Evidenced by charred remains buried in bogs, prehistoric fires were common to Wisconsin. Records left by early explorers tell of forest fires that burned for weeks in dry seasons. During early settlement, fire became more frequent and more destructive. In Northern Wisconsin a period of major forest devastation began with the advent of commercial logging following the Civil War.

This map portrays fires that burned more than 250 acres in Wisconsin from 1871 to the present. Many of the earlier fires were not mapped or named. There are historic documents that describe the general location and size of many fires, especially in the northwestern part of the state. For these fires, a general shape and size of the fire has been estimated. So many fires burned during the 1930's that it is difficult to differentiate between them.

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