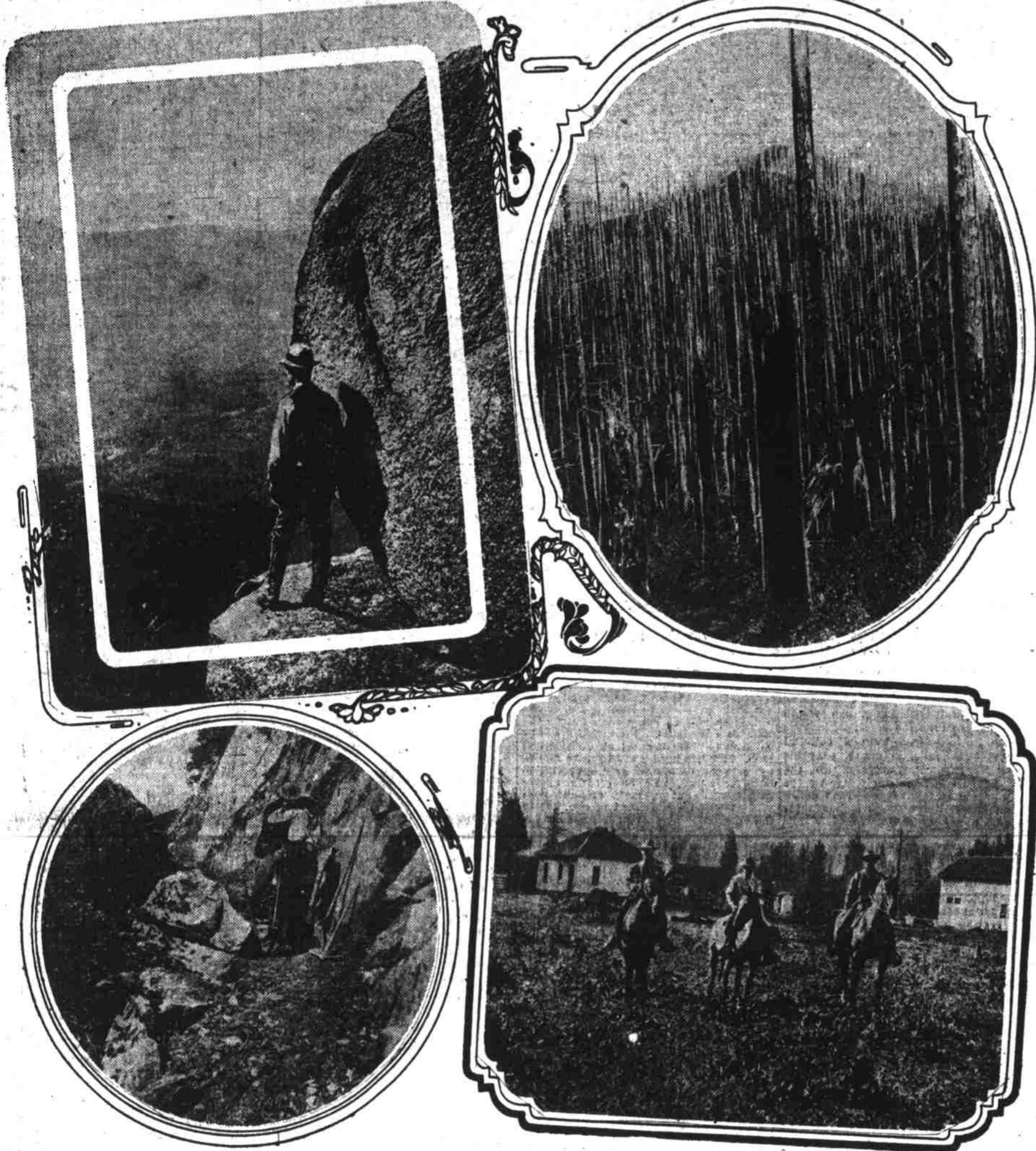


PORTLAND, OREGON, SUNDAY MORNING SEPTEMBER 3, 1911.

When Rangers Do Battle Against Forest Fires

An Intimate Review of the Dangers and Hardships Encountered by Men Who Serve the Government When the Forests Are Threatened—The Story of Fire-Fighting on the Upper Reaches of the McKenzie River Last Year



Upper oval—Work of the fire demon. Upper upright—Forest ranger on his lookout. Lower square—Rangers starting on rounds of forests. Lower oval—Building government trails.

By Franklin S. Allen.

Eugene, Or., Sept. 1.—Although Lane county, said to be the most heavily timbered area in the world, suffered heavy fire loss last summer, she has experienced no loss at all from fire this year. The credit must be given to the very efficient system of patrol employed by the government in the forest reserves, by the large lumber corporations and by the county itself. The government rangers have a very perfect system, and guards from lookout points during the summer dry months watch practically every acre of the forest. As soon as they get sight of a fire communication is sent over the telephone, for insulated wires, strung along the ground, connect every ranger's station and lookout point with the forest supervisor's office in Eugene, and a crew of men is sent over trails, which are being constructed as a network through the forests. It is possible to successfully fight the fire before it has gained much headway.

The dangers and hardships of fighting forest fires are many. With the smoke hanging about the mountains as a blanket, making it impossible for the ranger to see 200 feet away, giving the helpless feeling of a man groping about in the dark, and with fire apparently on all sides covering miles and miles, the helplessness of man is apparent. The story told by John Morse, ranger in charge of the McKenzie Bridge station, of the disastrous Blue river fire last summer is thrilling.

Patrolling Large Areas.
"You can get some idea of the amount of territory I alone had to patrol when I tell you that my district is as large as many eastern counties, over 15 miles long by 20 miles wide, with almost three fifths of it inaccessible," said Mr. Morse. "Consequently I was not only handicapped by the lack of guards, but in knowledge of the country as well. It was under such conditions that I went into the Blue river fire."

"Owing to the dense smoke, patrol from the lookout points was utterly impractical. I was helpless and could not even see the trees a few hundred feet below me. Some time, if you want to know how small you are, get on a lookout point in a dense smoke and strain your eyes for a sight of the opposite hill. Look over the cliff on which you are standing and see no ground, nothing but the dull, leaden gray of the impenetrable smoke, and you will feel the most peculiar, helpless sensation imaginable, especially if your business is to detect and suppress fires."

"August 17 the wind shifted and lifted the smoke. I believed that I should start for the 5000 foot lookout on Horse Pasture mountain, which overlooks my entire district. I stopped en route on Owl's lookout, a small promontory that puts off from the main ridge. It was at this point that I first sighted the fire north of the Blue River mines. I was 30 miles from the fire that I could see was already becoming serious. I retraced my steps and traveled all that day as fast as possible, considering the heavy load of my pack horses, and reached the old Kelly sheep camp that night about 10 o'clock, having covered nearly 40 miles.

"At the sheep camp I employed Pat Charles and a miner who had prospected in the country where the fire was and who saved us much time by his knowledge of the Indian trails. On the morning of August 21, with two pack horses and a saddle horse we took the old Indian trail and practically fought our way within two miles of the fire with the horses. Here it was necessary to leave the packer while Hawkinson, the miner, and I endeavored to learn the extent of the fire and sought water as well as a route over which we could bring in men and supplies. Doing this, I left for Blue river and the next morning returned to the fire with six men.

Making Trails.
"Returning it was necessary to cut logs from the old trail and construct fully a mile of new trail in order to get the pack train in. By night camp was located where we had found water the day before. It was three days after I first sighted the fire before we could commence our attack, and by the time we began actual work the fire covered 500 or 600 acres and was traveling northwest up a ridge through an old burn. Directly above on the south side there was a large body of green timber which was threatened, consequently we began our fire line on the crest of the ridge a few hundred yards in advance of the fire and trenched down the north side about 100 yards. As soon as we had made the trench in front of the main fire safe, we back-fired along the side slopes to within about 100 yards of the end of the trench, then detailed four men to patrol the back fire while the rest of us made new trench. By pursuing this plan the middle of the afternoon found us with over one-half mile of fire line completed, backfired and properly patrolled by four men, and evidently safe."

Making Progress.
"By night time the main fire and our defensive back-fires had burned together on the crest of the ridge and had met in little tongues on the upper part of

the south slope. The next day conditions remained about the same and by constructing more trench we lacked but half a mile of surrounding the fire, and thus under ordinary conditions there would have been nothing to do but patrol the fire until the last snag had fallen and the fire had died out. Such was the condition on the evening of August 23, when I climbed the cliff on the ridge near camp, where I sighted a fire on the south fork of the McKenzie near Cougar creek. Studying the situation a few moments I determined to leave the Blue river fire in charge of the miner, and that night I started over the rough mountain trail, until I reached the Blue river road and made my way to the south fork of the McKenzie.

"As I rode that night I could feel the wind rising and knew that Hawkinson would have trouble in preventing the Blue river fire from breaking out again. On the morning of August 24, the east wind of the preceding night developed into a terrific gale. Meantime the crew under Hawkinson held the fire line all day by constant work, but late at night, with the men dead tired, the fire, the live coals and sparks soon formed a second fire even more serious than the first, with all the trenches useless. At 2 o'clock in the morning of August 25 the men, beaten, weary and discouraged, were forced to abandon their camp, barely having time to bury their outfits."

Fleeing for Safety.
"You know the average person in considering what he would do in case of a forest fire figures from the standpoint that he is always fresh, unwearied and clear handed, but it usually works out just the opposite, and in this case the men were about exhausted when they were forced to flee for safety. Hawkinson realized the seriousness of the situation and saw that their only chance lay up a steep ridge that apparently ran into the very head of the main fire. And it was only after threatening to leave them to their own resources that Hawkinson induced them to follow him."

"New fire was gaining strength on all sides except to the northwest, but in that direction they would be traveling with the fire and it would only be a matter of time until they would be overtaken. Hence he realized that they must out-travel the fire in the gulch below and round its head before the fire cut them off. He told me afterward that he never before had known what real exhaustion meant. When he finally rounded the fire it was not more than 200 feet below him. All the crew but one had rounded the head before Hawkinson. This man in a half crazed con-

dition gave up the fight and was half dragged, half carried over logs and brush by Pat Charles, the packer, to a point on the ridge half a mile above camp. From the top of the ridge Hawkinson's knowledge of trails and short cuts allowed them more speed, but it was not until 5 o'clock in the morning that they felt themselves safe and they did not reach Blue river until late in the afternoon.

Hurrying Men to Fire.
"I was on the South Fork of the McKenzie, 25 miles distant, organizing the work on Cougar creek when a messenger came from Hawkinson. Immediately I returned with the messenger to the road and telephoned to the supervisor in Eugene for 30 men. These were rushed immediately by automobiles to the town of Blue river, 20 miles from the fire, where they arrived on the evening of August 26.

"Hawkinson had succeeded in getting around the greater part of the fire the day before and reported it burning slowly in most places and having little if any direction. I divided the men into three crews, with each crew divided into shifts, the night shift to patrol the fire line built by the day shift. For the next week trials were systematically built and rebuilt by crews equally distributed about the three or four principal fires. The wind for the greater part of the time was favorable and the men accomplished much."

"For the next three days it was doubtful whether we would be able to hold the fire within the lines. However, conditions were favorable for fighting the fire, and the men seemed to have developed a spirit of battle, and fought with an energy that indicated a personal interest in the conflict. To shorten the story, the trenches held and the forest fire season was over."

Cider Vinegar Must Go.
From Leslie's.
The astonishing revelation is made that pure-food legislation has produced a monopoly in an inferior product. The agricultural law of New York prohibits the sale of vinegar which has not an acidity equivalent to the presence of at least 4 1/2 per cent, by weight, of absolute acetic acid. Since acidity is most desirable in vinegar, this seems to be a proper requirement; but pure apple cider vinegar, it is said, will not develop this amount of acetic acid. In any event, it is without question that all pure apple cider will not do so, for there are in the collars of farmers all over the state thousands of barrels of such vinegar which cannot be put on the market because of this peculiar kink in the agricultural law.

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