A NOVEL EXPERIMENT:
HALLIE COMES TO EDDY'S GULCH

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The date was May 12, 1913. The place was Sawyer's Bar in the rugged Siskiyou Mountains of northern California. The letter was addressed to Mr. W. B. Rider, Supervisor, Klamath Forest. The writer was Mr. M. H. McCarthy, Assistant Fire Ranger. His purpose in writing was twofold: first, to inform Mr. Rider that W. R. McDowell, who had served "so well" as Fire Lookout at Eddy's Gulch Lookout Station during the fire season of 1912, had declined the invitation to serve in 1913, having found "a better paying job"; and, second, to review the qualifications of three new applicants.

The first applicant, McCarthy's letter continued, was a man "whose reputation for the various cardinal virtues that go to make up a desirable employee of Uncle Sam's is not of the best: It's liable to 'run' in warm weather." Concluded McCarthy, "I could not conscientiously recommend him, even in a 'pinch'."

The second applicant, wrote McCarthy, was

> . . . a passably good fellow. . .whose eyesight is reported to be not of the best, but who is also said to be one of the best rifle shots in the country, he having shot more holes in game laws than any other man on the Salmon . . . . For various other reasons . . . I should prefer to defer recommending this applicant until I had to.

"The third applicant is also 'no gentleman,'" continued McCarthy,

> . . . but has all the requisites of a first-class Lookout . . . . The novelty of the proposition which has been unloaded upon me, and which I am now endeavoring to pass up to you, may perhaps take your breath away, and I hope your heart is strong enough to stand the shock. It is this: One of the most untiring and enthusiastic applicants which I have for the position is Miss Hallie Morse Daggett, a wide-awake woman of 30 years, who knows and has traversed every trail on the Salmon River watershed, and is thoroughly familiar with every foot of the District. She is an ardent advocate of the Forest Service, and seeks the position in evident good faith, and gives her solemn assurance that she will stay with her post faithfully until she is recalled. She is absolutely devoid of the timidity which is ordinarily associated with her sex as she is not afraid of anything that walks, creeps, or flies. She is a perfect lady in every respect, and her qualifications for the position are vouched for by all who know of her aspirations.

In his letter, McCarthy asked his supervisor if Miss Daggett's sex would bar her from the position. He ended his letter with a conscientious recommendation that they try "the novel experiment of a woman Lookout." McCarthy's thought was that setting such a precedent would not be likely to cause future embarrassment "since we can hardly expect these positions to ever become very popular with the Fair Sex . . . ." Little did they know the time would come when it would be rare to find a male Forest Lookout!

Miss Daggett's application was quickly approved. McCarthy submitted the appointment papers on May 26, 1913, recommending Miss Daggett as a "Forest Guard" at a salary of $840 per year. Included with the letter was an Oath of Office statement, Personal Statement sheets, and the words "Miss Daggett will take charge of the Eddy's Gulch Lookout Station." And so she did. Hallie went to work on June 1, 1913, and returned each June for the four-to-seven-month tour of duty for the next 15 years. During those many years, newspapers across the nation, from the Boston Globe and the Christian Science Monitor to the San Francisco Call, had headlines reading "She Guards from Fire Great Timber Area of the Salmon River Shed," "Withal, First Woman Fire Warden Is Very Feminine and Also Quite Efficient," "Female Ranger Watches Salmon River Forests," "Lonely Forest Post Guarded by Woman," "Woman Forest Guard Kills Bears, Wildcats and Three Coyotes," "The Only Woman Forest Fire Lookout," "Woman Takes Lonely Post," "Girl's Lonely Vigil in Forest," "Woman Keeps Fire Vigil in Siskiyous," etc. Never were the fires on the Salmon River Watershed reported more quickly, it was said.

"SHE IS NOT AFRAID OF ANYTHING THAT WALKS, CREEPS, OR FLIES."

In November 1920, a Mr. M. F. Bosworth of Cleveland, Ohio, wrote Hallie requesting that she write him about her unusual occupation atop Klamath Peak. He wished to include a story about Forest Service stations. There is no record that Hallie responded to these requests, but it is recorded that on her off-season trips to Los Angeles and San Francisco to visit friends she spoke before numerous women's clubs on Forest Service activities. Her audiences, mainly female, were always deeply interested in her own life on the Lookout. They admired her independent spirit and many, no doubt, would have been glad to change places with her.

In August 1917, Hallie received a telegram from Robert A. Bracket, who worked with C. L. Chester, Inc., Motion Picture Producers of New York. It read, "We are desirous making motion pictures of you and your work showing what you do and how you do it together with beautiful scenery and sufficient action to make it of interest. Please write immediately." On August 14 Hallie responded that she had taken the matter up with the office and the Forest Service would be pleased "to have you take the motion pictures you suggest, and will gladly furnish you with any assistance and action you may need . . ."

. . . The scenery, I think, you will find ©

very satisfactory. I would suggest, however, that you time your coming on or after September 1st as the country is at present too smokey to secure good results.

It is not known at this time of writing if the film was made.

A Hollister, California, reporter once asked Hallie how she passed her time. "Do you read?" he asked.

"I get some time to read, but mostly I'm on the lookout for fires," she replied. "There are other stations in the forest and the men on duty are constantly on watch. The station that reports the most fires and reports them first gets the most commendation in the report of the Forest Supervisor. Of course that keeps us all on the alert." She had a deck of cards and would play solitaire, although, as she said, she kept "alert."

Hallie did not court publicity, but all who heard her speak or read about her knew she was deeply in earnest about her work and felt herself an integral part of forest conservation and the inheritance she was helping to guard for future generations to enjoy. She fully supported the government's policy of saving the forests from fire destruction and "the axe of the timber grabber."

Hallie Daggett atop Klamath Peak, ca. 1916.

Tall, strong, and sunburned, with a breezy air that identified her as an outdoor dweller, Hallie had sprung from pioneer parents. Her father, John Daggett, a tall, intelligent, distinguished-looking gentleman, born in New York on May 9, 1833, had crossed over the Isthmus of Panama in June 1852 in search of the goldfields. Later, he was to note his occupations as "miner, politician." He was a Democrat and a Mason. He had made his way to Klamath County from Los Angeles and San Francisco in 1854. Hallie's mother, Alice Pamelia Foree, born in Hannibal, Missouri, in 1849, had been brought west across the plains in a party captained by her father, William Green Foree. Foree ultimately owned a Spanish land grant in Vaca Valley, and Alice was educated in Vacaville and San Francisco. Pioneer records indicate that she arrived in Klamath County in 1863. Seven years later, she met, and on December 17, 1870, married John Daggett at Black Bear; he was 37; she was 21. They had six children: Ben F., Hallie M., and Leslie W.; three other children died young.

John, at the time, was part owner and superintendent of the Black Bear Mine, so named because of the many black bears seen in the forest nearby, near Sawyer's Bar, California. It was said that he had already taken two fortunes from the mine and was sure there was yet a third. A popular and increasingly prominent man, Mr. Daggett had been elected to the state assembly where he served four years (1882-1886). He then became Lieutenant Governor of California, a position he held for two years. In 1891 he served as one of the commissioners at the Chicago World's Fair. Following this he became superintendent of the U.S. Mint in San Francisco.

Hallie and her sister, Leslie, were accomplished and refined young women, having completed courses at girls' seminaries in Alameda and San Francisco. But both had a deep love for their childhood home near the Black Bear Mine not far from the town of Sawyer's Bar in the Salmon River Drainage. With their brother, Ben, they had explored many of the trails in the rugged Siskiyous. All had learned to hunt, ride, fish and shoot early in life. Hallie was especially adept at trapping, and she was an expert rifle shot. She had no fear of bears, coyotes and wildcats; nor did she fear anything else in her rugged world, including the frequent electrical storms she endured on her mountain top. Why should she? She had a telephone beside her, and when the thunder would permit she would call Ranger McCarthy to report all was well.

"THE ONLY THING THAT FILLED HER WITH DISMAY WAS CONTEMPLATING THE END OF THE FIRE SEASON, WHEN SHE WOULD LEAVE HER SCENIC ABODE AND RETURN TO THE IMPRISONMENTS OF CIVILIZATION."

"Weren't you frightened?" he would ask.

"Why, no!" came back her cheerful response. "It was exciting while it lasted, and I love to watch the display. It was simply grand!"

About such storms, Hallie once wrote,

> . . . There seems to be very little actual danger from these storms, in spite of the fact that they are very heavy and numerous at that elevation. One soon becomes accustomed to the racket. But their chief interest to the lookout lies in the possibility of their starting fires, for it requires a quick eye to detect, in among the rags of fog which arise in their wake, the small puff of smoke which tells of some tree struck in a burnable spot. Generally, it shows at once. But in one instance there was a lapse of nearly two weeks before the fall of the smoldering top fanned up enough smoke to be seen.

Hallie concurred with those who believed the electrical storms responsible for most of the forest fires, "as traveler and citizen alike are daily feeling

more responsibility for the preservation of the riches bestowed by nature." The general trend of opinion at the time seemed to be that the Forest Service was "doing an excellent work in keeping a watchful eye on the limits of that hitherto wholesale clearing."

Hallie's telephone, which kept her in touch daily with her local world, " . . . with its gradually extending feelers through the district, made me feel exactly like a big spider in the center of a web, with the fires for flies." Her dependence on the telephone she learned one afternoon soon after her arrival on the forest in 1913 when an "extra heavy" electrical storm broke nearby, causing one of the lightning-arresters outside the cabin to burn out. Hallie was cut off from the rest of the world until the next day when someone from the Sawyer's Bar Office traveled the nine miles up to the station to find out the cause of the silence and to see if she was all right. "They often joke now about expecting to find me hidden under some log for safety . . . ." But that would have been out of character for Hallie.

Believing one's costume should fit the occasion, Hallie most often wore a heavy duty shirt and knickers for riding to and from her cabin at the beginning and end of her season. But photos of her at her cabin show her in the popular ankle-length skirts and pretty, feminine high-necked blouses of her day. From her second season on, however, it was a rare experience to see her without a revolver strapped to her belt, ready to be drawn from its holster at a moment's notice if danger threatened. She often said the only thing that really filled her with dismay was contemplating the end of the fire season, when she would have to leave her "scenic abode" and return to "the imprisoning habitations of Civilization."

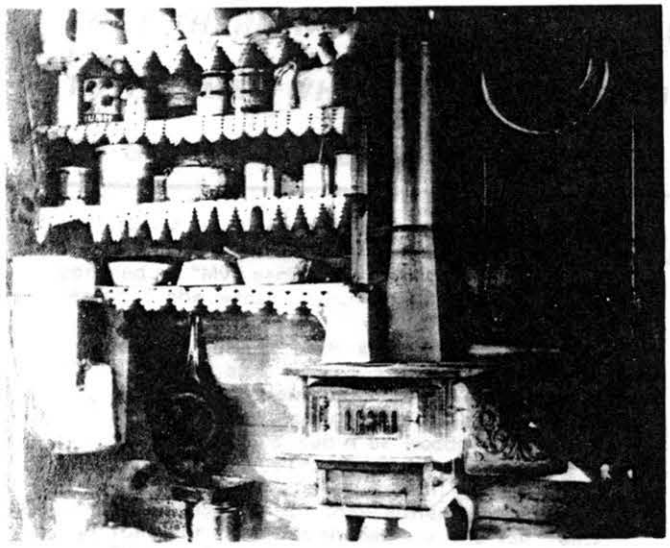
Hallie in her ranger hat and with gun on her hip stands before her log cabin (1914).

Though Hallie was ready to protect her life from marauding wild animals, she turned with gentleness to the smaller animals and birds as they clustered around her cabin. She once wrote how plentiful bird and animal life was: "They filled the air with songs and chatter, coming to the door-step for food, and often invading the cabin itself."

> . . . I positively declined owning a cat on account of its destructive intentions on small life--a pair of owls proving satisfactory as mouse-catchers, and being amusing neighbors as well . . . . Several deer often fed around evenings, and I put out salt for them. There was a small brown bear near the spring, besides several larger ones whose tracks I often saw on the trail. A couple porcupines kept me from being lonesome by using various means to find a way into the cabin at night, mainly at the window-sills. Grouse and quail raise their young around my cabin door. One summer I had seven pet chipmunks eating out of my hand. I raised one little waif on condensed milk, and later he would raid my pockets for corn and biscuit. All these animals being harmless, it had never been my custom to carry a gun in so-called Western fashion, until one morning I discovered a big panther track out on the Trail, and then in deference to my family's united request, I buckled on the orthodox weapon which had been accumulating dust on the cabin shelf and proceeded to be picturesque. But to no avail, as the beast did not again return.

During the 1913 season, however, Hallie killed one bear, four wildcats and three coyotes. At that time the county paid a bounty on all but bears.

The small cabin Hallie called home close to half the year had been built of rough-hewn logs atop 6,444-foot Klamath Peak during the summer of 1912.



Interior view of Hallie's cabin showing woodstove, tea kettle, pans, MJB Coffee, and Carnation Mush.

> I'd never thought of [Klamath Peak] as a possible home. One of my pet dreams had always been of a log cabin, and here was an ideal one--brand-new the summer before, and indoors as cozy as could be wished, while outdoors--all outdoors--was a grander dooryard than any estate in the land could boast, and oh! what a prospect of glorious freedom from four walls and a time-clock.

Though news and magazine writers insisted on calling her vigil on one of the loftiest peaks of the Salmon Summit "lonely," to Hallie it was anything but. "It was," she admitted, "quite a swift change from San Francisco, civilization and sea-level, to a solitary cabin on a solitary peak, on a still more solitary mountain a mile and a quarter above sea-level." But she never felt a longing to retrace the step--"that is, not after the first half-hour following my sister's departure with the pack animals, when I had a chance to look around."

Lonely? Never. There was the "ever-busy phone with its numerous calls." And sister Leslie brought supplies, newspapers, and mail from home every week--a distance of nine miles and "a good three-hour climb from everywhere." There were

visitors too, "guards who passed that way" as well as hunters, prospectors, and campers, so Hallie kept the kettle boiling. And there was always the great map spread out at her feet so that she might study "by new lights and shadows while waiting." Though photos show the frequent presence of a dog, it is thought that one may have accompanied Leslie on her weekly trips to Klamath Peak. "I have no need for a dog," Hallie once said, "as anything or anyone approaching can be easily seen and heard." Despite her wish not to have a cat, she wrote in 1916 that she had a pet kitten "who helps to answer the phone and is as well a good 'watchdog'."

Perhaps the most rewarding of all was the time she spent viewing through telescope (later "field glasses") the magnificent, rugged Siskiyou Mountains about her.

> . . . Klamath Peak is not really a peak in the conventional sense of the word, but is rather the culmination of a long series of ridges running up from the watershed of the north and south forks of the Salmon River. Its central location in the district makes it . . . an ideal spot for a station. I can think of no better description of it than the hub of a wheel, with the lines and ridges as spokes, and an unbroken rim of peaks circling around it. Some eternally snow-capped, and most of them higher than itself.

From her peak, Hallie could view 14,162-foot magnificent Mt. Shasta to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the grand sweep of country in between. It made up what was said to be one of the finest continuous views in the West. She would see a neighboring Lookout on Eagle Peak; farther to the south there was the high jagged edge of Trinity County, and just discernible with her powerful glasses a shining new cabin on Packer's Peak. To the west, behind Orleans Mountain "with its ever-watchful occupant," Hallie could, with a favorable sunset, catch a faint glimpse of the shining Pacific, and all in between, a "seeming wilderness of ridges and gulches and pine- cedar- and fir-lined canyons. It was certainly a never-ending pleasure to search its vast acres for new beauties at every changing hour from sunrise to sunrise again." Hallie, it must be remembered, was on 24-hour duty daily. She loved the "constantly spreading, fairy-tinted carpet of wildflowers to the very edges of the snow-banks." She had them all summer, followed by "the gorgeous autumn coloring on the hillsides . . . when the whole country seemed one vast Persian rug."

She was determined to do her duties faithfully. She had to make good, " . . . for I knew that the appointment of a woman was rather in the nature of an experiment, and naturally felt that there was a great deal due the men who had been willing to give me the chance." Her major duty was to "scan the vast forest in every direction as far as I could see by naked eye and telescope by day, for smoke, and for the red glare of the fire at night." Then she was to report her observations by telephone to the main office of the forest patrol at Sawyer's Bar.

Hallie herself thought of her other duties "on top" as small,

> . . . merely consisting of an early morning and late evening tramp of half a mile to the point of the ridge where the trees obscured the north view from the cabin, and a constant watch on all sides for a trace of smoke.

She raised and lowered the flag daily, a ceremony she took quite seriously. In the earliest days it was tacked to the logs at the front of her 12' x 14' cabin.

Hallie soon came to feel that the Lookout was indeed "an ounce of prevention," as one of her friends aptly called it. Hallie reported three times daily to the district headquarters "to prove that everything was serene." An occasional extra report was made if she had spotted a puff of smoke somewhere on her forest. And there was "a little--very little--housework to do." Hallie would be the first to admit that, all in all, her days were not very busy as judged by "modern standards of rush" (1915). "But the Lookout motto might well be, 'They also serve who only stand and wait.'"

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Hallie had been born at Klamath Mine in the shadow of the peak on which her Lookout station was perched. "My earliest recollections of that first season," she wrote,

> . . . abound with smoke-clouded days in summer, and fires that wandered over the country at their own sweet will, unchecked, unless they happened to interfere seriously with someone's cabin or woodpile, when they were usually turned off by back-firing and headed in another direction, to continue at their mischief till they either died for lack of fuel, or were quenched by the fall rains. Such being the case, it is easy to see that I grew up with a fierce hatred of the devastating fires, and welcomed the force which arrived to combat them. But not until the lookout stations were installed did there come an opportunity to join what had up till then been a man's fight, although my sister and I had frequently been able to help on the small things, such as extinguishing spreading campfires, or carrying supplies to the firing line."

Hallie added, the fires were often discovered at night "when they look like red stars in the blue-black background of moonless nights."

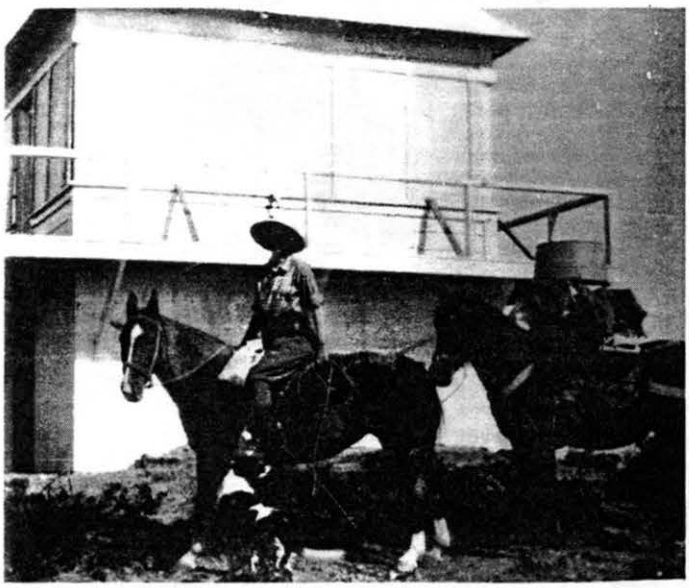
Because of the high elevation, the question of wood and water was a serious one--this was true of most of the stations in the second decade of the twentieth century. "But I was especially favored," Hallie wrote, "as wood lies about in all shapes and quantities, only waiting for the axe to convert it into suitable lengths." And Hallie could wield an axe. Water was unlimited, for Hallie was surrounded by snowbanks as late as the end of July, "although it did seem a little odd to go for water with a shovel in addition to a bucket." Later, she was to pack in canvas sacks from a spring about a mile away in the timber.

In her first season (1913), Hallie reported some 40 fires and was praised by Ranger McCarthy for her promptness. Out of that number of fires, fewer than five acres were burned. McCarthy wrote, "due entirely to the fact that rangers and guards had such prompt warning that suppressive efforts were put forth before the fires could gain an appreciable headway. Had one less faithful been on the Lookout, it might easily have been five thousand. The first woman guardian of the National Forests is one big, glorious success."

Wrote Hallie,

> . . . Fires were certainly treated to exactly the speedy fate of the other unworthy pests. Through all the days up to the close of the term on November 6, when a light fall of snow put an end to all danger of fires, there was an ever-growing sense of responsibility which finally came to be almost a feeling of proprietorship, resulting in the desire to punish anyone careless enough to set fires in my dooryard.

Hallie could become as irate at those careless about fire in her forest as Carrie Nation had been a generation earlier at those irresponsible about alcohol. In 1915, 75 people and countless forest animals across the nation had lost their lives in forest fires. The dollar cost to the nation's forests that year had run about $25 million.



Hallie packs in to the new Eddy's Gulch Lookout (1920s).

Hallie's vacation time was two days off each month,

> . . . With this respite, the work never grows monotonous. My interest is kept up by the feeling of doing something for my country--for the protection and conservation of these great forests is truly a pressing need. To women who love the ballroom and the glitter of city life, this work would never appeal, but to me it is work more than useful--it is a grand and glorious vacation-outing, for the very lifeblood of these great foliated mountains surges through my veins. I like it; I love it! And that's why I'm here.

An article in the Siskiyou News in October 1916 noted that the women of the summer protective force fared better than the men as they were still on duty. Named were Hallie, of Sawyer's Bar, and the telephone operators whose alertness helped her play a vital part in the fire suppression work: Mrs. E. A. Smith, Walker; Mrs. J. B. Johnston, Hamburg; and Mrs. Gorham Humphreys, Happy Camp. The same news writer, carried away by visions of Hallie's expertise, raved on. "Looking ten years into the future," he wrote, "it is very probable that the Forest Service notes will contain a paragraph as follows:

> Last Saturday at noon a fire was sighted about 70 miles west of Etna by Miss Daggett, aeroscout, in her biplane. The location of the fire was immediately reported to headquarters at Yreka by wireless telephone. Forest Supervisor Rider ordered out Forest Service zeppelin No. 2 from Ranger Gott's hangar with a crew of men. With the zeppelin piloted by Master Mechanic William Groom they were over the fire in one hour, and with the new chemical apparatus had it under control after it had burned over a half-acre of timberland. This is the largest fire the service has had in two years. The tourists who left the campfire which did the damage were sighted by Aeroscout Daggett speeding westward in their automobile over the Salmon River boulevard. They were overtaken at Orleans and taken before the U.S. Commissioner at Redding who imposed a fine of $5,000 and treated them to a severe reprimand.

That didn't quite come to pass, but by 1917 Hallie did have an instrument attached to a new map which helped her locate the exact spot where smoke was rising. By 1918, U.S. involvement in World War I was beginning to deplete the forest lookout stations of manpower, and Hallie was no longer the sole woman forest guard in the nation; two others, including 23-year-old Miss Mollie Ingoldsby on California's Plumas National Forest, had been added to the service.

In 1927, after 15 years of faithful service, Hallie Morse Daggett retired to her homestead, Blue Ridge Ranch, some 10 miles from Eddy's Gulch, where she continued to raise the American flag each fair day.

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Rosemary Holsinger, born in Los Angeles, has an M.A. in Education from Stanford University. She has taught at Santa Clara University, among other places. Ten years ago she sought refuge in the forests of the Siskiyou Mountains in northern California, where the seasons change (and the temperatures with them) and the air and the water are pure. A former teacher, she is interested in preserving as much local history as possible. Her house in Etna is situated on a lot in front of two houses once occupied by the Daggett sisters after Hallie left her Blue Ridge Ranch homestead in late years to be near sister Leslie. The sisters were members of the Siskiyou County Historical Society and occasionally contributed articles to its yearbook.