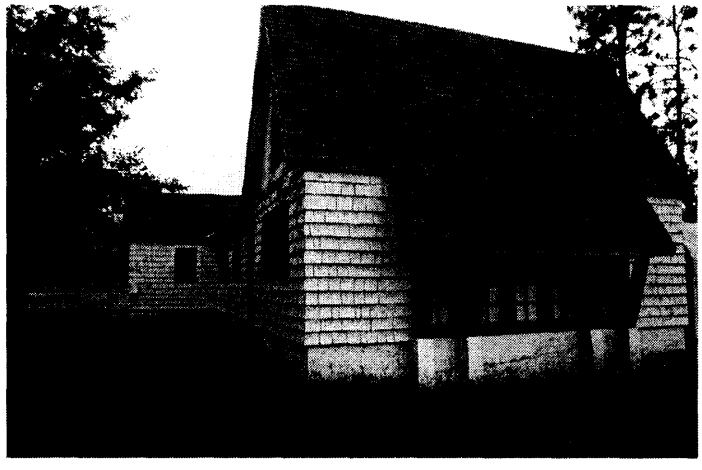
P-02: South wall of parachute loft
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking north
South wall of the parachute loft. Note window on office (left) has been removed.



P-03: Parachute loft, west and south exterior wall
Photographer: Jim Allen, circa 1952; Looking northeast
Parachute loft dock on west side of building.

P-04: Parachute loft south and west walls
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking northeast
Dock and entrance to loft on left. Window of office has been removed and door added on west wall.

P-05: Working on loft
Photographer: Bob Nolan, 1950; Looking northeast
Smokejumpers working on south wall of parachute inspection tower.



P-06: Parachute loft west and south exterior
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking northwest
The roof of the parachute inspection tower has heavy bracing. Office protrudes on far end.

Additional Information

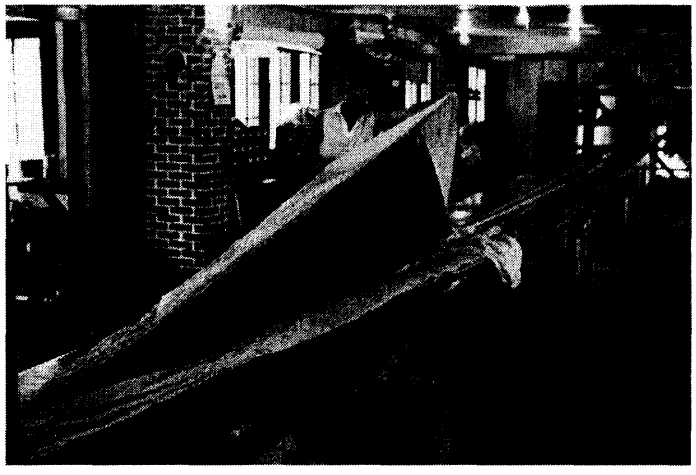
Siskiyou Smokejumper Base - Cave Junction, southwest Oregon

PARACHUTE LOFT

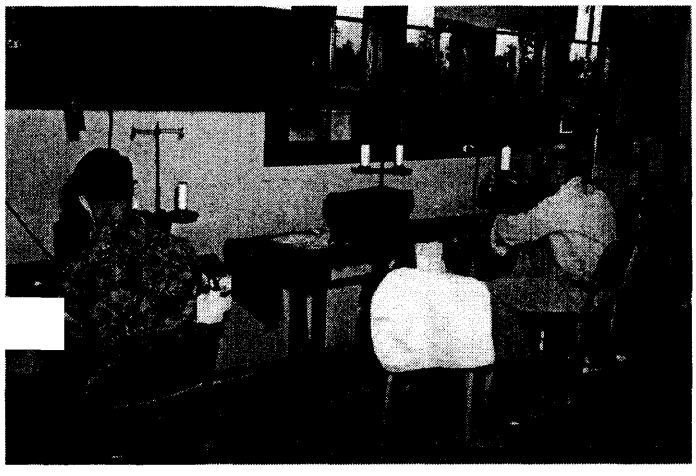
P-07: Parachute loft attic
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking north
A section of the attic above the repair room looking toward stair well. Storage bins can be seen along right.

P-08: parachute loft repair room
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; looking northwest
The repair room still has hangers used for jump suits and name plates above each hanger. The old stairway to attic is above man.

P- 09: Parachute rigging tables
Photographer: Jack Rittier, circa 1954; Looking out west doors
Office on left, tarmac outside door in background, repair room right. Note tool pouches hanging at end of tables.



P-10: Rigging room
Photographer: Jack Rittier, circa 1954; Looking northeast
Door to repair room is seen on the left. The parachute inspection room is at the far background.



P-11: Parachute loft, repair room northwest windows
Photographer: Jack Rittier circa 1952; Looking northwest
A total of seventeen sewing machines were once set up in this loft.

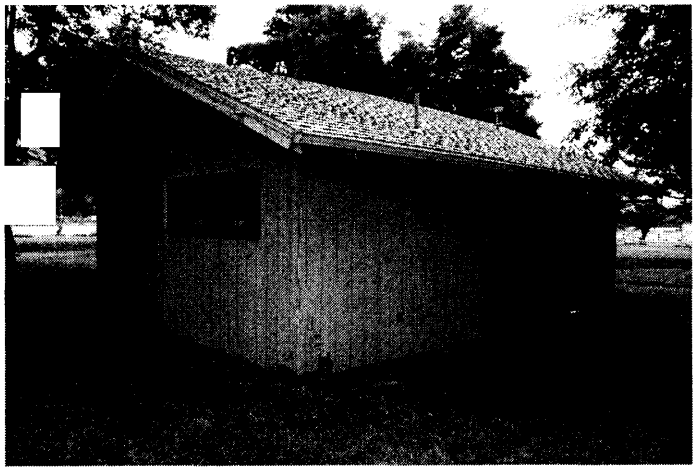
P-12: Parachute loft
Photographer: unknown newspaper; Looking southeast
A repair table for fixing individual sections of a parachute was located in the southeast corner of the repair room.

Additional Information

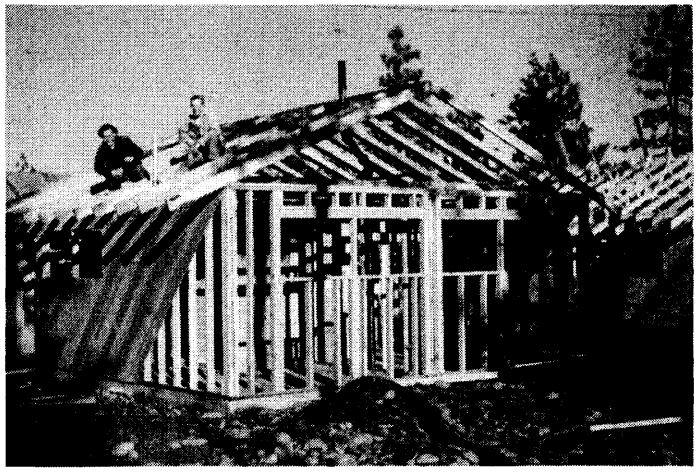
Siskiyou Smokejumper Base - Cave Junction, southwest Oregon STAFF RESIDENCE AREA

R-01: 1954 Barracks
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking southeast
Barracks constructed in 1954.

R-02: Barracks under construction
Photographer: Jim Allen, 1954; Looking northwest
Barracks under construction showing one-by-six subsiding that was later covered with shingles.



R-03: 1954 Bath house
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking northwest
Bath house was constructed in 1954.



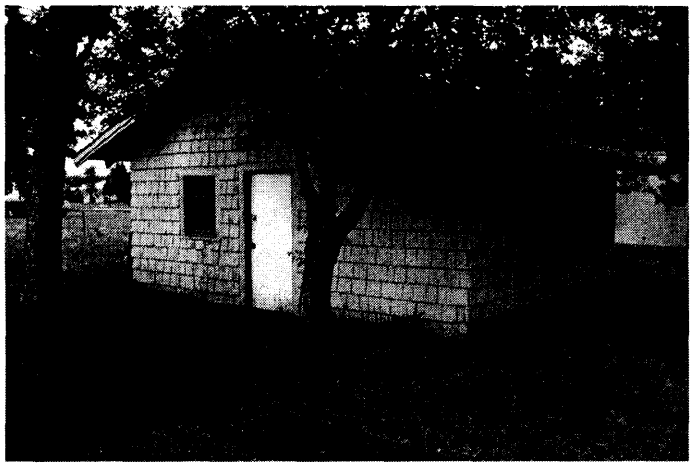
R-04: Bath house under construction
Photographer: Jim Allen, 1954; Looking northeast
Bath house shows position of windows and one-by-six subsiding. Barracks is under construction in background.

R-05: Cook house
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking northeast
This structure was reconstructed after fire damage in the early 60's. It sits on the same foundation and uses same entry walks.

R-06: 1954 Cook house shingle siding
Photographer: unknown, circa 1954. Looking north
The original siding of the buildings constructed in 1954 were shingles. These were later replaced by plywood.

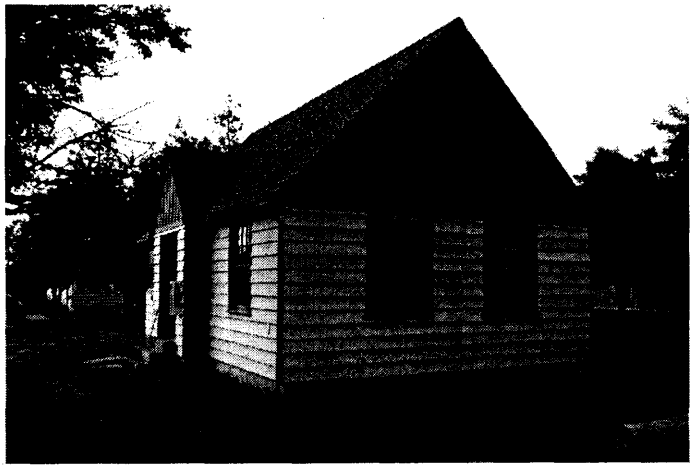
Additional Information

Siskiyou Smokejumper Base - Cave Junction, southwest Oregon STORAGE AND ADMINISTRATION

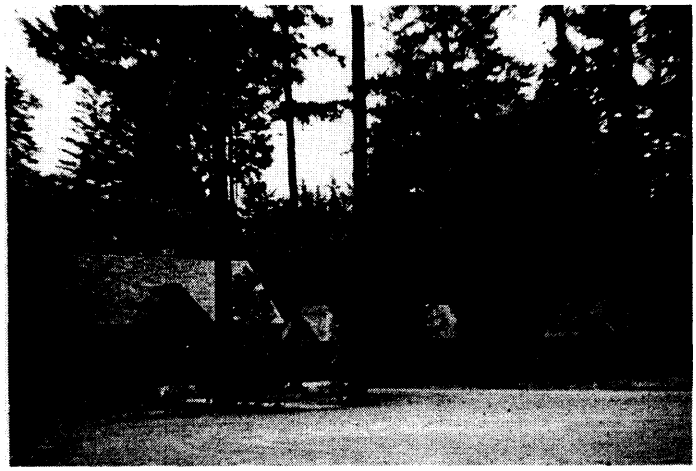


S-01: Storage shed
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking northeast
View of west wall of storage shed.

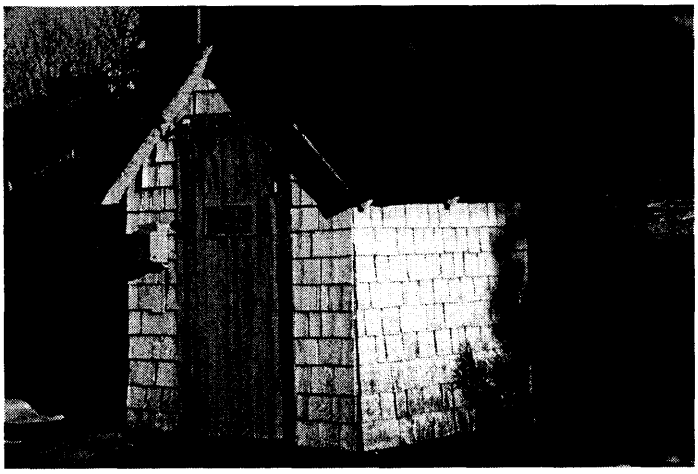
S-02: Storage shed
Photographer: Jim Allen, circa 1952; Looking northeast
Storage shed with the original shingle siding installed when the building was erected..



S-03: Administration office
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking northeast
The administration building was formerly the Redwood Ranger Station constructed in 1936.



S-04: Redwood Ranger Station
Photographer: Nick Pauls, 1945. Looking west
The Redwood Ranger Station (left) administered the smokejumping program when it was located in Cave Junction.



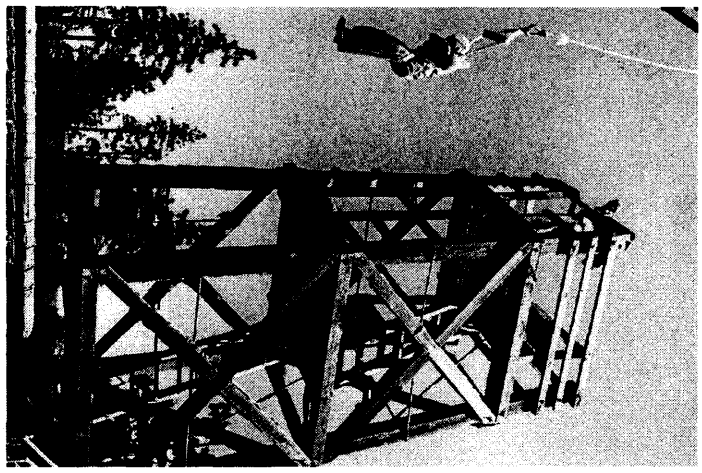
S-05: Fire pump house
Photographer: Roger Brandt, 2005; Looking northeast
Note large cement base that was installed to cover a 5 foot diameter, 20 foot long culvert smokejumpers installed.

S-06: Fire pump house in background
Photographer: Jim Allen, 1954; Looking north
Fire pump house is seen in the background behind the cement pad for the new barracks.

Additional Information

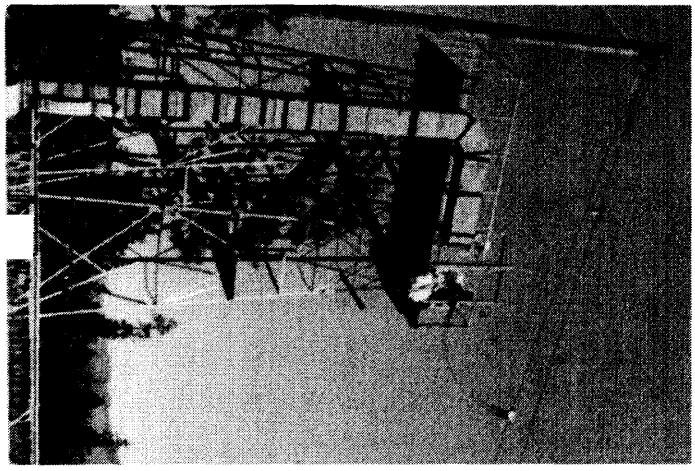
Siskiyou Smokejumper Base - Cave Junction, southwest Oregon

TRAINING AREA

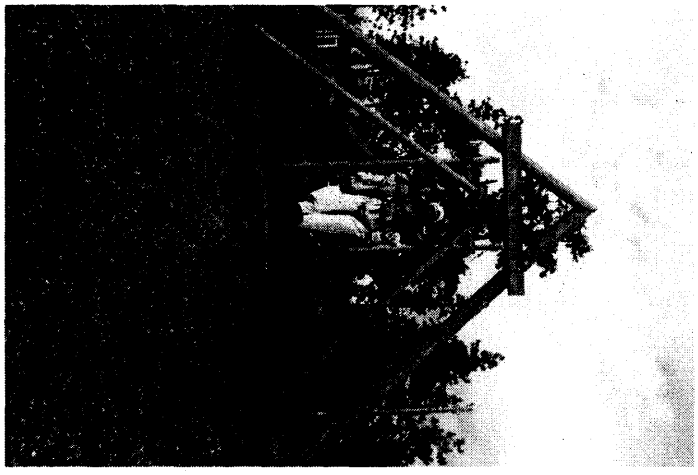


T-01: Jump tower
Photographer: ____, circa 1949; Looking east
The first jump tower at the base was a wood structure. This was removed when a metal tower was constructed in 1954.

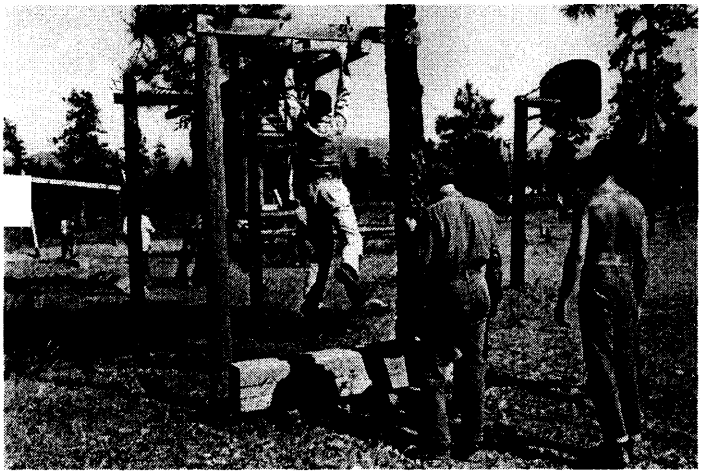
T-02: 1954 Jump tower
Photographer: Jack Rittier, 1954; Looking northeast
This tower is a modified radio tower with an arched top to keep trainees away from the structure as they practiced.



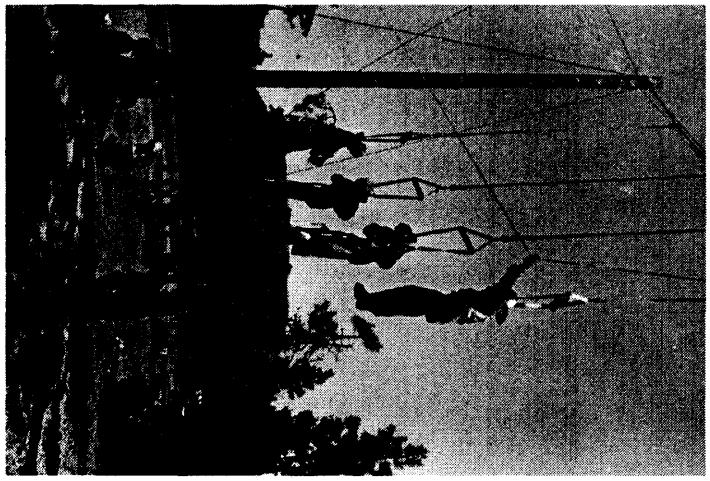
T-03: 1970 Jump tower
Photographer: Mike Mann, circa 1970; Looking northeast
This jump tower had a fan system to mimic wind jumpers would experience when jumping from a plane.



T-04: Drop and roll training
Photographer: Jack Rittier, 1954; Looking northeast
Jumpers could be released at any point as they rolled down this device. Invented by Bob Scofield at the Siskiyou Base.



T-05: Exercise equipment
Photographer:Jack Rittier, USFS, 1954; Looking northeast
Many exercise devices were set up in the training area.



T-06: Let down training
Photographer: Jack Ritter, USFS, 1954, Looking northwest
Staff was trained on the procedure for getting to the ground when their parachute was caught in a tree.

Siskiyou Smokejumper Base Historic District

Cave Junction, Josephine County, Oregon