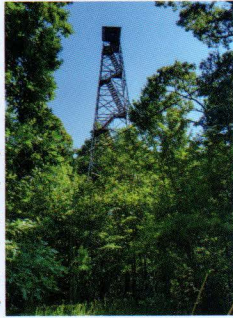


Nine Days, Five States, and Forty Towers

As usual, some members went above and beyond the conference tower visits before and after the Eastern Conference. Gary Weber had decided to make coming east worth his while and found a willing accomplice (and chauffeur) in Mark Haughwout. Mark had picked up Gary Tuesday night (actually in the wee hours of Wednesday morning) at the Raleigh-Durham Airport in North Carolina.

After a short night's sleep, they were on the road with the first stop being the **Cane Mountain** tower, a long-abandoned 100-foot Aermotor MC-39 with lower stair sections removed, nearly hidden in the trees near a taller



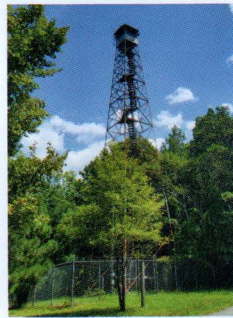
communications tower. From there, it was on to Yanceyville and the **Caswell** tower, at the North Carolina Forest



Service's Caswell County office. Upon arrival, no one was around, but the County Ranger pulled in soon after, returning for repair parts for equipment on his current project. He

offered them the opportunity to climb the tower, a 100-foot Aermotor MC-39 that appeared to be in good shape, holding antennas as well as Christmas lights. Mark made a note to come back to see it lit up in December.

The first stop after crossing into Virginia was the **Alton** tower, privately owned and fenced, standing along a county road. While there, a pickup pulled up and stopped – it was the owner, who graciously opened the gate and also provided several pieces of



information about the tower and its history, helping to clear up some discrepancies in inventory records. The 100-foot Aermotor MC-99 was fully intact, and appeared to be in decent condition. Some obvious differences

noted between the MC-99 and the more common MC-39 included the window shades and "Y" numbers instead of "U" numbers stenciled on the steel.

Next was the **Phenix** tower, an 80-foot McClintic-Marshall on the edge of a cornfield.

The tower is missing its cab, as well as the top and bottom flights of stairs. While there, Mark and Gary looked for identifying characteristics to differentiate McClintic-Marshall



towers from other manufacturer's towers, and took note of the format and font of the numbering stamped into the steel.

After climbing up the powerline opening to the **Leigh Mountain** tower,



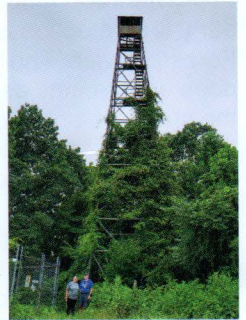
a new office-type modular structure was found at the site, as well as a shed and water tanks, raising questions for the future of the tower. The 80-foot International Derrick is still securely fenced, but with the cab floor and glass gone, has obviously seen better days.

With plans to overnight in Roanoke and meet up with Virginia-West Virginia Director Krissy Reynolds, it was then decision time. After making contact with Krissy, it was decided to meet in the morning, leaving time for Mark and Gary to go to one more tower, **Piney Mountain**. The 80-foot International Derrick was one of the last used by the Virginia Department of Forestry, and appeared to still be in good condition. After hiking back down, they had an interesting visit with the resident at the home at the base of the overgrown tower road, before heading on to Roanoke and being done for the day.

Krissy and Wes Reynolds showed up at Mark and Gary's hotel Thursday morning; after a lengthy visit in the

parking lot, Krissy got in with the pair and they headed to the **Bedford** tower.

While privately owned, a road coming up the other side of the mountain to neighboring communication towers got the trio to the fence at the property line a few feet from the



tower. The 80-foot Aermotor LS-40, becoming overgrown by kudzu, has also seen better days. Aermotor stenciling, "NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BEDFORD, VA", left the three wondering about the tower's history.

After dropping Krissy and saying their goodbyes to her and Wes at their *Sun & Spruce Soaps* store, Mark and Gary headed north to clearing skies and **Red Oak Mountain**, the site of

Virginia's only cupola-style lookout. Although securely closed up, cupola



windows were open and the lookout showed other signs of needing some care.

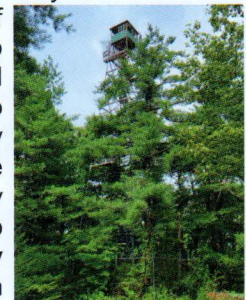
One last stop in Virginia was the **Woodstock** tower, a 30-foot steel



observation tower built by the CCC in 1935 as a public attraction. It reportedly was used jointly for fire spotting and recreational purposes, and is maintained by the US Forest Service.

After crossing through West Virginia and Maryland, Mark and Gary reached their overnight spot outside of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.

With much of the state to traverse and hoping to be to New Jersey by mid- to late afternoon, Friday morning's first stop was **Snowy Mountain**, in



Michaux State Forest. After hiking the half-mile up the gated road, they found the 80-foot Aermotor LS-40K (the LS-40K has the catwalk on one side and an exterior cab door) to have been severely vandalized. Cab furnishings and window frames had been thrown to the ground.

Next was the **Mount Dunlap** tower, near Blue Ridge Summit. The 80-foot Aermotor MC-39 is in a fenced enclosure, but with missing floor and windows, appears to only be used to hold a myriad of antennas. A few driving hours later, the pair checked in to their New Jersey hotel, finding Tennessee Director Bill Ulmer in the lobby, and later met up with Bob Wolff and others for dinner and the conference weekend had begun!

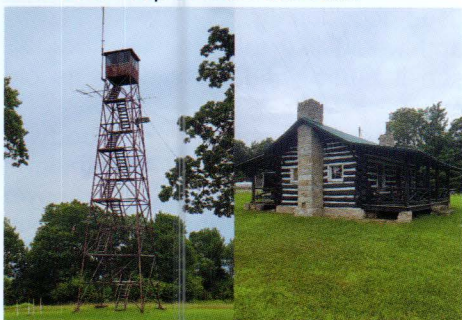
After the conference and the six towers visited, **Catfish, Culvers, and Budd Lake** in New Jersey on Saturday and the **Old Big Pocono** at Grey Towers, **Big Pocono**, and **Bears Head** in Pennsylvania on Sunday, Mark and Gary continued west with Monday morning's first stop at **Sand Mountain**, where the 80-foot Aermotor LS-40 was dwarfed by a nearby communications tower. The tower was long-abandoned for fire-spotting purposes, but was securely fenced and held several antennas.

No snakes were found that day at the **Rattlesnake** tower (below left) in Moshannon State Forest, one of the new 80-foot towers. The old stone observer's cabin was closed up tight, and the old outhouse stood tucked back in the trees. As the clouds were moving in, the **Snow Shoe** tower (below right),



another of Pennsylvania's new 80-footers was found at a Sprout State Forest maintenance facility compound.

Upon arrival at the gate for the quarter-mile walk to **The Knobs** tower, again on the Moshannon State Forest, a steady drizzle had started. Although replaced and taken out of service, the 60-foot Aermotor LS-40 appeared in decent shape, supporting several antennas. The covered porch of the stone cabin offered a respite from the rain.



A five-minute drive led to the **Chestnut Ridge** tower (below left), the replacement for The Knobs. Staying dry wasn't an option walking the hundred yards from the gate up the road in the rain to the new 80-foot tower.



An hour later, the rain had fallen back to a drizzle upon arrival at **Rockton** (above right), another of the new towers on the Moshannon Forest, again an 80-footer.

The rain had stopped, but the tall grass was far from dry around the **Clover Run** tower. This 80-foot tower overlooking State Game Lands was the only one of the new PA towers that was not a replacement for an existing tower.

Zig-zagging across I-80 on their way west through Pennsylvania, the duo had time for one more tower for the day. After finding an open gate for a logging operation, they were able to drive most of the way up to the **Bootjack** tower in the Elk State Forest (right column, top) before being stopped

by a windfall. After walking the last quarter mile, they found the new 100-foot tower, as well as the old stone cabin; its covered porch again provided a place to get out of the rain, which had picked up again.

Bootjack also answered the question of whether all of the new towers (except Big Pocono's 35-footer) were 80-feet tall ... *No!*

Tuesday started with a stop at the **Hays Lot** tower in Clear Creek State Forest. The Aermotor LS-40 appeared



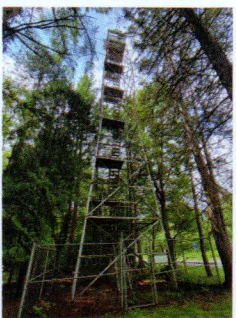
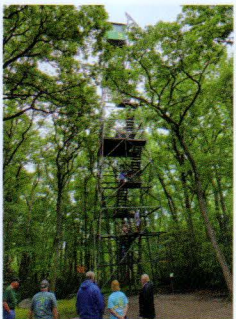
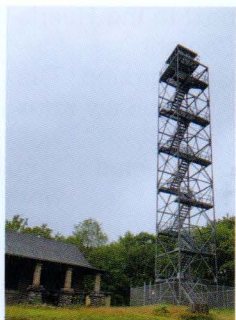
to have originally been a 60-foot tower, at some point extended with four sections to now stand 86 feet tall. While still fenced, stair treads removed from the bottom two flights and cab

windows open indicated that it likely was no longer in use.

The **Cook Forest** tower, old Fire Tower #9, an 80-foot Aermotor LS-40, is likely the most visited and publicly climbed tower in the state. Originally built in 1929 as a tourist attraction at Seneca Point in Cook Forest State Park, the tower was used for fire detection from the late 1940s until the mid-1970s.

Nearly hidden in the trees alongside a busy highway, the **Marienville** tower is a PA Bureau of Forestry tower located on Allegheny National Forest land. Like Hays Lot, the 60-foot Aermotor LS-40 was extended to its current 86 feet. Several lower cross braces on the tower have been spliced, after having rusted through.

Another State tower on Allegheny NF land is the **Wheeler** tower, located



next to the Hearts Content Campground. The 80-foot Blaw Knox tower, was constructed in 1922, was securely fenced and appeared to be in decent condition.



After meeting up with Southern Deputy Ron Stafford, the three proceeded to the **Cole Hill** tower, an abandoned, privately owned 80-foot Aermotor LS-40 that was in poor shape. After visiting there for a couple of hours, it was reluctantly decided that if Mark and Gary were going to get to any more towers that day, they needed to say goodbye to Ron.

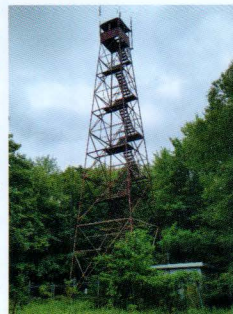


Beginning their way south, next was the **Tionesta** tower (below left) in the Cornplanter State Forest. The 95-year-old 80-foot Aermotor LS-40 and its ground cabin were still secured and in operational condition. The last tower in



the area was **Plumer** (above right), another Cornplanter District tower, located on State Game Land. The 80-foot McClintic-Marshall tower was still securely fenced, but was missing most of its windows, and had seen better days. *Fifteen towers for the two days across Pennsylvania – not bad!*

Wednesday was more windshield time than tower time, and began with a visit to **Springfield**, another privately owned, abandoned 80-foot Aermotor LS-40 that was in poor shape, missing windows, floor, and the



bottom two flights of stairs.

Located in the compound of a Forbes State Forest maintenance facility, **Pondfield** is an 80-foot McClintic-Marshall tower, not easily photographed. Workers who returned while the two were there said the tower is used occasionally, and would like to see it refurbished, as well as its old cabin.



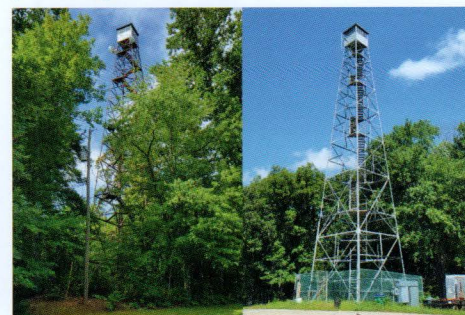
The next stop was **Goodwin Knob**, near Smithfield, with its unique cupola-style lookout. Little was known about this lookout, but it appeared to be fairly well taken care of. No one was home at the house below to help answer any questions about it. With that, it was time to leave Pennsylvania and



continue south into West Virginia.

After a quick foray into Maryland for an unsuccessful attempt to find the access to the former Roth Rock tower site, it was on to the Monongahela National Forest's **Olson** tower, followed by a trip to **Bickle Knob** (see Monongahela Towers, p.24 for more on these two). After many more miles of twisty, curvy roads, mostly after dark, the day ended after over 400 miles, in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Thursday's time-limited touring started with a stop at the **Central Plains** tower (below left) in Fluvanna County, a now privately owned 100-foot International Derrick that appeared to still be in reasonably decent condition. This was a repeat visit for both Mark and Gary, although it had been many years ago for both.



The **Re-located East Leake** tower (above right) that once stood near Gum

Springs was moved to a site outside of Columbia about twenty years ago. The 100-foot International Derrick stands in good condition in what has been developed into a vineyard that serves as a wedding venue and hosts many other events.

The last tower stop was **Cumberland**, one of the only ones in the area that Gary had not previously been to. The 100-foot Aermotor MC-39 is located in town behind the post office. Mark was determined to make a winter return, since the thick undergrowth around the base prevented much inspection of the tower.



With that, it was time to get Gary back to the Raleigh-Durham Airport for his trip home. On the way, they passed the Crafton Gate tower and unbelievably, didn't stop! *Mark that one on the calendar – it isn't likely to happen again very soon!* (They had both been there before.) In addition to visiting forty lookouts, seeing everyone at the conference and meeting Krissy (first time for both Mark and Gary) and Ron (first time for Gary) made for a great trip!

Zazzle FFLA Items Lunch Box

In addition to the 2024 Calendar, there are several other items in the Zazzle FFLA Store, the newest of which is a classic metal lunchbox featuring a photo of one of North Idaho's classic L-4 lookouts on the top and the FFLA logo on the bottom. The lunch box is available in green, white, black, or stainless colors.



Other items, all with the FFLA logo, include a tote bag, a USB swivel flash drive featuring a photo of the iconic Sundance Lookout, a trailer hitch cover, sticky notes, a refrigerator magnet, face masks, and a lighter.

To order Zazzle items and get the most benefit for the FFLA, go to https://www.zazzle.com/store/forest_fire_lookout or to the FFLA website, <https://ffla.org/lookout-store.html>, and click on the links there.