

OREGON INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM
COUNTY: Clackamas

HIST. NAME: SiSi Butte Fire Lookout 663EA177

COMMON NAME: same

ADDRESS: none

CITY: none

OWNER: U. S. Forest Service, Clackamas Ranger District

T/R/S: SW 1/4 of NW 1/4 of NW 1/4 of Sec. 9 T8S R8E, Will.Mer.

MAP NO: n/a

TAX LOT: n/a

ADDITION: n/a

BLOCK: n/a

LOT: n/a

7.5' USGS QUAD: Pinhead Buttes, Oreg., 1986 Provisional Edition

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: ca. 1937

ORIGINAL USE: Manned fire lookout

PRESENT USE: Manned fire lookout

ARCHITECT: USFS - ?

BUILDER: USFS, possibly CCC ("Aladdin" was principal manufacturer [Kresek 1984:11])

THEME: 1914-1940, Mt. Hood N.F., Oregon Cascades, timber industry, early USFS, fire lookouts; possibly CCC

STYLE: L-4 design; also called "Alladins" (Kresek 1984:11).

BLDG.XXXX STRUC. DIST. SITE OBJ. (CIRCLE)=XXXX

PLAN TYPE/SHAPE: 14x14-foot cabin on L-4 tower support system.

NO. OF STORIES: cabin = 1; 4 flights of stairs, 41 feet tall.

FOUNDATION MATERIAL: Pressure treated timbers on exposed concrete pads at 4 corners, all original.

BASEMENT (Y/N): NO

ROOF FORM & MATERIALS: Hip type. 3-tab composition (not original).

WALL CONSTRUCTION: Tongue and groove paneling covered by plywood wainscotting. (Windows form the upper half of "walls.")

STRUCTURAL FRAME: Wood. The four tower support columns consist of 4 wood members which form an L-shaped built-up column, and each leg of the L has 2 members nailed together. The walkway around the exterior of the cabin is of 2x6-foot wood members laid flat, and may form the subfloor in the cabin. The cabin is all wood construction; roof support is of 2x4s between each 2-pane-wide window frame. (From Jensen 1992.)

PRIMARY WINDOW TYPE: Single frames of 4 small, rectangular panes set 2 over 2. Frames hinge at top to swing outward from the bottom. Five frames set side-by-side per wall. Per Jensen (1992), glass window panes are of Depression era; 2x4 roof supports between window frames.

EXTERIOR SURFACING MATERIALS: Wood shiplap

DECORATIVE FEATURES: n/a

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OTHER: Some of the original interior features are still in the cabin. One of the original pieces of furniture made for the tower remain there (Bill Joy, Electrical Dept., Mt. Hood NF-SO, personal communication, 5/19), as does an old light bulb (Don Evans, Fire Lookout at SiSi, personal communication 4/92).

CONDITION: GOOD__ FAIR__x POOR__ MOVED__ (DATE) 1992
(See "SiSi Lookout Condition Survey Report" by Reginald Jensen, Civil Engineer, Clackamas Ranger District, January 31, 1992.)

EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS (DATED): None, essentially intact as originally constructed (John Platz, Mt. Hood NF-SO, personal communication, 5/92; Jensen 1992). The original shutters (and wood stove) have been removed.

NOTEWORTHY LANDSCAPE FEATURES: The lookout tower rests on the top of the peak, and has a good view of the surrounding terrain.

ASSOCIATED STRUCTURES: None of historic period.

KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES: None. Historic-era garbage piles were not encountered within the project area surveyed. (Historic site 663EA82, a large rockpile [wood post in its center] with a rock wall nearby, is about 1/3-mile [600 meters] to the northeast on SiSi's Alter Ego.)

SETTING: The lookout sits upon the top of SiSi Butte, at the end of a two-mile dirt road which is gated at its lower end. A helicopter pad and portable toilet are south and southeast of the lookout. New toilet construction is southeast of the lookout. The lookout is within a conifer forest of mainly *Tsuga mertensiana* and *Abies amabilis*, but the area around the lookout tower is generally rocky and bare of vegetation.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (historical and/or architectural importance, dates, events, persons, contexts). USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY: (The following is extracted from Reese 1992.)

The Forest Service began using lookouts for spotting fires just after the turn of the century, however, many were not very permanent structures and early ones were generally individual in style. At its peak, lookouts numbered 805 in Oregon and 646 in Washington. Within the region of Mount Hood there are 137 lookout sites. Most of the structures were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the depression years (Kresek 1984:9, 11, 19). Presently there are 3 manned lookout towers on the Mount Hood National Forest that are more than 50 years old (Bill Joy, personal communication, May 1992).

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE, Continued

Data gathered by Kresek (1984:23, 35) shows SiSi Butte Lookout to have been built in about 1937, to be 41 feet tall, constructed of treated timbers, with an L-4 tower. The L-4 design began in 1929, and was a 14x14-foot "frame cab that cost only \$500 (FOB Spokane or Portland); was bundled in kits for hauling by mule trains; and would even fit nicely atop four tall poles cut right on the site" (Kresek 1984:11). Variations, primarily in the style of the roof, were made until 1953. Thereafter, the R-6 flat-topped prevailed. There were more than 1,000 model L-4 lookouts (Kresek 1984:11-12).

The condition survey (Jensen 1992) indicates some alterations to the structure, for example, the wood stove has been removed, however it also documents numerous elements that are of original construction (the cabin walkway materials, tongue and groove interior paneling and ceiling, floor joists, members of structural support, etc.). The main conclusion of the condition report, however, is that the structural components are not entirely sound and the structure is therefore unsafe, given the extreme weather conditions that occur on SiSi, and recommends that it be replaced, with repairs performed in the interim (Jensen 1992).

Within the present context framework developed by Oregon's SHPO, in the case of SiSi Butte Lookout the appropriate chronological period would be 1914-1940. The geographic area could be the Mount Hood National Forest, the Oregon Cascades, or the Pacific Northwest. The historical context could also include the thematic category of the industry represented by the resource, i.e., the development of the timber industry, or might involve the Forest Service itself, or the Civilian Conservation Corps if the lookout was constructed by the CCC ("Public works" theme identified by the SHPO).

Factors important in evaluating the potential significance of the SiSi Butte Lookout would involve a comparison of the lookout with other remaining lookouts and would center on the building's integrity. The critical evaluation factors are: it is the oldest of only three lookouts from the historic period remaining on the Mount Hood National Forest; it is thought to be the 'best' example of an historic lookout tower; it continues to operate as a manned lookout, which was the original function of the building; there has not been major alteration of the building, preserving its architectural integrity; and, on a slightly negative note, the building's condition has been determined to be unsound and unsafe.

Although its integrity may be compromised by the deteriorated condition of structural elements, evaluation factors for the property are based on qualities of the building itself and the fact that it is still in use as originally designed. It is recommended that the SiSi Fire Lookout be considered to be potentially eligible for listing on the National Register.

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SOURCES:

(Also, in-text personal communications)

Jensen, Reginald

1992 SiSi Lookout Condition Survey Report, Mt. Hood National Forest. Manuscript on file, Clackamas Ranger District, Ripplebrook.

Kresek, Ray

1984 Fire Lookouts of the Northwest. Ye Galleon Press. Fairfield, Washington.

Reese, Jo

1992 Cultural Resources Survey at SiSi Butte, Mount Hood National Forest, For GTE Mobilnet's Proposed Cellular Repeater Station. Archaeological Investigations Northwest Report No.25, Portland.

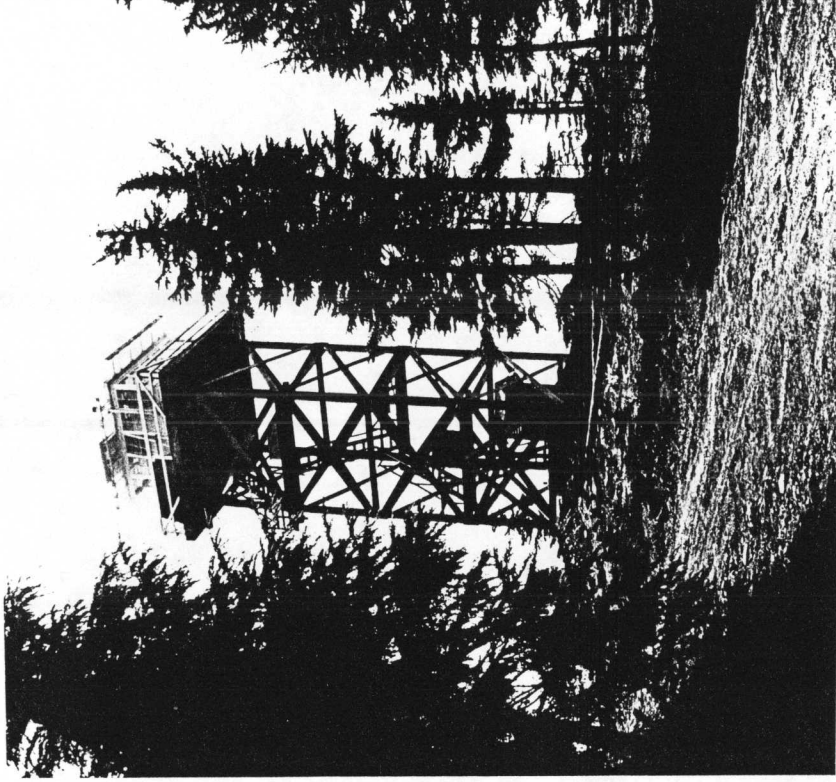
NEGATIVE #: B & W roll #B69-1, frames 2-11 (AINW Project #92-69)

SLIDE #: none

RECORDED BY: Jo Reese, M.A., Archaeological Investigations Northwest, Inc., for David Evans and Associates and GTE Mobilnet.

DATE: June 22, 1992 (Field data collected April 29, 1992)

PHOTOGRAPHS



PHOTOGRAPHS: Courtesy David Evans and Associates., 1992

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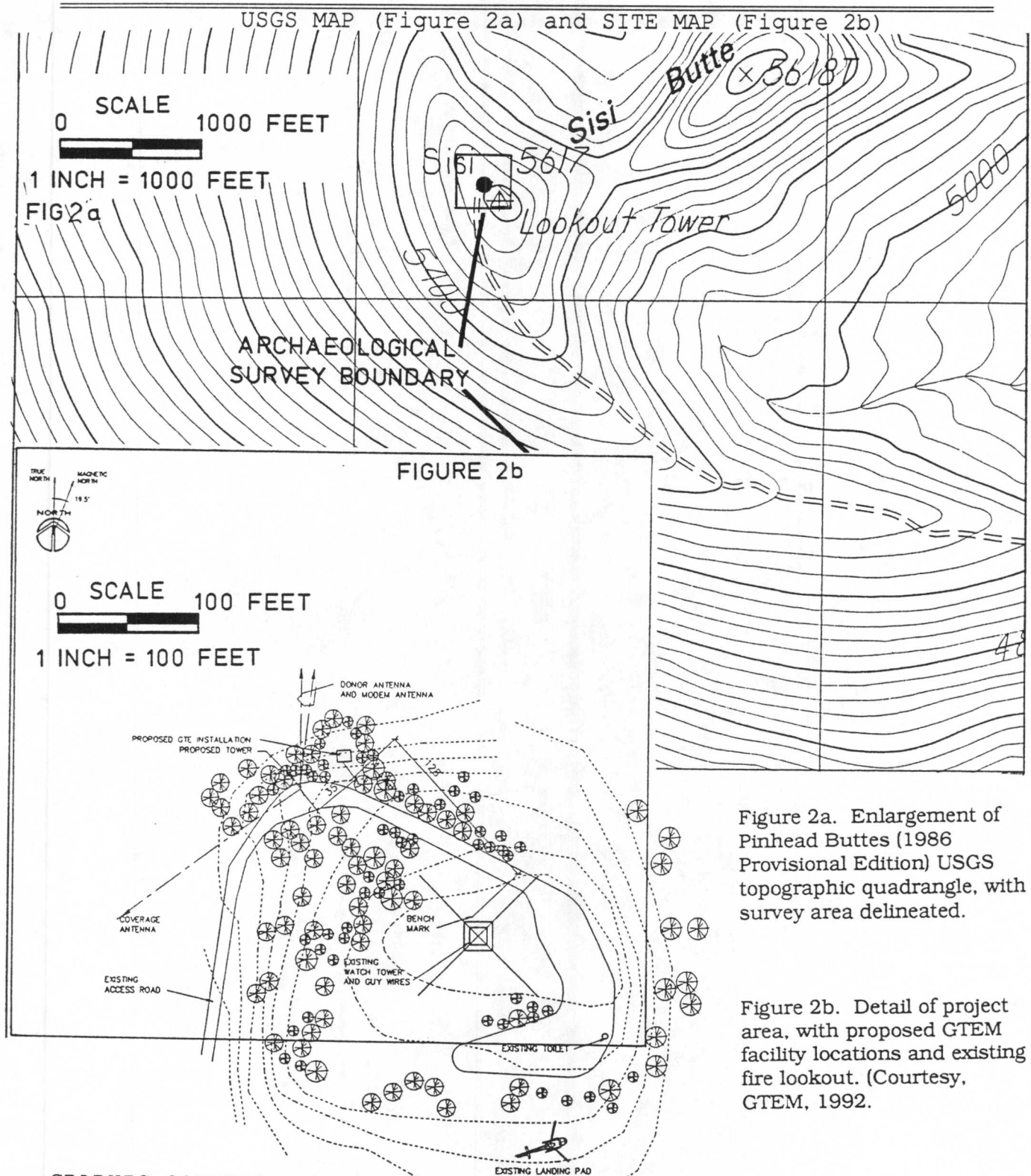


Figure 2a. Enlargement of Pinhead Buttes (1986 Provisional Edition) USGS topographic quadrangle, with survey area delineated.

Figure 2b. Detail of project area, with proposed GTEM facility locations and existing fire lookout. (Courtesy, GTEM, 1992.)

GRAPHIC SOURCES: David Evans and Associates, Portland, Oregon.

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