

AFD Ep 450 Links and Notes - The Pulaski Tool [Rachel] - Recording Nov 27, 2022

A book we read for background but don't really recommend was "*The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire That Saved America*" 2009 by Timothy Egan)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulaski_tool

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/burn-pulaski/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Fire_of_1910

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Forest_Service#History

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gifford_Pinchot

The Great Fire of 1910 was a fire that burned 3 million acres in just one weekend in August 1910. It spanned across Washington, Idaho, and Montana, and even stretched north into British Columbia. Strong winds and intense drought, along with a Forest Service policy of putting out all fires as soon as possible with no prescribed burns, created conditions for the largest forest fire in history. Many small fires combined to create a massive superfire that raged and killed 87 people, destroyed many mining and timber towns, and sent a billion dollars worth of timber up in smoke.

One of the men that valiantly fought the Big Burn was Ed Pulaski. [PBS] *Ed Pulaski joined the Forest Service when he was 40 years old; his previous experience had been in mining, prospecting, ranching, blacksmithing, and construction, among other things.* He couldn't be more different from the typical Forest Service worker. Gifford Pinchot, the first head of the Forest Service, was born to a wealthy Eastern family and studied the French forestry system in Europe, and many of the first Forest Service employees came from similar backgrounds. Pulaski's working class background served him and his men well during The Big Burn. *Trapped by the raging fire, Pulaski saved the majority of his men by sheltering in an old mine shaft for hours until the blaze outside subsided.*

Although gravely wounded during the fire, Pulaski set out to make an instrument that would help to fight future forest fires. [PBS] *One source describes Pulaski getting his hands on a tool invented by his supervisor, USFS Supervisor William Weigle, that was an axe-mattock-shovel combination. In his personal blacksmith shop, Pulaski modified the tool -- getting rid of the shovel head and lengthening the axe and adze blades -- and thus the Pulaski was conceived.*

Wildland firefighters began regularly using the Pulaski by the early 1920s, and it has become a standard tool for fighting wildfires. A common use for the Pulaski is in creating fire breaks -- sections of land devoid of vegetation which can help contain forest fires. Firefighters chop down trees with the axe side, cut away roots and shrubs with the end of the adze blade, and dig barriers with the wide portion of the adze. (The tool has remained largely unchanged in its design, though the Super Pulaski is a slight improvement, with longer, evenly weighted blades made of stronger metal, and a longer, sturdier handle.)

[Pulaski wiki] *Pulaski further refined the tool by 1913, and it came into use in the Rocky Mountain region. In 1920 the Forest Service began contracting for the tool to be commercially manufactured but its use remained regional for some years. The tool became a national standard in the 1930s.*

[PBS] *Ed Pulaski's original prototype is on display at the Wallace District Mining Museum in Wallace, Idaho. His initials are engraved on the intersection of the axe and the adze.*