

# FOREST LOOKOUTS

OREGON

BAKER COUNTY

BENTON COUNTY

CLACKAMAS COUNTY

CLATSOP COUNTY

MORE...

DOUGLAS COUNTY

## ACKER ROCK

Umpqua National Forest  
29S-1E-13



© 2007 - Ron Kennow photo

**1913:** Acker Rock used as a lookout point. Possibly used prior to that year.

**1932:** A 14x14 gable roofed ground house constructed. The structure's lightning protection was of standard #2 copper wire. The house was encircled by a non-standard catwalk and five-sixteenths guy cable was attached to the upper corners of the building and anchored to the rocks. The interior equipment included a Kellogg Grab-a-phone, a new #4 Osborne fire finder and a Lang wood stove with sheet iron sides. The outhouse was a standard Wallowa style. Water was carried from a spring three-quarters of a mile east of the lookout. Accessibility to the lookout was 21 miles by road from Tiller to the trailhead, then by trail for three miles. **(Umpqua National Forest files)**



**August 9, 1933:** Panorama photos taken by Lester Moe & Robert Cooper.

**July 1, 1961:** "Ray Gerhardt, Chico, Calif., who has been attending college in Mexico, Acker Rock, returning for a second summer's employment here." **(The News-Review)**

**August 4, 1962:** "The line up of college students stationed this summer at lookout posts in the Umpqua National Forest: Acker Rock -- Daniel L. Nelson of Albany worked last summer on the Winema National Forest. A student at the University of Oregon his major is physics and mathematics." **(The News-Review)**

**July 15, 1963:** "Jeffrey L. Magrist, 1963 graduate of the Days Creek High School, is serving as lookout on Acker Rock. His post, constructed on a high pinnacle of rock, is reached by a 3 mile hike by trail from the main South Umpqua Road. The new Rock Point Road now comes within a mile of the lookout, but no access trail exists and it is 'one mile straight up across country.'" **(The News-Review)**

**September 19, 1963:** "The list of projects for the Umpqua National Forest includes: Construction of two badly needed fire lookouts -- at Tallow Butte and Acker Rock." **(The News-Review)**

**October 12, 1963:** "A lookout house, battered, worn and weathered by the storms of more than 30 years, was demolished early this week in preparation for the construction of a brand new structure atop Acker Rock in the South Umpqua Ranger District." **(The News-Review)**

**October 31, 1963:** "Adverse weather has combined with the difficult location to slow progress on construction of the new Acker Rock fire lookout in the South Umpqua Ranger District northeast of Tiller, but the initial helicopter airlift of materials for the project was carried out on schedule without major problems, according to Ranger Hillard M. Lilligren.

The imposing rock formation is so shaped that there is no place large enough on top to set a helicopter down, thus presenting problems not encountered on previous lookout sites where airlift delivery was used. Some eight tons of materials and tools had to be trucked to the temporary heliport, an old logging landing approximately 1 1/2 miles south of the rock. There the supplies were bundled into units of about 600 pounds each and a long rope was securely attached which could be connected to the underneath of the helicopter. Individual lengths of rope for each bundle were required, Lilligren explained, because the ropes could not be recovered until the airlift was completed.

From the temporary heliport, the whirlybird lifted each bundle some 1,400 feet and maneuvered into position atop the narrow ridge, hovering gently until the load was lowered to the site at which time the pilot released the rope by means of a button on the control stick. The same technique is sometime required in supplying fire crews in mountainous country, the ranger said. He added that the Acker Rock operation is a little different from the one of a few years ago when Grasshopper lookout was constructed. A heliport was available there at the delivery point, making the project easier and presenting fewer safety problems.

About half of the eight ton total was transported in the first airlift. When the foundation and platform of the new lookout is constructed, a second airlift will deliver the remaining bundles containing materials for the lookout house itself. Evergreen Helicopters of McMinnville have the contract for the project.

Even demolishing the old lookout structure, built in 1932, was a problem, the ranger stated. Although Acker Rock is a huge mass of stone, the top consists of a series of rough, sharp spire - like formations somewhat resembling the backbone of a prehistoric animal.

The old lookout had been built at the point offering the most substantial area for the installation of supports for the platform, but even there the top was irregular and less than 8 feet in width. As a result the lookout house appeared to be supported on one side by rock and on the other by little more than imagination. An extremely steep ladder-like stairs clung to the side of the rock to connect the trail with the lookout base.

Whipped by winds and drenched by winter storms for more than 30 years, the lookout had become unsafe for occupancy because of decay of structural timbers and general deterioration. Although replacement was badly needed, no funds were available until the recent allocation through the Accelerated Public Works program, Lilligren explained.

Preparatory to the airlift operation, Bill Oden and a crew of Forest Service employes hiked about a mile cross-country from a new road development in the Buckeye Creek drainage to salvage all removable equipment from the old lookout, including firefinder, furnishings and windows. Then the structure was dismantled and pushed over the steep north side of Acker Rock where it will be piled for burning.

The helicopter airlift is in sharp contrast to the method of transportation of materials for the original lookout, Lilligren said. Other than native materials used in the piers, all other supplies were packed in by pack stock over an exceedingly steep trail some three miles from a point on the South Umpqua Falls. The trip involved fording the South Umpqua River." (by Mrs. M.H. Hammersley) **(The News-Review)**

**November 11, 1963:** "With rain and sleet contributing to discomfort of crew members handling the touchy job, final airlift of materials for Acker Rock lookout was completed Friday afternoon.

An attempt to carry out the delivery Thursday was abandoned after one load was deposited on the huge rock. Snow flurries and wind conditions made the difficult job even more hazardous, resulting in the decision to wait for better weather." **(The News-Review)**

**1988:** The staffing of the lookout to be done by contract.

**2006:** The lookout structure received a new roof and other much needed repairs to make it ready for the rental program.

---

*National Geodetic  
Survey*

---

DESIGNATION - ACKER ROCK LOOKOUT HOUSE  
 PID - PC0857  
 STATE/COUNTY- OR/DOUGLAS  
 COUNTRY - US  
 USGS QUAD - ACKER ROCK (1989)

**STATION DESCRIPTION**

DESCRIBED BY COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY 1953 (CTH)  
 STATION IS THE CENTER OF A WOOD FIRE LOOKOUT HOUSE, OWNED AND MAINTAINED BY THE U. S. FOREST SERVICE, ON THE HIGHEST POINT OF ACKER ROCK. A TRAVERSE CONNECTION WAS MADE FROM TRIANGULATION STATION ACKER ROCK 1953. DISTANCE TO CENTER OF HOUSE IS 9.19 METERS, 30.16 FEET. DISTANCE TO SOUTH GABLE OF HOUSE IS 7.06 METERS, 23.18 FEET.

REX'S FIRE LOOKOUT PAGE

NATIONAL HISTORIC LOOKOUT REGISTER



MEMBER: FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION

