

Maine Chapter Report 2009

We continued to have an active year, though restoration efforts have been very slow. This year we focused on research, archive collection, and field trips. We continued to keep the Maine tower inventory up to date as there were changes, new discoveries and updates. The findings are below –

Tower Survey

Data as of 12/30/2009

Summary:

Total Known Tower Sites – 143

Total Towers Still Standing – 63

Total Towers Gone or Removed - 80

Of the 63 Standing Towers:

Standing Steel Only, No Cab – 19

Standing Steel Converted to Observation Deck - 6

Standing Steel and Cab – 37

Standing Wooden Enclosed - 1

Average Condition of the 38 Standing Towers with Cabs:

Good Condition – 14

Fair Condition – 12

Poor Condition – 7

Bad Condition – 5

The full tower summary list can be found on the FFLA Web Site on the Towers page under the Maine section. We will continue to update these lists as new information is found.

Tower Losses – There were 2 tower losses this year.

Priestly Mountain – This tower, which had no cab and housed some state radio systems, was removed in July. The US Department of Homeland Security built a new radio complex here, including shelter and a new steel tower. The state will also share space at this site.

Dedham Bald Mountain – This Aermotor tower was in disrepair and growing unsafe. The current landowners decided that it was not safe, and due to liability reasons, sold the tower to a private individual in November. The tower will be restored and re-erected on private land in Canada in the spring of 2010.

Planned Removals – The following towers may be removed in 2010:

Bigelow Mountain – This tower is being recommended for removal by the Maine State DOC

Mount Abraham – This tower is being recommended for removal by the Maine State DOC

We are also researching other possible removals – West Kennebago, May Mountain, and Debouille Mountain.

Membership

Current membership in ME is at 23 members. We are down one member from last year.

Membership continues to be an issue with the Maine Chapter. Locating interested parties to become members has been challenging.

NHLR

11 Total Entries. There were no new NHLR nominations for 2009. There are 2 targets for 2010 that are being investigated.

Research / Archives

We continued this past year with significant research on tower sites. We continued the focus on the Federal Towers on Mount Desert Island and many of the other little known lookouts in Maine.

Activities

Squaw Mountain Project

This project has been particularly challenging to get off the ground. After we suffered a delay due to the loss of state helicopter support (budget issues), we lost our local sponsoring group due to delays and timing. Given this event, we are effectively starting over again. We will be searching for another local sponsor group so that we can get this project off the ground.

Delorme Gazetteer Project

Last year, FFLA teamed up with Delorme to update all of the Maine Fire Tower locations in its new Gazetteer scheduled for release sometime this year 2009. The atlas was delayed and was released in August 2009.

Dave Hilton Website

Dave Hilton, FFLA Maine Historian and author of *FROM YORK TO THE ALLAGASH, Forest Fire Lookouts of Maine*, previously maintained a Fire Lookout website on Geocities. After Dave died suddenly in 2003, this website became inactive and unmanaged. In October 2009, Yahoo assumed control of all Geocities websites and eliminated all free website space. The site then went off the air. Since that time, we have secured permission from the Hilton family to host and use the material on that website. The Maine Fire Tower portion of Dave's website was posted on the FFLA. The fire-based portion of the site will be posted in early 2010.

Archive Drive 2009

The Maine chapter launched Archive Drive 2009 this year, which was an outreach effort aimed at locating any old Maine Fire Tower photos, stories, memorabilia, and other related material. We advertised in the Maine Department of Conservation newsletter, CCC Alumni Newsletter, historical outlets, and the Maine DOC FaceBook Page. We unearthed many old photos, bits and pieces of info, and a few older watchmen, who we interviewed. The effort was a success and will be considered again in the future.

Other Projects

Rocky Mountain Tower – We were able to get up to Rocky Mountain tower to check out its condition. The cab needs a new floor and likely some roof work. The steelwork should also be painted. We were not able to put together a repair mission this year. Rocky Mountain is in

the most northern, extreme northwest section of Maine. Its 20 – 25 miles away from most civilization, so it's difficult to get any help with projects this deep in the woods. We will work with the current group that is maintaining the tower to see what is possible moving forward.

Carr Pond – This tower has been in a collapsed state for many years, though the tower itself is salvageable. A project to move it to private land began in 2009, but was put on hold due insurance issues. This will attempt to start up again in 2010.

Indian Hill – A project to restore the wooden tower on Indian Hill is under discussion once again. The land has changed hands again, so we will be discussing this with the new ownership this year to see what the possibilities are.

Southern Maine Activities and Status

All 3 volunteer towers in York County (Aggie, Ossipee, and Hope) have continued to operate during 2009. The towers were active during the few dry spells, but this year was largely a washout.

Jason L'Heureux, watchman at Ossipee had over 500 individual visitors and several school classes from Waterboro including home schooled children. He started in May, was there minimally in June due to 23 days of rain. July was slightly better weather wise. August, September and October days were manned regularly. The tower needs some maintenance work and Pam L'Heureux is looking for some funding to assist with this effort. John Heseltine, watchman at Mount Hope reports that much of the spotting season was washed out due to the weather. No major upgrades at the tower other than to have the state fire frequency added to the radio. Mt Hope tower closed for the year on Oct. 14. For next season, we will be looking to recruit one or two more volunteers. At Agamenticus, the lookout continues to be manned when possible, but this year there was a shortage of volunteers due to illness and a limited number of lookout days due to a largely wet season.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bill Cobb, Maine Director