

# FOREST LOOKOUTS

OREGON

BAKER COUNTY

BENTON COUNTY

CLACKAMAS COUNTY

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MORE...

LANE COUNTY

## PRAIRIE MOUNTAIN

*Siuslaw National Forest > Polk-Benton District, State Board of Forestry > Western Lane Fire Patrol  
15S-8W-12*



November 1958 - Oregon Department of Forestry Collection



**December 23, 1913:** "Next year it is proposed to build a trail and telephone line to Prairie mountain on the line between Benton and Lane counties and establish a lookout point there, as it is one of the best in the Coast range. A fire can be spotted in Benton, Lane, west Douglas and part of Lincoln counties from this point, even in very hazy weather." (**The Eugene Guard**)

**1913:** "A lookout should be maintained another season on Prairie Mountain, a peak having an elevation of 3,700 feet, and situated on the line between Lane and Benton Counties. From this point the entire district being patrolled can be seen and any fire quickly located. By building a telephone line and repairing and rebuilding an old trail for a distance of seven miles, a warden on Prairie Mountain could be in constant communication with the head warden." (**Report of State Forester - 1914**)

**April 30, 1914:** "The state supervisor in Eugene, C. V. Oglesby, has more extensive plans for development work in Lane county than ever before. This work will commence next week when Oglesby will take a crew of three men to Lake Creek and begin the construction of a seven-mile trail and telephone line to the top of Prairie mountain. Here he will locate a lookout station from which a guard can watch the forests in four counties: southern Lincoln, western Benton, Western Lane and northern Douglas. The work will cost about \$500." (**Eugene Daily Guard**)

**1914:** "Twelve miles of badly needed telephone line was constructed, six miles of this paralleling the trail to the top of Prairie Mountain." "The eight miles of trail built this season, consisted of seven miles from Section 34-15S-7W to the top of Prairie Mountain in Section 7-15S-7W." "A Weeks Law warden thoroughly familiar with the topography of Western Lane and Benton Counties, both of which are commanded by the lookout, was stationed on Prairie Mountain throughout the summer. The facility thus afforded for early discovery of fires, together with the installation of telephone communication between this lookout, the head warden, and several district patrolman, added greatly to the efficiency of the patrol." (**Report of State Forester - 1915**)

**July 23, 1915:** " William Oglesby, Horton, on lookout point at Prairie Mountain, on the Benton county line. He has a general view of the whole district, as well as Benton county and part of Lincoln and Douglas counties." (**The West**)

**September 16, 1915:** "Robert Kuykendall is home from Triangle lake, where he has been spending the past few weeks. He also spent some time on the lookout at Prairie mountain for the forest service." (**Morning Register**)

**June 26, 1917:** "A new telephone line is being built to the Prairie mountain lookout station. Carl V. Oglesby, supervising warden of the Western Lane County Fire Patrol association, went to Walton Monday to look after the work." (**Eugene Daily Guard**)

**July 19, 1917:** "Harold M. Mayo, voluntary U.S. weather observer in this city, has been employed as a fire guard in the Siuslaw national forest and will leave today for the lookout station on top of Prairie mountain, northwest of Eugene, where he will work during the remainder of the summer." (**Morning Register**)

**August 29, 1917:** "H.M. Mayo, a lookout stationed at the summit of Prairie Mountain, today telephoned a friend in Eugene that flies had prevented his reporting a fire immediately after its discovery. It is cold at night on the mountain top and the insects had crawled into the generator of his telephone to get out of the cold. The box acted as a trap and the accumulated flies finally put the instrument out of commission.

The fire at Noti was reported spreading today. Mr. Mayor has reported 100 fires since July 18." (**The Oregonian**)

**September 13, 1917:** "Three inches of rain fell at the top of Prairie mountain in the Coast range from Friday, when the rain began, and yesterday morning, when H.M. Mayo, of this city, left the lookout station on top of the mountain.

Mr. Mayo, who was stationed there at Lookout, being in the employ of the Western Lane County Fire Patrol association, says he reported 160 forest fires in sight from his station during the summer." (**Morning Register**)

**May 28, 1920:** " Mt Roman Nose and Prairie Mountain will be used as lookouts as in the past and both these stations will be equipped with modern cabins and fire finders. Telephone lines have already been built to these points." (**The West**)

**August 31, 1920:** "J.L. Spry, of Walton, who has been the look-out on Prairie mountain, yesterday made a trip to the mountain to get

his camping equipment which he left there. Mr. Spry was forced by illness to leave to leave the lookout about two weeks ago. He was replaced for the rest of the season." **(Morning Register)**

**September 18, 1920:** "A.R. Wilcox of the Siuslaw national forest office, left yesterday for the Alsea river valley to locate a trail from the lookout station on Prairie mountain out to the county road." **(The Eugene Daily Guard)**

**1920:** John Rust and his brother carried the building materials over a seven mile trail to the summit. Jack Sandburn, a carpenter, put up the building. George Lewis was the helper and when the job was completed he stayed on as the lookout.

**June 3, 1921:** "A. R. Wilcox and Mr. Sanborn, of the Siuslaw national forest, were out yesterday in the Blachly district, looking after lumber supplies for a new lookout station to be erected somewhere on Prairie mountain this season." **(The Eugene Daily Guard)**

**June 12, 1921:** "A lookout house will be erected at once on top of Prairie mountain in the Siuslaw national forest, nine miles northwest of Blachly and about 40 miles from Eugene. R.S. Shelley, supervisor of the forest, is now at Blachly arranging for the purchase and transportation of lumber to the top of the mountain, which is at an elevation of 3400 feet and is one of the highest points in the Coast range in Lane county. The materials will be packed on horseback." **(Morning Oregonian)**

**June 18, 1921:** "A lookout house, similar in construction to the one on top of Mount Hood, will be erected at once on top of Prairie mountain, in the Siuslaw national forest." **(Capital Journal)**

**June 25, 1921:** "R. S. Shelley, supervisor of the Siuslaw national forest, yesterday received a telephone message from Blachly informing him that a good part of the material for the lookout house on top of Prairie mountain has been transported to the site and that erection of the site soon will begin. The material is taken to the top of the mountain on horseback." **(Morning Register)**

**June 27, 1921:** "G.L. Sanborn, lookout of Prairie mountain of the Siuslaw national forest, spent the week-end in the city. Mr. Sanborn is having a lookout house cut out at Horton. The house is being carried up the mountain by pack train." **(The Eugene Daily Guard)**

**June 28, 1921:** "One of the forest patrol planes from the Eugene base soon will be carrying mail to the lookout on top of Prairie mountain west of Eugene. The lookout does not get his mail more often than twice a week but the plane will take it to him daily." **(Morning Register)**

**July 8, 1921:** "The first aerial mail to be delivered in Oregon was dropped yesterday by a plane from the Eugene base of the forest fire patrol to J.L. Sanborn, lookout on Prairie mountain in the coast range, 35 miles west of Eugene, in the Siuslaw national forest.

The plane was in command of Pilot Drake of the 91st aero squadron. 'Jake' Jacobson, observer, dropped the mail. Sanborn has a lookout tower on top of the mountain which is plainly visible. Jacobson said the plane cut down as close as possible and the bundle of letters, papers and magazines struck within 50 feet of the structure." **(The Morning Oregonian)**

**July 8, 1921:** "Six fire finding instruments for as many lookout stations were sent out by the Siuslaw national forest today. The instruments consist of a large map of the lookout district on which is mounted a circle graduated in degrees, and a sighting apparatus. Angle readings are taken by the lookouts and telephoned to headquarters where the fire is located by the intersection method. One of these instruments went out to Prairie mountain." **(The Eugene Daily Guard)**

**July 13, 1921:** "R.S. Shelley, supervisor of the Cascade national forest, left yesterday by motor truck for Blachley with a load of equipment and supplies for the Prairie mountain lookout station and will go on to Mapleton and to the Five Rivers country to look after road work." **(Morning Register)**

**July 21, 1921:** "R. H. Chapler, of the district foresters office in Portland, and Mr. Scott, of the state foresters office in Salem, are working here for a few days establishing telephone connections with Prairie mountain lookout station." **(The Eugene Daily Guard)**

**July 30, 1921:** "R. S. Shelley, supervisor of the Siuslaw national forest, states that they expect to start soon on the erection of a telephone line between Waldport and the Prairie Mountain lookout station." **(Morning Register)**

**August 24, 1921:** "R.S. Shelley, supervisor, and A.R. Wilcox, examiner in the office of the Siuslaw national forest, left yesterday for the Alsea country, where they will look after the building of a new trail from the road between Alsea and Fisher in Lincoln county to the top of Prairie mountain, which is used as a forest fire lookout. The trail will be several miles long and is one of several which are being projected in the Siuslaw national forest." **(The Morning Oregonian)**

**August 29, 1921:** "Mrs. J.L. Sanborn, wife of the lookout on Prairie mountain, returned to the city yesterday after visiting her husband for a month at the mountain lookout station." **(The Eugene Daily Guard)**

**September 2, 1921:** "R.S. Shelley, supervisor of the Cascade national forest, accompanied by A.R. Wilcox, examiner of forests, left yesterday for Blachly with a load of tools and equipment for the rangers' lookout house on top of Prairie mountain. Mr. Shelley announced before he left that J.L. Sanburn, who has charge of the construction of the house will be transferred to the top of Roman Nose, where a similar building will be erected." **(Morning Register)**

**April 23, 1922:** "Warden Oglesby says that this year lookouts on Prairie mountain and Mt. Roman Nose will have to depended upon. These lookout stations are used co-operatively by the Siuslaw national forest and the fire patrol association." **(Morning Register)**

**June 25, 1922:** "The first of the forest fire lookouts stationed on the Siuslaw national forest this year has began his work on Prairie mountain, northwest of Eugene. Lawrence Chruden is located on that eminence and there will be others on Mount Hebo, Mount Roman Nose, Cummins peak, Dean's mountain and Elk peak." **(The Morning Oregonian)**

**June 19, 1923:** "Lookout goes to Prairie Mountain -- T.M. Humphreys, who was lookout last summer in the Santiam national forest, has gone to Prairie mountain in the Siuslaw forest to act as lookout this summer." **(Morning Register)**

**June 26, 1924:** "F.G. Backman, a University of Oregon student last year accompanied by his wife has gone to the top of Prairie mountain, in the Siuslaw national forest, where he will act as forest fire lookout during the summer." **(Morning Register)**

**August 9, 1924:** "Seventy-six forest fires were reported during the period from the middle of June to July 31 by V. G. Backman, lookout on Prairie mountain, 30 miles northwest of Eugene, according to R.S. Shelley, supervisor of the Siuslaw national forest. Not one of the fires was caused by lightning, but all were from the carelessness of human beings, the lookout reported." **(The Eugene Daily Guard)**

**September 24, 1924:** "V.G. Backman, who has been a lookout in the Prairie mountains since the university closed last June, has returned to Eugene and will enter the university for the fall term." **(Morning Register)**

**September 27, 1924:** "V.G. Backman, lookout at Big Prairie Mountain in the coast range west of Junction City, has returned to Eugene for the winter, accompanied by Mrs. Backman. He will attend the University of Oregon, the lookout stations having been closed for the season. Mr. Backman will be remembered for his work in the local 'Y' office last year. He reports that deer hunting is not good this fall as in former years, owing no doubt to the unusually dry year which drove the deer from the higher regions." **(The Eugene Daily Guard)**

**June 15, 1925:** "V.G. Backman goes back to his old post on Prairie mountain, about the distance southwest on the divide between the Siuslaw river and Alsea river." **(The Eugene Guard)**

**September 26, 1925:** "V.B. Backman, forest fire lookout on Prairie mountain has been taken off duty, according to R. S. Shelley, supervisor of the Siuslaw national forest, as there appears to be little or no more danger of fires." **(Morning Register)**

**June 29, 1928:** Dock Backman, a student, will do his sixth year as lookout on Prairie Mountain." (**Siuslaw Oar**)

**May 1931:** "The Prairie Mountain lookout house was broken into again this winter. A shutter from a south window had been removed and a glass broken out. The guest had remained long enough to use a gallon of kerosene and to get the dishes very dirty and things thoroughly messed up. Several things were taken from the house. Fortunately the visitor placed the shutter back over the broken window, otherwise things would have been badly damaged by the rain." (**The Salt** - Forest newsletter)

**June 19, 1931:** "Verus Dahlin, who is taking a course in forestry at the O.S.C., will be stationed at Prairie Mountain this summer." (**Siuslaw Oar**)



**April 4, 1934:** Panorama photos taken by Robert Cooper.

**1935:** ----- Bewley, the lookout was a co-op between the USFS and Western Lane FPA, and remained so until taken over entirely by the state.



Activated: March 18, 1942. Eugene Filter Center.

**May 2, 1946:** "The newly organized Polk-Benton District of the State Board of Forestry will occupy and maintain under an agreement Forest Service protective improvements: Such as the Prairie Mountain lookout station." (**Corvallis Gazette-Times**)

**1953:** A half mile of the lookout road re-aligned.

**1958:** "A new lookout was built and completed on Prairie Mountain and was used through the fire season.

This was a joint undertaking with the Polk-Benton District to our north. Each District paid half of the material costs, Polk-Benton furnished the carpenter and this Association provided all the additional labor. The total cost was \$2214.74 for materials." (**1958 Annual Report to Oregon Department of Forestry**)

**1958:** "The Prairie Mountain Lookout house, authorized as a cooperative project between Western Lane and Polk-Benton District, was completed for use during the 1958 season." (**Western Lane District Annual Report**)

**1958:** The cupola lookout house was moved and a 3-story enclosed 'Amort Special' structure built. The cupola building was purchased by the Kyle Brothers and moved about a quarter of a mile away. The building used as a line shack while running cattle on the peak.



Removed

**c.2012:** The long unused lookout site has been reactivated with the Forest Watch camera detection system.



REX'S FIRE LOOKOUT PAGE



MEMBER: FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION

