



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
May 2018**

The mission of the Forest Fire Lookout Association: The Forest Fire Lookout Association (FFLA), founded in 1990, is an organization involved in research of current and former forest fire lookout sites, ground cabins and early forest fire detection methods. It promotes the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of Lookouts.

Many who came before me have done significant research of the current and former fire towers in New York State. One such person is Retired Forest Ranger, Paul Hartmann. Paul has been exceedingly generous in sharing his knowledge of our New York fire towers and system as well as in sharing his photography collection. It is as important to look toward the future as it is to look at and record the past. To that end, Paul's generosity will be showing itself again in the near future as he has very kindly given the use of his fire tower web site to the State Chapter as the basis for our website. We thank Paul for his generous gift and look forward to making some additions to the work he has already done. If you have suggestions for items you would like to see on the web page, please let me know. We will certainly consider including those suggestions as we can and hope to release the new State web page by summer's end at the latest.

Another person who did a great deal of research on the former fire towers was past FFLA Director Fred Knauf. After the April newsletter was sent and included information on the connections between trains and fire towers, Fred reminded me of a very important item that I had left out, the delivery of the steel for fire towers via railroad. Often the steel was stamped with the train station name that was its destination and often with the name of the Ranger who was to pick up the steel.



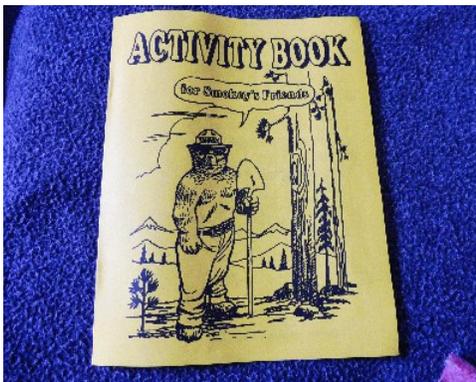
Some have said that fire towers are just an ugly steel skeleton that have no purpose. I believe that fire towers continue to have very valid purposes. To that end, I would encourage each of you to take the time to review the new amendment proposals for the Vandewhacker and High Peaks Unit Management Plans. This is your opportunity to make comments, either at public meetings to be held on May 23rd or in writing by June 23rd, which may have an impact on the future. Let your voice be heard!
https://poststar.com/news/local/apa-sends-high-peaks-vanderwhacker-plans-to-public-comment/article_08416f0f-d94a-5b53-b850-4f2f4ca8f567.html



Trivia Question: What is this item? How was it used? I know a few of you can answer this question and win an FFLA sticker for doing so!

When I visit a fire tower or a former fire tower site, I am always reminded of the human presence there. Recently we saw where daffodils are still growing on Tomany, left behind by Observer Orville Slade and his wife, Bertha. I know many who read this will understand this excerpt from *From The Hermit of Ampersand Mountain*, by Seaver Mill Rice, taken from the *Franklin Historical Review Volume 15 1978*, provided to me by Bill Hill

“He was an Observer who looked for more than the outbreak of fire in his beloved forest. He saw not only the misty tops of the mountain at the break of day, the shimmer of the sun on the forest clad slopes at twilight and the gleam of silver from the Saranac chain at his feet. He saw the entire process of the changing seasons, he watched the buds burst into leafy loveliness, and the leaves change to burnished gold and he saw the mating of the birds in the springtime and their departure in the fall. 'I never felt lonesome on Ampersand' he said with tears in his eyes when he had to abandon his post. 'I have friends up there, a feathered orchestra to waken me in the morning and plaintive song of the hermit thrush to lull me to sleep at evening tide”



Book of the Month: Activity book for Smokey's Friends for ages 7 to 12. 100 copies for \$10.00
https://www.symbols.gov/product_info.php?cPath=126&products_id=645

Help Wanted: The FFLA could still use some volunteers for work on fire towers in some areas of the state. We are a bit slow getting started with specifics as we have to wait for winter to leave us, supply flights, and black flies to calm, but we do need some hands. So please be in touch and let me know if you are willing to help out.

THANK YOU!! The Chapter received a very generous anonymous donation to be used as best suits the chapter. With a shoestring budget to work with that comes from membership dues and sales of centennial patches only, we greatly appreciate this generous gift! Thank you!

Black Bear Information: The NYSDEC shared information regarding black bears that you may wish to share at your fire tower. The information is free to download. Black Bear Curriculum: <http://blackbearinfo.com/> Poster: http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/bears2.pdf Brochure: http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/bears1.pdf

News and Announcements from Around the State

Ninham Fire Tower: Ninham is located in the Town of Kent in Putnam county. On Tuesday, May 15th an EF2 Tornado with 100 mph winds passed through the area. If anyone has any news of how the fire tower fared, please let me know. I will make a trip there as soon as I can, but want the emergency workers, road crews, and power companies to get their work done first. <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2018/05/16/ny-storm-cleanup-begins/>

Poke O Moonshine: The Friends of Poke O Moonshine have announced their new Steward this year, Megan Grega, who will be on duty from mid June to late August.

Kane: In the *NYS Forest Ranger Highlights*, Ranger Michael Thompson included a trip to Kane Mt Fire Tower with his family. Thanks Ranger Thompson!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqIBxkd2c28>

Hurricane: The Friends of Hurricane Mountain report that Earth Day turned out to be a good day for clearing away winter blow-down on the 9N trail. Nearly a dozen trees and snags removed. They also have a position available for a Volunteer Summit Steward. The job description reads - "Great view. Mellow hike. No pay. Do you care? We need volunteers to fill in around times our paid summit steward cannot be there to educate hikers and help protect the wilderness. Send a message."

Friends of Grafton Lakes State Park: Our first FFLA Affiliate member is the Friends of Grafton Lakes State Park. We look forward to this new partnership and the benefits that we hope will occur for all of us, but most importantly your two fire towers: Dickinson Hill and the new Welcome Center tower.

Mount Beacon: The trailhead parking area is closed until sometime in June. <https://www.scenicHUDSON.org/news/release/parking-improvements-mount-beacon-park-enhance-enjoyment-popular-hudson-highlands>

St. Regis: If you're interested in volunteering with the Friends of St. Regis Mountain Fire Tower, please visit their website and see how you can become a Volunteer Tower Steward!
<http://www.friendsofstregis.org/calendar/>

Azure: Azure Mountain Friends are looking for a local, insured, contractor they could hire to replace the fencing on the fire tower. If you know of anyone who wouldn't mind hiking a mile up a mountain to go to work, please let them know, or message them. Please share with others. They would like to get this done by the Centennial this July.

Lyon: The NYS FFLA Chapter is the official adopter of the trail to Lyon Mt Fire Tower. We do so with the help of a core group of people who live and hike often in the area; Fred, Suzie, Bruno, Julie, Marie and friends are the ones who do the work on the Chapter's behalf and I thank them immensely for their attention. These 2 articles were brought to my attention by David Thomas-Train about Lyon Mountain and were very interesting reads. I will be looking at things a bit differently when we do our spring trail work. <https://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2018/05/lisas-favorite-mountain-is-mine-as-well.html#more-138251> The following article is about the trail: <https://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2018/05/the-historic-old-trail-on-lyon-mountain.html#more-138465>

Sterling Forest: Susan is still looking for volunteers to welcome visitors to Sterling Fire Tower on Saturdays from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend. Although she has coverage for the majority of the Saturdays, volunteers are still needed for June 30, August 11, and 18. Applicants must be able to hike to the tower, which is located approximately 1.5 miles from the Lautenberg Visitor Center. For more information, please e-mail Susan at sterlingfiretower01@gmail.com

Stillwater: Stillwater Fire Tower boasts a beautiful interpretive sign as of May 9th. The DEC in Lowville installed the sign under the tower. Would you like to be a summit steward there? Message the group if interested.

Calendar Notes

Saturday, May 26th - Save the Date: Grafton Lakes State Park's new visitor center, natural play ground and fire tower will be holding a grand opening celebration! Stay tuned for details.

Saturday, May 26th – The Catskill Fire Tower Project opens Balsam Lake, Hunter, Overlook, Red Hill and Tremper fire towers for the season. The towers are staffed by volunteers on weekends from Memorial Day through Columbus Day.

Saturday, May 26th – The Town of Webb's Historical Society Goodsell Museum has a new fire tower exhibit entitled “As Far As the Eye Can See” and is expected to open Memorial Day weekend. Located at 2992 St. Rt. 28 in Old Forge, they are open from Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Saturday, May 26th – The Adirondack History Museum opens for the season.

Saturday, June 2nd is National Trails Day. Decide within your group or by working with the DEC or your municipality if you would like to participate. It is a great way to showcase your fire tower and to get some assistance in sprucing up or repairing the trail to your tower.

Saturday, July 14th is Trail work day on the ranger trail to Poke-O-Moonshine. Call David Thomas-Train at 518-576-4592 or Tom Hayhurst at 518-562-9989 with questions or to sign up.

Saturday, July 28, 2018 at 2:00 pm I will be doing a family friendly presentation at the Thompson Park Zoo, located in Watertown.

Sunday, July 29, 2018 will be the Azure Mountain Anniversary Celebration. <http://azuremountain.org/>

Sunday, August 5, 2018: The Friends of St. Regis Mountain Fire Tower are excited to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the fire tower. Lake Clear Lodge is a co-sponsor of the event. Join us at their beautiful facility on Sunday, August 5th at 1:30 PM. There will be a ceremony featuring a number of the partners responsible for the preservation and restoration of the tower. There will also be food, beverages and entertainment with live music by the local band “Barn Cats”. The event is free. In addition, picnic lunches can be purchased and enjoyed down by the lake. Dinner reservations are also available by contacting the Lodge for reservations at 518-891-1489.

Tuesday, August 7, 2018 Marty Podskoch and myself will be presenting a program on Swede Mt. Fire Tower at 7pm at the Horicon Town Hall in Brant Lake. Marty Podskoch is doing a book signing of his *Adirondack Fire Tower Book* and they are having a presentation for the 100th anniversary Swede Mt. Fire Tower. Refreshments will be served. Sponsored by the Horicon Historical Society.

Wednesday, August 8th is trail work day on the Observers trail to Poke-O-Moonshine. Call David Thomas-Train at 518-576-4592 or Tom Hayhurst at 518-562-9989 with questions or to sign up.

Saturday, September 1st from 9-9:30 p.m. will be the Annual Lighting of the Fire Towers. Can your group participate? Rain date will be Sunday the 2nd.

September 2018 – The Annual Hudson Valley River Ramble <http://www.hudsonrivervalleyramble.com>

October 21st- The 26th annual Ridge Walk and Run will be taking place. Several of the routes pass by the Alma fire tower and Observer's cabins which are on private property. This may be your only chance to get a photo! Some I.T. issues have delayed the registration process, but they expect to have that open soon. <http://www.ridgewalk.com>.

Sunday, November 11th – Ravens Rock Run to bring back the [Cross River Mountain Fire Tower at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation](http://ravenrocksrn.org/) at its former site in the park. <http://ravenrocksrn.org/>

Go Climb a Fire Tower

by David Beetle

Part 2

Article Courtesy of Observer, Rick Miller

The road goes off the right between Blue Mountain Lake and Indian Lake and the trail itself, some three miles long, starts not far from Cedar River Flow (or the end of the road). Tradition has it that the Wakely tower blew over three times, but that may be just so much folklore.

Meteorologically, this is supposed to be explained by the fact that the winds get a clean sweep across the broad Canada Lakes valley before hitting Wakely. Incidentally, the year that Wakely only had 19 visitors, the Observer failed to spot a single fire, indicating that all in all things must have been pretty quiet.

Runner-up for the least visited fire tower title that year was Pillsbury, which is some 6 miles from Perkins Clearing on the Speculator-Indian Lakes road, and about as long a trek as is necessary to reach any of the state's 57 assorted towers. The Pillsbury Observer had 42 visitors during the year and spotted only one fire.

People in the Old Forge-Inlet section who are willing to do a little driving, have a fair choice of fire towers. If they've already tackled Rondaxe, their second choice will probably be Blue Mountain, which every year attracts between 3,000 and 5,000 visitors. Most of them find it a rather stiff climb, but the lake-and-mountain panorama from the top is thoroughly compensating. Some people think the view is about the best in the state.

Third in popularity in the area is Snowy, which is accessible from a trail that leaves the Indian Lake-Speculator road a few miles from Indian Lake. The peak itself is rocky and spectacular, with a sheer cliff that drops down a few hundred feet from the Observer's cabin. Last we knew there was a tent on top for overnight guests.

With these three mountains cleared up the Central-Adirondack-Fire-Tower fancier has only to visit West, Woodhull, and Moose River to be able to talk like an expert. West overlooks Raquette, and can best be approached by boat, although anyone that is really ambitious can start in at Raquette Lake

village or even the Big Moose road. The view of the lake itself is rewarding. Moose River Mountain is about three miles from the railroad underpass at Thendara and is splendid as an example of how high they have to build a tower sometimes to see over the trees. Up until his death, the Observer was Pete Walters, who boasted -and carried out the boast- that if anyone visited the fire tower twice he he could greet them by their first name on the second trip. And Woodhull mountain is accessible from Bisby Lake road (if you want to pay a toll) and from McKeever (if you want to hike seven miles each way.) A lot of people don't want to do either, and the mountain only had 129 visitors in 1939.

Vacationist who go into what might be designated vaguely as the Piseco area, have about four fire towers to choose from – Ft. Noble, Tomany, Hamilton and T-Lake. The easiest to climb is Ft. Noble, the trail to which leaves the Piseco road at Nobleboro. A reasonably good hiker can reach the top in an hour and a half. The duller is Tomany which is accessible by trail from the Pine Lake-Piseco road; the top gives a view of too many trees and not enough other things of interest to us. The T-Lake trail starts from Piseco village and the mountain is a pleasant enough 3½ mile trip. The tower affords a fine view of Piseco, Spy Lake, Lake Pleasant and a few other odds and ends of water. Hamilton mountain can be reached from Hamilton Lake and is a good stiff 3½ mile climb. On a clear day you can see the Catskills. Though of course if it's the Catskills you want you can do a lot better by heading south in the first place. (To be concluded next month)

Wakely and Jackie Jones: If all goes as planned, necessary repairs should be completed by the end of June on both of these towers and they should be reopened to the public.



We saw this rather unique marker on Tomany. It's a little hard to see, but the elevation is denoted with indented dots (2593). Has anyone ever seen another marker like this?

Laurie Rankin, Director
New York State Chapter
Forest Fire Lookout Association
lauriejrankin@gmail.com
www.ffla.org