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# LONGMIRE CABIN

MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK  
HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT  
PART I



January 30, 1968

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# Longmire Cabin

Mount Rainier National Park

by  
Benjamin Levy



DIVISION OF HISTORY  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

January 30, 1968

National Park Service

U.S. Department of Interior

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## FOREWORD

This report is authorized by Resource Study Proposal, MORA-H-2 which called for a historical study of the authenticity of the so-called "Longmire Homestead Cabin" at Mount Rainier National Park. It also contemplated the discovery and evaluation of documentary evidence that might testify to possible alterations and modifications made of the structure in order that it might be rehabilitated to its historic appearance. It was felt that a refurbished pioneer cabin, the only one remaining at Longmire Springs, would be an excellent interpretive vehicle for presenting the fascinating story of the first settlement in the Mount Rainier region, demonstrating a pioneer way of life and exhibiting an example of pioneer architecture.

#### 4. Historical Data

The Longmire Cabin (Exhibit No. 1) is the only remaining structure reminiscent of the first settlement in the rugged wilds which are now Mount Rainier National Park. The cabin testifies to the pioneer spirit of James Longmire (Exhibit No. 2) and his family. Longmire was a farmer, rancher, packer, mountaineer, entrepreneur, and politician, and his children followed in his ways.

The Longmire wagon train plodded westward over the Oregon Trail in 1853. It was a singular trek because the train was the first to cross the Columbia River at Walla Walla, the first to negotiate the Yakima and Wenas Valleys, and the first to traverse the Cascade Range north of the Columbia. Crossing to the south side of the Nisqually River they arrived at Yelm-Prairie (Exhibit No. 3). James was so impressed with its beauty and lushness, he determined to settle there--the homestead has never passed from family control.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Mrs. Lou Palmer, "Narrative of James Longmire," in *Told by The Pioneers*, ed. F. I. Trotter et al, 1 (Olympia, Wash., Washington Pioneer Project, 1937), pp. 121-29. Also, Arthur David Martinson, "The Influence of the Longmire Family Upon the Early History of Mount Rainier National Park," (unpublished Master's thesis, Washington State University, 1961), pp. 6-8. The writer of the historical data section of this report is indebted not only to Dr. Martinson's thesis but to his generous personal assistance in identifying potential sources and in giving a general and initial direction to the search for important data.

Longmire quickly established his reputation as a vigorous and influential pioneer. Local tradition holds that he found favor with the native inhabitants and was often sought for his ability to conciliate with the Indians. He was also a member of the first Washington State Legislature.<sup>2</sup>

What it was that stimulated James Longmire to search out the forbidding wilderness of Mount Rainier can only be conjectured. It was probably an appetite for adventure enhanced by his pioneering effort in crossing the Cascades which was no mean task.

As early as 1854 he penetrated the region in search for a passage across the Cascades better than the treacherous Naches Pass. That endeavor, which eventually took him up the Cowlitz River, was almost duplicated in 1861 when Longmire hacked out a crude trail from Yelm to Bear Prairie. This latter trail was later to become a popular path for tourists and mountain climbers using Yelm as a base camp.<sup>3</sup>

While Longmire was not the first white man to venture into the Mount Rainier region, by 1870 he had built a

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2. Richard and Floss Loutzenhiser, *The Story of Yelm: The Little Town with a Big History, 1845-1948* (Yelm, 1949), pp. 22-23. Quoted by Martinson, "The Influence of the Longmire Family," p. 9.

3. Martinson, pp. 10-11. Also, John H. Williams, *The Mountain That Was "God"* (2nd ed. rev., New York, 1911), p. 59.

reputation of familiarity with the country that identified him as the most reliable guide in the area. In 1870 the first conquerors of Mount Rainier, Van Trump and Stevens, were aware of this fact and employed Longmire to lead them to the base of the mountain. Later that year he did the same thing for the Emmons-Wilson party--the second group to reach the peak. But it was not until 1883 that Longmire decided to make the climb himself, when he joined Van Trump again for the third successful assault on the summit.<sup>4</sup> It was on this trip, that the Longmire mineral springs were discovered.

Differing and conflicting stories are told about the discovery of the springs. Len Longmire, a grandson of James, related in 1933 that:

On the return trip from the summit he [James Longmire] found that the horses had wandered away. He located them in a meadow and found the mineral and hot springs there. This gave Grandfather the idea of establishing a mineral claim and building a hotel up there in the wilds.<sup>5</sup>

In 1907, the Tacoma News carried a story similar to Len's.<sup>6</sup> However, George B. Bayley, a member of the Van

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4. Ibid., pp. 13-15.

5. Alton Lindsey, "Interview of Len Longmire," *Mount Rainier National Park Nature Notes*, Vol. XI, No. 7 (Sept. 1933), 5. Naturalist Div. Library, Longmire.

6. *Tacoma News* (July 12, 1907), cited by Aubrey L. Haines, *Mountain Fever: Historic Conquests of Rainier* (Portland, Oregon Hist. Soc., 1962), n. 15, p. 223.

Trump-Longmire team, gave a first person account of the incident. Bayley relates how the team encamped on the river bank near "soda and iron springs of great variety,"--not on the return trip but in preparation for the climb.<sup>7</sup> His account should be followed, because it is an eyewitness report by a participant.

The traditionally accepted time for the discovery of the springs is in error, but what of the notion that James Longmire was the exclusive discoverer? Bayley tells us that the encampment was along a newly blazed trail beside the Nisqually River<sup>8</sup>--so they were not traversing well-known territory and the springs were, therefore, not a landmark. Longmire, being the guide, would be in the lead and hence the first to happen upon the springs. If they encamped by the river it is reasonable that the horses might have wandered and Longmire, who was responsible for the animals, might have discovered the springs on his own while recovering the beasts. After all, the area lay under a fog<sup>9</sup> and the springs could not be seen from the river--only by moving from the campsite could one discover them, and this might be what Longmire did.

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7. George B. Bayley, "Ascent of Mount Tacoma," *Overland Monthly*, VIII (1886), 266, cited by Haines, *Mountain Fever*, p. 63.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.



This string of "might haves" may be an exercise in futility, but it suggests that the traditional account of the discovery of the mineral springs is not entirely inconsistent with Bayley's report. Len Longmire might only be in error about the time of the discovery; not the circumstances.

Regardless of the details of the discovery, James Longmire envisioned a new prosperity for himself and his family with the prospective development of a resort and health spa situated among the mineral and hot springs. Some accounts indicate that he filed a homestead claim of 640 acres on the area of the springs and in 1884 began improvements by building a spur trail from the 1861 Yelm-Bear Prairie road and constructing the first of the permanent structures at Longmire Springs.<sup>10</sup> Diligently he began the development of the Longmire area which was to become the primary "jumping off" point for the Mountain's visitors. By 1885 tourists were being accommodated in a log inn.<sup>11</sup>

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10. Williams, *The Mountain That Was "God"* (3rd ed., Seattle, Lowman and Hanford Co., 1932), p. 69. Also, Interview with Mrs. Maude Shaffer, granddaughter of James Longmire and daughter of Elcaine Longmire, cited by Martinson, p. 24.

11. Pearl Engel et al, *History of Tacoma Eastern Area*, Washington State Historical Files, cited by Martinson, p. 25.

If a homestead claim was ever entered, it was never proved upon and completed. Longmire probably discovered that under the Donation Land Law he could not receive title to more than one agricultural claim, and he already lay claim to his homestead on the Yelm prairie. So he turned to the United States Mining Law of 1872 and located a claim on August 1, 1887, of an acreage just short of the allowable twenty acres (Exhibit Nos. 4a and b). The claim was based on the presence of beds of "mineral paint" and "auriferous gravel." The patent was issued on February 6, 1892.<sup>12</sup>

The health spa was indeed a family endeavor. James Longmire's eldest son, Elcaine, made the westward trek with his father in 1853, and to him eventually fell the major responsibility of managing the resort. Elcaine and his twelve children, especially Leonard and Benjamin, were identified with the Longmire Springs operations.

#### The Longmire Cabin on the Trail of the Shadows

It is Elcaine Longmire who is credited with having constructed in 1888 the small log cabin standing near "Iron Mike" spring (Exhibit No. 1). Leonard, who visited the

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12. Final certificate of entry is reproduced in Martinson, p. 22. Also, John P. Hartman, address, *Creation of Mount Rainier National Park* (Olympia, 37th Annual Convention of Washington Good Roads Assn., Sept. 27 and 28, 1935).

Springs first in 1885 is said to have helped his father fashion the rude hut from timber felled nearby.<sup>13</sup> There are several early photographs dating back to at least 1889 that faintly show in the background a structure resembling the present cabin (Exhibit Nos. 5a, b, & c). The 1889 date is difficult to arrive at but a careful comparison of the historic photos in relation to known facts sustains this conclusion. It is known that the two-story hotel was constructed in 1890.<sup>14</sup> Exhibit 5c shows the cabin in a photograph in which the two-story hotel does not appear. The structure behind the log cabin in the foreground is the building which was eventually integrated into the hotel structure.<sup>15</sup> Enlargements of the small sections of the photographs better reveal the similarities and comparison of these historical "blow-ups" with the present appearance of the structure. Points of similarity are the shake roof, the same number of courses of shakes, the number of logs, the overall dimensions and, of course, the location of the structure itself. There are differences, of course. The door is not the same--the

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13. Interview, Leonard Longmire, undertaken by Martinson, September 10, 1960 and cited by him, p. 25.

14. Martinson, p. 26.

15. This is confirmed by another photograph contained in Martinson, p. 28.

original did not have the window that is in it today and the early photos indicate a kind of siding or boarding on the front wall above the door which is not as pronounced today. Nevertheless, by and large, the comparison strongly indicates that the present structure is the one revealed in the early photographs.

Suggestions were made that this structure was erected by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930's.<sup>16</sup> However, a photograph, captioned 1929, showing Len Longmire standing in front of the cabin (Exhibit No. 5d), contradicts this. The photo reveals the same basic structure and elements as the present building, and while some rehabilitation of the cabin is indicated, thorough reconstruction is not.

Mrs. Martha Kerr, daughter of Elcaine Longmire recalled the cabin existed in 1905 and believed it was there in 1901 when she began spending her summers at Longmire Springs at the age of nine.<sup>17</sup> Other "old-timers" trace the present

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16. Letter, A. Lewis Koue to Benjamin Levy, Aug. 8, 1967.

17. Interview, Mrs. Martha Kerr, by writer, Sept. 10, 1967. Mrs. Kerr lives in San Diego but by fortunate coincidence was visiting Doctor Stute, Westport, Washington. She was reached by telephone. Mrs. Kerr remembers the 1905 date because she coupled it with construction activity on the "Government" or "Ricksecker" road during that summer and recalled how the workers were boarded by the Longmires. Indeed, the Ricksecker papers, (Naturalist Div. Library), reveal a letter from F.(?) A. Pope, 1st Lt. Corp of Engineers to Elcaine Longmire, Jan. 2, 1906, "I enclose P. O. money order in your favor for 1.67 the amount due you for board by R. E. Libby...."

structure back to the time they arrived in the area, but none earlier than 1901. None of them recalls anything other than minor repair and maintenance work done to it which probably accounts for the newer style wire nails found in the cabin.<sup>18</sup>

How was the cabin used? According to Mrs. Lelah Mosman, a granddaughter of James Longmire, the original intention was to use it as a meat house, but later Elcaine's boys used it as a summer residence. Mrs. Mosman disagrees with those accounts that hold that the structure was a family home. She recalls the family staying at first in tents and later at the Longmire Hotel.<sup>19</sup> Henry J. Evans, a friend of the Longmires who lives near the park, remembers spending his summers in the park from 1910 to 1918 when he came to live permanently a few miles from the Longmire entrance. He remembers purchasing meat periodically from the Longmires and recalls a different structure from the present cabin being used as a meat hanging shed. The meat house, according to him, was removed a short distance from the cabin and built either near or over the stream flowing close by. Water was drawn from the stream, raised to roof level and passed into

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18. Interviews, Messrs. Hollis Barnett and Henry J. Evans, by writer, Sept. 10, 1967.

19. Interview, Mrs. L. Mosman, undertaken by Martinson, Dec. 27, 1960, and cited by him p. 26.

inside overhead pipes with small holes drilled into them. The holes permitted the water to drip slowly from the pipes onto sheeting or burlap draped like a tent around the meat. The evaporating water refrigerated the meat. Mr. Evans recalls the cabin in question was outfitted as a watchman's shed and used by someone posted to guard the meat.<sup>20</sup> It may be that Elcaine's sons stayed at the cabin for that purpose. Leonard Longmire spoke of his staying in the cabin and recalled the experience of sleeping on the damp hay.<sup>21</sup> The furnishings were certainly simple--Mrs. Dwight M. Wells, a granddaughter of Elcaine Longmire, recalled a stool made by her grandfather and a bunk and stove.<sup>22</sup> At present there is a bunk nailed into the wall and a table, both pieces constructed of unfinished tree limbs.

#### Further Improvements<sup>23</sup>

The cabin was only one small and minor element in the entire complex of the mineral spa, but it is the only remaining relic of that fascinating development.

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20. Interview, Mr. Henry J. Evans, Sept. 10, by writer, Sept. 10, 1967.

21. Told to the writer by Arthur D. Martinson.

22. Interview, Mrs. Dwight M. Wells, by writer, Sept. 10, 1967.

23. This section is largely a condensation of Martinson, pp. 30-52.

As more and more visitors were attracted to both Mount Rainier and the Springs the Longmires began to enlarge their operation. The period from the late 1880's through the 1890's was a time of energetic expansion. James and Elcaine began to operate sizable horse trains from Yelm to the Springs (Exhibit No. 6). These trains consisted of about twenty-five Indian ponies awkwardly loaded with flour bags and other commodities balanced with pots and pans and crates of chickens. The women outfitted in riding skirts added to the picturesque appearance of such a train winding its way toward the mountain.

The Longmires began advertising in the Tacoma newspapers. A typical ad described "Longmires Medical Springs" as "Natures Own Laboratory" in which visitors could find relief from their afflictions (Exhibit No. 7). Indeed many of the early visitors to the region were attracted by the alleged curative properties of the spring waters. There were hot and cold mineral springs--the former for bathing and the latter for drinking. Over the hot springs bath houses were erected and cedar planked tubs sunk into the ground to catch a depth of water sufficient for bathing. A sulphur plunge bath was added and rubs and massages were specialties of the house (Exhibit No. 8). The "snorting" or "smelling"



pole is remembered by some--a wooden pipe stuck in the ground giving out sulphurous fumes. The object was to take a "whiff" of the sulphur-laden gases to clean one's head and sinuses. Hollis Barnett recalls that it nearly "took the top of your head off."

The number of springs has been in dispute and many of them were destroyed by the improved "government" road that skirts the area. The number reported varies from 12 to 48<sup>24</sup> and we will probably never have an exact count.

By 1889 a great amount of work had been accomplished at the health spa. James Longmire had hired five men to improve the roads and assist in the construction of five residences and two bath houses. The following year, the Longmires added the split-cedar hotel which was further enlarged about 1902 or 1903 (Exhibit No. 9).<sup>25</sup>

In addition, by 1899 a barn, storehouse and several shacks were reported.<sup>26</sup> At the hotel and at the "Paradise Tent Hotel" meals were served family style for 25 cents and 50 cents respectively.

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24. Ibid. Also, United States Geological Survey, *Twenty-first Annual Report to the Secretary of Interior, 1899-1900*, Part V (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1900), p. 95. Also, W. D. Bonney, *History of Pierce County*, Washington, 3 (No city, Pioneer Historical Publishing Co., 1927), 983-84.

25. Martinson, p. 26.

26. U.S. Geological Survey, *Twenty-first Annual Report*, p. 94.



The Longmire influence on the development of the park extended beyond the mineral springs complex. James was one of the first white men to lay eyes on Paradise Valley which is said to have been named by either his wife or Elcaine's wife, Martha. In fact, most of the place names in and around the National Park are accredited to the Longmires.

After James Longmire died in 1897, the management of the family interests fell to his son Elcaine and his children. The burgeoning tourist trade compelled the family members to specialize their tasks. Len became known as a guide for summit parties and his name is closely associated with the early conquests of Rainier. Ben specialized in packing visitors from the Springs to Paradise Valley. Sue Longmire and her husband, George Hall, operated a tent camp at Indian Henry's Hunting Ground.

The turn of the century heralded the creation of Mount Rainier National Park. That same period marked the ascendancy of the Longmire operation. The actual establishment of the park obviously enlarged the attraction of the region, and entrepreneurs, other than the Longmires, sought to establish businesses within the park to accommodate the growing tourist trade. The Longmires held their own property but the newcomers had to obtain concessions from the

Department of the Interior. On February 13, 1906, the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company obtained a lease of two-acres adjacent to the Longmire property for the construction of a hotel, known variously as the Tacoma Eastern Hotel or the National Park Inn.

Elcaine Longmire opposed the concession granted to the railroad and threatened the parties engaged in constructing the hotel with an injunction. It was also reported on April 21, 1906, that he planned to file a homestead claim on four forty acre tracts surrounding the James Longmire claim.<sup>27</sup> This latter action (Exhibit No. 10), if sustained, would seriously have interfered with the concession development.

On April 10, 1906, Elcaine filed a "re-location" placer claim on twenty acres north of, and adjacent to, the James Longmire claim (Exhibit No. 11). This action was probably taken to secure land and timber for further development of the Longmire complex. Eugene Ricksecker, Asst. Engineer, Corps of Engineers, who was supervising the construction of

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27. Letter from Eugene Ricksecker to H. M. Chittenden, Corps of Engineers, USA, Seattle, Washington, April 21, 1906. Ricksecker correspondence filed in Naturalist Div. Library, Park Headquarters. This suggests that accounts claiming there was no contention created by the concession are in error. Martinson p. 47.

the "government" road in the vicinity of the springs, was personally opposed to the patenting of lands within the park and requested the Corps to take steps to prevent the issuance of a patent for this claim.<sup>28</sup> Clearly Elcaine Longmire was running into difficulty in the attempt both to monopolize accommodations at the Spring and to enlarge his resort area.

Resistance to private expansion within the park is an understandable policy. The conservation of natural and scenic resources abounding at Rainier can only be assured through control of the land. The Longmires could not be an exception. In 1907, Acting Park Superintendent, G. F. Allen, advised the purchase of the Longmire premises and charged that the health spa had become dilapidated and unsightly. He also objected to the extension of the Longmire premises via Elcaine's re-location claim stating that he could find nothing there but a "mineral paint" of hydrated iron oxide of no commercial value.<sup>29</sup> Allen's purchase recommendations were made annually and succeeding Superintendents continued the call. It was not until 1939,

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28. Ricksecker to Chittenden, April 14, 1906.

29. United States Department of the Interior, *Report of the Acting Superintendent of Mount Rainier National Park to the Secretary of the Interior*, (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1907), pp. 5 and 10.

however, that the property was obtained by the park and by then the tract had changed hands.

Even though the Longmires did face obstructions to their hopes for expanded facilities, they were granted certain concessions. In 1907 John Longmire was granted a concession for the transportation of passengers by seven wagons in and through the park.<sup>30</sup> In 1914 Roy Longmire operated an automobile for hire (Exhibit No. 12) and Elcaine was granted a lumbering concession as well as one for vending ice cream, and groceries.<sup>31</sup>

#### The End of the Longmire Era

Elcaine Longmire died in 1915. His death drew the curtain down on the eventful and influential Longmire episode. In the spring of 1916 the property at the springs was sold to three men who founded the Longmire Springs Hotel Company. In 1919 it was leased to the Rainier National Park Company formed in 1916. On June 14, 1939 Superintendent Tomlinson delivered a check for \$30,000 to the Longmire Mineral Springs Company. The following day he received the deed and Longmire Springs was park property.

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30. Ibid., p. 11.

31. *Report of the Acting Superintendent*, 1914, p. 8.

### The Longmires and Mountain Climbing

The Longmires are remembered for more than the exploration of the mineral springs. They are identified with mountain climbing as well. James Longmire participated in the earliest climbs to the summit. Elcaine was turned back once but may have climbed on other occasions. His sons and daughters climbed--Sue in 1891, Grover in 1912. Ben reached the top at least twice and Len became the first professional guide to summit parties and acted in this capacity for twenty years. He estimated that he climbed the mountain over 100 times.<sup>32</sup>

### Exploration of Rainier Country

The exploration of the Rainier parklands was another Longmire achievement. Many of the present trails within the park today were originally blazed by the Longmires and vast stretches of the countryside were initially penetrated and named by them. A few significant miles of roads were Longmire-built. James financed Harry Carter's construction of the new road from Longmire Springs to Paradise Valley and Len helped in the construction of that road. James probably ventured into the northeast and northwest sections

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32. Martinson, pp. 67 and 74.

of what is today the National Park, but this has not been documented. There are, however, several vague references to his penetration of the southeast and southwest quarters and his finding a cut-off from the Nisqually River to the Cowlitz River prior to 1877.<sup>33</sup>

Elcaine's son, Ben, is the one most remembered for the exploration of the countryside, building of trails and naming the features of the land. He and his string of burros became familiar features around the mountainside. He was hired by the government as a packer and predator hunter. He was trail foreman for the construction of the Wonderland Trail and built trails in Stevens Canyon and the southeast region of Ohanapecosh. About 1910 he became a Park Ranger.<sup>34</sup>

#### The Longmires and the Creation of the National Park

The Longmires did not contribute directly to the political efforts to establish Mount Rainier National Park. Their indirect influence cannot be denied, however. Their exploitation of the mineral springs encouraged people to visit the mountainside. These first arrivals carried a

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33. Ibid., p. 83.

34. Ibid., pp. 84-86.

wondrous word back to the cities where pressure was building for the preservation of such splendid parkland as Mount Rainier. The Longmires made these exceptional lands more accessible to the public by guiding them to mountain summits, packing them into these new-found pleasuring grounds, and blazing the trails into fresh sections of the wilderness.

While the Longmires did not participate directly in the park movement, neither did they oppose it. In fact, Leonard Longmire recalls overhearing a conversation at the Springs between Congressman Francis W. Cushman and James Longmire on this very subject. The two men stayed up all night discussing the proposed national park and James expressed his favor for the proposal provided he could retain his rights to his land.<sup>35</sup> No doubt the Longmires found it difficult to live with the standards of National Parks and they retained an understandable jealousy toward their property rights. But they are justifiably proud of the significant part they played in the pioneer history of Mount Rainier.

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35. Ibid., p. 99.

### Conclusion

James Longmire was one of the many hardy and adventurous pioneers who opened the wilderness to modern settlement. His success in leading his wagon train across the Cascades north of the Columbia River and his penetration and exploration of the Mount Rainier country qualify him as a major figure in the history of the State of Washington. He and his descendents are responsible for initiating interest in the wonders of the Rainier countryside and for establishing the first settlement in what is now Mount Rainier National Park.

The Longmire family is represented significantly in most phases of the Park's history--discovery, exploration, exploitation, mountaineering, trail blazing, road building, recreation and others. Thus, the Longmire story has its place in history and one established on its own merits. To the history of Mount Rainier National Park, that story is of extraordinary importance.

The significance of the Longmire story is the substance of the value of the Longmire Cabin. It is regretful that of the entire original Longmire spa only this cabin remains. Fortunately, good sense and devotion to historical



preservation saved this last memorial. Since it is the last it should be saved.

But is the Longmire Cabin authentic? The weight of historical evidence demonstrates that it is. Photographs taken before 1900 substantiate the age and location of the structure. The structure today does not look exactly like the cabin in the early photographs, but differences in certain features are attributable to minor repairs and general maintenance through the years which also explains the presence of wire nails hammered into the building to hold bark or siding to the log walls. A few documents place the structure prior to 1903 and identify its use at different times.

Currently the cabin is described as the "Longmire Homestead Cabin" by a wooden plaque above the door. The use of the term "homestead" in this context is misleading because the structure was not built to "prove up" a homestead claim but rather a mineral placer claim under a mining act. Nor is the broad meaning of a homestead being in truth a family home for many years, applicable here, because the structure was lived in only incidentally. In one sense, the term might be made to apply in that the structure was

part of the complex of improvements for the James Longmire mineral spa. This may be stretching a point but it is a very subjective point anyway. The use of the word "homestead" to describe this cabin is certainly misleading and the best alternative would be to drop it and title the structure simply Longmire Cabin and let the details of interpretation explain the exact role of the building.

## Sources

In the development of historical narratives such as this, the historian inevitably uncovers data which for many reasons cannot be used directly. He frequently is impressed by the value of these materials and recognizes their importance to other chapters of a park's interpretive program. The study of the Longmire Cabin has revealed several sources of information which could have particular significance at Mount Rainier.

1. The photographs used in the historical data section of this report were found together with a vast collection of historic photographs which bear upon many interesting phases of the park's history. This collection lay dormant in a closet on the second floor of the Longmire Museum and workshop. The preservation of this collection is vital and an effort should be made to catalogue and protect these photos. On many of the photographs the captions are loose and falling off, thus making it difficult or even impossible to properly identify the subjects. These captions should be secured and the information filed. The photographs are of immense value to the interpretive program. They add dimension and color to the park's history.
2. In the Naturalist Division Library at Mount Rainier are several boxes of the correspondence of Eugene Ricksecker, the Engineer for the so-called "government" road through Mount Rainier National Park. His letters revealed some important information not previously cited about the Longmires and are valuable in other ways.
3. Recently some letters and reports dated 1891 and 1892 relating to Mount Rainier have been uncovered at the National Archives. Basically they are documents written by Cyrus A. Mosier, Special Agent General Land Office, Department of Interior, Seattle, Washington, in support of the preservation of the Mount Rainier region. Mr. Mosier's report contains a log of his trip into the Rainier country which contains information on the Longmire resort spa and other phases of the mountain scene.

Mosier took over 100 photos on his trip and included them with his report. Sadly, this photographic essay was not found in the Archives. One Archivist suggested that since Mosier intimated that he wished to be paid several hundred dollars for them, that the land office just returned them to him rather than compensate him for them. In this case the photos may be back in or around Seattle. This possibility might be examined sometime.

EXHIBITS



EXHIBIT NO. 1: Two scenes of Longire Cabin as it appears in 1967.

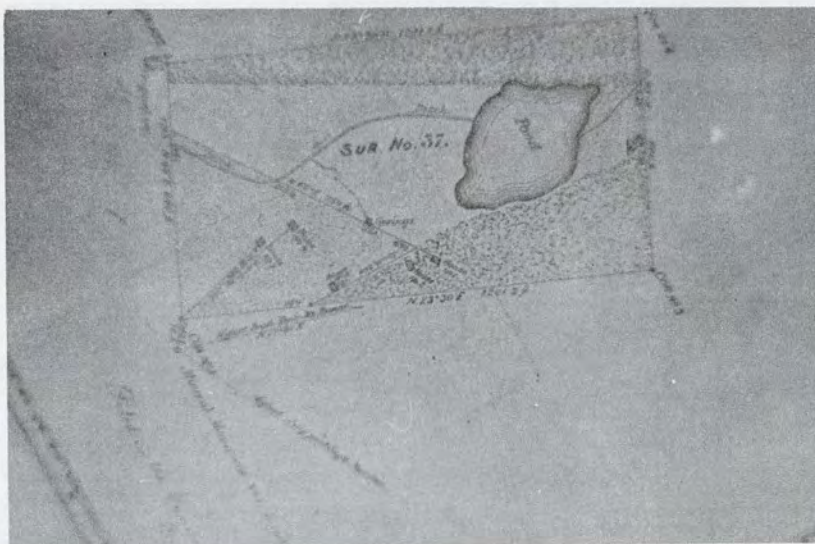
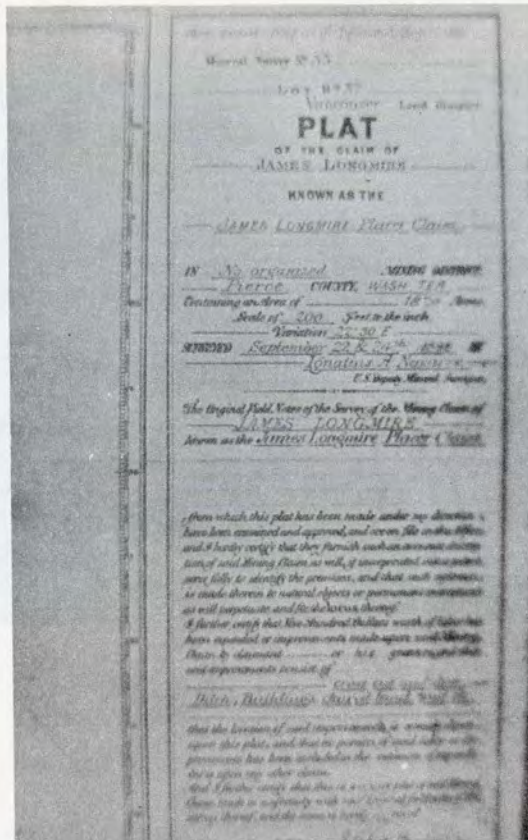




EXHIBIT NO. 2: James Longmire



EXHIBIT NO. 3: Yelm Prairie, Washington



EXHIBITS NOS. 4A & 4B: Enlarged sections of the Plat of James Longmire's claim.





EXHIBIT NO. 5A: Longmire Springs, c. 1903. Lower photograph is an enlargement of the circled area.



EXHIBIT NO. 5B: Longmire Springs, c. 1904. Lower photograph is an enlargement of circled area.





EXHIBIT NO. 5C: Longmire Springs, c. 1889. Lower photograph is an enlargement of the circled area.



EXHIBIT NO. 5D: Longmire Cabin with Len Longmire standing  
by the door, 1929.



EXHIBIT NO. 6: Elcaine Longmire leading a pack train from Yelm Prairie to Longmire Springs.

EXHIBIT NO. 7: Advertisement from  
Every Sunday, Tacoma, 1890.



# Longmire's

# - - Springs

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On the Road to Mount Tahoma.

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A Word to the Afflicted. An Antidote for Disease, prepared  
in Nature's Own Laboratory.

## Longmire's Medical Springs,

WITHIN EASY REACH OF OUR PEOPLE.

Are now open for the public. Why go abroad when you  
may find Nature's own restoratives at your very doors?

The best recommendations of the wonderful curative  
properties of these waters is afforded by the cures performed  
of those afflicted with rheumatic pains, catarrh, piles and  
other affliction that have been pronounced incurable.

The present means of reaching the Springs from Yelm  
Station, on the N. P. R. R., is by gentle saddle-horses, trains  
of which will leave August 1st and 15th, and September 1st  
and 15th.

Passage including board, for round trip, \$12. Board  
and treatment at the Springs, \$8 per week.

ELCAINE LONGMIRE, Yelm, Wash.


 In corresponding please mention that you saw this ad-  
vertisement in EVERY SUNDAY.

Fig. 5.--Reproduced from Every Sunday  
(Tacoma), August 9, 1890.



EXHIBIT NO. 8: Posted sign at Longmire Springs and the Sulphur Plunge. Both photos are enlargements of small sections of the originals.



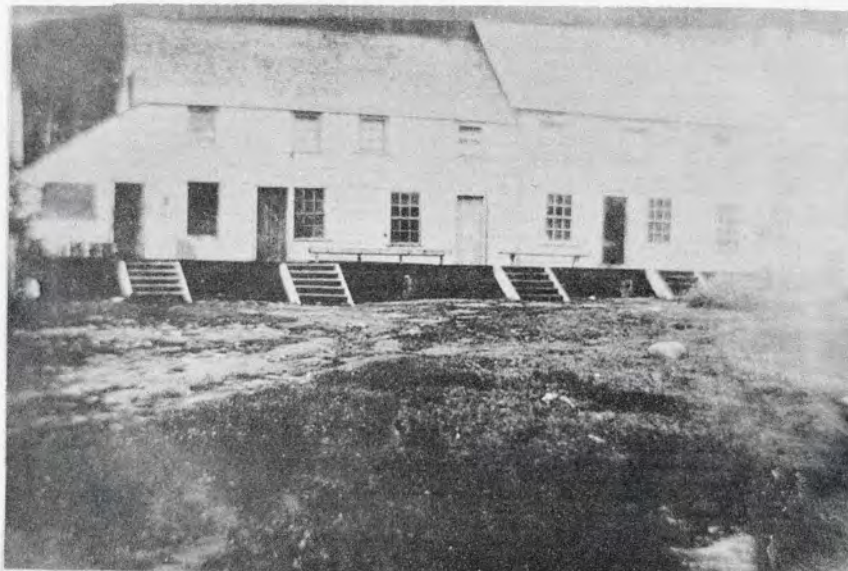


EXHIBIT NO. 9: The Longmire Hotel at Longmire Springs.  
The lower photo is a reverse print.

EXHIBIT NO. 10: Letter of Eugene Ricksecker,  
April 21, 1906, and plat of Elcaine Longmire's  
intended homestead claim.

R P R

OFFICE OF ASSISTANT ENGINEER,  
TACOMA, WASHINGTON,

April 21st 1906

Major H. M. Chittenden

Corps of Engineers, U. S. A.

Seattle, Wash.

Sir;

I was informed yesterday that Eleaine Longmire had stated his intention to file homestead claim on four forty acre tracts at Longmire Springs in Mount Rainier National Park, namely , the S.W. of S.W. of sec. 26, the S.E. of S.E. of sec.29, the N.E. of N.E. of sec. 32 and the N.W. of N.W. of section 33 all in township 15 N. R. 8 E. W.M. and was advised that he threatened the parties engaged in erecting hotel there, under concession from Sec'y of the Interior, with an injunction.

I learned from the receiver of the U. S. Land Office while in Olympia today that his mother, Viranda, widow of James Longmire, owner of the Longmire placer claim, for which they are supposed to have patent, and in which the springs are situated, had presented a filing yesterday which was defective in that it did not segregate the land and was therefore not acceptable. That he expects her to return with the papers on Monday and states that since there is likely to be a fight over the matter he will probably forward the filing to Washington without recommendation. When asked what suggestion he could make looking to the rejection of the filing stated that it would be well to file a protest that he could forward with the filing to Washington and that he would hold the papers until the middle of next week, April 25th, if you wished to take action in the matter.

I think effort should be made to have this filing disallowed.

That no filing should be allowed within the limits of the Park.

No land is under cultivation outside of the mineral claim. Two small houses were erected some years ago, prior to 1903, outside of this mineral claim but no improvements have been made to them since. All improvements



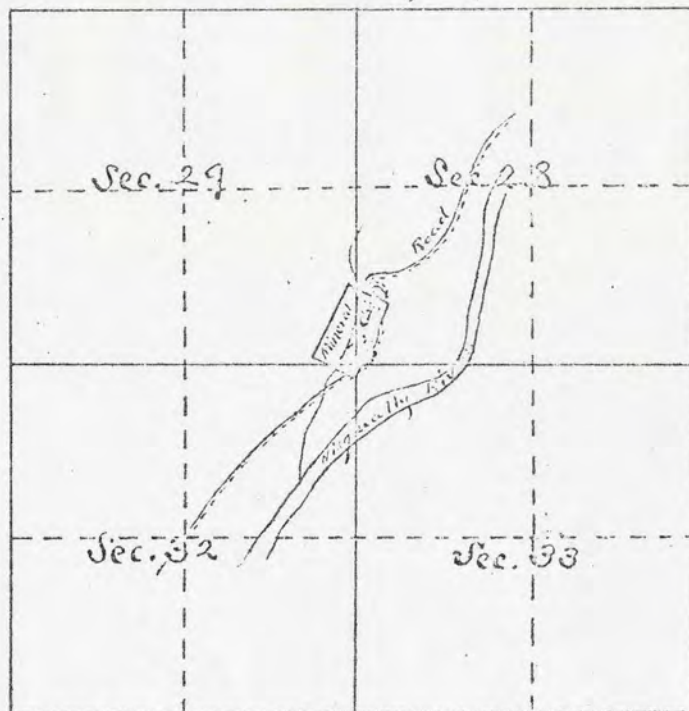
in recent years, since 1903, have been made within this mineral claim and made for hotel purposes. The mining claim has not been worked in any shape or manner.

I have today written the Park and Forest Superintendent, G. F. Allen, Orting, Wash., giving him a brief statement of what I have learned in this matter so that, if unknown to him, he may take cognizance of it as I think the matter calls for immediate action.

Very Respectfully

*Eugene Ricksecker*

Ass't Engineer.



Sketch taken from Land Office plat.

EXHIBIT NO. 11: Letter of Eugene Ricksecker,  
April 14, 1906, and plat of Elcaine Longmire's  
"re-location" placer claim.

April 14th 1906

Major H. M. Chittenden.

Corps of Engineers, U. S. A.

Seattle, Wash.

Sir;

The following extract from the records of the Auditor of Pierce County and today, is respectfully reported.

"Notice of Re-location of Placer Claim.

"I have this day re-located the Elcaine Longmire Placer Mining Claim containing 20 acres situated in unknown Mining District, Pierce County, State of Washington and more particularly described as follows, to wit:-  
"Beginning at a larch post marked P.O.M. #1 being the N.W. corner of the James Longmire placer claim on the "Misqually river about 5 miles south of Mount Rainier. Thence running 23.30 degrees south of east 600 ft to a hemlock post faced on four sides, three inches in diameter near the N.E. corner of the James Longmire placer claim. Thence running 23.30 degrees east of north 1500 feet to a pine post with four witness trees situated on a high hill. Thence running 23.30 degrees north of west 600 feet to a hemlock post with four witness trees near a small creek. Thence running 23.30 degrees west of south 1500 feet to place of beginning.

"Elcaine Longmire  
"Locator

"LaFayette Longmire.

"Located April 1st 1906.

"Filed for record at office of County Auditor, Pierce County at Request "Elcaine Longmire on this April 10th 1906 at 11.10 A.M. and recorded "of 7 "record of Mining Locations of said County on page 575."

Patent was issued by the Government to James Longmire for his placer claim some years ago. The claim has not been worked but has been used as a hotel for accommodation of tourists. The claim includes a large number of springs of various kinds and temperatures.

The relocation of Elcaine Longmire includes an iron spring and paint deposit. I have an idea that this claim is filed for mining purposes. There is a fine body of timber on it and it may be to enable them to cut timber for construction of hotel buildings, etc., and wood for fuel, a small item for hotel and camp fires, also to tie up the spring and paint pots, natural curiosities, from use by the public.

This notice must be advertised for 60 days from date, April 1st., before the Recorder at the local land office needs his approval to the Department at Washington, that is, patent is ordinarily issued, I believe, unless an adverse claim is filed within the 60 days.

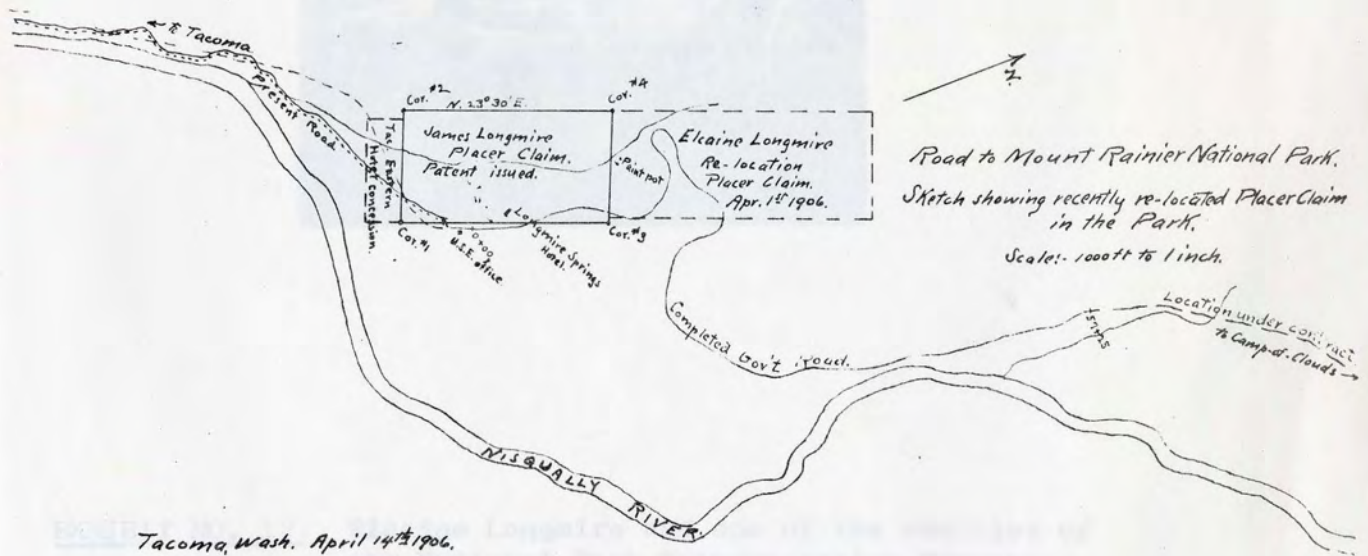
This office is strongly opposed to the granting of any patents in the Park;- the destruction of trees and other natural features that follow the location of mining claims, and it is respectfully asked that you give the matter consideration with a view of taking some steps to prevent the issuance of a patent for this claim.

Very Respectfully

(Sketch attached.)

*Engineer*  
Asst. Engineer.





Road to Mount Rainier National Park.  
 Sketch showing recently re-located Placer Claim  
 in the Park.  
 Scale: 1000 ft to 1 inch.

Tacoma, Wash. April 14<sup>th</sup> 1906.





EXHIBIT NO. 12: Elcaine Longmire and one of the vehicles of the National Park Transportation Company.

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

PART II

LONGMIRE CABIN  
Building LD4

Mount Rainier National Park

Prepared by  
A. Lewis Koue  
Architect  
January 1969

for

PLEASE RETURN TO:  
TECHNICAL INFORMATION CENTER  
DENVER SERVICE CENTER  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

PART II

LONGMIRE CABIN  
Building LD4

Mount Rainier National Park

A P P R O V A L   S H E E T

RECOMMENDED

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief, Division of Historic Architecture      Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent, Mount Rainier National Park      Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Regional Director, Western Region      Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic  
Preservation      Date \_\_\_\_\_

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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III	ADMINISTRATIVE DATA	1
IV	HISTORICAL DATA	2
V	ARCHITECTURAL DATA	4
VI	ARCHEOLOGICAL DATA	5
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VIII	FURNISHINGS AND EXHIBITION DATA	5
	Appendix	
	8 photographs	
	1 drawing	
	P.C.P. and HABS Inventory List	

### III ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

#### A. Name and Number of Structure

Longmire Cabin, LD-4.

#### B. Proposed Use

To serve as a key trailside interpretive exhibit on the history of the Longmire area.

#### C. Justification

1. This 1888 cabin is the only remaining structure of pioneer Longmire mineral claims.

2. It is a good example of a pioneer log cabin.

3. It illustrates primitive living conditions of settlers in the Northwest.

#### D. Provisions for Operating the Structure

No staff is available or contemplated for operating the exhibit, so an audio station is proposed.

#### E. Cooperative Agreements

No agreements extant though possible through volunteer or aid-program personnel.

#### F. Brief Description of Proposed Construction Activity

Replace logs at base of building and other unsound structural and finish members. Treat with preservative. Restore setting.

G. Estimated Cost of Proposed Construction

1. Labor and material to replace unsound structure and finish members	\$4000
2. Furnishing (built-in)	700
3. Battery operated audio station	<u>400</u>
Total Construction Cost	\$5100

H. Photographs

Appended.

I. Revised P.C.P.

Appended.

IV. HISTORICAL DATA

A. Relevant Historical Data

Elcaine Longmire is credited with the construction of this small one room log cabin in 1888.

Elcaine was the eldest son of James Longmire who had come west with his family over the Oregon Trail in 1853, and who had taken up a homestead at Yelm-Prairie. James Longmire had quickly established himself as a vigorous and influential pioneer and found favor with the native inhabitants. He pioneered here as a farmer, rancher, packer, mountaineer and politician; and his children followed his ways.

In 1883 James Longmire, though he had guided many parties to the base of the mountain, for the first time undertook to make the climb to the top in the company of Mr. Van Trump,

who with Mr. Stevens had been the first white men to conquer the mountain in 1870. It was on this expedition that Longmire came across the mineral springs and invisioned the potential of the site as a health resort. He had already used his homestead rights at Yelm so took advantage of the United States Mining Law of 1872 and located a mineral claim on August 1, 1887, for an acreage just short of the allowable twenty acres, based on the presence of beds of "mineral paint" and "auriferous gravel". The patent was issued on February 6, 1892.

The health spa called "Longmire's Medical Spring" was developed here as a family enterprise, and Elcaine eventually assumed the major responsibility for managing the resort. Eclain's twelve children, Leonard and Benjamin in particular, were identified with the enterprise. The property remained with the Longmire Family until taken over by the National Park Service.

The log cabin has undergone repairs from time to time, but essentially maintains the integrity of its original construction as evidenced by appended photographs. Reference also is made to the thorough and well documented Historical Research Report by Benjamin Levy of the Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service, dated January 30, 1968. This document



from which the above is extracted fixes the significance of the Longmire family with the exploration, discovery, exploitation, mountaineering, trail blazing, road building, recreation and history of Mount Rainier National Park, and establishes this cabin as the only remaining structure reminiscent of the first pioneer inhabitants of the area.

V

#### ARCHITECTURAL DATA

##### A. Record Drawings of Existing Conditions

No drawings for original construction are known to exist. Measured drawings of present existing conditions are contained in the approved Part I, Historic Structures Report.

##### B. Photographs of Existing Conditions

See Photographs appended.

##### C. Description of Existing Fabric

The structure is a single room one-story log cabin approximately 13 feet wide and 15 feet, 6 inches long, outside dimensions, with plank floor and shake roof. The logs are halved with that side to the inside and alternately lock-notched at overlapping corners. The roof shakes are secured to quartered log purlins which extend approximately 4 feet providing shelter over entrance stoop. The cabin has one hand made plank door and one small window. The exterior and interior are unfinished. Slabs of cedar bark have been tacked to the exterior surface of logs.

##### D. Architectural Description of Proposed Construction Activity

It is proposed to rehabilitate the structure and replace all rotted and unsound members with new like material and

members. Because of excessive moisture in the area from weather conditions and from the innumerable springs, it is proposed to place a concrete sub-floor and foundations under the structure with a moisture proof membrane to arrest the decay of the logs and wood floor construction; and to treat all exposed wood with preservative. The structure shall be made weathertight by chinking to correspond to original; and window and door openings shall be glazed. No heating or lighting shall be provided.

See appended drawings.

VI ARCHEOLOGICAL DATA

Not applicable

VII LANDSCAPE DATA

Area around cabin should be cleared of overgrowth and forest trash to condition approximating historic site conditions.

VIII FURNISHINGS AND EXHIBITION DATA

Job-built furnishings such as built-in bunk, table, etc., to be included. Exhibition Data to follow.



ILLUSTRATION NO. 2: Longmire Spring, c. 1904. Lower photograph is an enlargement of circled area.



ILLUSTRATION of a log cabin  
with Lenora standing in the  
door, 1917.



ILLUSTRATION NO. 4: Front view of  
cabin.



ILLUSTRATION NO. 5: Side view of cabin.



ILLUSTRATION 14 Cabin.

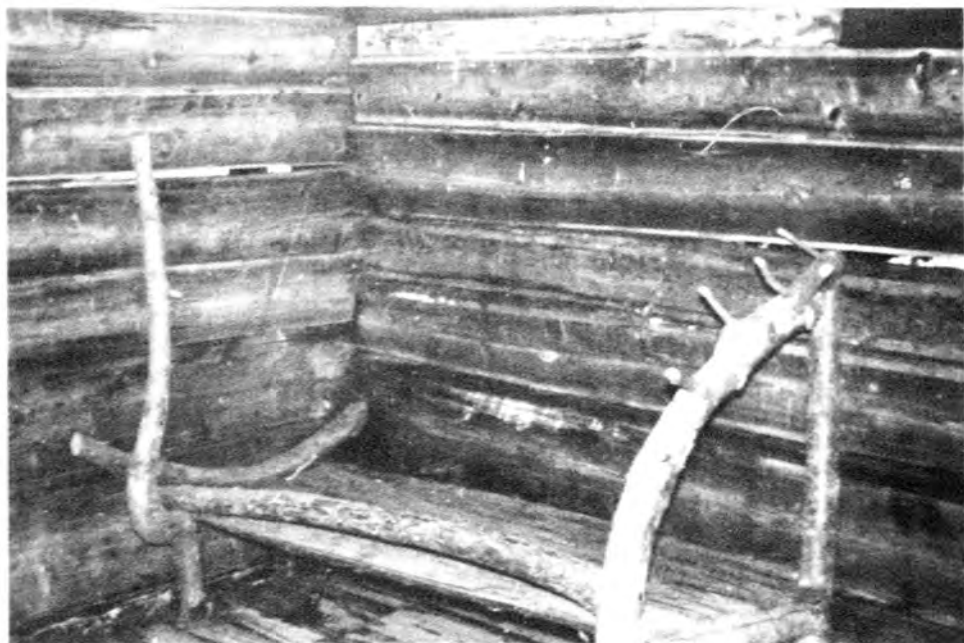




ILL. 1. View of door.



ILLUSTRATION NO. 8: Interior view of window.





DISTRIBUTION OF COPIES	
NO.	TO
2	WASO
1	WFO
1	DCBSC
2	WORA

# PROJECT CONSTRUCTION PROPOSAL

1. STATEMENT OF MANAGEMENT'S REQUIREMENTS, PROPOSED WORK, AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER FACETS OF THE PARK PROGRAM (Provide detail data for "Management Information" on Form 10-11a, Supplemental Sheet and attach.)

- a. Justification: Restore and rehabilitate Longwire Homestead cabin. Furnish with authentic furnishings of the 1890 period to provide a clear interpretive picture of the significance of the structure and the early history of the Longwire and park area.
- b. Justification: The cabin, constructed in 1888 by Eldon Longwire, is the only remaining structure of the early Longwire settlement. The Longwire family played the major role in pre-Park history. It is a good example of early pioneer architecture, rapidly disappearing from the Northwest. It also depicts the living conditions of early settlers in this area. These are important elements in the Mount Rainier interpretive story. Immediate attention is necessary to this structure as deterioration is to be halted and the structure preserved as part of the park story.

(Historical and architectural research to be accomplished under the direction of the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. See FCP M-126 Historical and Architectural Research on Longwire Cabin.)

## 2. ADVANCE REQUIREMENTS DATA

LAND STATUS Government-owned	MASTER PLAN NO. MP-RAI-3013-K	APPROVAL DATE 4/2/56
PCP NUMBERS OF PREVIOUSLY COMPLETE PORTIONS	INTERRELATED & DEPENDENT PROJECT PCP NUMBERS M-126	
INTERPRETIVE PROSPECTUS APPROVAL DATA		DATE

## WATER RIGHT NEEDS & STATUS

RESEARCH NEEDS & STATUS  
For FCP M-126, Restore & Rehabilitate Longwire Homestead Cabin, submitted to WASO 6/7/67

## OTHER

3. RECOMMENDED BY SUPERINTENDENT (Signature & Date) (SGO) DAVID A. RICHIE AUG 4 1967 Superintendent		4. APPROVED BY REGIONAL DIRECTOR (Signature & Date) (SGD) RAYMOND C. MULVANY OCT 11 1967	
5. LOCATION WITHIN AREA OR TERMINI Longwire		6. BLDG OR RT.# AND SEC. LD-4	
7. REGION Western	8. PARK Mount Rainier		
9. PROJECT Restoration and Rehabilitation of Longwire Homestead Cabin		Pierce (County) Washington (State)	
		10. PCP INDEX NO. E-207-2	

CLASS ☐ (A) - Estimate based on working Drawings  
 CLASS ☐ (B) - Estimate based on preliminary plans  
 CLASS ☐ (C) - Estimate based on similar facilities in other parks

P. S. & S. by

BPR ☐ NPS ☒

ESTIMATE

ITEM

QUANTITY

COST

1. Replace floor and roof.  
Stabilize foundation, side logs and roof members.  
Preservation treatment to entire structure.
2. Provide authentic furnishings of the period.  
battery powered
3. Install audio station and interpretive labels to  
present historical story. This is to include  
rehabilitation of small way-side exhibit.
4. ~~Install underground electric 220V power line, for  
minors heat and lighting to prevent deteriora-  
tion of historical furnishings and to power audio  
devices.~~

Day labor project

RESEARCH ESTIMATE APPROVED:

(Asst. Director, Resource Studies)

(Date)

CONSTRUCTION ESTIMATE APPROVED:

(Design Office Chief)

(Date)

INTERPRETIVE ESTIMATE APPROVED:

(Asst. Regional Director, Operations)

(Date)

ESTIMATE TOTALS

RESEARCH .....

Construction .....

Plans, Surveys, and  
Supervision .....

Contingencies .....

CONSTRUCTION  
SUB TOTAL .....

INTERPRETIVE  
SUB TOTAL (100%) .....

GRAND TOTAL .....



1. STATE <b>Washington</b>		HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY INVENTORY	
COUNTY <b>Pierce</b>	TOWN <b>Longmire</b> <del>XXXXXX</del>	2. NAME <b>Longmire Homestead Cabin</b>	
STREET NO.		Building #LD4	
ORIGINAL OWNER <b>Elcain Longmire</b>	DATE OR PERIOD <b>1888</b>	STYLE <b>Log Cabin</b>	
ORIGINAL USE <b>Home</b>	ARCHITECT <b>Unknown</b>	BUILDER <b>Elcain Longmire</b>	
PRESENT OWNER <b>U. S. Government</b>	3. FOR LIBRARY OF CONGRESS USE		
PRESENT USE <b>Interpretive Exhibit</b>			
WALL CONSTRUCTION <b>Log</b>			
NO. OF STORIES <b>One</b>			

## 4. NOTABLE FEATURES, HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DESCRIPTION.

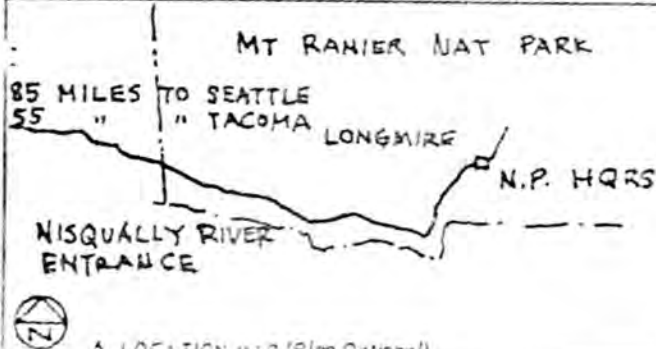
OPEN TO PUBLIC **No**

Structure constructed by son of James Longmire, who staked a claim to twenty acres at Longmire in 1888.

This cabin was built in 1888 by Elcain Longmire, son of James Longmire. Elcain filed on this homestead immediately adjoining that of his father to provide more land for their development of the hot mineral springs as a resort. This cabin is the only remaining building of the early Longmire settlement.

The cabin is typical of pioneer homes in the Pacific Northwest. The walls of the cabin are of split western red cedar logs and the floor is made of split cedar planks. The roof is fashioned of shakes also made from western red cedar. There are several pieces of household furniture in the cabin fashioned from material split from the same material. The structure is a one room cabin with a front door, a four pane glass window in the left wall and a small port hole high on the rear wall. The ceiling and interior walls are unfinished. Outwardly the cabin appears to be in fair condition, but on closer examination, the sill logs which were placed on the ground are decayed. The floor is decayed and very fragile.

The Longmire Homestead Cabin is the only remaining building constructed by the Longmire family on land later purchased by the Government. It is an example of early pioneer architecture that is rapidly disappearing from the Northwest. It portrays living conditions of early settlers in the area and, as such, is an important part of the human history to be retained for the enjoyment of future generations.

5. PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE Endangered **Yes** Interior **Yes** Exterior **Yes**

6. LOCATION MAP (Plan Optional)

7. PHOTOGRAPH

8. PUBLISHED SOURCES (Author, Title, Page)  
INTERVIEWS, RECORDS, PHOTOS, ETC.

C. Frank Brockman, The Story of Mount  
Rainier, p. 63.

9. NAME, ADDRESS AND TITLE OF RECORDER

Superintendent, Rainier National Park  
August 1962

DATE OF RECORD **August 15, 1962****Exhibit #1**