

tory. He was considered an authority on the travels of Lewis and Clark in this region.

His ascent of 12,842-foot high Granite Peak, supposedly inaccessible and located in the Bear-tooth Mountains just northeast of Yellowstone National Park, was among his mountaineering experiences.

"More than any other one person, Elers Koch characterizes Missoula's skillful merger of the outdoors and indoors," said Richard Neuberger in a recent article on "Missoula of the Mountains." "This gnarled and wizened man was not too old a decade ago at the age of 63 to lead the first successful ascent of the sheer tusk of Granite Peak, loftiest peak in Montana. He can follow a woodland trail which would thwart the nose of lynx, yet he is a nationally recognized authority on western history," wrote Neuberger.

Mr. Koch was born in Bozeman, Dec. 12, 1880, and was graduated from Montana State College in 1901. He received a master's degree in forestry at Yale University in 1903. He entered the Forest Service in 1903, spending two years on boundary examinations on the Gallatin, Madison and Beaverhead National Forests in Montana, the Shasta National Forest in Colorado and the Big Horn National Forest in Wyoming. The boundary examinations were preliminaries to the creation of these forests.

In 1909, as forest supervisor, he located and laid out the Savnac Nursery at Haugen.

In 1940 Mr. Koch, through the Oregon Historical Quarterly, published the Lolo Trail route of Lewis and Clark across the Bitter Root Mountains, the first effort to identify all points of this early hike. The book, "The High Trail," with central Idaho for its locale and dealing with an incident of the Carlin hunting party which went over the Lolo Trail into Idaho over 60 years ago, was published by Mr. Koch late in 1953.

He was married in 1906 to Gerda Heiberg-Jurgensen. She died in early 1942 and was buried in the Missoula Cemetery. Two sons, Thomas P. of Hamilton and Peter of Seattle, survive. Another son, Stanley, was killed in the Normandy invasion in June of 1944.

Mr. Koch was found late Sunday afternoon lying on the floor of his home with a gun by his side, and a wound in his head. Coroner Ralph M. Simmons took him to the hospital by ambulance. No inquest is planned, the coroner said. The body is at the Marsh, Powell & Livingston Mortuary and funeral services are pending.

## Elers Koch, 73, Retired Forester, Dies

Elers Koch, 73, 420 E. Beckwith Ave., retired Forest Service official, died late Sunday night at a local hospital.

He retired in the spring of 1942 from the Forest Service after 40 years of service. A forest field assistant, inspector and super-



Elers Koch

visor, Mr. Koch was appointed supervisor of the Lolo and Bitter Root National Forests with headquarters at Missoula in 1907. From 1908 until 1919 he was chief of the Lolo National Forest.

He then served two years as fire control chief for Region 1, comprising Montana and northern Idaho. In the fall of 1920 he became chief of the division of timber management, administering the resources of the timber stands of the region until his retirement.

Following the forest fires of 1919, Mr. Koch initiated the first formalized fire training, associates stated. He also established boards of review on fires, pioneered fixed lookout networks and been-area maps, a map orienting able and invented a fire tool that bears his name.

Mr. Koch was a fellow of the Society of American Foresters and from 1936 through 1937 he served on the council of the Society of American Foresters. Aside from forestry, Mr. Koch's chief interest was northwest his-

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In other fields he was credited with making major contributions to fire control and the establishment of the first formalized fire training program.

Koch was the author of many technical publications, among them "Passing of the Lolo Trail" which appeared in the Journal of Forestry. In 1952 he published "The High Trail," a book for young readers. In 1942 he was recognized by "Who's Who in America."

A rugged outdoorsman, he led a party which was the first to climb mighty Granite peak. Comparable to Grand Teton and located just northeast of Yellowstone park, it is the highest point in Montana.

The pioneer forester was the father of Tom Koch, Hamilton attorney. His other son, Dr. Peter Koch, is a mechanical engineer with the Champlin Lumber Co. in New Hampshire. Stanley a third son serving with the navy in World War II was killed during the invasion of Normandy when his ship struck a mine.

Koch Mountain which is 9,036 feet in elevation, compares with Trapper peak which is 10,131 feet high and El Capitan which is 9,965 feet. Trosper said that he has submitted the name of W. W. White to be honored by naming a mountain in his memory. The mountain is located west of Koch Mountain. White, who died recently, was a pioneer forester and a former Bitter Root Forest supervisor.