

# HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Spring 2008  
By: **Bob Spear**

Greenville, Maine, 1993  
"Moosehead Lake Conference"

The third conference in 1993 of the Forest Fire Lookout Association took place at the Maine Forestry Headquarters in Greenville. Moosehead Lake, dotted with its many islands in its fifty mile length, has to be seen to be appreciated. The quaint "working town" of Greenville is located at its eastern end surrounding a small cove with the forestry headquarters on one side and Folsom's seaplane base on the other. Through the years summer homes and camps have sprung up around the area from there to Rockport, but Greenville remains truly a "working man's lumber town" as it was decades ago. People here make their living from the woods, either lumber related industry, forestry work or running hunting and fishing camps in the surrounding townships. One of the attractions in summer is the old lumber tug "Katardin" or "The Kate" as she is affectionately called, making daily lake excursions out into the rolling green waters of Maine's largest fresh water lake, stopping at several bed and breakfast wharves along the way. Kineo Island stands like a giant plug of granite in the lake and on its summit stands the Mt. Kineo fire tower, that was planned for restoration. On the southeastern summit of an imposing hill stands the old Squaw Mountain fire tower, built in 1908. Off to the west is the remote Williams Mountain fire tower, all but consumed by the surrounding spruce and hardwood forest, while to the north, beyond Lily Bay and out toward Kodajoe (population "Not many" as the sign says), is old Number 4 fire tower, now collapsed on itself and a shamble of boards and steel angles. Others are Borestone Mountain, Hardwood and Depot mountain towers, and Big Spencer. Still farther are Green Mountain, West Kennebago, Ross Mountain, Norway Bluff, Horse Mountain, Priestly Mountain and many others.

We had the good fortunate to have one the legends of the Maine Forest Service speak, former Commissioner Austin Wilkins, then in his 92nd year. Austin's book "Ten Million Acres of Timber" chronicles his tenure in office. It was truly an honor and an inspiration to have him present. Caroline Parmenter, no small article herself in her years as a watchperson, first in Vermont and then at Harris Mountain lookout, regaled us with her history of serving in the CBI (China-Burma) theater of operations in World War II with Merrill's Marauders as a combat infantry nurse. The day was not wasted either when another legendary ranger of the Maine Forest Service gave us his brand of sage wisdom. Chief Pilot Harold Jones honored us with a talk of his adventures and insight into the state's fire towers. Flying his Huey helicopter as if it were part of himself, Harold later deftly put on a water dropping demonstration. The next afternoon, Dave Quam with Sue Merics in tow, flew his seaplane up from New York State and landed at Folsom's flying service "just to drop in"!

Public awareness of fire towers was a topic of discussion. An "inventory update" was reported on and talks were given by other guest speakers. Dinner was in town at a

congenial eatery, within walking distance. The conference over, Bill Wilmouth and I headed north through the Big Woods some eighty-six miles on logging roads to Ashland and Presque Island, looking for fire towers along the way. We spent three days in Mapleton, before once more heading south for home. The Greenville Conference, a memorable event, was not soon to be forgotten!

.....to be continued.....

**Bob Spear, National Historian**