

BACK IN TIME

Fir Glade guard station

BY EVELYN BYRNE WILLIAMS WITH JANEEN SATHRE

In the early 1930s, the Forest Service had several guard stations located in the back country of the Applegate River country. These stations might be along the route used to carry supplies to the fire lookout towers or in areas hard to reach on short notice, where a crew of firefighters could stay. One of the most interesting to me was at Fir Glade, located near Whiskey Peak and its lookout tower.

In 1939 my newly married brother Morris, and sister-in-law Florence, were stationed at Fir Glade by the Forest Service and my mother decided to arrange a trip there to visit them. She invited my former sixth-grade teacher, Bertha Haskins, and husband, Wallace, as well as my seventh-grade teacher, Doris Work, to go along. Mr. Haskins had grown up in the Applegate and had been to Fir Glade several times. This was a chance for him to show his wife, who was from Illinois, our Oregon environment.

In the early morning we drove a short ways from Copper (now under the Applegate Lake) to the Middle Fork where the road ended. We met Melvin Arnold, the Forest Service packer at the trailhead there. He had a horse and a mule loaded with supplies headed for Fir Glade and the Whiskey Peak Lookout. We were going to spend the night so I carried my things in a flour sack. Backpacks in those days were made for men and the wooden frames covered in canvas were quite heavy when fully loaded.

For most of us there was much excitement for this first-time trip to Fir Glade. We anticipated a good meal that evening with Morris, Florence, and my sister, Gladys, who had gone to Fir Glade a week or so ahead with a Mr. Knudson, who also was packing supplies to Whiskey Peak. He asked her if she would like to go on over to Frog Pond where Knox McCloy, lived. She said she would be glad to see Mr. McCloy who often times had stopped at our parents home on his way to get his supplies for winter. He would spend the night in their barn, have

breakfast with them the next morning and put baby Gladys on his knee to play horsey.

It didn't take long for the miles to take their toll. I ran out of steam after foolishly walking too fast at the beginning. Bertha Haskins developed blisters on her heels so Mr. Arnold let her ride his horse. By day's end she had saddle sores, too. We really felt sorry for her but she did not complain, being a good sport. We were so glad when the picturesque setting of Fir Glade came into our view.

The log cabin, I believe, was built by area cattlemen who would bring their cattle up into the high country in the summer to eat the grasses in the many alpine meadows. The cabin's large open front faced a meadow with a slow running stream flowing through it, and the back was shaded by big fir trees. I don't recall what we had for supper that night but I do remember the delicious applesauce Florence made from the apples that Mr. Arnold brought her.

Those apples grown in the upper regions of the Applegate were known for their unusual tart and sweet flavor. They were extra large, mid-green in color. Most everyone in the area grafted a branch from the original onto their own apple trees. My mother said it was called the Watkins apple, which probably came from the early pioneer Watkins family. (Editor's note: If anyone knows of or has one of these trees, contact J.D. Rogers, Editor, 541-846-7736.) My family considered it the best apple they ever had. Too bad that the trees were probably destroyed when the Applegate Lake was being built.

Where and how we all slept at Fir Glade that night, I do not remember. There were no sleeping bags or air mattresses like today. Mr. Haskins and my brother may have cut some fir boughs on which we placed our blankets. That was much better than sleeping on the bare ground. We did wake up very early the next morning because everyone was chilled. There is always a heavy and cold dew



Photos above:
Top: Fir Glade mule. Bottom: Whiskey Peak Lookout
Photos below:
Left: Fir Glade family. Right: Fir Glade cabin.

in the high mountains.

After a hardy breakfast it was time to prepare for the return trip. I spent some time that morning after packing up to view the many names carved and written on the upper logs in the interior of the cabin. Needless to say, I just had to add mine.

Interestingly, my future husband, Clarence, spent time at Fir Glade when he worked for the Forest Service fire crews in the summer of 1946. They stayed about a week doing trail work and removing phone lines that ran from the guard stations to the lookouts.

Several years ago, I returned to

Fir Glade with daughter Janeen's hiking group. It brought back such fond memories even though the cabin was gone. Some of the roof lies in a mass of weeds. Those logs with the names would have been such a keepsake. As I stood there looking at the meadow I was glad it had not changed; however, time has taken its toll. All of those people mentioned back there in 1939 are gone except Gladys, teacher Miss Work, and myself.

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