

HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK

Listing of the Comments on Fires from the Superintendent's Monthly and Annual Reports

FY Ended 6/1/1878

"Early in March last we had a terrible conflagration, which burned almost the entire business portion of the town. The buildings on the east side of Valley street from the southwest corner of the reservation proper, including three bath-houses, up to near the Big Iron Bath House, were entirely consumed. I have had great trouble in preventing parties from rebuilding on this portion of the reservation, but have thus far succeeded."

FY Ended 6/30/1881

"Since the withdrawal of the military force from here I have been very much annoyed by parties trespassing upon the reservation... I therefore suggest that Congress be asked to pass a stringent law providing punishment for all manner of trespasses upon the reservation, such as I have named, also for...firing the woods on the mountains of the reservation, thereby destroying the timber and shrubery."

FY Ended 6/30/1899

"Danger of Fire"

"The exposure of the Government's property to the danger of fire is such as seems to demand attention. The pumping station and the free bath house are so situated that reasonable fire protection may be had from the city, but this is not the case as to the office and residence building, which is situated in Fountain street back of the Arlington Hotel, there being no water mains on this street and none nearer than Central avenue, some 700 feet away."

"The danger to which the building is exposed is from the Arlington Hotel and the old reservation office building, on the reservation side, and several frame buildings, including a four-story frame and a livery stable on the opposite side, the greatest danger being that in case of fire in the Fountain street side of the Arlington Hotel or in the high frame building on the opposite side, either of which would greatly endanger this building by cutting off communication through Fountain street, the only way to reach the building with a line of hose. For these reasons, and for the better protection of the valuable maps and other documents contained in this building, I respectfully recommend that the sum of \$1,150, or so much thereof as may be necessary, be allotted for the following items, necessary to afford reasonable fire protection:

700 feet best 6-inch high pressure iron pipe.....	\$525
1 fire hydrant.....	85
500 feet best woven cotton web 4-inch high-pressure fire hose.	425
1 hand hose reel.....	40
2 nozzles, couplers, and spanners.....	15
Oakum, lead, and fittings for laying pipe.....	60
Total.....	1,150

(Labor by reservation maintenance force.)

FY Ended 6/30/1905

"...the disastrous conflagration which destroyed a large territorial area of the improved section of the city, February 25, 1905."

6/30/1908

"Hot Springs Mountain...the slope above was thoroughly cleaned of stones and underbrush, and the dead leaves raked off to protect the young pines in case of forest fire. On Hot Springs, North and West Mountains...the underbrush was also cleared off and burned as a precautionary measure against fire."

March 1912

"..East Mountain which was raked, cleaned, and burned."

March 1913

"Raked up and burned trash on East Mountain and Whittington Park."

February 1914

25th and 26th "Burned and raked slope of mountain." (maint. report)

FY Ended 6/30/1914

"Fire of September 5, 1913."

"While the bathhouses have enjoyed a fairly prosperous year, there can be no question but that this city suffered greatly as a result of the disastrous conflagration of September 5, 1913. The nature of this holocaust was such that the press gave considerable publicity to the fact, although the harmful effects of this was in a measure offset by the issuance of an official bulletin to the press by the department."

"In this fire 518 buildings were destroyed, entailing a property loss of between \$2,000,000 and \$4,000,000. The city, however, quickly recovered from this catastrophe, and many of the buildings were rebuilt, while a great many more of the buildings have been replaced by more substantial and better buildings during the past 10 months, and there are now ample accommodations for all visitors to this resort. Fortunately, the flames did not extend to the reservation. The number of visitors to the Hot Springs Reservation during the year is estimated at 125,000."

November 1914

"Put out 4 fires on Hot Springs and West Mountains after same had attained considerable headway."

3rd "Put out fire on Hot Springs Mountain" (maint. report)

4th "Put out fire on West Mountain" (maint. report)

16th "put out fire" (maint. report)

21st "fought fire" (maint. report)

25th "fought forest fires" (maint. report)

February 1915

"For 15 days of the month the entire force of laborers was engaged in burning off all underbrush and cleaning up the west slope of Hot Springs Mountain."

6th to 20th "Burned and raked slopes of Hot Springs Mountain." (maint. report)

FY Ended 6/30/1915

"Burned off all underbrush and thoroughly cleaned up west slope of Hot Springs Mountain during early spring."

### February 1935

"On February 23 John Thomas, negro, was arrested for dumping and burning trash on the park along the trail behind the Opera House on West Mountain. He was ordered to clean up all trash, and given drastic reprimand and warning, and was dismissed from further action due to his mental condition."

"Two bad fires occurred on West Mountain in the latter part of February. The regular routine reports on these fires have been submitted separately. The fires were handled in a proper manner and are considered bad not so much in respect to the amount of damage which they incurred but rather in respect to the possibility of extreme damage which they held. Both of them occurred during very high wind periods and only for the prompt action of park forces would have practically ruined the entire south slope of West Mountain. As it was, damage was restricted to possibly twelve acres total."

### March 1935

"There were six fires during the past month, the largest being four acres and another 1-1/2 acres and a third of one acre. A particularly bad fire condition obtained on all park mountain slopes during the month and undoubtedly was a hold-over of last summer's drought conditions."

### Nature Notes September 1935

"A hot fire in August which burned in areas adjoining the Park on Sugarloaf Mountain did irreparable damage to the trees. In some cases it killed the trees completely, but in many cases it burned them so severely that all the leaves browned and withered so that the tree was apparently dead. But after a month passed and freshening rains came, new leaves began to show..."

### Nature Notes March 1936

"Firebird", by S. Ralph Austin, Park Ranger

"On the morning of March 24, Mrs. Austin went on one of her occasional hikes up Hot Springs Mountain, and after gaining the top, stopped to rest near the shelter house by the observation tower, to regain her breath before starting the descent of the slope. While enjoying the view and the various phenomena of spring, her attention was attracted to a bird which proved to be a phenomenon indeed."

"This was a gray bird (Mockingbird) of a species unknown to her, since she is quite unfamiliar with Southern fauna. While watching the bird, she noticed it drop something, and her curiosity was especially aroused by the apparent weight of the object. Investigation proved it to be a lighted cigaret, and as she watched, it gradually set the leaves to smouldering where it had dropped. Immediately she extinguished this incipient conflagration in its infancy."

"I do not know whether birds have been listed previously as a cause for forest fires, but apparently they must be henceforth."

### June 1936

"On June 29 two juveniles were apprehended for setting fire to the forest on North Mountain and were committed to their parents, who were leaving within a day or so for their home in Iowa."

#### April 1940

"One fire of 0.15 acres occurred caused through the carelessness of a smoker."

"A demonstration of fire fighting equipment, fire truck and forest fire fighting tools was given to park rangers, laborers and CCC enrollees on April 3. A meeting of all park rangers was held on April 25 for a lecture on fire fighting methods and fire protection planning. Methods of better organization and inter-office cooperation were suggested."

#### May 1940

"No reportable fires have occurred. Two back pumps and several fire line tools have been added to the protection equipment."

"Approved plans were received for the construction of a fire house, using west end of existing utility buildings fronting on Whittington Avenue. At the close of the month this job was approximately 30% completed and will be totally completed during the month of June."

#### June 1940

"One small fire about one-fourth of an acre burned adjacent to the park boundary. The unusual wet weather has greatly helped in keeping down fire danger conditions. A fire protection plan better adapted to present conditions is being formulated."

"Fire house job was completed during the month, with the exception of installation of overhead door which had not been received. With its installation this job will be completed, and it is contemplated this will be done under National Park Service auspices."

#### FY Ended 6/30/1940

"Several pieces of firefighting equipment have been added to our supply during the year."

"Firefighting tools, truck and other equipment of this nature have been consolidated at a central location, thereby making this equipment more accessible in an emergency."

"A seven-man fire tool cache has been established in the Gulpha Gorge campground."

"The fire threat at this park has not been so great for the past several months, since the summer season has been comparatively wet and cool, but from December 20, 1939 through April 26, 1940 eleven reportable fires occurred. Four of these fires were outside the park boundary and the area burned within the park by the other fires was negligible, with the exception of one fire occurring on March 17, which burned 9.1 acres. Damage to the forest resources value was slight."

"The total acreage involved in all reportable fires within the park was 12.13."

"A Fire Protection Plan better adapted to present conditions at Hot Springs has been formulated."

#### July 1940

"No reportable fires."

"The fire truck and tool cache moved July 13 to the new location at the utility area, which will permit easier egress of fire equipment. The consolidation of fire tools, mobile equipment and work shop within the same room will undoubtedly increase the efficiency of operation."

"July 6, a seven-man fire tool cache was established at the ranger's residence, Gulpha Gorge Campground."

#### August 1940

"A comprehensive fire plan for forest protection in the park has been completed and issued. Most of the work of preparing the fire plan was accomplished by the Chief Ranger's office."

#### September 1940

"Fire No. 11, of less than one acre in extent occurred on West Mountain the 9th. This was also the warmest day of the year (98 degrees)."

#### October 1940

"Fire No. 12, Hot Springs Mountain No. 4, of 0.05 acres occurred on October 17. A non-reportable fire on Indian Mountain approached within a quarter mile of the park boundary. Technical assistance and three hours of labor were given by National Park Service personnel in suppression of the fire."

"The park fire atlas was completed for the years 1935-9, inclusive, and copies forwarded to the Regional and Washington Offices."

"A regular preseason fire training class was held during the earlier part of the month. The primary suppression crew and rangers were in attendance."

#### November 1940

"No reportable fires occurred within the park."

"Instruments for a fire danger rating station were received November 30 from Region III office. Location of the station was determined with the aid of the Regional Forester."

#### January 1941

"Fire danger has been relatively low; considerable rain and cold weather has kept the forest ground cover rather moist during the month. There were three man-caused fires, both resulting from carelessness, and the parties responsible have been fully informed of their responsibilities under the law affecting such negligence."

"January 8, a fire on West Mountain burned 0.14 acre, caused by children playing with matches."

"January 20, a fire adjacent to Sugar Loaf Mountain burned 0.26 acres, caused by a resident burning grass in back yard."

#### February 1941

"January 31, a small incendiary fire of 0.01 acre on West Mountain was suppressed by rangers on patrol."

"February 14, two fires were suppressed on Sugar Loaf Mountain by the National Park Service crew, one within the park of 1.25 acres and the other of 1.75 acres outside but endangering park land. The fires were incendiary in origin and the responsibility placed by apprehension of T.J. Mattingly, Hot Springs. T.J. Mattingly, Hot Springs, plead guilty February 14 to 'Setting Fire to Government Timber,' before the United States Commissioner and was bound over to the United States Grand Jury."

"February 17, a 'cigarette' fire on Hot Springs Mountain was promptly extinguished by the labor crew that was working nearby. Area burned, 60 square feet."

"February 3,4,5, a pre-fire season training school was held for rangers and firefighting crew. The training period was of much interest and benefit to all in attendance."

"February 7, couplings for the new fire hose were installed and satisfactory inspection, by use, was made of the complete hose."

"February 8, construction of fire danger stations units (shelter erected on Hot Springs Mountain) were commenced. The fence about the station area was placed February 27, with installation of units to follow shortly."

"All fires to date have been man caused and responsibility for the origin of each has been made, with the exception of the cigarette fire February 17."

#### March 1941

"Ranger Wilson appeared as witness before the United States Grand Jury at Fort Smith, Arkansas, March 24, in the case of U.S.A. vs. T.J. Mattingly."

"Ranger Dickison was in attendance at Fire Protection Training School held at Broken Bow, Oklahoma, March 11-13, for CCC supervisory personnel."

"Weather Bureau station was moved March 17 to the fire danger station."

"There was a 0.12 acre fire on West Mountain caused by the negligent disposal of burning tobacco."

#### April 1941

"Two crews (CCC) of twenty men each were given advanced fire suppression training during April. An average of four man-days was expended during April on this training."

"Education on fire prevention has been placed in the forefront by rangers to numerous groups of clubs and schools."

"April 6, Fire #8, Class A, .04 acre occurred on Hot Springs Mountain."

"April 11, Fire #9, Class B, .50 acre occurred on Hot Springs Mountain."

"April 21, Fire #10, Class A, .14 acre occurred on Hot Springs Mountain."

"April 26, Fire #11, Class A, .02 acre occurred on Hot Springs Mountain."

"April 27, Fire #12, Class A, .25 acre occurred on West Mountain."

"All were smoker fires from discarded cigarets or matches."

#### May 1941

"May 14, Fire #13, Class A, .21 acre occurred on Hot Springs Mountain. Caused through negligent disposal of cigaret."

#### June 1941

"Fire danger conditions were low throughout the month."

#### FY Ended 6/30/1941

"During the past fiscal year, 15 reportable fires occurred within the park, 11 of them being Class A fires and 4 falling within Class B. A total acreage of 4.842 was affected by the fires. Suppression costs totaled \$35.95. Although more reportable fires occurred this year than last, a smaller acreage was involved."

"A pre-season fire training school was held early in October and was very beneficial in preparing the personnel for the fire fighting duties ahead."

"A fire danger rating station was constructed on Hot Springs Mountain and the Weather Bureau recording instruments moved to the same location. The coordination of these facilities renders each more effective."

### February 1943

"On February 12, all rangers and laborers attended a fire school from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., in which classroom lectures and demonstrations presented various problems in forest and building fire prevention, presuppression and suppression. Methods of treatment and practice in first aid were reviewed. The larger amount of schooltime was spent in field practice."

"Several fires outside the park's protective zone but threatening the park were suppressed by park personnel and others."

"February 27, a one-acre fire within the park's protective zone, which originated outside and did not enter the park, was suppressed by the park's fire crew in cooperation with the city. The fire was started by a six-year old boy playing with matches."

"February 28, a fire (0.24 acre) within the park on North Mountain was suppressed by regular personnel. The fire started due to careless disposition of burning tobacco or matches by some visitor to the park."

### March 1943

"The chief ranger incorporated into fire prevention talks to some 150 school children at two separate city grade schools, considerable nature lore and relative naturalist interpretive material."

"March 3, Fire No. 3, Class B burned 0.52 acre on Hot Springs Mountain."

"March 9, Fire prevention talk was given to East Side Grade School."

"March 24, Fire prevention talk was given to Ramble Grade School."

"March 24, Fire No. 4, Class A, burned 0.05 acre on North Mountain."

### April 1943

"It is a pleasure to report that we did not experience a single forest fire during the month. The last ten days of the month were unseasonably dry, and with one exception (ground cover greening) was forest fire weather."

"On April 21, rangers posted several of the new fire prevention posters (Hitler-Tojo) in various comfort stations, trail shelter houses, etc. Also, one of the posters was placed on the museum bulletin board, where it always attracts the visitor's immediate attention. Undoubtedly this is the most effective poster yet furnished for the prevention of forest fires caused by carelessness."

### June 1934

"Numerous visitors were cautioned...in the prevention of forest fires while using park roads and trails."

"Several items concerning fire prevention methods were released to the local press during the month."

"An effort has been made to reduce the fire hazard along the park boundary by removal of tops and limbs left by logging operations."

"One class B fire burning 0.75 acre occurred June 24."

"One class A fire burning .18 occurred June 30."

"Both of the above fires were man-caused, the "B" fire from a carelessly discarded match or burning tobacco, and the "A" fire from negligence of our National Park Service insect control crew."

CY Ended 12/31/1980

"Thirteen fires burned within the Park this year covering a total of twenty acres. Eleven fires were man caused, one resulted from a lightning strike, and one resulted from a structural fire spread. The 1980 fire season was spread throughout the year due to the extreme dry conditions and high temperatures. Total cost for suppression of fires was \$9,000. The Chief Ranger and resource technician were active in the Garland County Fire Prevention Cooperative. The Fire Management Plan was completed for the Park."

CY Ended 12/31/1981

"Wildfires - There were 5 man-caused wildfires in 1981, which burned a total of 15 acres and one lightning caused wildfire that burned 2 acres.

"Prescribed Burn - In December, a 2-acre prescribed burn was conducted to lower fuel levels, control exotic plants, and for training of park personnel. The burn was successfully completed partly due to assistance from the USFS Fire Management Office."

CY Ended 12/31/1982

"Approximately eight (8) acres were burned as a result of six (6) wildland fires at Hot Springs National Park in 1982. The largest fire consumed five acres and was caused by lightning. Four fires of known or suspected arson occurred; one arsonist was arrested by division personnel, charged, and prosecuted. The remaining wildfire resulted from a minor spread of a structural fire adjacent to the park boundary."

"Hot Springs National Park completed the initial survey stage of the newly instituted NPS fire management program, FIREPRO, and submitted the information to the regional office. A computer derived level of desired wildfire response readiness will be determined sometime in 1983. The park's fire weather station was made operational in 1982. As part of the FIREPRO study, the park completed a new fire management plan based on the Incident Command System element of the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS). In response to the need to establish an Incident Command Center to be in compliance with NIIMS, a former government quarters garage behind the RM/VP office at 527 Reserve Avenue was converted to an Incident Command Center and training facility. In order to gain needed room and a more central location, the park fire cache was moved from the HOSP maintenance facility to 527 Reserve. The garage building of the former Superintendent's residence was converted to house immediate response equipment and the park fire truck. Reserve fire supplies were stored in the remodeled basement of the RM/VP office."

CY Ended 12/31/1983

"A total of 3.5 acres were burned as a result of three man-caused fires. The largest fire of 1.5 acres was quickly contained with assistance of the Hot Springs Fire Department. Other fires originated from one, a structural fire and two, welding slag at the Hot Springs Tower."

"Wildland Fire History and the Effects of Fire on Vegetative Communities at Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas: Dr. Forrest Johnson of the University of Oklahoma began collecting fuel loading data and will continue into 1984. The findings will be especially important to the Park fire regime as a decision-making tool in analyzing forest vegetative succession."