

Glacier National Park Headquarters Historic District Walking Tour Script

Introduction:

Hello and welcome to Glacier National Park's Headquarters Historic District Walking Tour. Today we will take a stroll through the administrative area of Glacier National Park, learn a bit about the architecture of fifteen historic structures, and get a glimpse into what it takes to keep a national park operating. The entire route is about a mile long, with one steep 50 foot section that is not paved. It will take approximately one hour to complete.

A few simple instructions are all you need to start your audio tour. Audio stop numbers are displayed in your brochure. Simply enter the appropriate audio stop number on your cell phone keypad followed by the pound sign, or enter * to advance to the next stop. Disconnect the call while walking between stops and you can rejoin as many times as you like by dialing the tour phone number.

For your safety, please walk on the left side of the road, facing traffic, and be aware of park personnel working and driving. Also, all of these structures are working facilities and many are private residences. Please be respectful of this and do not approach or enter structures. Our first stop is to your right and around to the back of the park's administration building where we will set the stage for the construction and need for this building. Enjoy your tour and please press one to begin!

Stop #1 – Administration Building:

You have just walked around what park employees know fondly as "park headquarters." This building serves as the Park's main administrative center, and today, is the first building to greet visitors as they enter the area on Grinnell Drive. Approximately 45 people work inside this building and many have worked here for over twenty years. How would you like to report here for work every day?

William Logan, Glacier National Park's first superintendent hired in 1910, focused his initial construction projects on the creation of a park administrative center and on a system of roads and trails. In late 1910, soon after the area was converted from a national forest to a national park, he established the park's first administrative center at Fish Creek Bay. This was near the current Fish Creek Campground, in a building abandoned by the U.S. Forest Service that is no longer standing. Between 1917 and 1923, the park secured funding for the development of a new administrative complex, to be located immediately adjacent to the park's west entrance (the area you will be walking through). Later on the tour, you will see the 1924 Rustic Style building that originally housed the park's administrative offices (today's West Lakes District Office, stop # 7 on the tour). Due to increased workloads and staffing, by 1950 it was clear that Glacier required a new, larger administration building, and park and regional offices undertook an architectural study for a new headquarters building.

It was not just Glacier National Park that was in need of better buildings in the 1950s. In 1956, the National park Service entered a new era of funding and construction for the first time in nearly a generation, known as the "Mission 66" Program. The NPS instituted the "Mission 66" strategy for modernization to address nearly a generation of neglect of national parks resulting from massive shortages of funding, as well as staff and materials created by World War II and its long, lingering aftermath.

The National park Service intended the ten-year "Mission 66 Program" to dramatically expand national park visitor services and facilities by 1966, in time for the agency's 50th anniversary. Conrad Wirth, the NPS Director at that time, conceived of and instituted the massive, ambitious plan. Wirth concentrated on the efficacy of a ten-year budget that would serve the long-term implementation of planned modernization, instead of the standard annual budget. By mid-July 1961, Glacier completed a negotiated contract for \$14,000 with the

architectural firm of Brinkman and Lenon of nearby Kalispell, Montana for the final design of the administration building you see today. Construction began on April 2, 1962 and was completed June 23, 1963 for a final cost of \$308,377. This modern style building is asymmetrical in massing and combines a long, low one-story horizontal front (south) wing with a two story wing that projects to the rear. The resulting L-shaped structure encompasses 15,100 square feet in area. The building sits on a poured concrete foundation that holds a full basement

Our path heads east, along the bike path and through the woods to Mather Drive. This road was named after Stephen Mather, the first National Park Service Director, who used his own funds to purchase much of the land for the HQ area. As you walk through the woods on the way to our next stop, think about what this area was like for 10,000 years before it was designated a national forest and then a national park. When you get to Mather Drive, press 2# to learn about American Indian culture and Glacier National Park.

Stop #2 – American Indians in Glacier:

Since prehistoric times, humans have travelled through and lived in the Glacier National Park region. To the Kootenai, Salish, Pend d'Oreille and Blackfeet people, the landscape has always been a place of tremendous spiritual importance. The Kootenai Indians called Lake McDonald, “The Place Where They Dance” because they went there to dance, sing songs, and find spiritual guidance. Additionally, the Kootenai used several routes through Glacier National Park to find needed resources such as bison on the Great Plains. The Blackfeet used the same routes, but travelled westward to steal horses – an act of great prowess in their culture. In 1806, Lewis and Clark came within 50 miles of what is now Glacier Park, and as the number of white people moving west increased, the American Indian tribes were forced onto reservations. The thousands of years old Kootenai tradition of camping and dancing at the foot of Lake McDonald ended after Milo Apgar and others settled in the area.

When formally made into a national park in 1910, Glacier began to attract more and more visitors. These visitors expected roads, trails, food, lodging, and other services. To provide some of these amenities, the park needed more employees, and the employees needed housing! Look to your left and you will see the bike path which leads to Apgar Village, and then look to your right. As you turn to your right on Mather Drive, realize that you are on the old, main park entrance road. All of the structures along the west side of Mather Drive are examples of “Mission 66” employee housing. When you are across the street from the building with the “Research Learning Center Residence” sign on the front, press 3#, to learn more about “Mission 66” employee housing.

Stop #3 – “Mission 66” Employee Housing:

Like many companies or corporations, Glacier National Park needs employee housing. These buildings are examples of the permanent employee residences built during the “Mission 66” era. In Glacier Park, the first phase of “Mission 66” housing began in 1959 when Superintendent Edward A. Hummel awarded the building contracts to the Federal Construction Company from Spokane with the total cost of each house at \$17,216. The original exterior colors were “sand Pastel” and “Pink Coral,” with the shingled roof a “pastel brown blend” or “red blend.” The houses were done in a Modern Movement Ranch style and the square footage was 1,120 feet. The garages are 382 square feet.

It's interesting to note that the spouses of the traditionally male park rangers requested that all the government housing be constructed with the same exact layout. That way, when they were transferred with their husbands and families from park to park, all of their furniture, curtains and other furnishings would fit in the next park house. Today, most of these “Mission 66” houses are used for seasonal workers or for office space.

With more visitors and more employees coming each year to Glacier, the next step in the creation of park administration was to include a legal jurisdiction. Learn how the law was and is enforced in our national park at stop #4, the old Commissioner's Residence.

Stop #4 – Commissioner's Residence:

When Glacier National Park was established in 1910, legal jurisdiction of the land was ceded to the federal government. This created the position of the U.S. Commissioner, who served as the judicial authority, trying criminals and handling other legal matters. In the earlier days of the park, poaching was the most common crime committed (and it is still an issue today). Motor vehicle violations are now the general legal offense in the park. A permanent residence for the commissioner had been considered, but there were never enough funds to build such a structure. In 1929, Senator Thomas Walsh of Montana added an amendment to a Department of Interior appropriations bill providing \$5,000 for construction of this home, which was completed on August 29. William Lindsey, who had served as the Commissioner since 1920, was the home's first occupant. Lindsey and his family occupied the home into the 1950's, and after his death on January 26, 1953, his wife, Margaret, served as the commissioner for several years.

Today, the house is an employee residence, as there is no longer a federal Commissioner for Glacier National Park. Instead, district court is held regularly at the Community Building, the next stop on the tour. The Commissioner's house remains largely the same as when first built. The interior of the building has two living levels and a partial basement. The main floor contains a living room, dining room, kitchen, utility room, half bath, and an office. The second floor contains three bedrooms, a full bath, and a hallway with an open banister that overlooks a stairwell. The interior of the home still holds historic truth and contributes to the significance of the building.

Our next structure has served many functions over the years. Traditionally it was used as a dance hall, an entertainment building, and is now Glacier Park's community building. When you arrive at the community building, stand near the light pole for a good view, and press 5# for more information. Please be respectful of events that may be occurring at the building while you are on the tour. Thank you.

Stop #5 – Community Building:

The Glacier National Park Community Building was originally built as part of the Gold Brothers hotel complex in Apgar. The building known as "Gold's Bungalow" was used as a dance hall and entertainment center for many years. There were dances held there twice a week, and there was a soda fountain and gift shop inside. In 1929, the Half Moon fire burned down a lot of the Gold Brother's facilities in Apgar but not the hall. In 1930, park administrators recognized the need for a community building in the residential area for the park and purchased the building. It was cut in half and moved here in 1938.

Since 1938, the community building has been used for a variety of purposes including park offices, a training center, and a community hall. The structure's unusual and important role in defining the community makes it an important part of the Headquarters Historic district. The building is a single-story wood frame resting on a concrete foundation and was originally painted green. The building's interior features a large, central room with a stage. Extensions provide a kitchen, bathroom, and cloak room. This building is now used for social events, park training, and district court.

No need to walk to our next stop since the structures are only a glance away and best viewed from the light pole area. Press 6# to learn how the earliest employees cooked and lived, and curiously, what these old dormitories and mess hall are used for today.

Stop #6 – Employee Dormitories and Mess Hall:

The first park dormitory and mess hall were completed in 1927. The second dorm was built by Civilian Conservation Corps Crews in 1933-'34. The Civilian Conservation Corps was active from 1933-1942 and was comprised of young men who were out of work because of The Great Depression. They were employed by the government and put to work to construct and improve facilities on public lands. The CCC crews improved many of the trails while they worked here in Glacier, and constructed the fire hose tower and maintenance garages that you will see later on the tour.

These two dorms and mess hall were constructed to house the influx of seasonal workers needed to help maintain the park's services since Glacier Park was becoming a destination and more visitors were arriving every year. Traditionally, before the dorms were built, most of the seasonal workers camped in tents.

The building on your left was the Mess Hall. It was used for its original purpose as a dining hall until the late 1970's. The original floor plan of the mess hall had a storage area, cooks' bedrooms and baths, a kitchen and a large dining room. Since 1970, it has served as the park's main archives building. The archives keep old visitor record books, newspapers from the past, and are a major help in keeping the park's history documented.

Return to Mather Drive and turn right. Our next stop takes us to the original entrance of Glacier National Park and the architecture of the Belton Bridge, which was built so visitors could cross the Middle Fork of the Flathead River to get into the park. When at the bridge viewpoint, press 7# to learn about the bridge's architecture and the great flood of 1964.

Stop #7 – The Belton Bridge and Original Entrance:

The Middle Fork of the Flathead River runs along the southwestern edge of Glacier Park and serves as the border between the park and adjacent land. To enter the park, the very first visitors had to use rowboats to cross the river, until a bridge was built in 1895. After this bridge was condemned in 1918, the Belton Bridge was constructed in its place and served as the main entrance to the park until 1938, when another bridge was built half a mile downstream and in the present location of today's highway entrance bridge.

Both bridges were fine until the massive, 500-year flooding of 1964, which destroyed the highway bridge at today's park entrance site and severely damaged the Belton Bridge. On June 25, 1964, the Belton Bridge was rebuilt by N.D. Robinson from Missoula and served throughout the 1964 and 1965 seasons while the new "highway" bridge in use today was constructed.

The Belton Bridge is a reinforced concrete arch span. On top of the arch is a ten-span timber trestle system supporting a wood-deck. The single, 110 foot span, concrete arch has a rise of just over 12 feet and is 16 inches thick. The bents are comprised of four 12-inch timber posts which have 2 ½ inch x 12 inch diagonal bracing. On top of these posts are 12-inch timber beams that support 4 inch x 12 inch floor joists and plank decking.

Operating a national park requires not only employees, but a leader to oversee the work personnel and park mission. The park Superintendent's house was built adjacent to this historic park entrance so he could keep close tabs on the coming and going of visitors and personnel. When ready, press 8# to learn more about the Superintendent's house, and remember, please stay on our path and don't approach the house.

Stop #8 – Superintendent's Residence:

In 1923, the superintendents' house was constructed here, off to the side of the original park entrance, in an area of flat topography and coniferous trees. Strategically placed by the main entrance, the superintendent could oversee and monitor the park activity as visitors entered and left.

The building was designed by the NPS Landscape Division in San Francisco, but not without input from Glacier's superintendent at the time, J. Ross Eakin. At that time it was the largest park residence and was often used for hosting NPS social functions. There have been minor structural changes to the building as of now, but it exists largely unchanged from its original state. The few changes include adding on a rear porch. The heavy log construction of the building with chimney and patio of native stone is an excellent example of rustic National Park Service architecture. In the house, there are seven rooms and two bathrooms split between two levels. This house blends well with its beautiful setting along the Middle Fork of the Flathead River.

Our next structure has transitioned between three different purposes as park priorities and operations have changed. When at the West Lakes District Office, press 9# to learn what these purposes were.

Stop #9 – West Lakes District Office:

The West Lakes District Office was the original Administration Building, or Headquarters. It was built near the main entrance to the park in order to have a commanding view of the approaching travel as well as a distant view of the Belton [entrance] station. From 1924-1965, this building was used as Park Headquarters until it was converted to a health clinic and nurses department. In 1941, the entire interior was remodeled, and in 1943, a pedestrian door was installed within the southeast elevation to provide a direct entrance from the Superintendent's office. Today, it contains the offices of the district supervisors for park trails, interpretation, education, volunteers, cultural resources, and resource protection.

In addition to these offices, park operations wouldn't be complete without divisions to respond and deal with natural disturbances such as fires. Our next stop, the Fire Management Office, is left, or west, on Ruhle Drive. Once again, for your safety, please walk on the left side of the road, facing traffic, and be aware of park personnel working and driving. Veer left onto the "Bike Path," and the Fire Management Office is located half way down this street. When there, press 10# to learn more.

Stop #10 – Fire Management Office:

The year of park establishment, 1910 was a monumental year for fire in the western U.S. Glacier National Park has had a fire management operations office for over 70 years, and the first office was located in the fire cache building, #12 on the tour. The present-day Fire Management Office building was originally constructed during the late 1950's again as part of the "Mission 66" architectural scheme, and was built for employee housing. In 2002, it moved into this building from the Fire Cache building. The Fire Management Office is where the fire official's offices are located and where fire-fighting strategy is planned. The Fire Management Office is purposely located adjacent to the fire cache, which you will see at stop #12, and to the hose tower, our next stop.

To reach the hose tower, follow the bike path downhill from the cul-de-sac and then veer right uphill onto a short, unpaved trail. At the top of the trail, press 11# to learn about the most unique structure in the park.

Stop #11 – Hose Tower:

The Headquarters hose tower was completed in 1933 by the Civilian Conservation Corps crews to help dry hoses used by park fire teams and the tower is still used for this purpose today. This building was one of several structures built to strengthen the fire infrastructure after the 1929 fire. The hose tower is a big improvement from the old method of draping hoses over the roofs of park buildings. It was also built because of an inability to dry hoses outside due to the late fire season. The tower is constructed of wood with a small cast iron ladder on the inside. The tower is built near the Fire Cache in a hollow and stands over sixty feet tall. Half way up the front of the tower is a bridge that links it to the ground level of the maintenance yard. Being one of the most distinct and noticeable buildings in the headquarters area, the tower received a lot of comment from other national parks regarding its unique concept and design. It is the only noted hose tower in any national park.

From the top of the hill, look southeast from the hose tower and the first long building you see on the right is the fire cache. To learn about the fire cache press 12#.

Stop #12 – Fire Cache:

An integral part of the management of the park's fire crew, the fire cache was built in 1933 and houses tools along with a map room and radio room for dispatch complete with a telephone switchboard. Previously, the building served as the Fire Management Office for over sixty years. The building is constructed of wood with concrete floors and has been void of any major structural changes since it was built.

Our next stop is the horse barn to the north, on the other side of the road. Press 13# to learn why stock is an important part of park operations – in the past and now.

Stop #13 – Stock Barn:

The barn, built in 1928, was originally isolated from the rest of the Park service buildings, sitting at the west end of the maintenance yard, but is now surrounded by other structures. Since forest fires frequently sweep through Glacier Park, and because of the heavily wooded area where the building was constructed, the barn was made of mostly fire-proof materials, such as galvanized iron and modern metal panels. Along with a central stall area the two-story barn consists of three major spaces: a hayloft, grain room and saddle room. Like many stalls and barns, this one is “mouse proofed” in order to keep the rodents from eating the grain.

Historically, the barn served the purpose of housing the park's pack horses and mules during the summer, and then was used for storage in the winter, while the stock was let out to pasture.

Today, the Park's horses and mules are used for backcountry patrols by rangers and packing for trail crews, lookout tower personnel, and other backcountry personnel. Now the stock stays in a new barn and corral located between Headquarters and Apgar, and this historic structure is used for storage of maintenance equipment.

Even though stock is still used every day in Glacier Park, over the years, automobiles and machinery have become more commonplace in the work force. And, as always, where there are cars and trucks, there are needed repairs. If you move one building to your right and then look back across the street to the south, you can learn about the largest building in the maintenance yard, the auto repair shop, press 14#

Stop #14 – Auto Repair Shop:

The auto-repair shop was constructed in 1925 and was an essential addition to the park's infrastructure because it allowed equipment to be repaired on site. Originally, vehicles were housed in the auto shop too, but due to the size of today's vehicle fleet they are no longer stored there. Over the next few years, additions were made to the building's length and width, along with the addition of a blacksmith shop. The exterior of the building is wood with a wood interior; except for the blacksmith shop which has corrugated metal walls. All floors are concrete. This building is the largest and center-most building in the maintenance area.

Speaking of automobiles and roads, the construction of the Going-to-the-Sun Road from 1921 - 1932 was a major accomplishment in park history. To achieve this feat and to maintain the road after it was completed, a phenomenal amount of manpower and equipment was needed. Our next stop is in front of the Civilian Conservation Corps garages that were built to house that equipment. When there, please press #15.

Stop #15 – Civilian Conservation Corps Garages:

The Civilian Conservation Corps equipment sheds and the associated boulevard lie on both sides of the wide median in the maintenance yard. Construction of the sheds began in 1941. The sheds were originally built to store the heavy equipment used to maintain the Going to the Sun Road. They contain ten 12-panel/three-light metal vehicular doors that dominate the front elevations. These sheds initiated the second phase in headquarters development. The monotony of the yard itself would be broken by a row of three (later two) oval-shaped tree islands located down the center line. These sheds are still standing, as are the trees on the farthest south of the two tree islands. This phase of headquarters development made sure that the housing, maintenance, and administrative buildings were grouped together in separate locations.

As you can see, the small area that you walked today on the tour continues to be the working operation and housing center for the park. As such, it contains cultural resources from some of the major eras of National Park Service history and architecture. From pre-park establishment and American Indians' relationship to this special place, to the creation of the park - the roads and bridges, trails, park housing, fire management, and administrative office space -there have been many changes in the past 100 years. These cultural resources are protected and preserved as a record of the human component of national park operations. We can only wonder at what changes, needs, and issues may affect this area and the human side of operating a national park in the next 100 years.

This concludes our historic walking tour. This tour was created in 2011 by students at Whitefish Independent High School with funding from the Montana Arts Council's Cultural Trust Grant Program. Please follow the designated route back to the Headquarters Administrative building and enjoy the rest of your visit in beautiful Glacier National Park!