

Timberline Cabin confused with Timberline Lodge

Recently, a Government Camp cabin owner brought a photograph to the museum and asked if we could tell her anything about the building in the photograph. We were happy to share the history of the building known as the Timberline Cabin. She said, do you mean Timberline Lodge? No, Timberline Cabin and Timberline Lodge are two different buildings from two different eras. The buildings both were located at the ecological line at which conifers trees cease to grow above, which is 6000' on Mount Hood, commonly referred as the timberline.



Timberline Cabin on the right. Timberline Hotel to the left. Photo date is 1924.

Joel Palmer visited the area in 1845 following a Native American trail, as he scouted the route for the Sam Barlow wagon train attempting to cross Mount Hood on the south slopes. Later the climbing parties climbing the mountain from the south side in the 1850's camped here in the shelter of the highest trees on Mount Hood. Judge James Blossom pioneered a wagon road from Government Camp to this spot in 1888. The Judge built a small cabin here and spent his summers here to avoid the heat in Oregon City. After the Mazamas were formed in 1894, Camp Blossom became their favorite last campsite before making the final ascent of Mount Hood. A Mazama climbing party in 1907 found the camp site occupied by a government mapping party, so they setup camp a few yards to the west. This spot became known as Camp George, as the

leader was M.C. George. The Forest Service felt a need for a base here to support their Forest Fire Lookout to be built on the summit of the mountain. The agency was also actively supporting and assisting mountain climbers. Forest Service employee Lige Coalman built the Timberline Cabin and the Summit Lookout in 1916. This cabin was built a few hundred feet west of Judge Blossom's cabin and apparently used some of the boards from the dilapidated Blossom Cabin. Coalman installed a telephone in the cabin to have communications to both the Summit fire lookout and the Ranger Station at Government Camp. The site became so popular with climbers that in 1924 the Government Camp Hotel opened a hotel annex here for climbers. They had a lunch counter in a small building and used tents furnished with real beds and mattresses for sleeping accommodations. Now it was possible for climbers to eat and sleep in style before their final climb to the summit of Mount Hood. These facilities were three miles from Government Camp and most visitors hiked or rode a horse.

The Forest Service had an initiative in the early 1920's to increase the recreation use of the National Forests. They did this by building roads, campgrounds and issuing permits for outdoor clubs to build cabins. A nice auto road from Government Camp to Phlox Point was opened in 1930. Here, just east of Camp Blossom, Wy'east Climbers, Nile River Yacht Club and the Boy Scouts built cabins. This marked the end of the Timberline Hotel tents and overall use of the Camp Blossom area. Climbers could drive to the end of the road at Phlox Point and begin their climb from there. Later in 1937 Timberline Lodge would be sited just above the end of the Phlox Point Road, known today as the Westleg Road.



Timberline Cabin as it appeared in 1932. Note the door and ladder on the second story. This design made access easier in winter when snow depth could be 20' or more. Here members of the Wy'east Climbers are entering the cabin. Curtis Ijames is in the door, James Mount on the ladder and Walt Staehli on the snow. Today nothing is left of Camp Blossom, Camp George, the Timberline Cabin or the Timberline Hotel. A sign on the Timberline Trail just west of the Timberline Lodge marks the historic location.

Written by Lloyd Musser, Curator, Mt. Hood Cultural Center & Museum. 2019