

Nez Perce National Forest Lookouts

<http://idahoptv.org/outdoors/shows/eyesoftheforest/NezPerceForestLookouts.cfm>

Square Mountain Lookout

Square Mountain Lookout overlooks the Gospel Hump Wilderness. It's an L5 style lookout that was built in 1931. Beginning in 1999 it was restored with the help of Passport in Time Volunteers, Forest Service personnel and historic building preservation specialist Bruce Dreher.



"The lookout was in poor condition. The logs were severely decayed so we jacked the lookout up, placed cribbing under it to support the roof and the heavy gable logs and then we replaced all the wall logs. We also replaced the windows and the native rock foundation was rebuilt, a new roof was put on it. So today it's in pretty good shape. It was a wonderful feeling to get that done because when we started, the lookout was almost to the point of no return, so it was great."

— Cindy Schacher, Nez Perce Forest archaeologist



Square Mountain is a popular destination for recreationists. A lot of people just go for a drive to Square Mountain or ride their 4-wheelers and a lot of people visit up there. The country surrounding it is beautiful with the high elevation lakes. It's a fun place to go."

— Cindy Schacher, Nez Perce Forest archaeologist

Sourdough Lookout



"The Nez Perce forest is well known for its exquisite workmanship in our log buildings and at one time we had twenty log cabins with cupola lookouts. There is only one remaining today and that is Sour Dough lookout, so it is rare and beautiful building. We worked on Sour Dough for four seasons in the 1990s. I took a lot of pride in when we worked on Sour Dough. It felt very rewarding when we were done. It is a good feeling to know that lookouts like Sour Dough will be there in the future for future generations to visit and to experience."

— Cindy Schacher, Nez Perce Forest archaeologist

Elk Summit Lookout



"The first lookout at Elk Summit was built in 1911. It was a crow's nest and in 1934 a hundred foot steel aermotor tower was built there. With that type of lookout the cabs were very small because they were way up in the air and the wind would sway them quite a bit. So, in the case of

Elk Summit the cab was seven by seven feet so they built what they referred to as a log fireman's cabin at its base for the lookout to cook in and to sleep in. The steel aermotor towers were usually extremely tall, a hundred feet is a long way up there and we only have one of those left on the forest."

— Cindy Schacher, Nez Perce Forest archaeologist

Burnt Knob Lookout



"Some of the lookouts were built with native materials available on site and this was the case at Burnt Knob. Burnt Knob lies between the extensive Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. It sits on a rock bluff above two high elevation lakes. Burnt Knob was built in 1930 and it has not been staffed for many, many years."

— Cindy Schacher, Nez Perce Forest archaeologist

Wiley's Peak Lookout

This well known lookout on the Nez Perce is now gone, but for years it was an iconic structure.



"Wiley's Peak is without a doubt the most memorable and spectacular of the lookouts on our forest. It was the first lookout placed on the National Register within the entire nation so it was very special. The lookout was built in 1925 on a large granite boulder. The top twenty-five feet of

the rock had to be blown away to create a platform for the lookout to sit on. ...Despite the beauty of the lookout, its usefulness was short-lived and after the 1934 fire season it was closed forever. And unfortunately in 1983 lightning struck a fatal blow and it burned to the ground."

— Cindy Schacher, Nez Perce Forest archaeologist

Pilot Knob Lookout

Pilot Knob is another historic lookout on the Nez Perce and one of the few that is still staffed. Gary N. Dutcher has been returning to this lookout every summer for over twenty-five years.



"I knew I could do the job because I'd even helped teach lookouts how to do it when I was a dispatcher and this was open and I needed a job. I think we're all part of a team, the adrenaline gets to pumping and you hope you're seeing it before anyone else does. I don't know I just really enjoy spotting fires and nailing down the location as close as I can."



"There's a certain amount of freedom to it and to have a job like this you've got to be pretty comfortable with yourself and being alone. A lot of people can't do this job. Its 14 feet by 14 feet but still you've got a view of three or four states so you know I don't feel near as confined here as I did when I worked in the office. I think it's something deep inside of a person that makes you

want to see out further some. I can't explain it, but it's there. I'm more comfortable in the mountains — I'm just part of it."

— Gary N. Dutcher, long-time lookout at Pilot Knob