



Heroes. Heritage. Renewal.

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

Stories of the 1910 Fires

AFTER-EFFECTS OF THE FIRE

The burning of three million acres of timber and young growth, including some of the most valuable white pine stands, was a staggering blow to the National Forests of the Region. The direct loss of that much timber and young growth was not the only loss. It is true that fire breeds fire, and the 1910 fire started a vicious circle which has greatly increased the difficulty of protection since 1910. The burned areas, with heavy snags and dead timber have proved the breeding places of innumerable fire which have burned additional areas and so created new hazards. It is not at all impossible that the burned area since 1910 has been twice as great as would have happened if the 1910 fire had not occurred.



There are not adequate figures on the percentage of the 1910 fire area which has subsequently reburned, but it is probably at least 30 to 40 percent. The heavy dead timber areas have been a continual hazard, and only in the past few years has the hazard started on the down grade, due to falling of snags and growing up of reproduction.

The greater part of the single 1910 burns reproduced, but when they have reburned subsequently, large areas have been taken by brush, particularly in the Clearwater region. Also, many areas which formerly carried white pine or larch and fire have now come into almost pure lodgepole pine stands. This is particularly true of the upper St. Joe and upper St. Regis country.

Immediately following the 1910 fire, there was serious erosion in many places. The fall rains brought down a vast amount of sheet erosion and many steep gullies were scoured out to bedrock. Such streams as the St. Regis River showed the effect of the 1910 burn for many years by irregularity of flow and severe washing and scouring of banks. Such steep canyons as the North Fork of the Clearwater and the Lochsa River have been badly denuded of soil, leaving great expanses of bare granite rock.

Nature is gradually healing the wounds of the fire by tree reproduction or brush, but it will be more than a century before pre-fire conditions are recovered.

Another important influence of the 1910 fire was the fostering of a serious bark-beetle epidemic. Nearly all the scorched trees were immediately attacked by bark beetles, and as a result, an infestation was built up which in 1914 invaded green timber and resulted in the lost of many million feet of white pine.

Excerpt from the collection of "When The Mountains Roared", (page 48-49) USDA Forest Service