

**FIRE WAREHOUSE**  
(Building No. 2200)  
(Butte Falls Ranger Station)  
Rogue River - Siskiyou National Forest  
730 Laurel Street  
Butte Falls  
Jackson County  
Oregon

**HABS OR-180**  
*OR-180*

*HABS*  
*OR-180*

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
PACIFIC WEST REGIONAL OFFICE  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FIRE WAREHOUSE (BUILDING #2200)  
BUTTE FALLS RANGER STATION  
HABS No. OR-180

**Location:** 730 Laurel Street; Butte Falls, Jackson County, Oregon.

USGS Butte Falls 7.5' Quadrangle (formerly USGS Butte Falls 15' Quadrangle).  
Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) Coordinates: 10. 4709720N .0535763E.

**Date of Construction:** Circa. 1930-1931;  
remodeled by Civilian Conservation Corps in 1936.

**Present Owner:** U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Rogue River - Siskiyou National Forest

**Present Occupant:** U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Rogue River - Siskiyou National Forest

**Present Use:** Warehouse for fire-fighting equipment and related supplies since its construction.

**Significance:** Structures in the Butte Falls Ranger Station compound were built (or, in the case of Building #2200, the fire warehouse, remodeled) by crews of Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees. Construction of the Butte Falls compound was one of many Pacific Northwest examples of the significant-scale federal public works projects on the national forests during the Great Depression. These buildings exemplify the Pacific Northwest's Forest Service administrative structures of the Depression-era that employed the "Cascadian" or "rustic" style of architecture. Due to these qualities, the CCC-built Butte Falls Ranger Station compound buildings, including the fire warehouse (Building #2200), were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History

**1. Date of Construction:** In 1935 the Forest Service, using Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) crews, began construction of an enlarged complex of administrative and residential structures at the Butte Falls Ranger Station compound. By the time this entire project was completed it had extended at least into 1937, and possibly even a year or two later.

Previous to this project, the compound was a smaller, simpler ranger station (i.e., living quarters and work base for the district ranger) that consisted of only two structures: the ranger's residence (Building #1001) and the garage/warehouse (Building #2200, the structure documented in this narrative). Both of these buildings were either purchased or built by the Forest Service sometime during 1930-1931.

The exteriors of these two structures were then extensively remodeled during the 1935-1937 CCC project so as to conform to the new, "CCC-built" ranger station's overall architectural design and details. Within the new ranger-station compound, Building #1001 became the fire-prevention assistant's residence, and Building #2200 became the fire warehouse. The six buildings added during 1935-1937 as new construction to the enlarged ranger-station compound included: ranger-station office building; a new district ranger's residence and garage; timber management assistant's residence; 4-vehicle garage and enclosed-storage building; a paint shed; and a small gas-and-oil storage shed.

The exact year of Building #2200's construction is undocumented in available records, but it (as well as nearby Building #1001, the first ranger's residence) was almost certainly erected sometime between spring 1930 and fall 1931, i.e., *prior* to Civilian Conservation Corps construction activities at the Butte Falls compound. This conclusion is based on both structural and archival evidence: Until about 2001 it had been assumed

that both Buildings #1001 and #2200 were built as part of the CCC-constructed ranger station complex in 1935-37. Closer examination of Building #1001 in mid-2001 revealed certain details (e.g., “double-run” shiplap siding remaining *beneath* the CCC-era exterior siding) that indicated that it apparently pre-dated the compound’s CCC development. This slightly older building’s current “CCC appearance” was therefore the result of conscious modifications to its façade by the CCC crews.

A year-by-year administrative history of the Rogue River National Forest shows that the Butte Falls district ranger was first stationed at Butte Falls itself in 1931; the ranger was Hugh Ritter. Prior to that, the Butte Falls district rangers had stayed at more remote guard stations, such as those at Big Elk Prairie and Skeeter’s Swamp. (Brown 1969:257)

Subsequent research in the collection of national CCC camp-newsletters held at the University of Illinois, produced an article in the February 1936 issue of the Butte Falls “Camp South Fork” CCC Company 1640 newsletter, “*The Bulldozer*,” that confirms the earlier date for both buildings 1001 and 2200: “The “*original* [emphasis in original] fireman’s residence [Bldg #1001, i.e., the initial ranger’s house] and warehouse [Bldg #2200] have been remodeled [i.e., by the CCC crews at Butte Falls] in order that in appearance they will conform to the latest thing [i.e., CCC-built rustic-style exteriors] in Forest Service buildings...rustic siding and rubble stone foundations have been added.” Thus, it is apparent that both Buildings #1001 and #2200 definitely formed a two-building Forest Service ranger-station compound before development of the larger ranger station administrative compound in 1935.

Since its initial use by the Forest Service sometime in the early 1930s, Building #2200 has continued to be used as a fire-suppression storage facility. Most recently, the structure has held the usual variety of firefighter hand tools, power tools, and supplies: shovels, axes, pulaskis (combination hoe and axe), mcleods (combination fake and hoe), and mattocks; chainsaws, blivet bags, backpack hand-powered water pumps, and gas-engine water pumps; firefighters’ clothing, hardhats, gloves, and fire shelters; cases of MREs (“meals ready to eat”); and so forth. The District’s fire-suppression storage needs are now better served by a much larger, newer warehouse structure located elsewhere in the compound.

**2. Architects:** The identity of the architect(s) for the CCC-built and CCC-remodeled structures in the Butte Falls compound is unknown. It is virtually certain that the 1935-1937 compound was designed by staff members of the Forest Service Pacific Northwest Regional Office's "Architectural Group." The staff that designed most administrative structures in the Pacific Northwest Region is known to have included Linn A. Forrest, Howard L. Gifford, James Pollock, and W. I. "Tim" Turner. It likely was one or more of these individuals that designed the Butte Falls Ranger Station compound, including the remodeling (horizontal shiplap siding; decorative, scallop-edged vertical siding in the gable ends; lava-rock foundation facing, mortared-vesicular-basalt chimney on Bldg #1001) of the new older buildings (#1001 and #2002). It is probable that these two older (1930-1931) buildings were either privately constructed and then sold to the Forest Service, or the Forest Service hired a local contractor to build them.

**3. Original and subsequent owners:** The property has remained in the ownership of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service since the land around Buildings #1001 and #2200 first became a Forest Service administrative site (ca. 1930-1931). The property originally would have been within the ethnographic territory of the Upland Takelma Indians, who were defeated militarily and removed from the Rogue River Valley in the 1850s. The land remained federal public domain until sometime around 1900, when the Butte Falls Lumber Company acquired timberland and a sawmill site along nearby Big Butte Creek. The company also obtained a large parcel of land on the "flat" directly above the falls, which it subdivided into lots as a townsite and sold to prospective merchants and residents. This became the present, small incorporated City of Butte Falls. Private owners of the property prior to the Forest Service could likely be determined by a title search, but this information is not necessary for HABS documentation.

**4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:** The identity of the original, ca. 1930-1931 builder/contractor and any suppliers are not provided in any of the available records. As stated previously, both Buildings #1001 and #2200 may have been built as privately owned structures before being purchased, along with the land, by the Forest Service, or the agency may have contracted for their construction after acquiring the property.

Exterior remodels in 1936, done as part of the 1935-1937 construction of the enlarged ranger station facility was done by young men belonging to Civilian Conservation Corps crews. Two CCC companies, Co. 1642 (1935, headquartered at Camp South Fork F-104, near Butte Falls), and Co. 3865 (1936-1937, also at Camp F-104), accomplished the task, under the direct supervision of "Local Experienced Men" (LEMs) and the Forest Engineer. Camp South Fork, F-104, was situated approximately ten miles east of Butte Falls; it is possible, but uncertain, that many of the CCC enrollees stayed at a "spike camp" at Butte Falls during much of the construction effort.

**5. Original plans and construction:** No original plans have been found. Cost of construction is unknown.

**6. Alterations and additions:** Subsequent to the Civilian Conservation Corps crews' 1936 interior and exterior work on Building #2200, the warehouse exterior remained essentially unchanged until some time in the 1980s.

Sometime around 1980, a small gable-roofed showerhouse (probably built in the 1960s) was moved from near a post-1960 firecrew-barracks building elsewhere in the compound to a location adjacent to the north wall of the fire warehouse (flush with its northwest corner). Converted into additional storage (called the "Fire Cache"), the outside of the former showerhouse was re-sided with 4'x8' plywood-panel siding (with small-dimension bats at the joints). In a nod to the CCC architecture of the compound, a cut-out "pine-tree" symbol was added to its north gable end. A sealed interior connection between the warehouse and the new addition provided for direct

access from within Building #2200; this work resulted in the warehouse's north wall being slightly modified and its sliding door becoming non-functional. Most recently, this addition has held cases of MRE's and extra fire packs.

In 1987, a stoutly built deck made of pressure-treated timbers extended the working surface and size of the original (and relatively small) concrete loading dock next to the west wall's door. Around the same time, Forest Service crews built a small firewood shed near (but not attached to) the remaining portion of the warehouse's north wall.

## **B. Historical Context**

The Forest Service established the original (ca. 1930-1931) two-building ranger station at Butte Falls for two primary reasons: (1) It provided for an on-the-ground administrative presence for agency staff to oversee the nearby Fourbit Creek Timber Sale (a very large-volume sale of National Forest pine and Douglas-fir harvested by Owen-Oregon Lumber company, of Medford, Oregon). It probably was more by design than by coincidence that the Forest Service located its 1930-1931 Butte Falls ranger station on the far southeast edge of town, where Owen-Oregon's loaded log trains first entered into the town for the switch-over from steam-powered geared Willamette-Shay engine to steam-powered Baldwin rod engine. (2) It also served as headquarters for supervising the seasonal fire-guards and firefighting crews working out on the Forest itself during the summer season.

In 1932, with the severe economic decline of the Great Depression, the harvest rate on the Fourbit Creek sale had already declined precipitously and Owen-Oregon Lumber Company went bankrupt and was taken over by its bondholders. As part of the nation-wide phenomenon of massive unemployment, logging work in Butte Falls and elsewhere plunged to almost nothing. Beginning in 1933 the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), one of newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt's most popular and successful "New Deal" employment programs, brought thousands of unskilled apprentice laborers to federal construction projects

across the country. The expanded Butte Falls Ranger Station project of 1935-1937 was one such project. The CCC's nearby "Camp South Fork F-104" housed the crews that toiled on this and many other local Forest Service projects. In turn, the new ranger station served as headquarters for overseeing the other CCC projects (including firefighting and reforestation on the Rogue River National Forest). Also during the mid 1930s, Medford Corporation (successor to Owen-Oregon) sustained a low volume of logging on the Fourbit Creek sale and then increased harvest on adjacent company-owned lands; by the late 1930s, Butte Falls' economy had begun to recover to the worst effects of the Depression.

The original use of Building #2200, as a storage facility dedicated largely to firefighting needs, has continued to the present time.

At the time of construction, as now, the vicinity of the Butte Falls Ranger Station was the edge of the small town. To the north and northwest of the station, scattered modest residences of the community extended several blocks to the one-block-long commercial center. Immediately to the west and southwest (then as now) lay over ten acres of fenced pasture. And, to the east, across Laurel Street and beyond the Forest Service property, is the forested canyon of Big Butte Creek.

As the district's timber-harvest grew significantly after World War II, the Forest Service enlarged the 1936 CCC-built ranger station office, and added more buildings (including residences) during the 1950s-1960s. In about 1970, a significantly larger new ranger station office (a leased building constructed on adjacent private land to the north) opened; during the 1970s-1980s the agency added a tree-seedling cooler and other storage buildings. The leased office was replaced in about 1995 by a second and even larger private-leased office structure situated on land immediately to the south of the compound.

With major reduction of the Butte Falls Ranger District workforce during the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Forest Service vacated the privately

owned (leased) office building in 2004. During that year, the Forest Service-owned, small CCC-built office, CCC-built timber-management-assistant's house, and CCC-remodeled fire-prevention-assistant's house (1930-1931 ranger's house) were all adapted for use as office space. The agency implemented this adaptation, going through the Section 106 historic-preservation-compliance process, in a manner that protects the original fabric and historic appearance of the three buildings' exterior, and that has restored much of their respective historic interiors (e.g., removed linoleum and re-finished wood flooring) for ongoing administrative use.

## **PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

### **A. General Statement:**

**1. Architectural character:** The Butte Falls Ranger Station compound's pre-1950s buildings have historical and architectural interest as buildings constructed (or, in the case of Building #2200, remodeled) as part of the federal employment programs of the New Deal. The compound is designated as a "primary-ranked" property, and one possessing unusually strong architectural coherence, in an Oregon-Washington thematic National Register nomination of Depression-era Forest Service administrative structures. Designed by Forest Service Regional Office architects as part of a large body of work during the Great Depression, each of the Butte Falls Ranger Station buildings express many of the characteristics of the "rustic"-style so popular in Forest Service architecture during the 1930s. The fire warehouse's extensive remodeling during the Civilian Conservation Corps construction project is a clear indication of the design principles and priorities of the architect(s).

The compound's location --- in a rural area on the outskirts of a small town --- probably helped to determine the consciously rustic (and "agency-identifying") appearance of the compound's buildings.

**2. Condition of Fabric:** Because Building #2200 has been maintained with regular painting, reroofing, and ongoing repairs, it is in very sound condition. Recent modifications (e.g., addition of the showerhouse structure as an attached "fire cache" storage unit in the 1980s) have altered the fabric of the building, but only to a minor extent.

## **B. Description of Exterior:**

**1. Overall dimensions:** Building #2200 is 37' by 24'6" feet in plan, and is 19' high at the peak of the roof.

**2. Foundations:** The foundation of Building #2200 consists of a poured-concrete stemwall with a thick "veneer" of rounded "lava-rock" facing on all sides of the structure.

**3. Walls:** Building #2200's walls are sided with 1x8" horizontal shiplap boards, with metal joints at the corners. For a decorative touch, the two gable-end sections are sheathed with vertical, scallop-bottomed 1x8" boards.

Originally (1930-1931), the exterior walls may have been sided with the same kind of double-run horizontal shiplap as was evidently then used on Building #1001, the (first) ranger's residence. This particular kind of siding, very popular between about 1910 and 1940, was typically employed far more on residential structures than on associated outbuildings however.

**4. Structural systems, framing:** Balloon framing is used throughout the warehouse. Structural members appear to be high-grade Douglas-fir lumber throughout. (It is very likely that this material was purchased locally, possibly from the extensive Owen-Oregon Lumber Company mill

operation located in Medford. The large Owen-Oregon Lumber Company owned and logged much of the timberland surrounding Butte Falls between 1925 and 1932; during that period most of the town's male residents worked as loggers or trainmen for the company.) Dimension and spacing of studs, dimension of plates, etc. cannot be determined because they are concealed behind the interior walls and ceiling. It is probably that, as a sturdily built warehouse, Building #2200 employs 2x6" studs with 18" or 16" spacing.

**5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:** The only CCC-era (or earlier) exterior projection from the main volume of the structures is the poured-concrete landing adjacent to the west-wall doorway.

**6. Chimneys:** The fire warehouse has a ca. 1980s metal stove-pipe chimney, for venting smoke and sparks from the wood-burning stove.

**7. Openings:** The HABS photographs adequately document the placement of all openings.

**a. Doorways and doors:** The two doors of the warehouse probably date to the CCC remodeling phase, although they could date to 1930-1931 construction. Both are heavy-frame, top-fixed sliding doors. The front (west) door measures 7'2" high and 48'4.5" wide. The side (north) door (no longer functioning) measures 9' high and 10'4" wide; it would have provided direct access for loading/unloading a vehicle.

**b. Windows and shutters:** All of the nine windows also appear to be original to the CCC remodeling phase; they are uniform in size (35" wide by 30" high) and in design (fixed 6-light; 3-over-3 with wooden muntins and frames).

**8. Roof:** Building #2200 has a 12/12-pitch gable roof, with the ridge line oriented north-south; it is roofed with standard-manufacture cedar shingles (probably last roofed ca. 1990-1995).

**9. Decorative details:** Decorative embellishments are few. Building #2200 has the distinctive CCC/Forest Service "pine-tree" symbol situated near the roof peak in both gable-ends (see photographs). The tree symbols are formed by cut-outs in the two central vertical gable-end boards. (The "pinetree"-symbol detail in gable-ends was very common on Forest Service administrative structures built during the 1930s; it is considered to be diagnostic of Civilian Conservation Corps work.) The vertical gable-end boards, the wide horizontal lower siding, and the lava-rock foundation facing can all be considered decorative details, specifically added to make the older warehouse conform in appearance to the nearby, newly built CCC structures. (The rounded lava-boulders/cobbles of the foundation facing most likely are local volcanic rocks; this kind of weathered, spheroidally exfoliating andesite is extremely common in the Butte Falls vicinity, occurring in plentiful quantities in road cuts and elsewhere.)

### **C. Description of Interior:**

- 1. Floor plan:** Building #2200 has an enclosed interior; the floor plan is rectangular.
  
- 2. Stairways:** The warehouse has no interior stairs or stairways. Three concrete steps on the south side of the concrete landing provide access to the landing and west doorway.
  
- 3. Flooring:** The warehouse's floor is covered with a non-descript reddish utility-grade linoleum that may date to the 1960s-1970s. It quite likely conceals diagonal-run, 2x12" board sub-flooring that rests on the floor plate and joists.

**4. Wall and ceiling finish:** The ceiling and original wall surfaces consist of plywood sheets with wooden bats at the joints, all painted white. Vertical “knotty-pine” paneling, which was added ca. 1985, extends along the entire south wall.

**5. Openings:** There are no original interior doors; the sole current “interior” door connects the the warehouse to the attached “fire cache” (old showerhouse) shed.

**6. Decorative features and trim:** There are no decorative structural details inside of Building #2200.

**7. Hardware:** The warehouse uses lag-bolts in the framing and heavy-duty steel hardware for hanging the two slider doors. There is no decorative or unusual hardware used inside the building, other than the pulls and handles employed on an unpainted-wood (possibly ca.1930s-1940s) cabinet, which is free-standing and not attached to the structure.

**8. Mechanical equipment:** All of the heating and lighting likely post-dates 1960. A wood stove (installed ca. 1980-1990) provides heat in the winter. (A single desk, with telephone and Forest Service radio, serves as seasonal “office space” for the fire-crew foreman and others while spending time in the warehouse.) The building has no summer ventilation other than an opened door and oscillating fans. The lighting system consists of fluorescent ceiling units.

**9. Original furnishings:** It is entirely possible that at least some of the built-in shelves, cubicles, and other storage features inside of Building #2200 date to the 1930s-1950s. However, it is likely that most of these were fabricated during periodic upgrades in firefighting equipment and supplies during the 1960s-1980s.

**D. Site:**

**1. General setting and orientation:** Building #2200, as with the other Depression-era structures at the Butte Falls compound, is oriented to the cardinal directions. The building site is approximately level, draining imperceptibly to the east and north.

Unlike the office and residences of the 1930s ranger station compound, which face Laurel Street, the fire warehouse faces away from Laurel Street and towards the gravelled alley that provides Forest Service vehicles with direct access to the warehouse and its contents.

**2. Historic landscape design:** No shrubbery or other landscaping is present at or near the warehouse. A relatively mature Douglas-fir is situated about 12 feet east of the southeast corner of the warehouse, and a large Oregon white ash grows about the same distance east of the northeast corner. Based on the plentiful summer watering that this grassy area has likely received since the late 1930s, it is probable that these two trees were either purposely planted in the late 1930s or, once they became established naturally around that time, were allowed to flourish.

**3. Outbuildings:** In addition to the “fire cache” (former showerhouse), which is attached to the warehouse, one other structure is located very close to Building #2200 along its north wall: a ca. 1980s firewood storage shed with doors opening to the north (away from the warehouse), T-1-11 grooved plywood siding, and a shingled “shed” roof. Two other small storage buildings are situated approximately 40 feet south of the fire warehouse. These are a “paint shed” (built by the CCC, and with very similar exterior materials and design as the warehouse) and a gas-and-oil storage shed (the construction date of which is uncertain, and the exterior design of which differs from the compound’s CCC-built or CCC-remodeled structures).

### **PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

**A. Architectural Drawings:** No architectural drawings or building plans of Building #2200, the fire warehouse have been found in Forest Service's available historic records or civil-engineering files.

**B. Historic Views:** No historic photographs of Building #2200, the fire warehouse, are known to exist.

**C. Interviews:** Personal interview with the following person was conducted by the author of this narrative in December 2004:

-- Richard McLanahan (Rogue River National Forest employee for over twenty years; firefighter stationed at the warehouse compound for much of his career).

**D. Bibliography:** The following sources provided information on the site history and the broader historical context of the Butte Falls Ranger Station:

Brown, Carroll A. History of the Rogue River National Forest, Volume I. Medford: Klocker Printers, 1969.

LaLande, Jeff. "Determination of Adverse Effect and Mitigation-Measures Report: Removal of Building #2200," (C.R. Job RR-1237), Rogue River National Forest, 2004.

LaLande, Jeff. Medford Corporation: A History of an Oregon Logging and Lumber Company: Klocker Printers, 1979.

Throop, Elizabeth Gail. "Utterly Visionary and Chimerical:

A Federal response to the Depression (An Examination of Civilian Conservation Corps Construction on National Forest System Lands in the Pacific Northwest)." M.A. Thesis, History. Portland: Portland State University, 1979.

Throop, E. Gail. "National Register of Historic Places

nomination: USDA Forest Service Administrative Buildings in the State of Oregon and Washington, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps." Portland: USDA Forest Service, 1985.

**E. Likely sources not yet investigated:** Although the author of this report made a brief and unsuccessful sampling effort in the main Jackson County newspaper for the years 1930-1931 and 1936, no concentrated research effort has been undertaken. It is possible (but not very likely) that the daily Medford Mail Tribune for 1930-1931 and 1936 contains articles regarding the ranger-station compound's two phases of construction (pre-CCC and CCC). Any such article(s) might identify the builder involved in the 1930-1931 project and provide additional specific information. A full title search would certainly reveal the identity of pre-Forest Service owners of the property, as well as the year it was acquired by the agency.

**F. Supplemental material:** No project field records or other supplemental materials are associated with this HABS documentation effort.

#### **PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

This HABS documentation project has been prepared as mitigative recording required by a Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement between the USDA Forest Service (Pacific Northwest Region), Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, the Washington State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation dated 1988 and amended 1989. As required by the PMOA, the Forest Service consulted with the Oregon SHPO and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation in 2004 regarding

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the adverse effect of the proposed removal of the Butte Falls fire warehouse. The consultation included an extensive but ultimately unsuccessful effort by the Forest Service to identify an interested, non-Forest Service party that would be willing to move the building from Forest Service land and adaptively use the structure while maintaining the historic integrity of its exterior. Consultation was completed in 2004, with concurrence reached that mitigation would consist of the level of HABS documentation that is specified in the 1988 PMOA for "primary-ranked" CCC/Depression-era structures listed on the 1989 Forest Service National Register nomination.

The HABS documentation is also prepared under terms of a Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement between the USDA Forest Service (Pacific Northwest Region) and the National Park Service (Western Region) dated 1986. This PMOA stipulates the number and size of photographic views for National Register-listed CCC-built Forest Service buildings.

The author of this outline/narrative HABS report was Jeff LaLande, Rogue River - Siskiyou National Forest archaeologist/historian. The report was completed and submitted to the National Park Service in April, 2005.

