

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Parsons Memorial Lodge

AND/OR COMMON

Parsons Memorial Lodge

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Tuolumne Meadows

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Yosemite National Park

___ VICINITY OF

18th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

California

06

Tuolumne

109

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
___ DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED (June-October)	___ AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	___ PRIVATE	___ UNOCCUPIED	___ MUSEUM
___ STRUCTURE	___ BOTH	___ WORK IN PROGRESS	___ COMMERCIAL
___ SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	___ EDUCATIONAL
___ OBJECT	___ IN PROCESS	___ YES: RESTRICTED	___ ENTERTAINMENT
	___ BEING CONSIDERED	___ YES: UNRESTRICTED	___ GOVERNMENT
		___ NO	___ INDUSTRIAL
			___ MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Nature Center

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

California

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

National Park Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

STATE

California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE 1) List of Classified Structures Inventory
2) National Register of Historic Places

DATE

1) 1975
2) 1975

FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

National Park Service

CITY, TOWN

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

Parsons Memorial Lodge is a small building of approximately 1040 square feet at the northern edge of Tuolumne Meadows in the high country of Yosemite National Park. Elevation at the Lodge is 8640 feet above sea level. The area is closed by heavy snowfalls from approximately October until June except for access by skiers and snowshoers.

The Lodge is a simple, humble, yet massive structure. The building is symmetrical and rectangular in plan. The masterfully executed rubble stone masonry is laid in a reinforced concrete core. The pink feldspar and grey granite stones for the building were gathered onsite. The deeply raked mortar joints accentuate the stonework. Walls are battered and approximately three feet thick on the bottom and two feet thick at the top. The simple roman arch of the south-facing entrance frames a thick, arched wood door that has been covered with galvanized metal on the exterior. The interior of the arched door is of heavy planks tied with massive wrought-iron strap hinges. The voussoirs and keystone are dressed, as are lintel and jamb stones throughout the building. The low-pitched gable roof is finished with corrugated metal.

All of the windows are eight-light casements. Windows are shuttered during the off-season. Two windows (3.5'x5') flank the single entrance door at the south. The east and west walls each have two 4'x7' windows. On the interior the massive fireplace is centered on the north wall opposite the entrance door. The floor is scored concrete. The stone benches under the windows have thick wood planks for seats.

The roof structure is exposed on the interior. Peeled log rafters, sawn flat at the top edge, are strapped together at the ridge. The rafters average 1.5' in diameter. The rafters are supported by diagonal peeled log braces on the interior and exterior that rest on low stone buttresses on the east and west walls. Rafter tails (outlookers) project approximately 2' out from the metal roof. Smaller peeled logs from 6" to 9" in diameter lie side-by-side, perpendicular to the rafters completing the exposed interior roof structure. Above those are roofing paper and the galvanized metal exterior finish.

The stone for constructing the building was gathered nearby. Logs, hardware, and cement were packed in by mule. The galvanized iron for the roof was brought in by truck. The building was constructed during the summer of 1915. Construction began as soon as the trails were passable.

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 checked="" 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-Present	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1915-Present

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Mark White and Walter Huber
Bernard Maybeck (probably)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Parsons Memorial Lodge is of national significance in architecture because it was designed with a thorough understanding of the harsh environmental conditions encountered at that altitude, yet with the highly expressive use of simple natural materials indicative of the Bay Area architectural tradition as seen in the work of Bernard Maybeck and others. The building is one of the earliest stone rustic buildings in a national park. Parsons Memorial Lodge is a straight-forward response to architectural materials and environment. In subsequent years, rustic buildings became the trademark of the National Park Service architecture. Parsons Memorial Lodge was a most important forerunner of that design ethic.

The battered walls and low roof of the building make it hug the ground, leading a prominent contemporary architect to comment that the building seemed "to grow out of the ground naturally and to belong there just as much as the neighboring trees and rocks."¹ The simple materials were roughly shaped--the logs were peeled and some of the stone was dressed--and molded into a masterful, highly expressive architectural form. The hand-crafted quality is reminiscent of a pioneer mode of construction. The studied care with which the stonework was executed, the decisive arch at the entrance, and the elegant curve of the chimney show the controlled genius of the designers. The building's low rise visually connects it to the low rise of the granite peaks in the immediate vicinity. The use of local stone as the predominant building material blends the structure in so well with its surroundings that it is almost invisible from a distance. The use of onsite materials, "pioneer" building qualities, and harmony with the landscape were all foundations of the rustic design ethic seen in National Park Service architecture in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Lodge is of regional significance in the history of conservation. Edward Taylor Parsons, for whom the Lodge was named, was a businessman from New York. His love for the western mountains led him to join the Sierra Club about 1900. He served on the outing committee, and later became club director. Like

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .08

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	1	2	9	1	8	5	5	4	1	9	4	7	6	5
ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

B

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

C

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

D

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION
The boundary is a rectangle, 50' X 70", centered on the building.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	N/A	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	N/A	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Laura Soulliere Harrison, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

National Park Service

DATE

1985

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 728

TELEPHONE

(505) 988-6787

CITY OR TOWN

Santa Fe

STATE

New Mexico

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

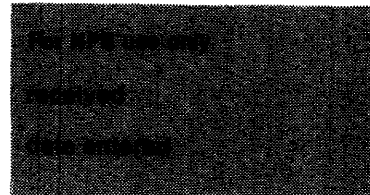
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Inventory—Nomination Form**



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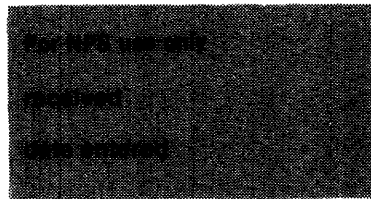
The building has undergone a few minor changes over the years, but none that mar its integrity. Ansel Adams, Sierra Club custodian of LeConte Lodge in the Valley during 1920, visited Parsons Memorial Lodge that summer. He noted that the doors and windows had been forced open and that "...the poles intended to support the roof against winter snows had been removed and cut up." Adams and F.C. Holman cut additional poles to fit and wedged them in. This temporary support system may have been unnecessary. No additional supports against winter snows have been used in recent history, and the original roof structure seems to be able to support the snow loads without problems.

A number of changes happened in 1935. The roof was repaired and roofing paper was laid under the galvanized roofing, which made the building much easier to heat. A concrete floor was poured at the same time. Presumably, the original floor had been dirt. New window frames and heavy shutters studded with nails were constructed to keep out marauding bears who frequently vandalized the building when it was not occupied. The cabinet and table which remain in the building were constructed at that time. The summer custodian at the time recommended that canvas sheets be hung from existing wires to partition off areas for the privacy of overnight visitors. It is not known if this was ever done. His other recommendation--that heavy planks be cut to cover the stone seats under the windows "to improve comfort and appearance"--was done. During recent years electricity was installed in the building. Track lighting and hanging exhibits (both removable) were added by the Yosemite Natural History Association. The electrical system on the exterior at the southwest corner of the building is an intrusion.

In 1973 the National Park Service acquired the building from the Sierra Club. It retains its use as a high country nature center. Overnight use is no longer allowed.

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John Muir, Parsons' death in 1914 was attributed to failing health that resulted from the devastating fight over the fate of the Hetch Hetchy Valley. The club set up a memorial fund to construct a simple one-room building with a large fireplace that would serve as a permanent club headquarters and meeting place. The building was also intended to serve as a reading room and library. The club chose the location so it could maintain better control over Soda Springs, a small mineral spring nearby, and because the area was an excellent starting point for access into the high country.

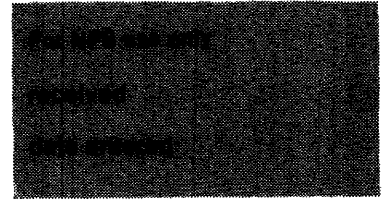
The matter of who designed the building remains somewhat unclear. Maybeck scholars Gary Brechin and Dr. Kenneth Cardwell attribute the design to Bernard Maybeck, in collaboration with his brother-in-law Mark White and construction engineer Walter Huber. The Sierra Club Bulletin announcing the opening of the Lodge stated that Mark White was the designer and Walter Huber the construction engineer. Mark White was an active member of the Sierra Club and would have been known by the article's author. No mention is made of Maybeck. The following is a short summary of other available information.

Bernard Maybeck (1862-1957) was an American architect of international stature. His better-known designs include the Palace of Fine Arts for the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco and the First Church of Christ Scientist in Berkeley. He also designed numerous residences in the Berkeley hills and in San Francisco, and became renowned for his use of natural materials, exposed interior structure, and having a building "fit into the landscape as if it were a part of it."² He felt that design of a building was "in large measure determined by the materials of which the structure was to be built."³ If stone were to be used, then the building should look like a stone building. Whatever materials were of structural importance were to be emphasized as ornamental features. All of this design theory is evident in Parsons Memorial Lodge. The Lodge is closely related in design to a group of buildings Maybeck designed at Lake Tahoe, also with battered stone walls and corrugated metal roofs to shed the high Sierra snows. Maybeck was awarded the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects in 1951.

Mark White joined with Maybeck to form the architectural firm of Maybeck and White in 1902. The firm existed until 1938. Mark White was Maybeck's assistant and full partner. In 1907, Mark White's brother John (designer of LeConte Memorial Lodge in Yosemite Valley) and George Howard also joined the firm, but only

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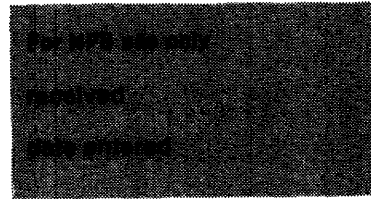
for 15 months. Maybeck did the initial design work, and trained Mark and John White to develop preliminary sketches into integrated designs. Mark White was the architect of the Hillside Club in Berkeley (1924)⁴, which was the meeting place for a group of aesthetes concerned with literary, artistic and social pursuits with a tendency toward a William Morris arts-and-crafts tradition. Members of the Hillside Club included architects Bernard Maybeck, John Galen Howard, and Ernest Coxhead. John Muir was a frequent visitor in the earlier days of the Club.

Scholar Gary Brechin who reviewed Maybeck's office files for drawings of Parsons Memorial Lodge found several unsigned and undated ones, all of which he attributes to Maybeck.⁵ A small sign hanging in Parsons Lodge, not dated, signed or documented, was installed by the Sierra Club and states that the building was designed out of a collaboration among Bernard Maybeck, Mark White and Walter Huber. The documentation of Maybeck's involvement is inconclusive; but whether or not Bernard Maybeck was directly involved in the design of the building, Parsons Memorial Lodge remains a work of genius for its simple design and environmental harmony.

1. "Report of Parsons Memorial Lodge," Sierra Club Bulletin, Volume 10, Number 1, January, 1916, pp. 66-69.
2. Leslie Freudenheim and Elisabeth Sussman, Building with Nature: Roots of the San Francisco Bay Region Tradition (Santa Barbara, 1974), p. 48.
3. Ibid., p. 48.
4. David Gebhard, et al., A Guide to the Architecture in San Francisco & Northern California (Santa Barbara, California: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1976), p. 246.
5. Marilyn Fry, "Parsons Memorial Lodge, Tuolumne Meadows, Yosemite National Park," on file in the National Park Service, Western Regional Office.

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Duhme, Albert, "Report of the Lodge Committee," Sierra Club Bulletin, Volume XXI, Number 1 (February, 1936).

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