

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name Oregon Caves Chateau

historic

and/or common

2. Location

street & number

not for publication

city, town Oregon Caves National Monument vicinity of

state Oregon

code 41

county Josephine

code 033

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public (land)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied (Seasonally)	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private (building)	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Hotel

4. Owner of Property

name Canteen of Oregon

street & number 5000 North Lagoon Avenue

city, town Portland

vicinity of

state Oregon

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Josephine County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Crants Pass

state Oregon

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

1) Pacific Northwest Regional Office Inventory

title 2) National Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

date 1) 1984

2) In process

☒ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records National Park Service

1) Seattle

Washington

city, town 2) Washington

state D. C.

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☒ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Chateau at Oregon Caves National Monument is a rustic hotel in the Siskiyou Mountains adjacent to the entrance to the cave in the only active limestone formation in Oregon. The Chateau is part of a larger development that includes a chalet (dormitory/gift shop/multiple use structure), several employee and rental cottages, and a visitor contact station, all under consideration for National Register status as part of a district. The buildings were all constructed between 1923 and 1941. The Chateau is without question the most outstanding of the structures.

The Chateau is a six-story structure with a reinforced concrete foundation and a superstructure of wood frame construction with enormous post and beam interior supports. The building spans a small gorge and a great deal of the building's mass is banked into that depression. The first floor houses mechanical equipment. The second contains basement storage areas. The dining room, coffee shop and kitchen areas are on the third floor--at the same level as the lower trout pool grotto at the immediate head of the gorge. The fourth floor is at road level and contains the entrance lobby and some hotel rooms. The two upper stories have additional hotel rooms and living quarters for the manager.

Exterior walls are shiplap siding sheathed with cedar bark, giving the building a shaggy, rustic appearance. The main gable roofs are steeply pitched and are pierced by shed-roof dormers further broken by gabled-roof dormers.

The large lobby on the fourth floor of the building (entered from the level of the parking lot) contains a huge double fireplace of marble construction. The exposed wood beams of enormous size (about 18x24 inches) are supported by peeled log posts with 30-inch diameters. The applied wood decoration at the joints simulates wood joinery and is non-structural. The subtle grey appearance of the wood is due to airborne particles of cement that settled on the wood when sacks were beaten on the posts during construction. Portions of the wood not initially tinted by the cement were colored to match. Leading from the lobby to the downstairs dining room and coffee shop and upstairs to hotel rooms, is a handsome rustic staircase of oak, madrona, and pine or fir. The open stairwell shows off the structure of the stairs to great advantage. The simple oak treads rest on pairs of notched log stringers. The logs are nearly the same size as the log posts of the lobby. The darker wood of the peeled madrone balusters and the lighter wood of the handrails and newel posts

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900– Present	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1934–Present **Builder/Architect** Gust L^uam

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The prime significance of Oregon Caves' Chateau lies in its designer's extraordinarily creative use of the limited building site and how he allowed the site to dictate major architectural choices. Inseparable from that is the extremely high integrity of the building, the furnishings, and the site. Of local significance is the importance of the development of Oregon Caves, fostered by a group of local businessmen who formed the Oregon Caves Company--the monument's concessionaire--to stimulate the depressed economy in the area.

Oregon Caves was discovered in 1874 and became a national monument in 1909. The resort potential of the area had been promoted during the late nineteenth century but little development was accomplished, perhaps because of the area's remoteness. By 1913 the congressional representative had introduced a bill to establish Oregon Caves National Park hoping to remove it from U.S. Forest Service jurisdiction and thus facilitate the construction of a hotel and a good road for the area. Changes in U.S. Forest Service regulations regarding leasing lands for hotel and recreation sites in 1915 stimulated interest again in the resort potential of the caves; but not until 1923 did local businessmen form the Oregon Caves Company and take over food services, overnight accommodations, and tours through the cave.

The early structures built by the company included the Chalet, cottages, and tent houses. By 1929 the company spokesman was announcing plans to construct the Chateau. Construction was underway by 1932 and completed in 1934 for a cost of \$50,000. One regional newspaper boasted of the new hotel "patterned after Swiss Chalets,"¹ while another commented:

The new Chateau, unquestionably responsible for the

¹ "Oregon Caves to Boast New \$50,000 Hotel," Grants Pass Bulletin, Vol. VIII, no. 32 (July 10, 1931), p. 1.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Less than 1

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References

A

1	0	4	6	6	3	0	0	4	6	6	0	6	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Note: U.S.G.S. in Denver had no more topo sheets for Oregon Caves, UTH. Coordinate is taken from draft National Register nomination.

Quadrangle scale _____

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary begins at a point 25 feet north of the north corner of the Chateau, then proceeds southeast 150 feet, then south 120 feet to the top of the stone wall directly below the cave entrance, then in a westerly direction along the wall to a point 50 feet southwest of the southwest corner of the Chateau, then 100 feet north, then 140 feet northeast to the starting

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries point as shown on the enclosed map.

state	N/A	code	county	code
-------	-----	------	--------	------

state	N/A	code	county	code
-------	-----	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laura Soulliere Harrison Architectural Historian

organization National Park Service, Southwest Region date 1985

street & number P.O. Box 728 telephone (505) 988-6787

city or town Santa Fe state New Mexico

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

title _____ date _____

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

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are smooth-finished but retain softened gnarls and knots. The natural light from the plate-glass windows that overlook the trout pool only emphasize the stairwell and draw the viewer's eye from the darker portions of the lobby.

The most common interior wall finish is a wainscoting of heartwood from the California redwood with pressed fiberboard above. The fiberboard is original and unaltered. New carpeting covers the original linoleum of the lobby and the hallways and rooms of the hotel. The large plate glass windows in the lobby, main stairwell, and dining room are topped with twenty-six lights above. All of the windows in the building are wood frame and vary from eight-over-one double hung to nine-light casements.

The dining room and coffee shop on the third floor retain considerable original character. The stream is still channeled through the dining room. The original wood floor in the dining room, damaged by flood during the 1960s, has been replaced with a plywood subfloor and linoleum tile. New wooden partitions (removable) that are jigsawn in a pattern reminiscent of Bavarian/Swiss chalet detailing separate the small bar area and the employee section of the dining room. The open room configuration remains. The coffee shop, completed in 1937 retains its birch and maple counters and knotty-pine panelling. The present tile floor replaces the original oak parquet floor that was damaged during the 1963 flood.

The arts-and-crafts style furniture throughout the building is original and in excellent condition. The wood furniture has leather and metal detailing, and some sports painted designs. Period wrought-iron and brass lamps, sconces, and chandeliers light the interior. Other interior decoration includes Kiser tinted photographs of local scenes. Hardware on the doors is also original.

One of the reasons the building fits so well with its setting is that most of the construction materials are local in origin. The principal timbers were cut a short distance away and trimmed at a mill on the Caves Highway. The cedar bark for the vertical siding came from a railroad-tie cutting operation nearby. The marble for the stone fireplace was blasted out of adjacent bedrock while the development was under construction.

Changes to the building have been minimal. A new sprinkler system with cast-iron pipes was added to the building in 1955.

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Flood damage in 1963 necessitated the changes to flooring materials in the dining room and coffee shop. The steel fire escapes with their wooden catwalks were added in 1962 after the wooden verandas were irreparably damaged by snow. These changes have done little to alter the integrity of the building.

Certain landscape architectural features in the vicinity of the structure contribute to the ambience of the building. These features, constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps under the direction of Park Service landscape architects Merel Sager and Francis Lange, include the trout pools, water falls, stone retaining walls and parapet walls, and the campfire circle. Also included is the stone curbing that borders pathways within the boundaries.

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major part of business increase at Oregon Caves, is deserving of more than casual examination, for several reasons: Native materials were used in all places possible, which employment has resulted in a building entirely in harmony with its surroundings. Marble blasted from the spot on with the inn stands has been laid up in one of the largest fireplaces in the state--if not on the coast. Douglas firs, felled from adjoining hillsides, support the enormous structural beams in the attractive lounge and dining rooms. The stairway is perhaps the most ingenious piece of construction in the entire house. Two large logs form the strings, on which have been set three-inch oak treads cut from trees in the valley a few miles below. Madrona balusters support a fir handrail. This stairway is a conspicuous feature of the lounge. There is also a maple floored ballroom....²

Even the park service landscape architect assigned to work there wrote of the building's "original architecture." He commented that the Chateau created

...a perfect feeling of homelike comfort but still of quiet dignity.... Descending the landing...one is amazed to hear, blending with the music of the orchestra, the falls of the mountain stream which wends its way across this room and on to the sea.... When the large windows of each room are thrown open to the Siskiyou breezes, babbling from the brooks running into the beautiful fish ponds which surround the building, and the murmuring of the superb stand of Douglas Fir which covers the hillside, sleep can not be anything but peaceful and delightful....³

Any building inspiring that type of romantic prose created a powerful spatial impression on visitors.

The very limited building site on steep, mountainous terrain was a major challenge to the builder, Gust Liam. Rather than constructing a new lodge perched on the mountainside as the other buildings at the monument had been, he instead chose to span the

² "Siskiyou in Oregon Hold Caves National Park," Spectator, Saturday, October 13, 1934, no pagination.

³ B.R. Finch, "Report on Oregon Caves," September 7, 1934.

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small gorge through which the cave's stream discharged. He used that to architectural advantage by allowing some of the stream to pass through an artificial brook in the dining room and diverting the rest through a culvert in the basement. The way that nature was physically brought inside the building reinforced the purpose of the enormous picture windows. The visitor could relax and dine in cozy comfort with a small stream flowing past his feet while looking out into the thick, green forest. The concept of running a small mountain stream through a building and bringing the outdoors inside was not unique, but it was unusual and noteworthy.⁴

Liam used influences from the building site in other ways, too. By covering the exterior with shaggy cedar bark the building blended in better with the surrounding mixed conifer forest. The placement of the greatest mass of the building inside the gorge diminished the perceived size of the structure which made it less noticeable. From the "ground" level where the drive curved around the building the visitor sensed a two-story building--something smaller in scale than the trees of the forest, and something that "fit" with the terrain and rural atmosphere of the development. This enormous building was thus scaled down by creative thinking on the part of the designer. The building was able to deny its size.

Between 1934 and 1941 the young men of the Civilian Conservation Corps worked at the monument building the stone retaining walls, campfire circle, trout pools and waterfalls, and planting vegetation around the developed area. Their work was based on plans prepared by the National Park Service's Branch of Plans and Design in San Francisco. That office, headed by landscape architect Thomas C. Vint, contained many of the core people responsible for developing the design ethic known as "rustic architecture." The landscape plans for Oregon Caves were typical of that period. The basic design for the rubble masonry walls was decided on paper, but the boulders were selected in the field by the onsite landscape architect who chose them for color, texture, and weathered appearance. In this way the stone walls

⁴ Considering that the Chateau predates Wright's house "Falling Water" by two years leads me to think that the use of the stream running through the building was an honest response to the site, and not a choice made because the designer saw it in an architectural magazine and felt it would work here.

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had a natural-looking, aged form that made the walls blend in with the weathered bedrock exposed around the site. This thoughtful approach to site design further enhanced the rustic feeling around the Chateau.

Today's visitor to Oregon Caves is still enchanted by the rustic sense of place that the builder and the landscape architects created. Entering the area is very much like travelling back into the 1930s. Trout still swim in the small pools. The Chateau is more weathered, but the furnishings are entirely original. Even the smell of the aging fiberboard wall panels inside the Chateau contributes to that undeniably nostalgic feeling. More important than these subjective responses to the spaces is the strong architectural presence of the chateau with its steep roofs and shaggy exterior. The builder's intent to create a structure in harmony with the surrounding landscape, and the landscape architects' enhancement of the setting remain artistic pieces of the past.

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Bibliography

Finch, B.R., "Report on Oregon Caves," September 7, 1934.

Oregon Caves National Monument Files including newspaper clipping file and oral history notes.

Pacific Northwest Regional Office files including national register nomination and inventory forms.

"Report on Oregon Caves National Monument," May 4, 1934, Crater Lake National Park. No author listed but most likely NPS landscape architect Francis Lange.

