



2025 Indiana and Illinois Chapter Annual Report Forest Fire Lookout Association

MEMBERSHIP: The Indiana Chapter has 11 current members from Indiana. I also oversee 6 people from Illinois. I just learned FFLA added Missouri which brought in 6 members to my list, but I plan to do the Missouri report separately. The balance for the three states is \$278.

CURRENT CHAPTER OFFICER: Teena Ligman, Director

PROJECTS, ACTIVITIES, and INTERESTING PEOPLE:

I still have not completed my quest to climb every tower in Indiana. Mostly because I only climb one if I happen to be in the area. But I've made progress and am working with Mark Armantrout who has climbed or been to, pretty much all of the tower sites. He is still working on his website on Indiana Lookouts where he has collected an amazing amount of information:

<https://www.indianafiretowers.com/>

Between the two sites, we've gathered quite a lot of information on Indiana's towers.

Paoli Tower: I regularly get more information. At Christmas I met a man who was carving Santa Clauses and wooden tree leaves for Christmas ornaments. When I asked him where he was from, he told me Orange County- off the Valeene Road - where the road made a triangle. I noted that's where there used to be a lookout tower. The man was amazed! YES- that was his grandparents' lookout tower. They manned that tower, and his dad and his brother helped too. How did I know there was a tower there? It had been gone for 50 years. I admitted I had never seen the tower, I just knew it had been there and was interested in lookout towers. It was like I flipped a switch. He lit up and started telling me about how he got to man the tower sometimes and once the antenna had blown off and his brother had climbed up and gotten on top the roof and fixed the antenna; and how really scared he'd been and... I saw there were people waiting to buy things and I wanted to have paper to write down what he was telling me so I promised to call him in a month or so and he said he'd be glad for me to come down and he'd have lots of stories! So, I look forward to that. His name is Ferrell Wells and he once helped his family serve as sentinels of the Paoli Tower, which is no longer standing (Pictured above before it was taken down).



West Fork Tower: I volunteer as a disaster responder for the Red Cross. I received a call asking me to respond to a fire in St. Croix, IN –further than I normally go, but I agreed to respond due to a shortage of volunteers. The name of the man whose home had burned sounded familiar to me: Loren Brown. When I pulled up, he was sitting in an old lawn chair in front of a home that had



burned to the ground with his son and a couple dogs. He WAS Familiar. When I moved to the Hoosier National Forest in 1985, I interviewed him just before he retired. I reminded him who I was, and he was so pleased that I remembered him, and before we could talk about the fire, we had to talk about all the former old Forest Service employees who we knew in common.

Loren was 100 years old. He had lived alone with his dogs on his farm. Loren was quite spry. After the fire I went back down and interviewed him. They were rebuilding his house. He said he might be 100 but he was pretty sure he had at least 5 more good years in him and he wanted his own house. 😊 He had lost everything except his dogs and what he was wearing when his home burned. He said they'd just had a big birthday party when he turned 100, and it turns out he was the oldest WWII veteran still living in

Indiana, so they made a big deal of it. A lot of politicians came and people gave him shiny bling on his big day. He lost it all. Since I remembered he had worked the West Fork Lookout tower, I brought him a Lookout coin and said he could start his new collection of shiny fun things. He was so pleased with his coin. I have a very long interview I still need to transcribe. He told me about growing up with a big family on a farm, he and his brother went into the Army during WWII. His brother was killed, but he spent 4 years, a lot of it in the Pacific. We talked about his military



service and then him coming home and working for the county. He farmed and got married. Then he got on with the Forest Service. Federal jobs were the best. They hired him to work the West Fork Lookout Tower, just down the road from his farm. He did that when there was fire danger and helped fight fires – went out west on fire crews and said after fighting the Japanese, fighting fire didn't seem too tough. He did lots of different things for the Forest Service, but really enjoyed his lookout tower (picture to left). There was a picnic area around the tower and people often climbed the tower and he

talked to them and told them about the tower. It was close to a major highway (now Interstate 64) so people stopped to picnic and climb the tower, and see how he used the fire finder.

Loren's tower was auctioned off when the Forest Service decided they no longer needed many of their towers. He said parts of his tower can still be seen around the area, such as a flight of stairs are on the deck of a neighbor's home. The tower was bought, dismantled, and parts sold off to anyone who wanted part of it.



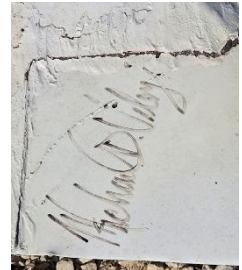
CASCADES/GOOSEPOND/LUVA TOWER UPDATE

For two years I've reported on Missouri's Cascades Tower being moved to Indiana by the owner of Luva's Campground adjacent to the Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area. Bob Frakes wrote an article for the Lookout Magazine about this when I told him the story. There was a problem

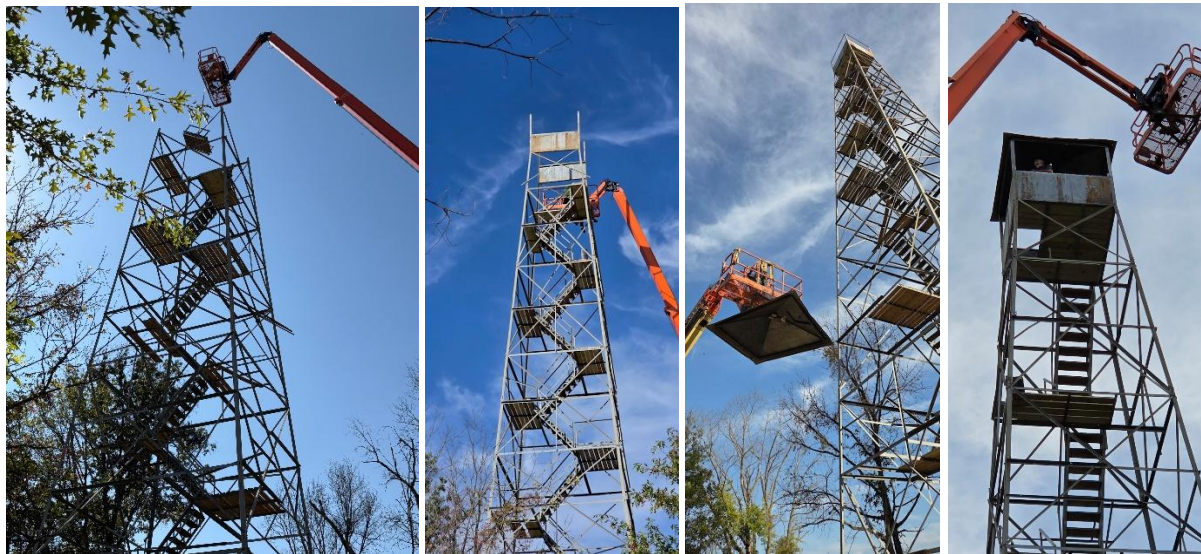
getting the cab section on top but after 2 years... the tower has a top! It stood for those 2 years topless as shown in the picture on the prior page.

It turned out the owner of the tower had proposed pouring the footers then Mike Vigaleti would come and erect the tower. But it became harder to get the pieces to fit as they went up. Only later did they discover the footers were not quite level, so the problem got worse as they went higher. The owner had to relevel the footers and reset the base.

Mike texted me when he would be back on site and I drove down and took pictures of him working on the tower. He even took me up in the lift to see what the view would be when it was complete. For a flat area of Indiana- it was incredible. You could see for many miles across the Goosepond Wetland and it was quite impressive. Mike was so proud of finally get this project done he autographed the roof of the cab! 😊



This project is now done and the Campground around it's base is coming together so it should become a popular landmark at Goodpond Fish and Wildlife Area. While he was in Indiana, Mike was able to look at an Indiana DNR tower nearby (Willow Valley LO) that he may be able to refurbish for the state!



JACKSON WASHINGTON TOWER:

When I gave a program (see under reports) a former State Forest manager volunteered that he had some information that might be of interest. I had mentioned that there were sites that I had seen on old maps and sometimes remnants on the ground that didn't match what would be left with our modern Aerometer or Derrick lookout towers, so I suspected that there may have been several homemade towers in some areas of Indiana. I had pictures of one that was down by Clark State Forest and showed some that Bob Frakes had from Missouri that may be styles used in Indiana as well. I had made inquiries at the Jackson County History Center, and nobody knew any information about the old Lookout Tower marked on the map. However, this manager had found an old picture in the files. He also said there were a few notes about it. Before they put up the Skyline Tower which is now standing on Jackson Washington State Forest and may have the



largest view shed of any tower in Indiana – they can see the power plant on the Ohio River on a clear day! Prior to that, local people decided they needed a tower so they designed and built their own tower, and set chestnut poles and put in a telephone line down to the Ranger office. You can still see some of the iron braces left for the building. The former manager sent me the one old picture of the building he'd found.

When the state decided to build a tower on the top of Peach Orchard Hill – they had all the wood cut

and milled and lumber ready to build a wooden lookout tower for the new Skyline Tower. Then IDNR did the math and decided it was cheaper to buy metal towers for their Forests. So, they bought a metal tower and used all the wooden components piled up at the site to build a big shelter house.



Above is a not so clear picture of the first Lookout tower at Jackson Washington State Forest, and what remains of the building as well as the American chestnut poles (right) that once served as poles for the telephone lines.



GEORGIA TOWER:

In the last report I mentioned being interviewed as an episode for the IN the Parks podcast series on Lookout Towers in Indiana. (More on that below). The Podcasts are done by a young teacher named Allison Martin from Indianapolis. She does the podcasts as a side hustle and absolutely loves our state parks and learning more about them. One of the IDNR Assistant Directors had suggested Allison contact me about the lookout towers since several Indiana State Parks and Forests have lookout towers. Allison loved the stories I told and the idea of lookout towers. She had asked me earlier if I had information on women who worked lookout towers – so I told some of the historic stories I'd heard or read in the FFLA magazine. She was enamored with the idea of early women breaking barriers and working in lookout towers and researched the fact that there had not been a comprehensive book done on them. So, Allison is now researching and writing a book on just that subject. So stayed tuned!

But one of the first women she wanted to know about was a local woman I told her about in the podcast- Clarisse Carroll (shown here).



Clarisse died several years ago but Allison asked me if she had family she could interview. So, I helped her arrange a meeting and interview with Clarisse’s family. I went with her and we had a great time. We (Forest Service) had interviewed Clarisse back in the late 80’s maybe? And I had written up a story about her which is posted on the Hoosier NF website. But I knew some of



Clarisse’s family so Allison and I went out to the farm where Clarisse and her husband Clinton had lived (just down the road from the Georgia Tower) in an old farmhouse which is still standing. Shown to left.

We met with Clarisse’s only living daughter – Pat Kerber, her granddaughter – ironically named Georgia, after the tower and the long-gone community where the farm is; Georgia’s brother Frankie and his wife, and another granddaughter Becky. Georgia and Becky are friends of

mine. We met at Georgia’s house which is close to her grandparent’s home. Georgia’s mother died in childbirth and her father had her young brothers to raise and couldn’t manage an infant as well – so he had given the baby to his mother-in-law to raise. Georgia has always thought of Clarisse as her mother. Many days she accompanied her grandmother up in the tower and had a wealth of stories about Clarisse and her tower. As the family gathered in Georgia’s living room, they shared stories about their beloved mother, aunt, or grandmother.



Georgia had pulled out many of the Tower



documents that her grandfather Clinton Carroll, and her grandmother Clarisse used in the tower. Clinton started as the lookout towerman, then handed the job off to Clarisse when he became bored with it and decided his farm was more important. Clinton was also a long-time fire warden in Lawrence County and in documents he’s often noted as leading the efforts to control wildfires in the county.

Sidenote: Interestingly, in the adjacent Martin County, Clarisse’s sister Nellie Allen “manned” the Willow Springs Tower, and her husband George was the local Fire Warden. Fire protection seems to have been a family business. Their grandson Mike Allen is a fireman on the West Baden Fire Department. I did call and ask him if I could interview him about anything he remembered about his grandparents. He said sadly almost nothing. He was very young when they died. His father was also a fireman, but he died fairly young and they only had one son. He had 2 sisters and

would talk to them and let me know if they had any memories. He didn't call me back. So that trail may be cold.

But Georgia (the woman) had a lot of interesting things to show us, and we spent a very nice afternoon listening to stories about the lookout tower and funny, heroic, heart-warming stories about their grandmother and her work as a lookout. On the register below Clarissie and in three cases her daughter Pat, who, along with other family members worked the tower periodically and recorded the daily weather.

STATION Georgia
 FOREST DIST. 700
 FOREST Clarissie Carroll
 OBSERVER Clarissie Carroll

MONTH March 21-31 1963

DATE	TIME	HOURS OF OBSERVATION	CONDITIONS OF VEGETATION	PRECIPITATION - 24 H.							TEMPERATURE				WIND		STATE OF WILDLIFE	QUALITY (INDEX)	OCCURRENCE OF LIGHTNING (NO.)	FUEL MOISTURE %			DANGER CLASS	ESTIMATE	NUMBER OF INSECTS	AREA NUMBER	MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS & REMARKS												
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MYSTERY TOWER FOR SALE:

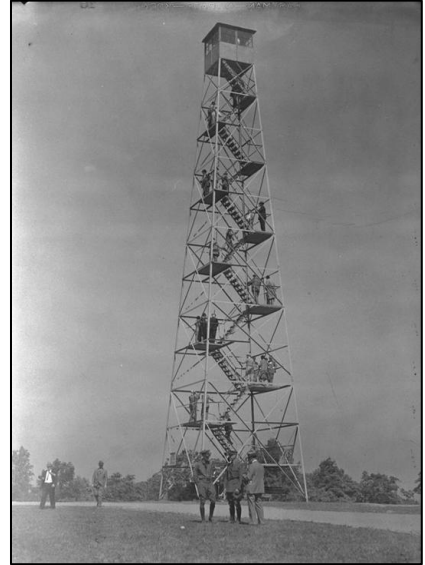
This picture (shown at right) showed up on Facebook as a "Lookout Tower for Sale near Cloverdale". I can't figure out WHAT tower it could be. Mark Armentrout got me a location on a map where it is and I plan to stop by and talk to people in the neighborhood next time I'm up there. Mark contacted the people selling the tower to see if they knew anything about the history of it and they said no, it had just been used in recent years as a windmill to pump water for the house. In the meantime, it's a mystery. We don't have that many towers that had ladders instead of stairs. But it may not be an original Indiana tower, so this is a loose thread to chase at some point.



WEED PATCH TOWER TO BE RENOVATED

When giving a program in Bloomington, the President of the Friends of Brown County State Park came up to introduce herself. She had come to my program and wanted to know more about lookout towers since she said they are starting to raise money to refurbish the Weed Patch Tower. It is likely the oldest standing tower in Indiana. I'm delighted they're going to keep it in good shape. The tower is legendary! Its name came after a tornado took down all the trees on the hilltop leaving nothing but a weed patch.

In 1923 the Conservation Report documented that "Weed Patch Hill is now part of the reservation, and the intention is to build an 80' steel tower on the hill which is the 2nd highest point in the State." Then in, 1927 they documented that the 90' Weed Patch Tower, had been built. Frank Hohenberger, an early area photographer's photo dated 1927, documented the tower on a busy day. Note how many people are on this popular tower- certainly more than any recommended capacity! Yikes. And still, it is standing 99 years later!



HENRYVILLE TOWER –

This tower – sometimes touted as Indiana's oldest tower, but built in 1928 though a tower nearby was older – has been refurbished at least twice, but last year the cab caught fire. Whether by lightning or arson the fire was put out but the tower has been closed until repairs can be made because the cab is no longer safe.



NAVY TOWERS

I was able to get an invitation last February to visit Crane Naval Weapons Depot and had an escorted tour to the four lookout towers (or partial towers) on the base. Ben Embry – the son of a friend - is the Navy archaeologist/historian. He told me if I wanted to bring someone with me I could, so I invited Mark Armentrout to come with me. He was happy to come and brought a lot of great questions and maps and added a lot to the visit. All four towers were used extensively during WW II to protect the base due to the storage of explosive materials at Crane. The towers were located to protect the vast network of bunkers and facilities where munitions were stored.

Tower #1 - Two of the towers are in fairly original condition. Tower #1 (Structure 1853) is shown here, and was built in 1938 and is 125' high according to the Navy. It

was used until the 1970s to locate fires on the base.



I climbed the tower and it was still very solid and safe except for the cab. The cab still had the phone on the cabinet in the center, and I was told until recently that the alidade and logbook had been there, but apparently someone had taken it. 😞



But maybe that's a good thing, because the roof access door of the cab has blown off so the cab is now leaking and the floor is beginning to rot, so it didn't look safe to walk into the cab, I just stood on the top step. It's too bad- not sure anyone will take the initiative to replace the roof panel

though I did report it to Ben Embry. He thought more likely they would excess this tower if I could help him find a new home for it. I told him I would do my best. It's a great tower!

Tower #2 – This one is interesting – I was told the cab had been taken off and the structure now supported a water tower – which seemed hard to believe- but that's only part of the story. I think the whole tower has been reset. Another friend that worked at Crane said he heard the military used the tower frame to rappel off of. So the steps were left to get to the top and then they'd rappel down the sides? Maybe?



Tower #3 - This tower was built in 1942. The Navy calls it Structure #44, I think this was originally the Forest Service's Trinity Springs Tower. A lot of Forest Service land (and private land too!) was taken for the war effort and stayed within the military base. This is a 100' tower. This one has a lot of communication antennas on it. Ben said it is a big communication tower and they'll keep it for sure because it is tied in to their communication system so it's safe for the near future.

it. Very odd. My friend who worked at Crane for many years (and thought Tower #2 was used for rappelling, thought this was used as a "drop tower"). The chute on the left of the picture was something they used to drop bomb casements or other things down to see how

Tower #4 is the most mysterious about what has happened to it. Ben thought it was gone but Mark asked if we could go by just to see the footers, so Ben accommodated us and there it was! Or at least part of



they did with dropping them in a controlled area. It's as good a guess as anything. Why they removed the top or if it blew off is unknown?



Mark found an aerial photo from 2004 and the tower was all there. (photo to left)


By 2019, only a portion of the tower was there? (photo to right)



PROGRAMS GIVEN

The podcast mentioned above is part of a series of “In the Park” outdoor podcasts that includes information on Indiana lookout towers; but then spins off to talk about women lookouts and women who have achieved great things in the outdoors. Alison does a good job with her podcasts and they’ve become quite popular.

<https://shows.acast.com/in-the-parks/episodes/fire-towers-lookouts-women-reaching-new-heights>



IN the Parks

Side Trail: Fire Towers, Lookouts & Women Reaching New Heights

Season 1, Ep. 21 • Tuesday, April 15, 2025

I loved learning about fire towers and lookouts in Indiana and across the country. There's so much history here, and I barely scratched the surface! You can learn tons about fire towers at the [Forest Fire Lookout Association site](#). If you want to see a presentation Teena Ligman did in March 2025 about them, including pictures, click [here](#). You'll hear much of the same information but get the awesome visuals a podcast can't provide.

LISTEN NOW!

EP 21: FIRE TOWERS, LOOKOUTS & WOMEN REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

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RSS

I gave a program in September to the Indiana Society of American Foresters. One of my fellow foresters had been to the program I gave to the Monroe County History Group and recommended my talk. It went very well. There were about 75 foresters at that meeting at Spring Mill State Park.

From that program I got an invitation to speak at the 2026 national meeting of the Forest Sentinel Landscape Program. The meeting is four days with a speaker each evening for dinner. They asked me to speak one evening. The program is about protecting forests from invasives, pests, fragmentation, etc. But the Sentinel fits in well with the idea of lookout towers! The Indiana director said my program had enough national appeal – I start with why the Forest Service and states started putting up towers- the big fires, and how the designs for towers had standardized,

and the system had evolved- and personal appeal with all my side stories about individual lookouts - that he thought people from all over the country would like it.

My program is May 12. Hopefully he is correct and I can increase awareness and interest in lookout towers.

FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES: No financial or fundraising activities in 2025.

ILLINOIS TOWERS

This report is from Mark Armentrout, who with his brother visited the Illinois towers in 2025.



TRIGG TOWER:

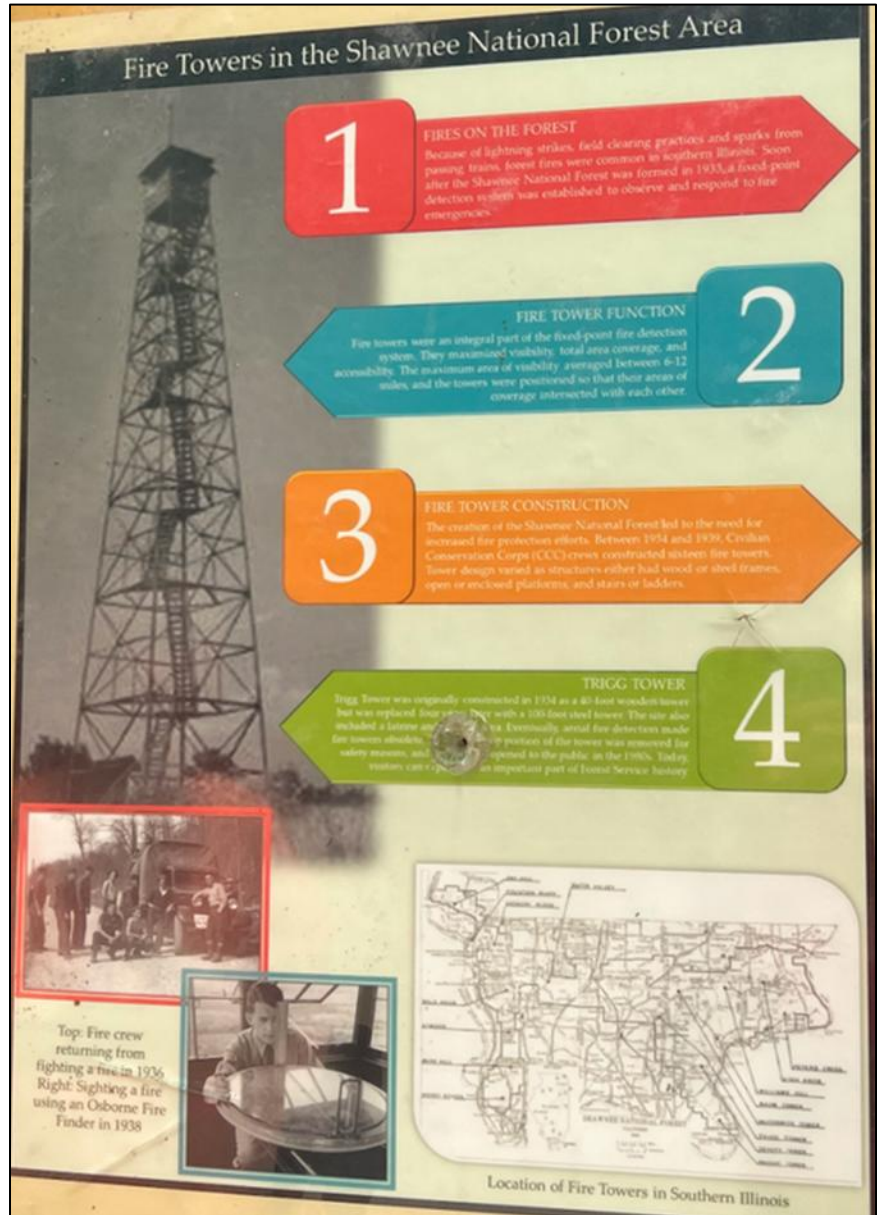
Mark and his brother climbed the Trigg Tower (shown above). They said it has not changed since they were there last. It is only half a tower. The observation



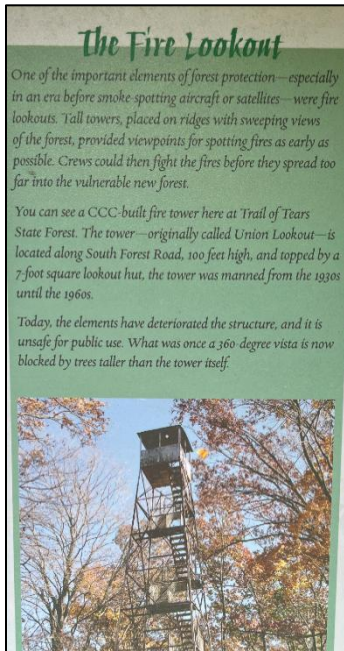
deck is

solid enough. However, the chain link walls around the stairs is pretty ratty looking. They reported that it's a great view.

They took a picture of a kiosk which had an interesting interpretative message on lookout towers and a map – hard to read- that showed all the early lookout towers in the area.



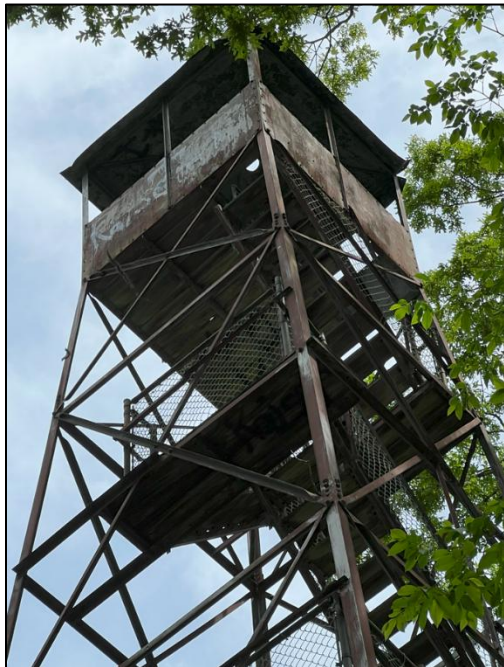
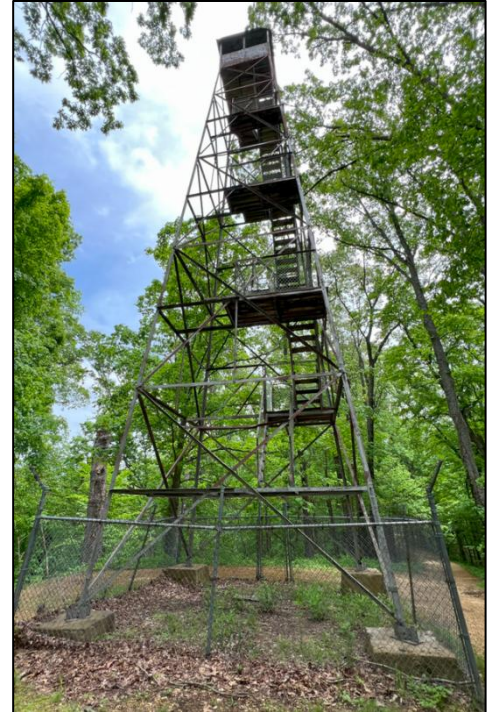
TRAIL OF TEARS (UNION) TOWER:



This Tower is in the Trail of Tears State Forest, west of Jonesboro. There's a main forest office building in a barn, but no one was there. There are a couple things about the tower posted on the information board outside. Then a short drive to a parking lot just south of that barn. The parking lot is at the start of the CCC trail, with an information board there.

The trail is very steep but only about a seven-minute walk to the tower. There is also a southern forest road that is supposed to lead to the tower, but it is gated

and gate was closed.



The tower was in pretty bad shape. It's missing the first one or two flights of stairs. Some of the higher up wooden stairs appear to be missing too. It looks like some of the cab floor is also missing. The fence around the tower isn't in great shape. There is a plaque on one of the footers from Feb 5, 2003, when the Union Lookout was put on the National Register of Historical Places.

Mark remarked that the forest road into the tower wasn't in poor shape as well, making it difficult to get to the tower.

Just looking at the pictures of the tower, I (Teena) found the orientation of the stairs interesting. I don't think I've seen that type of alignment before.



HIGH KNOB TOWER SITE:

Mark and his brother visited High Knob, a recreation site in the Shawnee National Forest. It is an old tower site, and the tower footers are still there. Also, some great views from this site. There's a sign, and a picnic area. The High Knob Tower was constructed in 1934 as a 60 feet steel stair tower. It included a dwelling, garage, latrine and a picnic area. The sign explained that aerial fire detection made fire towers obsolete. By 1974 these towers were no longer in use.

GIANT CITY TOWER:

Giant City State Park, south of Carbondale, has lots of great trails with rock formations. It also has an “observation tower”— it turns out that it’s a weirdly shaped water tower with an observation deck. It was never a fire tower site, but it’s a fun observation deck to climb.

From that observation deck we could easily see the very large cross that had been built at Bald Knob, which was a Shawnee fire tower site in the past. According to history, there have been crosses and religious activities happening on this site for many decades. This cross was about 9.4 miles away, but it was easily visible.



Mark visited the nature center at Giant City State Park and ended up talking to Damon Cederberg who is the new site superintendent for both the Giant City State Park and Trail of Tears State Forest. He had recently started this job and is interested in doing some restoration of the Trail of Tears tower. He said he’s been talking to people about it, but just getting started and not making any progress yet. Mark told him a little about the FFLA and gave him Teena’s name. Mark and his brother told him how the “friends” groups in Indiana had been instrumental in fixing up the McCormick’s and Ouabache towers.

Mark said the new superintendent didn’t seem to know much about towers or what resources are available, but has some interest in restoring the tower, or at least stabilizing it. Mark asked if he could share my contact information which I said would be great. I have not heard from him, but I really should reach out to him and tell him about some people like Mike Vigaleti who could work with him to restore a tower. I will follow up in 2026!

OLD TOWER SITES:

Mark said they also drove past two old tower sites, McCormick and Williams Hill. If they’d had more time, they would probably have walked around in the weeds to look for old tower footers.

I appreciate Mark and his brother checking out these towers in Illinois last year since I have not gotten over there.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2026:

My objectives are carried over from previous years

- I hope to interview more 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. If the register is up and going again I need to get the towers not on the register listed!

- Work with the State Parks and Forests in Indiana on needed work on their towers as I visit them. I feel good about introducing Brad Schneck with IDNR Forestry to Mike Vilegi so he now has a contact who will bid on his tower jobs. Earlier they had gotten no bids on restoring towers.
- Offer to give programs on lookout towers as I can.
- Generate more interest and members for FFLA.
- I need to also expand my travels to include Illinois and Missouri towers as I can.

2025 Indiana Tower Statistics:

Total lookout towers in chapter: 20 - A few in bad shape.

1. Lilly	2. Winamac
3. Weed Patch	4. Lincoln City
5. Cascades/GoosePond	6. Salem
7. Henryville	8. Ouabache
9. Ferdinand	10. Hickory Ridge
11. Cincinnati	12. Crane Tower #1 (Bedford Gate)
13. Wyandotte	14. Crane Tower #3 (Indian Creek)
15. Skyline	16. Spears
17. Willow Valley	18. Hartwell
19. Mason Ridge	20. McCormicks Creek
21. Mulvania Tower (from Missouri)	22.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Lookout Towers on National Register | 9 |
| 2. Towers in active service: | 0 |
| 3. Towers in rental program | 0 |
| 4. Towers needing significant repairs | Unsure |
| 5. Towers hopelessly dilapidated | 2 – possibly more |
| 6. Towers converted to alternate function | 2 but not listed above (the Crane towers) |
| 7. Towers schedule to be removed | None known |
| 8. Complete new tower under construction | 0 |

2025 Illinois Tower Statistics -Not updated this year.

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 9. Total lookout towers in chapter: | 3? |
| 10. Lookout Towers on National Register | 3 |
| 11. Towers in active service: | 0 |
| 12. Towers in rental program | 0 |
| 13. Towers needing significant repairs | 2 |
| 14. Towers hopelessly dilapidated | Unsure |
| 15. Towers converted to alternate function | |
| 16. Towers schedule to be removed | None known |
| 17. Complete new tower under construction | 0 |

Respectfully submitted:

Teena Ligman, Indiana Chapter Chair
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