

Timber Creek Bunkhouse and Mess Hall  
Trail Ridge Road  
Rocky Mountain National Park  
Grand Lake Vicinity  
Grand County  
Colorado

HABS No. CO-86

HABS  
COLO  
25-GRLK.V,  
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY  
TIMBER CREEK BUNKHOUSE AND MESS HALL

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3-

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Location: Trail Ridge Road, Rocky Mountain National Park, approximately ten miles north of Grand Lake, Grand County, Colorado

Quad: Fall River Pass

UTM: ZONE 13/428000/4470080

Present Owner: Rocky Mountain National Park, National Park Service

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Timber Creek Bunkhouse and Mess Hall is significant as an example of National Park Service rustic architecture, which is present throughout Rocky Mountain National Park. The log frame structure is an isolated building, and not within a specific Historic District. The building originally served as the bunkhouse and mess hall for the Timber Creek Road Camp. There are no records of alterations to the building.

## PART I. HISTORY

### A. Physical History:

1. Date of construction: 1931
2. Architects: Howard W. Baker and Thomas C. Vint

### B. Historical Narrative:

The origin of Rocky Mountain National Park's early architectural style is attributed to National Park Service policy, and to the influence of Stephen T. Mather, its first director. Following the nineteenth century romantic tradition, and using the architectural tenets of Andrew Jackson Downing and Frederick Law Olmsted as precedent, Mather and his assistant Horace Albright, developed a rustic style of park architecture. The philosophy of this rustic style, which dominated park planning for thirty years, was formally recorded in the National Park Service's "Statement of Policy."

The philosophy behind the National Park Service architectural style was to blend the building into its surrounding environment. Massing and building materials were important design techniques used to blend the building into its landscape. The building's massing responded in similarity to the topography of the park, and only natural building materials were used. In addition, over-scaled elements, such as massive rock walls, helped ground the building in its landscape. Attention to detail was another characteristic of this rustic style. For instance, careful attention was paid to handcrafted details, such as hewn logs, as well as to the detailed masonry work and the wood shingled roofs. Finally, and most importantly, the design of the building or building complex was always subordinate to its surroundings.

In accordance with the park service policy of rustic architecture, the architecture of Rocky Mountain National Park drew on its forested surroundings and alpine environment for inspiration. Thus, logs were the dominant building material, with native moss rock used as an accent material. In order for the building's scale to be consistent with the surrounding large trees and rough terrain, all of the structural members were massive. Characteristically, the roof was usually pitched and had exposed log rafter ends. The color scheme of the building also blended with its forest surroundings. Brown was the prominent exterior color, while trim was painted green, gray or buff.

Timber Creek Bunkhouse and Mess Hall is one of nineteen individual buildings in Rocky Mountain National Park that are significant examples of NPS rustic architecture. Two historic districts within the park are also examples of this rustic architecture. All of these

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buildings, as well as the two historic districts, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The construction of the Timber Creek Bunkhouse and Mess Hall began in August 1931, taking one month to complete. The total construction costs added to \$4,000. This building was used to house construction crews, up to sixteen men, who built Trail Ridge Road. By the late 1930s, Trail Ridge Road was mostly complete, and the building's use changed to storing supplies and materials. Recently, this building has stood empty. Other buildings at this location include three comfort stations, and a barn, plus a campground.

Biographical Information - Thomas C. Vint

Thomas Vint joined the National Park Service Landscape Architectural Division in 1923. He received his Bachelor Degree from the University of California just prior to joining the Park Service. Vint assisted with Landscape Engineer Daniel Hull until 1927. During this time, Vint was in charge of the day-to-day operation of the landscape program. In 1927, Vint replaced Hull as Landscape Engineer. Virtually all the early construction in Rocky Mountain National Park and many of the designs through the 1930s were closely associated with Vint. He personally trained his staff in the intricacies of NPS rustic architecture. Although he began with a small staff, their numbers grew steadily. One of the architects was A. Paul Brown. Several unsigned drawing plans for structures at Rocky Mountain National Park may well be Brown's work, including the buildings and barn at the Timber Creek Road Camp.

Biographical Information - Howard W. Baker

Howard W. Baker joined Vint's staff in 1931, just after he received a Bachelors Degree in architecture from Kansas State University. With the growth of the National Park Service Division of Plans and Design, the western parks were organized into regions, with a landscape architect assigned to each region. Rocky Mountain National Park fell into Region II with Howard Baker serving as the region's landscape architect. He became closely involved with Rocky Mountain National Park. His position generally entailed preparing preliminary plans for construction in the parks. Final drafts were completed in the National Office in San Francisco. Most of the building projects undertaken in the park through 1932 were basic facilities, including housing, maintenance, utility areas, visitor comfort stations, and visitor information structures. Baker designed many of these buildings including the bunkhouse and mess hall for the Timber Creek Road Camp. Baker also supervised the preparation of dozens of building designs in Rocky Mountain National Park in the 1930s and 1940s. He is largely credited with the architectural development of Rocky Mountain National Park.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Information:

1. Architectural Merit and Interest: The Timber Creek Bunkhouse and Mess Hall is of architectural merit based on its contribution to the NPS rustic architecture theme at Rocky Mountain National Park. This architectural theme adds to the historical and architectural character of the park.
2. Condition of the Fabric: Good.
3. Summary Description: The rectangular log frame building is constructed with a concrete foundation and steps. Large, exposed horizontal and vertical logs reinforce the building's structural system. Vertical wood boards form the exterior and interior walls. On the facade there is a wood platform stoop. The building has a total of thirteen windows, and there are doors on all four sides. The gabled roof has green wood shingles and the log rafter ends are exposed.

### B. Detailed Description of the Interior:

1. Overall Dimensions: 19' x 42'
2. Foundation: Concrete
3. Wall Construction: The exterior and interior walls are constructed of reverse board and batten, reinforced with vertical and horizontal exposed logs.
4. Structural System: This is a wood frame building, reinforced with vertical and horizontal logs.
5. Porches, Stoops, Etc.: One wood platform stoop on the facade. There are poured concrete steps to the entrance.
6. Chimneys: One chimney of red brick is located centrally on the ridge. There is also a metal vent pipe.
7. Openings, Doorways and Windows: There are three single-width, brown painted, board and batten doors with wood screen doors on the north, south, and west facades. On the east facade there is a single-width, brown painted, wood paneled door. There are ten 2-gauged, six-light casement windows. In addition, there are three four-light hoppers. The window frames are brown wood with flat arches.

8. Roof - Shape and Covering: The roof is gabled with a low pitch. It is covered with green wood shingles, doubled every fifth course. The log rafter ends are exposed.

C. Detailed Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans: The single story rectangular building has four rooms.

2. Flooring: The floor is constructed of tongue and groove wood flooring.

3. Wall and Ceiling Finishes: The walls and ceiling are exposed wood frame. The ceiling has open rafters.

4. Doorways, Doors and Windows: There are wood frame doors and windows. On the north, south and west elevations the doors are single brown board and batten. On the east elevation the door is single brown wood paneled. There are ten six-light windows and three four-light hoppers.

5. Interior Trim: Wood frame windows, doors and open rafter ceiling.

6. Hardware: Details not known

7. Mechanical and Electrical Equipment: Details not known.

D. Site and Surroundings: The front facade of the building is to the north, facing a clearing. The setting is open, with native pines, aspens and grasses. There is a gravel drive to the west of the building.

PART III. SOURCES OF PROJECT INFORMATION:

Bibliography:

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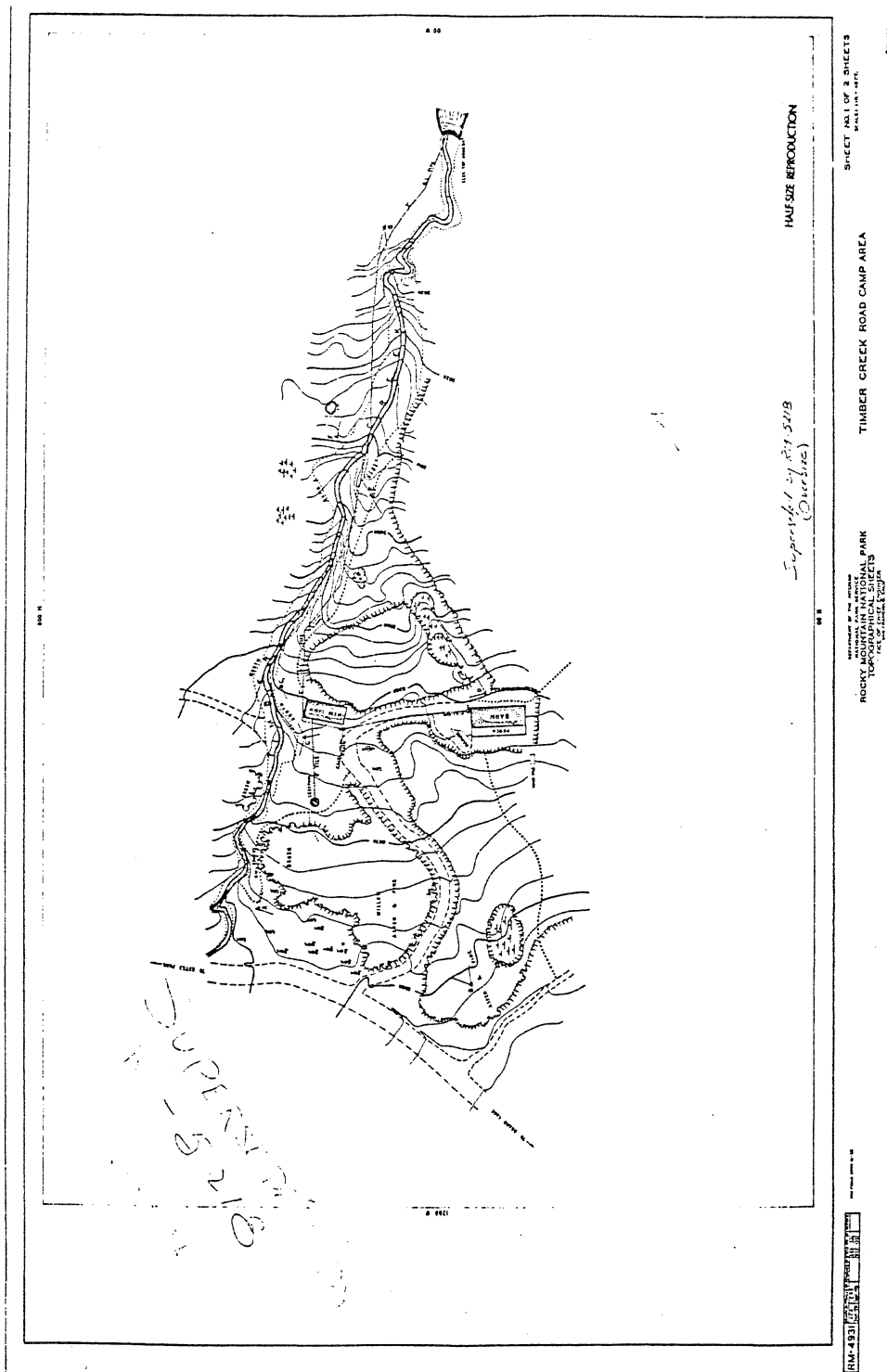
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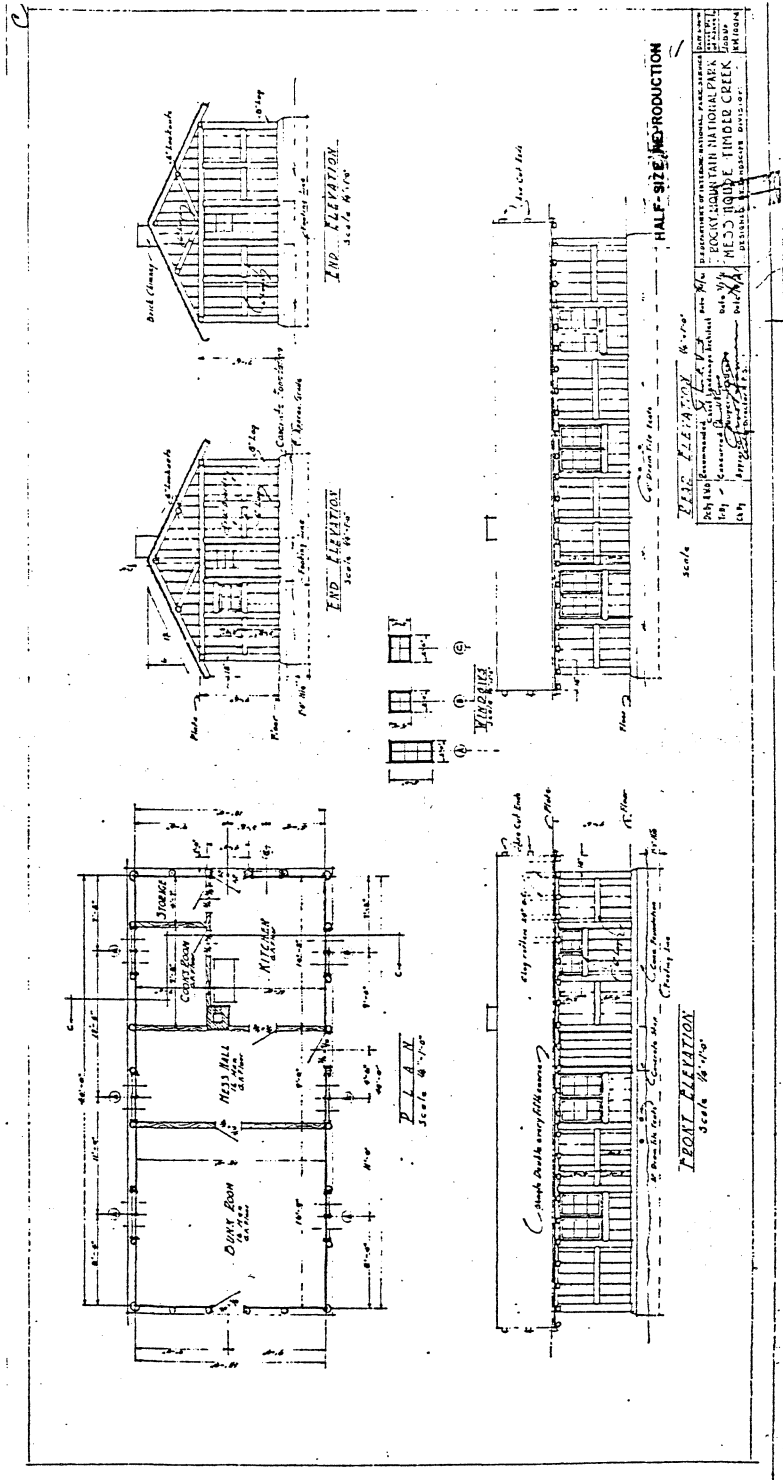
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Taken from: Timber Creek Road Camp Area. Rocky Mountain National Park, Topographical Sheets. (Microfiche) National Park Service. Rocky Mountain Regional Office, 1931.

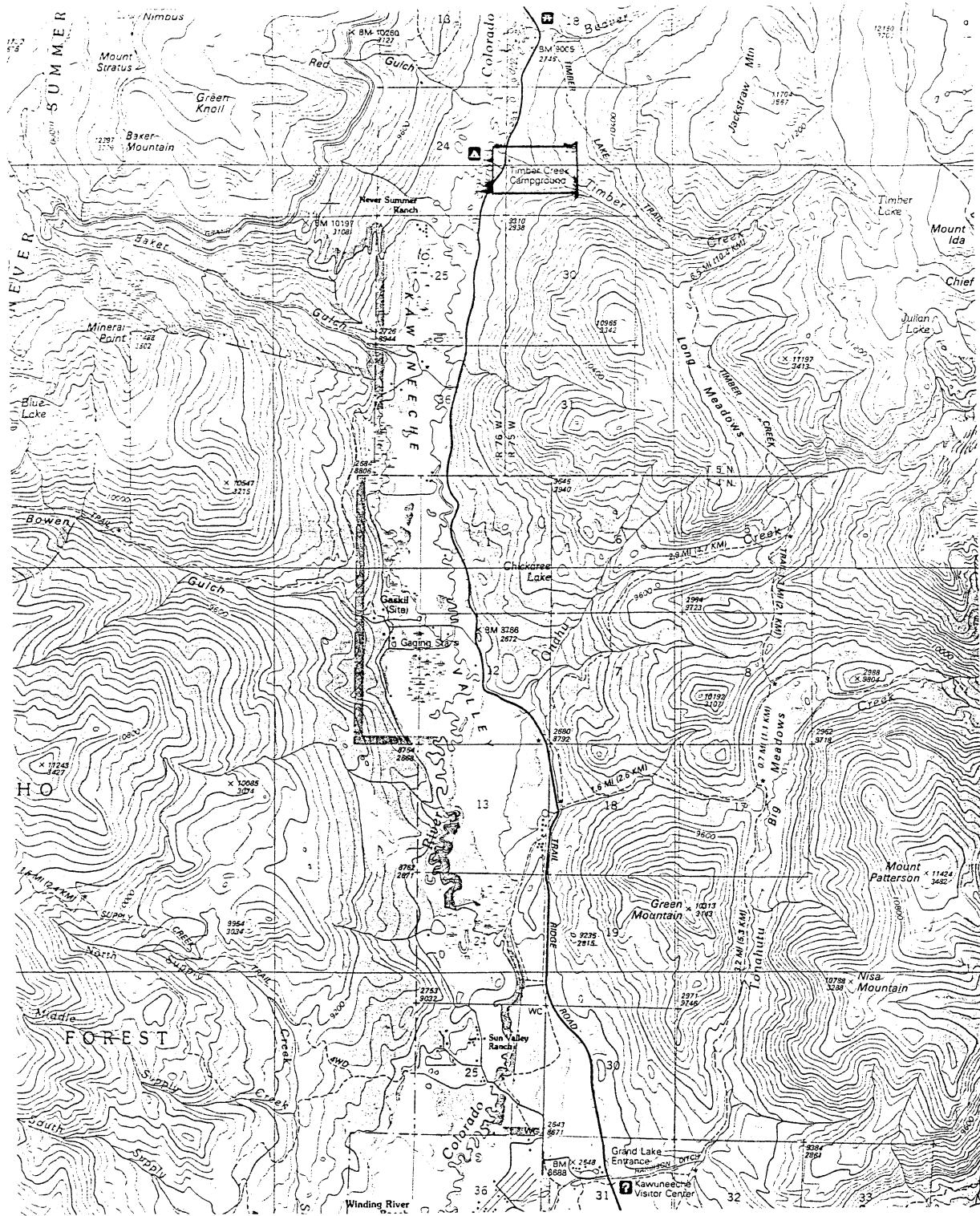


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Taken from: Mess House - Timber Creek. Rocky Mountain National Park. (Microfiche) National Park Service. Rocky Mountain Regional Office, 1931.

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Taken from: Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado. Topographic Map. United States Department of the Interior. Geological Survey, 1987.

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Documentation:       5 exterior photos  
                          2 interior photos  
                          8 data pages

Arnold Thallheimer, Photographer, August 1985.

- CO-86-1       TIMBER CREEK BUNKHOUSE AND MESS HALL, ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK. VIEWING EAST.
- CO-86-2       TIMBER CREEK BUNKHOUSE AND MESS HALL, ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK. VIEWING NORTH.
- CO-86-3       TIMBER CREEK BUNKHOUSE AND MESS HALL, ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK. VIEWING WEST.
- CO-86-4       TIMBER CREEK BUNKHOUSE AND MESS HALL, ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK. VIEWING SOUTH.
- CO-86-5       TIMBER CREEK BUNKHOUSE AND MESS HALL, ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK. VIEWING SOUTHEAST.
- CO-86-6       TIMBER CREEK BUNKHOUSE AND MESS HALL, ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK. INTERIOR, BUNK AREA, VIEWING SOUTHWEST.
- CO-86-7       TIMBER CREEK BUNKHOUSE AND MESS HALL, ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK. INTERIOR, KITCHEN AND DINING AREA, VIEWING NORTH.



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HNBS No. CO-86-2



HABS NO. CO-86-3



HPB 5 NO. CO-86-4



HABS NO. CO-86-5





HARRIS No. Co-86-6



HABS NO. CO-86-7