

Paulina Lake Guard Station

By Les Joslin

The Civilian Conservation Corps built Paulina Lake Guard Station in 1938 on the south shore of the larger of the two lakes within the Newberry Caldera on the Deschutes National Forest. As a satellite of a U.S. Forest Service ranger station, the guard station was staffed by a seasonal forest guard who assisted a district forest ranger. Located about thirty-five miles east of the crest of the Cascade Range and thirty-five road miles south of Bend, Paulina Lake Guard Station was and remains a remote Forest Service outpost.

Designed in the Pacific Northwest region's distinctive New Deal-era Cascadian Rustic style, the three-room combination office and residence—the station's main structure—had a large living room with a wood stove, a large bedroom with a small closet, and an eat-in kitchen with a large wood cook stove. It also had an indoor bathroom and shower.

Attached, but not part of the main structure, were a one-car garage and a woodshed. A crew house was added in the early 1950s. Identified by a rustic brown sign with carved white letters and Forest Service shield, the brown Paulina Lake Guard Station building is about two hundred yards from the station's namesake lake on the western road into Newberry Caldera.

For its first seventeen summers of service, Paulina Lake Guard Station was staffed by Forest Guard John Prescott Robins, who arrived with his wife Helen and young sons Dick and Dave on June 15, 1942. District Ranger Henry Tonseth had selected Robins for the job because he had proven himself as a forest guard and fire lookout on two other Deschutes National Forest ranger districts. In addition, as a married father and schoolteacher in his early forties, he was available to work during the severe World War II manpower shortage.

To be successful in the position, Robins had to be capable and self-reliant. Tonseth's headquarters was thirty dusty road miles away at Cabin Lake Ranger Station, the hub of most Deschutes National Forest timber sale activity. Robins's communication with others working in the forest was by a hand-ring, party-line telephone in the kitchen.

Robins's main duties were preventing and suppressing wildfires, maintaining campgrounds and facilities, and providing information and assistance to visitors. He always wore a Forest Service uniform. Helen Robins staffed the station while he was in the field, and their sons Dick and Dave often tagged along and helped with the work. Beginning in 1946, visitation and campground use increased enough that Robins was given a Forest Service truck and additional help two or three days a week for campground maintenance and other chores.

Paulina Lake Guard Station remains in service as a Newberry National Volcanic Monument visitor center. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on April 11, 1986.

Sources

Joslin, Les. *Uncle Sam's Cabins: A Visitor's Guide to Historic U.S. Forest Service Ranger Stations of the West*. Bend, Ore.: Wilderness Associates, 2012.

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