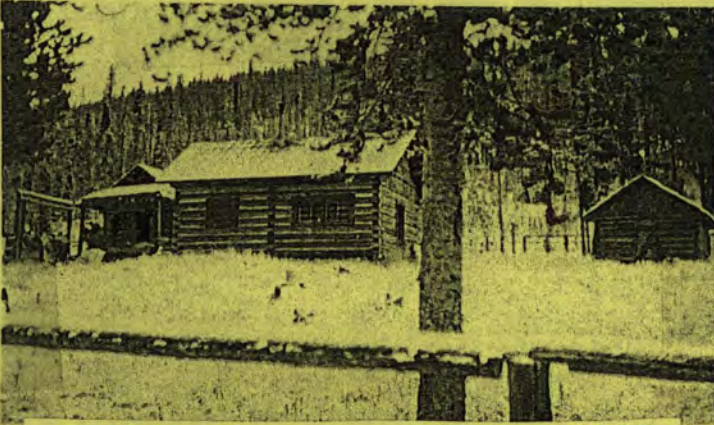


Cold Meadows Guard Station
US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
Payette National Forest, Heritage Program
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The Cold Meadows Guard Station, located in the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This Guard Station was constructed as one of many Forest Service administrative sites serving the backcountry of Idaho. The station lies near the eastern most boundary of the Payette National Forest at the convergence of several pack trails that historically provided a network of supply lines throughout the backcountry. As early as 1906 US forest rangers began to be assigned to these remote areas. The early rangers enforced federal law, monitored homesteads, and guarded forest resources throughout the wilderness. The Guard Station provided communication, housing and supply links for the men protecting the National Forests. These trails are still used and maintained today as vital routes into the backcountry.



Cold Meadows Guard Station, 1948.

The buildings at Cold Meadows represent early 20th century Forest Service rustic architecture and are one of the few remaining examples of “log cabin” era building. The early Forest Service relied upon skilled craftsman in constructing vernacular style buildings using local materials. The remoteness of the site precluded the use of milled lumber and manufactured materials to a great degree; all supplies had to be packed in via mules, horses, or humans. This era ended with the standardization of Forest Service buildings in the 1930s. A good example of the transition to standardized buildings can be found at Chamberlain Guard Station.

The Forest Service had very rigid standards for building their stations. Buildings were to be uniform, making it easy to identify them as belonging to the Forest Service. In this case it was log buildings with gabled roofs, painted a standard brown, with green stain on the wooden shingles. The cabins at Cold Meadows Guard Station have predominately square notched corners while those at Chamberlain, which were built later, have saddle notched corners.

The oldest building at the guard station, the woodshed (#1362) was built in 1913. It probably served many purposes until other buildings were constructed. The Cold Meadows fly shed, built in the 1920s, represents a unique early Forest Service building type. A fly shed is a covered corral or livestock shelter used in areas of dense insect populations. The structure was intended as temporary protection for livestock until a more permanent structure could be built. When in use, it would have been covered by a tarp saturated with bug repellent. Another fly shed exists at the Chamberlain Guard Station.

Other buildings at the guard station include; a main dwelling (#1157) built in 1923, where the Ranger lived and where daily forest business was conducted; a storehouse (#1361), built in 1929, and used for storing dry-goods and equipment; and a bunk house (#1111) was built in the early thirties to house trail crews and fire fighters. In 1933 airplanes started landing in the meadow near the Station. In 1935 milled lumber was flown in to build a privy. This structure, based on R-4, Plan #70, represents the incursion of standardized building plans. By 1943 a formal landing strip had been built. The most recent building at the guard station was built in 1955 and is a shower/wash house. Collectively, these structures had an estimated life span of twenty years; preventive maintenance has preserved these buildings and allowed continuous use by the Forest Service.

The Idaho Primitive Area, established in 1931, was renamed the River of No Return Wilderness in 1980. The name was legislatively changed to the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness in 1984. The role of the Forest Service changed somewhat when the designation of the land changed. Today the Forest Service seasonally maintains trails, reports fires, protects the wilderness, and provides a contact with the wilderness users. Guard Stations with airstrips such as Cold Meadows provide portals for personnel to carry out those duties.