

# HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Winter-Spring 2009

By: Bob Spear

## The 1995 Conferences

### MILFORD, Pennsylvania

In January, the 100th anniversary of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry was celebrated in unison with the 13th annual meeting of the FFLA in historic Milford in the northeast corner of Pennsylvania. Milford was the family home of the Pinchot family, one of the most influential and noteworthy names in American forestry and conservation. "Grey Towers", the Pinchot estate visited during the conference, had in recent years undergone a complete restoration. The conference was held at "Cliff House", a large colonial rambling bed and breakfast set in the hills south of town with picturesque qualities hard to match in an eastern forestry setting.

The weather was unseasonably warm, in the 70's ... two weeks later it would be below zero. The Board of Directors met as was customary on Friday evening with pressing business taken care of. Desktop publishing and incorporation progress, along with chapter reports and committee reporting was carried out. Saturday's events after the invocation began with a welcome from Bureau of Forestry personnel, and reports on South Carolina research by Scott Kline. There was a Mt. Hood NF report and guest speakers included Doug Riley, FMO of Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Tim Sullivan, Chief Ranger of Palisades region NY. A slide program presented by Larry Paul was followed by awards and certificates of appreciation.

The highlights of the Sunday bus tour developed by Steve were the Snow Hill Ranger Station, the Water Gap, Big Pocono Fire Tower and other old sites where Pocono towers had stood. Other fire towers were visited separately in nearby New Jersey and New York.

### MISSOULA, Montana

John Waverek welcomed everyone to the Missoula Conference, June 16-18, the 3rd Western meeting of the FFLA, held at the Fort Missoula Museum, near the USFS Lolo National Forest and Missoula Ranger District offices. A violent thunderstorm raged outside during Friday afternoon's board meeting with 65 mph winds and lightning knocking the power out, forcing using flashlights for the meeting! Eight chapters were represented, including Alberta, Canada. The meeting included chapter reports, liability risks, the question of inactive directors, newsletter reporting and archives management. FFLA pins were announced, an IRS 501c3 update was given and preparations began for a forthcoming Alberta Conference. After the storm had passed and the meeting concluded, an evening trip was taken to Blue Mountain Lookout.

John gave a brief history of how the Montana chapter came to be. It had first been organized as a local group calling itself "Fire Lookout Association" and then upon

learning of the FFLA, formed the Missoula chapter of the larger association, gradually taking on representing the entire state. West Fork Butte was the first lookout "adopted" for restoration. Reports centered on membership growth and distribution of the newsletter, and numbers of lookouts in use.

"How to set up a local chapter" was presented and a talk was given by the Montana State Historic Preservation Office. Passport in Time (PIT) was reviewed, with a report, "Making it Happen: PIT Logistics and Cabin Rental". The National Historic Lookout Register was reviewed by Keith Argow and Sliderock Lookout was listed. Ray Kresek gave a historical sketch, "Evolution of the Fire Finder". A significant document called "Who, What, Where & When", an informational sheet on the FFLA, was reviewed. Window glazing, paint removal, and roofing workshops were followed by an evening barbecue.

After visiting Sliderock Lookout on the museum grounds, Sunday's tour to West Fork Butte Lookout included history stops at Lewis and Clark expedition sites where Frances Vanderberg gave some of the Native American perspective while relating stories told to her by her grandparents and other elders of the Flathead tribe.

#### MONT ALTO, Pennsylvania

The second Conference held in Pennsylvania for the year continued the hundredth anniversary of PA Forestry. Mont Alto campus of Penn State University is considered the "birthplace of forestry education" in the country, with the first graduating class in 1903. A highlight of the event was a talk by fire warden Blaine Kaufman about early fires in Penn's woods. Ken Swartz of the Michaux State Forest served as tour guide as the group explored such places as Stahley's Knob - originally a "tree lookout", Pine Mountain - thought to be the site of the first steel fire tower erected in the state in 1906, Hammond Rock, Littles Mountain, Snowy Mountain, and Rattlesnake Fire Tower.

The next three conferences in 1996 would be at McClellanville, South Carolina, Woodford, Vermont, and the first Canadian conference at Hinton, Alberta.

#### **Bob Spear, Historian FFLA**