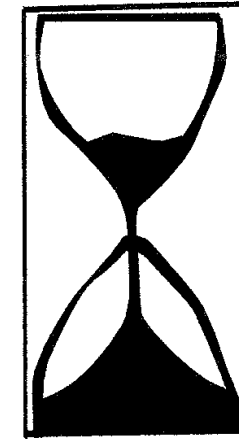
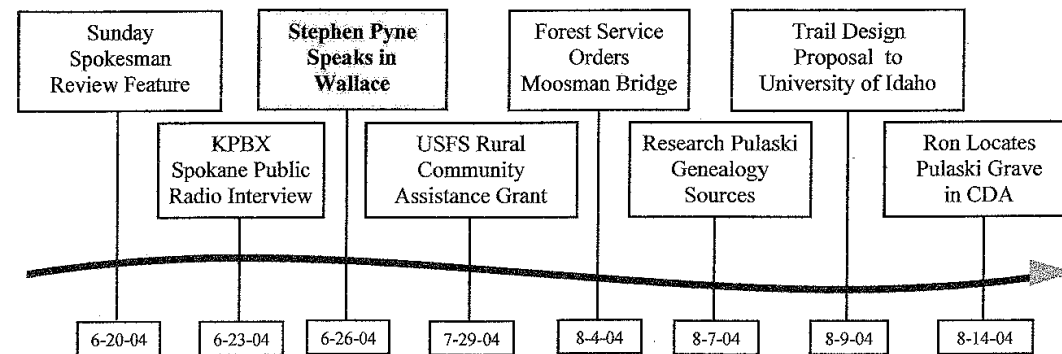
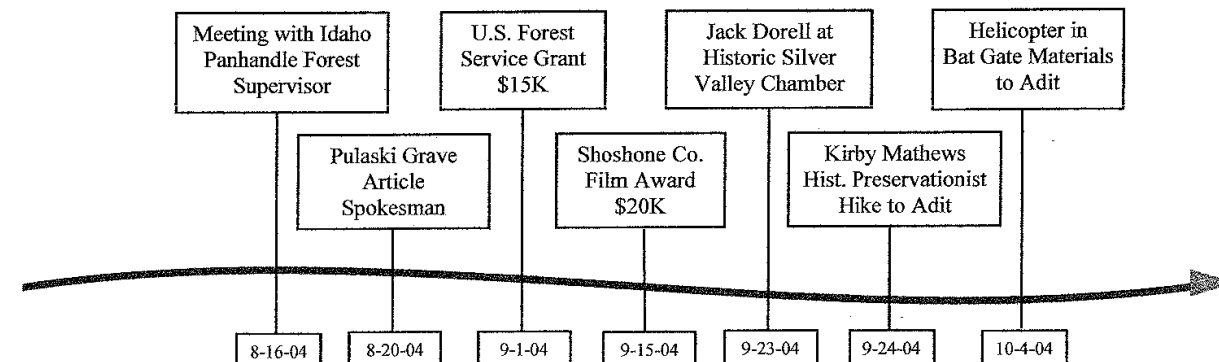


## Pulaski Project Accomplishments & Activities Timeline

**June - December 2004**



## and News & Media Coverage of the Great Fire of 1910



# SHOSHONE NEWS-PRESS

## Pulaski project moving at good pace



— Courtesy of Continental Bridge

A bridge similar to this one has been purchased for the Pulaski trailhead and is expected to be placed just off the Moon Pass Road.

By DON SAUER  
Staff writer

WALLACE — A spirit of cooperation between the U.S. Forest Service and a group working to restore the Pulaski Trail has an ongoing project to improve the trail on course and moving ahead at a brisk pace.

According to Ron Roizen, a member of the Pulaski Trail Project organization, a second meeting with USFS officials was held May 6 and the feeling at the meeting was "upbeat" and there was "a strong sense

See PULASKI, Page 3

### PULASKI

Continued from Page 1

of mutual cooperation."

Jack Dorrell, who is the USFS project director for the Pulaski Trail, said the work is moving along at a good pace and could be completed by the end of the summer.

Dorrell also reported that while the Forest Service's view that funding for the project be dedicated strictly to the Pulaski, should there be a bad fire season, funding could be "borrowed" from the project and replaced next year.

While the main work on the trail would continue, Roizen said the rerouting of funding for firefighting could slow the development of trail sign designs.

Roizen said a bridge for the trailhead crossing has been

selected and will be placed just off the Moon Pass Road.

Work on the design of the trail is ongoing, Roizen said, adding that a few of the design elements which are beginning to emerge will be determined by the natural characteristics of the site.

He also said that there is ongoing discussion as to whether the front of the Pulaski Tunnel, which is also known as the Nicholson Mine adit, should be restored to its appearance before or after the 1910 fire.

When signage is completed for the trail, Roizen said it is likely many of the signs will feature stories of the 1919 fire. He added that USFS Archeologist Carl is researching information for the signs.

Roizen said there is also the possibility an observation deck may be built across the West Fork of Placer Creek which will overlook the mine adit.

## Stories from the Pulaski Project

### The Oscar Weigart Mystery

By RON ROIZEN and JIM SEE  
Special to the News-Press

There are many forgotten or unfinished stories, and loose ends, associated with the Big Blowup that scorched North Idaho and Montana in August of 1910.

This is one. A young man named Oscar Weigart was one of more than 80 firefighters who perished in the Great 1910 Fire.

Weigart died in the Setser Creek fire, near Avery.

Weigart did not, however, die by burning, suffocation, or any of the other direct effects of fire.

According to the Forest Service's account, Weigart committed suicide — specifically, by shooting himself twice in the chest — when he became separated from his firefighting crew and panicked at the oncoming blaze.

But Oscar Weigart's mother, Mrs. Antoine Weigart, vigorously disputed the Forest Service's account. She claimed instead that her son had been shot by Forest Service personnel "because he flinched in the face of danger."

Forest Supervisor W.G. Weigle called Mrs. Weigart's claim "absolute madness" and was quoted as asserting: "I don't see that there is the least chance in the world for her to prove anything that is charged."

Mrs. Weigart, on the other hand, was equally resolute. She declared that "a bundle of affidavits" supported her claim.

A November 26, 1910, article in The Wallace Times (available on microfilm at the Wallace Public Library) colors in some of the elements of Mrs. Weigart's angry and anguished charge.

"According to Mrs. Weigert's [sic] own statement, ever since the death of her son she has been haunted by a strong conviction that the young man did not meet death by an act of his own. So strongly had this feeling prevailed that two weeks ago she called upon some of the county officials and explained her conviction; the result being that a week ago last Monday the body of Oscar Weigert [sic] was exhumed and examined by Coroner Kendrick, Dr. E. F. Pease and Dr. J. J. Flynn.

"The examination showed that two .30-caliber bullets had entered the body in the region of the heart, one, believed to have been the first, striking slightly higher and to the side of the heart, coursing somewhat downward and striking directly against the fifth rib, which was shattered. The bone deflected the ball which found final lodgement in the left lung. The second bullet struck just above the heart, passing through the main artery and then finding a resting place in the tissues of the back, immediately opposite the point where it entered the body.

"When questioned concerning the position of the wounds and the course of the bullets, Dr. Pease declared that in his opinion Weigert did not commit suicide. He said that it was practically impossible for a self-murderer to hold a pistol in such a position that the projectile could pass straight through the body. The bullet which shattered the rib might have been fired by Weigert [sic], but were that a fact, the shock would have produced a paralysis which would have ren-

dered the wounded man utterly unable to repeat the shot. The bullet which severed the artery produced instant death.

"Asked for his opinion regarding the manner of Weigert's death, Coroner W. D. Kendrick said there was not even a small chance that the young man killed himself, but believed that the shots which ended his life were fired by another person."

The Wallace Times quoted another newspaper's account as follows:

"Mrs. Weigart claims it was the practice of the forestry officials to enforce obedience during stress of great fires at point of the pistol and Weigart was shot down when he showed cowardice."

The contested story of Oscar Weigart's unfortunate death throws new historical light on Ranger Ed Pulaski's famous rescue of most of his crew in the Nicholson mine (AKA "Pulaski Tunnel").

Pulaski drew his pistol to keep his men in the mine.

Mrs. Weigart's claim suggests that fire crews were not entirely unfamiliar with stern discipline — even the threat of deadly force — especially in the battle-like conditions of a raging fire.

It follows that when Pulaski drew his revolver, his men may have regarded the act as no mere theatrical gesture.

On the other hand, if Oscar Weigart actually did shoot himself with his own pistol — incidentally, a pistol was included among his post-mortem effects — then it follows that other frontline firefighters may also have carried sidearms.

And in that case, when Pulaski drew his pistol he might not have been entirely sure that someone in his 45-

man crew wasn't going to draw another pistol in reply.

Who can say if this possibility crossed the 40-year-old ranger's mind in the excitement and terror of the situation?

It is another of the historical loose ends in the complex drama that was the Great 1910 Fire.

Thanks are due to librarian Bernie Ludwig, at the Wallace Public Library, for her generous help.

SUNDAY

JUNE 20, 2004



Partly cloudy

High approaching 80  
See A2



IN LIFE, F1

# TRIBUTE TO DAD

*A toast to those who dare to be fathers*



SPORTS, C1

## Leading man

Goosen takes lead in U.S. Open

BUSINESS, D1

## Producing home-grown grain

Inland Northwest wheat farmers unite to keep their product in local stores

# THE *Idaho* SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

AN EDITION OF THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

*Bringing history back to light*

## A fire's line of legacies

*Residents work to preserve mine shaft where  
1910 crew survived still-influential blaze*

By James Hagengruber / Staff writer

**W**ALLACE — No markers or monuments grace the mine shaft.

Not even crosses for the men who died inside the tunnel of rock on that terrible, fiery night 94 summers ago.

Until recently, the steep trail leading to the Nicholson Adit up Placer Creek's west fork was tangled by brush and deadfalls. The U.S. Forest Service had given up trying to maintain the path, even though it led to a place considered sacred by many within the agency and the larger firefighting community.

The narrow shaft is where Ranger Ed Pulaski and 45 firefighters found

refuge from the "Big Blowup" of August 1910. Although five died in the tunnel, some consider it the birthplace of the nation's troubled firefighting policy — a generation of foresters were imprinted with the tale and vowed that never again would such an incident happen.

Several residents from nearby Wallace have been working to preserve the tunnel and build a

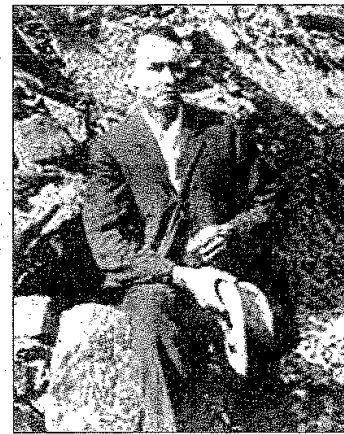


Photo courtesy of the Pulaski Project

**Ed Pulaski poses in front of the mine where he led his crew to take cover.**

wildfire education center, a place where a wiser wildfire policy can be shaped to help prevent a repeat of

history, said Ron Roizen, one of the leaders of the so-called Pulaski Project.

"Our philosophy is, if the Pulaski story and the 1910 fires got us into this, maybe the Pulaski story can get us out of it," Roizen said. "We have to somehow emancipate ourselves."

Members of the Pulaski Project worked with Idaho Republican Sen. Larry Craig to secure \$300,000 in funding from Congress to rebuild the trail to the Nicholson Adit. The Forest Service expects to begin construction later this summer on a two-mile interpretive trail, ending at an overlook above the tunnel. The trail is now lined with orange surveyors' stakes. It is expected to be finished by the end of next summer, said Jack Dorrell, who is leading the construction effort for the Forest Service. Because of safety concerns, the mine shaft will be blocked with

Continued: Fire/A9



# Fire: Tool named for him still an essential

Continued from A1

steel bars.

Pulaski probably would have scoffed at so much money for such a short trail. In 1908, after he was appointed as the area's ranger, he was given a federal allotment of \$1,000 to carve 26 miles of trail. The famously taciturn ranger probably also would have balked at the retelling of the story. He kept silent about it, except for submitting an essay on his experience to a writing contest 13 years after the fire. Pulaski used the \$500 prize money to pay for an operation for his fire-damaged eyes.

Much of Pulaski's fame came not from the fire, but from a tool he invented that bears his name. The combination ax and hoe remains a fundamental tool for wildland firefighters.

Some of the brush and ferns have been cleared away in recent weeks from the entrance to the Nicholson Adit. Inside, the 70-foot-long tunnel is like any other cave: cold, dark and damp. Water drips from cracks and collects in pools along the boulder-strewn floor. In 1910, Pulaski scooped water from the pools with his hat to pour on the burning timbers at the entryway. Some believe the dead firefighters might have drowned in the shallow pools after they passed out from the hot gases and lack of oxygen.

Forest Service archaeologist Carl Ritchie extensively explored the mine shaft in the early 1980s in his successful quest to have the site placed on the National Register of Historic Places. "There's nothing in there that says, 'Pulaski was here,'" Ritchie recalled. "Just old mining equipment and the remnants of an old dynamite box."

Apart from a few charred stumps along the trail, there are few obvious signs of the fires that tore through the area. The Big Blowup, as it's known, happened during the afternoon of Aug. 20, 1910, when gale-force winds tore through the forest, causing hundreds of small fires to merge. Pulaski was on his way up the west fork of Placer

Creek with a pack string to resupply a firefighting crew when the wind hit. Pulaski eventually rounded up 45 men. The wind and fire swept through the mountains "with the

roar of a thousand freight trains," Pulaski later wrote. "Many thought it really was the end of the world."

Old-growth white pines and cedars exploded from the heat. Burning logs rolled down the steep hillsides. The smoke was thick enough in Billings, 400 miles to the east, that it blocked the sun. Entire towns across the border in Montana were being overtaken by flames. A third of Wallace burned.

Pulaski led his men to an old mine shaft he knew. As the firefighters fled the advancing flames, they were joined by a bear also running out of the forest.

The crew and two horses squeezed into the tunnel. One man panicked and tried to run for the entrance. Pulaski drew his revolver and said, according to numerous accounts, "The first man who tries to leave this tunnel I will shoot."

Pulaski then attempted to cover the entry with wet stock blankets. "The men were in a panic of fear, some crying, some praying," according to Pulaski's account.

"Many of them soon became unconscious from the terrible heat, smoke and fire gas. The wet blankets actually caught fire and I had to replace them with the others soaked in water. But I too finally sank down unconscious. I do not know how long I was in this condition, but it must have been for hours. I remember hearing a man say, 'Come outside boys, the boss is dead.' I replied, 'Like hell he is.'"

It was dawn. The men dragged themselves to the creek, about 10 feet from the tunnel entrance, but found the stream filled with ashes and too warm to drink, Pulaski wrote. The horses were alive but needed to be shot. Five members of the crew never awakened. Another could not be found until days later — search crews had repeatedly passed his charred body, but had mistaken it for a stump. Pulaski had been blinded and badly burned.

The Big Blowup killed 85 people; many were firefighters. Three million acres with 8 billion board feet of timber burned.

Pulaski remained the ranger in Wallace until his retirement in 1930. Apart from hounding Congress for a proper monument for the fallen firefighters, Pulaski rarely spoke of the fire, said Gerald Williams, national historian for the Forest Service. Many of the firefighters were buried in Wallace or St. Maries, Idaho.

"For years he was the only person who regularly tended the graves of the firefighters," Williams said, speaking from his office in Washington, D.C.

## COMING UP

### Author to speak

Author Stephen Pyne will be in Wallace next Saturday to discuss Ranger Ed Pulaski and the 1910 Big Blowup. His talk is free and begins at 7:30 p.m. The lecture is part of the city's Theodore Roosevelt history celebration, which marks the 1903 visit to Wallace by the president.

Other talks include a discussion at 5:30 p.m. Friday on the Murray Gold Rush and a 7 p.m. lecture by Bethine Church, wife of the late four-term Idaho senator Frank Church and author of the recent memoir "A Lifelong Affair: My Passion for People and Politics." The lectures will be held at the Wallace Elks Club, 419 Cedar St.

For the Forest Service, the fires would not soon fade from the spotlight, Williams said. The agency had only been founded in 1905.

"It all of a sudden made stopping fire one of the big goals of the agency, which it remains today," Williams said. "In that sense, it was a turning point."

Before the Big Blowup, top officials in the Taft administration had been debating the best way to deal with fires in vast tracts of Western forest, said Stephen Pyne, a professor at Arizona State University and the nation's foremost fire historian. Pyne's 2001 book, "Year of the Fires: The Story of the Great Fires of 1910," explored how the fires shaped national policy for years to come.

Taft's Interior secretary believed that some wildfires should be allowed to burn. The Forest Service chief, Gifford Pinchot, had another view. He called wildfire a "dragon" that needed to be tamed. "Like the question of slavery, the question of forest fires may be shelved for some time at an enormous cost in the end. But sooner or later it must be met," Pinchot wrote.

The debate split the Taft administration. "Whether to light fires or fight fires becomes part of the political scene," Pyne said.

There was little debate in the aftermath of the Big Blowup. For the Forest Service, the event became a "Valley Forge," Pyne said. The only good fire was a dead fire.

"History is the result of lots of things happening. It's very rare you can point to one person, one moment or one event, but I think the 1910 fires really were a catalyst. It affected how fire was managed all

over the country and continues today," Pyne said, speaking from his home in Arizona.

Every Forest Service chief through 1939 served on the lines of the Big Blowup, Pyne said. "They were determined it would never happen again."

Agency attitudes toward fire began changing in the 1960s, but a fierce debate continues today over fire's place in the forests of the West.

Pulaski's home would be a fitting site for a national wildfire education center, said Roizen, with the Pulaski

Project. The group hopes to raise enough money — \$15 million is the high-end goal — to open the center by 2010. "It's truly a sliding-scale proposition," Roizen said. "We could end up with a kiosk at a flat area at the end of the trail."

Ideally, the center would serve as a showcase for wildfire technologies and a place where Forest Service officials, timber company representatives and environmental groups could meet to help shape a new fire policy, said Jim See, a Wallace resident and founder of the Pulaski Project. "We would love to

plop ourselves right in the middle of the different sides and try to enhance communication. Our feeling right now is they really talk past each other."

Although the Forest Service already has extensive wildfire research facilities in nearby Missoula, "they don't have Pulaski," Roizen said.

"Our theory is if you build it they will come," he said. "Particularly with people who have any connection with wildfire fighting, this story is sacred. People will come and do a kind of pilgrimage."



THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 2004

# SHOSHONE NEWS-PRESS

Visit us online at [www.shoshonenewspress.com](http://www.shoshonenewspress.com)

50 CENTS

## UP FRONT

Best of luck to all Silver Valley athletes competing in Hoopfest and the Ironman!

6 THE NEWS-PRESS Thursday, June 24, 2004

## ROOSEVELT

Continued from Page 1

will be speaking. Church's memoir is based on her life with her husband, the late four-term Idaho Senator Frank Church and her political family. Church will discuss her experiences in Washington, D.C., and Idaho politics. There will be a book signing to follow.

On Saturday, at 7:30 p.m. upstairs in the Wallace Elks Club, Professor Stephen Pyne will lecture on U.S. Forest Service ranger Edward C. Pulaski and the Great 1910 fire. Professor Pyne is the nation's leading authority on the cultural and natural histories of wildfire. He has authored numerous books and essays, including "The Year of Fires: The Story of the Great Fires of 1910" which focuses on the enduring impact on the Forest Service after the 1910 fire and the Pulaski crew's heroic rescue.

The Big Blowup burned

the eastern one-third of the City of Wallace to the ground. Now, just south of Wallace, the Forest Service is beginning work to restore the trail and the mine used by ranger Ed Pulaski and his crew to escape the 1910 fire. To this day the 1910 conflagration remains the worst wildland fire in U.S. history.

Also on Saturday, at 1 p.m., Dr. Rodney Frey, Professor of American Indian Studies and Anthropology at the University of Idaho, will speak on American Indian Studies at the Wallace District Arts Center, at 612 Bank St. Dennis Colson, a UI Law Professor, will speak at 4 p.m. at the Wallace District Arts Center on "Judge William Clagett."

The first event, held last year, marked the 100th anniversary of Roosevelt's 1903 visit to Wallace. This event is being co-sponsored by the Idaho Humanities Council, the Magnuson Family Foundation, the Northern Pacific Depot Foundation and the Wallace District Mining Museum.

# A president's visit remembered

### Roosevelt local history celebration brings speakers and authors to Wallace

By CAROL ROBERTS  
Staff writer

WALLACE — Because of the large amount of interest in the history of the Silver Valley, the Second Annual Theodore Roosevelt Commemoration Days will be held the last weekend in June.

The event will be held on Friday, June 25, and Saturday, June 26, and will include presentations from five different speakers on a variety of topics. Admission is free to all of the events.

"We received a lot of positive response from last year's event, and everyone enjoyed it and mentioned they would like us to do it again," said Dennis O'Brien of the Northern Pacific Depot Foundation, one of the sponsors of the event.

O'Brien also said that

because the Forest Service is currently working on the trail to the Pulaski Trail, there is a lot of interest in this subject, and the 1910 fire will be the topic of one of the presentations.

The presentations begin on Friday at 4 p.m. with a 40-minute film produced by the Idaho Mining Association called "Minerals: Idaho's Hidden Resource", shown at the Wallace Civic Auditorium, 412 River St. At 5:30 p.m. at the Wallace Elks Roundup Room at 419 Cedar St., Tony and Suzanne Bamonte will present "Slide Show: The Murray Gold Belt — The Great Gold Strike in the Coeur d'Alenes."

That evening at 7 p.m. in the same room, Bethine Church, author of "A Lifelong Affair: My Passion for People and Politics"

See ROOSEVELT, Page 6



—Photo courtesy NORTHERN PACIFIC DEPOT FOUNDATION

President Theodore Roosevelt is welcomed into Wallace in May 1903 during a very festive celebration.

# Quake, Flood, and Fire -- Few natural disasters change history's course



**Prof. Stephen J. Pyne's lecture on the Great 1910 Fire closes 2nd Annual Theodore Roosevelt Commemoration Days event in Wallace**

Natural disasters bring hardship and loss to human communities.

Yet very, very few natural disasters actually change the course of human history.

In 1755, a great earthquake struck Lisbon. The 1700s were the Age of Enlightenment, and Enlightenment philosophers from around Europe struggled to redefine the Lisbon quake in naturalistic rather than supernaturalistic terms. Voltaire's *Candide* survives as the best remembered discourse on the great quake's philosophical interpretation. For more, see T.D. Kendrick's book, *The Lisbon Earthquake* (1955).

In 1927, a great flood overwhelmed the Mississippi River basin. The flood's devastating effects lead to the passage of the federal Flood Control Act on May 15, 1928. The entire levee system along the reach of the Mississippi River was decimated. Among other long-term social impacts, the federal government's river restoration and new construction efforts helped launch Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover into the White House in the 1928 presidential election. For more, see John M. Barry's book, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (1997).

In 1910, a great fire scorched North Idaho and Western Montana. Twenty-eight firefighters perished in the "Lost Crew" near Avery; 18 perished in Hollingshead's crew at Dittman's cabin; 10 in Bell's crew (plus three homesteaders); Ranger Ed Pulaski managed to save all but six of his 45-man crew in the Nicholson mine up the West Fork of Placer Creek. In all, 86 or more lives were lost battling the "Big Blowup." Stephen J. Pyne's book, *Year of the Fires: The Story of the Great Fires of 1910* (2001), according to one review, made a "convincing case that the fires of 1910...constitute a seminal moment in U.S. history."

The Idaho Humanities Council and the Magnuson Family Foundation, along with the Northern Pacific Depot Foundation, the Wallace District Mining Museum, and the Pulaski Project have the honor to invite the Silver Valley community to a lecture on the Big Blowup by professor and author Stephen J. Pyne.

The lecture will be presented this evening, Saturday, June 26th, 7:30pm at the Elks Temple, 419 Cedar St., in Wallace.



FRIDAY  
AUGUST 20, 2004



Isolated storms  
High near 90/AZ

# TRIPLE U.S. swimmers take three golds PLAY



ATHENS 2004  SPORTS | C1, C4-5

- ◆ Peirsol stands tall after roller-coaster rulings
- ◆ Phelps adds fourth title; Beard wins her first

## Unhappy trails

Today's job market takes  
competition to the extreme

SEVEN SECTION

# THE Idaho SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

AN EDITION OF THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

8-20-04

## Pulaski Project finds remains of namesake

Hero of 1910 fire, inventor  
of popular tool rests in CdA

By James Hagengruber  
Staff writer

A minor mystery of North Idaho history was cleared up recently when the grave of firefighting folk hero Ed Pulaski was traced to a cemetery plot in Coeur d'Alene.

Pulaski was an early-day ranger for the U.S. Forest Service and is famous for helping to save dozens of firefighters near Wallace during a massive wildfire 94 summers ago today. He also invented a firefighting tool that bears his name and remains popular.

Locating his grave doesn't compare with finding the Dead Sea Scrolls or a Lewis and Clark campsite — a handful of distant relatives and Forest Service officials knew where he was buried — but the fact had long eluded local history buffs, including Ron Roizen, of Wallace. Even cemetery officials had no idea a quasi-celebrity was resting under their care.

"It's a discovery, but only sort of a discovery," Roizen admitted.

The granite tombstone stands as a bookend for Pulaski's life and it



James Hagengruber/The Spokesman-Review

Ed Pulaski's grave is in the Forest Cemetery in Coeur d'Alene. He is famous for saving the lives of firefighters during the 1910 fire in Wallace, and for inventing the tool used by wildland firefighters.

## Pulaski: Saved 40 firefighters

Continued from A1

also adds a colorful twist to the story: the marker bears a nobleman's title. The inscription, Count Edward C. Pulaski, piqued Roizen's curiosity and sent him on a mission to learn the full story. "I relish these types of things," he said.

Roizen is one of the leaders of the Pulaski Project, which aims to create a national wildfire education center in Wallace. The group helped secure \$300,000 in federal funding recently to build an interpretive trail to the hillside mineshaft where Pulaski and 45 firefighters found refuge in the "Big Blowup" of 1910. The men were trying to escape a fire that raged up the West Fork of Placer Creek. When one of the men panicked and tried to escape the cramped quarters, Pulaski drew his revolver and said, according to numerous accounts, "The first man who tries to leave this tunnel I will shoot."

The fire was hot and suffocating enough that the entire crew passed out in the tunnel. Five never awakened. In later years, Pulaski faithfully tended the graves of the dead firefighters, but he rarely spoke of the event. Pulaski remained the ranger in Wallace until he retired in 1930.

Not much has been published on Pulaski's final years, Roizen said, and few people seemed to know where the ranger was buried. Arizona State University Professor and fire expert Stephen Pyne shed light on the question during research for his book,

"Year of the Fires: The Story of the Great Fires of 1910."

When Roizen learned from Pyne that Pulaski was buried in Coeur d'Alene's Forest Cemetery, he tried to pinpoint the location by calling the city Parks and Recreation Department, which manages the cemetery.

"We had no idea," said the department's director, Doug Eastwood. "We know the name. We have his tool and use them in city parks."

City officials were doubly intrigued because they are putting together a walking tour of the historic Government Way cemetery, which they hope to have ready by next summer. But until Pulaski's name was unearthed, only local celebrities made the list. Although Pulaski's grave isn't as famous as, say, Grant's Tomb, the site could attract a fair number of firefighters and Western history enthusiasts, Eastwood said. "This got everybody excited. He's revered as a hero."

Pulaski's royal title makes the grave even more interesting, Eastwood said.

Roizen helped clear up the question by contacting Pulaski's grand nephew, Doug Casey, 77, of Woodland, Wash. Pulaski and his wife, Emma, adopted a daughter but had no direct descendants. Although the title is written in stone, Pulaski's blood probably didn't run blue, Casey said.

Emma Pulaski believed her husband came from the same line as Brigadier General Casimir Pulaski, a Revolutionary War hero and Polish

nobleman. Ed Pulaski likely scoffed at the notion — Casimir Pulaski was mortally wounded in battle and had no known children — but Emma had other ideas, Casey said. "She was a countess in her own mind."

Casey was born and raised in Coeur d'Alene, but he was only a toddler when his Uncle Ed died. Casey's father later told him that Ed Pulaski was a kind-hearted, quiet man who loved the forests of North Idaho and whose lungs were forever weakened by the 1910 fire.

Emma Pulaski lived 17 years after her husband's death. Casey has fond memories of visiting Countess Pulaski's downtown Coeur d'Alene home. She wore fine clothes and always served her guests tea, he said. She also told fortunes with palms, cards or tea leaves.

As a young man, Casey worked as a firefighter and spent countless sweaty, smoky hours chopping fireline with the tool bearing his uncle's name. Back then, the mention of a Pulaski made Casey and his friends think of a torture device. Today, the name prompts colorful memories of a dignified matron and her modest hero of a husband.

There's one other twist to the Pulaski grave story, Casey said. Not only did Emma outlive her husband and have a noble title engraved on his headstone, she also made sure that neither marker listed a birthdate.

"She never wanted anybody to know how old she was," Casey said.

James Hagengruber can be reached at (208) 765-7126 or by e-mail at jamesh@spokesman.com.



# SHOSHONE NEWS-PRESS

50

## BRIEFLY

### Pulaski Project gets mention in Preservation Magazine

SILVER VALLEY — Preservation Magazine, a national publication of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, recently printed an article about the Pulaski Project, an effort started by Jim See of Wallace to preserve the Pulaski Trail and Nicholson adit.

The article appeared in the May/June issue of Preservation Magazine and includes background information about the trail's namesake ranger Ed Pulaski who heroically managed to save all but six of his 45-man firefighting crew during the 1910 forest fires in the Silver Valley area. It also touches on current efforts, led by See, to restore the trail.

To view the article and for more information about the Pulaski Project visit [www.pulaski-project.org](http://www.pulaski-project.org).

## FRONT PAGE

### City readies tour of cemetery celebs

By James Hagengruber  
Staff writer

Coeur d'Alene Parks Department officials were surprised to learn that famous U.S. Forest Service Ranger Ed Pulaski was buried in the city's Forest Cemetery on Government Way. They are now hoping to learn about other notable figures in the cemetery's 17,000-some graves.

Last year, the city began compiling information to include in a proposed walking tour of the cemetery, said Doug Eastwood, the department's director. Much of the research was conducted by Mark Puddy, an intern from the University of Idaho. Puddy's work, combined with the fresh knowledge of Pulaski, has added momentum to the project.

"We've scratched the surface, now we're getting down to the really good stuff," Eastwood said.

The city hopes to have the self-guided tour ready by summer. Eastwood would ultimately like to see the cemetery host a living history event during which actors in period clothing would help set the scene.

The cemetery was given to the city in 1905. It was part of the abandoned Fort Sherman grounds. Among the buried local luminaries is the founder of Silverwood Theme Park, as well as regional railroad baron F.A. Blackwell. The tour would include the buried big shots, plus a few lighter stops, such as the grave marker bearing the epitaph, "I told you I was sick."

There's also a mysterious monu-

ment to Betsy Ross, but the flag lady's first name is incorrectly inscribed as Betsey. And the monument makes reference to a descendant of Ross, B.M. Ross, whose birthday is listed as 1834. This would mean Mother Betsy Ross was in her 80s.

"We've never been able to make the connection. Betsy never had any sons," Eastwood said.

Anyone with information on the Ross monument, or any other Forest Cemetery trivia, is asked to call the Parks Department at (208) 769-2252.

■ James Hagengruber can be reached at (208) 765-7126 or by e-mail at [jamesh@spokesman.com](mailto:jamesh@spokesman.com).



# Pulaski Project tracks down gravesite of fire hero

COEUR D'ALENE (AP) — The rediscovery of a firefighting folk hero's gravesite has local history buffs and city officials hoping it will raise interest in Western history.

Ed Pulaski was an early-day ranger for the U.S. Forest Service and inventor of the firefighting tool that bears his name. The ranger was also known for helping to save dozens of firefighters during a major Wallace-area wildfire 94 years ago.

Though a handful of distant relatives knew where Pulaski was buried, the fact had long eluded local historians, including Wallace resident Ron Roizen. Even officials from the Coeur d'Alene's Forest Cemetery did not know he was buried there.

"It's a discovery, but only sort of a discovery," Roizen said.

Roizen is a member of the Pulaski Project, a group that hopes to create a national wildfire education center in Wallace. So far, the group has secured \$300,000 in federal funding to build an interpretive trail to the hillside mineshaft where Pulaski and 45 firefighters found refuge during the "Big Blowup" wildfire of 1910.

When one of the men panicked and tried to leave the cramped quarters, according to several accounts, Pulaski drew his gun and said, "The first man who tries to leave this tunnel I will shoot."

They all stayed inside, eventually passing out from the suffocating heat. Five of the men never woke up.

Pulaski rarely spoke of that day, but tended the graves of the dead men faithfully and remained the ranger in Wallace until he retired in 1930. His lungs were forever weakened by the fire, relatives said.

Roizen said information on Pulaski's final years is limited, and few people knew where the ranger was buried. Roizen learned of the location from

Great Fires of 1910."

Coeur d'Alene's Parks and Recreation Department was also excited to learn that Pulaski had been buried at the Forest Cemetery. The city has added Pulaski's grave to a walking tour of the cemetery scheduled to start next summer.

"We had no idea. We know the name. We have his tool and use them in city parks," said the department's director, Doug Eastwood. "This got everybody excited. He's revered as a hero."

The granite tombstone also adds a colorful twist to Pulaski's life story, said Roizen. The name on the inscription is Count Edward C. Pulaski.

The unlikely royal title sent Roizen searching for more facts.

"I relish these types of things," he said.

He contacted Pulaski's grand-nephew, 77-year-old Doug Casey of Woodland, Wash. Although the title is written in stone, Pulaski's

blood probably didn't run blue, Casey said.

Pulaski's wife Emma believed her husband came from the same line as Brigadier General Casimir Pulaski, a Revolutionary War hero and Polish nobleman. Ed Pulaski likely scoffed at the notion — Casimir Pulaski was mortally wounded in battle and had no known children — but Emma had other ideas, Casey said.

"She was a countess in her own mind," he said.

Though Ed Pulaski died when Casey was just a toddler, he remembers visiting his "countess" aunt at her downtown Coeur d'Alene home. Emma Pulaski wore fine clothes and always served her guests tea, he said. She also told fortunes with palms, cards or tea leaves.

As a young man, Casey worked as a firefighter and spent countless sweaty, smoky hours chopping fireline with the tool bearing his uncle's name. Back then, the mention

of a Pulaski made Casey and his friends think of a torture device. Today, the name prompts colorful memories of a dignified matron and her modest hero of a husband, he said.

There's one other twist to the Pulaski grave story, Casey said. Not only did Emma have a noble title engraved on his headstone, she also made sure that neither marker listed a birthdate.

"She never wanted anybody to know how old she was," Casey said.

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## Pulaski Project ready to move forward with grant from USFA

By DON SAUER  
Staff writer

WALLACE — The possibility of designating part of the Silver Valley as a "National Heritage Area" could be the cornerstone for the development of a national Wildfire Education Center and Museum near Wallace.

The Pulaski Project, whose members are working for the development of the center, received confirmation this week that the project has been awarded a \$15,000 grant from the U.S. Forest Service which will be used to initiate three major projects, according to Jim See.

See said the grant will allow the group to move forward with three important projects, including pursuing the possible designation as a National Heritage Area. See said the NHA program is part of the National Parks Service which helps areas of the country

heart of an inferno like the 1910 fire.

"We want to be able to recreate the sights, sounds, the smells, within safety limits of course, of a raging fire," See said. "We want a Disney World-like experience, virtual reality because we feel it would become a major tourist attraction for the region."

See said the Pulaski project has been in contact with the

Chicago Museum of Science and Industry to gather details on the design, operation and cost of a display like the fire room.

A third project which will be made possible by the grant will be to look at projects similar to the Fire Education Center to see which ones have been successful or have failed and what factors made them a boom or a bust.

which have rich historic backgrounds develop ways to showcase that history and share it with the rest of the nation.

"We've made preliminary contact with the Idaho Heritage Trust to begin working on this project," See said. "We understand there is as much as \$1 million in funding available through the Heritage Area program and that would allow us to do so much as far as developing the Wildfire Center."

Not only would the story of the 1910 fire be told, but See said the Heritage Area designation would allow the valley to highlight its entire mining heritage.

"One plus we see right now is that there are no Heritage Areas in the Northwest," See said. "That might give us a leg up on gaining a designation."

The grant will also allow further research into the development of a "fire room" at the education center where visitors would literally be taken into the

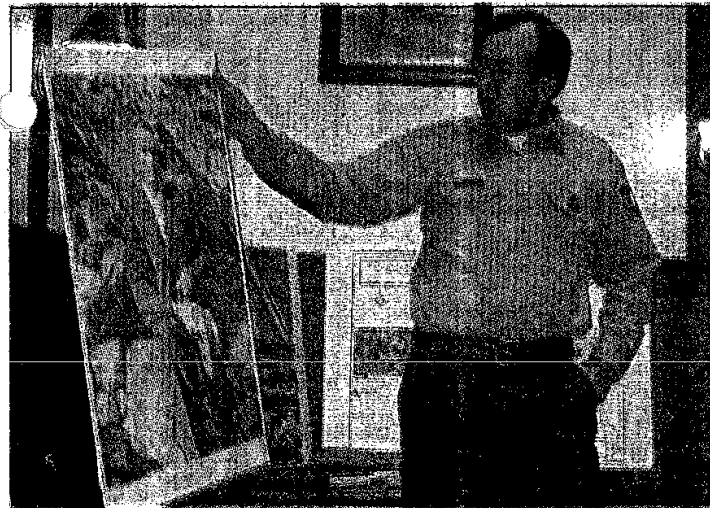
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## Pulaski trail project faces long hike, but first steps being taken



— Photo by DON SAUER

Jack Dorrell of the USFS spoke to the Historic Silver Valley Chamber of Commerce on progress on the Pulaski Trail project Thursday.

By DON SAUER  
Staff writer

**KELLOGG** —A national trend of increased public interest in historic places bodes well for the Silver Valley's Pulaski Tunnel project.

Jack Dorrell, recreational planner with the United States Forest Service, told members of the Historic Silver Valley Chamber of Commerce Thursday that more and more people are using their vacation time to visit places such as Civil War battlefields and other sites where the nation's history was shaped.

"Historic tourism is on the increase all across the country," Dorrell said. "The Pulaski project will fit right in with this and I think it has tremendous potential to pull people off the interstate and into the area."

While the ultimate goal is to turn the Pulaski Tunnel area into a complete destination site with a wildfire education and visitor center, Dorrell said the work that is currently under way is a major step in preserving

the site and turning it into a major tourist draw.

The first work to be undertaken will be the construction of a parking area at the trail head approximately one mile outside of Wallace on the Placer Creek/Moon Pass road. Dorrell said the parking will be paved with room for six vehicles, a turnaround area for buses and restroom facilities will also be installed.

A 90-foot wooden bridge crossing Placer Creek will be built next, Dorrell said, with interpretive signs to be constructed all along the trail leading the 1.8 miles up to the tunnel audit. Dorrell said the actual trail will be 30 inches wide and will be constructed using a modular, concrete retaining wall. The trail will cross Placer Creek in three places.

He said the contract for the work will be awarded before the end of the year and work will begin next spring with this portion of the project expected to be completed by fall of 2005.

## Steel framing helicoptered up to Pulaski Tunnel

By RON ROIZEN  
Special to the News-Press

**WALLACE** — On Monday, Oct. 4, under a clear blue sky, a helicopter transported steel framing, welding equipment, and a generator up to the "Pulaski Tunnel," also known as the Nicholson mine.

The tunnel is located about two miles up West Fork Placer Creek from the big green water tank up Moon Pass Road, south of Wallace. It is the place where ranger Ed Pulaski saved 39 of his 45-man firefighting crew in the midst of the Big Blowup — at least once drawing his pistol to insure that no man panicked and tried to flee into the raging 1910 fire.

See PULASKI, Page 3

## PULASKI

Continued from Page 1

The Forest Service, in partnership with the community-based Pulaski Project, are engaged in a two-year project aimed at securing and reconstructing the mine adit's 1910 appearance, and restoring and developing the "Pulaski Tunnel Trail," which travels from Moon Pass Road to a viewing site directly across the creek from the adit.

There are three steps in the Forest Service's plan for the Pulaski Tunnel.

First, create a steel closure roughly 30 feet inside the tunnel. Monday's helicopter delivery supplied the materials for this step. New timber sets inside the mine will also be constructed, which Jay Price is the contractor for.

Second, a bat-friendly gate will be built at the mouth of the mine. A bat gate is comprised of a series of horizontal bars spaced so as to allow bats unimpeded enter and egress.

Third and finally, a representation of the entrance and exterior look of the mine in 1910 will be recreated.

Monday's helicopter trips signaled the beginning of actual construction related to the Pulaski Tunnel.

The whole project — tunnel

# Five Days After: The Wallace Miner's account of the Great 1910 Fire

By Ron Roizen and Jim See  
Special to the News-Press

WALLACE — A yearly subscription to The Wallace Miner weekly newspaper cost \$2 in 1910. The paper was published every Thursday out of its quarters at 5th and Bank Streets. Its motto: "Devoted to the best interests of the entire Coeur d'Alene district, giving only authentic information and aiming to accomplish this without fear or favor."

Though primarily focused on the local mining industry, the Miner (not surprisingly) ran a front page story on the Great 1910 Fire in its regular Thursday, August 25, 1910 paper. Five days had elapsed since the fire struck on the previous Saturday, Aug. 20. Yet information on injury and loss was still incomplete.

"FIFTY LOSE LIVES IN FOREST FIRES THROUGH DISTRICT" was the story's title — though the actual count would later prove to be closer to 90 deaths.

The story placed the number of men who survived the night in the Nicholson mine in Ed Pulaski's crew at 31 — later estimates would move the figure up to 39.

The Miner offered a gripping and detailed account of the fire's encounter with Wallace.

"For weeks the forests in every direction have been burning, and it was known that only a heavy fall of rain would ultimately put them out. With a high and fitful wind Saturday afternoon and evening, the flames headed for the south toward Wallace, and for a time the entire town seemed doomed. Arrangements were quickly

made to get the women and children to places of safety. The railroad companies assembled their locomotives and rolling stock preparatory to caring for everyone. Nestled in the heart of high surrounding hills, with egress limited to a narrow canyon, it was realized that it might become necessary for all to flee, as a general conflagration would mean certain death for any who remained.

"As the flames neared town on the southwest, they followed the hillside on the south, and for a time it looked as if the town might escape. Suddenly a sheet of flame, which appeared to be a hundred yards long, burst a hundred feet high into the sky, and it was only too apparent that the danger was graver than ever. Within a short time a brand from this lighted on a framed building and started the fire in town. The hills on the opposite side of the city then took fire, and on the south side the main hill was burning in 20 places. The residences on this hill took fire and were quickly demolished. It seemed as if the town could not be saved, but after several hours of valiant effort by the fire department, assisted by a large force of volunteers, the flames were stayed, and the damage is variously estimated at from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000, the actual figures being probably somewhere near \$800,000.

"Among the destroyed buildings are the Coeur d'Alene Ironworks, Sunset Brewery, Coeur d'Alene Hardware Company's warehouse, Worstell Company's Furniture Store, O. R. & N.

station, Corner and Fisher's office and warehouses Wallace Times, Wallace Cigar company, Turner Music Company, Pacific Hotel Pacific Annex, several rooming houses and a large number of dwellings.

"For a time it was feared the Providence Hospital and the Standard and Mammoth mills were destroyed, but they remained uninjured. The fire followed the hills to Mullan and Burke, and grave fears for both these towns were entertained. The damage will not be great in either place."

One page 4, an editorial titled "Our Calamity" offered further images of the fire and the town's reaction. At one point its text paused to take umbrage regarding an account of the town's collective response to the fire published in Spokane:

"While we regard this as no time for denunciation, we cannot refrain from criticizing the Spokesman-Review for an article in its issue of Tuesday morning, which starts by saying 'we have passed the first stage of wild, unreasoning panic.' This was written by a special correspondent sent here after the fire had been controlled and consequently ignorant of the circumstances. There was no panic wild or otherwise, and never was more reason displayed in an emergency. Every able bodied man was active, going from one point of danger to another, to be of assistance to the best of his ability."

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## Idaho THE PRESS / HAGADONE NEWSPAPER NETWORK Sunday, October 24, 2004 A3 Newspaper gave detailed account of 1910 fire

Front-page story was published five days after blaze struck

By RON ROIZEN and JIM SEE  
Special to the Coeur d'Alene Press

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