Olmstead Place State Park

Olmstead Place State Park, located four miles east of Ellensburg, is a charming and rustic 217-acre day-use park that celebrates the legacy of the family farm. Open year round, the park's pastoral landscape provides an escape from the hustle and bustle of modern-day life and a rare opportunity to experience a historic pioneer homestead, where part of the work is still accomplished with some of the park's collection of antique implements. Olmstead Place also offers public tours and is perfect for school field trips. The park gives kids an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and learn about rural life. The original 160-acre homestead is a heritage area and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The park's goal is to bring the family farm back to life by allowing visitors to experience a pioneer homestead. The map below illustrates the heritage area, where many historic buildings still stand, complete with original furnishings. As you wander across the park, try to imagine what it was like arriving and settling in the Kittitas Valley in 1875. Try, if for only a moment, to perceive the rewards our ancestors cherished and the hardships they endured.

Olmstead Place State Park
921 N. Ferguson Road
Ellensburg, WA 98926
(509) 925-1943

Park hours:
April 1 - Sept. 30, 6:30 a.m. to dusk
Oct. 1 - March 31, 8 a.m. to dusk
The Seaton Cabin School House story
-as remembered by Clareta Olmstead Smith

In the long ago days, more than 100 years ago, this little cabin stood in a meadow of native grasses in the Kittitas Valley. The cabin was constructed by S.T. Sterling as his first home and was originally located on his homestead, where it stood for many years. The cabin served as the home for several families who owned the land at various times.

Like all pioneer homes, it faced south in order to take advantage of the low south-facing winter sun. It did not have a wood floor or a ceiling; it only had a hard-packed earth floor and shingled roof.

In 1876, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Terry lived in the cabin. The Terrys were graduates of a teacher’s college in Pennsylvania. Mrs. Terry realized the value of an education and started a private school in the small cabin. In her school, Mrs. Terry taught 10 children from the Olmstead, Grewell, Grimm and McDonald families. Each family paid $1 per child for three months of education. The school had few books — one speller, one reader and a dictionary, which was donated by Samuel Olmstead. Each child had a pencil and a tablet, made from brown wrapping paper. On warm spring days, the children ate their lunches in the schoolyard. Their tin lunch pails were normally filled with everyday foods — fried sage hen, roast beef or ham sandwiches; pink radishes, leaf lettuce or green onion; and dried apple or wild berry pie for dessert.

As time drifted on, the old cabin was no longer lived in and was used for the storage of hay, sacks of grain and various farming tools. In 1949, the farm was sold, and the owner wanted to clear his land and the cabin stood in the way. He intended to use the logs from the cabin for firewood. Upon hearing of the cabin’s plight, Mrs. Ruth Wallace Seaton requested that her husband, James Seaton, move the cabin to their property. It was relocated onto the north side of the Vantage road where it stood for many years.

Seaton cabin was donated to the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission by the Seaton family. It was dismantled and in 1979 was erected on Olmstead Place State Park.

Visitors to Seaton Cabin School House are encouraged to tour the other areas of Olmstead Place State Park. The land was originally homesteaded by Samuel Olmstead and his granddaughters, Leta Mae and Clareta Smith, who generously donated the family farm and buildings to the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

The park typifies a turn-of-the-century Kittitas Valley farm and includes the original homestead cabin and historic farm equipment.