

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received AUG 21 1984
date entered SEP 20 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic North Idaho 1910 Fire Sites TR

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number Shoshone and Benewah Counties N/A not for publication

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Idaho code 016 county Shoshone 79
Benewah code 09

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sites	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple (see individual inventory forms)

street & number N/A

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of N/A state N/A

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Shoshone County Courthouse, Wallace & Benewah County Courthouse, St. Maries

street & number N/A

city, town N/A state Idaho

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Idaho Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1972 federal state county local

depository for survey records Idaho State Historical Society

city, town Boise state Idaho

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This nomination includes a variety of sites of exceptional historic significance because of their association with North Idaho's 1910 fire. All major aspects that have historic site features are represented in this inventory. These include shelters in which trapped fire fighters survived; a stream location where a force of fire fighters was spared; railway stations where residents assembled to get on relief trains; Edward Pulaski's escape-route trail; a townsite of a community totally wiped out by that conflagration; and two Forest Service memorials in special cemetery sections for firefighters and forest residents lost in that disaster. Descriptions of individual sites are provided on inventory forms submitted with this nomination.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1910-1924 **Builder/Architect** N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

North Idaho's 1910 fire swept through a vast area of timbered ridges rising above major river canyons. Normally abundantly watered, this rough terrain became an extremely difficult area for fire fighters when more than four months of summer drought turned it into hundreds of miles of fuel ready to explode by August 20. A variety of cultural resources and historic sites are related to this exceptional fire. These include tunnels, trails, and streams in which endangered fire crews and residents sought safety and transportation systems utilized to escape. Communities totally wiped out and historic areas in which evidence of that conflagration survives after a quarter-century of forest recovery are included in these sites. Special sections of two cemeteries for fire victims also are maintained as reminders of that disaster. Site inventory forms describe these resources and locations in detail.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Betty Goodwin Spencer, The Big Blowup (Caldwell, Caxton Printers, 1956), 286 pp.

Ruby El Hult, Northwest Disaster: Avalanche and Fire (Portland: Binsfords and Mort, 1960), pp. 99-222.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property see individual inventory sheets

1:24,000;

Quadrangle name see individual inventory sheets

Quadrangle scale 1:62,500

UMT References see individual inventory sheets

A

Zone		Easting							

B

Zone		Easting							

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

See individual inventory sheets

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state Idaho code 016 county Shoshone code 79

state Idaho code 016 county Benewah code 09

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cort Sims/Forest Archaeologist

organization U.S. Forest Service, Panhandle National Forest date 10 Feb 1984

street & number P.O. Box 310 telephone (208) 765-7306

city or town Coeur d'Alene state Idaho

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Merle Wells

title Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer

date 10 July 1984

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

See continuation sheet for listing date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

1910 North Idaho Fire Sites
Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

Forest fires, which had created severe problems for loggers for years, became a worse menace after 1900 than they had been before commercial lumbering and rail lines brought increased risk to timberlands. Some fire protection systems were organized before 1910, but they were not yet very effective. An exceptionally dry summer--with practically no rain from April until September--accounted for North Idaho's 1910 fire hazard. More than 1400 fires, including many large ones burning out of control, were scattered over several adjacent national forests by mid- August, when Forest Service staticians lost count and had no more opportunity to identify or keep track of new fires anyway. That overwhelming emergency led President William Howard Taft to arrange for military assistance to greatly expanded fire crews distributed over a wide area. Finally on August 20, a number of major fires exploded, creating their own hurricane gales that imperiled crews and forest residents alike. Aside from setting protective backfires and seeking shelter in deep mine or rail tunnels or in large streams, nothing could be done to protect anyone caught out in a vast timbered area. Small communities were evacuated by special trains, and fires were fought in larger centers. Shifting winds saved some mining communities, but for two days nothing could be done to combat a fire storm moving seventy miles an hour and cutting off escape routes for crews in many drainages. Through remarkable ingenuity, most firefighters survived that ordeal. A confirmed loss of 85 crewmen and forest residents was surprisingly light, considering what could have happened without resolute leadership and, in come cases, good fortune under difficult conditions. Edward Pulaski, a forest ranger of unusual talent, survived a particularly hazardous ordeal with most of his crew in a Placer Creek prospect tunnel above Wallace. A Forest Service report of this incident showed how terrifying that fire storm had become:

Pulaski was in charge of about one hundred fifty men distributed over a distance of several miles along the divide between Big Creek of the Coeur d'Alene river and Big Creek of the St. Joe river. When the danger conditions became imminent he rounded up about forty of his men who were in the danger zone and cut off from safety on the west side of the fire where the other men were located and started with them down the mountain toward Wallace, a distance of ten miles. When he got about half way however he found that he was cut off by new fires. At the sight of this his men became panic stricken, but he assured them that he would still get them to a place of safety. Being thoroughly familiar with the region he know of two prospect tunnels near by, the shorter being about fifty feet in length and the longer about one hundred feet in length. Not being certain as to whether or not he could reach the largest and safest, but putting a wet gunny sack over his head he penetrated the dense smoke to where he could see the largest tunnel, and finding it was safe he rushed back to his men and hurried them to the tunnel, getting them there just in time to get them inside before the fire reached them. The portion of his crew with him consisted of forty-two men and two horses. He got all of his men and horses inside of the tunnel, with the exception of one man who had fallen a few hundred feet behind and was

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

1910 North Idaho Fire Sites
Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

caught by the fire before he could reach the tunnel. The intense heat caused by the forest fire outside of the tunnel caused the cold air of the tunnel to rush out and the smoke and hot air to rush in. The timbers supporting the tunnel caught fire and Pulaski stood as near to the mouth of the tunnel as he could, and from a little stream that flowed from the bottom of the tunnel dipped water with his hat to dash upon the burning timbers, until he was badly burned and fell unconscious. Prior to becoming unconscious himself he had commanded all his men to lie on their faces for protection. All of the men were evidently unconscious for a portion of the time. One of the men however having sustained less injury than the others, recovered to the extent that he was able to crawl out of the tunnel, and the fires by this time had subsided sufficiently for him to drag himself into Wallace and notify the Forest Office. This was about three o'clock in the morning. A crew was immediately sent to the tunnel and all of the men and the horses were removed. Although nearly all of the forty-two men were still in a helpless condition after being taken to the hospital in Wallace, they rapidly recovered their strength, with the exception of five who had smothered before they were reached.

An enormous smoke cloud from Idaho's 1910 fire darkened skies in Toronto and Montreal and interfered with North Atlantic navigation for several days. Parts of adjacent Montana and Washington forests were lost in this conflagration, which has not been matched in intensity or in national significance.

Other severe fires, especially in 1919 and 1934, also consumed vast areas of Idaho's forest lands. But after 1910, a more effective system for fire suppression was instituted in order to preserve important lumber resources. Lookout towers were built on high peaks, and guard stations were manned in strategic locations. Roads were built to provide access to timbered areas, for fire protection as well as logging and recreation. National Forests were managed for conservation objectives, with improved defense against fire a primary goal.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received 8/21/84
date entered 9/20/84

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 1 of 1

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name North Idaho 1910 Fire Sites Thematic Resources

State Benewah and Shoshone Counties, IDAHO

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

- | | | | | |
|-----|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | Pulaski, Edward, Tennel
and Placer Creek Escape Route | Entered in the
National Register | <i>fu</i>
Keeper | <u><i>Melores Byers</i> 9/20/84</u> |
| | | | Attest | _____ |
| 2. | Bullion Tunnel | Entered in the
National Register | <i>fu</i>
Keeper | <u><i>Melores Byers</i> 9/20/84</u> |
| | | | Attest | _____ |
| 3. | Halm Creek, Bean Creek Fire | Entered in the
National Register | <i>fu</i>
Keeper | <u><i>Melores Byers</i> 9/20/84</u> |
| | | | Attest | _____ |
| 4. | Grand Forks | Entered in the
National Register | <i>fu</i>
Keeper | <u><i>Melores Byers</i> 9/20/84</u> |
| | | | Attest | _____ |
| 5. | Cedar Snags (St. Joe
North Fork) | Entered in the
National Register | <i>fu</i>
Keeper | <u><i>Melores Byers</i> 9/20/84</u> |
| | | | Attest | _____ |
| 6. | St. Maries 1910 Fire
Memorial | Entered in the
National Register | <i>fu</i>
Keeper | <u><i>Melores Byers</i> 9/20/84</u> |
| | | | Attest | _____ |
| 7. | Wallace 1910 Fire Memorial | Entered in the
National Register | <i>fu</i>
Keeper | <u><i>Melores Byers</i> 9/20/84</u> |
| | | | Attest | _____ |
| 8. | Avery Depot | Entered in the
National Register | <i>fu</i>
Keeper | <u><i>Melores Byers</i> 9/20/84</u> |
| | | | Attest | _____ |
| 9. | Northern Pacific Depot
(NR 10 August 1978) | | Keeper | _____ |
| | | | Attest | _____ |
| 10. | | | Keeper | _____ |
| | | | Attest | _____ |