

# THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM

Newsletter

February 2022



## CROCKED MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER

### CROCKED MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER -

2021 Is becoming quite the notable year between COVID and the Western States wild fires. As was no part of the country safe from COVID, history has shown that no part of the country is or has been safe from wild fires. Among notable wildland fires (or forest fires as we commonly call them in New England) one occurred in 1903 when we were ravaged by over 500 such fires that burned a quarter million acres of our forests.

Flash back to 1910 when fires destroyed 3 million acres in Washington, Idaho and Montana. These led to the founding of the US Forest Service which lost no time in promulgating rules and policies. Among these was a rule that required towns to pay for the contracting of fire suppression services. It was this rule that spurred the construction of fire towers. And so it was that in 1910 the NH Timberland Owners Association, the State of New Hampshire and the US Forest Service worked together to start building a series of fire towers in the White Mountains.

This effort got further impetus from fires in 1917 and there were soon 29 fire towers on various peaks.

The first was built by a private company which owned the Mount Pleasant Hotel on Rosebrook Mountain in the White Mountains. It was a 20' high log structure that that overlooked the Zealand Valley and Bretton Woods. Nothing remains of it today. Another early "tower" that could be considered crude at best and was located on Carter Dome near Jackson, NH – photo on page #4.

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### SESTERCENTENIAL –

What could more relate to our Heritage than our 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our incorporation as a town? This is the year folks 1772 – 2022. A suitable celebration is planned and more details will follow in our next edition as well as through the Frankestown News and the Town website. One planned item is to make available a commemorative license plate for your vehicle(s). These can be put on any registered vehicle in place of the front plate for the duration of 2022. Please contact the Selectmen's office to obtain you plate(s) which are \$20 each. Ω

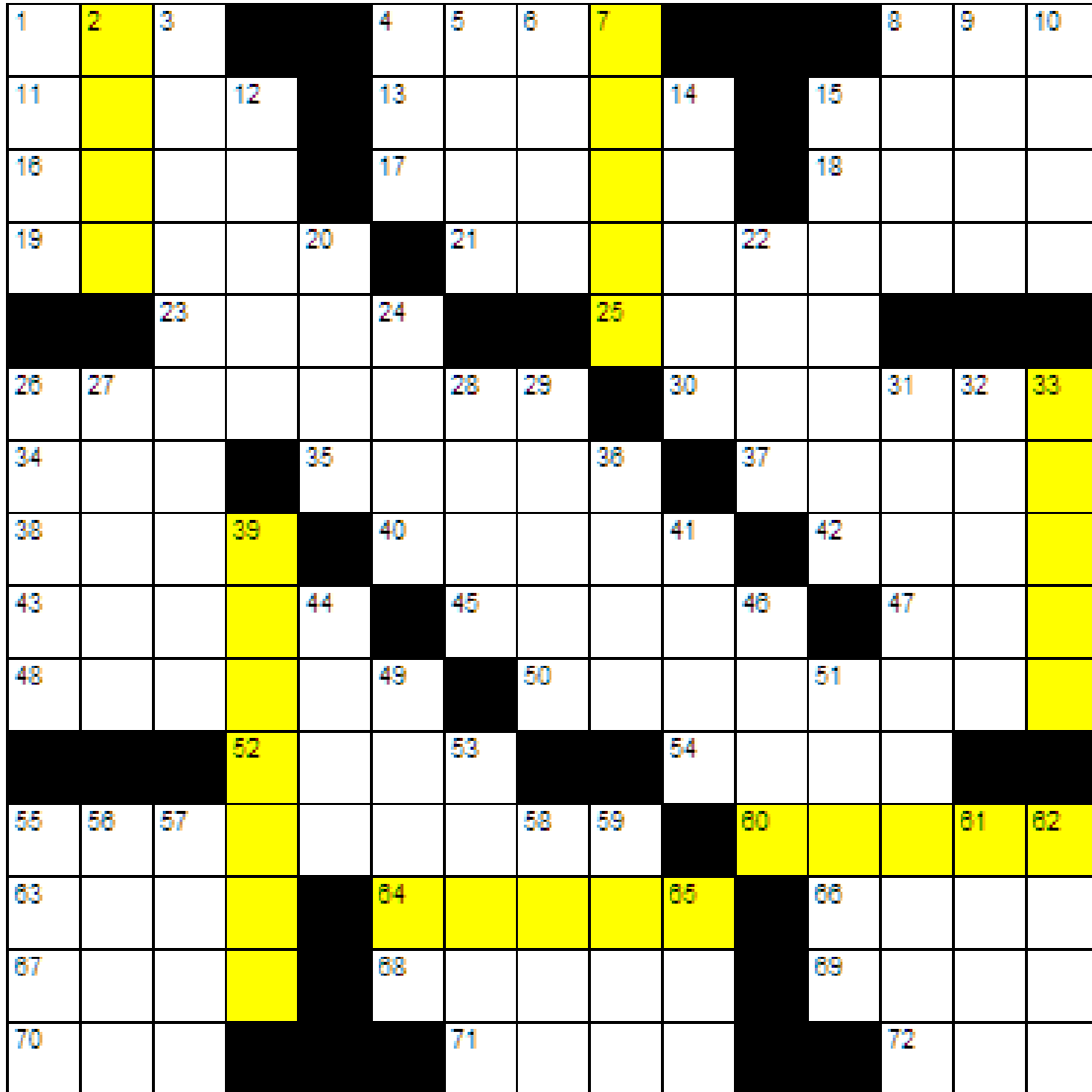


1926 Dodge at the Heritage Museum sporting its Commemorative plate

(2)

# FEBRUARY THEME CROSSWORD

The **yellow** blocks contain the theme words and all come from the text of this newsletter.  
Enjoy and Happy Valentine's Day



ANSWERS ON PAGE #8

(3)

**Across**

1. Craft from space
4. "Check this out!"
8. "60 Minutes" network
11. 12-point type
13. Common carriers
15. A fisherman may spin one
16. Tolkien creatures
17. Looking tired out
18. Brawl
19. Some tides
21. Receive at no cost
23. Son of Ramses I
25. Enlarge, as a hole
26. Loss of voluntary movement
30. Carpentry tool
34. John Lennon collaborator
35. Walks with heavy steps
37. Copy
38. Ashcroft's predecessor
40. Ornamental cases
42. Hawaiian tuber
43. Bait
45. Put to rest, as fears
47. Churchill's "so few": Abbr.
48. Not quite
50. Voice lacking expression
52. Face-to-face exam
54. Berth place
55. Permit to introduce
60. MOUNTAIN TOPS
63. Phooey
64. VEHICLE 250TH
66. Got bigger
67. Blunted blade
68. "The Crucible" setting
69. Lab burner
70. "Comprehend?"
71. Sounds from a murder
72. Chester White's home

**Down**

1. "Once \_\_\_ a time..."
2. MENACE TO LOOK OUT FOR
3. Infrequent
4. A place for notes
5. Move from site to site on the web
6. Antares, for one
7. 1 OF 91
8. Brother of Abel
9. Alliance
10. \_\_\_ Thomas - clockmaker
12. Colorado resort
14. Contemptuous look
15. Proclaim loudly
20. Increase, with "up"
22. Animal house
24. Bermuda, e.g.
26. Blood carrier
27. Show respect, in a way
28. Bit
29. Mature
31. Emergency extra part
32. Capital of Pas-de-Calais
33. ROSIE the RIVETER OF FORESTS
36. Fodder holder
39. FIRE LOCATING DEVICE
41. \_\_\_ souci
44. 100 cents
46. Cry of pain
49. Pack down
51. Feudal lord
53. Air freshener option
55. Bad day for Caesar
56. Back of the neck
57. Alder, e.g.
58. Indian music rhythm
59. State of anxiety
61. Clark of the Daily Planet
62. Go to and fro
65. Dash lengths

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**FIRE TOWERS – CON’T . . . .**



**CARTER DOME TOWER**

As below, some of the first fire towers were not towers at all. Located on Middle Sister near Conway, NH this tower was no more than a small hut held on a pile of rocks by guy cables.Ω



**MIDDLE SISTER TOWER**

And so readers, how many of you know what a WOOF is. Come on ladies, this should be near and dear to you. Well glad you asked – Fire

**FIRE TOWERS – CON’T . . . .**

towers were no better than the people manning them. The Second World War created a bit of a problem as most able bodied men were in the service. So like “Rosie the Riveter” the women again stepped up and the “Women Observers on the Forests” became a reality as did the acronym WOOFs. These women were considered to be a vital part of the defense effort and were also trained as aircraft spotters.



**A WOOF ON STATION**

Sorry – we have digressed a bit here.

The initial focus for fire tower construction was in the White Mountains and once the State, the Timberland Owners Association and the US Forest Service joined forces they built 10 towers that first year in 1910. Three of them were built on existing hotels or stations. After that, new towers were built by the State and the NH Timberland Owners Association and in years to come there would be 91 towers built.

A side benefit was the popularity of the towers with the public. Hikers started to climb them for the views and the dangerous ladders on the towers were replaced by stairs. Trails were blazed and marked to assist the hikers. One such popular Fire Tower was here on Crotsched Mountain. The old direction signs to the Crotsched Mountain Fire Tower can be found in the Heritage Museum.

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**FIRE TOWERS -****DIRECTION SIGNS ON CROTCHED MT.**

It was also in 1917 that the US Forest Service started to produce tower cards to give the public. These signified that the holder had visited the tower. A similar program is still in place today and sponsored by the State Division of Forest and Land. Any hiker who visits five of the remaining 16 towers can receive a patch, a certificate and a letter of recognition showing that they have completed the requirements of TOWER QUEST. The program is intended to create awareness of the role that these towers still play in the protection of our forests. A list of these towers and a map of their location can be found on page #7.

In all there were 91 towers built in NH. Of those, today there are only 17 that are still active, 12 that are still standing but are no longer actively used and 62 that are no longer standing. Now our sharp eyed readers will note that this paragraph refers to 17 towers that are still active while the previous paragraph refers to climbing the 16 towers needed to get your TOWER QUEST patch. This is due to the tower on Croydon Mountain now being on private land owned by a hunting club so the public is not allowed on the property.

Where does the Crotched Mountain Tower fit in with all this? Remember, it is the Crotched Mountain Fire Tower that was intended to be the focus of this article which has gotten completely out of hand. So we will make a fresh start on the next page.

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**THE FEBRUARY WHAT'Z IT . . . .**

This month, rather than a WHAT'Z IT we are looking at a "WHAT'Z THEY". While different in appearance they serve the same purpose and are called the same thing.



As usual, the first person to correctly identify these items will win one of the Heritage Museum's coveted lifetime membership cards. These will entitle the holder a certain degree of prestige and also allow for unlimited free entry into the museum (not diminished by the fact we do not charge anyone admission). Ω

**FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES -****HOW WOULD YOU MAKE A MARRIAGE WORK?**

- Tell your wife she looks pretty, even if she looks like a dump truck. Ricky, age 10

**WHAT DO MOST PEOPLE DO ON A DATE?**

- Dates are for having fun, and people should use them to get to know each other. Even boys have something to say if you listen long enough. Lynnette, age 8

Ω

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**CROTCHED MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER - redux**

The Crotched Mountain Fire Tower appears in the TOWER QUEST list as a “no longer standing” tower. Since this article has so far been pretty much about fire towers in general, let’s look at our Crotched Mountain Fire Tower. Our tower was actually two towers. The first was built in 1915. It was a steel tower with an open top – essentially nothing more than an elevated platform you could stand on. It had a significant short-coming, it was only 20’ high offering only a limited view and as such operated only intermittently and even then often supported by local residents. Its use was discontinued in 1921. But by 1927 it was re-established and a 45’ steel tower was built with a closed top. It remained in use until 1973 when it was again closed. It was torn down in 1983.



Still standing in 1955 the area apparently was a favorite with local blueberry pickers who can be seen here enjoying the climb to the fire tower. You have to wonder how many of the blueberries in those pails ended up in the stomachs of hungry children and never made it back down the mountain.



Were the fire towers effective? The State of NH has classified the towers as:

**PRIMARY** – stationed on high peaks with excellent views of the surrounding terrain. Duties are to discover, locate and report forest fires. These locations are equipped with sighting devices known as “Osborne Fire Finders with maps and panoramic photos.



**AN OSBORNE FIRE FINDER**

**SECONDARY** – located on less prominent peaks, with shorter views and staffed only during high risk periods.

**EMERGENCY** -- used on strategic points during periods of high fire danger.

The State of NH continues to use fire towers to augment aircraft and ground patrols. The State has found that “its system of fire towers is successful at detecting forest fires, keeping communities safer and burned acreage low”.

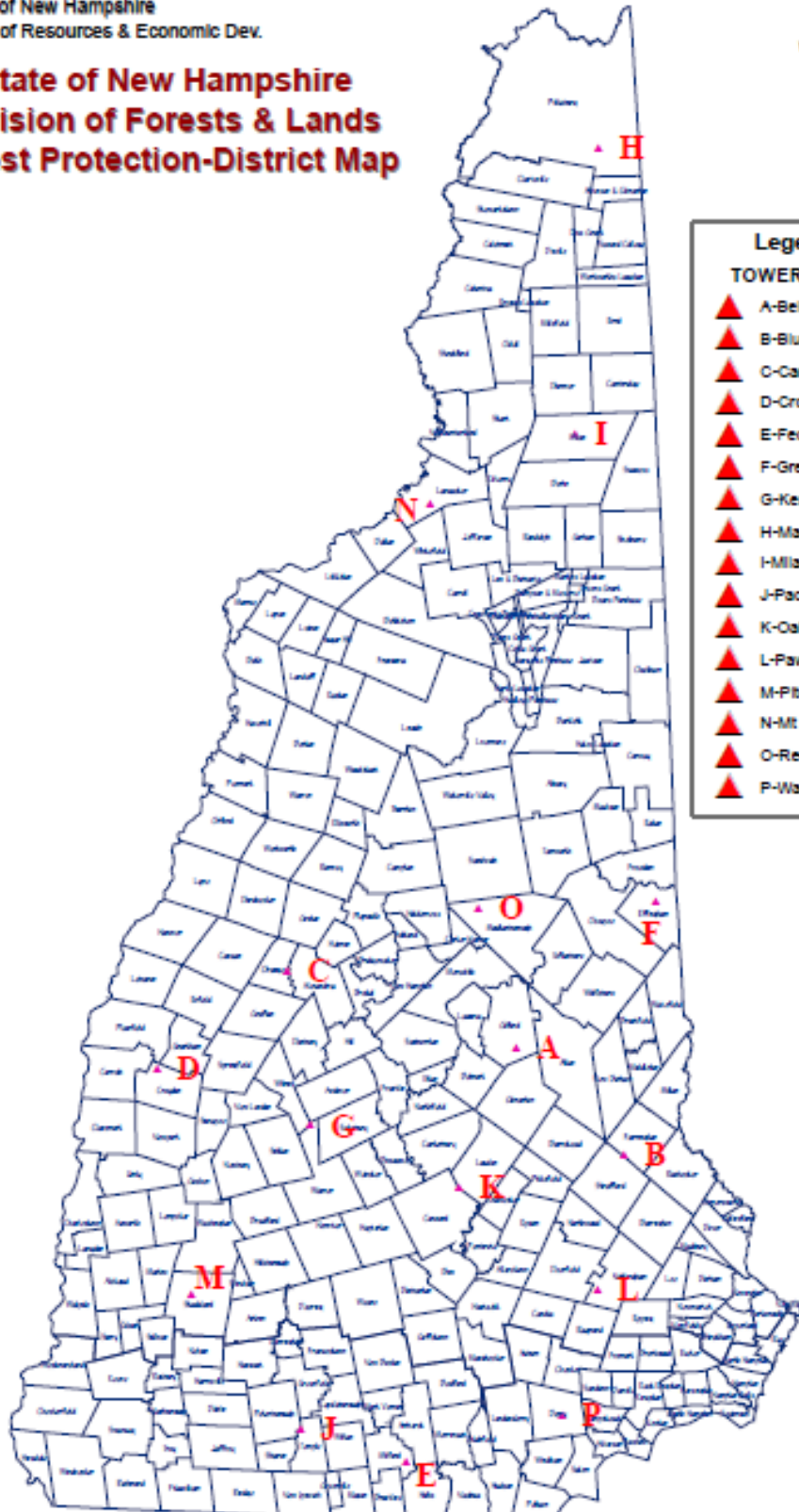


**FIRE SPOTTED FROM CROTCHED MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER – 1929**

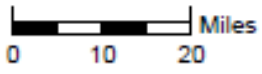


State of New Hampshire  
Dept. of Resources & Economic Dev.

### State of New Hampshire Division of Forests & Lands Forest Protection-District Map



Legend	
TOWER_NAME	
	A-Bellnap Mt
	B-Blue Job
	C-Cardigan Mt
	D-Croydon Mt
	E-Federal Hill
	F-Green Mt
	G-Kearsarge Mt
	H-Magalloway
	I-Milan Hill
	J-Pack Monadnock
	K-Oak Hill
	L-Pawtuckaway
	M-Pitcher Mt
	N-Mt Prospect
	O-Red Hill
	P-Wamer Hill



Revised: April 26, 2006



