



Heroes. Heritage. Renewal.

**Exerpts from the collection
"When the Mountains Roared"**

Stories of the 1910 Fires

The Organization of the National Forests (1910)

By 1910 the organization of the National Forests in Region One was pretty well shaken down under the direction of the Forest Service, following the transfer from the Department of the Interior in 1905.

The first Forest Reserves in the Region date back to February 22, 1897. These included the old Lewis and Clark, which took in most of what is now the Flathead and the western section of the present Lewis & Clark and Glacier National Park. The old Bitterroot Reserve, created February 22, 1897, included most of the country from the Lolo Trail south to the Salmon River and a strip in Montana on the west side of the Bitterroot. The Priest River part of the Kaniksu was set up in 1898. The next oldest Forests in the Region are the Elkhorn, now the Helena, the Absaroka, the Little Belt, now in the Lewis & Clark, the Kootenai, and the Madison, which were withdrawn from 1900 to 1902. Most of the other Forests in the Region were established 1905 to 1906, including the Lolo, Cabinet, Pend Oreille, Coeur d' Alene and St. Joe.

Some sort of primitive fire control had been established under the General Land Office on the old Lewis & Clark, Bitterroot and Priest River Forest Reserves. The country was partly explored and a few t rails built, but not a great deal had been accomplished up to the general reorganization of the older units, and a new organization of the new Forests by the Forest Service in 1905 to 1907.

In 1908 the present regional organization was set up with W.B. Greeley as District Forester and F.A. Silcox as Assistant. By 1910 the organization had pretty well settled down to approximately its present form. At that time, George N. Ring was Supervisor of the Nezperce; Major F.A. Fenn had the Clearwater, which then and what was subsequently the Selway Forest. W.G. Weigle was Supervisor of the Coeur d' Alene, which included most of the present St. Joe. W.N. Miller had the Kaniksu, and J.E. Barton the Pend Oreille. In Western Montana the Supervisors were as follows:

Kootenai	Dorr Skeels
Blackfeet	F.N. Haines
Flathead	Page S. Bunker
Cabinet	Ralph H. Bushnell
Lolo	Elers Koch
Bitterroot	W.W. White
Missoula	D.G. Kinney

The five or six years previous to 1910 had all been fairly favorable fire years, so that the organization on many of t he Forests had relatively little experience in large-scale fire-fighting. An exception to this were the Lolo and Coeur d' Alene Forests. The year 1908 was a fairly dry year, and the C.M. & St. P. Railway was just finishing construction through these forests, and in the course of right-a-way clearing operations scattered fire pretty well all along the line, so that these forests went through a rather intensive training period and the personnel learned to handle large crews on fires. The effect of this training was very apparent in 1910.