

HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Autumn 2008

By: **Bob Spear**

OAKRIDGE, Oregon, Western Conference 1994

The 11th annual meeting and the 2nd annual Western Conference of the FFLA was held at the Rigdon Ranger Station June 17th - 19th, hosted by Oregon Chapter Director Ron Johnson and the Willamette National Forest. A yurt was set up outside of the fire warehouse for registration and sale of t-shirts and books. By noon Friday, the first folks began arriving and new and old friendships were in progress. Smokey Bear arrived in the afternoon to celebrate his birthday with a large cake. Exhibits included Richard Miller's lookout models and the panoramic photo-making transit camera brought by Ray Kresek from his Spokane Fire Lookout Museum. Ray Kresek, Gary Weber and Howard Verschoor displayed several thousand lookout photographs in albums. The rental plans in Oregon and Northern California and old lookout plans were looked at and discussed. The 2/3rd scale model of the D-6 cupola on Red Mountain lookout was brought from the Tiller Ranger District, Umpqua National Forest.

There were 81 registered and several other local and Forest Service guests at the conference. Saturday's meeting started at 8:30 and ran to noon and was opened by host Ron Johnson with an invocation by Keith Argow. Bob Barstad, Oakridge & Rigdon District Ranger welcomed all. Ron introduced Gary Weber, Western Deputy Chairman, Ray Kresek, Washington Director, and Keith Argow, editor and chairman of National Woodlands magazine. State reports were read and an upfront and basic interpretation on preserving lookout relics was presented by Ray Kresek. A group photo was taken at the cupola model outside the meeting room after the morning session. The Saturday afternoon activities included four "Workshops": #1 The National Historic Lookout Register procedures, Keith Argow and the lookout rental program by Carol Winkler of Eugene. #2 was "Lookout Preservation Projects" by Pete Cecil of Bend. #3 was a presentation by Don Allen on "Successful Lookout Restoration-Partnerships". #4 was "Lightning Protection Systems" by Bill Joy, Mt Hood NF radio tech. Jim Doerter, a 1950's lookout from Ashland, Oregon did a sketch on UFO sightings from lookouts and slide shows were presented by Scott Kline and Forrest Clark.

Touring on Sunday was done in five vans as the caravan headed for Huckleberry Mountain where lookout Patty Crawford greeted everyone. Later in the day, the caravan made the trip to Warner Ridge Lookout. Monday's lookout touring group headed for the Deschutes NF, first stopping at Odell Butte, then Walker Mountain, and finally Round Mountain.

CAPE COD, Massachusetts, the 12th meeting, Summer 1994

Nickerson State Park on the cape, the location for this summer conference, was unmercifully hot and humid for those attending. The refreshing breeze that occasionally drifted across the cape was welcomed when it arrived. For most, it was camping out on the sandy terrain for this affair with a friendly bonfire each night to gather around, cooking hot dogs and roasting marshmallows in congenial friendship. The small village wasn't too far down the road to walk for evening dinner.

Jack Faustino, the District Two Fire Warden on the cape welcomed the group, which was also fortunate to have with them, Bob Pasquill from the USFS Archaeology section based in Montgomery, Alabama. The business attended to at the conference included the usual reports on the conditions of fire towers in each state along with the minutes of the previous conference. The Director's Report briefed everyone on national activities and a "View from the Summit" was presented by Chairman Emeritus Steve Cummings of Pennsylvania. State reporting was done and NHLR activities were covered by Keith Argow. There were updates on Blue Mountain and Beebe Hill fire towers in New York, as well as restoration work in the Adirondacks and other locations nation-wide.

A debate on what constituted the east/west regional boundary line of the FFLA ensued. Minnesota is traditionally recognized as an "eastern state" by the USFS, but it also has the headwaters of the Mississippi River, long recognized as the division of eastern and western US. With headwaters at Lake Itasca in the northern part of the state, the river runs the length of Minnesota on its eastern border with Wisconsin. Recognizing the need to identify locations as East or West for the sake of workable logistics, it was agreed that the east/west region border would be that of Minnesota and North Dakota respectively. These arguments will probably go on for years!

A large display of fire fighting apparatus was at the conference site, along with many of the famous "brush breakers" used on Cape Cod for fighting wildfires. The fire towers at Dennis, Barnstable, Sandwich, Bourne, Acushnet, and the old and new Carver towers were visited. Several other sites on the Cape (Pine Hill) were discovered as well as a fire tower on Martha's Vineyard. The tourist attractions on the Cape were available for those who wished to go that route, but most were more into the subjects that fire towers represented.

The next conference of the FFLA would take place at Milford, Pennsylvania in 1995.

Bob Spear, National Historian