

The Log Cabin Building

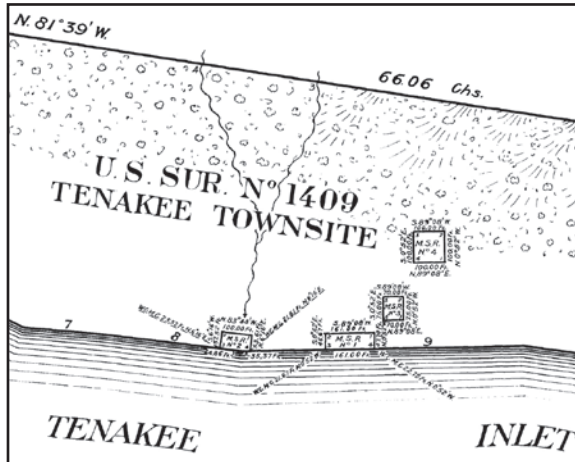
Built along a boardwalk in the early 1900s, the Blue Moon Cafe operated at the heart of Tenakee Springs and remained there for over 100 years. While neither the Log Cabin Cafe nor the Florescas remain in Tenakee – the original log cabin site has a fascinating history.



The Tenakee boardwalk. Circa 1915. Photo: O'Toole Collection.



Main St. Tenakee Springs. Circa 1900. Photo: John M. Blankenburg



U.S. Survey Plat of Tenakee Springs and its Mineral Springs, September 1922.

The Log Cabin Building Today

In the summer of 2019, residents in Tenakee Springs began work to convert the historic Blue Moon Cafe into a heated greenhouse. The greenhouse project is spearheaded by Kevin Allred and over 120 townspeople in Tenakee volunteered to give new life to the cabin which held a cafe for over 100 years.



Blue Moon Cafe, 2018. Photo: BLM



New Moon Cafe and Greenhouse, 2023. Photo: Kevin Allred



Preservation and The National Register of Historic Places

The Blue Moon Cafe cabin has been a historic part of the Tenakee Springs community for over 100 years. The federal government has managed the Tenakee Mineral Springs Reserves (U.S. Survey 1409, M.S.R. Nos. 1 to 4), since the creation of the town. However this unique building itself has always been privately owned. The log cabin cafe was determined to be eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. Its eligibility was based on the building's age as well as its role in the settlement and development of Tenakee Springs. Although the original building is gone, the Blue Moon Cafe's site serves a new function now, as a greenhouse. It is also a public gathering space—much as it has always been.

Questions? Contact us:

Bureau of Land Management

Glennallen Field Office

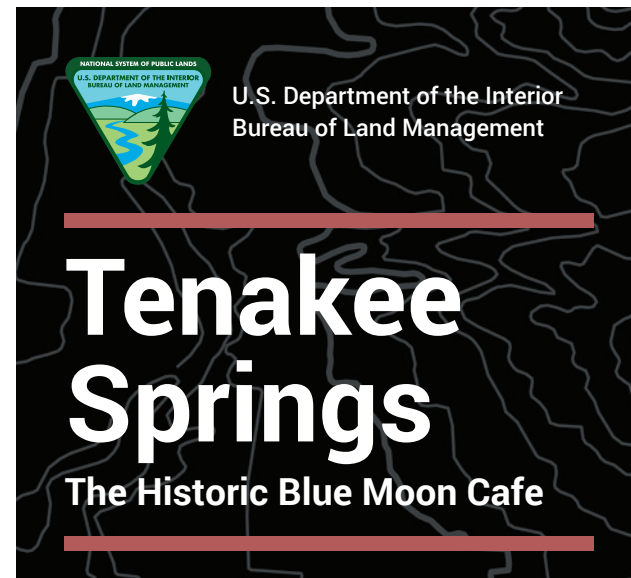
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Cover photo: Blue Moon Cafe Sign in 2018. BLM



The Blue Moon Cafe: a Fascinating History



Bathhouse. Pre-1920s. Photo: O'Toole Collection.

In the early 1900s, a small log cabin was built next to the famous hot springs fed bathhouse in the remote Southeast Alaska town of Tenakee Springs, on Chickagof Island. By 1916 the log cabin housed a hand laundry, using the same hot spring water.

In 1919, a newly arrived Japanese entrepreneur, Harry Dorkee, outfitted it into the "Log Cabin Cafe" while he lived in the attic. In the beginning, Harry's clients were mainly loggers and cannery workers.

Harry, or Hezo Dorkee, was born on Kyushu Island, Japan in 1879. He arrived in the US in 1901 and worked in Cordova, Alaska as a hotel porter before arriving in Tenakee Springs. Harry ran the Log Cabin Cafe until the spring of 1942, when he was sent by US military officials to the Japanese Internment Assembly Center at Puyallup, Washington, and then on to the Minidoku Internment Camp in southern Idaho on August 30, 1942. This camp held over 9,000 Americans of Japanese descent from 1942 to 1945.

It's unclear if Harry ever owned or just rented the Log Cabin Cafe, but after his internment, the cafe was sold to Teresa Grossman by Caroline Hurley in March 1943.

On May 8th of 1943, a Saturday, a fire at the Log Cabin Cafe at West 104 Tenakee Boulevard broke out in the early evening. The Tenakee Times newspaper reported at the time that although it was "well past midnight, everyone in Tenakee piled out of bed and set to work in their pajamas." In two and half minutes the fire truck had dashed across town to the burning building, and the fire was extinguished with only one portable pump and a bucket brigade from salt water! Reportedly, the fire originated in the boiler room. Little damage was done and was limited to the underside of the floor beneath the stove.

Blue Moon Cafe

In May of 1945, Speedy Floresca, an enterprising bar and restaurant owner from California, purchased the Log Cabin Cafe for \$620 and promptly changed the name to "**Blue Moon Cafe**".



Speedy Floresca outside of The Blue Moon Cafe. Date unknown. Photo: O'Toole Collection.



Rosie Floresca in front of the Blue Moon Cafe, 1958. Photo: O'Toole Collection.

Sometime in the early 1950s, Speedy had a chance encounter with 18 year old Rosie Lumba who had just arrived from the Philippines on her first visit to Alaska.

Speedy and Rosie were married on November 3, 1955 and just five days later the pair flew out to the remote Tenakee Springs where they would run the **Blue Moon Cafe** together for the next 23 years.

"To honor his wife's birthday, Speedy gave a dinner party in his Blue Moon Cafe last Saturday evening. The affair was attended by almost everyone in town and the excellent meal was enjoyed by all."

Tenakee Times Newspaper, 1956.

Residents recall that "no one knows why the [name] '**Blue Moon Cafe**' was chosen, but Rosie recalls that Speedy sang the song 'Blue Moon' often—" despite that fact, most came to know the establishment simply as "**Rosie's**".

The Menu



Tenakee Times Newspaper, August 25, 1956—Page 2. Advertisement for the Labor Day Special at the Blue Moon Cafe. Special includes Turkey Dinner, pork chops and rib steak. Photo: O'Toole Collection.

"The Blue Moon Cafe serves good Beer-Wine and Grub!"

Rosie and Speedy always served the same menu— steak, hamburgers, potatoes —with the occasional special, which Rosie recalls would sell for \$3.50 a plate.

Rosie frequently featured South-East Asian and Filipino cuisine—usually chop suey or salmon dishes—in addition to the standard fisherman's fare of steak and potatoes.

In November of 1946, an ad ran in the Tenakee Weekly boasting, "**Steaks at their Best!**"

The Cafe was best known for their hamburgers (55 cents), beer (55 cents), and soft drinks (20 cents). The Blue Moon Cafe ordered most of their goods from Juneau, and later the monthly Seattle-bound barge. Rosie recalled, "All we had to haul our goods with were two 800 pounds carts. It was hard work."

In 1978, Speedy Floresca died, leaving Rosie to run the Cafe on her own. Eileen Aldrich remembers that Rosie was extremely busy during the following years, and worked nearly 24-hours each day in the cafe—cooking twenty hamburgers and going through ten to fourteen cases of beer each day. Rose ran the Cafe on her own for another 39 years until her retirement from Tenakee Springs in 2017.