



## 2023 Indiana Chapter Annual Report Forest Fire Lookout Association

**MEMBERSHIP:** The Indiana Chapter has 4 current members. We were earlier combined with the Illinois Chapter when Joe Mirabelli was interested in working with me as a co-chair and working on finding members and doing projects in Illinois. Since that time Joe has ghosted us and not renewed his membership. The Illinois Chapter currently also has 4 members. One of those looks like he is likely to be dropped. We lost three members in 2023 – all from Illinois. The balance for the two states is \$197.

**CURRENT CHAPTER OFFICERS:** Teena Ligman, Director

### PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES:

I have continued my quest to see and climb all the towers in Indiana- you wouldn't think it would be a hard job since we don't have so many, but I do it when I'm in an area so its taking me awhile. My granddaughters continue to enjoy checking out towers when they're along with me.

However, in 2023 I didn't get to any new towers. I did run across a woodcarver at a festival who as he was telling me where he lived he said he lived near Valeene on Old Firetower Road. I latched on to that and asked if it was the old Paoli tower at the crossroads. He grins widely and asked how I would know that. So I told him I'd been there and seen the footers but hadn't talked to anyone who'd actually seen the tower or seen any pictures of that tower. He said his older brother helped at the tower some, it was just up the road from where they grew up but agreed it had been gone a long time. I asked if he had pictures or knew any interesting stories. He said he might but couldn't think of any at the moment. I wrote my name and phone number down and said I'd love to hear from him if he thought of any or found pictures, but he's never called.

There are a few towers I still need to visit.

### NEW Towers moves to Indiana with a bit of Mystery...

For some states towers being razed and put up is a common thing but in Indiana, it is not. While I received an email years ago from someone who had purchased a tower and wanted to put it up near Taswell and asked for information they went radio silent after I answered the question and then asked how it had gone and if the tower was up, etc. So I'm not sure if that ever happened or not? But this year I heard of TWO additional towers coming to Indiana.

**Calvary Tower Moves from Missouri to Indiana** – A friend who knew I really liked lookout towers texted me last fall and sent me a series of photos. She said she had been down at Goose Pond to take bird pictures and gone past a private campground and noticed a crane putting up a lookout tower so pulled in to see what was going on.

Ever a Nosy Nellie she got out her camera and started taking pictures and asking questions. She sent me the man's name – Jason Bault, and his contact information and told him I would contact him. I did and learned he owned the campground and was putting it up on the property there which had been in his wife's family since the 1800s. He wanted the tower to eventually be open to the public and said the view from the top is "crazy". The Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area nearby has a series of ponds and sloughs and is usually filled with migrating birds and many interesting species so it would be a great place to watch the birds below. The F&WL area receives 12,000 visitors/year.



Jason told me Mike Volegi, out of New York had bought the tower and moved it from Missouri to his property. As an aside he said Mike must have been an FFLA member, he remembered he had an FFLA shirt that had 4 lookout towers on it and was very cool. Jason and his wife were proud of their tower and said they liked history and wanted to make sure they got everything right. The New York company said it was the Grandin Mountain Tower and he had vinyl letters made to put on the roof. Jason asked if I would help him with an interpretive sign.

Since I had originally worked on the Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri, and in fact had worked in a lookout tower and knew many of the lookout towers around my Eastwood Lookout, I knew there was a Grandin Tower but hadn't heard of a Grandin Mountain Lookout. I checked the information Bob Frakes had and found it must indeed be the Grandin Tower, which I knew. I talked to Bob about it, and he noted that the Grandin Tower, though it had been sold, hadn't been removed. There had been a problem that the NY company hadn't met the time frame so had lost the contract. However they had also purchased the Cascade Tower.

Bob Frakes friends, the Lute's brothers whose father had worked in the Cascade Tower and who had bid on that tower, were so interested in the Cascade Tower, that even though they didn't get the high bid, they watched it being taken down and took pictures. They matched up

pictures of the Cascade Tower with the pictures I sent of the cab of what we thought was the Grandin Tower and it appears that they are one and the same. Jason bought the Cascade Tower, not the Grandin Tower. Good detective work by Bob Frakes and the Lutes Brothers!



The Cascades Tower has a great history. It was built in 1953/54 and replaced a pole tower built about 1940. In 1963 there was "a terrible disastrous forest fire" according to Lee Fine of the Missouri Conservation Dept. They reported the fire burned all around the tower site but the tower and buildings were saved though 55,000 pine saplings were killed. In 2022 the tower sold for \$4,024. And here it is now in southern Indiana!

Bob Frakes and I have committed that one of us needs to get a story on this tower for the Lookout Network Magazine once its complete and interview Jason on the whole story.

What a story these old lookouts can tell!!

## Another New Indiana Tower we need to Locate!

Bob Frakes tells me the Mulvinia Tower, previously in Ripley County Missouri has also come to Indiana. It sold at auction for \$2,375. This was a 120-foot Aermotor tower. Indiana doesn't have any other towers that tall, so it would be nice to know where it was. However, Bob tells me though David Vana moved it here, he said it went to an "undisclosed" location and said the person who paid for it didn't want it known where they were putting it. (Could be the tower near Taswell that wouldn't answer my questions!) Bob said the person who bought it asked for a platform half way up to be added (a feature on some Indiana towers so likely the new owner had seen that on Hoosier towers and liked the ability to stop, rest, walk around, and view the forest before going on to top. Plus it's a good place for passing people if some are coming up and some going down. They also reportedly had a catwalk added around the cab. One of my missions now is to find this mystery tower! 😊

**FINANCIAL ACTIVITES:** No financial or fundraising activities in 2020.

### OBJECTIVES FOR 2023:

My objectives are mostly carried over from previous years

- I still hope to do some interviews of former towermen, their widows or old firefighters- though as the years go by, I'm losing those opportunities and have lost track of some of the possibilities I earlier knew of. If I get a good story, I'll write a story for the magazine.
- I want to continue to get around to all the towers. For those not on the register I need to get them on it!
- Work with the State Parks and Forests in the state to generate an inventory of needed work on towers as I do this assessment. Also work with them on publicity and encourage people to visit lookout towers in 2024.
- Offer to give programs on lookout towers (I am scheduled to give one this fall).
- Generate more interest and members for FFLA.
- Write an article on the relocation of the Missouri Lookouts or work with Bob Frakes to make sure it gets written
- Write an article on the Happy Valley Lookout in Arizona – not related to Indiana – but that was my Uncle and Aunts lookout and we hiked up the mountain this year to scatter the ashes and I want to tell that story!

### 2023 Indiana Tower Statistics:

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| • Total lookout towers in chapter:       | 16 (Need to verify if the tower by Salem had fallen down and if the Mulvinia Tower has been up in Indiana) |
| • Lookout Towers on National Register    | 9  |
| • Towers in active service:              | 0  |
| • Towers in rental program               | 0  |
| • Towers needing significant repairs     | Unsure   |
| • Towers hopelessly dilapidated          | 2 – possibly more  |
| • Towers converted to alternate function | Many are used for radio/repeaters/antennas   |

- Towers schedule to be removed                      None known
- Complete new tower under construction            1

**2021 Illinois Tower Statistics -Not updated this year.**

- Total lookout towers in chapter:                      3?
- Lookout Towers on National Register                3
- Towers in active service:                                0
- Towers in rental program                                0
- Towers needing significant repairs                    Unsure
- Towers hopelessly dilapidated                        Unsure
- Towers converted to alternate function
- Towers schedule to be removed                      None known
- Complete new tower under construction            0

**Respectfully submitted:**

Teena Ligman, Indiana Chapter Chair  
 10 January 2024