

## 2013 Maine Annual Report

The year 2013 was another active year with respect to tower activities. With the state of Maine's new radio system nearing completion, we saw no tower removals this year. Restoration efforts continue to be burdened by liability issues and the lack of a liability insurance policy. We are working with several groups to try and spur some restoration efforts.

We continued with research and archive collection, including several visits to Maine archival sites. We created a 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 –

### **2013 Tower Survey**

Data as of 12/23/2013

There was no significant change to the inventory this year.

#### ***Summary:***

Total Known Tower Sites – 143

Total Towers Still Standing – 58

Total Towers Gone or Removed – 85

#### ***Of the 58 Standing Towers:***

Standing Steel Only, No Cab – 19

Standing Steel Converted to Observation - 6

Standing Steel and Cab – 32

Standing Wooden Enclosed – 1

#### ***Average Condition of the 33 Standing***

##### ***Towers with Cabs:***

Good Condition – 12

Fair Condition – 11

Poor Condition – 8

Bad Condition – 2

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** – None for 2013

**Planned Removals** – The following towers may be removed in 2014:

1. **Mount Abraham** tower is still being recommended for removal by the Maine State DOC, but discussing with some officials, there are no immediate plans above a general recommendation.
2. **Johnston Hill** tower is still being recommended for removal at the request of the landowner

### **MSCommNet Project**

The MSCommNet project is a statewide radio upgrade initiative that has had an effect on many mountain top summits and fire tower structures in Maine. The project has largely wound down with respect to our involvement. No new towers have been removed as part of this project.

### **Membership**

Current membership in ME is at 25 members, up 25% for 2013. This increase is largely due to our Facebook presence. We will continue to leverage this new social media avenue to further increase membership. We have close to 100 other friends or folks that help out occasionally with research, trip reports, or tower reports. We will try to convert some of these into memberships as well.

### **NHLR**

11 Total Entries

There were no new completed NHLR nominations for 2013, but Wadleigh Mountain Tower is in process awaiting State of Maine approval.

### **Research / Archives**

We continued this past year with significant research on tower sites. Focused a lot of time on watchman rosters and have built up a good watchman roster base. Worked with various organizations to provide history and background data on towers and tower sites, including the Ashland Logging Museum, Moosehead Historical Society, and a few private surveying firms.

### **Liability Challenges in Maine**

We continue to hold on restoration projects on state owned/leased land until we can get private liability insurance. There does not seem to be any leads to solve this problem at this point in time.

### **Facebook Presence**

The Maine Chapter made its Facebook debut on February 26, 2013. It was largely an experiment to see if social media could help FFLA get further exposure. I was largely inspired by our Indiana Director Teena Ligman, who emailed one day back in 2012 about someone that posted an old fire tower postcard on a local Indiana Facebook page, and got some overwhelming response to a question about it.

I am happy to report that our Facebook experiment has been a resounding success. In the 10 months of operation, we currently have 830+ followers of the page. Although it is some work to keep fresh content on the page, we have realized some of the following key benefits –

- 25% increase in membership
- Connected with many former watchman, yielding a wealth of info
- Connected with the families of former watchman, yielding a wealth of info
- Has provided a good mechanism for communication and outreach
- Has created more exposure for the chapter

### **Activities**

**Norway Bluff**, removed as part of the MSCommNet Project in 2012. On July 7, 2013, the Ashland Logging Museum held a tower dedication ceremony - The finale of the Norway Bluff Fire Tower move project - its dedication & honoring Malcolm Milligan's Eagle Scout achievement. FFLA supported this function with historical materials and handouts. This closes the final chapter in that tower move. It can now be enjoyed as an exhibit at the museum.



**Norway Bluff – finished product and dedication; July 2013**

**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, there are new plans to re-erect the tower at the visitor center, and FFLA is working with NREC officials to help make that happen. For now, the tower lies on its side in the clearing next to the building, but hopefully in the next year, it will be standing on the grounds of the visitor center.



**Big Moose Tower lays in a field next to the NREC facility on RT15 in Greenville**

### **Williams Mountain**

FFLA and a local club have been discussing a restoration project for Williams Mountain up in Misery Township. Plum Creek, the current owner of the land and tower, is generally interested in the project, but continued to not have the resources in 2013 to proceed with anything concrete. Plum Creek is currently fully occupied with the very large Moosehead area development and conservation project that they just closed on earlier in 2012. We will attempt to open talks again in spring 2014.

### **Wadleigh Mountain**

FFLA member Dave Merchant has created a group called the “Friends of Wadleigh Mountain” with the primary purpose of spearheading a restoration effort for the Wadleigh mountain fire tower. A proposal has been written and presented to the State of Maine. There was an initial public meeting with FFLA members present and speaking about the restoration. The Maine Chapter director wrote a letter of support of the restoration. We have also been collaborating with the state to help answer questions about a possible restoration. In the fall, 2 separate maintenance trips were made up the mountain as a stabilization effort. The tower is weather tight for the long 2013/2014 winter. It is hoped that the proposal will be accepted and an effort can begin in the spring of 2014.



**Wadleigh Tower in the fall of 2013**

### **Southern Maine Activities and Status**

Volunteer towers Mount Agamenticus and Ossipee Hill have continued to operate during 2013. These towers continue to be most active during the dry spells. Mount Hope was not regularly staffed this year due to a shortage of volunteers.

#### **Aggie**

The tower is still manned by volunteers of the York Fire Department. The year 2013 was a slow fire season in these parts. We manned the tower only during higher danger days. It was a slow spring fire season for fires (luckily) and we did have a fire in the late fall started by a hunter and his cigarette that posed a challenge due to remote area and no one to see it until smoke became apparent (no tower that day). It was on water district watershed land and could have been a lot worse. The duff layer was very dry at the end of the summer and when the leaves fell, they stayed very dry due to little rain. We still have support from the Maine Forest Service to continue with volunteer manning and help is hard to find. We need some maintenance done at Aggie including some windows.

#### **Mount Hope**

The Mt. Hope was not staffed this year and would be classified as a rebuilding year. Since John Heseltine has retired as the last volunteer watchman, this year was used to try and train and organize new volunteer watchman from the Sanford Call department. Due to a roof problem, a little cleanup and maintenance was done on the tower earlier in the year. FFLA Maine chapter donated a copy of Delorme Topo North America V10 for the tower. It is hoped that there will be some staffing this spring.

#### **Ossipee Hill**

A total of 125 days spent in the tower. September was a wet month – not many class three days. Great foliage year many hikers, walkers and picture takers made the walk up. Approximately 75 school children made their annual trip up to the tower. The tower is in need of some repairs – hopefully in the spring. The tower was closed early this year due to an injury to the Fire Tower Watchman in early October.

### **Other Activities**

Made several tower site visits this past year. Trips included Snow Mountain, Kibby Mountain, Coburn Mountain, Big Spencer Mountain, Number 4 Mountain, and Mount Agamenticus.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cobb  
Maine Director