

## **2017 Maine Chapter Annual Report**

Since the last report, we saw some new tower losses, continuing on the theme of landowners and agencies disposing of perceived liability. We had a large amount of members and friends of the chapter do site visits all over the state. We had another year where all standing towers were visited, yielding a complete 2017 survey.

We continued with research and archive collection, including important donations and oral histories. We continue to maintain and grow our chapter 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 –

### **2017 Tower Survey**

Data as of 12/30/2017

#### **Changes for 2017:**

- **Clear Lake** lookout in T10 R11 was removed
- **Wadleigh Mountain** lookout in T1 R12 was removed
- **Kelly Mountain** lookout cab was removed and a new observation deck was built
- **Rocky Mountain** lookout cab was blown off in a wind storm

#### **Summary:**

Total Known Tower Sites – 144

Total Towers Still Standing – 55

Total Towers Gone or Removed – 89

#### **Of the 55 Standing Towers:**

Standing Steel Only, No Cab – 21

Standing Steel Converted to Observation –7

Standing Steel and Cab –26

Standing Wooden Enclosed – 1

#### **Average Condition of the 26 standing towers with Cabs:**

Good Condition – 11

Fair Condition – 5

Poor Condition – 7

Bad Condition – 3

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 – 2**

**Tower Changes** – Rocky Mountain loses a cab, Kelly Mountain gets an observation deck

**New Tower Sites** – None

**Planned Removals** – No concrete plans to remove anything, but the below continue to be at-risk towers:

1. **Johnston Hill**
2. **Pleasant Mountain**
3. **Almanac Mountain**

**Membership**

Current membership in ME is at 38 members, up 8 from last year. This is largely due to Facebook campaigns that we ran over the year. We also have over 100 other Facebook friends or folks that help out occasionally with research, trip reports, or tower reports.

**NHLR**

12 Total Entries

We had one nomination by Terry Grant in 2017. Mitten Mountain in Centerville is now on the NHLR as US 1251 and ME 12. There are a number of other towers under consideration and will be placed on the register as time permits.

**Research / Archives**

As always, we continued with significant research on tower sites. We received many new leads and information through Facebook and have worked with these folks to gather the information for the archives. We did several oral histories of past watchman as well. Worked with various organizations and individuals to provide history and background data on towers and tower sites. Also made several trips to the Maine Forest Service and other locations to retrieve archival information and old photos of lookout sites.

**Liability Challenges in Maine**

We continue to hold on a few restoration projects on state owned/leased land until we can understand if / how we can use the FFLA National liability insurance.

This will need to be a topic for the January 2018 board meeting. Despite queries, we have made no progress getting these answers in 2017.

### **Facebook Presence**

The Maine Chapter Facebook Page continues to do well and has 4703+ followers as of this writing, up 1,078 since last year. We continue to keep fresh content on the page, which is a key to keeping interest. We continue to see the below benefits -

- Connecting with many former watchman, yielding a wealth of info
- Connecting with the families of former watchman, yielding a wealth of info
- Provides a good mechanism for communication and outreach
- Is a good research tool
- Has created more exposure for the chapter
- Provides a mechanism to socialize our online membership

We regularly create Facebook advertising campaigns on a quarterly basis to advertise our Newsletter with our online membership link.

## **Activities**

### **Squaw Mountain Watchman's Camp project**

The Natural Resource Education Center (NREC) based in Greenville Maine, began a project to add a watchman's camp replica at the Greenville Maine Visitors Center. In 2016, the restoration of the Squaw Mountain Fire tower was completed on this site. The camp was to be built next to the fire tower to create a "fire lookout complex". The camp was to be the same size and style as the last standing watchman's camp on Squaw Mountain. The camp is to be dual-purpose; in the warm months when the fire tower is open, the camp will serve as an interpretive site showing elements of watchman life around 1960. In the winter months, the camp will be used as a warming shelter for the local cross-country ski group. In 2017, planning and ground work was worked on, and will continue in 2018.

### **Squaw Mountain Watchman's Camp Work Day**

At the end of August, groups from NREC, FFLA, Boy Scouts and others climbed Squaw Mountain to the old watchman's camp to salvage select items to be used in the new replica camp to be built at the visitor's center. Some of the items will be used as a model to re-create new items. Final measurements were taken to be used in the new camp. The state is planning on burning the camp during the winter of 2018.

### **Northern Region Towers**

The Maine Public Lands Division continued planning for maintenance on the Round Pond Mountain tower site, including footing and deck work. Site work to be started in 2018.

## Presentations

We gave 2 fire tower presentations in 2017. One was in partnership with the Downeast Lakes Land Trust, and was given in Grand Lake Stream. This presentation focused on Washington County and area tower history as well as a focus on the Grand Lake Stream tower. The second was in partnership with the Moosehead Marine Museum, and was given in Greenville on the steamboat "Katahdin". This presentation had a focus on Moosehead Lake area towers. Former Big Spencer lookout watchman John Boydston joined us for this presentation and spoke about his time as a watchman.

## Other Projects

The **Mount Agamenticus** restoration project did not see any movement in 2017 due to the need for an engineering study to be completed. FFLA will assist where possible.

There was progress on the Indian Hill fire lookout project in **Grand Lake Stream**. The Downeast Lakes Land Trust is completing ownership paperwork for this lookout and possibly starting a restoration effort by spring of 2018. FFLA will assist where possible.

As a result of the **Wadleigh Mountain Fire tower** removal, FFLA was able to work with Parks and Lands to get a 12 foot section of ladder for use with the Squaw Mountain fire tower at the Greenville visitor's center. This project will be worked on in May 2018.

On the volunteer front, **Mount Hope** remains in good shape and is manned by volunteers when they are available. **Mount Agamenticus** continues to be closed for restoration and **Ossipee Hill** tower has had little activity in 2017.

## Other Activities

Made several tower site visits this past year. Trips included Doubletop Mountain, Mount Kineo, Soubunge Mountain, Squaw Mountain, White Cap Mountain, Williams Mountain, Jo Mary Mountain, Williams Mountain, Number 4 Mountain, Tumbledown Mountain, Wadleigh Mountain, Day Hill, Poccomoonshine Mountain, and Indian Hill.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cobb  
Maine Director