

1917 Fires. Sound familiar?

Our thanks to SLHS member Jean Lafriniere for sharing the following information.

On August 28, 1917 a Seeley Lake related article appeared in the Spokesman-Review newspaper:

- . About 100 fires were burning in western Montana, and in some cases, people were fleeing from remote mountain areas.
- . “Driving their small herds before the farm wagons and prairie schooners, on which their household goods had been loaded, homesteaders...tramped into Corlett, a small town,” near Seeley Lake.
- . Most of the refugees “had fled in such haste that they had not even cooking utensils when they reached Corlett, and reports today indicate that suffering might result.”
- . Three fires were threatening to merge near Seeley Lake, including one that was “completely out of control.”
- . The paper ran a roundup of some of the other fires, including one at Lolo Hot Springs, west of Missoula. The fire was still “sweeping through timber stands,” but it was headed away from the resort.

- . The attached photo was taken north of Seeley Lake on the Swan-Ovando Wagon Road during that era. It shows a burned area in the valley bottom with regrowth started that are probably today's grown trees. The fleeing homesteaders would have been located on what is now private land along Hwy 83. Corlett was hardly even a "small town--comprised of a hotel/store and horse handling facilities.

- . Will similar stories be heard another 100 years from now? Stay tuned.