NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 10024-0018

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**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 determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name North Inlet Trail

other names/site number Nokoni-Nanita Spur; Grand Lake Trail; Flattop Trail; 5GA.3714; 5LR.11929

## 2. Location

street & number Rocky Mountain National Park (ROMO) [N/A] not for publication

city or town Grand Lake [X] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Grand; Larimer code 049; 069 zip code 80447

## 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 [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Joe Wallis Acting F.P.O. JAN 22 2008
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.
([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark Wolfe Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer 12/26/07
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

[✓] entered in the National Register
[ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register
[ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register
[ ] other, explain
[ ] See continuation sheet.

Joe Edson A. Ball — Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action 3.5.08

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

[ ] private
[ ] public-local
[ ] public-State
[X] public-Federal

### Category of Property
(Check only one box)

[ ] building(s)
[ ] district
[ ] site
[X] structure
[ ] object

### Number of Resources within Property
(Do not count previously listed resources.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | buildings |
| 0 | 0 | sites |
| 1 | 0 | structures |
| 0 | 0 | objects |
| 1 | 0 | Total |

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

Rocky Mountain National Park
Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation
LANDSCAPE/ park
TRANSPORTATION/ pedestrian-related

### Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation
LANDSCAPE/ park
TRANSPORTATION/ pedestrian-related

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

19th and 20th Century American Movements
Other: Rustic

### Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation
walls
roof
other EARTH
WOOD
STONE

### Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

North Inlet Trail
Name of Property

Grand and Larimer Counties/ Colorado
County/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.)

[X] **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.

[X] **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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/ RECREATION
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

### Periods of Significance
1926-1945

### Significant Dates
1931
1938

### Significant Person(s)
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).
N/A

### Cultural Affiliation
N/A

### Architect/Builder
National Park Service
Dunn, Allison van V.
Moses, Bert L.

### Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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

#_____

### Primary location of additional data:

[X] State Historic Preservation Office

[ ] Other State Agency

[X] Federal Agency

[ ] Local Government

[ ] University

[ ] Other

Name of repository:
Colorado Historical Society
Rocky Mountain National Park

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 34.7

**UTM References**
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.) (NAD 27)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | 13 | 430659 | 4456349 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 2. | 13 | 431766 | 4456299 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 3. | 13 | 433857 | 4457533 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 4. | 13 | 434031 | 4457364 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

The UTM points were derived by the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation from heads-up digitization on Digital Raster Graphic (DRG) maps provided to OAHP by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

[X] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sierra Standish, contract position (RMNP contact- Cheri Yost)
organization Rocky Mountain National Park date 10 November 2006
street & number 1000 Highway 36 telephone (970) 586-1394
city or town Estes Park state Colorado zip code 80517

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**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.

**Photographs**
Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional Items**
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

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

name Rocky Mountain National Park, U.S. Department of the Interior (Vaughn Baker, Superintendent)
street & number 1000 Highway 36 telephone (970) 586-1206
city or town Estes Park state Colorado zip code 80517

**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. 470 *et seq.*

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

## DESCRIPTION

Location: The North Inlet Trail is located on the west side of Rocky Mountain National Park. The trail begins along the banks of North Inlet, a tributary of Grand Lake, and moves upstream in a northeasterly direction for 7.5 miles. The main trail turns northward along Hallett Creek, eventually climbing to the Continental Divide and Flattop Mountain. A spur trail leads southeast past Lake Nokoni to Lake Nanita.

Setting: The trail begins in the subalpine ecosystem near Grand Lake and gradually climbs upward. Below timberline, rushing creek, waterfalls and thick coniferous forest border most of the trail. Above timberline, the trail passes through exposed tundra.

Built: The main trail's current alignment was improved beginning in 1926 and fully established by 1931. The Nokoni-Nanita Spur was completed in 1938.

Materials: Earth, local rock and log/wood

Destination: Flattop Mountain or lakes Nokoni and Nanita

Length of main trail: 11.5 miles Length of Nokoni-Nanita Spur: 2.8 miles

Trail Width: Ranging from 2 to 5 feet

Significant built features: Dry laid rock walls, split log footbridges/stock ford combinations, Nokoni Bridge (large log stringer horse bridge of modern construction), bogwalks, log and rock water bars and drains, stone steps, switchbacks and cairns

Significant natural features: North Inlet, Summerland Park, Big Pool, Cascade Falls, Hallett Creek, Lake Nokoni, Lake Nanita, and Flattop Mountain

Trail tour:
Unlike the East Inlet Trail, the North Inlet Trail does not follow its namesake all the way to the source. The trail follows the actual North Inlet as far as North Inlet Junction. From there, the trail turns northeast into the drainage of Hallett Creek and ascends toward the Continental Divide. The North Inlet Trail is considered part of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

The 11.5-mile North Inlet Trail shares an 8,500-foot high trailhead with the Tonahutu Creek Trail. Both trails begin next to a filtration plant, just a few city blocks from downtown Grand Lake at the park's southern boundary. The North Inlet Trail passes through about 4,000 vertical feet of topography and life zones, demanding a mixture of trail features to support the tread. Dry rock walls, rock and log checks, rock and log drains, and sections of causeway are common. Footbridge/ford combinations negotiate the small creeks. Above timberline, large cairns mark the trail. Backcountry campsites are located all along the way, including Summerland Park, various spots along the inlet, the junction with the trail to Lake Nokoni and Lake Nanita, and in the small park on Hallett Creek just at timberline. Only the exposed section of trail above timberline has no backcountry camping sites.

The first mile heads almost due east over a flat dirt road. The route narrows to a path in open, grassy Summerland Park and stays flat and low for another mile, utilizing a causeway through the boggier areas. Now at about 8,600 feet, the trail gradually ascends through the timber for the next 4.7 miles, closely following the inlet as it swoops northeast, then east, and then southeast. The trail remains on

the north side of inlet for the entire stretch, crossing only tributary creeks, but coming close enough to the inlet to see Cascade Falls and Big Pool. Rock walls intermittently support the tread, and backcountry campsites are sprinkled along the way. At 9,200 feet, North Inlet Junction marks the end of this section, bringing travelers to a cluster of backcountry campsites.

From the junction, a spur once continued along the inlet 1.5 miles to Lake Solitude, and then southwest to Lake Nanita. Initially built between 1916 and 1920, the spur is no longer maintained. Instead, a newer trail takes a more direct route to Lake Nokoni, and then reaches Lake Nanita.

The North Inlet Trail turns northeast at the North Inlet Junction, climbing away from the actual inlet and skirting along swift Hallett Creek. The pathway abruptly becomes steeper and hemmed in by trees. Extensive, long rock walls support several sharp switchbacks. At a point 2.2 miles farther and 1,600 feet higher, the trail reaches a little park just below timberline. The park harbors a corral and several backcountry sites.

From here, the bare slopes to the north, east and south rise "like a church roof" up toward the divide. The trail moves above the trees and up more steep switchbacks on the southeast side of the park. These switchbacks are so steep—and at such high altitude (rising from 10,600 feet to almost 12,000 feet)—that on August 9, 1941, the Grand Lake newspaper warned, "Riders should wind their horses three or four times during the ascent, and hikers will wind themselves without any advice." The trail then jogs back along the eastern rim, heading north for 2.2 more miles toward the junction with the Flattop Trail and the Tonahutu Creek Trail on the Continental Divide. Large and evenly spaced cairns mark the way, intended to make the route as obvious as possible when dense clouds settle upon the mountains.

The end of the North Inlet Trail is only half-way to the end of any trip. Here, at Bighorn Flats, the hiker or rider has three choices: return to Grand Lake along the North Inlet Trail; take the Flattop Trail (spilling down toward the east side of the Continental Divide toward Estes Park); or, take the Tonahutu Trail (wrapping north and west, to eventually finish back at Grand Lake). At over 12,000 feet, the crossroads represents a major passing area for prehistoric and historic travelers and recreational hikers. The wide areas of tundra give way to dramatic views in all directions: Odessa Gorge to the northeast; Hallett Peak to the southeast; and a broad view of the Never Summer Mountain Range several miles to the West.

*Spur to Lake Nokoni and Lake Nanita*
From North Inlet Junction, the 2.8-mile trail to lakes Nokoni and Nanita branches to the south. The trail begins by moving downhill and crossing the North Inlet over an approximately 30-foot long and 6-foot wide log stringer horse bridge. The bridge passes over a small gorge, about 28 feet above moving water. The Nokoni Bridge, the first having been constructed in 1933, is one of the largest and most dramatically-placed bridges on the western side of the park. Although the original bridge has long since decayed, that bridge set the standard for the modern one that mimics the original design.

After the bridge, the trail proceeds to ascend through thick timber. For the first mile, the grade is gradual. Low, dry rock walls support the tread. In the second mile, the pathway swerves southwest, climbing the steep slope with switchbacks supported by long walls of rock. The rockwork displays the signature signs of age–lichen and moss have settled on the stone faces while dirt and pine needles bury parts of the walls. The rocks in the walls do not appear to have been moved or added to recently.

At the top of the switchbacks, the trail turns south again, skirting along a steep cliff. The trees become thinner, and views to the north and east open up, drawing the eye toward the Continental Divide. The

trail is now far above the North Inlet, and a long waterfall is visible across the valley. Because this section ascends a ravine with a steep pitch, the trail was designed to pass through, instead of around, large masses of rock. In at least three cases, the trail passes over blasted rock: on the right hand is a vertical rock wall, punctuated by shafts left by drill bits; on the left is a steep drop-off, usually reinforced by dry laid rock wall.

At the end of the second mile, the trail reaches timberline and Lake Nokoni. The lake is flanked to the north and west by 500-foot cliffs, with 12,334-foot Ptarmigan Mountain to the south. In the first two miles, the trail ascended 1200 feet. The trail continues for another .8 miles in an easterly direction. This small, less-developed section of trail crosses a small ridge to Lake Nanita. Steep cliffs also flank this lake.

Trail construction and alterations:
Without a doubt, humans have been using this course since prehistoric times. The North Inlet Trail is one of the most obvious and easy ways to get onto the Continental Divide from the west side, delivering the traveler onto Flattop Mountain and a relatively gentle descent into the Estes Park area.

In 1886, the Grand Lake *Prospector* reported:

> Mr. Fred Sprague, of Estes Park, came over to the Lake last Saturday, looking up a route for a trail between the two parks. The trail is built to the summit on the eastern side, and it certainly should be looked after on this side. Mr. Sprague says Estes Park is full of tourists, and many would visit Grand Lake if there were a good trail between the two places.[1]

Ten years later, Alex and Louise Adams—owners of the "The Grandview," a lodge near Grand Lake—took the initiative to build seven miles of trail up the North Inlet. Perhaps this first trail cleared enough trees to give hikers and riders access to timberline. However, a 1901 trail-building effort by Sprague and a friend required them to "cut and slash" quite a bit of the way, suggesting that the trail was not well-marked or had deteriorated. Also, the two men reputedly built switchbacks from the little park at timberline up to the steep walls to the divide. These early switchbacks may or may not have passed where the switchbacks are today, but they represented the style of trail construction necessary on that dramatic bit of grade.

Maps through the early decades of the twentieth century indicate that the North Inlet Trail weaved considerably between the north and south banks of the inlet. Although lodge owners had a stake in sustainable trails for tourist use, trail work was peripheral to success in the hospitality business, and most lodge-sponsored trails did not receive consistent attention.

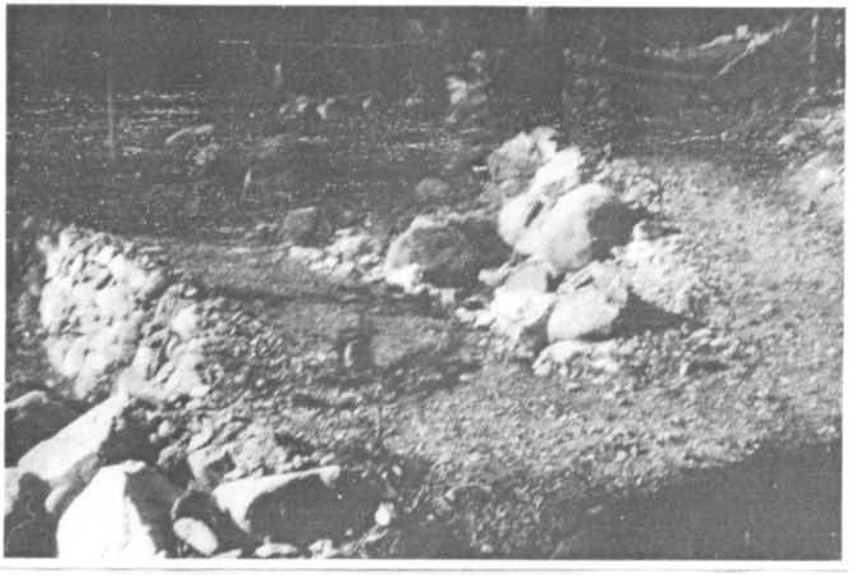
In 1918, future park superintendent Roger Toll reported, "...the national park authorities cleared a trail from the North Inlet trail, continuing on up the valley of the inlet and reaching Lake Nanita." Toll's comment indicates that the trail was already clear for the first seven miles, about as far as the Adams had cleared in the 1890s, and reaching where North Inlet Junction is today.

In 1926, Fred McLaren, the park's west side ranger, began to rebuild the trail. This phase of construction work—distinguished by a new level of trail-building expertise—produced the alignment that we

[1] Quoted in Mary Lyons Cairns, *Grand Lake in the Olden Days: A Compilation of Grand Lake, the Pioneers and the Olden Days,* World Press, 1971, 231.

know today. Over the next six summers, the crew built a trail up to timberline, keeping the pathway exclusively to the north side of the inlet. With the aim of improving efficiency, the park ordered the crew to haul in an air compressor to power a jackhammer for breaking up rock.

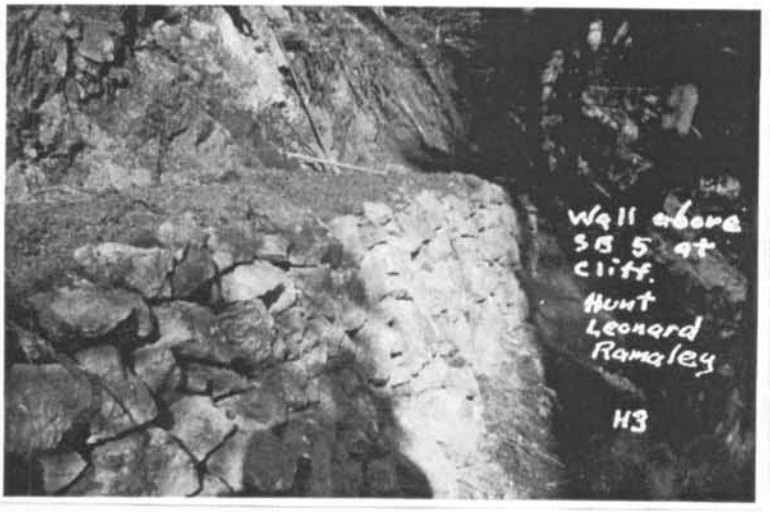
In 1929, the park's first trained trail "engineer" arrived, and immediately applied his knowledge to the on-going work along the North Inlet. Allison van V. Dunn, a NPS landscape architect with trail building experience at Carlsbad Caverns, oversaw the final years of the North Inlet reconstruction, staking out the new route and showing the crew how he wanted switchbacks to be built. At his previous park, Dunn successfully built trails—using dynamite—without harming the delicate caves. He emphasized that the scenic qualities of the North Inlet Trail not be damaged. To this aim, he coaxed out of retirement his former trail foreman at Carlsbad Caverns, Bert L. Moses.



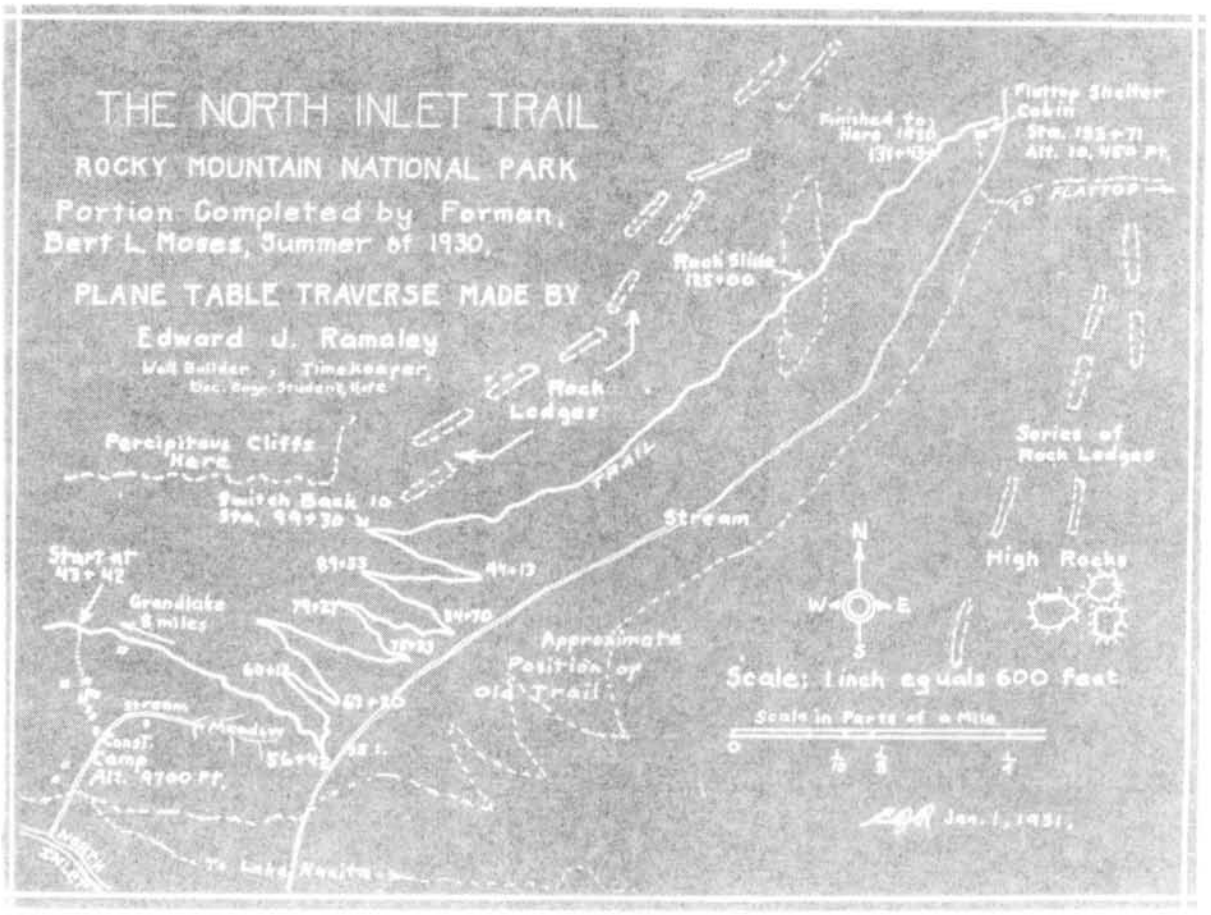
Switch Back No. 1, 1930, (Station 56 plus 42)

*Source: National Park Service*

Constructed under such experienced supervision, it is not surprising that the North Inlet Trail has required minimal alteration in the last 75 years. In 1939, a Civilian Conservation Corps crew eliminated certain small switchbacks, inserted footbridges/fords at creeks, and kept the grade below 15 percent, reflecting the increasing standardized and sustainable trail building techniques of the NPS.




*Stone retaining wall above Switchback No. 5. Source: National Park Service*

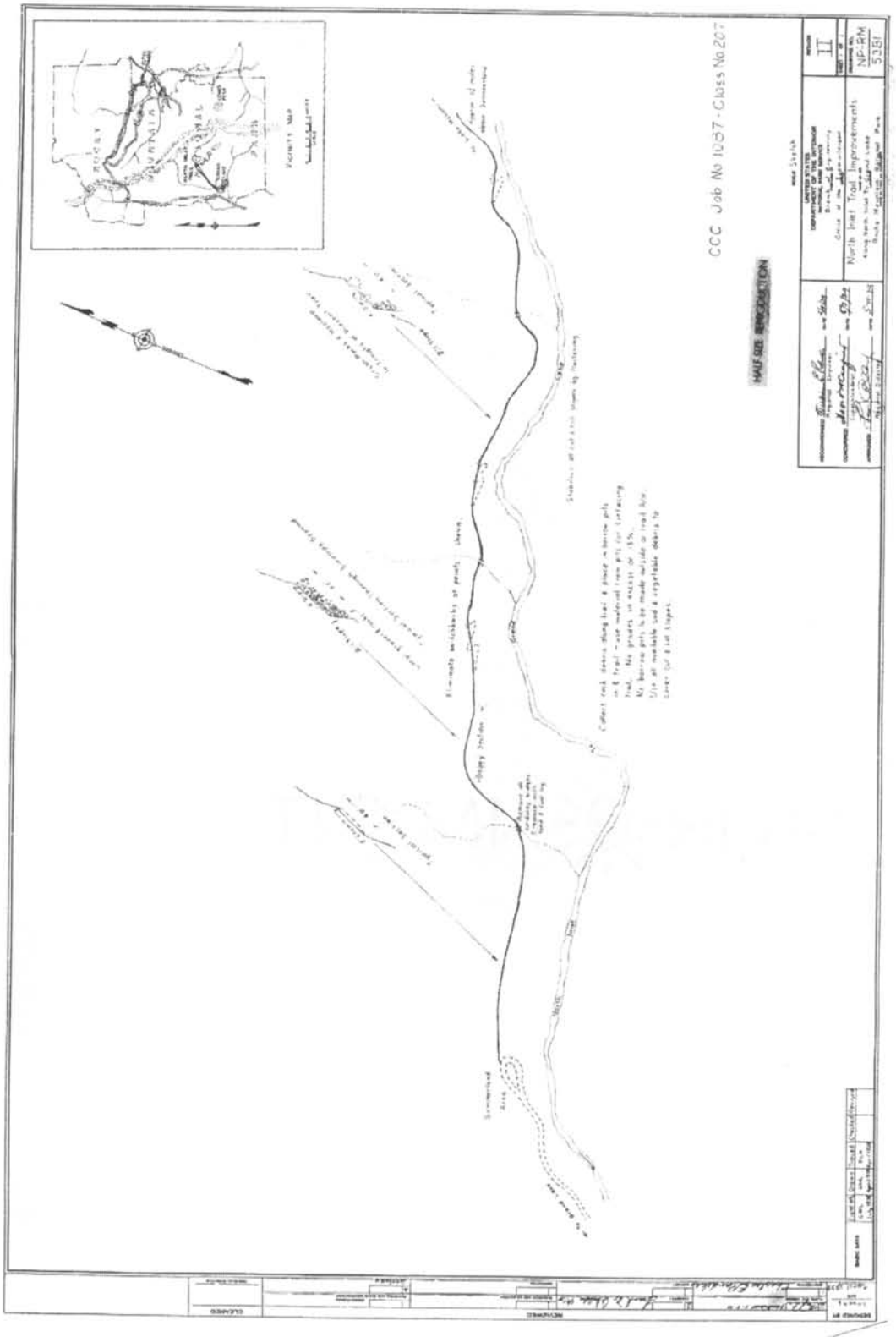



*Spur to Lake Nokoni and Lake Nanita*

The Colorado Mountain Club recorded the first mention of a trail to Lake Nokoni and Lake Nanita. In 1916, the club's annual periodical published a photograph of Nokoni, noting that, " 'Exploring Lake Nokoni' first became a subject of ambition in the Mountain Club two years ago, when the existence of this lake and nearby Lake Nanita became generally known." Future superintendent Toll reported that, "During the year 1917 the national park authorities cleared a trail from the North Inlet Trail, continuing on up the valley of the inlet and reaching Lake Nanita (10,700 feet). This trail opens up to the public a wild, beautiful, and rugged region, previously visited by but few persons."[2]

Known as the "Nanita Trail," this route followed the North Inlet's valley as far as Lake Solitude, and then veered southward and uphill toward Lake Nanita, bypassing Lake Nokoni. This was one of the only trail projects completed by the park between 1915 and 1920. However, much of the Nanita Trail was boggy and tricky. By the 1930s—when funding, labor and professional expertise facilitated large trail projects in the park—a good trail to Nokoni and Nanita apparently merited more attention. For several years a park trail crew had been busily reconstructing the main stem of the North Inlet Trail; it was only natural that trail workers would have eyed the trail to the lakes for future work.

[2] Roger Toll, *Mountaineering the Rocky Mountain National Park*, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919, 94.




*Plan for minor trail work by the Civilian Conservation Corps.*

In 1931, Allison van V. Dunn persuaded Bert Moses out of retirement (for the second time) and assigned him to supervise the trail crew. The plan was to build a totally new trail to the lakes. Construction carried through the summers of 1931, 1934 and 1938. Meanwhile, the NPS landscape division drew up plans for a bridge to span the North Inlet at the beginning of the Nokoni Trail. The 30-foot long, 6-foot wide log stringer bridge was built in 1933. Although long since decayed, the original bridge set the standard. The modern replacement mimics the original design. Bridges of this type have a limited lifespan, contributing to the ephemeral nature of trail structures.

There is no known evidence of CCC/New Deal 1930s work on the Nokoni Trail. Given that the park itself invested so much attention and expertise to this trail during the 1930s, it would not be surprising that the trail did not need additional attention.

The 1917-1918 Nanita Trail and the 1938 Nokoni Trail coexisted for at least a few decades. However, the park did not need two separate trails. The sturdy Nokoni Trail proved to be the favorite. The Nanita Trail no longer showed up on the USGS topographic map of 1961 and, by 1982, had grown over to the point that it didn't even reach Lake Solitude. According to the park's 1982 Trail Plan, the area was no longer popular with visitors and required extensive trail work through soggy ground. The park simply chose not to maintain the 1917-1918 Nanita Trail.

Although a "social trail" has probably linked the neighboring lakes of Nokoni and Nanita for as long as people have been visiting the area, a bone fide NPS trail did not exist until 1965, when the park spent $4,000 for new construction.

The trail needed "serious repair" work in 1970, but the alignment and major features (excluding the Nokoni Bridge) appear to have lasted since the 1930s.

Trail integrity:
The North Inlet Trail retains a high degree of integrity related to park improvements by various crews started in 1926 and continuing through 1939. The North Inlet benefited from professional design under landscape architect Allison van V. Dunn. His efforts led to sustainable trail that is easily maintained. Park trail crews have replaced ephemeral features such as wood bridges and log checks and rebuilt in-kind stone steps, rock walls, and rock borders using materials gathered on site.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The North Inlet Trail is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C, meeting the registration requirements set forth in the *Rocky Mountain National Park Multiple Property Listing.* Under Criterion A, the trail is eligible in the area of *Entertainment/Recreation* for its association with the early resort industry and tourism in the Grand Lake region. The period of significance begins in 1926 with the first work on the modern alignment and ends in 1945 with the beginning of the postwar tourism boom. Additionally, the trail is eligible under Criterion C in the area of *Landscape Architecture*; the trail design reflects National Park Service (NPS) Naturalistic Design of the 1920s through the 1940s, specifically in the implementation of the trail design of NPS landscape architect Allison van V. Dunn and trail crew supervisor Bert L. Moses.

The North Inlet Trail demonstrates the national trends described in Linda Flint McClelland's *Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks Multiple Property Listing.* In this second context, the trail is eligible under Criterion A in the area of *Entertainment/Recreation* for its connection to the twentieth century movement to develop national parks for public enjoyment. The trail is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of *Landscape Architecture* for a design that reflecting NPS Naturalistic Design of the 1920s through the 1940s.

### Historical Background

The North Inlet Trail's many miles and long story reflect the park's trail system in microcosm. The two dominant themes in local trail history—early tourism and NPS Naturalistic Design—are evident here. Also, the trail's narrative incorporates many influential individuals in the park's history. Finally, certain construction details are particularly well recorded in park documents, diaries and newspaper articles.

Humans have likely traveled this convenient course since prehistoric times. The North Inlet Trail provides one of the most obvious ways to climb from Grand Lake to the Continental Divide. Once on the Divide, travelers can use Flattop Mountain to descend with relative comfort to east side areas like Bear Lake, Horseshoe Park or Moraine Park. Arapaho tribal elders returning to the area in 1914 maintained that their people used the Tonahutu Trail, rather than the North Inlet Trail, to cover the same ground. Nonetheless, one archaeologist points out the "North Inlet is...a logical route to Bighorn Flats [Flattop Mountain] from Grand Lake. While the Arapaho may not have used this trail, it is highly likely that the Ute and other indigenous groups did travel along North Inlet."[3] There are at least three identified lithic scatters in the area. However, there is not enough information at this time to evaluate the North Inlet Trail's eligibility for nomination to the National Register for its prehistorical significance.

In 1868, an audacious mountaineering party perhaps followed the trace of a prehistoric North Inlet Trail. It is generally believed that Major Wesley Powell and a small group of students and associates—the first group on record to successfully summit Longs Peak—approached their objective by tramping up the drainage of the North Inlet.

At the end of the nineteenth century, tourism blossomed around Grand Lake. To that time, no one had purposefully built a trail up the drainage; neither Indians nor Powell would have had a reason. But lodge owners did. In 1886, Fred Sprague of Estes Park expressed his desire for a refined, easy-to-follow pathway for his guests. Most likely, Grand Lake locals heeded his words, and may have made

[3] Thomas Lux, "Ancient Trails at Rocky Mountain National Park," Master's Thesis, University of Denver, June, 2005, 267.

some efforts to create a trail, though there is no record of immediate action. But in 1897—eleven years later—the lodge keepers of The Grandview, Alex and Louise Adams, cleared seven miles of trail along the North Inlet, initiating two decades of tourist industry-managed maintenance on the route. Perhaps this first trail gave hikers and riders access to timberline. In 1901, Sprague and a friend continued the trail-building effort by reputedly building switchbacks from the little park at timberline up to the divide.

The North Inlet's early twentieth century construction seemed to have more staying power—perhaps due to increased use. In 1909, one tourist from Longmont scouted the trail in preparation for a hike from Grand Lake to Estes Park. He described a well-established trail:

> I went over the trail alone the first two miles of it Monday, to see what it looked like, what they call the North Inlet, a stream about the size of the Saint Vrain. I found a sign on a tree giving directions to the traveler. It said it was 25 miles by the long way and 28 miles by the short way. I thought this funny figuring; but I had already learned that in climbing mountains straight up, miles did not count.[4]

As this hiker noted, the North Inlet Trail involved a significant, but not excessively daunting, trek over the divide.

In 1915, the newly formed Rocky Mountain National Park assumed responsibility for the North Inlet Trail. In 1919, future superintendent Roger Toll acknowledged the growing popularity of the route, "Twenty years ago this [the Tonahutu Trail] was the shortest trail between Estes Park and Grand Lake and was the one most often used. Since the completion of the North Inlet trail most of the travel has gone over the newer and shorter trail."[5] In the early 1920s, the primacy of the North Inlet Trail was further bolstered by the construction of vacation houses near the trailhead. The *Estes Park Trail* reported:

> Road building to the Summerland addition is well under way, as the constant rock blasting indicates. Mr. Willis Crowther, of Salina, Kansas, is promoting the Summerland community, a resort on the old Kaufmann homestead, a mile and a half northeast of the lake. Several cottages are already completed, lots are surveyed, and streets laid out.[6]

Perhaps the increased use took a heavy toll on the trail. In 1926 the park initiated an improvement project that lasted until 1931. The work improved nearly every section of the trail below timberline. Historic maps indicate that the trail weaved considerably between the north and south banks of the inlet in the early twentieth century, but the 1926-1931 construction kept the trail to the north side of the creek—where it remains today.

This long project spanned two eras in the park's history—from the leadership of experienced generalists (rangers) to the prevalence of trained specialists (landscape architects). Ranger Fred McLaren directed the first few years of work on the lower North Inlet. Then, in 1929, Allison van V. Dunn, a NPS landscape architect with trail building experience at Carlsbad Caverns, oversaw the final years of the North Inlet Trail's reconstruction. McLaren and Dunn reportedly disagreed over some trail plans, but

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[4] "Return from Grand Lake," *Longmont Ledger*, August 20, 1909, 1.
[5] Roger Toll, *Mountaineering the Rocky Mountain National Park*, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919, 94.
[6] "Grand Lake Ripples," *Estes Park Trail*, July 27, 1923, 18.

McLaren ultimately had to defer to the expert. Dunn staked out the new route and showed the crew how he wanted switchbacks to be built. At Carlsbad Caverns, he had successfully built trails—using dynamite—without harming the delicate caves. He emphasized that the scenic qualities of the North Inlet Trail not be damaged. To this aim, he coaxed his former trail foreman, Bert Moses, out of retirement.

The project also witnessed the application of new technology in trail building. The park ordered the crew to haul in an air compressor to power a jackhammer for breaking up rock. The heavy, bulky machine needed to be moved several miles up the trail to the work site, demanding a team of horses, manpower, and block and tackle, and eliciting strong opinions about the "piece of junk." However, the effort appears to have been worth it. Today, the North Inlet Trail stands as one of the meticulously built trails in the park. Historic photographs attest to the durability of specific pieces of grade.

The multi-year endeavor culminated with the steep stretch that follows Hallett Creek up to timberline. Although the trail was now sound all of the way to the tundra, many tourists used the trail for shorter expeditions. On July 19, 1941, the *Grand Lake Pioneer* stirred up interest for out-and-back trips along the North Inlet Trail:

> For a woodsy, half-day hike, try the Cascade Falls trip. Approximately four miles of winding mountain trail will take you from the village to the place on the North Inlet where water tumbles over boulders to form Cascade Falls....
>
> For perhaps a mile and a half, the trail is relatively level, then begins to ascend. Past mountain streams, columbines, aspen groves and majestic pines until a sign proclaims "Cascade Falls." The rocks bordering the falls make convenient spots for picnics and afford a good view of the foaming water. The trip takes about a half-day and can be accomplished either on horseback or by foot.[7]

Visitors who opted to go farther than Cascade Falls could take the strenuous hike along Hallett Creek, to be rewarded by arriving at a small, delightful park at timberline, backing up against the western side of the divide. Here, generations of hikers were greeted by the "Flat Top Shelter Cabin." Although it supposedly served park staff, hikers often availed themselves of its protection until its demise in an avalanche. One Colorado Mountain Club member described her stay at the cabin as "A more gorgeous spot I have never seen, and I hope that cabin is still there for the use of foot-weary travelers. It was just in the edge of the timber, with a rushing little stream by the side of it, and two huge pine trees also close."[8]

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[7] "Hike to Cascade Falls," *Grand Lake Pioneer*, July 19, 1941, no page.

[8] Iva M. Oakes, "Back-packing Over Flat Top," *Trail and Timberline*, published monthly by the Colorado Mountain Club, Denver, Colorado, April, 1944, 43.

In 1939, a Civilian Conservation Corps unit received instructions to eliminate certain small switchbacks, install footbridge/ford combinations at creek crossings, and keep the grade below 15 percent when possible. This work perpetuated NPS Naturalistic Design—and reinforced a trail that has survived, relatively unchanged, for six more decades.

*Spur to Lake Nokoni*

Tourists discovered Lake Nokoni and Lake Nanita relatively late. Probably because of the lakes' isolation, the early tourist industry did not expend much energy trying to develop a trail, and literature aimed at visitors did not build up the trip. Though remote, the lakes were pretty. It was only a matter of time before visitors would want a good trail; it is likely that some hikers had already ventured cross-country up to the lakes. During 1917, the park cleared a trail from the North Inlet Trail, continuing on up the valley of the inlet and reaching Lake Nanita.[9] The fact that the park built the Nanita Trail only two years after the park's founding—a period defined by the park's tiny budget—reflects a substantial interest in the lakes. This was one of the only trail projects completed by the park between 1915 and 1920.

*A horse rests on the original Nokoni Bridge while his rider captures this photographic image. Source: National Park Service*

In 1931, Bert Moses returned to superintend the construction of a new trail to Lake Nokoni. Moses brought a new layer of professionalism to the park. Today, trail crewmembers say that this trail—with its clean switchbacks, the quantity of precise rockwork, and the sustainability of the construction—reflects a distinctive personal style. Quite possibly, they see the touch of Moses. The work of Moses and his crew stands up to the test of time—the well-planned trail to Lakes Nokoni and Nanita proved sustainable and through the rest of the twentieth century.

[9] Roger Toll, *Mountaineering the Rocky Mountain National Park*, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919, 94.

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*The 1930 trail crew stands outside the Flat Top Shelter Cabin. Source: National Park Service*

## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The trail is located entirely within Rocky Mountain National Park. Beginning north of Grand Lake at the park boundary, the trail travels northeastward and then eastward along the North Inlet. Upon reaching Hallett Creek, the trail branches turns northeast and follows the creek's drainage. At timberline, the trail turns south to ascend the drainage and onto the tundra, completes a wide U-turn, and moves directly north to reach Flattop Mountain. The main trail is 11.5 miles long. The Nokoni-Nanita Spur begins where Hallett Creek joins the inlet. The trail travels south for 2.8 miles to reach Lake Nokoni and Lake Nanita. The boundary of this nomination extends a distance of 10 feet on either side from the centerline of the trail. The trail route is shown on the USGS topographic quadrangle maps which follow.

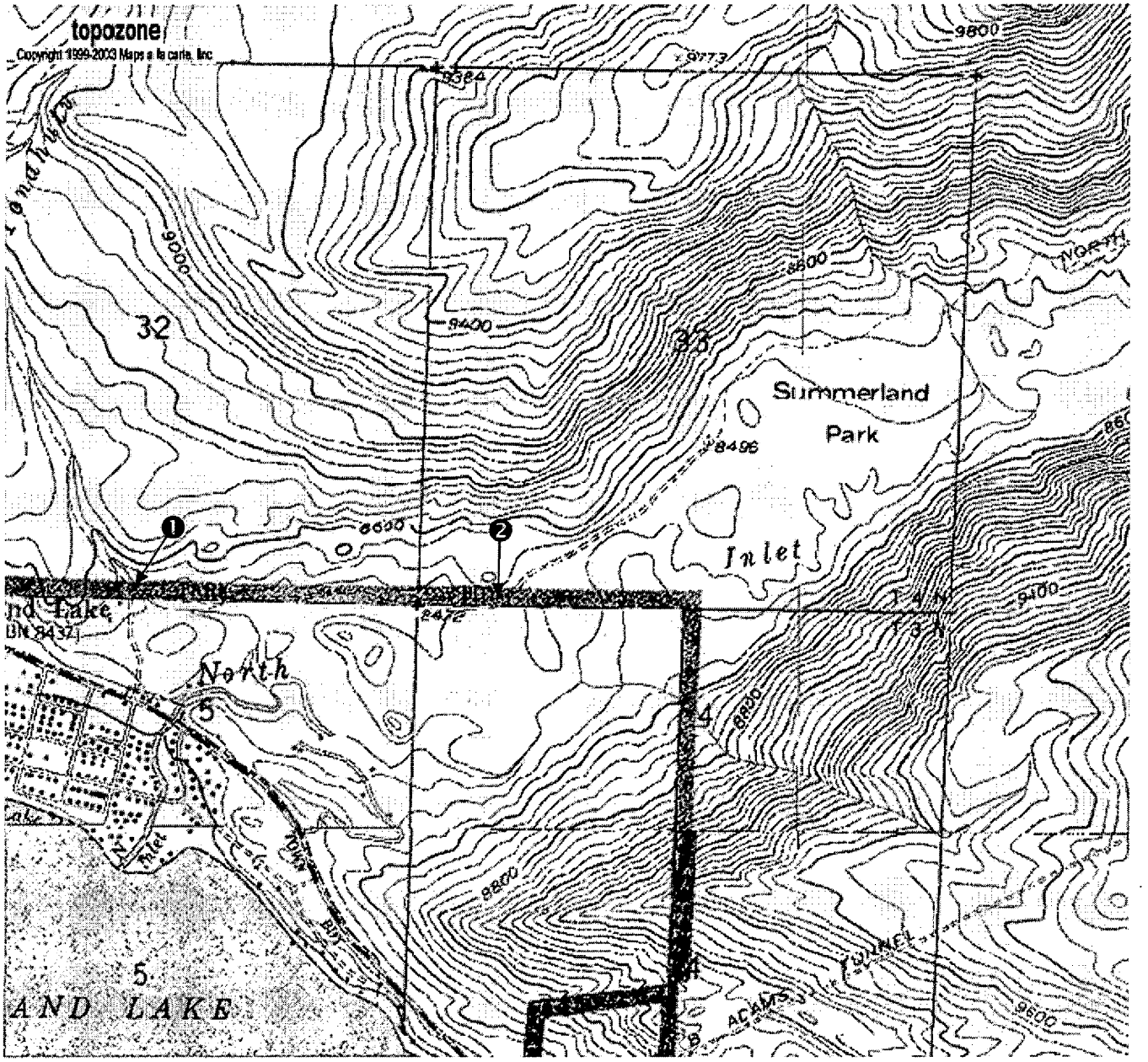
### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the resource and associated features such as (but not limited to) cairns, footbridges, signs, rock walls, and bogwalks. Though landscape features are important to the experience of the visitor traversing the trail and may contribute to the overall integrity of the trail, they are not included in this nomination.

### UTM REFERENCES (cont.) (NAD27)

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. | 13 | 435011 | 4458246 | |
| 6. | 13 | 434989 | 4459061 | |
| 7. | 13 | 435854 | 4459965 | |
| 8. | 13 | 438718 | 4459031 | North Inlet Junction |
| 9. | 13 | 439119 | 4458887 | |
| 10. | 13 | 440316 | 4459625 | |
| 11. | 13 | 440213 | 4459177 | |
| 12. | 13 | 440622 | 4459107 | |
| 13 | 13 | 441068 | 4459457 | |
| 14. | 13 | 441044 | 4462111 | County Line |
| 15. | 13 | 441009 | 4462137 | End of Trail |
| 16 | 13 | 439031 | 4457820 | |
| 17. | 13 | 438371 | 4457481 | |
| 18 | 13 | 438345 | 4456977 | |
| 19. | 13 | 438700 | 4456868 | |
| 20. | 13 | 438866 | 4456374 | End of Nokoni-Nanita Spur at Lake Nanita |

**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**
Grand Lake, Colorado
7.5 Minute Series

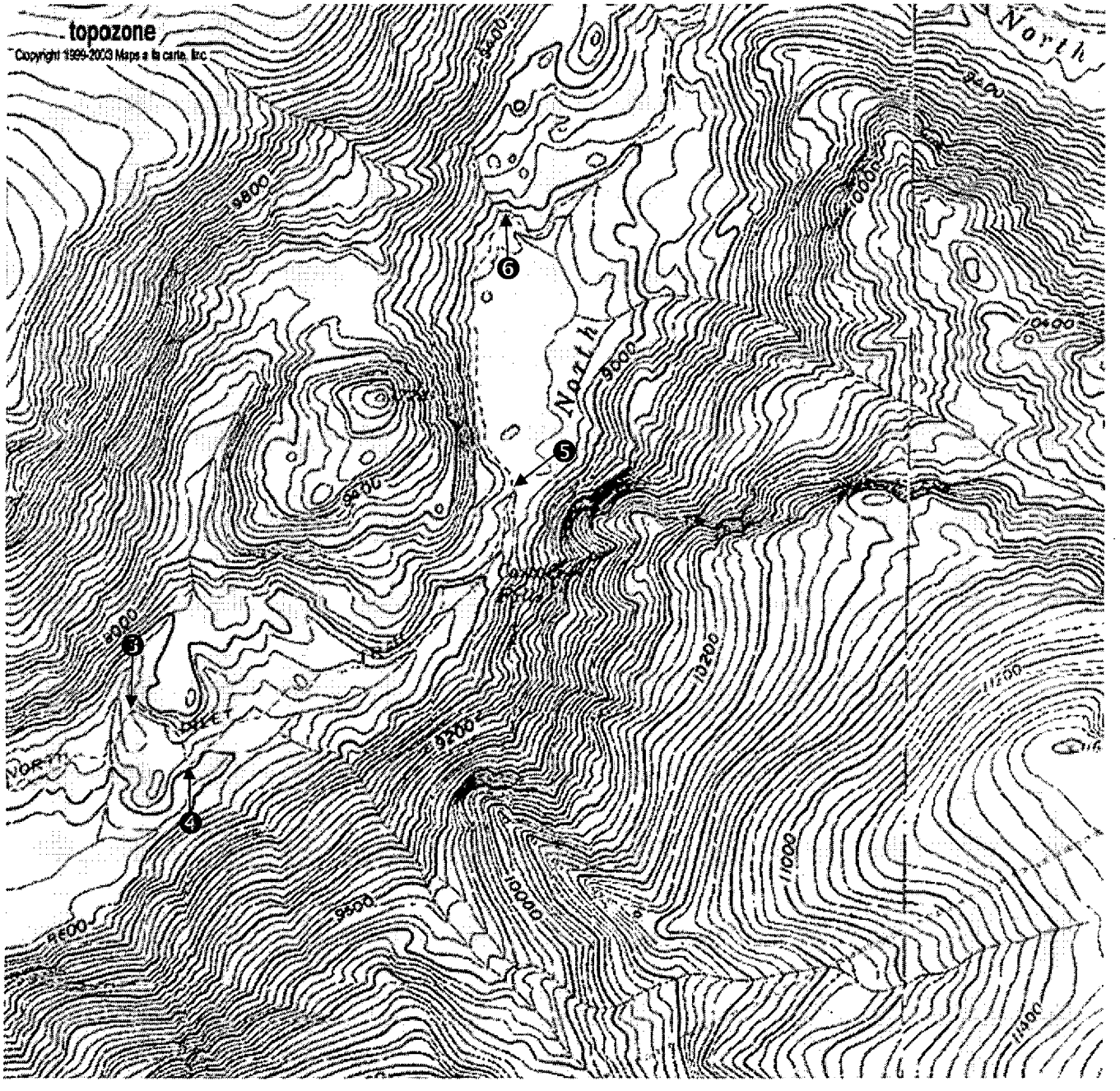



0 0.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 1.5 km
0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1 mi

**USGS Grand Lake (CO) Quadrangle**
Projection is UTM Zone 13 NAD83 Datum

North

**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**
Grand Lake, Colorado
7.5 Minute Series

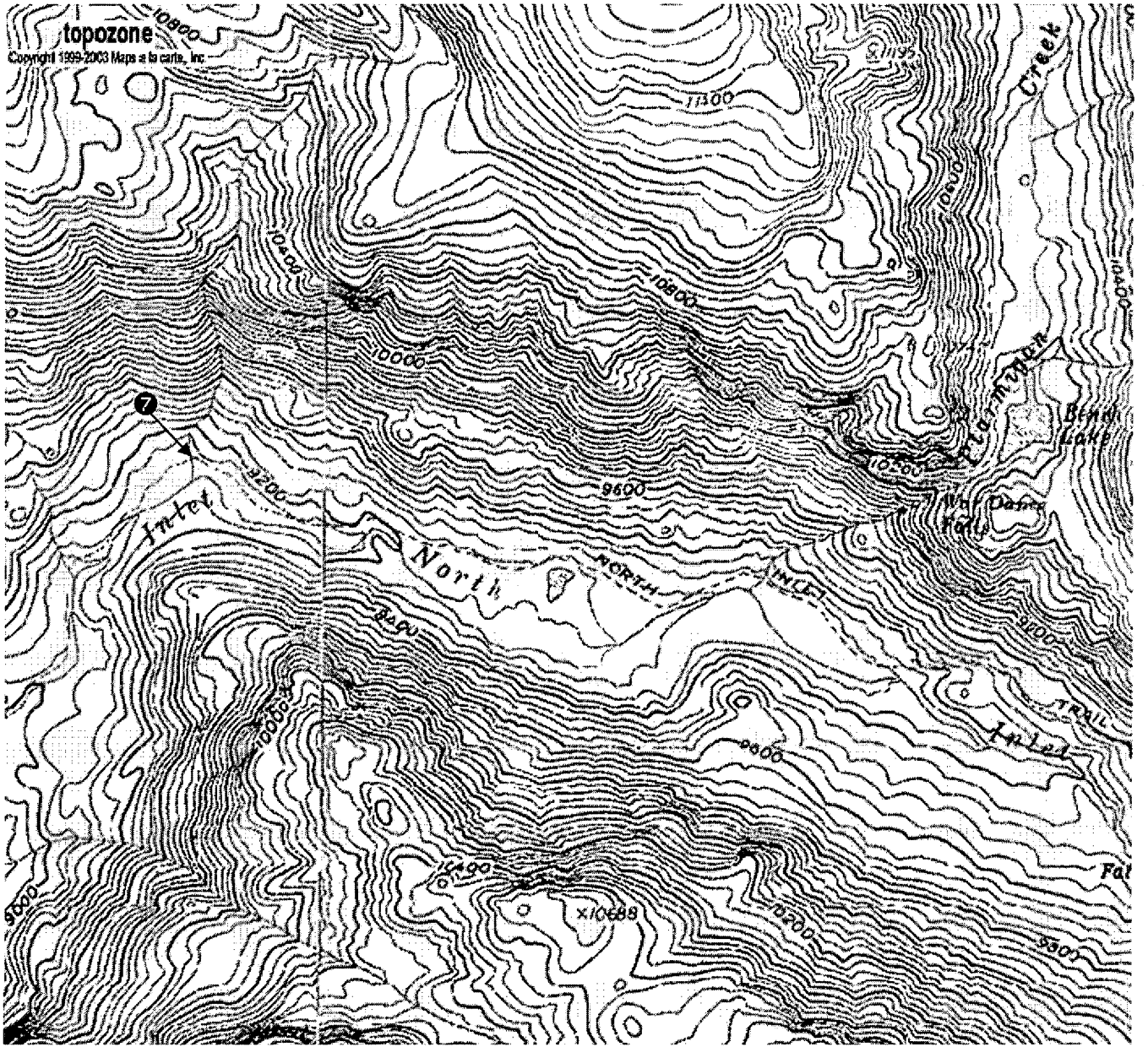



0 0.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 1.5 km
0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1 mi

**USGS Grand Lake (CO) Quadrangle**
Projection is UTM Zone 13 NAD83 Datum

North

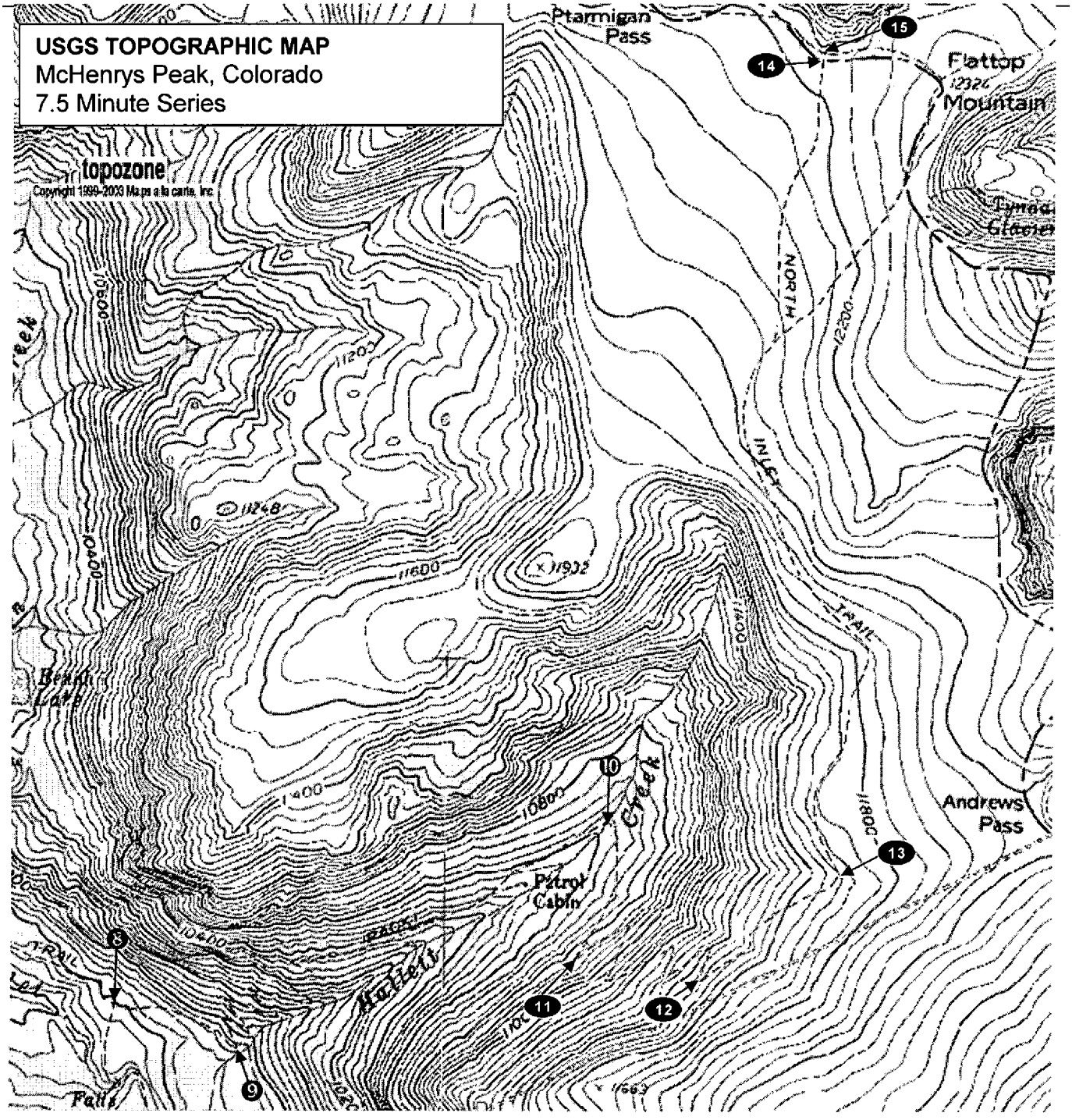
**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**
McHenrys Peak, Colorado
7.5 Minute Series



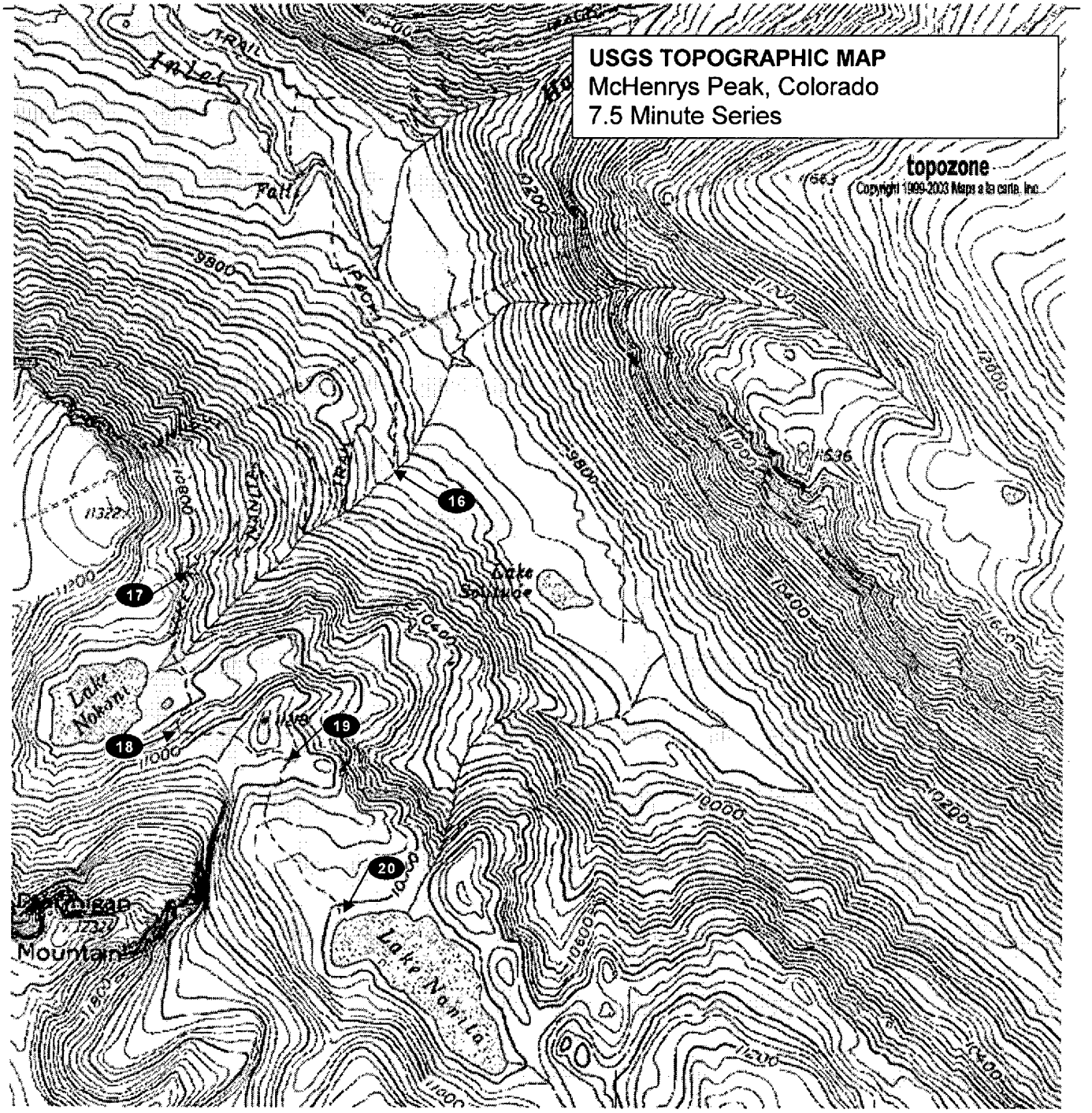

0 0.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 1.5 km
0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1 mi

**USGS McHenrys Peak (CO) Quadrangle**
Projection is UTM Zone 13 NAD83 Datum

North




**USGS McHenrys Peak (CO) Quadrangle**
Projection is UTM Zone 13 NAD83 Datum


USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP
McHenrys Peak, Colorado
7.5 Minute Series
topozone
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16
17
18
19
20
Lake Nokomi
Lake Nanita
Mountain
0 0.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 1.5 km
0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1 mi
USGS McHenrys Peak (CO) Quadrangle
Projection is UTM Zone 13 NAD83 Datum
North

## PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-14:

Name of Property: North Inlet Trail
Location: Grand County/ Colorado
Photographer: Sierra Standish
Date of Photographs: July 2006
Negatives: CD with tif images on file with National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

| Photo No. | Photographic Information |
|---|---|
| 1 | Spur to Lakes Nokoni/Nanita. Lake Nokoni. View to southwest. |
| 2 | Bogwalk, within 1 mile of trailhead. |
| 3 | Half log footbridge. |
| 4 | Rock wall supporting the trail. Wall is approximately 10 feet high. |
| 5 | Granite Pass in July 2005. |
| 6 | Cascade Falls, view to southwest. |
| 7 | Low rock wall support trail above the North Inlet. |
| 8 | Image of "Switchback Number 1." Corresponds with 1930 blueprint. |
| 9 | Switchback farther up on same section of trail. |
| 10 | July area, view to north. Ridge in background is Continental Divide. This is where the North Inlet Trail rises above timberline and wraps northward to join the Flattop Trail. |
| 11 | Spur to Lakes Nokoni/Nanita. Nokoni Bridge, crossing the North Inlet. View to northeast. |
| 12 | Spur to Lakes Nokoni/Nanita. Rock wall and rock cut. View to south. |
| 13 | Spur to Lakes Nokoni/Nanita. Close-up of rock cut. |
| 14 | Spur to Lakes Nokoni/Nanita. Another rock wall. Note that the wall is nearly vertical. |