



# Friends of Mount Arab 2009 Newsletter

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**Nancy Hess, Tres.**

NYS Department of  
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**Pat Whalen**

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**John Wood**

St. Lawrence County  
Youth Bureau, Youth  
Conservation Corps  
(YCC)

**Joanne Sevick**

## **Installation of Map Table and Alidade**

Last fall the FOMA board commissioned Dave Woodward of Train Brook Forge in Paul Smiths, NY to construct a new alidade and map table conforming to the design and dimensions of the missing originals. Early this summer, with the help of a FOMA volunteer, the new map table and alidade were installed in the tower cab atop the original map table frame still in our possession.

It is a beautiful piece of work. Not only does it recreate the original tower cab appearance, but it should help visitors identify both man-made and natural features surrounding Mount Arab.

The map table and alidade for which FOMA paid \$1250 shall be removed from the tower each year at the end of summer and stored in safe keeping until the following spring.

## **New Safety Caging on Tower Stairs**

This past fall FOMA hired Tom Sparks of Sparks Masonry Service in Tupper Lake to replace the old wire mesh along the stairway and landings of the tower with new UV resistant plastic coated steel mesh making it much safer for small children to access the tower cab. The new mesh is attached with aluminum extrusions and stainless steel hardware making for a very professional looking job that we expect shall last a long time.

Tom also repaired the cabin chimney, door, and a broken window that was damaged by vandals, which along with the safety caging, cost FOMA \$9356.

## **Summit Intern Funding**

Things are tight all over, and this past year we have been on our own to fund salaries (totaling \$3789) for the two Environmental Studies students from SUNY Potsdam who worked as our Summit Interpreters this past summer. So, despite the downturn in the economy, we need your help more than ever to keep our always popular Summit Interpreters on the job.

## **New Members on FOMA Board in 2009**

We are pleased to welcome Robert Acker of Mount Arab Lake and Tom Sparks of Tupper Lake who have joined the FOMA board.

Also during 2009 five directors, Brad Donahue, James Gray, Jon Kopp, Bill Beauchamp, and Joe Brant, left the FOMA board. We thank them for their service.

## **Upcoming 2010 Projects**

FOMA plans to continue repairs to the tower in the coming year. The cement piers at the base of the tower need replacing, and the tower needs a paint job. The observer's cabin needs to have steel mesh placed over the windows.

## **Spate of Vandalism**

There has always been a background of vandalism on Mount Arab – kids, both young and much too old – carve names and other things into anything carveable, drop trash, occasionally build inappropriately located fires, and break locks or hasps to gain entry. It has gotten worse over the past year.

Early last summer someone smashed the driver side window and inflicted additional body damage to the car belonging to our Summit Interpreter, Eric Sammis, while the car sat at the trail head parking lot over night. There was nothing in the car to steal; it was a purely malicious act.

During the fall someone broke the hasp on the tower cab trap door. Also this past fall someone smashed the rear window of the observer's cabin to gain entry. A few small tools were stolen and the cabin interior was left in a mess. We now plan to install wire mesh over the windows.

All of this follows the building of illegal fires and theft of a gas lantern in the middle of the night by three young local men during a 2008 fall weekend. We had a temporary summit steward at that time who reported this activity and the young men were arrested.

## **Off –Season Summit Stewards Needed**

FOMA is seeking volunteers who would be willing to spend a day, a weekend, or several weekends atop Mount Arab during times our student interns are unavailable to act as Summit Steward, talking to visitors, and generally keeping an eye on things. If you feel you might wish to do this, please contact FOMA by mail or email: [bentley@northnet.org](mailto:bentley@northnet.org).

**Eric Sammis**, our first Summit Steward of 2009, worked from June 24<sup>th</sup> to July 28<sup>th</sup>. Eric enjoyed the job and wrote the following about his stay on Mount Arab:



While at the tower I counted 812 people who visited the Summit and a total of 919 people signed the trail registry. While there, I had two bear sightings, saw many hummingbirds, a hawk, a variety of other

birds, including 2 or 3 sightings of grouse, and the snake den consisting of anywhere between 8-10 snakes living in the den. While there I worked with FOMA obviously as well as with John Wood and Pat Whalen of the DEC. I met a variety of people including college students who like to hike, boy scouts, locals, people from Europe, Russia, Canada, and all over the United States. The Adirondack Mountain club visited the tower as did Todd of North Country Public Radio who interviewed me. The interview played on the North Country Public Radio a couple weeks later. Mr. Bentley, a black smith named Dave, and I carried the map table and alidade up to the summit. It was installed in the tower cab for hikers to view.

All in all it was a great experience. Thanks. I undertook a project as part as my internship. The purpose of my project is to educate the public on the snakes that live on the summit of Mount Arab to better protect the snakes and their habitat. This will also make their visit to the summit more enjoyable as well as more educational. The product will be a booklet and poster about the main species of snakes that live on the summit, the Eastern Garter snake and Eastern Ribbon Snake.

**Crystal Decker** took the July 29 to August 28<sup>th</sup> shift. As part of her internship Crystal has been working on a plan to update the FOMA Interpretive Trail Brochure that is available to those who visit the tower. She reported that there was an average of approximately forty visitors per day to the tower, and greeted nearly 1000 visitors during her stay on the summit.



As she tells it, "I had a wonderful time completing my internship on Mt. Arab. Working on the mountain gave me a chance to meet and talk with many interesting people. Mt. Arab is a beautiful place. I will always remember my time there."

**We need your help more than ever to sustain their valuable presence on the mountain.**

## **Donations in 2009**

During the course of the year, FOMA received \$2553 in general donations from our very generous donors and an additional donation in the amount of \$1033 from a raffle to benefit the FOMA effort conducted by the St. Lawrence County Youth Bureau. We thank the YCC greatly for this most generous donation bringing our 2009 total to \$3586.

## **Communications Upgrade**

FOMA also purchased a DEC compatible radio (\$371) to provide direct communication capabilities to DEC dispatchers. Until now, our stewards had to rely on spotty cell phone service for emergency assistance.



**This is a January 2010 view of the Mount Arab fire tower. Although a bit snow covered, you can see the new safety caging on the tower stairway. I have noted a regular traffic of winter hikers up our mountain right up through December and on into January.**

**'Doc'** by Carrie Snye

George "Doc" LaVasseurs career as Observer at Arab Mtn. Fire Observation Station spanned 26 years from 1937 through 1963.

His main duty was to watch for sign of forest fire, pin point its location using the round map table and alidade, recently refurbished, also called the "Osborne Fire finder".



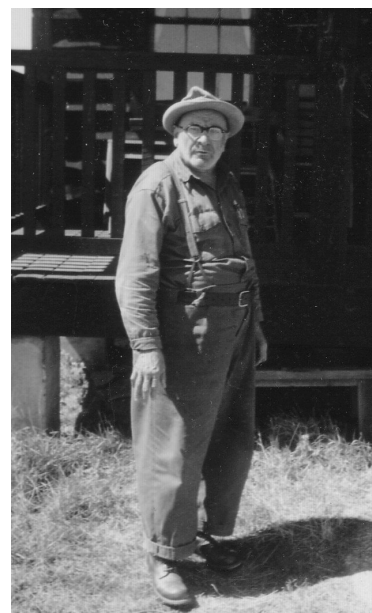
He would then report it to the local Forest Ranger to initiate fire fighting efforts.

During the years 1944 – 1949, "Doc" reported 21 fires and greeted over 2,070 visitors.

During the 1950's, "Doc" reported over 30 fire sightings. If left undetected, any one of these fires could have been devastating to the forest and nearby villages.

In 1952 the number of visitors rose to a record high of over 1,100 visitors nearly double the previous high. His role on the mountain was expanding into one of public relations and educator. He thoroughly enjoyed this part of his duty. Not only were the visitors treated to a splendid view of the surrounding area where 'Doc' could readily name each peak and stream, most also heard some of his colorful stories... many involving his encounters with the wild animal population he shared the mountain with.

I am certain that some 40 years after his death, he would be "tickled pink" to know that he lives on in the memories of not only former visitors, but will for generations to come.



**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.**

- 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.  
(Patches, T-shirts, and other items are also available at FORTUNES HARDWARE in Tupper Lake.)

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

## **Our Visitors** by Ingeborg Beyer Sapp

Whenever I have company during my stay at camp, I have my secret test for them: We climb Mount Arab. It determines how we will spend the time of their stay. Will we explore the Adirondacks by car or are they able to enjoy the rewarding views from the top without huffing and puffing. For me the mountain always offers something new, be it a wildflower in bloom or the sweet taste of some wild ripe berries, or the first tint of color in the fall.

It is also so interesting to see who the fellow climbers are that we meet. Last summer as we reached the summit, happy laughter greeted us at the top - a little redheaded toddler broke through the trees and aimed for the steps of the tower. His dad just scooped him up in time before he started to climb up. He had walked up all the way under his own power - with a little prodding by his parents on the way - yet there was still enough energy left to conquer the tower, to reach the summit first and then brag about it.

Sometimes we pass hikers speaking in foreign tongues who explore our beautiful Adirondacks, a wilderness beyond compare. I met a group of hikers acting extremely excited, chattering among themselves, they had just encountered a black bear that leisurely had crossed their path, a definite memory to take home with them, wherever home might be.

I pass older folks, who have to take a break a little more often but are determined to have their lunch on the bare rock offering a splendid view. We pass scout groups whose task is to spend a night on Mount Arab and to hike in with the full back pack. School busses bring in a load of kids for their school outing. Some mothers escort them. I always check their footwear. Heels truly won't do. Most of all I enjoy the families who take their kids and introduce them to our mountain. The parents may point out the names of the trees and plants while the youngsters climb a rock along the way. Close to the top the kids charge ahead to reach the summit first and then brag about it. Our summit guides will receive them and fill out the cards - the proof that indeed they climbed the mountain.

We are very proud of our mountain and all it has to offer with a minimum of effort and an enormous award.



**Friends of Mount Arab**  
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