

CHAMBERLAIN  
BASIN'S  
HISTORIC

THREE  
BLAZE  
TRAIL

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## CHAMBERLAIN BASIN'S HISTORIC THREE-BLAZE TRAIL

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Within the boundary of the Frank Church - River of No Return (FC-RONR) Wilderness, often called "the Frank", is an historic trail called the Three-Blaze Trail. The trail received its name from the the distinctive blazes of three squares in a column on the trees along the trail (Fuller 1887:267), as shown on the cover of this monograph, most of which are still visible (Hockaday 1968:7).

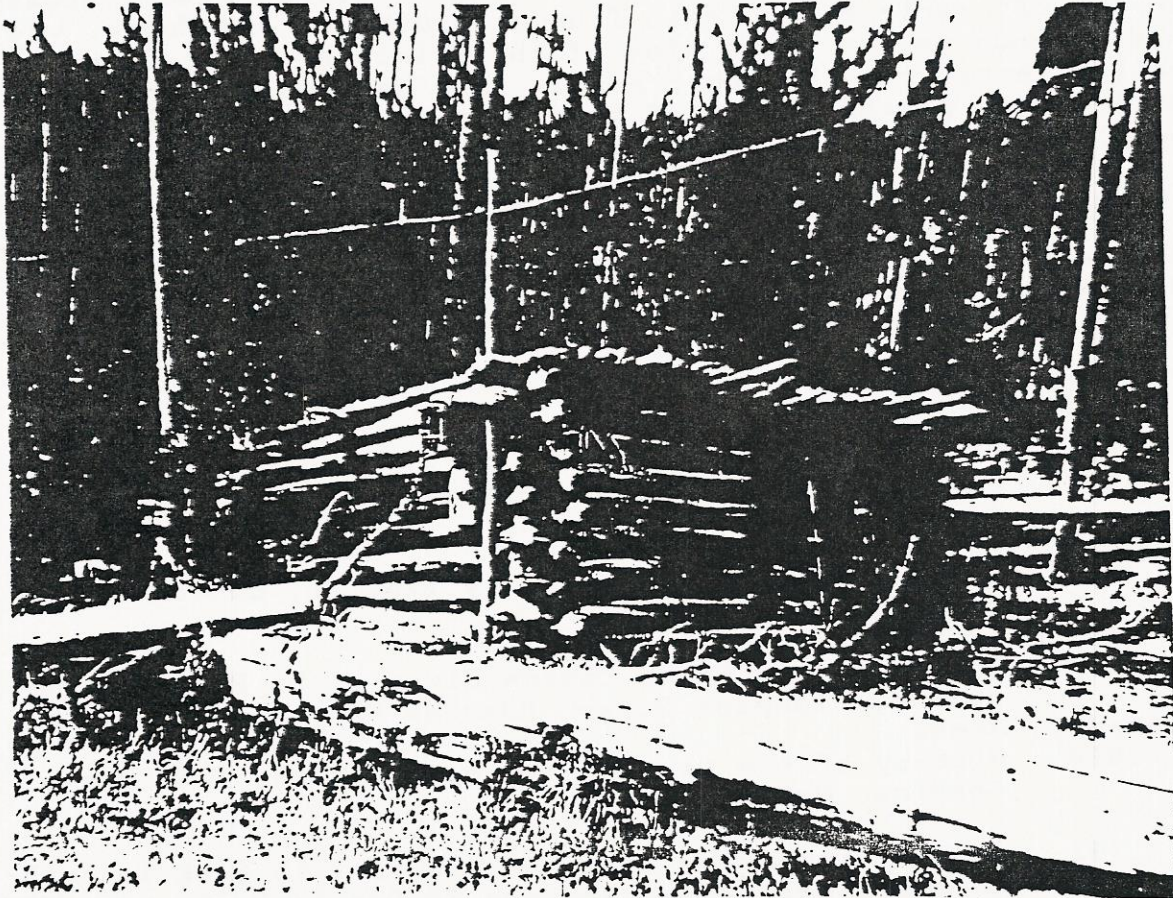
The Three-Blaze Trail had its origin during the first years of the gold rush to Thunder Mountain, which is about seventeen air miles east of Yellow Pine, in the upper reaches of the Monumental Creek drainage. The Thunder Mountain gold deposits were discovered by brothers Ben and Lou Caswell in 1896 and sold by them to William H. Dewey in late 1900 for \$100,000. Dewey's purchase of the Caswell claims sparked the rush to Thunder Mountain (Waite 1994:1-3).

In 1897 the principal access to the Thunder Mountain area was from the northwest, from Warren to the headwaters of Big Creek by way of Elk Summit, thence up Monumental Creek to the mining area. As the mining boom developed, the need for a more direct route to the diggings became evident. In the spring of 1900 three thousand dollars was collected by subscription from prospectors, miners, and businessmen to construct a new route (Elsensohn 1971:456-457; Parke 1955:46).

The principal contractors for locating and constructing the Three Blaze Trail were William Campbell and W. A. Stonebraker, assisted by August Hotzel and Harry Donohue. Campbell was a squatter-rancher on the Salmon River at the ferry site bearing his name; the latter three were early residents of Chamberlain Meadows: Stonebraker a packer and later a rancher, Hotzel a prospector and later a rancher, and Donohue a prospector and packer (Reddy 1995:44-45). Collectively, these four individuals had intimate knowledge of the area through which the new trail was to go.

Little biographic information exists on William Campbell: he settled on his Salmon River ranch in 1897 and soon thereafter built a ferry where the Dixie-to-Chamberlain Basin trail crossed the river (Reddy 1995:44). It appears that his ferry may have predated the 1900 trail constuction contract. Tragedy struck Campbell a year after the trail's completion when he disappeared in a snowstorm near the head of Lodgepole Creek and was never found (Hockaday 1968:7).





"SMOKEHOUSE" CABIN ON THREE-BLAZE TRAIL AT CHAMBERLAIN CREEK CROSSING, c.1946 (PHOTO BY TIB PARK)

About midway across Chamberlain Basin was a winter stop-over cabin at the point where the Three-Blaze Trail crossed the Chamberlain Creek trail at the mouth of Moose Creek. This cabin was called "Smokehouse", probably because it was smokey from the interior fire. This "Smokehouse" should not be confused with another "Smokehouse", which was built on Elk Creek below Elk Summit in the late 1890's as a mail carrier's stop-over cabin (Carrey 1868:58). The "Smokehouse" on the Three-Blaze Trail was still usable, but deteriorating, when used as an overnight camp and photographed about 1946 by Don H. (Tib) Park. Note the telephone line overhead and the telephone instrument box on the near corner of the cabin. The telephone was still in use at that time (Park 1995). Former Chamberlain District Ranger Val Simpson stated in a 1995 telephone interview that when he departed Chamberlain in 1957 the "Smokehouse" had deteriorated such that it was unusable (Simpson 1995). The remnants of the cabin have since been razed.