

Dick Proenneke Historic Cabin Site

Lake Clark National Park & Preserve
US Department of the Interior



Dick Proenneke: Alaskan Pioneer and Craftsman



Dick Proenneke moved permanently to Twin Lakes in 1968 at age 52 to live deep in the wilderness out of a need for simplicity. (Photo from the Richard Proenneke collection)

The Dick Proenneke Site stands out as the best example of the thousands of log cabins built in bush Alaska in the past 100 years. The cabin and other structures were built in 1968 by Dick Proenneke using nothing but hand tools. Proenneke was a master craftsman who believed passionately that his life at Twin Lakes should not result in a diminution of the wildlife there.

Dick Proenneke had the forethought to film himself building his log cabin, thus creating an extremely important historic film. The film documents a relatively common practice that was rarely, if ever, preserved on film for future generations.

Proenneke epitomized some of the salient historical virtues of American culture such as self-sufficiency, thrift, and living within one's means. He had a voluminous correspondence with friends and admirers all over the nation and was a daily journal keeper who filled notebooks and calendars with wildlife observations, weather notations, the details of his days, and sage reflections on the simplest of lifestyles.

Some people have called Dick Proenneke a modern-day Henry David Thoreau with Twin Lakes being like Walden Pond. A major difference is one of scale; Proenneke resided at his Twin Lakes cabin for 30 years and Thoreau lived at Walden Pond one year.



Dick Proenneke was a tireless journalist, observing and recording his natural surroundings and experiences. (Photo by Evan R. Steinhauser).

Help Protect This Heritage

Lake Clark National Park & Preserve is managing the Dick Proenneke Historic Cabin Site as a nationally significant historic site. Nearly everything here was handmade by Proenneke during his life at Twin Lakes between 1967 and 1998. It has been left here, as he left it, for the enjoyment and benefit of visitors. Look at and explore, but leave untouched, these historic remains for future generations to enjoy. Take special care with the handcrafted door and other fragile features so that the National Park Service can continue to leave the cabin and outbuildings open to all who wish to visit.

It is against the law to disturb historic and prehistoric resources on public lands. Violations may result in penalties of up to \$250,000, jail time, and forfeiture of all vehicles and equipment used in the violation. Please report any suspected violation to Lake Clark National Park & Preserve at 907/781-2218.

Facilities

There are no toilet facilities at the Proenneke Site. Visitors are asked to use the outhouse at the Hope Cabin approximately 200 yards northeast (uplake) of the Proenneke Site. The Hope Cabin outhouse is accessible by walking up the beach to the cabin and then walking 25 feet further to the east on the trail. An optional way to arrive at the Hope Cabin outhouse is by continuing past the Proenneke woodshed 25 feet and turning left on the foot trail and proceeding about 200 yards to the outhouse. Please stay on the established trails.

Camping at this historic site is prohibited, for the protection of the site environment and preservation of the wilderness values that Dick cherished. Camping is permitted at the Hope Creek campground, located about 300 yards south of the Proenneke Site, on the south side of Hope Creek.

More Information

Proenneke's first years' journals were edited by the late Sam Keith into the best selling Alaska classic *One Man's Wilderness: An Alaskan Odyssey*, recently reprinted by Alaska Northwest Books (1999). A video entitled "Alone In the Wilderness" uses Dick's own footage and documents the construction of his log cabin and his lifestyle at Twin Lakes. It is available from Bob Swerer Productions, Fort Collins, Colorado at 1-800-737-0239. For more information, contact park historian John Branson at 907/781-2111.



Dick Proenneke's wilderness philosophy included building his cabin using only hand tools. (Photo from the Richard Proenneke collection)