

FFLA Newsletter – New York Chapter

July 2016

Fire Tower Aficionados, Fire Tower Geeks, Fire Tower Lovers, Friends of I guess we have all been called these things along the way. I take no offense when folks do suggest these monikers. I am indeed all of these things and so are most of you. This past month has offered me the opportunity to meet and correspond with several of my fellow Fire Tower Aficionados, Geeks, Lovers, and Friends. One of the comments from one was that, “*I sometimes feel like I have to reinvent the wheel with some of these things*”. In this case, the reference was to fire tower maps and panoramas. One of my hopes for the New York State Chapter of the FFLA is for like minded people to share this type of information with one another. People who work so diligently on restoring fire towers, setting up informational displays, choosing and scheduling volunteers, preserving history and so many other details - you may already have some ideas in mind. But, they may also benefit greatly in knowing how you managed these things. To that end, this newsletter was begun, and more recently the facebook page. In just two short months, the northeastern gathering of the FFLA will be held in Keene, NY. All of these are venues where I hope you will feel free to share or connect with other like minded people regarding your expertise. It will also be an opportunity for you to gather important information from others.

The new facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1736798186564272/>) has seen a few people join and a bit of traffic. You do have to request to join the group. We did this in an effort to be sure we had the audience we desired. It is a simple click of the button to approve you joining our group and we will do so without delay. Copies of this newsletter can be found by clicking on the 'Files' link above.

I will happily “snail mail” a copy of the newsletter by postal mail to folks who request it. Just let me know and I will drop a copy in the mail to you if you would prefer.

Here is a perfect example of sharing information with one another:

“Corrosion from pressure treated lumber on fire towers - Hidden structural danger from modern treated lumber”, is an article written by NYS FFLA member Ed Englemen about the use of pressure treated lumber on fire towers. Ed has submitted his paper to the Lookout Network Magazine for the Summer 2016 issue. In the article Ed explains, “Throughout the years, various wood preservatives have been used on fire tower steps and landings to reduce the effects of rot and decay. Creosote-containing preparations, pentachlorophenol, and later CCA (Copper Chromium Arsenic) treated lumber were considered good practice. They are no longer allowed to be used due to their toxicity, cancer causing properties, and/or environmental effects. In 2004, new pressure treated lumber varieties replaced CCA, designated ACQ (Alkaline Copper Quaternary) and CA (Copper Azole). Unfortunately these newer treatments are more corrosive to metals that they come in contact with, especially when the wood is moist. Special techniques and fasteners are required to maintain structural integrity over the long run”. For the reasons behind Ed's conclusions, be looking for the Summer 2016 Issue of the Lookout Network.

There is much more coming up about the conference in Keene on September 17th & 18th.

In our June newsletter, I mentioned the Dog Head fire in New Mexico, spotted by Observer Dixie Boyle. That fire burned approximately 17,000 acres and the cause was determined to be forest service machinery: <http://www.koat.com/news/forest-service-machinery-identified-as-cause-dog-head-fire/40315464>.

Drought watch issued: As I write this, it is a hot and humid summer afternoon with a good chance of a thunder showers. That also means the chance that some of the rain showers if they do occur may include downpours or they may include no rain, but frequent lightning. Some areas have had spotty moisture, others are lacking, thus the declaration:

<http://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2016/07/drought-watch-issued-new-york-state.html>.

Will an increase in fires be far behind?

June's multi-part trivia question: What fire tower is currently located at the highest elevation in New York State? Historically, which fire tower was at the highest elevation in New York State? Which fire tower was the tallest tower in New York State? Is it still standing? Gary Lee gets an FFLA sticker for his response, though a couple of feet short. He obviously gave it some thought! Thanks Gary!

The current highest elevation tower is Hunter Mountain at 4040 feet.

Historically, the highest elevation tower was on Whiteface at 4865 feet.

The tallest tower in New York State was Swancott Hill at 99 feet, 9 inches! It was erected in 1940, and was an International Derrick design. It was dismantled and removed in the 1970's. See the image to the right. Photo credit goes to Dick Eckler for this picture, taken in 1974.



July Trivia Question: Which fire tower is currently located at the lowest elevation in New York State? Historically, which fire tower was at the lowest elevation in New York State? Which fire tower was the shortest in New York State? Is it still standing? Remember those coveted FFLA stickers are up for grabs to the winner!

July news from around the fire tower community includes lots of exciting happenings:

Stillwater Fire Tower: On July 2nd, Stillwater Fire Tower had a grand re-opening, and I do mean GRAND! Jim Fox and his crew had about 250 people who hiked to the tower throughout the day to see the work they had done. Visitors included a 90 year old who hiked the easy one mile trail to visit a favorite of hers once again. Excellent work, Jim and friends. Jeremy Graves put together this excellent video of the event: <https://vimeo.com/173361388>. Be sure to come to the Northeastern conference and hear more about the particulars from Jim and friends on September 17th.

Rock Rift: Ed Engelman is now retired – congratulations Ed! Enjoy your retirement. And many thanks for jumping right in to take the lead on the Rock Rift fire tower project. I was very pleased to attend a meeting with Ed, The Town Supervisor, and Steve Brown. What an enthusiastic group of people! The last hurdles in purchasing the fire tower from the DEC are underway. Long term plans were discussed. I see another fire tower open to the public in the future. If you are interested in helping out, please let me know.

Lyon Mountain: The DEC did approve the grant application of the Town of Saranac to have a Steward at the summit five days a week over the summer. Chad is knowledgeable and was wisely chosen for the position. He can be found either at the summit or doing some light maintenance along the trail. It is hoped that the FFLA application to do some tower maintenance and year round trail work will be approved in the near future. The tower does see a considerable number of visitors, so noted by the amount of graffiti they have left behind. Of note on a recent visit was that one of the historic telephone poles commonly used above tree line still stands. Posted on our facebook page and here for you to view and compare is the 2016 and 1923 versions.



St. Regis: Got the patch? I got mine and it is a great looking patch too! Keep an eye on the website for additional updates as work continues to get this tower reopened. <http://www.friendsofstregis.org/>. Dave Petrelli will be one of the speakers at the Northeastern conference in Keene and will explain the challenges this group has faced to get to this point.

Berry Hill Fire Tower: With many thanks to Andy at the NYSDEC and to Tom, Warren and Rich for all of their assistance, the VSA has been renewed for the Berry Hill Fire Tower. At this time, you can visit the Chenango County site where the fire tower cabin is by driving up, or by a very short walk, but the fire tower remains closed. The reason is the communications equipment that is on the tower at this time. Plans are in the works for that equipment to be relocated and then we can work with the DEC to see about access to the fire tower once again! Thanks to all for their efforts in accomplishing this.

Tremper Fire Tower: Tremper has their new panoramas installed! This is really great as the trees around the tower are growing taller and taller and it is getting to be a bit of a challenge to see all of the surrounding mountain profiles. These panoramas will help. Thanks to Forest Ranger Marie Ellenbogen for all her work!

Northeastern Conference: Don't forget to make plans to attend our Northeastern Conference of the FFLA on September 17th & 18th in Keene, NY. You can find a google map with some possible suggestions for restaurants and lodging along with the fire house itself, the fire towers that can be visited, and area museums on the FFLA's home page: <http://www.firelookout.org/index.html>. You can also easily become a member or renew your membership on our website too!

**I had promised I would be sending around registration forms after the June newsletter and that was unfortunately delayed. I do hope to have those forms completed soon and will be sending along a separate e-mail in the coming days with more details and registration forms for the conference!

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