

Lookout Show`n Tell #12 – Panoramic Photos

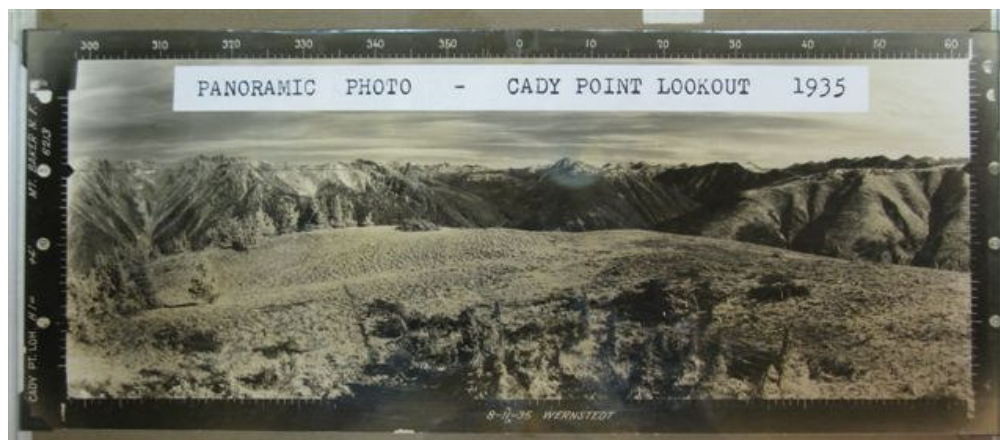
After inventing the Osborne Fire Finder, Wm. B. Osborne went on to be the father of the adze-eye firefighting hoe, the hygro-thermograph fire weather recording instrument, and perhaps the most valued of all, the "Photo-Recording Transit" camera.

Part camera, part surveyor's transit, this unique 75-pound precision-designed device was packed to the top of nearly every lookout in the Northwest in the 1930s. Only six were made, on special order from Leupold-Volpel Co. Six 1-man task crews were given the highest priority in the USFS and other fire protection agencies, because the photos had to be taken under the most ideal weather and light conditions, at 9:00am, 12:00 noon, and 3:00pm..



Osborne Panoramic Photo Camera

The special camera took a set of three photos on an infra-red 5"x13" film negative; each one covering 1/3rd of the full 360-degree points of the compass, exactly as seen from the lookout. The resulting same-size contact prints produced an incredibly clear image of the distant peaks and valleys. Mounted end-to-end, the 39" wide set of three prints, the "Panoramic Photo", was etched precisely in azimuth degrees from 0 to 360, and in degrees below & above the elevation of the lookout site.





When a lookout reported a fire, simply relaying the azimuth and vertical angle readings off the Osborne Fire Finder, the dispatcher and the smoke chaser could actually see the single snag that was burning, 4 miles from the reporting lookout... even in the dark of night!

Ray Kresek
Fire Lookout Museum
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