

# HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Fall 2007  
By: Bob Spear

Wicomico, Maryland, January 1993  
"The Eastern Shore Conference"

On the Eastern shore as it's called here, the DelMarVa Peninsula, short for Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, our 7th Conference took place in January 1993. The flatness of the terrain here calls for very tall fire towers and several different added on styles as we found. The Powellville fire tower just east of the conference site had been abandoned for a decade or more, it's outbuildings overgrown with brush and it's bottom landings removed to discourage climbing. It's one hundred forty foot height was one of the tallest our group had as yet visited. Already it was slated to possibly be removed by Maryland forestry but was hoped that at least part of it could be salvaged as a short tower for use as a teaching tool. The District Forester had a crew clean up the site for our visit and several of our members did climb the tower. With flat roofs and a "widows walk" around the top for added observation ability, these towers were mostly constructed during the CCC days of the 1930s. They also proved useful during World War Two for aircraft spotting and as "listening posts" for German submarines off shore in the Atlantic.

Our group, guided by Maryland Forest Ranger Bill Jones, visited Nassawango, Green Hill, Quantico, and Church Creek fire towers. Chief Ranger Al Zends welcomed us to the Wicomico facility and gave us a "standing invitation" to return again anytime for another Conference which the FFLA accepted graciously. There were twenty-six persons present representing nine states.

Other actions included voting on and recognizing the winning design, by Cindy Livesey of a National FFLA logo; Developing a "Patch" project, spearheaded by Dave Quam; introduction of the new FFLA Oregon Director Ron Johnson, new Washington Director Ray Kresek, and the addition of New Mexico to Arizona Director Dave Lorenz. Election additions to the by-laws were followed by voting for Secretary Ellen Dill Isenberg and Archivist\* Henry Isenberg (later changed to Historian) and announcing the new Western Region Director Gary Weber of Idaho.

The "Doug Newman" award and the NHLR report were presented by Keith Argow. Maryland has a long and useful history concerning forest fire lookouts. The design of the State's borders lends it to wide-ranging topographical changes. The western mountains, bordered by West Virginia and Pennsylvania made it necessary to use rocky balds and even early "tree lookouts".

The thick woods of the Catoctin mountains to the north of Washington allowed use of more standard steel Aermotor types and certain areas where heavier "Wells Fargo" styles were used (Cub Hill). The "eastern shore" developed it's own styles of very tall fire towers, 100- to 140-footers, having flat roofs with a small railing. A hatch inside the ceiling permitted access to the roof. Many of these were utilized during World

War II for “aircraft identification”. Toward the end of the conference, Mark Haughwout and I visited the Hallwood fire tower across the border in Virginia and Henry had the opportunity to visit many others along the route on his way to Florida .

There would be two more Conferences in 1993; SPOKANE, WA and GREENVILLE, ME.

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

**Bob Spear, National Historian**