



Hollingshead's Crew – West Fork Big Creek

“Mr. Hollingshead is about 22 years of age. Although a young man, he has always exercised good judgment.

He is conservative and had served as Forest Guard in the immediate region in which he had charge of men for two years; therefore was thoroughly familiar with the country. He had charge of a crew on the west fork of Big Creek fighting a fire that was coming northeast from Trout Creek. He had a crew of about 60 men. When the terrific winds scattered the fires all over the region and they discovered that they were surrounded by fire, all of his men with the exception of 19 worked through the fire line to a place of safety on an area that had previously burned over. Nineteen of these men, being thoroughly panic stricken rushed down the hill ahead of the fire to a little cabin where five pack horses were stationed. They found that the fire was all around them. They went into the cabin and remained there until the roof began falling in. They rushed out of this and tried to break through the fire line, but the fire was so terrific that 18 out of the 19 perished in the flames within a few feet of the cabin. The nineteenth man accidentally worked his way through the fire line and came out to the St. Joe two days later with all the skin off his face and hands and his clothing practically burned from his body. After six weeks in the hospital this man fully recovered. Mr. Hollingshead the next day went into the place where these men perished and found eighteen men, five horses and a large black bear that had perished in the flames all at the same place. The men were wrapped in blankets and canvas and were buried where they perished. They were all burned beyond recognition. The cabin where these men perished was known as the Henry Dittman cabin, and located on a tributary of Big Creek, known as Deadman Gulch near the south line of Section 35, Township 47 North, Range 2 East.”

Excerpt from the collection of “When The Mountains Roared”, (page 18-19) USDA Forest Service