



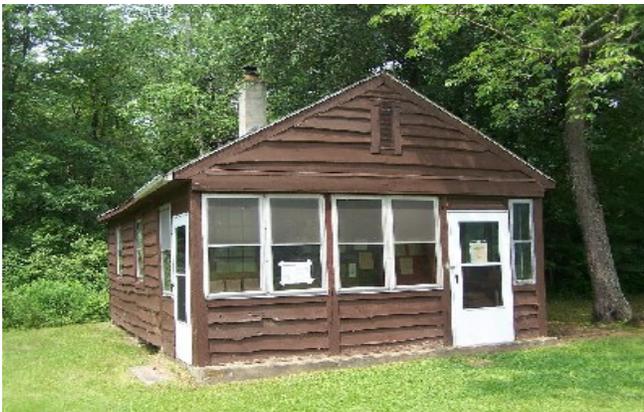
**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
April 2022**

When work began on this month's newsletter, there was not really a common theme, but then several things happened at once and the newsletter started to fill with that spring thing we call hope and renewal! We quickly saw a new old fire tower was found, a new old Observer's cabin, three old fire towers are getting fresh starts, an old friend has called for help, our national news is filled with tons of hopeful news and our membership are giving me great hope for a 2022 season that will be filled with renewal as many of our members spread the word about fire tower history. Are you out of breath yet? I am with so much going on!

The winner of this month's Facebook photo contest was Fred Knauf! Fred received the most votes for his photo of Hadley Mountain Fire Tower and cabin taken in April of 2015. Fred's photo will be the cover photo on our Facebook page for the next month. Congratulations to Fred and thank you to all who participated in the contest!



Member Warren Johnsen was out wandering and found an Observer's cabin all boarded up at the Labrador Hollow Unique Area. It turns out it is the former Morgan Hill Observer's cabin. Thanks for sharing this with us Warren – we will see if there is a special place for this special find.



Readers have often seen the words of our past Chapter Director Fred Knauf here. Fred has a wealth of historical information and shares that history within these pages and on a weekly basis on our Facebook page. This month, Fred kept his historical research going and got a bit of exercise too. Along the way, he uncovered a brand new to us, fire tower! Enjoy hiking along with Fred and finding this new discovery!

The tower for today is one which had been fabled back 25 to 30-odd years ago. Somehow, I remember hearing someone tell me about a tower north of Salamanca, New York that was not the McCarty Hill fire tower, but one erected earlier. Back about six years ago, I found an article in the Salamanca Inquirer newspaper which discussed the installation of a fire tower north of the City, but it gave vague information as to the whereabouts. All that article said was that a tower was installed between Whig Street and Hungry Hollow that was erected by the City of Salamanca's Water & Light Department.

Two years ago, in April, during one of my Covid related work furloughs, I travelled down and began searching for the tower site using information gathered by both retired Ranger Paul Hartman and me. We both had been looking at maps and trying to figure out where such a tower might have been erected. Then, I mountain biked to four of the sites, but all turned out negative, with one which I had to scramble around a summit of a high point on a day in the high 50's and with my fear of those darn rattlesnakes growing. Needless to say, I left that trip empty handed as far as confirmation of the tower, but I had eliminated some places and could go back and re-examine the maps.

I had since spoken to several people from the Olean and Salamanca area who all directed me towards the McCarty Hill tower as being the only one north of the City. I wasn't convinced, and last Friday, taking a vacation day away from work and weather being a passing light rain here and there, overcast skies, and temperatures cool enough to keep any snakes down in their dens, I made my way back down to the area known as Rock City State Forest. One road to the State Forest's N/S ridge & highest point along that ridge, the Hungry Hollow Road, was open to the summit ridge, and from there I repeated my mountain bike riding into the State Forest to go on some walkabouts looking for remnants of a fire tower.

My first planned stop was to re-search the summit that on the modern Caltopo.com map is called the Lindell Lookout. This summit is nothing more than a gradual rise and if it ever was a lookout, it either had to be totally treeless or a tower would have had to have been up there. After forty minutes of a zig zag searching, I concluded that the summit was not the site. My next destination was to the high point at the eastern end of the ridge that extended out south of Little Rock City. Being in State Forest property, I wanted to get closer to the border line with the City of Salamanca property and about half-way to my destination I didn't just stumble upon some tower's footers but the tower itself, buried in the hardwood forest that has overgrown all around the tower. Yes, there is and was a Salamanca Fire Tower and it still stands.

The Salamanca Fire Tower is located in the Town of Little Valley in Cattaraugus County. The elevation that the tower is located at is approximately 2,313 ft. above sea level. The fire tower was erected in the fall of 1938 and was a steel tower that was 40 feet tall to its floor. The tower is not an Aermotor or any other tower design I've seen – not an International Derrick, a Blaw-Knox or an International Stacey. The tower may have had a cab at its top but if it did have one, that part of the tower is now missing and no where to be found. The tower is accessed by a direct external ladder up the side, whose bottom rung is no longer attached to the base at the ground. Thus, I climbed on one step and refrained from going up further due to both risk of the tower collapsing and my agreement with "my better half" that I wouldn't do crazy things while out and about in a State Forest with closed roads and no one else around. The only tower that comes close to this one in New York State would be the private tower located at Pine Ridge up near Altona, but that one has a different floor system and may not have solid angle iron cross braces that this tower has. A walk around did not reveal any name plates or holes indicating where one may have been attached, and the tower is so rusted that no stenciling could be detected. Thus, it is a mystery who fabricated this fire tower.

Per the few articles I've been able to locate, the tower was erected by the City to observe for forest fires in the approximately 1,100 acres of land which the City purchased and reforested over the previous twenty years around their water reservoir located in Newton Run Hollow, just north of the City. A telephone line was strung back towards the city's telephone lines. Prior to WWII, the tower was staffed by a gentleman from Elkdale, NY, which is a Hamlet below the ridge/mountain to the west a few miles (I lost the article that mentioned his name). The tower was in use up until World War II and at that point the tower was used by Civilian Air Patrol teams to record and report plane movement. In 1940, the Conservation Department took ownership of a tower from the USFS and they worked with the C.C.C. men from Camp 106, Camp Seneca, located along the Hungry Hollow Road, to erect the 82 ½ foot McCarty Hill fire tower. By the time the War ended, the City's forests had grown up enough and with the use of the McCarty Hill tower, the need for this smaller tower diminished and I believe it was no longer staffed. There are no other mentions of the tower in any newspaper articles.

When looking at the earliest of topographic maps of the mountain ridge, an old tote road went up almost due north from Salamanca through the Newton Run Hollow, and after reaching the summit beyond Lindell Lookout, took a 90-degree left-hand turn down towards Elkdale. Camp 106 of the CCC constructed new roads throughout the forest, including several with a turn-around including one of those about three-tenths of a mile from the tower. The State Forest roads to this parking area and also to Little Rock City open up April 1st or when the roads dry out enough for safe travel via car, which would make a visit much easier. See the maps attached for information on location and way to visit this very old and forgotten tower...now found and verified.

Later in the day, I drove down into Allegany State Park to attempt to locate the Mount Irvine fire tower location, one I had never been to in my previous visits. Again, using a mountain bike, I biked and hiked, alternating between the two from the horse trail known as ASP trail 1 that begins off road ASP #2 just east of Camp Carleton. The first mile and a third was a 700+ foot elevation gain up the horse / snowmobile trail, which was an old road with good consistent grade. At the summit of the ridge, there is a junction to a north-south running trail that I mentioned a few weeks back in a TTT and was where the Ridge Road was to be installed. I remained on ASP horse trail 1 another 1.5 miles to the junction with ASP horse trail number 6. I didn't know or realize it at first, but ASP #6 goes right up and through the summit and footers of the fire tower before heading down to the south and Rice Brook. Because I didn't know it at the time, I went by the junction, past the hair-pin turn in the trail and went down about 300 feet before I realized that I was a little east of due north from the summit of the mountain, so I back-tracked to the junction of trail 6 and planned on taking that till I could scramble to the actual tower site. Within ten minutes, I found the footers.

Thank you Fred! We are always hopeful we will uncover new information about the history of our towers, and you have certainly shown us that many years later, we can be successful in finding them.



Around the State

Some old fire towers are seeing new horizons!

Bramley: The Friends of Bramley Mountain Fire Tower recently received major funding from two sources, and added to the \$60,000 already raised, moved closer and closer to actual construction. They received a \$25,000 Capital Improvement Grant from the Delaware County Economic Development Office's Tourism Grant Program and \$30,000 for reserve funding from The Catskill Watershed Corporation. The Friends said *"We are extremely grateful for the support we have received from the Delaware County Economic Development Office and The Catskill Watershed Corporation. This funding gives us about 65% of the total amount we need to return the tower. We hope to raise the remaining 35% in the next few months. We still need your help to make construction a reality."* Will you be the one to provide them with a donation that will send them over the top?

<https://bramleymountainfiretower.org/?p=419>

Makomis/Speculator: The former Makomis Fire Tower has been restored (see Sept 2019 Newsletter) and will be going up in the Village of Speculator in June and July of this year. (6/28 through 7/3). Along with that celebration, the Town of Lake Pleasant is also celebrating their centennial. Thus, in support of both projects, the Library is planning a display on fire towers through early June. I will be doing a presentation at the library on June 4th at 7pm about fire towers and their history. Hamilton County has had 14 fire towers in its midst over the years. The former Makomis one will make it 15!

<https://www.hamiltoncountyexpress.com/news/51998>

Buck: This fire tower has been visited by very few and its history is rather limited due to being in private hands. We expect it will be reopened to the public in 2022. A great partnership with the private landowner, The Town of Long Lake, and Hamilton County is working to make this happen. We will be looking for volunteers to lend a hand with work on both the trail to the tower and the tower itself. As plans are solidified, we will update our website calendar. Do check often for dates when we could use your assistance.

Beebe Hill: On April 1st, I read on the NYSDEC Bulletin that the Beebe Hill fire tower had been closed. At first I thought it might be one of those April Fools Day jokes, but I quickly learned that a wind storm had blown part of the roof off the tower and it had been closed to keep the public safe. Photographs from our friends Deb and Pat and inquiries to the DEC got me more information. This tower is an old friend, with a long history with the FFLA, who did extensive restoration work there in the 1990's, restoring both the Observer's cabin and the fire tower. <http://nysffla.org/beebe.html> Several DEC employees that we currently work with were actually part of the project at the time. In my discussions with the DEC, it sounds like there is good support to repair the tower. We have begun the paperwork process to do work and we will keep you updated as a plan comes together.



Jackie Jones: We had to cancel our plans for a steward at the fire tower this season. At this time, the Park is looking to complete an engineering assessment of the fire tower and make any necessary repairs the inspection may uncover. Once that steps is complete, we will once again consider a steward program.

Sterling: Remember, the Centennial celebration will take place Sept 17th! Many thanks to Dave Quam who sent this oldie from Sterling: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddkgUEg_OBs&t=396s

Cathead: We have asked you in the past and we will ask you again now to please consider writing to your local representatives about the possible compromises and solutions to having improved emergency services and an original fire tower reopened to the public: <https://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2022/04/its-time-to-work-out-cathead-mountain-amendment.html>

Around the Northeast and National News

Lookout Network: Our National News comes through several outlets, the Lookout Network Magazine being the major one. It is a benefit of membership that is put together by our Membership Chair and Treasurer, Gary Weber. Gary retired from a full time job at the end of 2021 and said one of the first things he was going to do was catch up on the Magazine. Has he ever – a triple issue is on its way to you as I type: Thank you Gary for a magnificent piece of work! If you have an article or item you would like to share, please send it to Gary. I have often felt a tower was a magical, spiritual place and so I was struck by an item on page 21 of this upcoming issue:

Doing God's Work by Rob Hoeye

The PIT crew working on Bull of the Woods Lookout, Mt Hood NF, Oregon, the last week of July 2005 was privately honored by Chairman Keith Argow for "doing God's work". He did not know how correct he was. While the crew worked at scraping, painting and other much needed repairs a white dove came to visit. It took some water from an old sardine can, roosted for the night and left the next morning. Indian folklore says it's a blessing visit from the spirits. The crew adopted that view and believe it was all the spirits of past lookout advocates, Gifford on down. So it was nicknamed "Giff" for the remainder of its stay. It seemed oblivious (and in a way curious) of what the crew was up to, at times watching each of the tasks. Don Allen claimed that in all the years of being at lookouts he had never seen a dove roost. The crew would love to believe that the project was blessed by the spirits.

How women kept the northeast safe: This is an interesting article about the history of women in the northeastern towers. <https://www.outdoors.org/resources/amc-outdoors/history/women-forest-fire-lookouts-history/>

New Jersey: From Bob Wulff, NJ towers are busy with spring fire season. Catfish Fire Tower and Budd Lake are training more Observers. At Catfish they will be celebrating the 100th Anniversary by doing baseball type cards to hand out and t-shirts will be for sale. Bob says they will staff a firetower exhibit at Blairstowns the 4th of July and Catsfish will be staffed on the 4th and should have a new coat of orange and white paint by then. They will be lighting up the tower cab and erect a 1922 – 2022 sign on the tower. Section 3 will have hikes and picnics to Catfish.

Kentucky Director: Danny Blevins, long time Director of the Kentucky Chapter is the recipient of the 2022 National Wildfire Mitigation Award for his work in creating a safer environment for first responders and their communities. In 1999, his Route 377 Volunteer fire department lost two members responding to a wildfire in the Cumberland Mountains. Danny took the leadership in getting people involved in wildfire prevention and suppression by creating the first Fire Wise Community in Kentucky, including the inspection of 1,000 homes. His department also owns the former USFS Hickory Fire Tower and maintains the historic observer cabin on the rental program.

South Dakota: A lengthy but interesting video about the fire towers of South Dakota:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vGsUrB4Mdw&t=2705s>

Please take a look at the items listed in the calendar below. I have been super impressed with the many achievements of our volunteers. The opportunities listed below offer a unique set of activities for you to choose from. Would you like to meet and greet hikers as a steward? Think about this for just one day this summer. Would you like to work on a trail? We might dig drainage ditches, do side cutting or build a bridge. Would you like to repair an Observer's cabin or build and restore a fire tower? We are seeking volunteers for all of these options. What a great opportunity to carry on the tradition of our members! Please let me know if you are interested!

Calendar

Saturday, May 7th: Wildflower Walk at Hadley Mt. sponsored by the Hadley Mt Fire Tower Committee. <https://hadleymtfiretower.org/events-newsletters>

Saturday, May 14th: Spring Trail work at Hadley Mt sponsored by the Hadley Mt. Fire Tower Committee. <https://hadleymtfiretower.org/events-newsletters>

Sunday, May 15th: 10 am Berry Hill Fire Tower Orientation

Monday, May 16th – Friday, May 20th Work at Blue Mt Observer's cabin if weather permits. Pick a day

Buck Mt. Trail Work - date TBD

Saturday, June 4th: 10 am Stillwater Fire Tower Orientation and Spring Trail work

Saturday, June 4th: 7pm Presentation at Lake Pleasant Library on Fire Tower History

Sunday, June 5th: 10 am Kane Fire Tower Orientation

June - Lyon Mt. Trail Work, 6/11 or 6/12 (best weather day), Speculator Tower work 6/28 - 7/3

July - Speculator Tower Work 6/28 through 7/3, Pillsbury Tower Work 7/30 and 31

September - Lyon Mt Trailwork 9/17 or 9/18 (best weather day)

October 10th - Stillwater Trail Work and closure

[To get involved](#)

Thank you!

Laurie Rankin
Director
New York State Chapter
Forest Fire Lookout Association
www.nysffla.org