

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

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August 23, 2004

Dr. Stephanie Toothman
National Park Service
Pacific West Region
909 First Street
Seattle, Washington 98104-4159

Dear Dr. Toothman:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the National Register Multiple Property nomination for Yosemite National Park. I concur that the properties identified and evaluated in the nomination do constitute a coherent group of geographically dispersed resources that are eligible for listing in the National Register. The nomination does an excellent job of defining separate, but related contexts that make clear the significance of the individual resources, as well as the reasons that they collectively constitute a multiple property. The inclusion of a number of the park's less elaborate, high altitude resources is particularly noteworthy. The context statements synthesize a large amount of historic documentation in a clear and concise manner and the descriptive material that is provided for the individual resources or resource groupings is excellent.

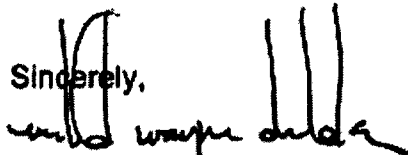
We concur in all of your findings regarding the resources enumerated in the multiple property nomination. We agree that the following properties are eligible for the National Register as a part of a multiple property.

Lake Vernon Cabin Building #2450
May Lake High Sierra Camp Historic District
Hetch Hetchy Comfort Station Building #2104
Henness Ridge Fire Lookout Building #5300
The Golden Crown Mine
Glen Aulin Sierra Camp Historic District
Chinquapin Historic District
Buck Creek Cabin Building #4800
Snow Flat Cabin Building #3501
Snow Creek Cabin Building #3450
Sachse Springs Cabin Building #2452
Ostrander Ski Hut Building #5110
Old Big Oak Flat Road
New Big Oak Flat Road
Merced Lake Ranger Station Building #3400
Merced Lake High Sierra Camp Historic District

Wawona Tunnel
Vogelsang High Sierra Camp Historic District
Tuolumne Meadows High Sierra Camp Historic District

I have signed the application as commenting authority. If you have any questions, please call
Gene Itogawa of my staff (916) 653-8936.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Milford Wayne Donaldson". The signature is written in a cursive style with some vertical strokes.

Milford Wayne Donaldson
State Historic Preservation Officer

Cc: Kimball Koch

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of
Property

historic name Snow Creek Cabin
other names/site number Snow Creek Lodge; Building #3450

2.
Location

street & number N/A not for publication ☐
city or town Yosemite National Park (YOSE) vicinity ☐
state California code CA county Mariposa code 043 zip code 95389

3. State /Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the
National Register

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Snow Creek Cabin
Name of Property

Mariposa, CA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1929-1938

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Eldridge T. Spencer, San Francisco

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

Primary location of additional data

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University

Snow Creek Cabin _____

Name of Property _____

___ designated a National Historic Landmark

___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

___ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # _____

Mariposa, CA _____

County and State _____

X Other

Name of repository:

Yosemite National Park, California

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>11</u>	<u>277850</u>	<u>4185125</u>	3	___	___	___
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	___	___	___	4	___	___	___
					___ See continuation sheet.		

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

The National Register boundary includes only the historically and architecturally significant Snow Creek Cabin and its immediate environment. The privy, well and shed are non-contributing elements.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

The boundary includes only the Snow Creek Cabin, the only significant structure in the area.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Andy Kirk, Richard Coop, Charles Palmer

organization UNLV Public History date 3/8/04

street & number 4505 Maryland Parkway Box 455020 telephone (702)895-3544

city or town Las Vegas state NV zip code 89135-5020

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to

Snow Creek Cabin

Mariposa, CA

Name of Property

County and State

nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section 7

Summary

The Snow Creek ski hut was built in 1929 as the initial step in the first hut system for ski-mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada. It stood at the edge of a wood near a swampy meadow in the highlands above Yosemite Valley. Constructed of vertical logs and wood-shingled siding, with a wood shingle roof, the structure was patterned after ski huts in the European Alps. The interior provided kitchen facilities and sleeping accommodations for about sixteen people. The hut was intended as a base for high-mountain ski trips into the backcountry of Yosemite National Park.

General Description

The Snow Creek ski hut is located on the westerly slope of Mount Watkins at about 7,650 feet elevation. It is a two-story, log pole structure supported by a cobblestone/concrete foundation. A double layer of natural wood-shingled siding shows some signs of weathering and deterioration. Two- and six-paned windows are wood-framed and covered with wood shutters, painted with a green saw-tooth design. The wood shingle gable roof is supported by exposed pole rafters, which are in turn supported by pole posts added later. A lean-to storage shed had been added to the east, side. Two new metal flues for cooking and heating stoves protrude from the roof.

The wooden entrance doors have metal sheeting attached to the exterior surface. The entranceway has a rock and earth floor, while wooden planks cover the rest of the cabin's floors. Most interior walls and ceilings are fiberboard. The upper level ceilings show some evidence of water damage. The stairs to the second story are hewn logs with a quarter-section cut. The cabin is at the edge of a wood with a well dug nearby. About two hundred yards south of the cabin is a small dome, called Herringbone Hill from the pattern made in the snow by skiers climbing the slope on the way to the cabin.

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Significance

Property Type: Resources Associated with Tourism, Recreation and the Preservation Ethic in Yosemite (1864-1973)
 Subtype: Winter Sports
Period of Significance: 1929-1938

The Snow Creek ski hut is significant as the major component of the first hut system for ski-mountaineering in the Sierra. This was part of a more extensive plan by the Yosemite Park and Curry Company to develop winter sports and promote amateur winter sports competition in the West. Although the High Sierra ski tours in Yosemite National Park, the first in the United States, did not become as popular as the Curry Company hoped, they did promote interest in skiing in general, which later made the company's Badger Pass resort for downhill skiing one of the great skiing centers of the Sierra.

Historical Context

After its construction of the Ahwahnee Hotel, the first year-round Yosemite Valley resort, and completion of the All-Year Highway to Yosemite in 1926, the Curry Company became concerned as to how to sustain its winter operations. Its directors decided to undertake winter sports development and envisioned Yosemite as the winter sports headquarters of the United States. Six years earlier, Don Tresidder, company president, had hired the Swiss-born Ernst des Baillets to organize skiing, skating, ice hockey, and other winter sports in Yosemite.

The YP&CC formed the Yosemite Winter Club in 1928, the pioneer California winter sports organization. Objectives of the club were the general development of winter sports, the promotion of amateur competition, and continued improvement of Yosemite's winter facilities. Physical improvements included an ice rink in the Camp Curry parking area and a new toboggan slide built in 1927 west of the camp. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, the company kept horses in the valley for sleighing and skijoring in Stoneman Meadow, which also provided a field for dog teams. Figure skating contests and ice carnivals were held frequently.

Tresidder developed the moraine near Tenaya Creek Bridge into a temporary "ski hill" and later installed a jump. Areas along the Big Oak Flat and Tioga roads catered to skiers when the valley had insufficient snowfall. A ski school also started at Yosemite in 1928, the first of its kind on the West Coast/with professional instructors and ski guides providing instruction. Another interesting aspect of the Tresidders' development of winter sports was the impetus it gave to ski apparel manufacture, for previously no such industry existed.

The Yosemite Park and Curry Company believed that High Sierra ski tours would greatly increase the scope of winter sports in Yosemite and, in entering that pioneer field devised cross country ski tours of two to six days, the first time such tours were attempted in the United States. The company remodeled the little Glacier Point Mountain House for

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winter use, and in 1929 built an experimental ski cabin on the north rim of Yosemite Valley on the shoulder of Mount Watkins above Snow Creek, initiating the first hut system for ski-mountaineering in the Sierra. Eldridge T. Spencer of San Francisco drew the Snow Creek cabin plans, with Dr. Tresidder making suggestions drawn from a book of pictures and plans of Swiss mountain huts. The cabin was enlarged in 1930.

The hut functioned as a starting place for tours of the High Sierra Camps, which would also be developed with a series of ski huts similar to those used in the European Alps. The slopes from the cabin to Snow Flat and May Lake were considered areas of heaviest snowfall in the park. Visitors arrived at the cabin via the Tenaya Zigzags on horseback, snowshoes, foot, and skis for the start of ski tours, which ran from Mount Watkins to Snow Flat and from the cabin to Tenaya Lake and Tuolumne Meadows. The Park Service allowed the Tenaya Lake and Tuolumne Meadows ranger cabins to be stocked and used in the winter as bases for those skiing expeditions.

In a brief history of western skiing published in the *British Ski Year Book* for 1939 volume 10, no. 20, Joel Hildebrand stated:

The first hut system for ski-mountaineering in the Sierra started in the Yosemite National Park in 1929. In that year, Snow Creek Ski Cabin was built and cabins at Tenaya Lake and Tuolumne Meadows converted for winter use. These were heavily stocked with food in the fall of each year, and during the winter months high-mountain trips were operated at fairly frequent intervals under the leadership of Jules Fritsch, one of the most competent ski guides in California. In 1930, Fritsch led the first ascent of Mt. Hoffmann from the Snow Creek Cabin as a base. He conducted parties from the Tenaya Cabin for the first ascent of Tenaya Peak, and from the Tuolumne Cabin he conducted parties over Tioga Pass up Ragged Peak, over Vogelsang Pass, Mammoth Peak, and the Lyell Fork.

The cabin had a kitchen with a wood-burning stove and a metal-lined cache for food supplies. A narrow passage held two bunk beds and a larger room a table and six additional bunks. A steep, narrow stairway led to a loft divided into two rooms with cots for six or eight people. The cabin stood at the edge of the woods near a meadow, where a well was dug. A practice slope lay 200 yards to the south. The main run came down Mount Watkins by any of several routes and ran down below the cabin several hundred feet.

The cabin was heavily used by skiers—Curry Company guests and Yosemite Valley residents—through the winters from 1930 to 1934. Park Service rangers on snow survey trips enroute to Yosemite Creek or Tuolumne Meadows also stopped in at the cabin. Each spring the Currys sent men to fill the snow houses at Tuolumne Meadows and Merced Lake, and they also found shelter here. Famed photographer Ansel Adams often journeyed to the cabin to make photographs of the high country in winter and of skiers.

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Activity began to wane at the Snow Creek cabin in the spring of 1934 with construction of the Wawona tunnel and road and of the Glacier Point road. Greater accessibility concentrated skiing activities in the Badger Pass area. Ski touring was ultimately eclipsed in popularity by ski lifts and downhill skiing. Because the valley facilities for handling the public had proven inadequate, Donald Tresidder felt justified in making Badger Pass the focal point of his company's ski development. He fully expected it to turn into one of the great skiing centers of the Sierra because of its easy access from the valley, its sufficient quantity of snow even in drier years, its good quality of snow, and its good skiing terrain. He finally abandoned the valley toboggan and ash-can slides because of the possibility of serious accidents. Tresidder began construction on the lodge at Monroe Meadows in late September 1935. The structure, of log slab construction and also designed by Eldridge Spencer, opened in December of that year with a ski lift in conjunction. Several of the Badger Pass ski school's directors and instructors proved very influential in the development of skiing in the West. Dr. Tresidder took a great personal interest in the development of winter sports in California, and Yosemite, a pioneer in the winter sports field, is one of the oldest and largest centers for ski enthusiasts in the West.

After 1934, the Curry Company abandoned the Snow Creek building, which was occasionally used thereafter as an overnight haven for snow survey parties. In the mid-1960s, some Park Service employees who had read old Curry Company skiing brochures hunted for and "rediscovered" the building, and it has since been used for overnight stays. The cabin is completely furnished in its original form; the kitchen contains early 1930s utensils and a cast-iron wood-burning stove. A lean-to was added in the 1960s. The building's charm and setting, its European ski hut styling, and the fact that it is the oldest ski resort in the Sierra, make it eligible for listing in the National Register.

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Bibliography

Finley, Michael V., Superintendent, Yosemite National Park to Regional Director, Western Region “Review of National Register forms for factual data,” September 7, 1989.

Hildebrand, J.N. “History of Skiing in California”. *British Ski Yearbook* 10, no. 20 (1939).

McClelland, Linda Flint. *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Tresidder, Mary Curry. “Story of the Snow Creek Lodge.” *Yosemite Nature Notes* 32, No. 2 (Feb. 1953): 13-19.