FIRE WARDENS & FIRE PROTECTION  
EASTERN REGIONS 1920-1960

By Jack A. Godden

INTRODUCTION

Published history of National Forest Fire Wardens in protecting eastern National Forest lands acquired under the Week's Law is lacking. The Monongahela National Forest's, 50 Years History of the Monongahela, September, 1970 provides first reference of Organized Fire Protection beginning in 1916 by appointment of two Forest Guards. In the 1950's the Forest Service continued to rely on a system of fire wardens. With only four to five regular employees on a district, there were too few employees to fight fire alone. The fire wardens were local community people, not Forest Service employees, who could be dispatched by an individual in a fire lookout tower.

In the 1950's there were as many as twenty-five wardens on the Cheat Ranger District, headquarters at Parsons, West Virginia and perhaps as many as eighty on the entire Forest. Each warden had his own crew and the Forest Service trained the crews and wardens annually by reviewing new equipment and prevention programs. Each warden had his own box of tools to use in fighting fires. Forest Service employees supplemented the warden and their crews. (Source: Cheat District Rangers — John Ballantyne, 1952-1957 and Jack Godden, 1958-1960)

THE NATIONAL FOREST FIRE WARDEN

The few Warden crews on the eastern National Forests in the mid-1930s were greatly supplemented by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program. Following the demise of the CCC program in the early 1940's, Warden Crews became most essential, better organized, trained and equipped to fight fires with or without Forest Service supervision during and following World War II.

The Wardens were key citizens who could "round" up local woods workers and farmers to fight fire, paid at established Firefighter's pay rates, documented on individual Firefighter's Fire Time Slips, mileage paid and subsistence provided on the fire line. They had a green painted wooden "National Forest Fire Tool" box placed on their front lawn with a "Report Fires Here" sign, some with Fire Prevention posters. They were our "Key Contacts" for local support and information exchange.

The tool box rarely moved from the Warden's front yard. Some earlier boxes placed at road junctions proved

Organization of Man Power1

Warden organization - Reduction of preparedness costs through the development of adequate suppression force comprised of trained warden crews is a prime objective in organizing man power.

1 Fire Handbook, USDA Forest Service, Region 7, 1931

See WARDEN, page 4
2014 Annual Membership Meeting
October 7, 2014 — Salt Lake City

The Annual Membership meeting of the National Museum of Forest Service History will be on October 7, 2014, 1:30 PM MDT in the Salt Lake Room, Salt Lake Plaza Hotel at Temple Square, 122 West South Temple. Temple Square Light Rail Station is in front of the hotel. Parking, if not a registered guest, is $1 per hour or $8 daily maximum. The Board of Directors will hold a Board meeting in the morning at the hotel. Non-members welcome.

There will be a raffle for one Limited Edition Buck Knife Model 102 with engraved Museum logo. Board members are not eligible for the drawing.

Donations Needed
Conservation Education Program
By Dave Stack, Executive Director

The Museum's Executive Committee is preparing a grant proposal to obtain funds to develop a social studies and science conservation education program for elementary schools across the country. We hope to submit the application to foundations by the end of the year.

The Missoula County Public School System and the University of Montana are partners in developing and prototype testing of the education lesson developed. We have the support of the Missoula School Superintendent in this effort. We have jointly established a need for our conservation education program and we can show how our program will support 21st Century learning skills by students. The Museum program will not duplicate programs by other organizations.

The MISSION of the Museum’s Conservation Education Program is to pass on knowledge of and appreciation for the conservation history of United States forests and grasslands to persons of all ages across the United States. The Museum program will support students and teachers in the 21st Century Schools Initiative to increase creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration in K-12 school programs.

Conservation history provides a context for the lessons learned over a century of natural resource management. The Conservation Education Program will provide the public with the knowledge to develop informed opinions on the issues surrounding forest and grassland management.

We need seed money for our education program to demonstrate to foundations that we are serious about supporting an education program. If the Museum could obtain at least $5,000 seed money, the Museum would be more competitive for a foundation grant.

Please consider a donation to support the Conservation Education Program. Funds received for education would be only used to support the education program. Checks should include on the memo line "education fund".
Timber Posts for the Lobby

John Hughes delivered a Sugar Pine and an Incense Cedar post from the Hughes Family Tree Farm in California to Brian Leisz’s Fall Creek Timber Framers mill in Troy, Montana. All 23 posts for the lobby are now in storage.

Timber framing posts for the museum lobby are coming from National Forests, Experimental Forests, State Forests and Tree Farms. The geographically diverse species will tell the story how forests supported the development of America. Visitors and students will read the plaque on each post and a companion brochure will be available.

Donated posts are from Alaska, Arkansas, California, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Wood Buildings = Green Buildings

Urban Timber: From seed to city — A new exhibition in Boston Massachusetts celebrates wood as the most sensible and abundant choice of material for urban building, highlighting its flexibility and technical qualities, including timber's potential to combat climate change. Yugon Kim, director of TSKP Architects and co-curator of the exhibition explains “We now know that timber is a superior structural building material that should be considered alongside steel and concrete. The carbon offset and sustainability benefits of wood make it an ever-relevant and timely building material in the urban landscape.” http://www.architects.org/bsaspace/exhibitions/urban-timber-seed-city

Our museum building will demonstrate wood building technology.

The National Conservation Legacy and Education Center building is designed to serve as a showcase for an educational exhibit of green building technologies. The building will use many wood-based construction materials, including timber harvested using sustainable forest management practices on federal, state and private lands.

Boston Exhibit Display of Four Timber Types Used in Construction
too much of a temptation and were usually pilfered. Possible contents for 10-12 men were: - two Pulaskis or single bitted axes, 2 shovels, 4-6 Council tools (eastern fire rakes), crosscut saw or 2 disassembled bow saws with two blades (Northern Forests), 2 kerosene lamps, 2-1 gallon canteens, two "Indian" 5 gallon back packs, with "trombone" hand slide pumps and a couple knapsacks. Mountain people had troubles, difficulties getting use to a Pulaski, and favored the single bitted axe. The Warden's knapsack carried some essentials - a crew size first aid kit, maybe a canister of carbide, a couple hand files and carbide lamps (Southern Appalachia users). The same items were carried by "overhead" - who wore hardhats, usually a Forestry Tech, Aid, or Forester who assumed "Fire Boss" responsibilities, made out the time slips, and Individual Fire Reports. Battery powered headlamps were for Forest Service overhead; the Warden's lamp was his personal 5-cell flashlight, a favorite for coon- hunting. "Regulars" - crew members, sometimes had their own carbide lamps from home (considered year's losses).

Many Wardens were Country Store owners, all on Forest Service telephone lines (later commercial lines ). As storeowner with Post Office status, he would cash most of the addressed fire paychecks that satisfied accumulated bills by their signature or "X".

A Standard ration list for 10-men was provided each Country Store owner who would deliver rations (including a pound of ground coffee) to night fires. Payment was handled by "Purchase Order" book on follow up visits usually taking less time for payment than fire time slips. There were never any "rations left", all leftovers shared, emptied bean, tomato or peach cans flattened and buried, papers burned. Surprisingly an egg or two would show up with a large coffee pot, supplied by the Warden for midnight coffee and lunch. A piece of "starter" or "widow" wood was a pocket item for starting a cooking, warming or toasting fire.

Canteen water came from "springs", back pack pumps filled from streams, but usually left empty in tool boxes. (Carrying 50 pounds of water and metal up a mountain wasn't a usual tool for line construction). Forest Service pickups normally carried two back pumps filled with water and extra essentials in side tool boxes. Their "trombone slide Indians" required care and maintenance for effective fire line use. One essential favored by the author was a case of excess military "C" rations, "corned beef hash" my favorite, that served as my backup for isolated small crew fires.

Crews of 6-8 were the usual number recruited; they would ride in back of the Warden's pickup with tools. Warden was usually identified by "fedora" hat on the fire
line. Safety was a concern in transporting the crews, speeds usually limited to "quality" of road. Personal safety gear became more available in the 1960s - hardhats, goggles, four battery electric headlamps replacing carbide lamps. Gloves were never supplied.

Training was not forgotten. Annual Fire Warden's meeting/training sessions were held - like a meeting of the clans - usually in the spring, paid time, travel and lunch provided. Local church groups were source for prepared Warden Training lunches, they too making a few dollars from our fire budgets. We trainers weren't provided with "subsistence" but somehow joined at the table with the Wardens. At my last conducted training in 1958, I introduced Fire Behavior training in the District's warehouse with sawdust pile, wood shavings with propane stove to show how fuels, weather and topography effects on how a fire burns. By this time Wardens had their own personal hardhat with Ten Standard Fire Orders decal.

Forest Fire Warden's bit of history faded away in the late 1960s, definitely in the 1970s with new firefighter's physical fitness, personal safety, protective equipment standards, and by other "time changes", workloads, attitudes and numbers of Forest Service personnel at District level. Spending time for visits with Wardens for the value of that key contact - their supporting role of our programs and that value of local gossip were soon forgotten.

As for their fire line safety - they knew how to use hand tools, could sharpen them to their satisfaction, willingly double tool themselves for a long night shift, and paced themselves in building and maintaining fire line. From what I witnessed they had fewer injuries than some later with hardhats, lugged sole boots, chain saws, chaps, fire retardant shirts and pants, goggles, gloves, fire shelters, fanny packs, radios, etc. that I witnessed at higher pay, "hazard" pay scales of today. They were legends, their performance-worth watching and remembered by a few of us "old timers".

Author Jack A. Godden

Graduate of New York State College of Forestry, Syracuse 1951. Forest Service career 1954 thru 1987 on Cherokee, Cumberland, Monongahela, White Mountain, Shasta Trinity National Forests and Director Aviation & Fire Management Region 9, Milwaukee, WI. Godden now lives in Fox Point, WI.
Stories Wanted

Sue Wight Sutherland is interested in networking with women who started Forest Service careers and became trailblazers that changed the culture of the Forest Service. Sue believes it is time to tell our stories in “Inadvertent Trailblazers” (name coined by Pam Herdrich).

Books such as What Did We Get Ourselves Into?, Ruth Freeman editor, and a Sampler of the Early Years by Forest Service Wives are fascinating reading and delightful glimpses of how the Forest Service was.

Sue wants to collect women’s stories before they are lost and forgotten and publish the stories in a book. Will you help? Are you willing to share your story?

Please feel free to contact Sue by phone 435-630-0889 or email sue.sutherland2007@ymail.com. Sue is looking forward to exploring this adventure with you!
Aldo Leopold —— Forest Guard

Aldo Leopold's Forest Service career began in 1908 as a Forest Guard on the Cabinet National Forest, Montana. He was later Forest Supervisor of the Carson National Forest, New Mexico, 1912-1913 and then for several years he was in-charge of "education cooperation" in District 3 (Arizona and New Mexico). In 1919 Leopold became Assistant District Forester for Operations, District 3. He moved in 1924 to the Forest Products Laboratory, Madison, Wisconsin. Aldo Leopold was the Associate Director of the Forest Products Laboratory when he left the Forest Service in 1928 for an academic career at the University of Wisconsin. (Source Forest Service "Service Bulletin", June 11, 1928, NMFSH catalog no. 2014.20.22)

Cornelia Bryce Pinchot


Ben & Lois Beall Smokey Bear Collection

Jeffrey Beal donated his parents large collection of Smokey Bear memorabilia several years ago. We have finished archiving the collection of almost 600 items. The collection includes Smokey Bear toys, puppets, Christmas ornaments, pins, patches, posters, activity books, baseball cards, stickers and shirts. Ben Beal was assigned to the Stanislaus and Angeles National Forests and the Pacific Southwest Region Office (R5) during his Forest Service career.

Lolo National Forest YCC Collection

A collection of 400 Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) photographs and slides from 1971 to 1976 programs have been scanned and archived.
Note: Your mailing label shows the date your membership expires. Please mail dues payment, 1 month prior to the date listed above. This space is blank for complementary copies of the newsletter. Please renew EXPIRED memberships as soon as possible to continue support of the Museum program.

**Membership Application**

Fill out, detach, and mail to: National Museum of Forest Service History, P.O. Box 2772
Missoula, MT 59806-2772

Mr. ___ Ms. ___ Dr. ___ Name: ________________________________
Address _____________________________________________________
City/State/Zip: _____________________________________________
Daytime Ph.: ______________________
E-mail: ___________________________ □ New □ Renewal □ GIFT

□ YES— Start sending my newsletter to the email address above.

**Membership Categories**

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**Mt. Baker National Forest Exhibit**

The exhibit has moved to Heather Meadows Visitor Center until late September. The display moved from the Whatcom-Bellingham Visitor Center after an eight month stay. The display describes the cultural, physical and historical points of interest of the Mt. Baker Ranger District in northwestern Washington State.