



**Forest Fire Lookout Association  
New York State Chapter  
February 2021**

Nobody says it better than the boss – in this case, our National Chairman Dr Keith Argow. Following our 2021 annual meeting last month Keith wrote: *“Yesterday a total of 24 Directors and Officers joined our annual teleconference. To my memo ry, that is a record.....THANK YOU. The year 2021 is an important year of transition for FFLA. With this kind of involvement from our Officers and Directors, I have no doubt we will be successful and be better situated to take advantage of the many new opportunities before us.”*

I echo Keith's words as they relate to our NYS Chapter. I have no doubt we will have a successful year with many new opportunities on the horizon for us. But just as Keith noted, 24 people were involved in that one call. We need people to be involved at the state level too. Throughout this newsletter you will see opportunities for ways that you can assist the NYS Chapter. Please read carefully and see what you can do to help us to be successful.

After a great deal of work by web master Tom Rankin, the Mark Haughwout collection of photographs and the Paul Hartmann collection of postcards are now on the web page <http://nysffla.org/> for all to see. I strongly encourage you to take the time to look at some of the photos/post cards of your favorite tower and to enjoy the trip down memory lane. We have more from other donors that we will be including in the coming weeks. If you have any photos or postcards that you would like to share, please let me know. We would love to include them.

Speaking of photos, our NYS Chapter Facebook page continues to be a great place to share thoughts, ideas, trip reports, and photographs. Our monthly photo contest winner for February was Kathleen Sauve with her beautiful photo of Azure Mt. taken in February of 2020. Kathleen's photo was one of several that were submitted for this monthly contest. The photo with the most likes wins the privilege of having their photo here in our monthly newsletter and as the cover photo on the Facebook page. Congratulations to Kathleen and thank you to all who participated!



**Fantastic Read:** I simply loved reading this article that Brian Fitzgerald sent to me! The author introduces us to Jim Henterly, the Desolation Peak fire watchman, who says “I guess I’m a kind of evangelist for the historical lookout experience” You certainly represent well Jim! <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2021/feb/16/desolation-peak-cabin-washington-state-fire-spotters-lonely-vantage-point>

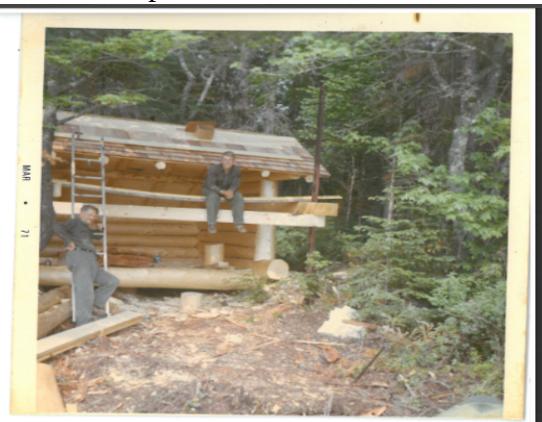
**100<sup>th</sup> Member:** In last month’s newsletter I mentioned that there was an opportunity for someone to become our 100<sup>th</sup> current member. We are pleased to say that Yana L. was the winner of that contest, and we sent her an FFLA patch and pin! Yana reminded me that she was also the 100th person to join the FB group and won a decal, and then she referred Josh M., the 500th person to join the FB group, and got the centennial patch! Yana says “this is a most serendipitous.” Way to represent! Congratulations! And THANK YOU for joining both of the groups!

**Feedback:** Following up on our **What did the Observer do all day question**, we had a couple of wonderful bits of feedback and I share them here.

From Bill Tindall whose Dad George was the Observer at Kempshall I was reminded that “*Since we lived at the cabin, there were all the activities of daily living to be done in a remote location; hauling water from the spring, cutting firewood, cooking, cleaning, hauling supplies from town to the cabin, maintenance and dealing with visitor needs*”. Additionally Bill remembers that his Dad was an airplane spotter; “*It was the cold war and he watched for intruding air craft and reported by phone any multi engine planes passing by*”. Thank you for sharing Bill! You can read more of Bill's memories on our web page: <http://nysffla.org/observer.html> Perhaps you have memories to share with us?

Retired Forest Ranger Gary Lee also sent along some great memories and a great photograph of the additional duty of building lean-tos, in this case at West Lake. The photo is of Gary and Floyd Waters who was the Observer at Kane Fire Tower and later took over for Gary at West Canada Lakes Ranger outpost. Gary says, “*Floyd was a good carpenter and he could break rocks for the fire place. We cut the logs around the lake shore and floated them across behind the boat. Blackflies were helping carry the logs to the shore when they did not slide in. Floyd didn't have his pant legs in his socks that first day and he had no spot on his legs up to his knee larger than a dime that didn't have a bite. He put them in in the afternoon. I had on hip boots and killed thousands around the top against my pants. We would come back in the cabin and the flies would go to the light from the windows and almost block out the light coming in.*” Thank you for that great memory of “other related duties” Gary!

Here is a photo taken in the 1950's on Balsam Lake Mountain that I discovered recently. It certainly illustrates the “other related duty” of needing to repair phone line. In this photo, the phone line is nearly buried in the snow! Those first few weeks of an Observer's work in the spring must have involved a lot of phone line repair.



**Looking ahead:** This past month has included a great deal of planning for 2021. We are acutely aware of the Covid-19 situation as we continue our planning and all must understand that this is a constantly changing and evolving situation. We will always do the work under the guidelines set forth by the Department of Health. The state chapter has several opportunities for work at a variety of fire towers and Observer's cabins. We can't do the work without your assistance. Below is a brief outline of some of the work projects we anticipate will happen in the 2021 season. I would love to hear that you would like to lend a hand.

**Projects: Blue Mt. Fire Tower Observer's cabin** – All materials are on site. We just need volunteers!

**Pillsbury Fire Tower** – Those last few landings need to be replaced.

**Vanderhacker Observer's Cabin** – This project is a great partnership with the Town of Minerva Historical Society, the Adirondack 46ers, and the NYS DEC. At this time, we are anticipating 3 work weekends will be set aside for this project.

**Kane Mt. Observer's Cabin** – We are still working on finding funding sources for this project. Cross your fingers we can make it happen this year. If you know of a funding source, please give me a shout out!

**Stewards Needed:** There are programs where we anticipate the need for volunteer fire tower stewards. These opportunities exist all around the state and offer a volunteer the option to be at a fire tower site greeting and educating visitors. The FFLA is looking for volunteers for Stillwater Fire Tower and we also hope to be looking for stewards for Berry Hill when that project is complete. If you would please reach out to me with your interest in being a steward, it is greatly appreciated.

**Blue Mountain Fire Tower:** There is a job opportunity for being a steward at Blue Mountain Fire Tower in 2021. The job description and details are on the web page: <http://nysffla.org/> Please note the deadline to apply is March 15<sup>th</sup> or first 50 applicants so act accordingly!



**Farewell and Thank You:** Mark Atchinson has been the Volunteer Coordinator for the Mount Tremper fire tower for a number of years. In addition to the duties of recruiting and scheduling volunteers, the Coordinator also has to deal with visitors, with maintenance of the facility and with the Board of Directors! That is a lot for a volunteer to take on. I had the pleasure of hiking with Mark and presenting him with a thank you gift, an embroidered rain jacket. Thank you Mark!



**Trail Closure:** Please note the following closure for the trail to Rock Rift Fire Tower for timber harvesting, and please keep a close eye on the web page for further updates.  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dep/recreation/hiking.page>

**Bramley Mountain Fire Tower:** More good news! The Friends of Bramley Mountain received a \$5,000.00 grant from the Laura Jane Musser Fund. The plan is to utilize these funds for the engineering study.  
[https://www.thedailystar.com/news/local\\_news/organizers-fire-tower-restoration-is-ahead-of-schedule/article\\_d37d41dc-fae0-568f-95fb-d9c9a4aa8504.html](https://www.thedailystar.com/news/local_news/organizers-fire-tower-restoration-is-ahead-of-schedule/article_d37d41dc-fae0-568f-95fb-d9c9a4aa8504.html)

**Red Hill Fire Tower Trail:** The DEC made it official this month with a press release about the new trail to Red Hill Fire Tower. The cost of the new trail and parking lot was significant, \$134,500. But it sure is a nicely constructed, well graded trail – see our January newsletter for more information.  
<https://www.dec.ny.gov/press/122341.html>

**Corrections Department:** Bruce Butters, Former Observer at Blue Mountain Lake sent me a correction from last month’s newsletter. “In 1968 the oversight agency was not the NYS DEC, but rather the New York State Conservation Department”. Bruce you are absolutely correct, NYS DEC was not formed until 1970 and the memo I posted was from 1968. I thought the Department may have also called themselves ENCON for a short period of time too? Does anyone have any information on that?

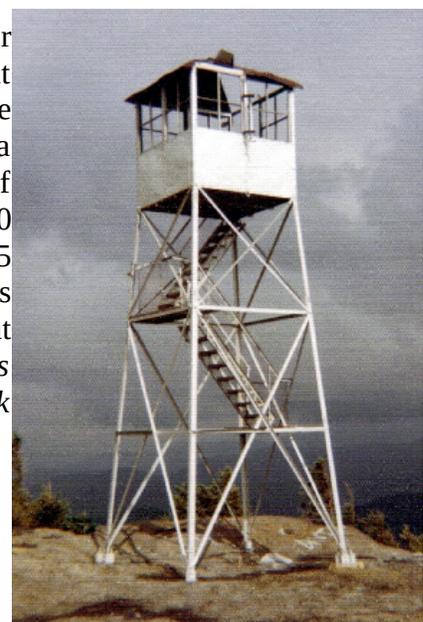
**DEC Budget survives thus far:**

<https://www.adirondackdailyenterprise.com/news/local-news/2021/01/dec-budget-breakdown/>

It is still worth reaching out to your elected officials in the Legislator who will be voting on this budget if you would like to comment.

**Graffiti:** Finally an investigation and prosecution of someone who plastered graffiti all over the mountains! <https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/blazes-on-cascade-mountain>. Thank you Forest Ranger Scott Vanlear for investigating and to the NYSDEC for taking this all the way to prosecution! Now if only we could do this with those persons who illegally put graffiti all over our fire towers!

**Centennial Towers:** Ampersand Fire Tower was the only tower erected in 1921. It was a 22 foot Aeromotor LS 40. With the summit area previously cleared by Verplank Colvin for his survey work, there was no need for a tall tower. However the climb to the summit was a tall, steep one. The CCC Camp in Tupper Lake built a mile and a half of stairs for the Observer to reach the tower. A total of over 1300 steps! The CCC Camp at Tupper Lake was a significant camp with 5 barracks housing 40 enrollees each. The fire tower on Ampersand was closed in 1970 and removed in 1977. For more information, check out Marty Podskoch's books *Adirondack Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: History, Memories, and Legacy of the CCC* and *Adirondack Fire Towers Their History and Lore The Northern Districts*.



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