

2015 Maine Annual Report

The year 2015 was another active year for the chapter. Since the last report, there was one tower loss – Mount Abraham, which blew over in high winds. Restoration efforts have picked up with the Squaw Mountain project moving along well. Other projects are in holding patterns for various reasons. We had a large amount of members and friends of the chapter do site visits all over the state. We had another year where nearly all towers with the exception of a few were visited.

We continued with research and archive collection, including several important donations. We continue to maintain and grow our chapter Facebook presence and collected a variety of new information from it.

We continued to keep the Maine tower inventory up to date as there were changes, new discoveries and updates. The findings are below –

2015 Tower Survey

Data as of 12/31/2015

There was one tower loss since the last survey. Mount Abraham was blown over in high winds and continues to lay on the summit. Some conditions continue to deteriorate.

Summary:

Total Known Tower Sites – 143
Total Towers Still Standing – 56
Total Towers Gone or Removed – 87

Of the 56 Standing Towers:

Standing Steel Only, No Cab – 19
Standing Steel Converted to Observation – 6
Standing Steel and Cab – 30
Standing Wooden Enclosed – 1

Average Condition of the 31 Standing Towers with Cabs:

Good Condition – 10
Fair Condition – 9
Poor Condition – 7
Bad Condition – 4

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

Tower Losses – Mount Abraham in Mount Abraham Township. Blown over in high winds.

Planned Removals – No concrete plans to remove anything, but at-risk towers are below:

1. **Johnston Hill**
2. **Pleasant Mountain**
3. **Almanac Mountain**

Membership

Current membership in ME is at 24 members. We have close to 100 other Facebook friends or folks that help out occasionally with research, trip reports, or tower reports. Now that we have an easier online membership process, we will try to convert some of these to memberships.

NHLR

11 Total Entries

There were no new completed NHLR nominations for 2015, but Wadleigh Mountain Tower is in process and continues to waiting for State of Maine approval. The state is working on a structural analysis before any work on this site begins.

Research / Archives

We continued this past year with significant research on tower sites. We received many new leads and information through Facebook and have worked with these folks to gather the information for the archives. Worked with various organizations and individuals to provide history and background data on towers and tower sites.

Liability Challenges in Maine

We continue to hold on a few restoration projects on state owned/leased land until we can get private liability insurance. The organization recently found an insurer, but it is to be determined if this will help these projects.

Facebook Presence

The Maine Chapter Facebook Page continues to do well and has 2,522+ followers as of this writing. We continue to keep fresh content on the page, which is a key to keeping interest. We continue to see the below benefits -

- Connecting with many former watchman, yielding a wealth of info
- Connecting with the families of former watchman, yielding a wealth of info
- Provided a good mechanism for communication and outreach
- Is a good research tool
- Has created more exposure for the chapter

Now that we have online membership, more efforts to grow membership will be undertaken in 2016.

Activities

Big Moose Mountain (Squaw Mountain) Project

Back in 2011, the Natural Resource Education Center (NREC) in Greenville agreed to accept the removed tower and place it at their new visitor center on RT15 in Greenville. After some initial challenges, the project is really rolling!



The former Squaw Mountain fire tower is now erected at the Greenville visitor center using the original 1919 restored steel and rebuilt cab.

Plans for 2016 include erecting an outside stairway to allow the public access (required by local codes) as well as a tree clearing operation to open up an east view for the tower. FFLA will be working on outfitting the inside of the cab with a map table, alidade, radio, phone, and other period items. Grand opening is tentatively planned for the summer of 2016.

Wadleigh Mountain

The “Friends of Wadleigh Mountain” continue to spearhead a restoration effort for the Wadleigh mountain fire tower. The State of Maine has agreed to perform a structural analysis in 2016 on the tower as a prerequisite to any restoration plans.

Presentation – Forest Fire Lookouts of the Moosehead Lake Region

The Maine chapter teamed up with the Moosehead Marine Museum and gave a fire tower talk on the steamship Katahdin in Greenville back in August. The talk featured John Boydston, former watchman at Big Spencer Mountain. Member Bill Spach also gave a short talk about his lookout experiences in the region. The remainder of the talk was a slide show of area historical lookouts given by Director Bill Cobb. We had a great turnout in this very unique venue.



The lower deck of the steamship “Katahdin” where we held the fire tower talk.

Other Projects

In addition to Squaw Mountain and Mount Agamenticus, we have project potential for Williams Mountain and Indian Hill in Grand Lake Stream. We will be looking at for these in 2016.

Southern Maine Activities and Status

Volunteer towers Mount Agamenticus, Ossipee Hill, and Mount Hope have continued to operate during 2015. These towers continue to be most active during dry spells.

Aggie

The tower is still manned by volunteers of the York Fire Department, but was rarely used in 2015 due to the poor condition. A Go Fund Me campaign was run by the York Fire Department and it earned more than \$10,000. We also applied and was approved for a \$500 restoration grant. A structural analysis will be conducted in 2016 and the repair effort will proceed based on the recommendations of this report.

Mount Hope

The Sanford Call department continues to maintain and staff the tower. It was staffed on and off in 2015, but there is still a shortage of volunteers. The tower is in good shape. Plans call to continue to staff it in 2016.

Ossipee Hill

The tower continued to be manned by one volunteer; however a second volunteer was largely unavailable due to illness. The Waterboro Fire Department provided around a dozen tours of the tower in 2015. The tower is still in fairly good shape and the department is keeping regular tabs on its condition. Plans call to continue to staff it in 2016.

Other Activities

Made several tower site visits this past year. Trips included Mount Agamenticus, Beetle Mountain, Big Spencer Mountain, Trout Mountain, White Cap Mountain (2 Trips), Williams Mountain, Moxie Bald Mountain, Boundary Bald Mountain, Number 4 Mountain, and Squaw Mountain.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cobb
Maine Director