

Oregon Caves Concession Cottages
Oregon Caves National Monument
End of Oregon Route 46
Cave Junction Vicinity
Josephine County
Oregon

HABS No. OR-147

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Pacific Northwest Region
Department of the Interior
Seattle, Washington

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
OREGON CAVES CONCESSION COTTAGES

HABS No. OR-147

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Location: On southwest side of road, at end of Oregon Route 46, in Oregon Caves National Monument, approximately 20 miles southeast of Cave Junction, Josephine County, Oregon.

U.S.G.S. Oregon Caves Quadrangle (15'), Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
10/466450/4660560
10/466370/4660550

Present Owner: Canteen of Oregon (Concessioner)
5000 North Lagoon Avenue
Portland, Oregon

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present use: Vacant--scheduled for removal

Significance: 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 19th century but little development was undertaken at the relatively unknown tourist attraction. In 1923, local businessmen formed the Oregon Caves Company and began providing food service, overnight accommodations and guided tours through the cave. Early structures built by the company in 1926 included the chalet, tent houses, and seven duplex cabins that came to be known as the Concession Cottages. These structures were built to cater to the tourist trade of the day. In their style they resemble a rustic Alpine village, a cluster of picturesque cabins nestled into a wooded mountain slope. Their design, scale, materials, and siting reflect the intent to harmonize with the surrounding environment. A proposed historic district at Oregon Caves originally included these seven cottages and seven additional structures; all but 2 of the cottages have been removed and the remaining ones are scheduled for removal by November 1988.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Oregon Caves Concession Cottages are located within the proposed Oregon Caves Historic District, in Oregon Caves National Monument. The district is in the Siskiyou National Forest, isolated by surrounding heavily forested, steep-sided mountains. The district is accessed by one winding paved road, and is situated near the top of a mountain in a steep ravine. The main attraction to the area is the existence of the Oregon Caves, one cave with a series of passageways linking "rooms" with dramatic marble formations. A group of buildings, including the Concession Cottages, the Chalet and the Chateau, is clustered near the cave entrance. Built for a growing tourist trade in the late 1920s, these structures form a cohesive historic district.

Oregon Caves was discovered in 1874 by Elijah Davidson, an Oregonian who was in the mountains deer hunting when he accidentally made his find. Over the years, adventurers continued to explore the cave, returning with descriptions of the cave's great beauty and mysterious nature. During the late 1890s, developers advertised the cave, but the remote area attracted few visitors. In 1907, a party of influential men, including Joaquin Miller, "Poet of the Sierra," visited the cave. Impressed with what he saw, Miller called the cave "The Marble Halls of Oregon." The publicity generated by his visit alerted others to the need for protecting this natural treasure. In 1909, President Taft proclaimed a tract of 480 acres as Oregon Caves National Monument.

Although the resort potential of the area had been promoted during the late 19th century, little development had actually occurred there. Tent cabins near the cave served the earliest tourists visiting the remote area. In 1922, the Caves Highway was completed, facilitating access to the remote cave area. It was not until 1923 that local businessmen formed the Oregon Caves Company and took charge of food services, overnight accommodations, and tours through the cave.

The earliest structures built by the company included the Chalet, a large 3-story, wood-frame structure, tent houses, and the Concession Cottages. The company built with the auto tourist in mind, providing them with some conveniences but a rustic experience overall. From a commercial standpoint, the city of Grants Pass benefited somewhat from the caves development, but not really as much as did the town of Cave Junction, which was established in 1926 just nineteen miles away and at the only road outlet from the cave. There is a direct relationship between the development of tourism and the settlement of Cave Junction.

By 1929 a spokesman for the Oregon Caves Company announced plans to construct a large hotel at the cave. Construction was underway by 1932 and completed in 1934. The 6-story hotel called the Chateau, was built in the rustic style, repeating design elements and materials found in the earlier structures. The year the Chateau was completed, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was brought in to Oregon Caves to implement landscaping plans around the concession buildings. Between 1934 and 1941, young CCC men built rock walls, fish pools, and planted 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. The landscape plans for Oregon Caves reflected the design ethic known as rustic, and were typical of the day. Rock walls and steps defined paths and open spaces. Careful attention was given to planting small, indigenous plants in the rock crevices of the walls, similar to natural rock outcroppings. Native trees were placed in appropriate locations to accent the relationship between structures and the surrounding forest. Cave Creek, which runs through the cave, was routed to cascade across rocks and fall into rock-lined pools stocked with German brown trout. All of this work was done for the visitor's amusement. The designed landscape appears so naturalistic it nearly belies its origins--it seems as though the mountain slope always had buildings, rock walls and paths, and fish ponds.

Visitors continued to rent the Concession Cottages until the summer of 1982, when some of the buildings were used to house concession staff. Eventually, all of the cottages were used to house staff and visitors had only the Chateau to stay in for overnight accommodations. The Concession Cottages were used until the spring of 1988, when five of the seven structures were removed. The last two cottages are scheduled for removal by November, 1988.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Built in the Rustic style of architecture, the Concession Cottages that remain appear much as they did historically. Their location was carefully chosen, for they were sited to appear as though they fit naturally into the surrounding landscape--they are nestled into the hillside, clustered together and linked to each other and the Chalet by narrow paths. Glimpses of the cottages in the trees can be seen through the Chalet's prominent archway.

The nearly identical duplexes are large, open rooms separated by an entry stairway and landing and toilet facilities. Rectangular in shape, each duplex measures (approximately) 30'2" x 16'3"; 480 square feet overall. They are 1-story and of wood-frame construction set on wood posts and rock foundations. Wood-shingled gable roofs have variations in the roof vents; both "eyebrow" and gable shapes are present. The roofs have extended eaves, exposed rafter ends, and plain fascia boards. The siding matches that found on the nearby Chalet and Chateau: cedar bark is applied vertically as a veneer, resulting in the structures' shaggy and rustic appearance. The duplexes have central, recessed entries, some arched. Some entries have shed- or gable-roofed overhangs projecting out from the building and supported by log brackets. Steps lead to entry porches which have plain log railings. Windows are varied but are generally 2-over-2 (horizontal) and 6-over-1 double-hung sash with plain trim. Cedar bark siding is also found in the skirting around the cabins.

Changes to the cottages have been minimal. They were not altered until 1952, when the concessioner remodeled the interiors of the cabins to provide visitors with modern conveniences. Some of the changes probably included the installation of showers and flush toilets. The cottages never had cooking facilities; visitors always took their meals in the dining areas provided in the Chateau.

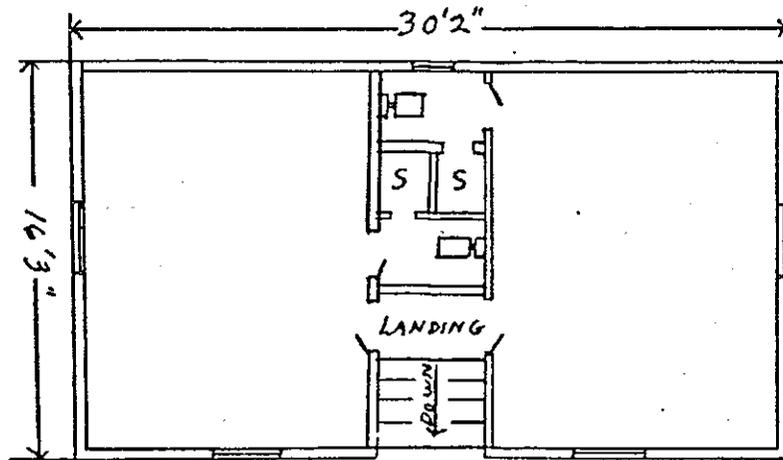
The exterior of the cottages remains the same except for seasonal repairs due to snow loads on porches and roofs. Despite the similarities between the cottages, each one had a slightly different roof detail, possibly due to the yearly maintenance repairs undertaken.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

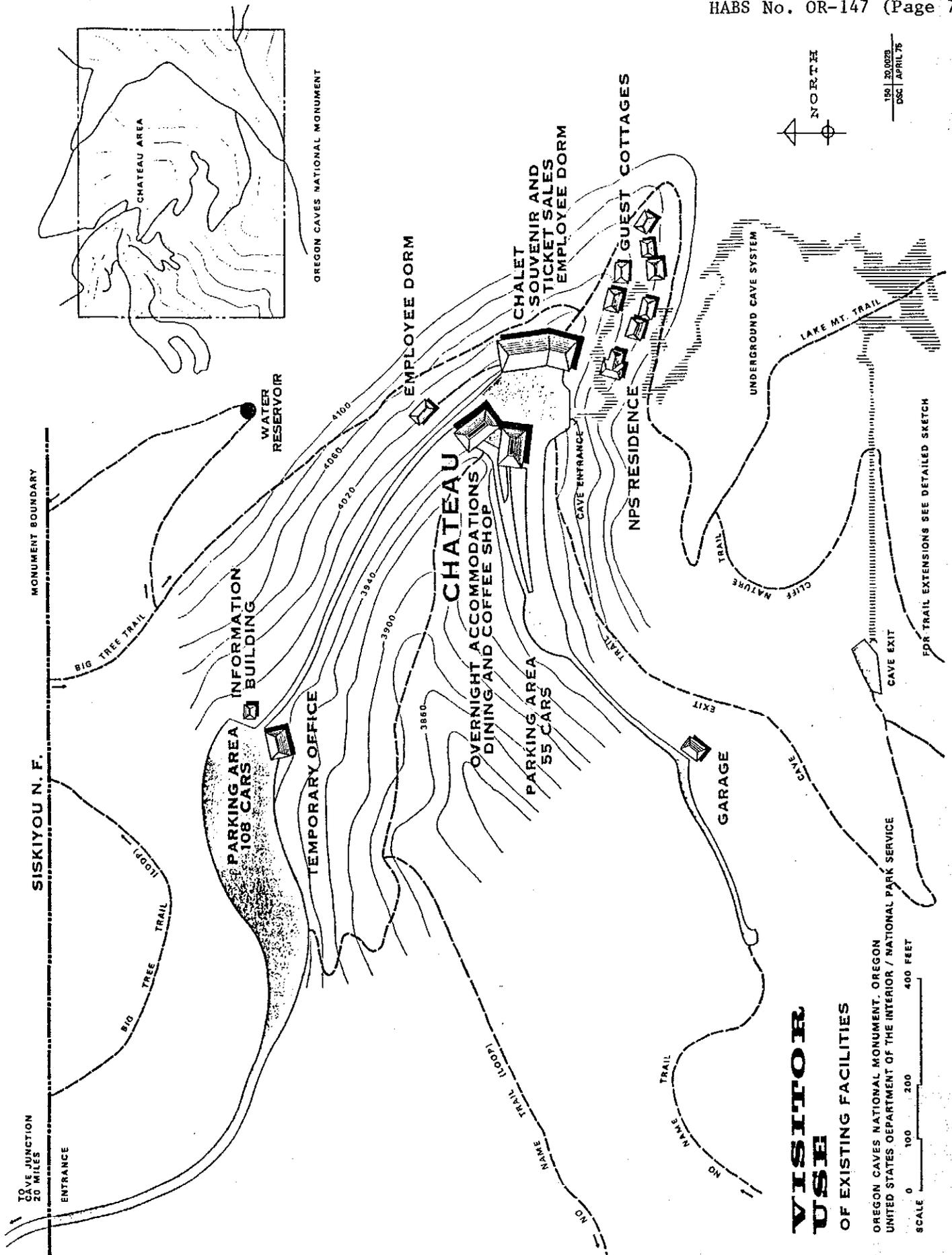
1. Davis, Chaz (Oregon Caves concession staff). Telephone interview with NPS Historian Gretchen Luxenberg, September 29, 1988.
2. Harrison, Laura Soulliere. National Register form for the Oregon Caves Chateau (1985), from the "Architecture in the Parks, National Historic Landmark Theme Study," National Park Service, November 1986.
3. Smith-Martin, Cheryl. Draft National Register Nomination form, Oregon Caves Historic District, Oregon Caves National Monument, August 1984. Edited and up-dated by Stephanie Toothman, National Park Service, September 1988.
4. Smith-Martin, Cheryl. Pacific Northwest Region Inventory Form for the Oregon Caves Concession Cottages, August 1984.
5. Walsh, Frank K. and William R. Halliday. Oregon Caves: Discovery and Exploration. Coos Bay, Oregon: Te-Cum-Tom Enterprises, 1982.

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Affiliation: Cultural Resources Division,
Pacific Northwest Region
National Park Service
Date: September, 1988

SCALE $1/8" = 1'$ #524-530



Sq. FT. 480



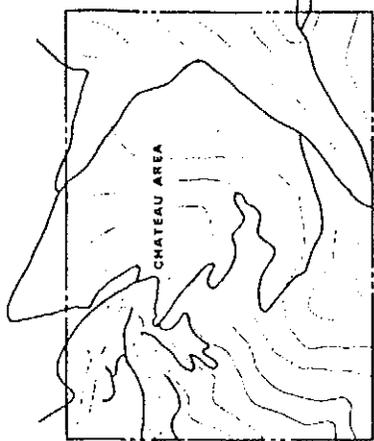
VISITOR USE

OF EXISTING FACILITIES

OREGON CAVES NATIONAL MONUMENT, OREGON
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

SCALE 0 100 200 400 FEET

FOR TRAIL EXTENSIONS SEE DETAILED SKETCH



OREGON CAVES NATIONAL MONUMENT

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