

GUY M. NIELSON CABIN
Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Big Springs Summer Home Area
Lot 3, Block E
Island Park
Fremont County
Idaho

HABS No. ID-128

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
COLUMBIA CASCADES SUPPORT OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
909 First Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104-1060

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GUY M. NIELSON CABIN HABS No. ID-128

Location: Lot 3, Block E, Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Big Springs Summer Home Area, Island Park, Fremont County, Idaho

The existing Big Springs Summer Home Area is located in the Island Park Management Area (MA#8), approximately 3 miles east of the community of Mack's Inn, Idaho. Access to the cabin is east from Highway 20 onto the South Big Springs Road #59 at Mack's Inn. Travel approximately 7 miles, cross over the Big Springs Bridge, and continue past corrals. Turn southeast onto the un-numbered road just before crossing the abandoned Railroad right-of-way Trail. Continue down road until the road narrows and appears to go through a swamp. The Guy M. Nielson Cabin is on the south side of the road on Lot 3, Block E.

Present Owner: Mr. Guy M., Dean G., and Clair W. Nielson

Present Use: Summer home

Significance: As an historic district, the integrity of Big Springs Summer Home Area has been lost. However, the summer home exhibits local significance due to its association with the original development of the area. The summer home was part of the original development of the Big Springs Summer Home Area begun in 1911 with the construction of the Forest Service Ranger station. The summer home also embodies the characteristics of the vernacular architecture typical of the region and time period that it was built.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: ca 1930s
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: No documentation lists the original owner of the property. It is believed that Mr. Glen Losch was the original owner of the cabin and sold the cabin to Mr. John R. Nichols in 1939.¹

A subsequent letter to the Forest Supervisor, dated August 23, 1948, requested the transfer of the special use permit from Mr. Nichols to Dr. H. J. Hartvigsen.

In 1954, Dr. Hartvigsen requested the transfer of the special use permit to Mr. W. A. Stewart². This permit was closed on June 17, 1954 and a new permit authorizing occupancy of the lot in the names of Guy M., Dean G., and Clair W. Neilson was issued.³

Mr. Neilson continues to hold the special use permit for this property.

4. Builders, Contractors, Suppliers: Unknown
5. Original Plans and Construction: Based on the construction technique and the use of materials, the original cabin consisted of a one-story rectangular in plan building oriented in the east-west direction. The single pen cabin was constructed with 7" diameter (on average) log walls with saddle notched corners, and a medium pitched gable roof. The foundation consisted of log beams and joists supported on concrete piers.
6. Alterations and Additions: Prior to 1961, a 1½-story addition was constructed perpendicular and west of the original cabin. This addition measures 15'-10" by 45'. The addition was constructed with a poured concrete foundation. The walls are 2" x 4" wood studs at 16" on center with 2" x 8" log siding. The floor was constructed with 2" x 8" wood joists at 16" on center. The roof was constructed with 2" x 6" rafters with exposed ends at 16" on center with ¾" fir sheeting and

¹ Letter to the Forest Supervisor stating the bill of sale and transfer of the use permit from Mr. Losch to Mr. John R. Nichols, August 22, 1939. (On file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

² Letter to Forest Supervisor from Dr. Hartvigsen, February 11, 1954. (On file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

³ Letter to Mr. Guy M. Neilson & Sons, from Forest Supervisor, June 17, 1954. . (On file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

asphalt shingles. A rectangular reddish-pink stone fireplace is located in the southwest corner of the addition. Access to the upper floor is provided via exterior stairs constructed with a 4" diameter log railing, 1" x 6" balusters, 2" x 10" treads and a 3'-4" x 1'-11" concrete pad at the base. A pine plank door with screen is located at the top of the stairs for access into the upper floor. Storage is located under the stairs.

The bedroom addition, constructed in 1961, is located perpendicular to the original cabin on the north side. The addition measures 20' x 19'. The bedroom addition has a poured concrete foundation over a crawl space. The walls are 2" x 4" wood studs at 16" on center with 2" x 8" log siding. The floor was constructed with 2" x 8" wood joists at 16" on center, with a ¾" fir subfloor and 5/8" finished plywood floor. The roof was constructed with 2" x 6" rafters at 16" on center with ¾" fir sheathing and asphalt shingles matching the shingles present on the existing residence.⁴

A breezeway was constructed on the north side of the 1½-story addition and accessed the west side door into the bedroom addition. The breezeway was constructed with 2" x 4" wood studs sheathed on the exterior with 2" x 8" log siding. The medium pitched shed roof, constructed of 2" x 6" wood studs, continues the roof line of the 1½-story addition.

- B. Historical Context: A U.S. Forest Service Ranger Station was the original development in the Big Springs area. It was located on the south bank of the river below the springs and consisted of a residence, an office, and a storehouse, plus a pasture and warehouse south of the road. In the beginning, summer homes were permitted as neighbors to this early Ranger Station. The first permits were issued in 1911 with the last permit issued in 1938. The original 37 summer homes were scattered in a U-shaped area around the head of the spring and along both sides of the stream. Many of the permits have since been transferred with U.S. Forest Service approval to new owners and, in some cases through a succession of owners.⁵

In 1949, the U.S. Forest Service gave notice to the summer home owners that the riverfront property in the Big Springs area was needed for public recreation.⁶ By 1965, the 37 original lots were reduced to 28 under special-use permit. The U.S. Forest Service

⁴ Plans submitted to E. Rex Naanes, District Ranger by Mr. Nielson, July 18, 1961.; Mr. Mel Harris constructed the bedroom addition for the Nielsons, Letter to Mr. Guy M. Nielson, from Alvin F. Wright, Forest Supervisor, July 13, 1961. (On file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

⁵ "Decision on Appeal of Big Springs Summer Home Owners to the Chief of the Forest Service from a Decision of the Regional Forester, Region 4, August 1965". (On file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

⁶ "Big Springs Summer Homes – Targhee National Forest", January 1983. (On file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

removed the Ranger Station buildings and the site and former lots have regrown to the natural forest environment.⁷

By 1982, 22 summer homes remained within the Big Springs Summer Home area. Today only four remain in their current location – Call Cabin, Deaton Cabin, Marriott Cabin, and Neilson Cabin. The other 18 properties have been moved to set-back lots within the Big Springs Summer Home area, relocated to other summer home areas within the national forest, or have been removed from U.S. Forest Service lands altogether. The remaining four properties are to be removed by 2002.

In the early 1980's, this river segment became the nation's first National Recreation Water Trail.

⁷ "Decision on Appeal of Big Springs Summer Home Owners to the Chief of the Forest Service". (On file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

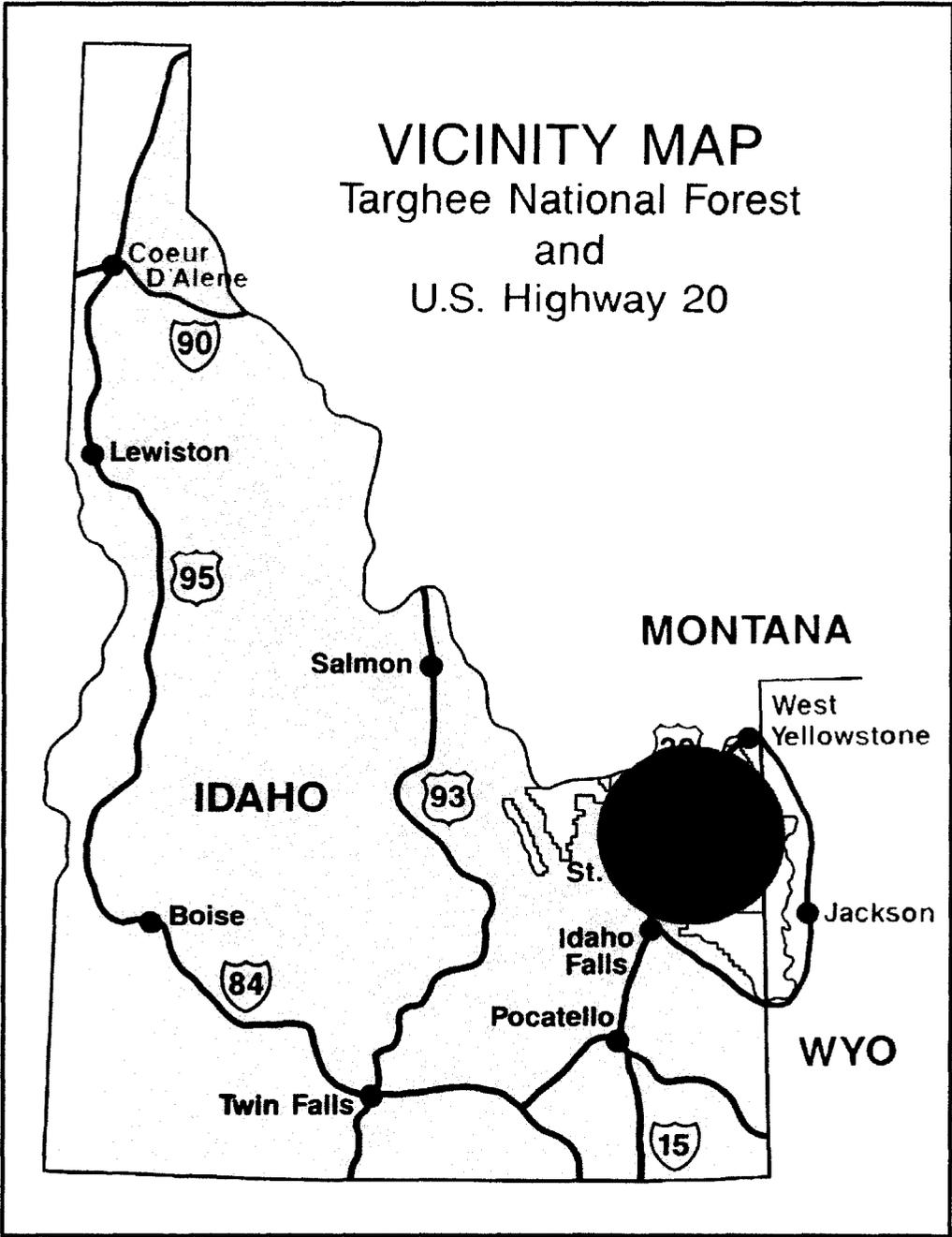


Figure 1: Vicinity map showing project area⁸

⁸ "Targhee National Forest Lodgepole Pine Reforestation Program", Targhee National Forest, Department of Agriculture, US Government Printing Office, 24.07.415.09/88.

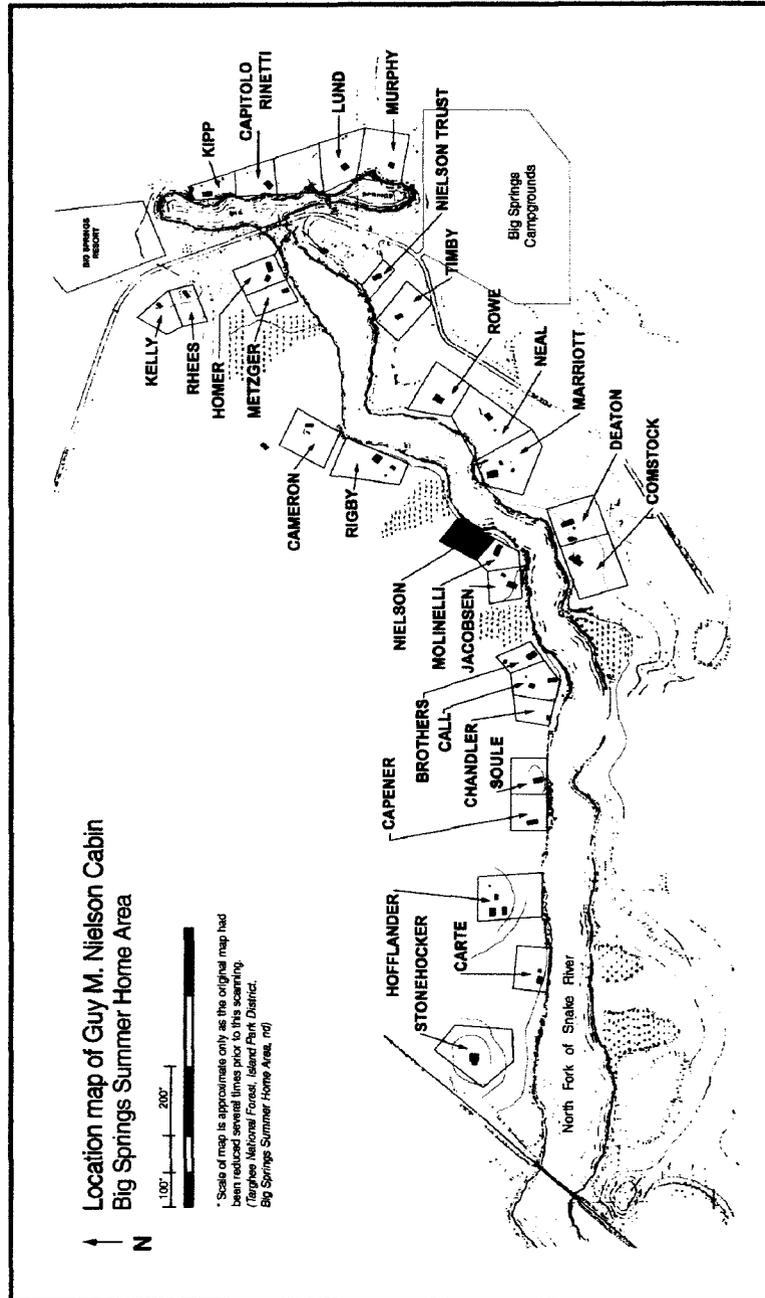


Figure 2: Location map of Guy M. Nielson property⁹

⁹ Modified from Big Springs Summer Home Area location map, Targhee National Forest, Island Park District, US Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, date unknown.

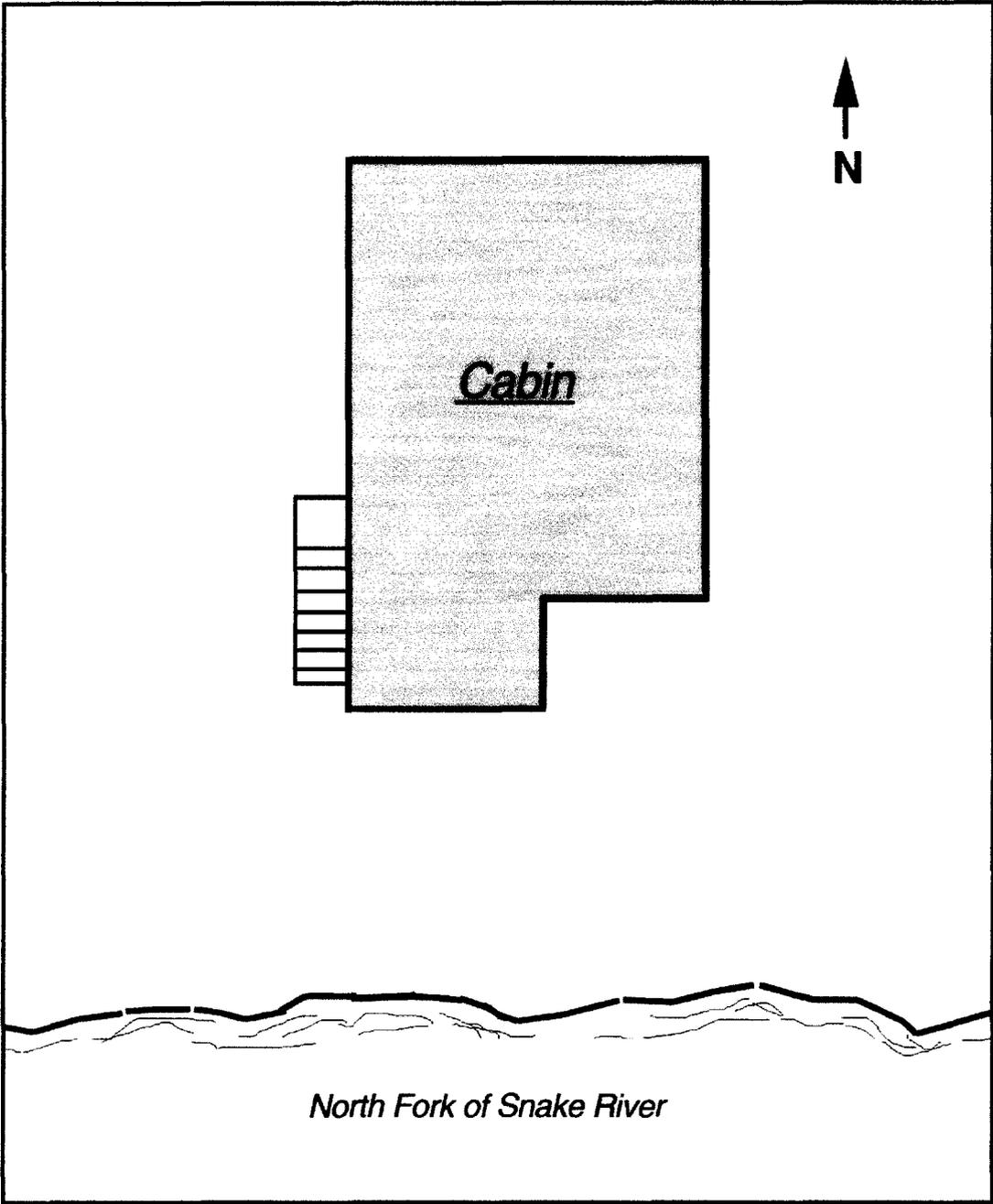


Figure 3: Sketch map of Guy M. Nielson Cabin

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The original building was constructed in a log cabin style. The style is evident in the building's massing, original single pen floor plan, construction technique, and building materials.
2. Condition of fabric: The exterior of the building is in fair to good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The building, as it is today, approximates a rectangle in plan. The original cabin area, located on the southeast side of the building is rectangular in plan measuring 18'-10" x 13'-7". Two additions (the 1½-story section on the west side and the bedroom/bathroom north) were constructed at right angles to the original cabin. The overall footprint measures approximately 45' x 34'-8".
2. Foundations: The foundation of the original cabin is log beams and joists supported by concrete piers. The foundation has been infilled between the piers with concrete masonry units and metal grates for ventilation. The foundations for both the 1½ story and bedroom additions are poured concrete over a crawl space.
3. Walls: The original cabin was constructed with 7" diameter (on average) pine logs laid horizontally and saddle notched at the corners. Both the 1½-story and bedroom additions are framed construction with 2" x 4" wood studs and 2" x 8" log siding with a varnish finish.
4. Structural System, Framing: The structure of the original cabin is 7" diameter logs laid in a saddle notch pattern on a concrete pier foundation. Log rafters, purlins, a ridge log, and cap logs support the gable roof. The 1½-story and bedroom additions are framed with 2" x 4" wood studs on a concrete foundation. Rafters support the gable roofs.
5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads: A large uncovered porch is located on the south side of the residence at the junction of the original cabin and 1½-story addition. The porch is a poured rectangular concrete pad with one step. A second concrete pad is located on the west side of the building. The pad measures approximately 3' x 4' and partially protected by a shed roof. A breezeway is located on the north side of the residence. The floor consists of 2" x 4" wood planking.

6. Chimneys: A single reddish-pink colored stone chimney with three-part chimney cap extends above the southwest corner roofline. The stone blocks were laid in an ashlar pattern.
 7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and Doors: Three doors provide access into the cabin. The west side entry door measures 36" wide and is constructed with tongue and groove pine planks. The breezeway has a 32" metal door with a 9-lite window. On the south side of the cabin, at the junction of the original cabin and 1½-story addition is a 32" pine plank door with exterior screen door. A pine plank door with exterior screen door is located at the top of the stairs for access into the upper floor.
 - b. Windows and Shutters: The building has several different types of windows. The original main cabin has a six-lite sliding wood window on the south side. The 1½-story addition has pairs of double-hung wood frame windows, and two double-pane fixed-glass wood frame windows measuring 8' x 6' and 5'-5" x 5'. The bedroom addition has sliding wood windows with aluminum storms on both the south
 8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, Covering: Over the original cabin area is a medium pitched gable roof with exposed 3" diameter log rafters, log purlins ridge log, and asphalt shingles over the original split wood shingles. The 1½-story section has a long sloping medium pitched gable roof with exposed 2" x 10" rafter ends. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The bedroom addition also has a medium pitched gable roof with exposed 2" x 6" rafter ends and asphalt shingles.

A shed roof covers the west side entry door and stoop. The medium pitched roof has exposed 2" x 6" wood rafters with asphalt shingles and is braced by three 2" x 6" wood studs angled from the foundation wall.
 - b. Cornice, Eaves: Exposed diameter log rafters, purlins, ridge log, and 2" x 6" rafter ends.
 - c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: None.
- C. Description of Interior: Access to the interior of the residence was not possible, therefore, the description of interior construction and finish materials has not been included in this report. Interior photographs are not available either.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation:¹⁰ The cabin is located in the Big Springs Summer Home Area on the north side of the North Fork of the Snake River. The original cabin was oriented in the east west direction.

The Big Springs Summer Home Area derives its name from a large spring that is the major source of water for the North Fork of the Snake River. The spring flows at a rate in excess of 160 feet per second from under a hill and gives rise to a stream about 100 feet wide with depths up to four feet. The spring is recognized as a unique geological feature in the state of Idaho. The original 37 summer homes were scattered in a U-shaped area around the head of the spring and along both sides of the stream. By 1965, 28 summer homes remained in the area.

The topography of the Big Springs Summer Home Area is generally level to gently sloping along the river banks. The area is heavily timbered with lodgepole pine, with an understory of shrubs, pinegrass and ground huckleberry and other wildflower plants. Marshy spots are interspersed with dry sites along the river. The stream itself supports a growth of green aquatic vegetation.

2. Historic Landscape Design: None
3. Outbuildings: None

¹⁰ Ibid.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings:

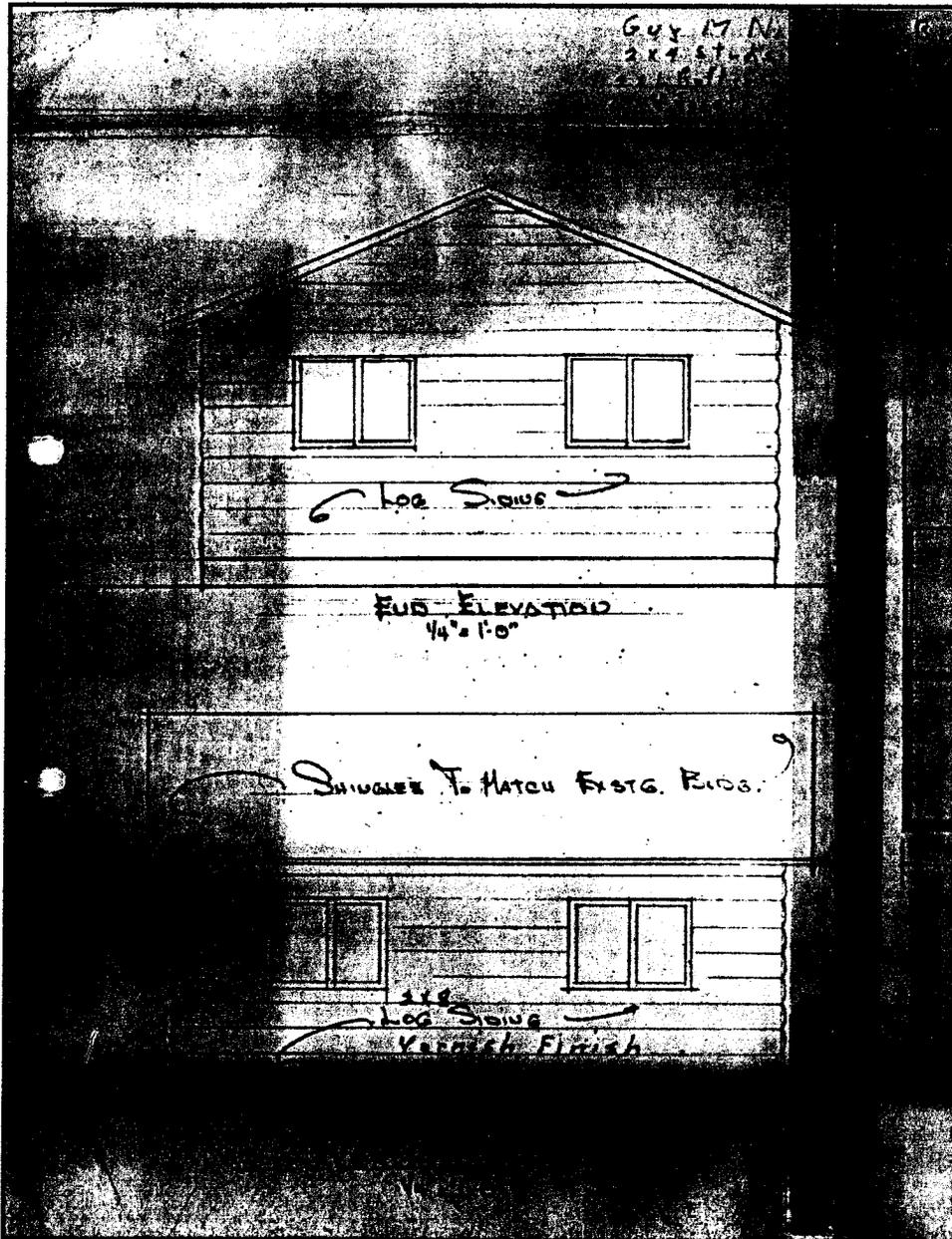


Figure 4: Elevation drawing for 1961 bedroom addition, submitted to Forest Supervisor. (Copy on file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

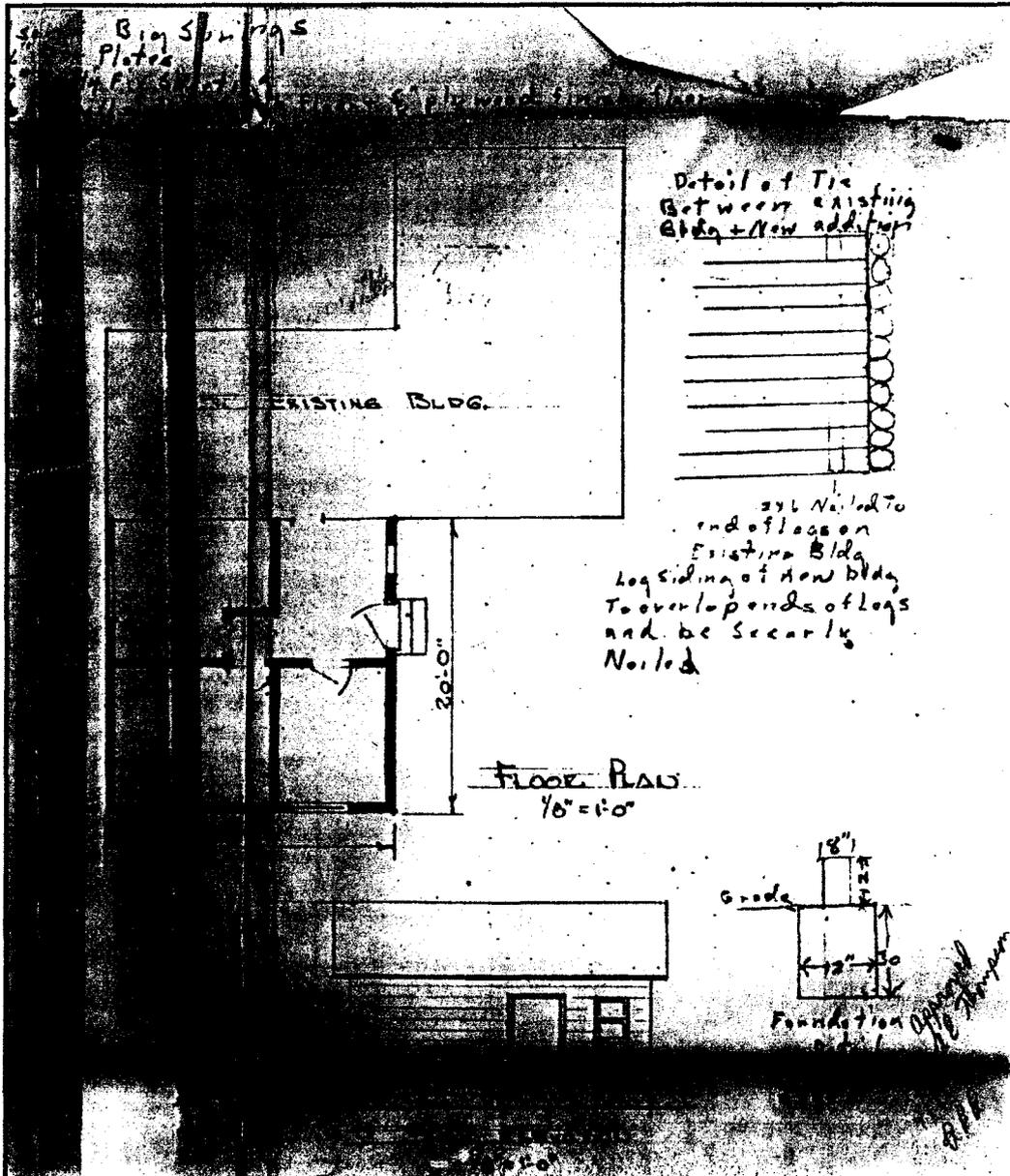


Figure 5: Plan for 1961 addition, submitted to Forest Supervisor. (Copy on file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

B. Early Views:

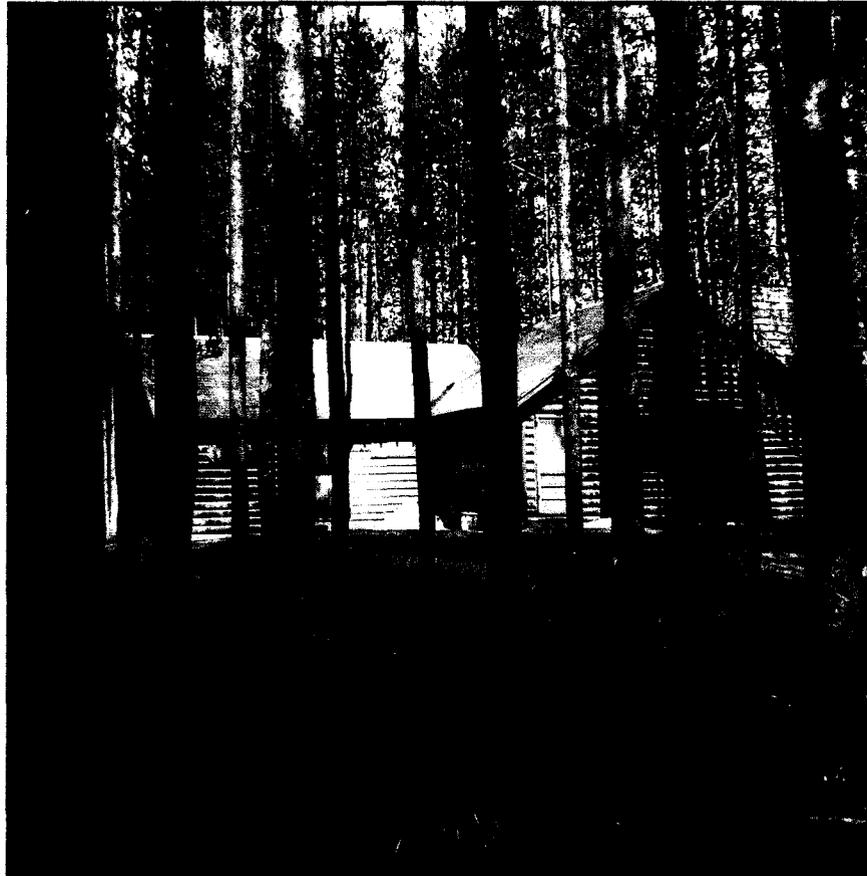


Figure 6: Photograph of Nielson property, (Photographer unknown, USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID, 1963)

B. Interviews: None

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

“Decision on Appeal of Big Springs Summer Home Owners to the Chief of the Forest Service from a Decision of the Regional Forester, Region 4, August 1965”. (On file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

“Big Springs Summer Homes – Targhee National Forest”, January 1983. (On file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

Letters to and from the Forest Supervisor. (On file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

Special Use Fee, Bill for Collection, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.
(On file with the USDA Forest Service, Island Park Ranger Station, ID.)

2. Secondary and published sources:

D. Supplemental Material: None

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

The project was sponsored by the USDA Forest Service. Documentation was coordinated through Mr. Ali Abusaidi, Archeologist, Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Idaho Falls, Idaho, and Ms. Kaye Olpin, Recreation Forester, Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Island Park Ranger Station, Island Park, Idaho. The project was completed through the U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Archaeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska. Ms. Sheila McCarthy served as project architect. Mr. Martin Stupich produced the large-format photographs included in the report.