

HISTORIAN'S CORNER

"Saving the past for the future"

Spring 2010
By: Bob Spear

1999 and 2000 Anniversary

The January 1999 meeting was again held at the mansion in Kittatinny Valley State Park, New Jersey; another great home cooked meal was put together with everyone's help and it proved an enjoyable event despite the wintry weather outside.

The summer 1999 meeting in July was a "working conference" at Phoenicia, New York, along the Esopus River in the Catskill Mountains. Phoenicia is a bustling "river town" in the Catskills and amenities in the village were great. Harry Jameson, head of the Mount Tremper restoration project, provided the campground. The main thrust of the activity was to get work started to rebuild the long-abandoned fire tower on the mountain above the village as one of the five projects of the "Catskill Fire Tower Restorations". Lumber for the steps and landings was brought up to the summit by New York State Forest Rangers on ATV. Chris Haartz camped the night on the mountain, despite the area's well-known history of rattlesnakes, to continue work on Sunday while others visited Balsam Lake Fire Tower that as yet had not been worked on. Balsam Lake has since been completely restored as has Red Hill, Hunter and Overlook towers.

The Western Conference that year was held in October in Libby, Montana. After discussions with National Forest archaeologists on Thursday, a Friday assessment trip to Tony Peak led to the concept of the "Tony Peak Award" to recognize the best examples of historic and visual preservation while designing electronic installations at lookout locations. FFLA Historian "Smoke" Pfeiffer went over plans for a "Historians Corner" in the newsletter. Visits included the Flower Point Lookout Tree, Blue Mountain, Big Creek Baldy, and Swede lookouts, and again to Tony Peak for initial stabilization tasks.

The 10th Anniversary Conference was held at French Creek State Park, Pennsylvania. For some of us, the return to Hopewell Fire Tower was nostalgic. The formation of the group that started what has become the FFLA was an opening topic by Steve Cummings. A moment of silence was observed for Caroline Parmenter, Maine Director who had recently passed away. New Jersey State Forester Jim Barresi, a continuing supporter of the FFLA, was present. Bill Zana of the "Pagoda Skyline" Association in Reading spoke on the continuing efforts to restore the William Penn Memorial Tower. John Miller of District 17 spoke, welcoming all to the headquarters. 1998 and 1999 Doug Newman awards were presented to Henry Isenberg and Shirley Goodrich respectively. Mount Penn and Cornwall Tower were visited on Sunday. The first ten years of the FFLA were observed with great success! The Conference

ended, Mark Haughwout and I dropped Gary off at the airport in Baltimore after a round-about tour of four Maryland towers, ending with a stop at the Long Hill Fire Tower in Pasadena. We then travelled eastward and with a pre-arranged appointment at the Earle Naval Weapons facility near Colt's Neck, New Jersey, located the site of the old 1924 Farmingdale Fire Tower. The "Throckmorton Hill" lookout stood until the late 1950's when it was relocated at the Penn Preserve in the New Jersey pinelands, and was destroyed in 1971 when a National Guard jet crashed into it, killing the pilot.

The summer 2000 meeting was held at Stamford, New York to discuss what could be accomplished to restore Utsayantha Fire Tower. In later years, a renovation of the historic fire tower was finally accomplished. We also visited Twadell Point, a remote old tower on the East Branch of the Delaware River, and met the ninety-nine year old former observer at his home; that was a treasured moment for us all. Marty Podskoch made these moments possible.

The western conference of 2000 was held at the Siskiyou County Museum in Yreka, California. The Oregon, Nevada and Northern California Chapters hosted it jointly.

The next conference, the 31st regular meeting of the FFLA, was planned for Helena, Arkansas, in January 2001, to be hosted by Arkansas Director Michael "Smoke" Pfeiffer.

Members wishing to receive a CD copy of all the Historian Corner articles, including those continuing from 1999 to the present, may send a request to the Historian at lookout18@juno.com or the address on the back of the magazine. A donation can be made to cover expenses, and sent to the FFLA Treasurer with a memo noting "Historian fund".

A complete chronology of all the FFLA Conferences can also be obtained by contacting Historian Bob Spear.

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