



Friends of Mount Arab 2008 Newsletter

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Conservation Corps
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GOVERNMENT BELT TIGHTENING LIKELY TO CUT FUNDING.

Affected would be most of the wages we pay our yearly Summit Interpreter. Joanne Sevick of the St. Lawrence County Youth Bureau wrote to tell us that "funding your program received through the St. Lawrence County Youth Bureau in 2008 may not be available in the 2009 calendar year."

Thus, FOMA shall likely be on its own to pay the wages for a 2009 summit interpreter.

WINTER DANGER AT THE SUMMIT

During the cold of an Adirondack winter the trap door to the fire tower cab can truly become a *trap*. Around Christmas 2008 a couple of young men from Tupper Lake decided to climb Mount Arab. I am not sure whether it was a day trip, or if they stayed over night, but they had gone up into the tower cab and closed the trap door.

We have been leaving it unlocked because when locked open someone broke the lock, and when locked closed someone broke the hasp.

When those two unlucky young men went to leave they could not open the trap door. *It was likely frozen shut.* One of them had a cell phone and called a friend to climb the mountain and rescue them. So, this story has a happy ending. But just suppose there had been no cell phone...?

CABIN ROOF REPAIR

In September Dick Bentley and Bruce Lewis repaired the leaking roof on the observer's cabin. The hardest part of this job was carrying a ladder to the summit, then back down.

Bill Starr, historian of NYS fire towers, after much research has put together a roster of NYS fire tower observers from 1911 through 1990. We expect to have a copy of this detailed unpublished work available for view by visitors to the Mount Arab summit this coming summer.

Also, Bill Starr has shipped us a limited number of NYS Fire Tower Centennial Patches we have available for sale.

Inge Sapp reports that black bears were seen on the trail during bow season this past fall.

FALL VANDALISM

Back in early October 2008 three local young men climbed Mount Arab in the middle of the night. Their activities, building a fire in an inappropriate location and other actions, prompted our fall weekend summit guide to call the state police. After destroying a small amount of FOMA property, the three men left the summit and were apprehended by police at the trailhead. State prosecution is ongoing as FOMA awaits restitution.

2008 SUMMIT INTERPRETER

Our 2008 Summit Interpreter was Maridee Rutledge. She enjoyed her time on the summit, speaking to visitors, scraping paint inside the tower cab, and for a short period of time her young daughter Skye kept her company.

(see story about 'Doc' by Maridee on page 3)



'Doc' and friends – date unknown but he looks young.

AFTA news

Michael Wilson tells us that he is still working on getting DEC to provide the fire tower financial support they have promised.

A new map table for the tower cab is currently being fabricated by David Woodward of Train Brook Forge in Paul Smiths, NY. He told me that he expects to have the alidade and map table for the FOMA tower completed this spring.

NOTICE: If you would prefer to receive your FOMA Newsletter as an emailed PDF file with photos in full color, please let us know by emailing bentley@northnet.org with the words 'Email FOMA newsletter' entered on the subject line.

Comments from the Summit - 2008

- 27 June – Maridee showed us bear rock – beautiful view ... and good stories.
- 2 July – Great View & it's my B-Day!
Bob Miskines, Jr.
- 6 July – Lisa, Todd & Katie Rockefeller – Katie's first hike up Mt. Arab 2½ years old.
- 17 July – Nice mountain. But if there's water in a water tower, then why is there no fire in a fire tower?
Troop 113, Webster, NY
- 18 July – Beautiful! Beautiful! Beautiful!!
Thank you so much for the tower.
Steve & Brigit Noracil, Etters, PA
- 19 July – It's been a long time since I've been back (1977). It's still beautiful & awesome. The memories are great! Ann Gregory (Scanlon)
- 19 July – Thanks.
Zane, Ellen, Thomas, Adam Thomas, Waterford, CT
- 19 July – 1st time back in 14 years... Came all the way from South Carolina – where everything is below sea level. Michele Breton
- 19 July – It's been a long time, but it's just like I remembered. Rebecca Teig
- 31 July – So beautiful up here! We had a great time!!
Maggie Simmons & Allen Brown
- 1 August – I wish I had this job! I am Anthony Bartlett and I love the mountains. Anthony Bartlett
- 4 August – This is amazing! Make sure you come to Australia! Christina Bond

- 14 August – We've been climbing Mt. Arab yearly for 14 Years. It's great! Mari is by far the best summit guide we've met!! Thank you! We've learned the most this year. Dee Jankowski, Clifton Springs, NY
- 15 August – Awsome view... great summit guide.
Bob & Frank, NYC
- 20 August – Thanks for the wonderful, informative tour by Inge Sapp. Bunny & Jim Gaffney & myself had an extra special summit experience.
Charlotte C. Ramsay
- 31 August – Beautiful Day – can see forever.
Pete & Rich Fleming
- 31 August – What a breathtaking place! The views, the hike up, absolutely one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen. Truly loved my Adirondack experience. Thank you!
Yvette Loynez, New York, NY
- 11 September – Views are magnificent! Having the enclosed tower made it very enjoyable. Interesting history in the cabin. The only way to see the Adirondacks!
Bill & Bernie Simmons, Holly, NY
- 20 September – Charles Mitchell – Great Day – What a climb! Would it kill someone to put in a escalator! My God! Or benches or a tram! Something!
- 20 September – 2:39 pm. Beat everybody. Great View.
Ted L. Labrake
- 12 October – Wow, breath-taking view! A great way to spend the day. Enjoy! Patrick Sullivan & Shantel Wood, Massena, NY 13662



**'Doc' Lavasseur as I knew him back in the early 50's
and in his younger days below.**



GEORGE 'DOC' LAVASSEUR

by Maridee Rutledge, 2006 Summit Guide

The automobile brought increased visitation to the Adirondacks in the early 20th century, which also brought an increase in forest fires. The New York State Conservation Commission responded by developing better fire spotting technology and educating the public. Fire towers rapidly became recreational destinations and the observers, who embodied the spirit of the Adirondack Guide, became conservation educators, naturalists and folklorists.

George 'Doc' LaVasseur was the fire tower observer on Mount Arab from 1937-1963, and became a local icon, admired for his Adirondack knowledge and colorful character.

Doc was from Piercefield and his nickname came from being the seventh son of the seventh son, a person commonly believed to have healing powers. He was often sought to stop nosebleeds, hiccups, and various maladies. In 1946 Doc bought a Willys Jeep to use on the mountain. Local children watched for him to catch rides to the summit. One of his relatives recalls as a child asking Doc about the bumper repair where brush bristles were imbedded in the paint. Doc spun a yarn about chasing a big bear up the trail until he could bump it off the ledges out of his way.

Doc also shared his stories in writing. His naturalist's powers of observation are evident in "Comrades In Quills," published in Reader's Digest in 1944. The story was about a blind porcupine that was escorted by its fellow creatures to and from the patch of sweet grass in Doc's cabin clearing for two years until it was killed by a bear. Doc was a licensed guide who knew the animals, the landscape and the people, and walking through the woods with him was an education.

Doc welcomed thousands of hikers, offering them an education in forest fire prevention, the local area, conservation and woodsmanship. George 'Doc' LaVasseur's memory is still vivid among locals whose recollections of him surface whenever conversations turn to stories about Mount Arab's fire tower.

Although the era of fire tower observers has ended, their legacy is the educational role of today's summit guides at restored fire towers.



HISTORY of FOMA

On Earth Day 1997 a small group of citizens and DEC officials gathered at the summit of Mount Arab. With the common desire to save and to share this historical facility and its magnificent views with future generations, they resolved to restore and maintain the sadly decaying fire tower and fire observer's cabin located there.

Beginning with the incorporation of 'Friends of Mount Arab' (FOMA), a non-profit organization in partnership with DEC, and now affiliated with the Adirondack Fire Tower Association, this small group has progressed steadily toward their goal. Restoration of the tower is well underway, and the fire observer's cabin is nearly complete. FOMA has created an exhibit of text and photos summarizing fire tower history and highlighting the restoration effort. Additionally, there has been extensive trail work assisted greatly by AmeriCorps work crews.

Yes! I want to become a friend of Mount Arab, to help save and maintain the tower and ranger cabin, improve the trail, and interpret the natural and cultural history of Mount Arab.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE YOUR NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL, PLEASE LET US KNOW AT: bentley@northnet.org

- Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution for: _____ \$10 _____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ Other.
- I would like to volunteer my time, services or needed material.
- I would like to order _____ patches at \$5 each plus \$1 postage per order.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

Please make checks payable to: **FRIENDS OF MOUNT ARAB**
Mail to: Friends of Mount Arab, PO Box 185, Piercefield, NY 12973

Season's Change

by Ingeborg Sapp

After the golden days of the September, after the forest and the mountains explode in color and wear their most festive gown - when the lake mirrors the beauty of the mountains and the trees - it is then that the days get noticeable shorter - cool nights take over. The geese are flying south. Their noisy flocks, flying in formation, invite us to look upwards to the sky. We cannot help to notice that the seasons are changing in many ways. The leaves are tumbling down, floating on the waters, cover the ground, crunch under our steps. Chipmunks are clucking on the tree trunks, squirrels hastily gather foods, bears are fattening up for their long winter sleep.

Shots are piercing the silence - it is hunting season - the time of male bonding. Soon after silence transcends the forest again and as temperatures

drop the raindrops turn to snowflakes that silently cover the ground and brighten the scene An occasional call from chickadees alerts us. We can read the footprints of the winter residence in the snow, tiny mouse trails, turkey tracks and the clearly marked deer trails. Our mountain and all its creatures are ready for the winters rest - are taking a break from busy feet and noisy people who enjoy the climb during spring summer and fall.



Friends of Mount Arab
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