

Documentation at Eagle Creek Recreation Area

Richa Wilson

Richa Wilson describes the benefits that have come to University of Oregon students from having an active role in the larger collaborative effort to preserve two historic Forest Service structures.

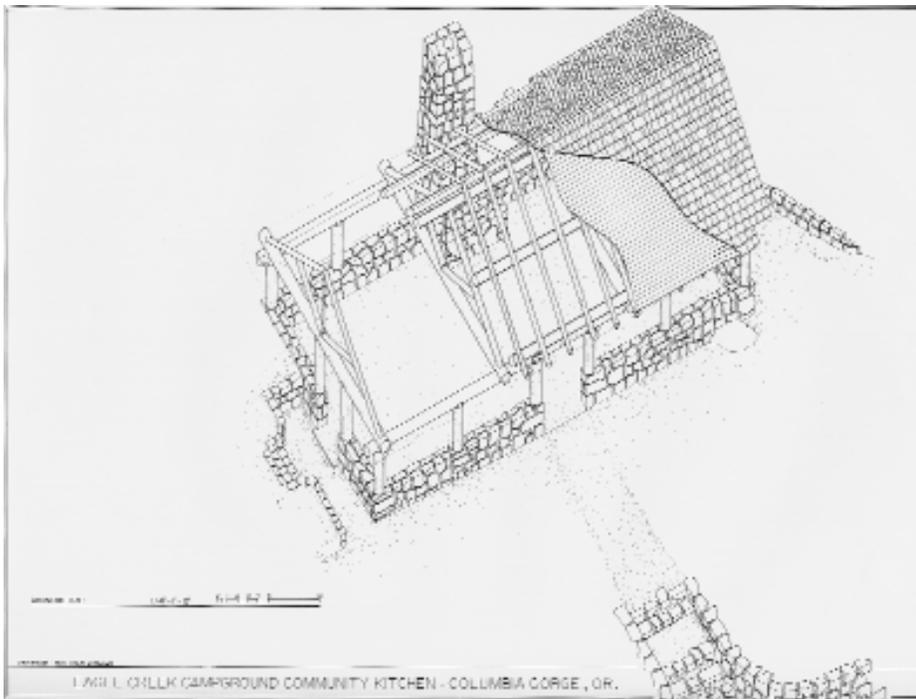
The Columbia River Gorge, whose rugged, green landscape delineates the border between Oregon and Washington, is the only waterway through the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. The Gorge has enjoyed a history of popularity, not only in terms of ease of transportation, but also because it provides access to some of the country's most beautiful forests. U.S. Forest Service development along the Gorge near Eagle Creek began in the 1930s and resulted in the construction of several buildings to support recreation activities and visitors. The Eagle Creek Recreation Area is located about 30 miles east of Portland and includes a Community Kitchen and Register Building. Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1936, both are log structures with basalt stone bases and shake roofs. The kitchen is approximately 20'x40' with open sides. The tiny Register Building (approximately 5'x6') was built to shelter the book that hikers registered in as a safety measure prior to heading into the forest.

The state of deterioration of both buildings was a concern to John Platz, a Forest Service engineer with the Mount Hood National Forest. He began planning another workshop with the National Park Service that would serve to build hands-on skills and would result in the restoration of these buildings (see Platz article elsewhere in this issue). In the spring of 1993, he was approached by Henry Kunowski of the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office who suggested using the skills of architecture and historic preservation students at the University of Oregon in Eugene. Within a short time, meetings had been held between representatives of SHPO, USFS, and the university and a plan had been established.

The first step in this cooperative endeavor was to take advantage of a fall 1993 class taught by Donald Peting and titled "Analysis of Historic Buildings." The 11 students who enrolled represented the Historic Preservation Program as well as the departments of Architecture and Art History. Some students had extensive drafting and measuring experience while others had little or none. Because of this, it was decided that the goal of the course was to produce a set of existing condition drawings to assist the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service with the training workshop scheduled for June/July 1994. The focus, then, was on measuring and graphically recording a structure on site and producing final ink drawings.

The course began with an introduction to the history, purpose, and methods of documentation of HABS/HAER. A discussion of the proper way to record field notes prepared the students for the first trip to the site. Three teams of three people were assigned specific parts of the Community Kitchen for documentation while a two-person team was responsible for the Register Building. Work during the first hours of the site visit proceeded slowly as the teams became accustomed to the process. Confidence and speed increased and the students succeeded in recording a significant amount of information in a day and a half. In the Community Kitchen, it was discovered that the stone fireplace, once used for cooking, was no longer functioning. Evidence also indicated the installation of electricity at one time but was no longer available. The roof had been cut away in two places to accommodate the growth of adjacent trees. The Register Building was in better condition but no longer served in its original capacity due to the relocation of the trail head.

Upon returning to Eugene, students drew plans, elevations, sections, and details based on everyone's field notes. In doing so, they identified missing information and realized the importance of using the HABS standardized notations to facilitate the understanding of notes by others. Inconsistencies in such items as roof pitch and dimensions



Eagle Creek Campground Community Kitchen. Drawn by Matthew Janssen.

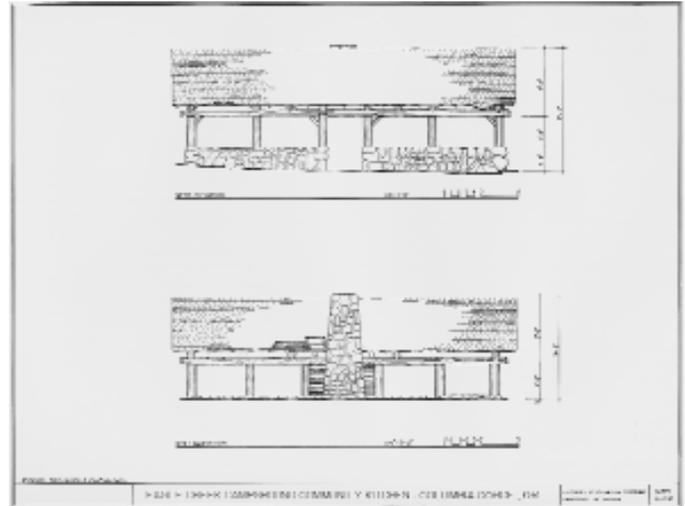
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were discovered. A second trip was quickly scheduled to avoid the harsh winter winds and snow characteristic of the Gorge. The progress of the students was evident in the speed and confidence demonstrated during this visit.

While the drawings progressed, class time was devoted to other aspects of the recording and documentation of historic structures. Professor Peting reviewed examples of HABS drawings, explained and demonstrated the UTM grid system, and discussed the construction of recreation structures by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Near the end of the term, pencil drawings were presented by the students and reviewed by John Platz and faculty. Many preservation questions of philosophical and practical natures, which will continue to be issues on future projects, were also raised. Should damaged materials be replaced in-kind even if that meant utilizing old-growth trees? Should the fireplace and electricity be restored to working condition? Should the encroaching mature trees be removed or should the building continually be modified to accommodate them? Should the siding on the back half of the Community Kitchen, which had been removed, be reconstructed? Should both buildings be restored to their original uses? Since very little documentation on them had been found, how accurate would a restoration be? Some of these issues were resolved by Mr. Platz who explained the adjacent trees were diseased and were to be removed because of the danger they presented while the fireplace and electricity would not be restored to working condition due to Forest Service policy.

As the deadline approached, a cooperative tone was set by students as they resolved issues about the final ink drawings. It was decided that most would be drawn free-hand to convey the irregular nature of the building materials. HABS standards were referred to for pen sizes and rendering of materials. The composition of each sheet was reviewed and revised to reflect a consistency throughout the set. The students in the class brought a diversity of experience and knowledge to the project. Those without a strong construction background learned more about building technology while others began to understand preservation issues. All developed an under-



Eagle Creek Campground Community Kitchen. Drawn by Richa Wilson and Jonathan Smith.

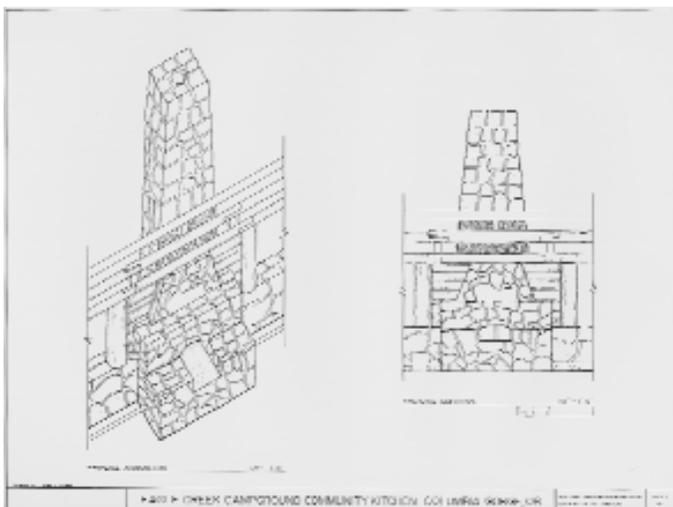
standing of the identification of building materials and the importance of HABS standards in terms of communication and consistency. The success of the course affirmed the bonds established between the U.S. Forest Service and the University of Oregon's School of Architecture and Allied Arts. In a situation that was mutually beneficial, the Forest Service received high quality work at a minimal cost (direct expenses such as travel, accommodations, and supplies were reimbursed). The students gained experience in the documentation of



Eagle Creek Campground Community Kitchen. Drawn by Jennifer Barnes and Alain Rebeyrol.

historic buildings as well as exposure to federal agencies that are so important to our nation's cultural resources. Most importantly, the project reflects a wonderful beginning to the establishment of a long-term relationship between the Forest Service and the university.

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Eagle Creek Campground Community Kitchen. Drawn by Janet Lamb.