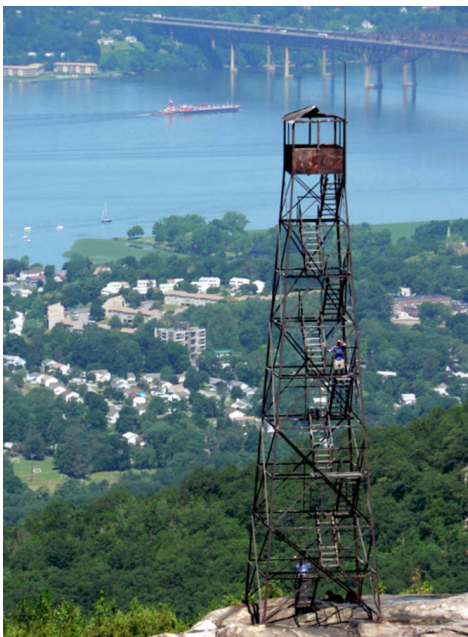


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MOUNT BEACON
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SINCE 1902

Fast Facts, Mount Beacon Fire Observation Tower



The Fire Observation Tower today.

LOCATION AND SETTING: The Mount Beacon Fire Observation Tower is located on the summit of South Beacon Mountain, the southernmost of two peaks forming Mount Beacon, in the Hudson Highland region of Dutchess County, New York. The steel tower is at an elevation of approximately 1650' above sea level and offers a commanding view of the mountains forming this section of the Highlands, as well as the Hudson River to the north, south and west. The maximum range of view, depending on weather conditions, is approximately 75 miles.

DESIGNATIONS: In 2009, the Fire Tower was placed on the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places, and had previously been listed on the National Historic Lookout Register.

SPECIFICATIONS: The Tower is a sixty-foot high Aermotor model steel observation tower, model LS-40, erected in 1931 and placed into service the following year. The galvanized and bolted steel frame supports a seven-by-seven foot steel observation cabin. The structure is of the four-post, steel-frame type and was fabricated by the Aermotor Windmill Company, originally of Chicago and later Oklahoma, which has been continuously manufacturing windmills, towers and related parts since 1888. The four legs of the derrick-like tower are anchored by steel plates into poured concrete footings. Wooden stairs and multiple wooden landings provided access to the observation cabin from the ground. The observer's cabin likewise had wood flooring, as well as a metal-hipped roof.

HISTORY: The Mount Beacon Fire Observation Tower was one of several erected by New York State to protect state-owned forest lands in the early 20th century. From its completion until the end of the 1972 fire season, the Tower, located in the 14th Fire District, was operated by the New York State Bureau of Forest Fire Control, at which time it was taken out of service. It was briefly put back into service before being de-commissioned permanently circa 1975, as the role of fire observation was being assumed by aircraft.

RESTORATION EFFORT: Interest in restoring the tower for recreational use coalesced from 2003 to 2006, when actual restoration analysis and work began. The Mount Beacon Incline Railway Restoration Society provided its not-for-profit financial structure and support to the ongoing effort as part of its larger goal to safeguard the mountain's summit as a scenic, historic and recreational resource. The Tower is currently being restored with the desire of having it ready for the 2009 Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Celebration. Prior to the restoration effort, the Tower was in danger of being lost to decades of neglect, vandalism and decay. The condition of the Tower has been stabilized, however, and recent repair work has focused upon the damaged concrete footings and deteriorated wood steps and landings. Next on the restoration agenda is the replacement of damaged or failing bolts, sway braces, and the cabin's roof. Other work will include sanding and painting and the installation of wire mesh as a security measure for visitors. While the fire observer's living quarters, a gable-roofed cabin, has failed to survive, plans are being considered to reconstruct it to serve a variety of interpretive functions.



Bureau of Forest Fire Control Ranger Ken Burns and friend at the base of the Tower, 1936.