

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

Enchanted Valley Chalet: Jefferson County, WA

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**Narrative Description:** Constructed from 1930-1931, the Enchanted Valley Chalet was designed and built as a 2-1/2 story hewn log building in a rustic style. It was rectangular in shape measuring approximately 28' by 41' and now sits on a concrete foundation. It was constructed of dovetail-notched logs, diagonally cut and hewn on one side. The gable roof with slightly overhanging eaves was sheathed in cedar shakes. A gable roof dormer on the south elevation provided light and circulation for upstairs guests. Pole purlins and supporting log knee braces at the gable ends were used. Windows consisted of 3-over-1 and 6-over-1 double-hung sash with plain surrounds and narrow projecting sills. An interior brick chimney was on the north slope of the roof. The original design included a fireplace on the north elevation. The logs were cut to accommodate the fireplace. The fireplace was never constructed because the mason was diagnosed with cancer. The interior of the building had tongue and groove wooden flooring on the first, second, and attic floors. There were three rooms on the first floor, including the kitchen, bedroom, and large living room; six sleeping rooms on the second floor with tongue and groove wall partitions; and a large room in the attic with exposed peeled pole roof rafters.

The Enchanted Valley Chalet stands today virtually unaltered from when it was first constructed in the 1930s. The only alterations include the addition of the gable and shed roof porch overhangs supported by log poles or knee braces on the north and east elevations (date unknown), and the preservation/rehabilitation work that was conducted in 1983-84 by the NPS and the Olympians hiking club, which involved in-kind replacement of rotted logs, repair of the foundation and installation of log infill in the original fireplace cut out. All work was undertaken following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation over a two year period, during the summer season only. The spatial organization of the site, its response to natural features, circulation patterns and vegetation, materials, and overall feeling and association give this property a high degree of cultural landscape integrity.

SEE ATTACHED INVENTORY CARD PREPARED IN 1982 FOR PROPERTY.

### Statement of Significance:

Summary: This 2-1/2 story, hewn, dovetail-notched log structure is significant historically for its association with the recreational development of the wild and remote interior of the Olympic Mountains, a theme important in Olympic National Park history (Criterion A). It is unique in that it is one of only two public resort structures that was built and has remained distant from road access: this fact epitomizes the wilderness theme for which the chalet was promoted and operated. The chalet is the only structure originally built as a public resort that remains standing in the interior of the Olympic range. Architecturally, the chalet is an excellent example of a log cabin building type, and it displays skilled craftsmanship and possesses high artistic value (Criterion C). It is the only known log structure of its size and scale on the Olympic Peninsula today. The Enchanted Valley Chalet retains a high degree of integrity in its location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Narrative: In the Quinault River Valley more than in any other drainage on the Olympic Peninsula, local communities and individuals sought to promote and develop the wilderness features for commercial gain. With the imminent completion of the peninsula's loop highway, private investors joined with public commercial

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interests at the southern end of the peninsula to devise plans aimed at developing tourist travel by promoting the rugged interior of the Olympic Mountains. From the mid-1920s to the early 1930s, energetic leadership and financial investments based in the communities of Hoquiam, Aberdeen, and Quinault coincided with the country's heightened appreciation for outdoor wilderness experiences. They produced four backcountry recreation building complexes: Low Divide Chalet, Nine Mile Shelter, Graves Creek Inn, and the Enchanted Valley Chalet. By 1983 only the bathhouse at the Low Divide Chalet and the Enchanted Valley Chalet remained standing.

Two separate private parties, the Olympic Chalet Company and the Olympic Recreation Company, organized in the mid-1920s for the purpose of developing the recreation potential of the Olympic mountain wilderness. Well-organized and aggressive in their approach, the Olympic Chalet Company, based in Hoquiam, Washington, submitted an initial plan to the United States Forest Service for the construction of three chalets and twelve shelter camps spaced about ten miles apart in the southern section of the Olympic Mountains. On March 15, 1926, a permit was issued by the U.S. Forest Service district supervisor for the construction of a chalet at Low Divide at the headwaters of the North Fork Quinault River and a shelter at the nine-mile post on the North Fork Quinault, approximately halfway between the end of the Quinault Road and Low Divide. In mid-June 1927 work resumed on the 35' by 50' main chalet building and before the end of the season the rustic log structure, with a large rock wall chimney, was completed. The following year workmen completed the 18' by 20' bathhouse, set against a steep wooded hillside only a few feet behind the main chalet. Finally, in 1929 and 1930, five shake cabins were constructed in the vicinity of the chalet building. The Olympic Chalet Company selected R.E. Voorhies to lease and manage Low Divide Chalet.

Even before the ensemble of buildings was completed at Low Divide, Northwest newspapers and periodicals publicized the Olympic Chalet Company's development scheme. For several years journals advertised the comfortable accommodations and excellent resort service that could be had at the crossroads of Olympic trails in a wilderness setting.

The stockholders of the Olympic Chalet Company contemplated further development of the Quinault drainage. In 1929 the company proposed building an airplane landing field at Low Divide. The U.S. Forest Service, who saw the project's potential enhancement of recreational values and fire fighting capabilities in the area, seriously considered the plan. The same year, Olympic Chalet Company officials gave fleeting consideration to damming a glacial stream in Martin's Park above Low Divide to create a lake for use as a landing place for hydroplanes. In the early 1930s the Olympic Chalet Company sought financial support for constructing an aerial tramway from Lake Quinault to the top of Mount Baldy. None of these projects were carried out.

Private and financial support and leadership of the Olympic Chalet Company came from leading citizens in the Hoquiam/Aberdeen area, many of whom had connections with organizations promoting the general development of the Olympic Peninsula. The country's financial depression of the early 1930s had a devastating effect on the chalet company's future development plans, as well as on its existing operation of the Nine Mile Shelter and the Low Divide Chalet. In 1932 and 1933 payment of the Forest Service special use permit went unpaid. In 1936 the Olympic Chalet Company was automatically dissolved by the state of Washington for

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nonpayment of the annual license fee. The final demise of the Low Divide Chalet came during the winter of 1944. A snow avalanche caused by winter storms demolished the main lodge building and the cabins. In succeeding years the National Park Service used the extant bathhouse during the summer months as a ranger station. The building was scheduled for removal in the 1980s.

The Olympic Recreation Company pursued a somewhat different course from that of the Olympic Chalet Company in the history of recreational development of the wilderness in Olympic National Park. Starting from a more modest base of financial and community support, the Olson brothers of the small south peninsula community of Quinault proceeded slowly with their plans to open the Olympic wilderness to tourists. In the end, owing to both natural and human circumstances, tangible evidence of their efforts outlasted those of the Olympic Chalet Company.

In 1926 the Olson brothers (all five) vied with the Olympic Chalet Company for Forest Service approval to develop the North Fork Quinault River and were turned down. Undaunted, and equipped with fifteen pack horses and extensive knowledge of the Quinault River backcountry, they submitted a second application to the Forest Service for permission to develop three tracts of land in the main East Fork Quinault drainage—one at the head of the East Fork Quinault, one at the fork of Graves Creek, and one at Sundown. Unable to proceed with construction plans in the summer of 1927, the five Olson brothers began their venture by organizing a guide service for hikers and campers that operated from a base tent camp known as South Fork Camp.

Eager to develop the recreational potential of the East Fork Quinault drainage, the Forest Service completed a prospectus for constructing public accommodations at the headwaters of the East Fork and at the mouth of Graves Creek. Minimum requirements established by the Forest Service for the building project at the East Fork Quinault included an expenditure of at least \$7500.00 within a three year period, adequate proof of financing capabilities, and an architect's plans embodying harmonious design either in the rustic, Swiss chalet, or other suitable style. On January 3, 1929, the Forest Service issued a permit for the development of five acres of land in the upper East Fork Quinault, known as the Enchanted Valley Recreation Unit, to the Olson brothers of Quinault, who were by then incorporated as the Olympic Recreation Company.

In August 1931 the Enchanted Valley Chalet was completed. Efforts of several local Quinault citizens made completion of the chalet possible. Elvin Olson supervised the construction of the 28' by 42' hewn log building and packed materials into the site over the 13 mile trail. Bricks and mortar for the chimney were packed in by horse, however, the fire place cut-out reveals that the fireplace was never constructed because the mason was diagnosed with cancer. The disassembled window frames and sash, and milled lumber for the interior were also packed in by horse. Tom E. Criswell and his son Glenn built the hewn log building. All the furniture, including chairs, settees, bunk beds, and tables were also fashioned by Tom Criswell. The Knack Manufacturing Company of Hoquiam furnished the window frames.

Over the next few years the Olson brothers made improvements to the building. A water system was added, and in 1934 a bathtub was installed on the second floor. Ignar and Herbert Olson devised a sled mechanism to be harnessed to a horse so that he could skid this cumbersome fixture over the long trail.

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The spectacular natural setting of the chalet captured the whimsy and imagination of those who hiked or packed into this remote interior valley. The Enchanted Valley Chalet became a featured stopping place for hikers and horse caravans. In 1936 the Olympic National Forest printed a brochure describing a thirteen-day trail riders' trip through the Olympics; the fifth day brought prospective participants to the Enchanted Valley, where a Swiss type chalet offered shelter, a fireplace, cooks, ashless food, a bath, and good beds.

Events with effects reaching far beyond the canyoned walls of Enchanted Valley impacted the historical course of the chalet during the two decades after its foundation was in place. The country's financial depression considerably slowed all recreational activity on the peninsula and delayed completion of the chalet by several months. Although the hard times of the Depression markedly reduced business at many peninsula recreation resorts, the period from 1932 to 1936 was apparently the chalet's busiest time of operation.

In 1938 the East Fork Quinault River drainage was included in the 682,000-acre Olympic National Park approved by Congress. The Olympic Recreation Company anticipated their operations would be out of keeping with NPS philosophy. In 1939 stockholders of the company decided to sell their buildings at Graves Creek and Enchanted Valley to the NPS. Operations at the Enchanted Valley Chalet continued for three more years before the building was closed to the public in 1943. At the height of World War II U.S. defense activities, the chalet was selected as a desirable defense outpost, and from 1943 until the end of the war the building was manned by Aircraft Warning Service personnel. A legislative bill passed by Congress in 1944 empowered the NPS to purchase the holdings of both the Olympic Recreation Company and the Olympic Chalet Company. The sale of the Olympic Recreation Company was consummated in 1951.

Enchanted Valley Chalet was put back into public use in 1953 when Olympic National Park superintendent Fred Overly visited the building and determined that public use had, so far, been satisfactory and that minimal fire and safety improvements to the building would render it useful once again. Over the next 30 years, the chalet served as a shelter for hikers passing through the valley, but age, weather, and inadequate maintenance and administrative protection took their toll and made the structure vulnerable to decay and vandalism. In the early 1980s the second floor and attic were sealed off from the public while the ground floor housed seasonal ranger quarters. In 1983 the Olympians, Incorporated, a hiking club of Hoquiam, Washington, and the NPS worked cooperatively to stabilize and secure the chalet, thus extending the life of the building.

The Enchanted Valley Chalet is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its association with commercial interests to develop the recreational potential of the Olympic Peninsula's interior mountain wilderness. It is also eligible under Criterion C, for it represents a distinctive method of construction and design in log cabin building. The chalet exhibits a high degree of integrity in location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and meets the registration requirements set forth for this property type in the Multiple Property Documentation form for the Historic Resources of Olympic National Park.

**Bibliography:** Evans, Gail. Historic Resource Study. NPS. 1983.