

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Mount Spokane Vista House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number N 26107 Mt. Spokane Park Drive

☐

not for publication

city or town Mead

☒

vicinity

state Washington

code WA

county Spokane

code 063

zip code 99021

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national X statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria

X A B X C D

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

WASHINGTON SHPO

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register

 determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Mount Spokane Vista House
Name of Property

Spokane County, WA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Cat: Recreation and Culture

Sub: Outdoor Recreation

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Cat: Recreation and Culture

Sub: Outdoor Recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Arts and Crafts: Rustic / National Park

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Stone (granite)

roof: Wood Shingle

other:

Mount Spokane Vista House
Name of Property

Spokane County, WA
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Vista House is a stone building located at the summit of Mount Spokane. Sitting under a front gable roof, the building features a large public gathering room and smaller specialized spaces on the ground floor. It features a covered entry on the south façade and steel casement windows at the first floor level. The building is surrounded by a concrete terrace and sidewalk, framed on the east side by a low stone wall. The second floor was originally constructed as a fire lookout, accessible by an exterior stair at the north end of the building with wood sash windows providing views to the surrounding region. The building retains a high level of historic integrity and is a good example of the NPS Rustic Style of architecture. The nominated property includes the building and the surrounding concrete terraces, including the low stone walls.

Narrative Description

See Continuation Sheets.

Mount Spokane Vista House
Name of Property

Spokane County, WA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Entertainment / Recreation

Period of Significance

1933

Significant Dates

1933

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Henry Bertelsen (Architect)

Einar Fieldstad (Builder)

Mount Spokane Vista House
Name of Property

Spokane County, WA
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Vista House is significant at the statewide level under Criteria A and C. Constructed in 1933, the building represents a significant development by the Washington State Parks Committee as funding was restored to the agency. It is also architecturally significant for its use of the Rustic Style of architecture, for its combination of uses, and as the only known remaining Rustic design by architect Henry Bertelsen. The building retains a high level of historic integrity, and the period of significance for the property corresponds to its construction date of 1933.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

See Continuation Sheets.

Mount Spokane Vista House
Name of Property

Spokane County, WA
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

See Continuation Sheets.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☒ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References NAD 1927 or X NAD 1983

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1
Zone Easting Northing

3
Zone Easting Northing

2
Zone Easting Northing

4
Zone Easting Northing

Or Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 47.923717 -117.112183
Latitude Longitude

3
Latitude Longitude

2
Latitude Longitude

4
Latitude Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary encompasses the Vista House and its associated terraces for a distance of 5 feet out on all sides from the edges of the constructed historic property.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the Vista House building and the terraces on all four sides of the building. It is extended five feet from the outer edge of all terraces to include the entirety of the significant resource.

Mount Spokane Vista House
Name of Property

Spokane County, WA
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Alex McMurry / Historic Preservation Planner
organization Washington State Parks date _____
street & number PO Box 42650 telephone (360)902-0930
city or town Olympia state WA zip code 98504-2650
e-mail Alex.McMurry@parks.wa.gov

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

See Continuation Sheets.

Property Owner: (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission
street & number PO Box 42650 telephone (360)902-0930
city or town Olympia state WA zip code 98504

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 7 Page 1

The Vista House sits at the summit of Mount Spokane within Mount Spokane State Park. The park encompasses nearly 14,000 acres, and is the largest in the Washington State Park system. The summit at this location has an elevation of approximately 5,800 feet and is the highest point in the region. This location provides sweeping views of the surrounding areas, particularly to the east and south. The relatively open landscapes on these sides give distant views, while the views to the north and west sides of the building are partially obscured by the surrounding high alpine forest.

The building serves multiple functions for the visiting public. At the exterior, the building features an integrated terrace on the east side to provide a defined space for taking in the magnificent views. The large east side terrace continues around the perimeter of the building in the form of a wide sidewalk. At the interior, there are four main areas: the public gathering room, the former store room, toilet rooms, and a former fire lookout room on the upper floor.

The building is rectangular in plan, covered by a gable roof. The building itself measures 51 feet by 26 feet, with the long axis running in a north-south direction. It is a two story building, with the primary public space located on the ground floor at the south end of the building. The exterior walls are constructed of uncoursed rubble stone quarried nearby, and the stone walls are approximately 2 feet thick. The mortar joints at the exterior are slightly recessed. Attention was paid to the stonework around each opening in the building, with stones roughly shaped to create square openings. There are two buttresses, one on the east elevation and one on the west elevation, that correspond to the main truss in the interior of the gathering room. Small gables cover the tops of these two buttresses. The southwest corner of the building is also buttressed, as are the entry gable support piers.

Five steel casement windows are present on the first floor level. Two different configurations are used, both with paired eight light outswing casements in the center. The three larger windows have fixed eight pane sidelights, and the two smaller windows (located on the south elevation and the north window on the east elevation) have four pane sidelights. The upper windows in the two small dormers and the fire lookout portion of the building are wood sash. The dormer windows are fixed six light wood sash. The fire lookout has three-over-three double hung sash on the east, north, and west sides along with triangular three light fixed sash facing south on each side of the main gable. The south gable end of the building has a nine light oculus with the stonework arranged in a sunburst pattern around the window at the exterior.

The main door, located on the west end of the south façade, is covered by a small gable extension. This door is of plank construction with Z-bracing on both the interior and exterior. It leads to the gathering room that is approximately 22 feet wide (east-west) and 32 feet long. The north wall is dominated by a large fireplace, constructed of the same stone as the rest of the building. The room is an open volume, with exposed wood trusses and exposed car decking on the underside of the roof. The dormers provide additional natural light to the space near the north end of the room. Finishes at the interior of this room include the vaulted wood ceiling, exposed stone walls, concrete window sills, and concrete beams on the east and west sides at the window head level that run the length of the building. Like the exterior, the interior of the southern oculus window is formed of stone in a sunburst pattern. The floor is concrete, scored to resemble flagstones as indicated on the original drawings. This scoring pattern continues throughout the space, with only a subtle variation at the hearth. At the hearth area, the scoring has a larger semicircle around the firebox, with a smaller flagstone pattern within the semicircle to delineate the hearth area.

The store room is accessed in the northeast corner of the main room. The door is a simple plank door with Z-bracing, similar in construction to the main entry door. The store room occupies the northeast corner of the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 7 Page 2

building, and currently is used as a concession space for the ski area. Interior finishes are similar to the main room, but without the flagstone scoring in the concrete floor. A door into this room from the exterior on the north façade is shown on the original plans, but was not constructed due to the addition of the fire lookout. The fire lookout stairs blocked access to this door in the revision to the design, and it was never constructed.

The northwest corner of the building is occupied by the former toilet facilities. The building originally had “Kaustine” chemical toilets. Two small rooms contained one stall each, one accessed from the north elevation and one from the northern end of the east elevation. These two rooms are divided by a lightly framed wood wall clad with horizontal shiplap. The dividing wall between the store room and the toilet rooms is also clad with shiplap. These rooms are currently inaccessible, the toilets are no longer in use and the entries have been blocked by installing a steel frame with expanded metal sheets welded to the frame.

The second floor, containing the former fire lookout, is accessed by the recently installed stair on the north elevation. Entry is through a four light over two panel door centered in the north façade. This room has broad views on all sides, as it is predominantly above the surrounding vegetation. The room is roughly T-shaped, with the entry centered on the north side. The south side (the leg of the T) has small alcoves to the east and west under the main gable for storage. The room is finished with shiplap at the walls and sloped ceilings, and has a fir floor.

The exterior is ringed by a concrete terrace. On the north and west sides of the building this “terrace” (as indicated on the original plans) is essentially a concrete sidewalk six feet wide on the west side and eight feet wide on the north side. The southern terrace is nine feet wide, corresponding to the length of the gable extension over the front door. The east side terrace is wider (11’-6”) and is framed by a stone wall. The wall is constructed of the same stone as the building, and is approximately 30” above the terrace level with varying heights above the surrounding natural landscape on the exterior. All terraces at the exterior are scored to resemble flagstones, matching the finish on the interior of the gathering room.

The roof is clad with cedar shingle, matching the original design. The two dormers and cross gable covering the fire lookout are clad with shingles both on the roof and sidewalls. Lightning protection aerials are located along the main ridge, on the entry gable extension, and at each end of the fire lookout gable. The chimney rises from the center of the main gable slightly south of the fire lookout, and has a new (2002) stainless steel cap and spark arrestor.

Alterations to the building are few. The original fire lookout stairs were removed sometime after the building ceased to be used for this purpose in 1948, but the exact date of removal is not known. A significant preservation project was undertaken on the building from 2002-2003. The project included roof replacement, repairs to the steel sash, replication of the original wood sash in the fire lookout and dormers, repointing the exterior masonry, minor repairs to the concrete terraces, restoration of the lightning protection system, and a replica wood door for the fire lookout. The only deviations from the original design constructed by the project are the installation of brackets for winter covers on the steel sash windows and the cladding of the ridges with zinc rather than the original shingles.

The only other alterations to the building include the installation of modern floodlights in the gathering room, the closure panels installed to block access to the former toilet rooms, and the addition of a new steel staircase on the north elevation to provide access to the former fire lookout. The steel stairs were installed as part of an Eagle Scout project in June of 2016. The stair is not a precise replica of the original stair due to modern code

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 7 Page 3

requirements. However, it is located on a secondary elevation and does not significantly affect the historic integrity of the building.

Overall, the building retains an excellent level of integrity. It retains integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The only diminishment of the building's integrity is the contemporary stair on the north elevation, and while it replaces a historic feature it does not replicate the appearance exactly. This minor deviation in design does not detract from the whole, and does not reduce the significance of the rustic design.

The primary public function or use of the building continues from the historic period. It still serves as a warming and gathering space for winter sports enthusiasts, now with a small concession space in the northeast room that originally served as storage space. The gathering room is open for park visitors in the summer months as well. The fire lookout, closed in 1948, was inaccessible until the new stairs were installed in 2016. The future function of this second floor space is to be determined.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 1

The land that would become Mt. Spokane State Park was initially promoted by Francis H. Cook, a newspaper man, real estate developer, delegate to the territorial legislature, and man of wealth whose fortunes collapsed in the Depression of 1893. After his financial collapse, he managed to retain his land holdings in the Spokane area, including the top of Mt. Carleton (the predecessor name for Mt. Spokane). He was inspired by the views from the mountain, and declared it the world's finest viewpoint. He developed a tourist destination on the slopes of the mountain, and for only 50 cents one could take in the grand scenery and enjoy the health benefits of his mountain pilgrimage. Cook developed an auto road to his camp, which was only $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the summit. He was a great promoter, inviting visitors to appreciate the greatness of the Spokane country. In 1912 he succeeded in changing the name of Mt. Carleton to Mt. Spokane to strengthen the ties between "his" mountain and the nearby city.

Many local residents saw Mt. Spokane as a community asset with the new name, and believed that the broad vistas from the higher flanks of the mountain were worthy of designation as a major park, perhaps even a national park. Prominent citizens helped further the notion, including Frank Guilbert of the Inland Automobile Association and Good Roads Association, City Park Board President Aubrey L. White, hotelier Louis Davenport, the county commissioners and many members of the Chamber of Commerce. Their promotion of the park idea at Mt. Spokane was effective, and in 1919 Spokane County purchased Cook's land on the mountain. The public park was not dedicated until 1922, but at the dedication there was a large convoy from the city and great ceremony. It is around that time that local boosters began to consider the development of the park, including "a resort of some outstanding type to welcome the tourist upon his arrival."¹ The county completed improvements to Cook's auto road, extending it to the summit area in July of 1922.

The park did not develop as hoped by some, and by 1927 the county commissioners had determined that they would no longer seek to develop the park. In July of that year, the Washington State Park Committee (predecessor to the State Park Commission) accepted the deeds to approximately 500 acres that had been accumulated by the county including the summits of both Mt. Spokane and Mt. Kit Carson. Shortly afterwards, additional land donations brought the size of the park to approximately 1,500 acres making it the largest of the six State Parks at the time east of the Cascades. Amidst great fanfare, another convoy ascended the mountain to dedicate the park yet again.

Improvements to the new state park were slow to develop, and in 1928 the State Parks Committee authorized community kitchens, flagpoles, sanitary provisions, and the cleaning and development of springs for good water. However, the only expenditures realized appeared to be for further improvements to Cook's road. The next year brought a hefty blow to the state park system with Governor Hartley's veto of the entire State Parks budget. The Committee continued to push for additional development across the state park system, convincing the legislature to appropriate \$150,000 for this purpose. Hartley did not believe it was the state's responsibility to develop park lands, desiring instead to leave the parks in a natural state. Hartley had proposed a budget of \$18,500 for State Parks operations, and the amount requested by the legislature seemed to Hartley unreasonable and contrary to his opinion on the purpose of the parks. This philosophical difference resulted in the veto of the entire State Park budget for the duration of Governor Hartley's term. Most parks were closed during this period, which lasted until 1933 when newly elected Governor Martin approved legislative appropriations after taking office in January of that year.

¹ Spokesman-Review, 29 June 1922, 6:1

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 2

The State Parks Committee, composed of the Secretary of State Ernest Hutchinson, State Treasurer Otto Case, and Commissioner of Public Lands A.C. Martin, continued to meet during these veto years, and when appropriations were restored they were ready. They hired a new State Parks Superintendent, William Weigle, whose task was to plan for and implement the necessary repairs to park buildings and grounds. Mount Spokane State Park, without funding to support even a caretaker, had become a dumping ground and the conditions became so severe that the Committee asked the Department of Health to step in to help correct the polluted condition. In addition to correcting health hazards and making parks suitable for visitors, the Committee focused on putting the most people to work to help relieve unemployment.

In addition to Superintendent Weigle, the Committee hired architect Charles Saunders to oversee development in the various parks. Secretary of State E.M. Hutchinson, a member of the Committee, promoted development of the park and pledged to “erect as soon as possible a suitable, massive, but economically operated outlook on the summit, one that fits the natural character of the situation.”² The Committee had asked Weigle earlier that year to recommend an outline of developments for each of the parks, and by June they had approved his proposal for Mt. Spokane. A Vista House was the first item on the list, estimated to cost \$8,000. The precise site was selected by Superintendent Weigle in July, by which time Saunders had designed a building for the summit.

The Saunders plan presented the Committee with difficulty. Saunders was hired to oversee developments in the parks across the state, and his design for the Mt. Spokane summit was elaborate. Measuring approximately 60 feet by 35 feet, it was entirely constructed of stone with a massive central tower that was open to the elements at the top level. Saunders’ design had a large assembly room, an ample vestibule, a “private room”, storage room, and restrooms. Estimates by Saunders and a local contractor approached \$15,000, which greatly exceeded the amount appropriated for the structure. There was also a question as to the efficiency of Saunders overseeing the work from afar, working primarily out of Seattle.

The plan set prepared by Saunders is dated July 11, 1933. Soon thereafter, the Committee met with Spokane architect Henry Bertelsen on the site at the summit and it was his opinion that a suitable building could be built within the funding allotted for the project. He proceeded to prepare a set of plans for a structure at the site that could possibly fit within the funds available. Bertelsen was already working within the park, overseeing construction of his design for a new Caretaker’s Residence with a community room in the vicinity of Cook’s Cabin. Speed was of the essence, as both Bertelsen and the Committee were keenly aware of the impending winter.

Bringing Bertelsen in as the project architect relieved the Committee from having to find the extra funding for Saunders’ design, and also allowed a local Spokane architect to oversee the construction. Henry Bertelsen (1888-1963) was educated at the Chicago Institute of Fine Art, arriving in Spokane in 1905. He apprenticed with architect Howard Hals, and by 1909 was working for Cutter & Malmgren, a prominent architectural firm in the city. He rose within the firm, eventually managing the drafting room due to his talent as a delineator. He continued to work as Cutter’s assistant after Malmgren’s death in 1921, but due to the declining Spokane economy Cutter was unable to pay his full wages. Bertelsen was left with Cutter’s office when Cutter left Spokane for Santa Barbara in 1923 in lieu of back wages. As he did not have a license, but work flowed into the firm, Bertelsen partnered with William Wells. Bertelsen received his license in 1924, and soon thereafter parted ways with Wells, continuing on his own. Over his career, Bertelsen designed a wide range of buildings including

² Spokesman-Review, 25 July 1933: 6.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 3

residences, stores, and civic structures. His notable designs include the 1924 Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children, the 1927 Waitsburg High School, the 1927 National Guard Headquarters at Felts Field, the award winning 1927 Solby House, the 1954 Spokane Coliseum, several buildings at Gonzaga University, and the 1963 Inland Automobile Association Building. The Vista House is unique among his designs as a rare example of a building constructed in the Rustic Style; he was more widely known for his commercial architecture and skill in designing for terra cotta.

By the end of July, Bertelsen had completed his plan for the building. As reported in the Spokane Daily Chronicle on July 27, Bertelsen was “authorized to take bids immediately for construction of the Vista house at the summit.”³ The result of this round of bidding is unknown, but the bids must have exceeded the funds allocated for the project since Bertelsen returned to the drafting table and by August 15 was returning revised plans to the State Parks Committee.⁴ This version of the plan eliminated any sort of tower as envisioned by Saunders and apparently included in Bertelsen’s original plan.

By August 23, Bertelsen had received three bids. The low bid on the contract, submitted by E.O. Fieldstad of Opportunity, was \$4,693.00. Informing the Committee of the bid results, Bertelsen notes that “He (Fieldstad) is a very reliable builder, well able to furnish a bond and would make a very determined effort to finish the job before bad weather sets in.”⁵ The Committee acted almost immediately, and within three days the contract was awarded and Fieldstad was directed to begin work immediately.

Einar Ole Fieldstad (1881-1957) was born in Norway, emigrating to the United States by 1904 (through Canada) and becoming a naturalized citizen in 1911. Census records indicate that during the years prior to World War I he was a carpenter, and family records note that he was the in-house carpenter for the local chapter of the Sons of Norway. By the early 1920s he had moved to Opportunity Township where he platted a small subdivision and constructed a number of homes, including his own at 1105 N. Bowdish Road. In 1930 the census lists him as “working on own account”, indicating that by this time he was self-employed and continued to be through the remainder of his working life.

Trained as a cabinet maker and initially working as a carpenter, he ultimately became a general contractor. Dealing primarily in residential work during his early years, he also constructed brewery additions and associated taverns in Spokane. As his general contracting business grew he began to take on larger projects, including the Ferry County Jail in Republic (a PWA project), a school in Liberty (near Yakima), and St. Aloysius School in Spokane. Many of these buildings were masonry structures incorporating brick, block, or river rock, but the Vista House is Fieldstad’s only known building constructed of this type of stone masonry. His general contracting business continued to grow during the 1940s, ultimately becoming Fieldstad & Son. The Vista House is his most distinctive work, and despite the building often being incorrectly attributed to the Civilian Conservation Corps it is the most recognized of all the structures he is known to have constructed.

At the Vista House, the Committee used funding from a variety of sources. The legislature had appropriated \$100,000 for State Parks for both operations and salaries/wages, and in addition provided \$40,000 to be used for emergency relief. The intent of this extra funding was to put people to work constructing necessary

³ Spokane Daily Chronicle, 27 July 1933, 6:1

⁴ Bertelsen letter to State Park Committee, 15 August 1933.

⁵ Bertelsen letter to Hutchinson, 23 August 1933.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 4

improvements and conducting routine maintenance. This relief fund was used, in part, to fund a portion of the labor on the Vista House. Public works contracts were not allowed under this funding (excluding Fieldstad's work from this fund source), but labor costs and material acquisition were eligible categories of expenditure. The Committee stretched their funding by constructing the fire lookout addition with the emergency relief appropriation, having committed the difference between the \$8,000 estimate and the actual bid of \$4,693 to other projects around the state.

Even as Fieldstad began work on the site, concerns were raised by many regarding the elimination of the tower from the building. The project was to displace an existing fire lookout on the site, and fire finding equipment had been procured and was waiting for installation in the new building. The Saunders tower design featured an open top, exposed to the weather, which would not be suitable for a fire lookout. The first Bertelsen design did feature a tower of unknown configuration that was removed to help the project fall within budget, and the revised design did not have a tower. The U.S. Forest Service, State Department of Forestry, and Spokane Chamber of Commerce all voiced concern regarding the lack of a lookout structure. The Committee relented, and by mid-September Bertelsen had designed and received bids on a fire lookout addition to the building. Despite having been at work on site for just over two weeks, Fieldstad's crew had the stone walls nearly up to the height of the proposed lookout on the north end of the building. Bertelsen required an immediate answer from the Committee, as a lengthy decision process would slow the entire work. The Committee instructed him to proceed on the 14th, with the caveat that the work could not exceed Fieldstad's estimate of \$570 for the addition.

The addition of the fire lookout speaks to the desire of the State Parks Committee to please everyone. Mt. Spokane was growing as a skiing destination, and the Committee had previously instructed Bertelsen to personally see the major players involved in the development of the county park (White, Davenport, Guilbert, and prominent city and county political figures) as well as major figures in the local skiing community. There appeared to be a great deal at stake in the development of the park, not only to provide needed jobs but also to improve the park in such a manner that it would become a regional and even national attraction. The Committee was certainly pleased with the result, and after visiting the site in late October Secretary of State Hutchinson remarked "we have visited Mount Spokane, and have been highly pleased with the progress of the work, particularly with the spectacular arrangement on the top, whereby the architect has caused it to appear as though that Vista House had grown spontaneously without the aid of either architect or artisan from the top of the mountain."⁶

With the design finalized, Fieldstad pushed the work to complete the building before the onset of winter on the mountain top. The masons, led by a Mr. Vinge, temporarily halted laying stone due to an early winter storm and freezing temperatures in late September, but were able to continue through the next month. Fieldstad reported to Bertelsen in November that they had been driven from the job site by the weather three times during the course of construction. Fieldstad, Bertelsen, Weigle, and the Committee were all concerned about the permanence of the work and the effect poor weather would have on the finished product. By increasing the workforce, Fieldstad hastened the construction process when able to work and Bertelsen reported to the Committee on November 21 that the building was complete.

The completion of the Vista House, combined with the construction of the other Bertelsen building at Cook's Cabin, provided park visitors with much needed amenities. The mountain continued to grow as a ski destination,

⁶ Hutchinson letter to Guilbert, 18 October 1933.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 5

eventually seeing the installation of the world's first double chair lift. The Vista House was a major development undertaken as State Parks came out of the Hartley veto years, and was one of the first major projects completed as the State Park Committee strove to improve the conditions in parks across the state and provide additional amenities for visitors.

The Vista House is a significant example of the Rustic Style of architecture. This style, commonly employed in park settings across the nation, had its roots in the English Romantic Movement, the nineteenth century naturalistic designs of Andrew Jackson Downing and Frederick Law Olmstead, and drew from the Shingle, Adirondack, Craftsman, and Prairie architectural styles in addition to vernacular forms. The design intent was to subordinate development to the natural character of the site and to not detract from the scenic character of the place. The design ethic of the Rustic Style was summarized by National Park Service Director Arno Cammerer:

In any area in which the preservation of the beauty of Nature is a primary purpose, every modification of the natural landscape, whether it be construction of a road or erection of a shelter, is an intrusion. A basic objective of those who are entrusted with the development of such areas for the human uses for which they are established is, it seems to me, to hold these intrusions to a minimum and so to design them that, besides being attractive to look upon, they appear to belong to and be part of their settings.⁷

The National Park Service refined the practices and principles of the Rustic Style through the 1920s and 1930s. Buildings and structures were typically sited to prevent them from becoming a dominant feature in a landscape, and designers aimed to blend their structures with the setting and topography, connect the interior spaces to the natural world around the building, and use local natural materials. There was a great deal of regional interpretation and experimentation with the style to produce designs that harmoniously integrated site, structure, and setting. There was a strong focus on scenic vistas that used picturesque details to integrate the interior spaces with the outdoors through the use of porches and terraces.

The influence of Adirondack and Craftsman philosophy are well expressed in the Vista House. Augustus Shepard, architect of a number of Adirondack buildings, stated in his *Camps in the Woods* that "the buildings must be designed so that they actually appear to grow out of the ground; they must take their place in the woods as a part of the woods. It should be hardly discernable to the eye where the building commences." In an article about the Charles and Henry Greene residence for Edgar Camp in the Sierra Madre, California, *The Craftsman* wrote that the design of the massive stone fireplace emerged from the ground "as if it were part of nature's magnificent rockpile." While these references may or may not have been known to Bertelsen at the time he was designing the building, they reflect the actual construction of the Vista House and the stylistic influences of the period. While designed outside of the National Park Service purview, the Vista House's use of native stone, incorporation of terraces to take in the astounding views from the summit, incorporation of buttresses, framing views with windows and porches, and the overall composition of the building as it appears to emerge from the mountain top exhibit the hallmarks of Rustic design in park settings.

The overall program for the building, with public spaces and an incorporated fire lookout, is somewhat unique in the Depression-era developments in Washington State Parks. The only other example, designed by architect Ellsworth Storey, is the Observation Tower on Mt. Constitution in Moran State Park. The refuge at the summit provided by the Vista House has served park visitors in all seasons, and is an excellent example of this combination of functions adhering to the design tenets of the Rustic Style.

⁷ Cammerer quoted in introduction to *Park Structures and Facilities*.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 6

Conclusion

The Vista House is significant under Criterion C as a well executed example of the Rustic Style of architecture. Designed by Henry Bertelsen and constructed by local contractor Einar Fieldstad, it cleverly combines both public spaces and a fire lookout at the summit of Mount Spokane. It is also significant under Criterion A for its association with the early work of the State Parks Committee to improve parks following four years of budget vetoes by the Governor. The building is significant at the statewide level due to its high quality of design, its unusual combination of functions, as the only known remaining Rustic design by Bertelsen, and as a major development adhering to the Rustic principles (promoted by the NPS) by the State Parks Committee prior to the more widespread use of the Rustic Style in State Parks under the Civilian Conservation Corps program.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 9 Page 1

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

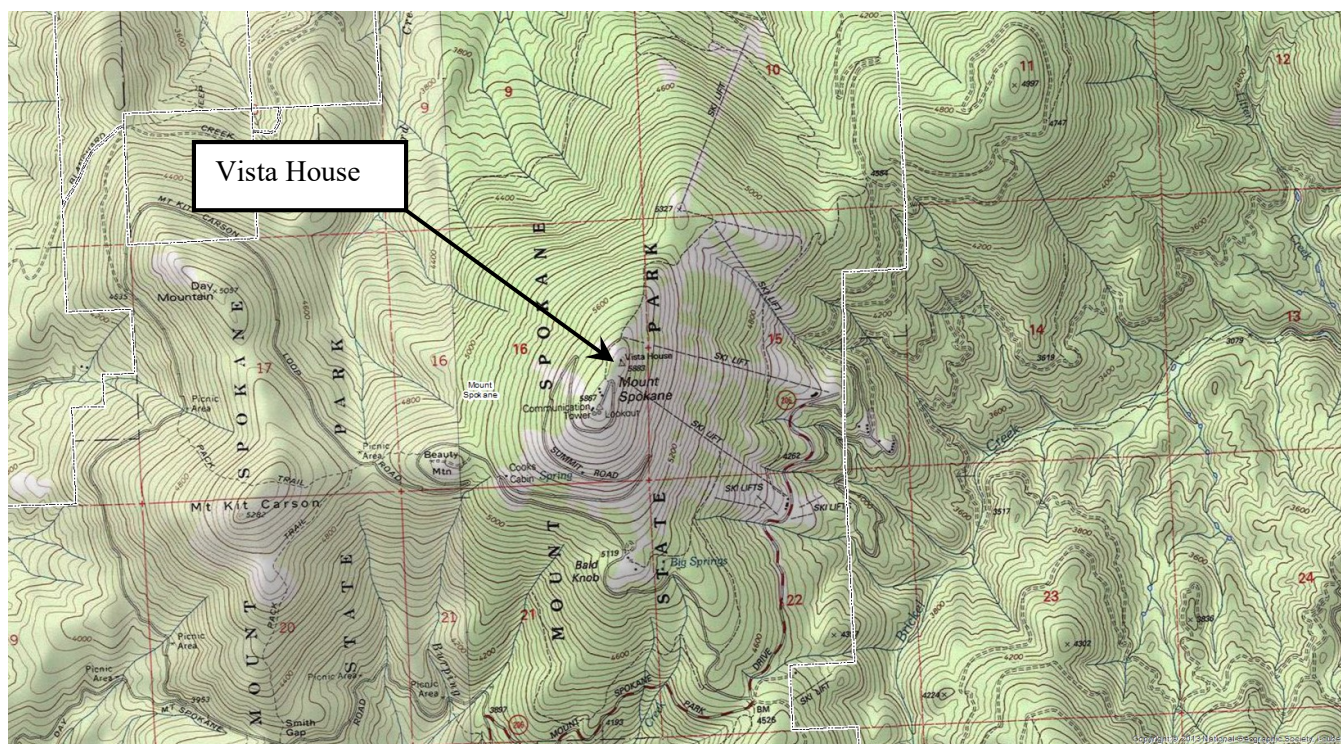
Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 10 Page 1



Location Map. Excerpt from USGS Mount Spokane and Mount Kit Carson 7.5' Quadrangles.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

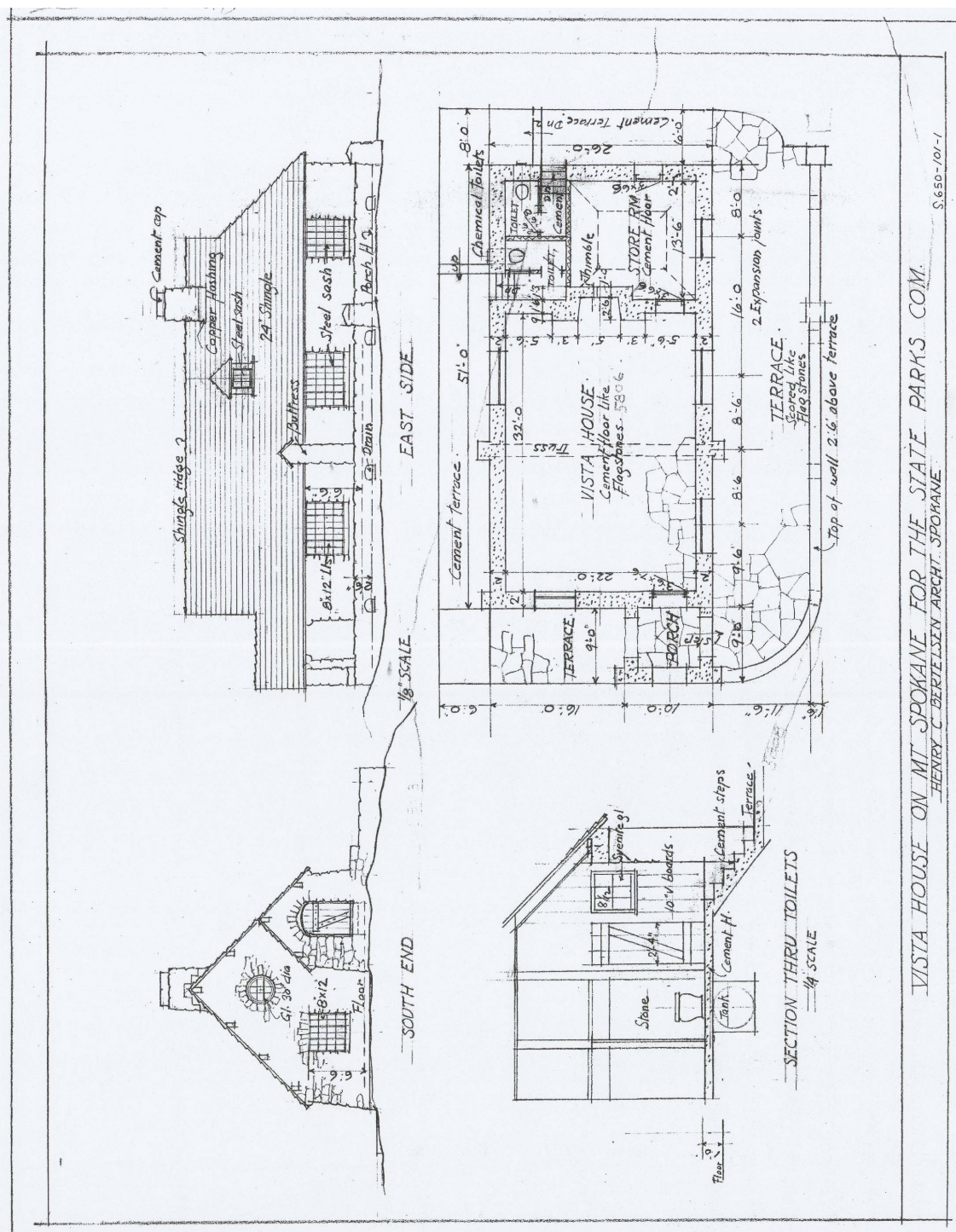
Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Original DrawingsPage 1

Original Bertelsen drawing of the Vista House. Courtesy of the Eastern Washington State Historical Society, Spokane Washington (Museum of Arts and Culture).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

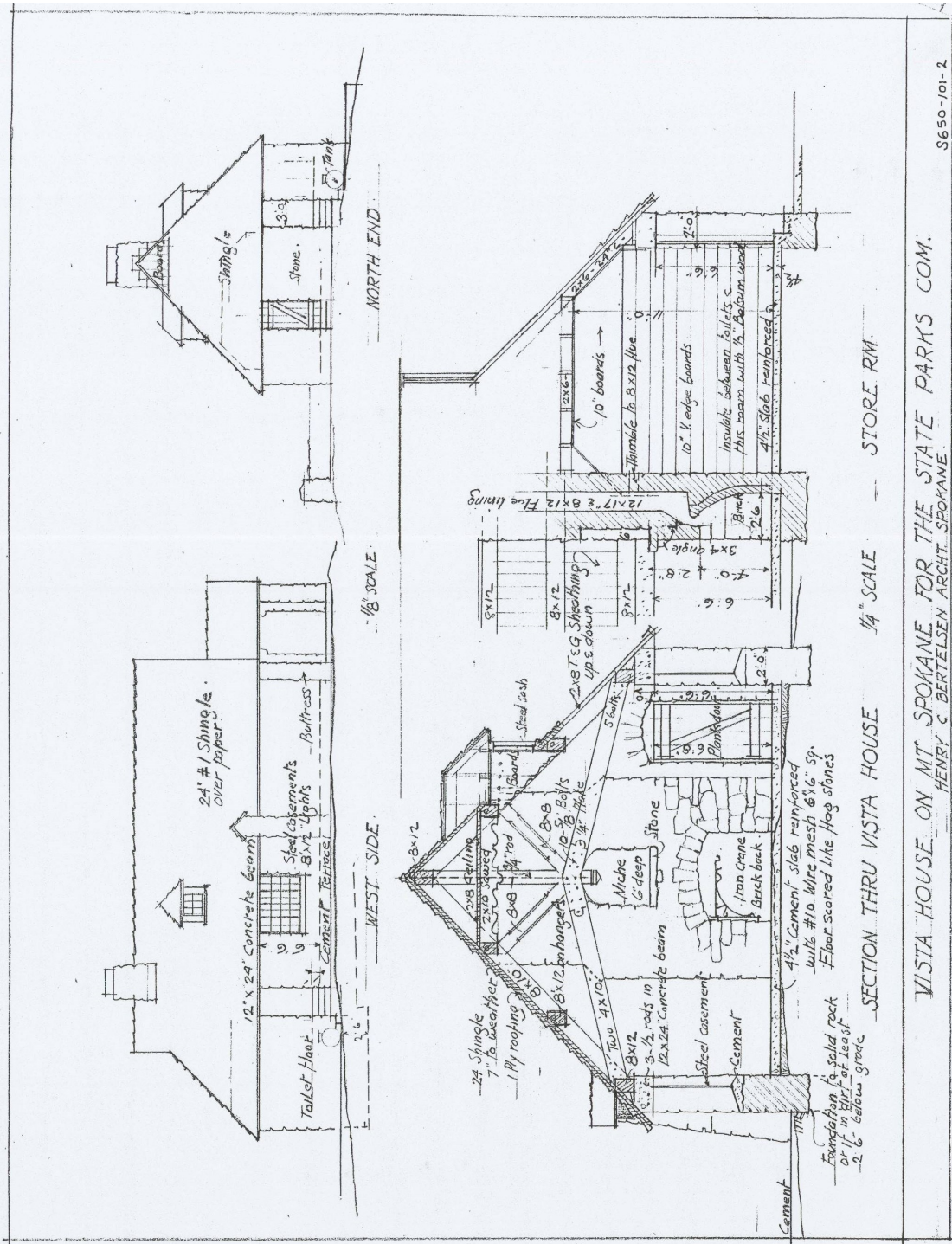
Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Original DrawingsPage 2

Original Bertelsen drawing of the Vista House. Courtesy of the Eastern Washington State Historical Society, Spokane Washington (Museum of Arts and Culture).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

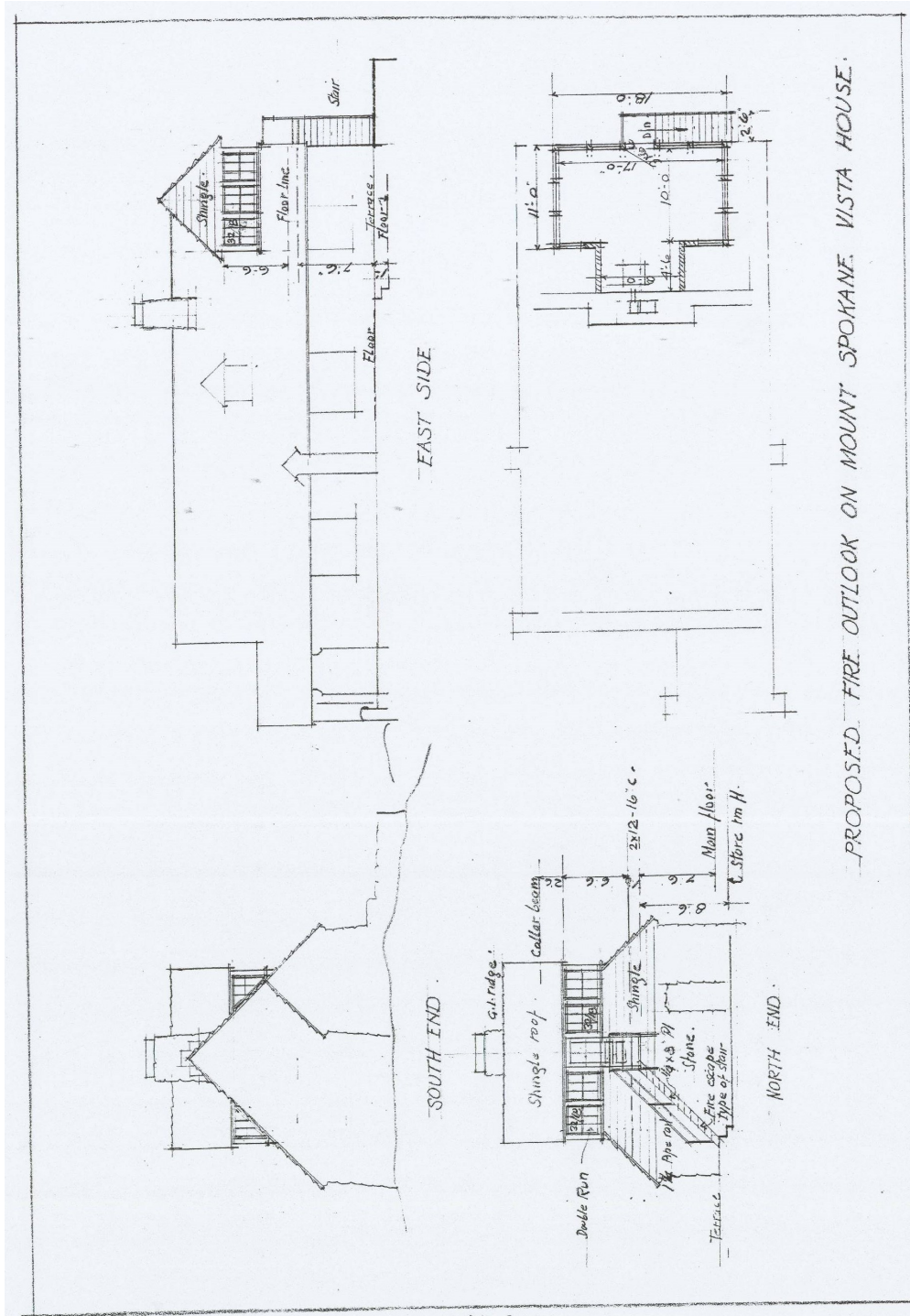
Spokane County, WA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Original Drawings

Page 3



Original Bertelsen drawing of the Vista House Fire Lookout Addition. Courtesy of the Eastern Washington State Historical Society, Spokane Washington (Museum of Arts and Culture).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

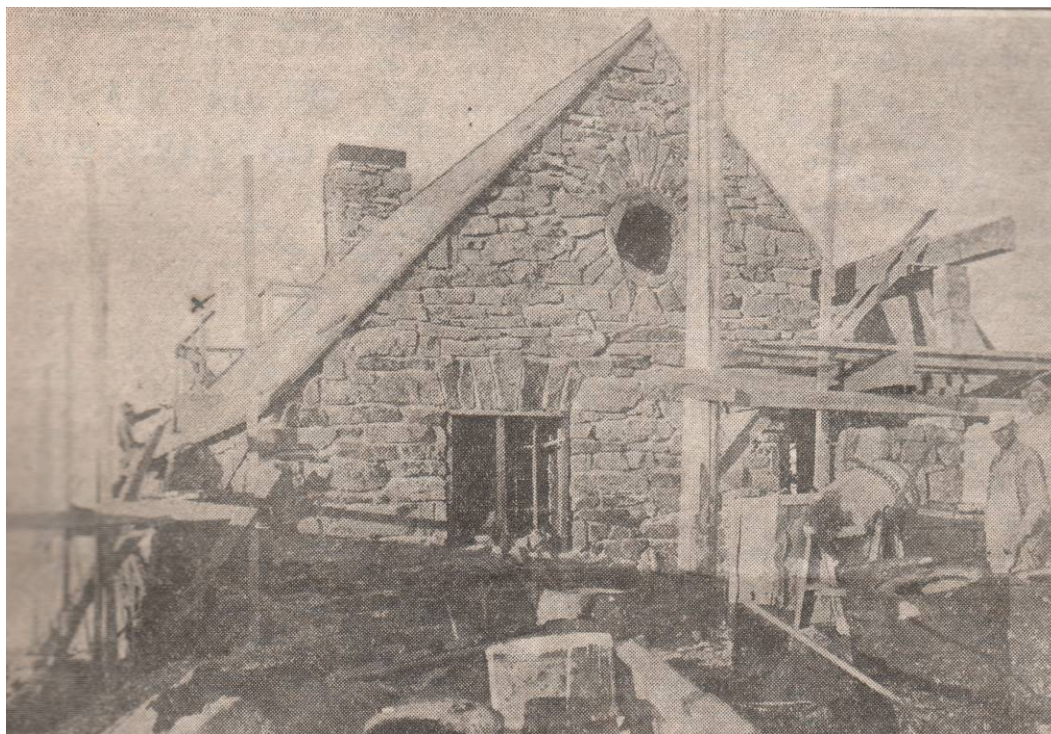
Spokane County, Washington

County and State

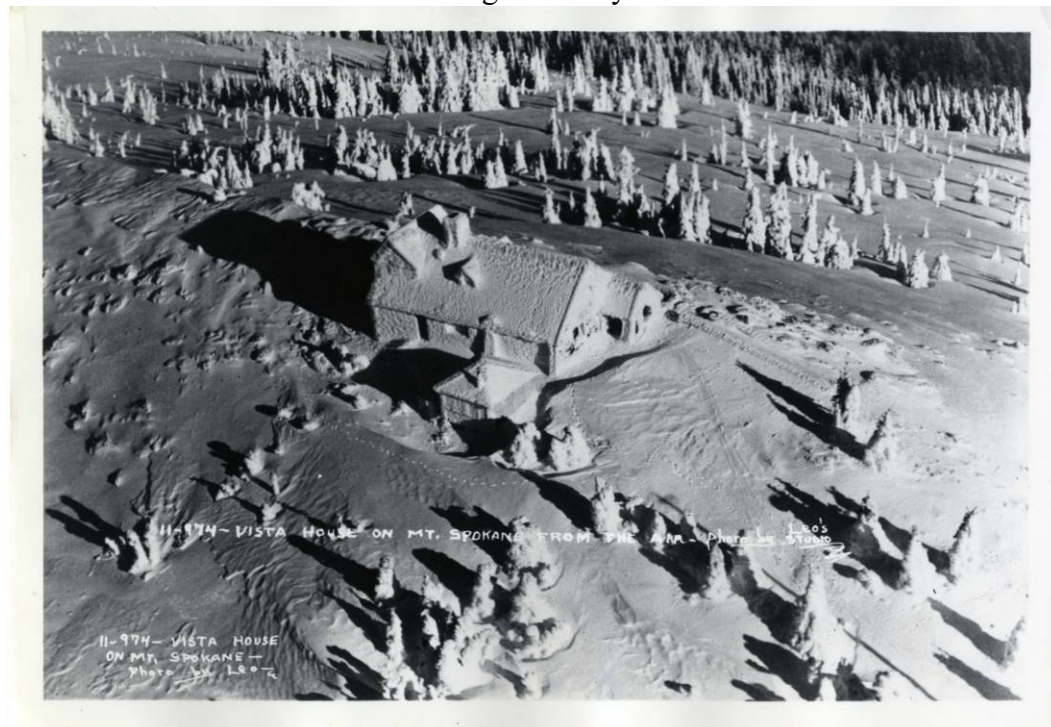
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Historic Photographs

Page 1



Vista House under construction. Image courtesy of Tedd Fieldstad.



Vista House shortly after completion. Note adjacent fire lookout. WSPRC, Oestreicher Collection, Image No. 78.2003.1.P1145a.Y4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, Washington

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Historic Photographs

Page 2



Vista House, unknown date. Image courtesy of Tedd Fieldstad.



Vista House, unknown date. Note original fire lookout stairs. WSPRC, Oestreicher Collection, Image No. 78.2003.1.N1229a.B5.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, Washington

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Historic Photographs

Page 3



Vista House, northwest end visible. August 1934. WSPRC Image 78-SP10-43.



Vista House, view to northeast, 1937. Image courtesy of WSPRC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, Washington

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Historic Photographs

Page 4



Vista House, view to south on east side, 1937. Image courtesy of WSPRC.



Detail view of fireplace, unknown date. WSPRC, Oestreicher Collection, Image No. 78.2003.1.N1282a.G5.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, Washington

County and State

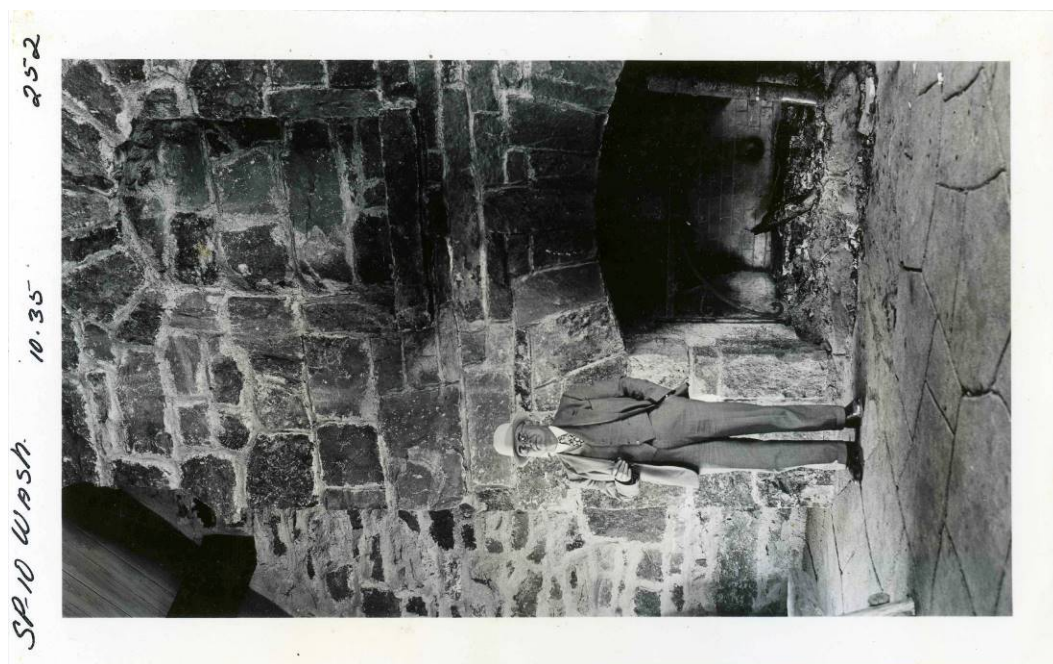
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Historic Photographs

Page 5



Vista House, view to northeast, unknown date. WSPRC, Oestreicher Collection, Image No. 78.2003.1.P1009a.M4



Detail interior view showing fireplace and floor. WSPRC Image 78-SP10-252.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, Washington

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Historic Photographs

Page 6



View to north on east terrace, July 1934. WSPRC Image 78-SP10-22.



Einar Fieldstad during construction of St. Aloysius School in Spokane. Image courtesy of Tedd Fieldstad.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, Washington

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Contemporary Photographs

Page 1

Contemporary Photographs. All photos taken by Alex McMurry, Historic Preservation Planner, Washington State Parks, August 2017.



Photo 1: View to northeast.



Photo 2: View to northwest.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, Washington

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Contemporary Photographs

Page 2



Photo 3: View to southwest.



Photo 4: View to south on east terrace.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, Washington

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Contemporary Photographs

Page 3



Photo 5: Detail view of south window.



Photo 6: Detail view of fire lookout, east side.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, Washington

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Contemporary Photographs

Page 4

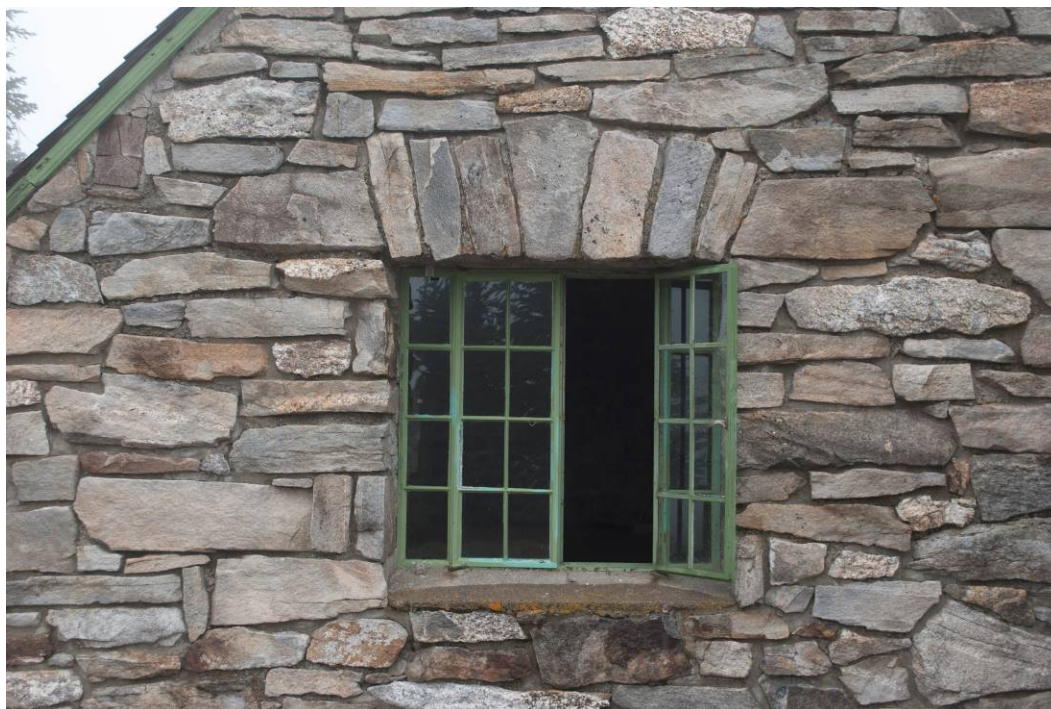


Photo 7: Detail view of typical window (south window at main floor shown).



Photo 8: Detail view of front door (south end).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, Washington

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Contemporary Photographs

Page 5

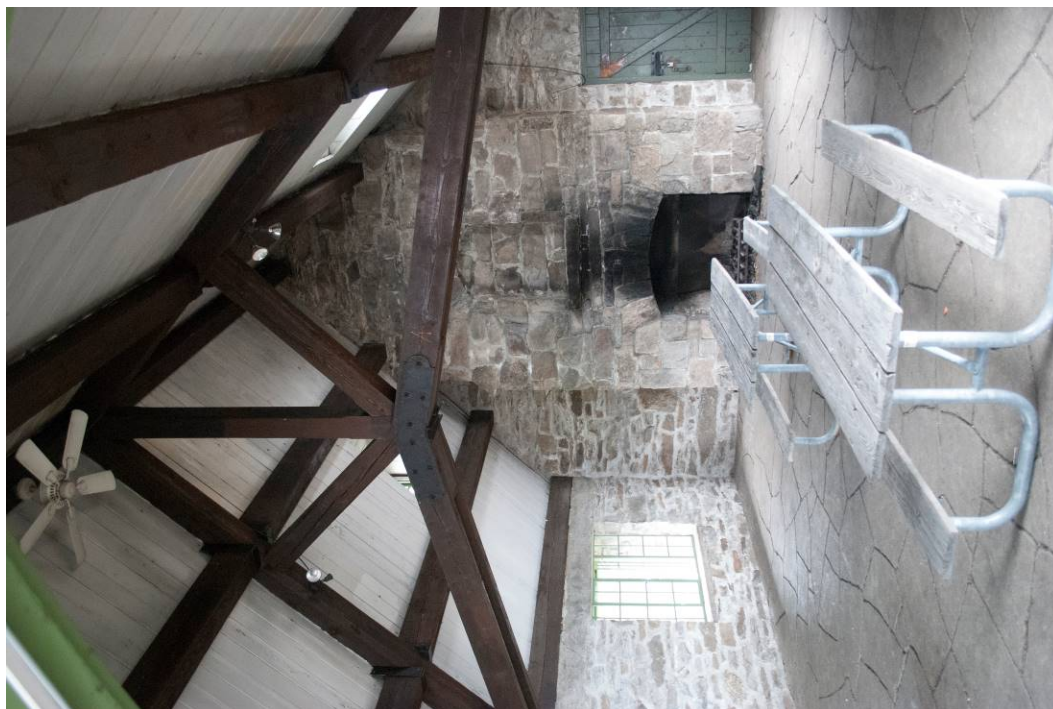


Photo 9: Interior view to north of public gathering room.



Photo 10: Detail view of fireplace and door to store room at interior (north end of gathering room).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Mount Spokane Vista House

Name of Property

Spokane County, Washington

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Contemporary Photographs

Page 6



Photo 11: Detail view of interior windows at northwest corner of gathering room.



Photo 12: Interior view (to south) in fire lookout.