

Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York Chapter
June 2017

I would like to entitle this month's newsletter Inspiration. I am not referring to breathing in black flies while struggling through the mud to a fire tower, (though there has been a lot of that this past month), but rather to the hard work done by volunteers and paid staff across New York State this month regarding fire towers. Some of that hard work has been in the planning stages and came to fruition this month, some of it involves making plans for future work, some of it involves tackling emergencies, and some of it involves preserving history. All of it should be inspirational to each and every reader.

First, an inspirational piece of national news. 85 year old Billy Ellis has been going to work for 33 years as a Lookout in Pike National Forest. The joy he shares with visitors about his job is infectious. Thank you Billy! <http://www.9news.com/news/local/next/85-year-old-still-running-fire-lookout-after-33-years/444654830>

Trivia Question for May: When was the Adirondack Fire Tower Challenge created? When was the Winter Adirondack Fire Tower Challenge created? Mike Shaw sent in the correct answers right away via our facebook page – 2001 and 2010 respectively. And Mike got one of those coveted stickers!

Trivia Question for June: This one may be a bit more obscure, but is still a two “parter”. What was The Observer and what was pictured on the center of the cover?

Book of the Month: *The Fire Observation Towers of New York State - Survivors that Still Stand Guard* by Paul Laskey. Your local library should include a copy of this book. In an easy to read format, filled with information, Paul describes each of the remaining fire towers that still stand. Perhaps the most interesting parts of this book are his introduction about his own personal journey to the towers and how it inspired him to write the book and his inclusion of Sitting on Top of the World, Helen Ellet's Story.

New Tower: In its May 2017 donation plea letter, the Catskill Interpretive Center mentions the plans for a new fire tower. Funds for this were approved several years ago. We do hope to see progress soon. “The Catskill Center has ambitious goals for this community resource including new exhibits, an outdoor pavilion for events, and a full-size fire tower”. It would certainly inspire visitors to the Catskill Park to go visit other fire towers if they could have an easily accessible “teaser” to get them started.

UPDATES

Indeed they are all inspirational!

Wakely Fire Tower: As mentioned in last month's newsletter, the NYSDEC acted very quickly to stabilize the fire tower and prevent it from toppling over. On May 16th a crew was flown in and emergency repairs were done. Other repairs that had been planned are still being worked on with some logistics necessary to get water, concrete and personnel in at the same time as favorable weather.

Blue Mountain Fire Tower: Thank you to all who sent in comments for the draft amendment for the Blue Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan update. Let us hope the draft plan is adopted!

Mount Adams Fire Tower: In the rain on May 13th, 'Kenmore' (trail name) of the Mount Adams crew replaced and repaired the safety netting!!! Thank you!!!

Historical Slide Show: On May 17th, I was pleased to present a slide show on the history of fire towers at the Crandall Library in Glens Falls. The show was hosted by the Glens Falls Saratoga Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club, who administer the Adirondack Fire Tower Challenge. There were over 60 people in attendance, many who were retired DEC personnel. They added a great deal to the presentation. Thank you all for coming! The highlight of the evening was the opportunity to see Jack Freeman, the author of *Views from on High*, be presented with the gold leaf. Jack and his wife Tillie have been an inspiration to many with their great love of fire towers. <http://www.adk-gfs.org/firetower.challenge.php>.

Maps: We all love maps. If you get an opportunity, check out this exhibit and be inspired: <http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Maps-tell-the-history-of-a-region-11181217.php>.

SAVE THE DATE – YOU'RE INVITED – PLAN TO ATTEND

Poke O Moonshine: The weekend of July 28-30, 2017 will see the celebration of the Centennial of the Poke-O-Moonshine fire tower and the 20th Anniversary of The Friends of Poke-O-Moonshine. Friday, July 28 at 5 PM, the juried Poke-O-Moonshine Art Exhibit will open at 1719 Block Gallery, Keeseville. On Sunday, July 30th there will be a hike to Poke-O-Moonshine summit and fire tower. Meet at the summit at 1 PM to tour the tower, eat lunch, and enjoy singing by the Essex-based singers, The Wannabees. Between 3 and 4 PM, gather at the Campground at the base of Poke-O-Moonshine for cake and speeches by some who have been closely involved in the history and restoration of the fire tower at Poke-O and fire towers on other mountains. Cap off the events with a party at Ausable Brewing Company in Keeseville. Check out the events on their web page and also consider lending a hand on one of their two trail work dates; July 8th and Aug 2nd. <http://www.pokeomoonshine.org>.

Hadley: On Saturday, July 15th, the first day of the Centennial celebrations for Hadley will be held at the trailhead, and on the summit from 9 to 3. On Sunday, the 16th, the festivities will be at the Hadley Town Hall from 12n to 4. Keep an eye on their website for additional details: <http://hadleymtfiretower.org>.

Hunter: Plans are being finalized for events to celebrate the 100th birthday of Hunter Mountain Fire Tower on Saturday, August 19th. For details contact contact Fire Tower Coordinator Gordon Hoekstra at 518-565-0150.

FFLA Annual Picnic: Following last year's conference there were several persons who approached me about the possibility of doing an annual picnic. It seemed like we should have such a picnic somewhere near a fire tower. To that end, I have reserved a tent at the Grafton Lakes State Park for a gathering on Saturday, September 23rd. The FFLA will provide hot dogs and hamburgers. Please plan to bring a dish to pass and your favorite beverage. I would ask that anyone who would like to attend please send me an rsvp so that I can plan accordingly. Families are welcome as well. We can plan to gather at noon and some people may wish to make a visit to the Dickinson Hill Fire Tower while there.

Please take time to rsvp for all of these events to help the various groups with their planning.

The Patch is Back: I have had several people ask me about the NYS Centennial Fire Tower patch. I ordered a new supply. Currently these patches are the only fund raiser the state chapter is doing. You can obtain the patch on the FFLA website (you can purchase them there with Paypal or a credit card) or by contacting me (check or money order only). <http://www.firelookout.org/lookout-store---patches.html>

HELP WANTED

Sterling Forest: A work project to restore the tower and get it reopened to the public is scheduled for July 7th and 8th. This time we hope the weather will cooperate. If you would like to help out, please let me know.

Southern Adirondacks: Looking for one or two individuals who would be willing to camp for a three or four day period and work on a fire tower. Individuals would need to be prepared to be working in harnesses on a fire tower structure. If you would like to help out, please let me know.

St. Regis: Come see what is going on and give these folks a hand if you can. An informational meeting will be held on July 10th at 7pm at 89 Church St. Saranac Lake where you can help support the tower and continue the restoration efforts.

Stillwater: I had this segment all ready to go when the Friends announced they were all set - All summit steward dates are booked!!!

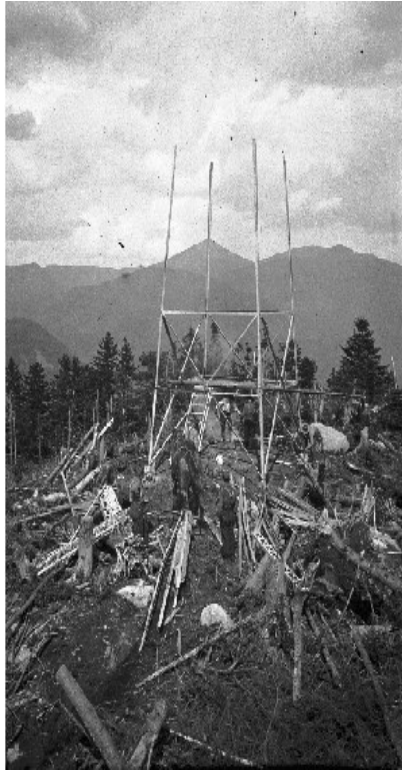
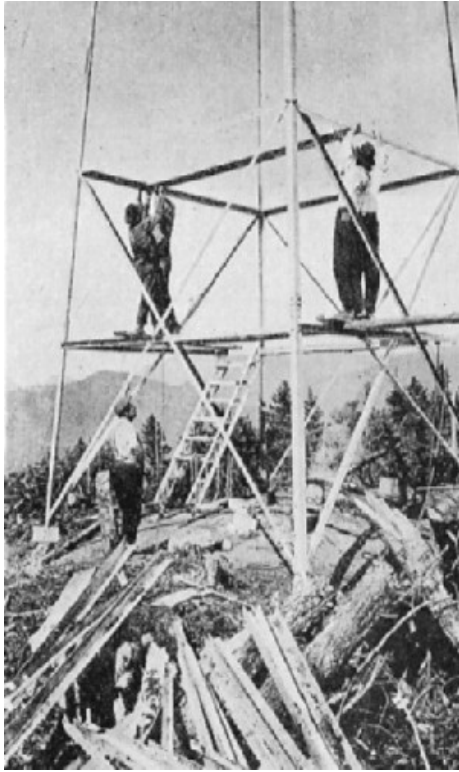
Volunteers Needed: We are still looking for a few more people who would be interested in helping out at Bald, Pillsbury, Leonard Hill, and Jackie Jones. Please let me know if you can help. You need not make a big commitment to any of these, just one day of assistance on the tower, or fresh ideas, is greatly appreciated!

Hurricane: Great article in Sun Community News on our volunteer summit steward program. On Memorial Day weekend, our steward counted more than 130 hikers on top in just one day. We're also hiring a paid steward beginning June 16, thanks to the Friends of Hurricane, the Town of Keene and the state DEC. There will be lots of action up there this summer. And hopefully we can get some signs in the tower cab, a replica map, and maybe even a new roof!
<http://www.suncommunitynews.com/articles/the-sun/steward-seats%C2%A0on-hurricane-are-open-for-hiking-volunteers/#.WT1NLeM2YYs.facebook>

CENTENNIAL TOWER

In 1917, the State decided to replace the wooden tower on Mt Adams with a more substantial structure, a 47 foot Aeromotor LS 40 steel tower. It was shipped by train, then trucked to the base of the mountain. From there, horses did the work of getting it to the summit, part of the way. Holes were drilled in the bedrock to secure the fire tower footings. Then according to DEC Engineer Kinne Williams, the tower began to grow and take shape. See the attached pdf article – Putting Eyes in the Sky from the August 1946 Conservationist magazine. I can only imagine the ride when it “became desirable to hike along after the truck”.

A cabin was originally built at the base of the tower, a crude wooden affair. In 1922 a standard 12' x 16' foot cabin was built, but it was located at the base of the mountain, a stiff climb and a mile away. The Observer's of old likely did not think much of the daily commute to work! During a visit in 2004 the cabin was in poor condition. It has since received some love and is accessible once again.



The tower was decommissioned in 1970. Restoration initially occurred in 2004, but subsequently the roof was blown off in 2008. In 2010, the ADKHP Foundation under the watchful eyes of Jack Coleman, signed an agreement with the DEC and donated funds to the restoration project. Among other items to be completed were fabricating a new roof off site, thoughtfully created to reduce the chance of the wind getting under it ever again. While the roof was helicoptered in with DEC support – and installed in the summer of 2011, other materials came in on the backs of volunteers. Concrete and water had to be carried to the top for the footing repair. Windows and maps, paint and other items also came by trail. The trail included fording the mighty Hudson and Lake Jimmy. Restoration was finally completed in 2013. The ADKHP Foundation continues to maintain the fire tower and the trail to it. Thank you ADKHP and Jack Coleman for restoring this beautiful tower with outstanding views of the High Peaks of the Adirondacks!

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