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HUMES RANCH CABIN

L Olympic National Park

Historic Structures Report

Part II

Historical Data Section

January 31, 1968

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Part II

Historical Data Section

Prepared by
Benjamin Levy
January 31, 1968

DIVISION OF HISTORY
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

National Park Service

Department of the Interior

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Ordinarily this writer has been received in the field with graciousness and an eagerness to assist any research project. This helpful attitude is typical in his experience. Nevertheless, Chief Naturalist Dave Karraker deserves special thanks for his help in developing this report. He put in many hours gathering materials, acting as guide, and directing efforts along the most economical channels. He spent much time and effort making the necessary introductions to the many "old-timers" who were interviewed. More than anything, however, Dave and his wife made this research endeavor a pleasant and, thereby, a rewarding venture by their sincere hospitality.

Benjamin Levy

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FOREWORD

This report is authorized by Resource Study Proposal, OLY-H-1, which calls for the rehabilitation of the Humes Cabin. That structure is, at present, the only building in Olympic National Park which is on the Historic Structures Inventory. The Master Plan also recognizes the building as a historic structure representative of the homestead period in the Olympics.

The proposed use for the cabin is as an interpretive exhibit of homestead life in the country through which the Park's trails pass. Therefore, the object of this report is to authenticate the historical significance of the Humes Cabin and develop its structural history in order that the proposed construction activity may be justified and carried out with historical accuracy.

INTRODUCTION

The Humes Ranch Cabin is of regional and local importance. It is most significant by reason of its relation to Olympic National Park. It is the earliest structural symbol of homestead life in the Park and is conveniently located along one of the hiking trails.

Grant Humes, who occupied the cabin, was a familiar figure, identified with the rugged interior of the Olympic range. Although he settled in the mountains late in the 19th century, few people preceded him. Whether an early or late arrival, he symbolizes a homesteading spirit vigorous enough to penetrate the Olympic wilds.

Documentary evidence of the cabin's structural history is sparse and some conclusions necessarily conjectural. Some sources of information have not been tapped because they are unavailable at this time. They have been identified, however, and, as time permits, should be investigated by local personnel.

The Humes Brothers - Pioneers of the Olympics

The Humes brothers most likely came from New England.¹ William, Martin, and Grant Humes may have been looking to get away -- seeking a new life and new fortune. It is believed they were heading to the gold fields of Alaska and their trip was cut short by an early winter.² They may have happened upon a piece of published propaganda singing the praises of the lush valleys of the Elwha and the Soleduck. Land companies flooded the market with promotional literature enticing the Easterner to settle on their land. The "Clallam County Immigrant Association" was no exception. It advertised the allegedly unsolicited testimonial of one pioneer:

I would rather have ten acres of cleared land here than 100 acres in Minnesota. We have here a perfect climate; we leave our root crops in the ground all the winter and dig them when we want.... Flowers bloom outdoors every month in the year. Horses and cattle graze out ten months... out of twelve. My only surprise is

1. Interview with Mrs. Roscoe Robinson, Port Angeles, Washington. She knew Grant Humes through the outings she participated in at the Humes Ranch. Contra, Deed Book 107, p. 527, Clallam County Court House, Port Angeles, indicates that Harrisville, New York, may have been the Humes' original home.

2. Jerry Russell, "Final Report of Historical Research Accomplished During the Summer of 1960 for the Olympic Natural History Association", p. 3; located in the historical files of Olympic National Park.

that people do not crowd into this place for it
is indeed God's country.³

Cleared land was indeed valuable. But clearing the land was a herculean task on the Olympic Peninsula. The rain forests were dense with giant fir and cedar, spruce and hemlock. The Humes brothers, if they were expecting to impound stretches of ranch land, must have had a sinking feeling when they discovered only narrow stretches of easily settled land along the coast. The wilds of the interior forest would not readily be tamed.

The massiveness and denseness of the Olympic forests were reasons that delayed the homesteading genesis on the peninsula. Another factor was the obstructionist position of Hudson's Bay Company. It convinced many would-be American settlers that the Peninsula was destined for British hands and that the Willamette Valley to the south really had more to offer.

Reputedly, the first homestead patent in Clallam County was not granted until 1873 and it was assigned to a settler on the un-forested coastal strip.⁴ Theodore F. Rixon recalled the unsettled

3. Clallam County Immigration Association, Port Angeles, The Gate City of the Pacific Coast, 4th Ed., 1898 (?), Clallam County Library, Port Angeles.

4. G. M. Lauridsen and others, The Story of Port Angeles and Clallam County (Seattle, 1937), p. 1. Also, A Cooperative Plan for Securing Homes and Occupations at Port Angeles, Washington, 1893. The latter is a pamphlet located in the Clallam County Library.

character of the mountains between 1898 and 1900 when he participated in the Dodwell-Rixon Survey.⁵

And so, pioneering as we know it -- moving into the back country and "proving up" a claim -- is a relatively late chapter in the Olympics. One old-timer in 1925 reflected on the few early settlers of the region between 1873 and 1895. He regarded only those who settled prior to 1895 to be the real historic figures stating "... those who came in after that could hardly be called pioneers."⁶ To this man the Humes didn't rate pioneer status. They missed it by two years.

Martin and William Humes and their cousin Ward Sanders, we are told, arrived in the Elwha Valley in 1897. Nothing has yet been learned about Ward. The brothers split up, Martin moving onto the flat below the Lilliam River and William settling the 120 acre plot known as the Humes Ranch. Grant Humes, the brother who occupied the ranch site longest and is the best remembered, joined William in 1900. For awhile they homesteaded the present site together. But when the young men's father died in New England, William returned to settle family affairs and left Grant as sole manager. Apparently Grant

5. Port Angeles Evening News, July 15, 1948.

6. H. B. Herrick, Olympic Tribune, Feb. 20, 1925, p. 1.

was not satisfied with one homestead. One old-timer thought he and another man built a cabin at Centreville, below Hayes on the river bottom. Martin, meanwhile, resided on top of Slippery Hill.⁷

The brothers began to prove up on the land. A land patent was issued in William's name on March 14, 1917.⁸ They built the present cabin and shed and erected a barn on a flat below, near the river. Cutting trees and pulling the stumps, they cleared a meadow from which they gathered hay. The hay was used to feed the pack animals, which were necessary to support Grant's occupation as an outfitter.⁹ He also cut hay at the Anderson place and hacked out a trail to the fields over which he drove his mowing equipment. He forded the river above his ranch and brought the hay back to his barn.¹⁰

7. Jerry Russell, "Final Report....", Interview with H. Burt Herrick, pp. 3-4.

8. Deed book 107, p. 527, Clallam County Court House.

9. Mr. Verne Samuelson, who visited Humes a number of times, testifies that the present cabin and shed are original.

10. Jack Henson, "Reminiscences of Twenty Years Ago", Port Angeles Evening News, June 18, 1949.

Grant Humes was not a farmer. He was a man of the mountains who lived by hunting and packing.¹¹ It is said that he had as many as 12 parties in the mountains at one time. He met the hunters with his pack string on the highway at the "Old Covered Bridge" and took them to camps beyond his place. He left them and returned to pack them out.¹²

Humes hunted cougar and wolves and was regarded as a marksman. A story is told how he saved a Forest Ranger from several wolves. The ranger was inspecting the countryside for trapped and poisoned wolves. Discovering what he thought were elk calves he approached. They were wolves, both male and female. He cautiously maneuvered back toward the Humes Ranch and climbed a snag. Humes heard the commotion, came out, discovered the wolves feeding on the carcass of a horse and shot both of them.¹³

Not only did he guide hunting parties into the back country, but he led and participated in mountaineering groups. In 1905 he and two friends went into the mountains and approached Mount Olympus from the Queets Basin. They moved to within a mile of the triple peaks when a thick fog settled in and forced them to back off. But on

11. Interview with Verne Samuelson.

12. Jack Henson, "Olympic Outdoors" Port Angeles Evening News, Oct. 19, 1956.

13. Interview with Jean Schofield. She is the daughter of Billy Everett, a highly regarded backwoodsman of the peninsula.

May 27, Humes accompanied Curtis and Price on a successful assault on Mount Queets and on August 4, he joined Curtis and Nelson in conquering Cougar Peak of Mount Seattle. His brother, William, scaled Middle Peak with the Hershell C. Parker party in July of that year. Nevertheless, the year 1905 closed without the Humes' tasting the experience of conquering Olympus.¹⁴

Two years later, Grant Humes tasted success. It was 1907 when the "Mountaineers of Seattle" formed and began looking for peaks to conquer. Humes led the scouting party and assisted the group to the top of Olympus. The climbing party named the Humes Glacier for their guide.¹⁵

Grant Humes -- Modern Mountainman

Grant Humes did not have to remain in the backcountry. He easily could have settled in town. Survival was hardly his problem and necessity of little consideration to him. He must have loved the Olympic wilds and found life along the Elwha an exhilarating experience. He never married; and only occasionally came to town for food. He was something of a modern day recluse -- not a misanthrope, but a man who enjoyed his solitude and simple surroundings.

He had his visitors on the mountainside and enjoyed receiving friends

14. Ruby El Hult, The Untamed Olympics: The Story of a Peninsula (Portland, Oregon, 1954), pp. 174-76.

15. Ibid., p. 173-78.

at his cabin. Many towns-folk enjoyed visiting with Grant, and old timers invariably relate how fine a person he was to know. Often he would prepare some supper for campers and visitors.¹⁶

He was a meticulous man, orderly about his routines, and kept his cabin "neat as a pin". He liked good music, was musically inclined, and may even have played an instrument. He read considerably and maintained a library.¹⁷

Jean Schofield, daughter of mountainman Billy Everett, calls Grant Humes a "high class guy and gentleman". He proved it to her by a demonstration of his adherence to the conservation ethic. Once accompanying her father and Grant on a camping trip she recalls the men's discovering some 15 dead elk. Grant refused to extract their teeth even though they were bringing as much as five dollars apiece. His refusal to participate in the crass exploitation of the wilderness was impressed deeply on this young lady's mind.

Humes' arrivals in town with his hound dog "Bing" were welcomed occasions. Sometimes the local press would give them brief notice. The Evening News in 1919 related that "our dear friend Grant Humes" was in town and "left at the office a fine big Dolly Varden for the Webster family".¹⁸

16. Interview with Mrs. L. Duckering who knew Grant Humes.

17. Interview with Verne Samuelson and Jean Schofield.

18. Port Angeles Evening News, July 8, 1919.

The Humes Homestead

Writing in 1949, old timer Jack Henson reminisced about his early days around Port Angeles. He said that the Humes cabin had changed little from the days when Grant occupied it. The log and shaken structure had hardly been altered. The grooved log that carried the spring water from the hill was still out front. Humes' Gravenstein apple tree and a plum tree were growing in 1949, as they are today in 1968. Henson noted the "root house, harness house, and tent house for guests". He referred to "pasture land, orchard and garden", still intact in 1949.¹⁹

Just as now, the Humes Cabin used to consist of one room and an attached kitchen at the back.²⁰ Warren Madison recalled Humes bringing in his cook stove by

...running two poles between two horses, one horse in front of the other. He suspended the stove from the poles and by using his best horses and by careful handling on corners, he made a successful trip."²¹

Mrs. Roscoe Robinson recalled the barn on the lower pasture and remembered that Grant would put salt out in the front yard

19. Jack Henson, "Reminiscence of Twenty Years Ago", Port Angeles Evening News, June 18, 1949. Verne Samuelson confirms that the present cabin and attached barn are the originals. See also, Illustration No. 1.

20. Interview with Mrs. L. Duckering.

21. Jerry Russell, Interview with Warren Madison, p. 5.

for the animals. She believes he kept chickens but doesn't think he did much gardening.²²

Jean Schofield recalls a visit to the homestead just after World War II. Grant had died by then and apparently the cabin lay abandoned. She remembers seeing a cider press and other objects, perhaps the power saw rusting away today in front of the cabin and the plow resting on the lower pasture. She found many magazines lying around dated about 1907. And that fact brought to mind the loft in the cabin, which Grant used for storage. He saved his periodicals and very meticulously stored them in his loft. She recalls that he enjoyed saving the mail order catalogs so that years later he could settle arguments over prices in the "good old days". The loft was still there in 1949 and a ladder ascended to it.²³

Mrs. Schofield remembered a rambler rose bush growing on the porch and water cress growing, most likely about the pool of spring water which collected around the base of the fruit trees. She recalls a simple table beneath the window, a wooden bed, a heating stove, and a water bucket hanging on the wall.

22. Interview. The weight of testimony tends to support the proposition that Humes did indeed maintain a garden.

23. Port Angeles Evening News, July 1, 1949.

Summary of Structural History

Log Cabin and Shed: Historic photographs and human testimony establish that these structures are those built and occupied by William and Grant Humes.²⁴ Although altered to a degree, these buildings are fundamentally as they were originally. After Grant Humes' death, subsequent residents may have modified them somewhat, but old timers testify that changes were minor.²⁵ The cabin still retains its two-room floor plan. Although the loft is gone, the sockets into which the supporting cross beams fit are still evident. Just inside the door is a cut out section in the floor, which some have suggested led to a root cellar or storage space. The picture-size window facing the down slope more than likely was installed by the new residents. A news photograph of 1949 does not seem to show such a large window.²⁶ And Jean Schofield, who visited the homestead on occasion, recollects that the windows were smaller French windows -- "little square windows" as she called them. She

24. A three page typewritten document is in the files of Olympic National Park entitled, "History of the Humes Ranch". Its author is unknown. It tends to confirm the authenticity of the buildings but factual errors in the account depreciate its value.

25. The new residents were Herb and Lois Crisler who filmed the Walt Disney classic on the Olympic Elk.

26. Port Angeles Evening News, June 10, 1949.

also recalled the ceiling was of cedar poles and the floor of split cedar laid in 4 inch widths. The front room was ceiled with plane cedar while the kitchen was not lined. The above news account of 1949 describes the floor as "caulk pitted, hand-riven, puncheon floor".²⁷ The shed was probably the "root house and harness house". The cinder block chimney does not appear in early photographs (Illustration No. 1).

Lean-to: Neither human testimony nor available historical photographs reveal anything about this structure (Illustration No. 2). It is unlikely that it was part of the historic scene. However, further inquiry ought to be made before it is removed.

Greenhouse: Another lean-to type structure in the vicinity of the cabin was used as a privy at some time. Immediately in front of it is an area that has been walled in with concrete. One old-timer believes that this is the remains of a greenhouse the Crislers erected.

Barn: The Humes Barn on the pasture below (Illustration No. 3) no longer remains. It is unfortunate that this structure was demolished, but its location can be determined on the ground.

Conclusion:

The Humes Cabin and shed are authentic historic structures. They

27. Ibid.

represent the effort to pioneer in and settle the Olympic mountainside. To be sure, the venture was later than in other parts of the nation. Nevertheless, the obstacles were real and it took a hardy spirit to "rough it" in the Olympics. It would be fair to say that Grant Humes pioneered out of the love of wilderness rather than the need to survive.

Whether or not a pioneer, in the strict sense of the word, he was identified with the mountain. He hunted and trapped throughout the countryside and guided pack trains throughout the wilderness. He led climbing parties to the mountain peaks and scaled them as well.

At the age of 61, Grant Humes' heart failed. He was buried at Oceanview Cemetery which overlooks Puget Sound.²⁸ A simple stone marks his grave. Appropriately it bears a bronze plaque on which is engraved the mountain peaks of the Olympics.

28. Burial Permit, No. 44, Oceanview Cemetery, Port Angeles.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Illustration No. 1: Grant Humes standing in front of his cabin and harness shed.
Date unknown. Source, Ruby El Hult, Untamed Olympics.

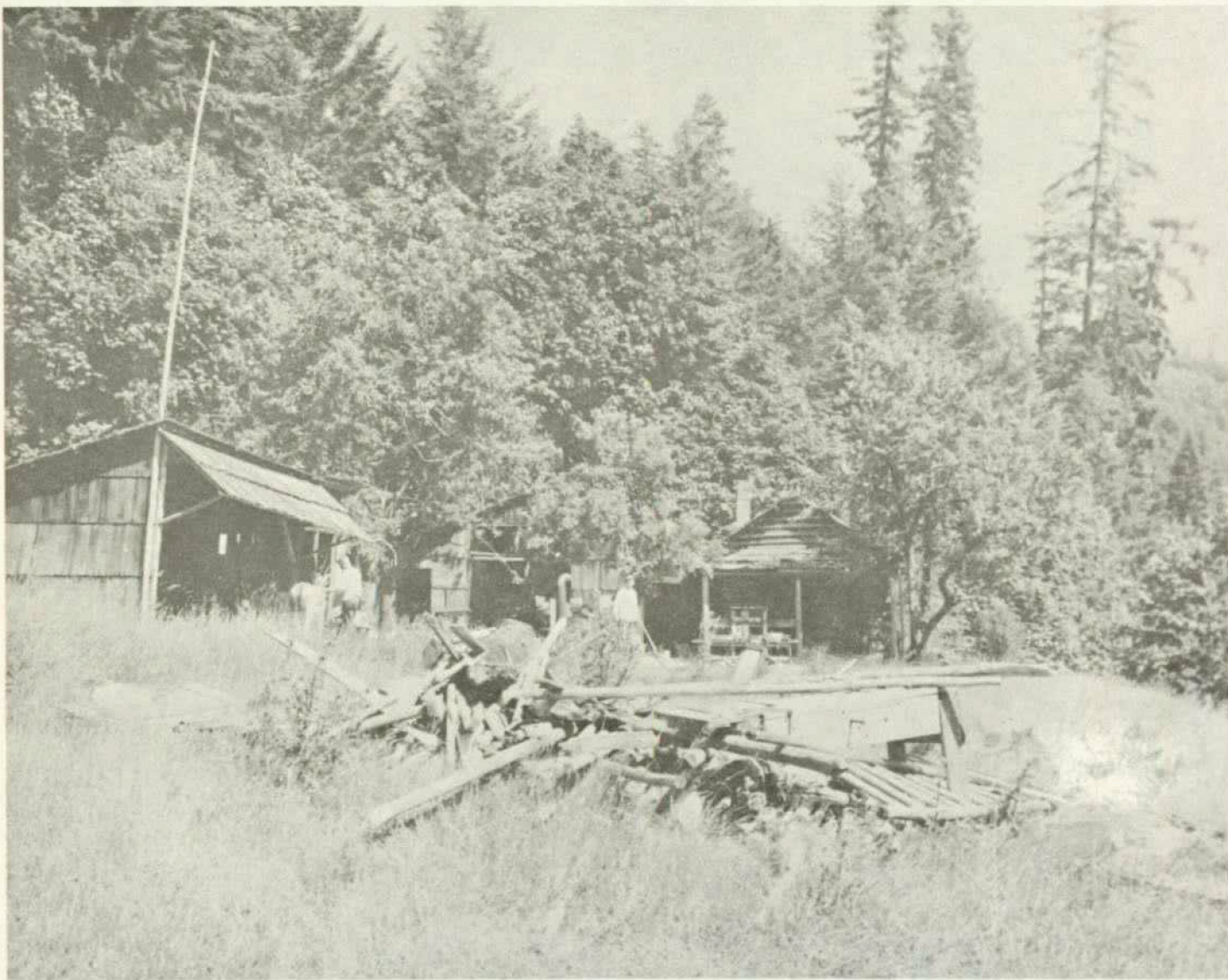


Illustration No. 2: Humes homestead with unidentified lean-to, left center. Rubbish in foreground is the fencework. Date unknown. Files of Olympic National Park.



Illustration No. 3: Humes Barn on the pasture beneath the cabin. The crowbars and hammers of the Student Conservation Program soon finished the job of demolition that time and weather began. Date unknown. Files of Olympic National Park.

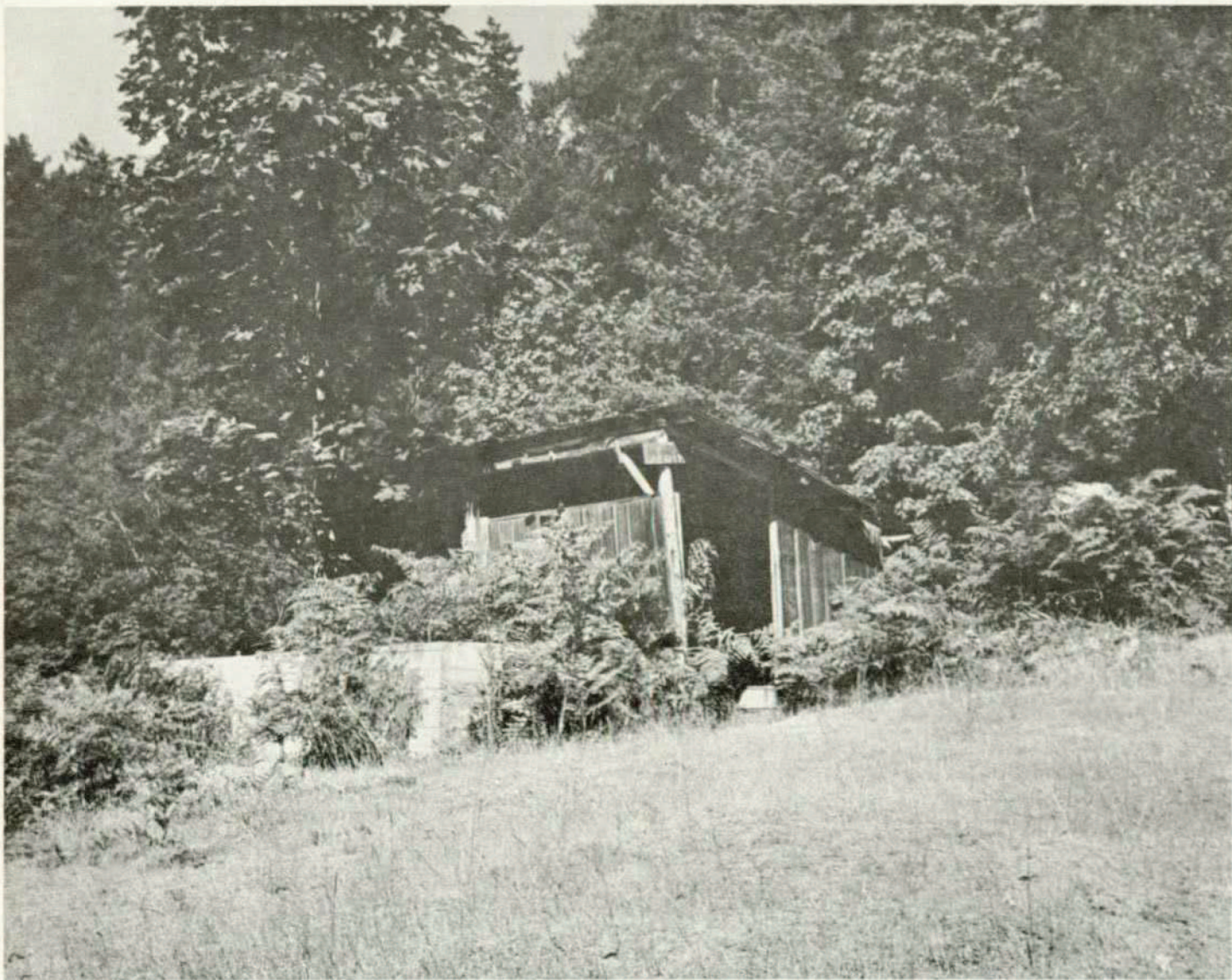


Illustration No. 4: Alleged greenhouse at the Humes homestead. At one time used as a privy. Taken 1967. Files of the Division of History.

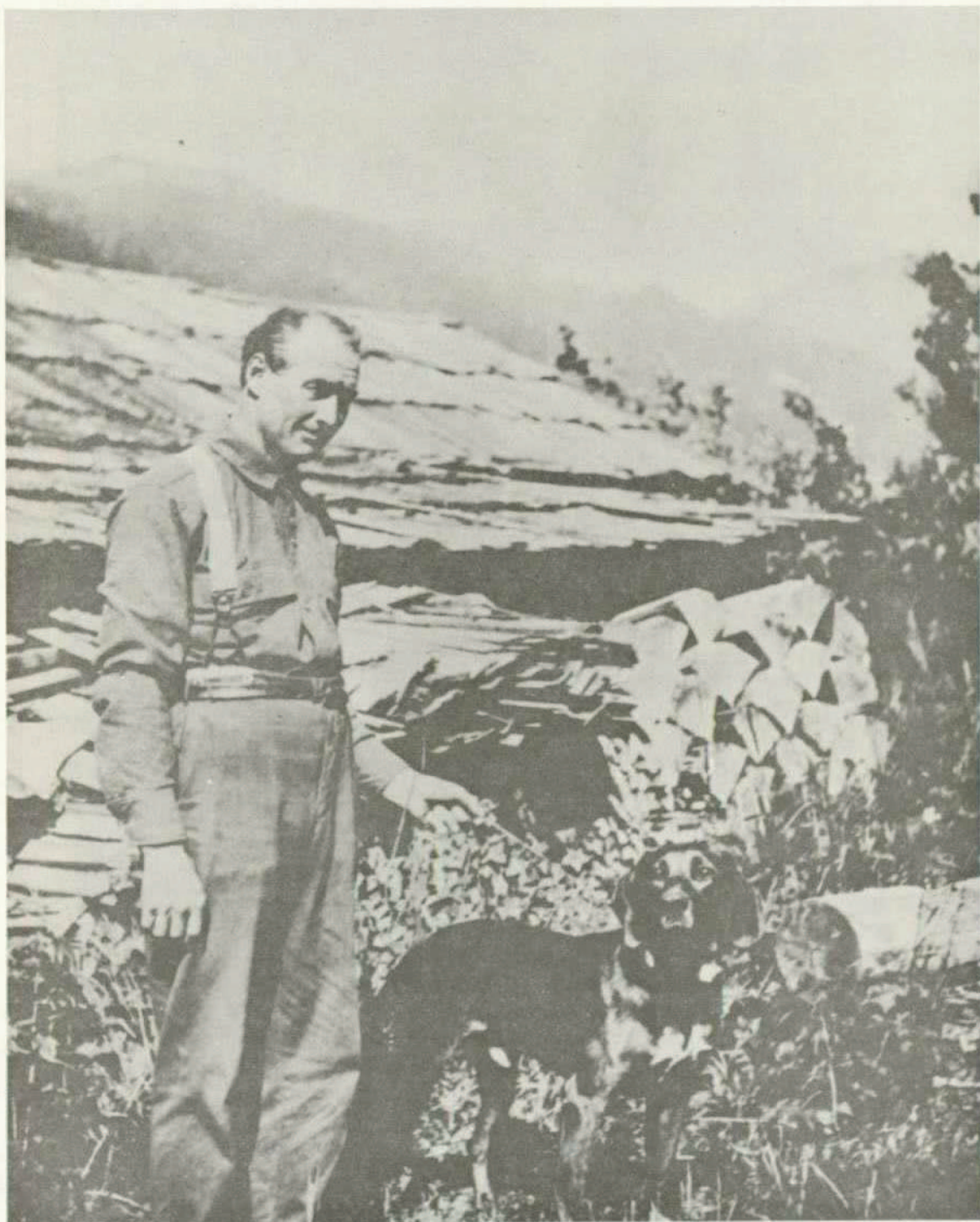


Illustration No. 5: Grant Humes and his dog "Bing". Taken about 1924 at the Anderson Ranch. Files of Olympic National Park.