

FOREST LOOKOUTS

OREGON

BAKER COUNTY

BENTON COUNTY

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MORE...

BENTON COUNTY

MARY'S PEAK

Siuslaw National Forest
12S-7W-28



September 22, 1960 - Siuslaw National Forest Historic photo

July 20, 1915: "The department is building a telephone line from the summit of Mary's Peak to the cabin at the water intake in Benton County. It is the intention to have a lookout man on the summit of the mountain." (**The Morning Oregonian**)

July 22, 1915: "Announcement was made today by State Forester Elliott, that a telephone line, being built from Mary's peak, in Benton county, to connect with the line of the Corvallis water department, will be completed in a few days. This will enable the lookout to be stationed on the peak, to report promptly all fires he may discover in that county and in Lincoln county." (**La Grande Observer**)

October 1, 1915: "A rain and hail storm, coupled with high winds, completely riddled a flag at the forest lookout on Mary's Peak September 11th. The wind, after the flag was in ribbons, twisted, braided and knotted the flag into a strand about three feet long. M.P. Burnett, who returned this week from the peak brought the remnants of the flag with him.

Mr. Burnett went to the summit of Mary's peak as sentinel for the forest rangers, arriving there July 16th. Earlier in the summer a telephone line has been completed from the Corvallis Water Works intake to the summit, and Telt was stationed there to keep a keen lookout for forest fires. He was furnished a tent, put up a flag pole and hoisted the stars and stripes. Frequent visitors walked to the top of the peak at various times during the two months he was there, and they will remember seeing the flag, quite large in size that floated from the flag staff. During the night of Saturday, September 11th, a rain and hail storm struck the mountain summit, and Telt says he never put in such a night in his life. The hail, he says, was as large as gooseberries, and fell in such quantity that the snowy coat remained on the peak until the of the forenoon next day. Because of the hail the water ran thru the roof of his tent and everything was soaked and the weather was cold. It is the opinion of Mr. Burnett that had any campers been sleeping out of doors on the peak that night, as is frequently the custom, they would have perished unless they could have found shelter on the leeward side of some big tree.

Mr. Burnett reported 50 fires seen from the peak. His reports went to John Hyde, fire warden, who had a lot of permits issued for burning slashings. During the time he was stationed on the peak there were no fires of any consequence. The only fires that did any serious damage to timber burned before the station was established. Today Mr. Burnett received a letter from the state forester, commending him for his efficient reports." (**The Weekly Gazette-Times**)

June 15, 1916: "From the summit of Mary's peak Telt Burnett will be able to observe fires in all directions as they occur. He has a telephone and as soon as a fire is discovered he notifies the nearest deputy warden and Warden Hyde. He makes a daily record of his observations and these are forwarded to the state forester's office." (**Corvallis Gazette-Times**)

January 4, 1917: "The Government maintains a lookout station on the mountain top for the Forest Service. Mary's Peak is in the heart of the Coast Range, with excellent fishing and hunting grounds all about it." (**The Oregonian**)

August 16, 1917: "Telt Burnett, our efficient fire watch, or lookout has his eye peeled for fires, but he hasn't seen any yet. The fires just won't burn when Telt is looking." (**The Weekly Gazette-Times**)

June 14, 1918: "John Hyde has again been appointed State Fire Warden, his district being Benton county, which he will cover in the most thorough manner. He says that the closed season for starting any fire without official permit extends to October first, and this will be strictly enforced, especially as this is the dryest season for many years. Mr. Hyde went up on Mary's Peak today to put up a new telephone from the lookout station down to Philomath, to insure quick notice in the event of fire being sighted anywhere in the district from the lookout, which will be in charge of M.P. Burnett, (Telt) who made such a good record on the same post last year." (**Corvallis Gazette-Times**)

May 30, 1920: "Mary's peak in Benton also may be used as a lookout station during a portion of the season, says Mr. Oglesby. It is connected by telephone with Corvallis." (**The Oregonian**)

July 30, 1935 "A special Washington dispatch to the Oregonian today said that Mary's Peak, one of the highest points in the Willamette Valley, may be purchased by the Forest Service for recreational development.

Senator Charles L. McNary was said to be interesting himself in the project." (**News-Review - Roseburg**)

1937: Ken Burkholder was the first lookout on the peak. The lookout consisted of a tent camp and a fire finder mounted on a crude tripod. (**From a December 2005 interview with Mr. Burkholder**)

June 9, 1937: "Plans for the area include construction of a fire lookout station on the top of Mary's Peak where a good view of many miles of coast range mountains can be obtained. No work has started on this as yet but preliminary surveys are being made.

Road improvement is also contemplated but final details for the construction of the proposed road to the top of the mountain for all year use has not yet been decided." **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**



July 2, 1937: Panorama photos taken.

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July 22, 1937: "A forest lookout station today went into operation on Mary's peak, from which lookouts can scan the mountainous country for many miles. The post will be in operation 24 hours per day.

The forest service crew erected the station in two days and it is equipped with radio phone and wireless. One man will be stationed there at all times.

The new station is located immediately on the summit of the 4000 foot peak." **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

August 1937: "A lookout station was recently established on the summit of Mary's Peak by the Forest Service. This mountain lies within the forest area that was purchased last year by the National Reservation Commission and made a part of the Siuslaw National Forest. Plans at the present time are to develop it into a recreational area with special emphasis placed on winter sports." **(The Forest Log)**

August 7, 1937: "Telephone communication lines have been established between the lookout on Mary's peak and the Alsea highway, it was announced today by Frank Groves, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce highway committee who has been active in the development of the peak area.

Establishment of this telephone line connects the lookout directly with centers in the valley whereas before the only way was by radio and it will assure adequate fire protection for the Corvallis watershed lands on Mary's peak and other forest lands of the federal government.

William Berkholder is in charge of the Mary's peak station and is working under direction of R.S. Shelley, supervisor of the Siuslaw national forest." **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

June 1, 1940: "Siuslaw forest officials, whose headquarters are in Eugene, visited the 4000-foot peak 23 miles west of Corvallis and said today a 10-mile stretch of road to the summit would soon be completed. The extension leaves the Alsea highway as it crosses the summit of the range.

The road up the mountain will be utilized by loggers as well as pleasure seekers and a combination lookout and observation building will be constructed at the top. Parking space for 500 cars will be provided." **(Klamath News)**

August 1940: "A CCC truck trail will be completed this summer to the summit of Marys Peak, the highest mountain in the Coast Range." **(The Forest Log)**

June 16, 1941: "Plans are being made now for a public observatory and standard forest lookout upon the summit. The observatory will be glassed in for the public. The top of Mary's Peak is 4073 feet." **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

June 17, 1941: "Action was taken which turned over virtually the entire summit of Mary's peak to the federal government's forestry service.

The city deeded 40 acres on the summit where the Siuslaw forest plans to erect a lookout tower and leased an additional 400 acres for a period of 40 years. The lease covers the remainder of the grass land on the mountain top and some portions of timbered area around the fringe of the summit." **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

1941: "The road to the summit of Mary's Peak, begun in the summer of 1938, was completed in the fall of 1941. Both CCC and WPA crews were employed on this work, under the immediate direction of foreman Clayton R. Barclay.

In connection with the development of improvements on the summit, the City of Corvallis donated to the government the NW 1/4 NW 1/4 of Sec. 28, Twp. 12 S, R. 7 W. and leased to the government its other lands on the summit." **(A History of the Siuslaw National Forest)**

July 3, 1941: "Construction of a public observation tower and fire lookout house on the tip-top of Mary's peak will start as soon as the materials can be carried to the summit, Dahl Kirkpatrick, Siuslaw National forest supervisor, said today.

The structure will be 30 feet square at the base and three stories high and will afford an excellent view in all directions from the top of the mountain. Several designs were turned down before plans were finally accepted, aimed at providing an attractive and at the same time serviceable building.

The tower will be made of logs and rustic siding. The first story will be put up merely to give the building additional height and will contain a large storage space.

The second floor will be the public observation section, 20 feet square with large glass windows on all sides and surrounded by a six foot wide walk. Atop this will be the standard 14 by 14 fire lookout tower.

About the biggest part of the job, Kirkpatrick said, will be to get the materials to the summit, with most of the work expected to be accomplished by a small tractor pulling a trailer.

Forest service workmen are now engaged in construction of the camp ground in the timber just below the grass summit area on the southwest slope of the mountain.

The Mary's peak tower will be manned by fire lookouts as soon as it is completed, and lookouts are being sent this week to all the various stations in the Siuslaw area." **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

August 20, 1941: "This morning construction of the forest service lookout on the summit was started, and within two weeks this will be about completed. Include in the structure atop the peak will be a glass inclosed lookout for patrons.

Last Sunday 550 persons signed the registry book at the parking space provided for motor cars, about 300 feet below the summit." **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

September 18, 1941: "Work on the forest lookout and public observation room atop the peak is progressing slowly due to a cut in CCC ranks, which is doing the work. Many people are motoring to the summit, and it is expected more will use the road this fall, 'when the clouds toll away.' " **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**



Activated: March 9, 1942. Eugene Filter Center.

1942: A garage was constructed.

July 8, 1942: "Mr. and Mrs. Burl Seits are stationed at the lookout on Mary's Peak." (AWS) **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

August 5, 1942: "John Hubler and Harold McCormack have replaced Mr. and Mrs. Beryl Seits at Mary's Peak lookout." (AWS) **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

November 7, 1945: "The Siuslaw National forest has closed its lookout station atop Mary's peak and no definite word of depth of snow on the mountain was available. However it was estimated the fall there probably varied from one to two feet." **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

February 5, 1946: "For the first winter in several years, there is no lookout at the forest tower on the summit, bu there is a telephone there, available to the public, and kept in usable condition by Stanley Tripp, as the line, four miles of it, goes down the City Water Works private road. The top telephone is connected with Philomath central, and can be used in case of need." **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

December 29, 1946: "Vandals have been causing considerable destruction of government property in the park area on the summit of Mary's peak, according to Siuslaw National Forest Supervisor Fred Furst, and unless the practice is curbed it may become necessary to

close the road leading to the top except at times when guards are on duty in the park area.

Furst said most of the damage had been done with guns and consisted mostly in wanton shooting out of windows in rest rooms and in the forest lookout station. Broken windows in the lookout have allowed rain and snow to enter, warping the floor. Twenty-three out of 30 windowpanes in one rest room have been shot out and the initials F.G. shot into the walls. All water faucets from the water system in the camping area have been stolen." **(The Sunday Oregonian)**

July 17, 1947: "All lookouts are at their stations in the forest, John Weigant said. On Mary's peak, Tom Steffen, an OSC student, and his wife are manning the lookout." **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

September 26, 1956: "Reference is made to previous discussions with Mr. DiBenedette and to our 1955 request for replacement for the Mary's Peak lookout structure. Ranger Resler has submitted the attached sketch as a proposal for replacement, and the enclosed copy of Forester Ellson's memorandum appears to cover some good and practical thinking along that line. We know that the State is using concrete block construction in a number of their newer lookouts as a means of cutting down maintenance. The West Lane Fire Patrol Association has three scheduled for next year.

We would like to have Mr. DiBenedette's consideration of this proposal and his suggested plan. We favor a three-level structure such as is now in use but we do wonder if it would not be practical to provide a 36 inch overhang to eliminate the need for hinged shutters. Individual bonded plywood shutters could be provided which could be handled by one man. All local terrain is below the level of this station, therefore high window visibility is no great object." **(Letter from Regional Forest to Supervisor, Siuslaw N.F.)**



August 23, 1957: Through a Memorandum of Understanding, the Forest Service transferred 5.41 acres to be used for an unmanned Gap Filler Radar facility and the pertinent improvements were constructed.

June 3, 1959: "Smoke ascending from the summit of Mary's Peak yesterday afternoon wasn't from signal fires of Chintimini, the Indian maiden for who the mountain originally was named.

It was smoke marking the funeral pyre of the old forestry service lookout which has topped the peak for years.

The lookout tower was 22 years old and was constructed by Civilian Conservation Corps crews. Forest officials said at the time it was built no preservative materials were used on the wood and that it had simply rotted out over the years.

A new simple structure is scheduled to replace the old one.

Originally it had been planned to make the lookout tower a multiple purpose affair, serving other agencies in various ways as well as the forest service, but these proposals fell through.

By July 1 at least some type of temporary lookout will be available for use during the fire season, forest officials said." **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

July 24, 1959: "Because the costs of the Bonneville structure were beyond the reach of the forest service the one building idea was dropped. Now the forest service is proceeding to construct its own lookout and observation tower on its land.

Bonneville apparently plans to go ahead with another building only a short distance away. Already under construction in the same area is an Air Force radar gap-filler station." **(Corvallis Gazette-Times)**

July 27, 1959: "The Bonneville power Administration has staked a claim to part of the top of Mary's peak, but its rights are being challenged by the U.S. Forest Service.

Under fire by Corvallis City Manager John F. Porter for failure to get together with the Siuslaw National Forest for a single building to house a forest service lookout and a BPA micro-wave station, Bonneville has posted a sign claiming about a 100 by 100-foot area on a 40-acre tract controlled by the Bureau of Land Management on top of the Coast Range mountain 20 miles west of here.

Pete Foils, assistant to the supervisor of Siuslaw, said the Forest Service will protest the right of Bonneville to occupy the tract. Porter has already opposed granting BPA a permit to the area." **(The Oregonian)**

August 18, 1959: "Modified plans for the joint construction of a lookout and radar installation on Mary's Peak west of here were being considered today by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bonneville Power Administration.

Officials of the two agencies are to visit the site atop the 4100-foot high coast range mountain soon to determine whether

tentative plans can be carried out.

Spokesmen revealed the possibility of construction of the BPA radio installation alongside a 21-foot high forest service lookout tower on the mountain top.

Work on the lookout already has started. It is expected to be completed next fall.

The two federal agencies had clashed over proposed plans for the installations. At first, both installations were to be housed in one building. The forest service turned down the plan as too expensive.

An Air Force radar facility already is located on the peak.

The city of Corvallis has protested the proposed plans. The city charged the installations would 'clutter up' the mountain top. Contamination of the city's 7000-acre watershed on the east slope of the mountain also is feared." (Corvallis Gazette-Times)

July 1, 1961: The Air Defense Command declared the site as excess property and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Defense and the Forest Service was terminated. The remaining improvements became property of the Forest Service.

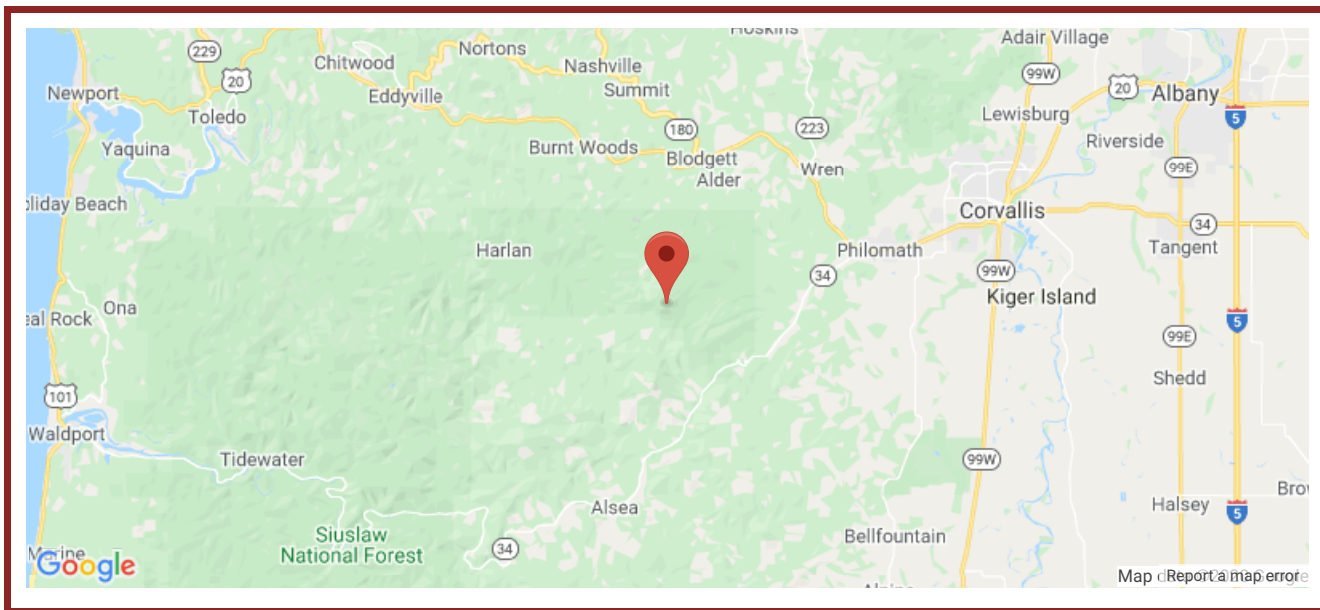
October 1962: The cab was destroyed.

1972: The last year that the lookout was staffed.



The lookout tower was removed.

1996: The last Gap Filler structure was removed and the foundations were used for a new radio transmitter facility.



REX'S FIRE LOOKOUT PAGE



MEMBER: FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION

