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# Newsletter

CAL FIRE MUSEUM

## Status report on the pass through funding

Resolution FIN-5-18am was introduced at the 2018 Cal Fire Local 2881 convention and adopted by more than 2/3rds of the delegates. It provides a more stable funding mechanism to sustain and improve the Historical Society & Museum for the California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection (Cal Fire) and importantly, assures a possible major donor enough funding is available to properly continue museum operations for both a facility and the assets owned and held in trust for protection and display.

At the time, a very promising series of discussions were taking place with a possible donor of a parcel of land and building of adequate size to meet the current and near future needs of the museum.

During the resolution process, a major topic of discussion was the need for the museum to assure the possible donor of enough funds to maintain a facility and properly fund the continued operational costs of the museum.

In addition, it was also a point of the presentations to the committee and convention delegates to discuss the future options should the donation from the building donor not come to fruition. While the goals remain the same, the methodology to achieve the specific goal of an appropriate facility also included the outright purchase of a site and building. These options were brought up since the then current proposition was not a done deal.

Unfortunately, the donor backed out of his offer. While this is a setback, it certainly does not spell doom and gloom. It only delays the process of achieving the goal of obtaining an appropriate facility.

The museum did not put all its eggs in one basket. Several other options are still in play including the outright purchase of a site. These options continue to be explored today.

The voluntary contributions along with the funds provided from the 2018 resolution have continued to build a stable financial base and will provide the necessary funding to purchase an appropriate site if that is the only remaining option. Obviously, the goal is still to obtain a donated site, that

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# EVOLUTION OF CALIFORNIA'S WILDLAND FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM

By C. Raymond Clar

During this fire season of 1927 the new Division could boast of 28 State Rangers, six patrolmen, seven inspectors and nine lookout stations. Twenty county boards of supervisors had entered some type of contractual arrangement under which the State Forester provided a patrolman or a ranger to handle fire protection over all or a specified portion of a particular county.

From 1928 to 1932 there was a rapid increase in federal aid made available under the Clark-McNary Act. The reimbursement payments made to California rose from less than \$40,000 to more than\$160,000 in this period. This source of income naturally became very important in the State Forester's working budget.

The Board of Forestry made allotments from this fund as its judgment dictated. Then about 1929 the representatives of independent agencies, such as organized lumbermen, and most especially Los Angeles County, began making demands for shares of the fund which they claimed had been properly "earned" by the original fire prevention expenditures of their clients.

The U.S. Forest Service was a major claimant for any money allotments that might be made by the Board. This was because of the four and a half million acres of private and State owned forest land that agency protected within and adjacent to the National Forests. As a matter of fact, the Forest Service was a prime beneficiary of the mentioned compulsory patrol fee law of 1923.

In 1930 this Board of Forestry strove valiantly to initiate a Fire Prevention Plan (as they termed it) which would quadruple the legislative appropriation in successive steps by 1936. The ultimate sum they envisioned was an annual State appropriation of \$800,000 aside from a contingent fire emergency fund. The Depression and the defeat of Governor Young quietly ended the Board's statewide education campaign.

#### Matching Money versus Allotment by Need

State Forestry officials could approach the forest land fire protection job along several avenues. They could make grants in aid to another fire agency; or they could undertake the job with State personnel. In either case there remained the question of a money allotment formula for a particular area. Should they institute a money matching scheme as an incentive to develop more material interest on the part of local government and private parties? Or should a straightforward determination of fire protection needs govern the State contribution? The latter proposal could take the shape of a money grant to another agency or the assignment of a planned and specified number of State men and firefighting facilities on State protected ground.

For a dozen years there was a pulling and hauling among individuals or groups favoring one or the other formula, depending upon their honest convictions or the calculated benefits from the particular system.

At the same time it can probably be accurately stated that some of the participants did not clearly distinguish between the two basic formulas. At any rate until approximately 1943 State forest fire money was

expended under a blending of the two concepts.

It is easy to claim that local interest will be stirred up if an outside agent makes an incentive contribution in direct proportion to the local effort. What should be kept in mind is that under such a scheme the rich can get richer to the detriment of the deserving poor.

Such a aggravation arose early in respect to demands from Los Angeles County upon the State Forester. Representatives of that county insisted that because they were willing to appropriate so willingly for fire protection, a relatively large share of available State or federal funds should be transmitted to them as heir duly earned share.

The repeated response from Sacramento was to the effect that other areas deserving of State interest would be improperly treated if only a matching, or "local earning" formula were used to distribute the insufficient money resources at hand.

Then of course, there continuously existed the very practical problem which could have only an arbitrary solution at best. The question was: of the total funds spent for non-city fire protection in a populous, wealthy area, such as Los Angeles County, what portion could fairly be said to be for the protection of general widespread watershed values?

The State Forester and U.S. Regional Forester in 1929 named a figure in respect to an annual "Clarke-McNary expenditure ceiling" for Los Angeles County. They said that \$100,000 seemed reasonable rather than a sum three times that much, as locally claimed.

In much of the remainder of California of immediate interest to the board of Forestry, it must be stated in all honesty that many owners of young timber saw no economic value in it; few had the slightest knowledge of or reason for caring about watershed protection. And further, the thin population and lean property tax base were not conductive to any money matching games; not even when played with the underfed State Board of Forestry of that period.

Under these circumstances, five county fire departments progressed independently and well. These were Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Mateo and Marin. They were variously referred to as non-Division, outside, or contract counties.

#### The Vital Impact of the Great Depression

By the spring of 1931 the effect of the great economic depression was weighing heavily upon California. This relatively self-sufficient State was being drenched in bitter juices of the Grapes of Wrath. Highways and railroads brought in new hordes of hungry itinerants daily. Incendiary fires were ignited to create work. Hungry families were sometimes fed in Division of Forestry fire camps because the women and children were there and they were hungry.

State unemployment camps were established during the winters of 1931-32 and 1932-33 for transient single men. S. Rexford Black, the representative of the organized lumber industry and chairman of the Board of Forestry, was certainly a prime instigator of the "labor camp" program.

The majority of these camps were established in timber or watershed areas throughout the foothills and lower elevations within the national Forests. State and federal forestry personnel served as camp and work supervisors throughout the winter lull between fire seasons. Transients came and went in the camps as they

pleased. They received food and a bed, tobacco, and some necessary clothing in return for a day's labor at firebreak or road construction.

In the spring of 1933 this program closed and the great Civilian Conservation Corps came into being. The story of the tremendous physical development of fire control facilities under the latter, and its sister federal emergency work programs, is well known. The unemployment relief programs commonly called WPA and SERA also made valuable contributions to the public forestry agencies.

It has been claimed quite reasonably that the California Division of Forestry found itself advanced a full twenty years beyond any otherwise contemplated progress in the construction of lookout stations, ranger stations, telephones lines and similar facilities. The non-Division agencies also received a full share of contributions from these unemployment relief programs.

In respect to the place of State Government in that peculiar upside down world of reality, it would be reasonable to say that the fiscal and social conservatives found themselves overwhelmed by the vicissitudes of economic circumstance. The Division of Forestry had grown lustily because of the forced feeding during the Depression era.

Three things occurred during the early 1930's (aside from the physical work accomplishment) which bore heavily upon the development of a State fire protection system. There was in 1932 1 serious attempt made by the Board of Forestry to determine a sound fiscal system for handling the State's money resources and fire protection responsibility. There was firmly established a system of hiring and stationing crews of firefighters throughout the State during the eight to ten month fire season. And there was initiated in 1944 a Master Fire Plan Study by a few young foresters in the State Forester's Office.

There would appear to be nothing spectacular in any of the three listed actions. Yet each bore heavily upon the eventual development of a firm policy for a statewide fire protection system.

While the transient labor camps were being endorsed and aided by State Director of Finance Roland Vandegrift, he (again in collaboration with Rex Black) proposed a study to determine the proper disposition of such State money as might be available to the Board of Forestry for fire protection. Vandegrift was the strong man in the James Rolph administration, and he very explicitly advised the Board to have no part of county cooperative money and thus get out of rural fire protection. Chairman Black concurred. Clearly, both gentlemen were concerned with rigid efficiency and economy in government. Mr. Black was especially concerned that the State was diluting its strength to the specific detriment of timberland fire protection.

#### The Sanford Plan

The Board hired a consultant, as agreed upon, to make a study of the situation. This was Forest Engineer Burnett Sanford. His subsequent scheme for allotting funds within and beyond the Division came to be called the Sanford Plan as a term of convenience.

Sanford and his small committee of advisors might well have held out for the rigid exclusion of structural and agricultural values in the complete State protection scheme. However, a devastating fact of fiscal life confronted them in respect to the inadequacy of State and Federal funds available to maintain a functioning State organization. It is probable also, that neither the State Forester, the Board, nor numerous assorted county supervisors, legislators and State Rangers out in the hinterlands were especially enchanted with the idea of a political and organizational fracture after a dozen years of tolerable togetherness. Vandegrift and Black were in a position to practically dictate the course of action for the Board and

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#### Continued form Page 4

Division of Forestry in 1932. But there did not exist any statistical proof that the timber-watershed area received in total, any less satisfactory fire protection under the cooperative system than it would have if the State Forester had divorced his agency from all rural interest. Unfortunately, this lack of detailed basic knowledge about the organization which could be used to shape operational policy was exactly what made the State Forester vulnerable to unsubstantiated criticism.

Sanford proceeded to zone out blocks of that portion of California which had come to be clearly accepted as timber or watershed land wherein the general public would suffer a loss in the event of wildfire. As stated above, this "State interest" area did not include land owned by the Federal Government nor land within the boundaries of corporate cities.

He had no faith in the accumulation of individual fire reports submitted by State Rangers during past years. Therefore, the very important historical aspect of fire incidence was ignored in the study. The intent was to place what might be termed a potential public fire loss value upon each zone block. This was done quite arbitrarily. Weighted values were given to young and mature redwood and young and mature pine. Watershed values ranged from one unit per acre on the north coast to 20 in some land blocks in Southern California. State Parks were given a high value, which is to say, a high priority of responsibility was placed upon the Division of Forestry for their protection.

The system was admittedly crude. But it did contain a little more statistical foundation for a judgement of the State's responsibility in each of the counties than had heretofore been used. However, the scheme contained two basic organizational and administrative weaknesses. First, it is erroneous to assume that the most efficient way to construct a statewide fire department is to establish protection units precisely where the values to be protected are situated, especially if not nearly enough protection units are available to spread around. Fires are not extinguished with money. The job is handled with men and equipment working against time.

Secondly, this measuring of county against county was amplifying precisely what Black and Vandegrift were trying to eliminate-the independent, county-firewarden State Ranger.

Be that as it may, each ranger unit now possessed a total relative weighted value which in theory could be used to divide up the fiscal resources available to the State Forester's Office from all sources. But not quite all sources. Suspicious Rangers had hinted that maybe appropriations made by County A were sometimes diverted to County B. Now was the time to set the record straight. County A's Ranger was credited with the County A appropriation in his working budget. And of course, the compulsory patrol fees collected in County A had to be allotted back to the place of origin. And it wasn't long before Los Angeles County asserted that the "earning" of federal aid money based upon these local contributions should also be credit to the unit of origin.

When this computation of money credits was allocated there remained for general distribution two items: (1) the general State support appropriation, and (2) the federal aid earning on that particular income. This "pool" of money was almost ready for distribution to all the units, both inside and outside the Division proper. There was still a central State Forester's Office to be maintained from the general appropriation. And there was the delicate matter of a contingent reserve, specifically appropriated for the Division of Forestry and available only for expenditure to hire, feed and transport temporary help in time of genuine

PAGE 6 Continue from page 5

fire emergency.

And there was another little matter. The first calculations indicated that some of the smaller units could not acquire enough income under this system to support a Ranger. So the fine ideas of the Sanford Plan were again compromised by providing a flat allotment of \$1,500 to each unit prior to dividing the residue in the pool on the basis of unit area weighted values.

#### Suppression Crew System Initiated

During an outburst of incendiarism in 1931 the idea of hiring full-time crews instead of pick-up labor to fight fire was tried an desperation in a couple of counties. First there was a gathering of a few regular Division patrolmen at key locations, and then publication of the fact that no firefighters were going to be hired under any circumstances. Resident incendiaries as well as hungry transients were thus put on notice.

It had been common for years to call upon the State Emergency Fund or to request deficiency appropriations to pay for so-called pick-up firefighters at 25 cents an hour. Since 1929 the demand upon the Treasury for this purpose and fluctuated from 50 to300 thousand dollars annually. This was a huge sum compared with the regular State Foresters budget of those days. Therefore, in 1932 the natural antipathy of the fiscal specialists to pay a fireman before any fire had started gave way to the reasonable idea that one dollar thus expended could prevent the expenditure of three that might well be required if abatement action was delayed and poorly organized. In that fire season, 250 men were hired at a monthly wage of \$25 and board. There was no recognized time off, night or day, for anyone during the fire season. About \$38,000 was transferred from the appropriated fire emergency fund for this purpose.

In a few years the total Division of Forestry expenditure for such crews increased to around \$300,000 annually. Los Angeles County in particular objected strenuously to not being cut in. The point at issue, both administrative and legal, hinged upon the regulations which permitted only qualified State official to expend State emergency fund money. Of late years the Division of Forestry has, of course, assisted other agencies in times of emergency to the fullest extent practicable.

Yet Los Angeles would have been well justified during the 1930's in protesting the Division use of emergency fund to hire crewmen on a monthly basis. But this was no time for any fiscal logic other than that which would effect economies. And the emergency fund had always been the source of money for the hiring of firefighters. At any rate, it must be admitted the basic concept of the Sanford Plan was violated in its incipiency; but not with malice. There were also two aspects of this situation which State officials could have presented in defense of the twisted budgeting scheme. The Civilian Conservation Corps, as a work force both before and during fire suppression action, was as a available to "outside" agencies as to the Division rangers. Secondly, the non-Division agencies maintained a rigid independence in their organization and behavior. Some State forestry officials were beginning to feel very firmly that the State organization had some right to develop as a unified working fire department, and was not created primarily to be a fund distribution agency for a group of county rangers.

#### Master Fire Plan

The third mentioned important event was the development of a Master Fire Plan by a few young men in the State Forester's Office. The idea was proposed to Board Chairman Black in 1934 and he, being the strong man around Sacramento, directed its start. He also made an initial salary contribution for a couple of assistants from lumber association funds. Perhaps he believed that the original intent of the Board in 1931 to concentrate on so-called State values could be accomplished after a sound itemization of planned field facilities was in the hands of the Board. Yet it is a paradoxical fact that the able Mr. Black, some six years later. While representing the lumber industry before the Legislature, found it necessary to oppose the full blown Division Fire Plan. Unquestionably he did so because of its cost and his lack of faith in the incumbent leader.

No one around headquarters evidenced any great interest in the young technicians and their plans. The strong-minded Deputy State Forester handling fire control was very busy supervising his own arrangement of field forces. So, at least it could be said that the principle of State paid regular fire suppression crews was now firmly established. Thirty-nine CCC camps allotted to the State Forester (of which six were under the jurisdiction and local direction of the Los Angeles County Forester and Firewarden) were building firebreaks, roads, phone lines and structures.

The half dozen young men who composed the new Division "technical office" were for the most part forest school graduates or engineers employed by the Division or supported through the several federal relief programs. The lack of direction from the busy and generally disinterested superiors was the best help they could have had. They took inventories of fire conditions and applied various new techniques to their planning for fire detection, reporting and attack. Very early they discovered that adequate maps for field studies simply did not exist. So a plan map compilation program was initiated.

Not much use was made of these practical studies except for the installation of twice the number of fire lookouts that were existing in 1933. This program was conducted in close cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, and was dependent almost entirely upon the Emergency Conservation Fund (CCC).

#### Supplemental Budget of 1938

In October of 1938 the planning in detail for a statewide "State interest" fire control system was given its first opportunity to show its value. Meeting in that month the Board of Forestry took two formal actions which tended to point in opposite directions. By resolution, it was declared that the State interest was primarily involved with offering fire protection in the timber and general watershed lands; however, assistance should be furnished rural areas, providing local funds were contributed to carry the bulk of the local burden.

Secondly, the Board instructed the State Forester through his staff to "study and develop an adequate fire prevention, protection and suppression program, by counties, to be coordinated with a statewide comprehensive program".

This article taken from the pamphlet "Evolution of California's Wildland Fire Protection System" by: C. Raymond Clar

To be continued in the February 2020 issue

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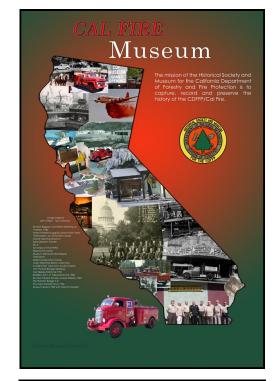
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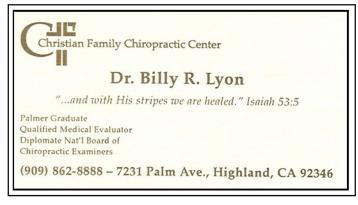
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The continued funding source provided by Resolution FIN 5-18am is an extremely important mechanism in achieving the goal of obtaining an appropriate site much sooner rather than later. Your continued support is very much appreciated and is indicative of a proud organization which is rich in history and a membership that is supportive of protecting historical items of interest to everyone.

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# THESE VENDORS HAVE PURCHASED ADVERTISING SPACE IN YOUR NEWSLETTER FOUR ISSUES PER YEAR CHARGE \$25.00 PER YEAR PER CARD



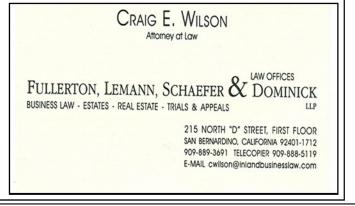


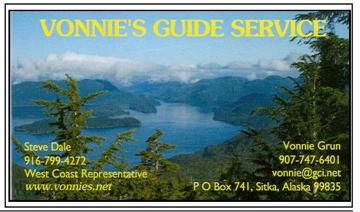












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Or Current Resident

**Help Us Preserve Our History** 



John Shimer, beautifully restored 1935 Chevrolet engine pictured here with the current engine at the Coulterville Station in the Madera-Mariposa–Merced Unit.

John has donated the engine to the museum and we are in the process of finding a place to house it hopefully in MMU. .