



## **THE MILWAUKEE RAILROAD**

At the time of the great fire, the C.M. & St. P. Railroad had just been opened through the St. Joe territory. While trains were running, the many high timber bridges had not yet been filled, and there was much construction work still underway. The whole twenty-five miles of railroad through the rugged country between Avery and the Taft Tunnel was swept by a consuming blast of fire so hot that pick handles lying in the open beside the track were utterly consumed. Considering the number of people in this section and the severity of the fire, it is almost miraculous that no lives were lost along the railroad. Great credit is due C. H. Marshall, superintendent, and W. R. Lanning, chief carpenter, of the Missoula division. Under direction of these men the town of Avery was evacuated by special train. Between Avery and the Taft Tunnel there were probably 1,000 people, mainly railway workers and their wives and children. These were picked up by work trains at the last moment, with bridges blazing, and at imminent danger to the trainmen's lives. Trains were run into tunnels and held there while the fire swept by, consuming everything up to the tunnel portals. Sixteen bridges, from 120 to 775 feet in length, were burned in this section.

*Excerpt from the collection of "When The Mountains Roared", (page21-22) USDA Forest Service*