

Dinkey Creek Ranger Station: This building is a surviving example of the architecture that characterized the Forest Service in the 1930s. It was constructed with Civilian Conservation Corps labor in 1934 as the summer administrative headquarters of the Kings River Ranger District.

From 1933 through 1938, Pacific Southwest Region 5 retained the services of professional architects Norman Blanchard and Edward J. Maher to develop designs for a wide array of administrative buildings, from lookout towers to offices, and from barns to barracks. Their designs were influenced by the latest “Ranch House” designs by regional modernists like William Wurster and the then popular Colonial Revival Style. Through its Depression-era administrative buildings program and the accompanying integrated architectural styles, the Forest Service sought to portray the agency's transformation of mission from a resource custodian to a comprehensive resource management role, which was a good fit with the increased activity of the national government in the social well-being of its people. Officials attempted to present an image consistent with the land management mission, increase the Forest Service's presence and visibility, and tap into President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal to meet the mission and administrative needs.

To accommodate the demands and realities of an ambitious construction program, highly variable climatic situations and settings, a semi-skilled workforce, and affordability, while also presenting a cohesive and desirable Forest Service image, Blanchard and Maher adopted ready-cut building systems. By using pre-cut lumber and by mass ordering materials, the ready-cut system gave Region 5 many of the advantages offered by prefabricated buildings, yet allowed for greater flexibility and more aesthetically pleasing buildings.

In addition to distinctive building designs, another hallmark of the Depression era in Region 5 was use of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) labor for construction. Through the association of the Great Depression, President Roosevelt's philosophy of government, his embrace of conservation, and the Forest Service's readiness to recast its mission, the agency's pivotal 1933 Copeland Report argued that forestry could be a solution to the raft of national social problems, particularly massive unemployment. On the heels of this report, the CCC was established by executive order in April 1933 and quickly became one of the most popular and effective of President Roosevelt's New Deal programs. The CCC was a public works program that put over three million young men and adults to work during the Great Depression of the 1930's and 1940's in the United States, and the Forest Service found itself with a labor force. Nationally, the program received about \$1,000,000 annually for Forest Service improvements. California had about 100 CCC camps, serving over 160,000 men; roughly half of these were on the National Forests. Forest Service projects focused on replacing old substandard facilities from earlier years. CCC labor helped build over 1,200 buildings, including supervisor’s headquarters, ranger and guard stations, experimental facilities, and 306 lookout towers and houses in California. Their other principal tasks included stringing telephone lines, building roads and bridges, preventing and suppressing fires, planting trees, and eradicating forest pests and diseases.

The modern human landscape and its administrative hubs developed during this time period. The SNF retains approximately 200 administrative buildings that were built by Civilian Conservation Corps crews during the Depression years. These include the Dinkey Ranger Station Compound

(1934), High Sierra Ranger Station Compound (1933-1934), and the North Fork compound of the Forest Supervisor's Headquarters (1933-1938). Many of the Forest's roads, trails, and campgrounds were built during this era. Almost all existing buildings were modified or built by CCC labor during this period. Very few administrative structures or buildings from before the CCC era survive on the Sierra National Forest.

The US Forest Service during the Depression era and its relationship with the Civilian Conservation Corps are recognized as two important occurrences that combined to make a landmark contribution to broad patterns of American history and to US Forest Service Depression era architecture in California.



How to get there: From Highway 168 at Shaver Lake, take the Dinkey-Shaver Road toward Dinkey Creek. Follow this road to the Ranger Station on the right. The station is currently used as a Forest Service Fire Station, but there is also a visitor center at the site that is open during the summer months.