

Florida Chapter; Forest Fire Lookout Association Inc.



2015 & beginning 2016

Visiting Florida remaining fire lookouts has been a hobby since moving to the State

In Company with Ed Seifert, we have visited a number of still standing lookouts in the State in several counties, and attempted to get to the Magnolia fire tower still reported standing on private property. Seen on Bing Maps online, this tall tower is located not far from a Martin Marietta aggregate quarry.

Online, we have been trying to ascertain how many of the 347 sites listed on the Tennessee Land forms site are indeed still standing. In doing that we have even found other Fire tower sites totally unknown to us such as Cooks Hammock and two “Salem” sites.* Cooks Hammock #294 according to BING is still standing but Carbur #034 is gone. Salem # 318 is removed while Salem #268 is still standing. This leads to unanswered questions if these two Salem sites were one and the same fire tower- just moved to a new location?

The various lookout towers called “Seminole” is a side-adventure.

Further nominations to the NHLR are on hold, awaiting better listing and Historical information.

In the Everglades “Pa-hay-Okee” lookout today is only an Observation deck out in the Alligator woods, but at one time a low hammock, now traversed by wood walk ways may have been the location of a steel fire tower...(another unanswered question).

The trail leading to “Long Pine Key” site is at Gate 3A Trail, Long Pine key is gone

As is “Florida City tower” near Homestead also gone

Miami Dade County fire headquarters site near South Dixie Highway, there’s no indication of a tower still remaining, however there remains a brown Forestry sign at the intersection. Down the road between a cluster of buildings is a Fire Station and also a

Forestry office apparently but any tower that had been there is long gone in the crush of built up infrastructure.

The Southside fire lookout in Jacksonville is a bit curious as it was at one time at a different location and re-erected there in 1938. It was recently listed to the NHLR*

The other tall Forestry tower that stood in Jacksonville; Jacksonville Heights was removed a long time ago and the area is now a housing complex, but retains the old name at "Fire Tower Road" The question...why would there be erected two very tall steel fire towers within only a few miles of each other in Jacksonville? A military base nearby Jacksonville Naval Air Station and other facilities certainly made it a security area.

Mayport Naval Base is not far away as is the Coast Guard Station. Was the Jacksonville Heights tower taken down and then re-erected as the "Southside Lookout" ?.... a story yet to be told perhaps?

Also being pursued are the many US Coast Guard lookouts that were built along the coast during World War Two. These were built of wood platforms supported on pilings. The small wood guard houses were positions where Coast watchers and Coast Guard patrols made regular treks among the dunes, back of the beach areas on sand pathways, many of the guardsmen on horse-back or on foot where just off-shore, German U boats prowled the coastlines. Several of these locations are still listed as "lookout sites" their tiny wood platforms long since removed but now bare evidence of a "yellow witness post" as a survey marker. Faint details of the old sand patrol roads can Occasionally be found. Mala Compra, Painters Hill and others, every few miles along the coast and a restored wood Coast Guard lookout still stands at Ormond Beach along Route A1A

Florida it seems has many such unanswered stories! A site not far from Smyrna Beach, seen as "Flagler" shows no structure standing. The name "Flagler" has been associated with several fire towers in the State as Henry Flagler was a very prominent name in the State's History. The "Southside" lookout still standing in Jacksonville's City limits was at one time known as "Flagler Tower" as was/is the tall fire tower (Wadsworth) along Route One in Palm Coast, also known as "Flagler" and also referred to as "Bunnell".

The "Flagler" site (#316) possibly could have been another US Coast Guard watch tower back from the beach several hundred yards. The question begs why would the State build a tall 100 foot steel fire tower so near the ocean front ?

Yet another location shown as "Gimlet #314 near Smyrna Dunes Park (gone) but the US Coast Guard Station is nearby

Fernandina Park & Clapboard tower's location largely overlooking mudflats on one side, the ocean front on another side and gave only long distance western views begs for a story.

To get down to the “Specifics” of the Chapter’s disposition is still as vague as it was two years ago. There are seen to be a total of 12 members of the Florida Chapter in all categories, one being complimentary. How many are actually “paid’ is still open to definition. *see follow ups on this to Gary Weber and Chairman Argow for clarification.

At the previous Florida conference held at the Myakka District Office, the Florida Chapter became a 10 member group (needed for FFLA rules) when Bob Spear officially accepted transfer from the New Jersey Chapter to the Florida Chapter. Previously, the Florida Chapter had been a “quasi- sub group “ of the New Jersey Chapter when John Seifert had moved to the State and operated the Deleon Springs tower and then the Seville fire tower . John had become the first Florida Chapter Director, succeeded by Jack Sargent, and then Bob Spear. It was through John’s first efforts that a working list of Florida lookouts was first obtained in 1991.

Searching out remaining fire lookouts in the State of Florida is on-going, any help with this is appreciated.

Bob Spear; (current Florida Director FFLA)