

National Register Nomination

Chattanooga, SG100006713,
LISTED, 6/28/2021

TENNESSEE, HAMILTON COUNTY,
Beck Knob Cemetery,
875 Dartmouth St.,
Chattanooga, SG100006714,
LISTED, 6/29/2021

TENNESSEE, MARION COUNTY,
Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower,
1657 Lower Fire Tower Rd.,
Sequatchie vicinity, MP100006708,
LISTED, 6/28/2021
(Tennessee Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers MPS)

TENNESSEE, OVERTON COUNTY,
Twinton Fire Lookout Tower,
Threet Rd.,
Crawford vicinity, MP100006707,
LISTED, 6/28/2021
(Tennessee Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers MPS)

TENNESSEE, SHELBY COUNTY,
Overton Park Court Apartments,
2095 Poplar Ave.,
Memphis, MP100006712,
LISTED, 6/28/2021
(Residential Resources of Memphis MPS)

TENNESSEE, UNION COUNTY,
Chuck Swan Fire Lookout Tower,
Main Forest Rd.,
Sharps Chapel vicinity, MP100006709,
LISTED, 6/28/2021
(Tennessee Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers MPS)

VIRGINIA, HENRY COUNTY,
John Redd Smith Elementary School,
40 School Dr.,
Collinsville, RS100006500,
LISTED, 7/1/2021

WASHINGTON, JEFFERSON COUNTY,
Landes, Colonel Henry, House,
1034 Franklin St.,
Port Townsend, SG100006702,
LISTED, 6/28/2021

WASHINGTON, KLINKITAT COUNTY,
Stonehenge Memorial,
Stonehenge Dr.,
Goldendale vicinity, SG100006703,
LISTED, 6/28/2021

WISCONSIN, SHEBOYGAN COUNTY,

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower
Other names/site number Jasper Fire Lookout Tower
Name of related multiple property listing Tennessee Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers, 1933-1975
(Remove "N/A" if property is part of a multiple property listing and add name)

2. Location

Street & Number: 1657 Lower Fire Tower Road
City or town: Sequatchie State: Tennessee County: Marion
Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: Zip: 37374

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Claudette Starn 5/20/2021
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official: Date

Title: State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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Signature of Commenting Official:

Date

Title:

State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

 Signature of the Keeper

 Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	2	buildings
0	0	sites
1	1	structures
0	0	objects
4	3	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Fire Lookout

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Fire Lookout (Emergency)

INDUSTRY/Communications Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/Standard Plan Aermotor MC-30

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL/Steel; GLASS; CONCRETE; WOOD

Narrative Description

The ca. 1947 Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower is located at Big Hill on the Cumberland Plateau in Marion County in southeastern Tennessee. The sixty-foot high Fire Lookout Tower is a galvanized steel skeletal structure that provided a high, sheltered location for fire observation. This task was facilitated by the tower's square metal cab and unbroken band of windows across each elevation, an arrangement that permitted a 360-degree panoramic view of the surrounding terrain. The tower is the principal contributing resource on the property and retains its integrity. The nominated property also includes three contributing buildings, which supported the fire tower's conservation activities, two non-contributing buildings, and a non-contributing radio tower.

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Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower, ca. 1947 (Contributing Structure)

The Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower was constructed ca. 1947 as part of the Tennessee Division of Forestry's (TDF) Fire Management program.¹ Sited atop Big Hill on the Cumberland Plateau at an elevation of 2,032 feet, the tower was optimally placed to provide a panoramic view of the surrounding area. While no manufacturer's mark is readily apparent, based on stylistic evidence the Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower appears to be a sixty-foot Aermotor MC-39 type. At its base, the tower measures sixteen feet by sixteen feet. The four-sided, truss frame galvanized steel tower is sixty feet in height. It tapers in width from the base to its apex where an enclosed seven-foot by seven-foot square observation cab sits.

The structure is supported on four steel legs secured to concrete footers. Steel X-bracing is bolted to the structural frame at each of the tower's six levels, spanning the distance between every level of the tower with diagonal support members on each face. The lower portion of each section of X-bracing is further reinforced by T-bracing, which traverses the distance between each leg and is bisected by a single steel member at center. Additional steel bracing is installed at the juncture of each level of the tower. Oriented on a horizontal plane, the bracing extends from each of the staircase's five landings to the opposing section of the tower, thereby forming a rectangular figure.

The tower consists of six staircase runs with differing numbers of wood treads: eighteen, seventeen, fourteen, twelve, nine, and eight, respectively from bottom to top. Each successive staircase rises diagonally across the interior of the tower to a wood plank triangular landing. The first landing is located at the northeast corner of the tower. The second landing is located at the next level of the structure at the southwest corner. This alternating, dogleg pattern continues through five landings, with the sixth stairway reaching the apex of the tower, which is accessed via a trapdoor in the floor of the square observation room.

Access to the observation room is achieved via a trap door positioned in the cab floor. The observation room is steel-framed, clad with metal sheeting, and topped with a hipped metal roof. Two large, one-light, fixed, metal sash windows are oriented side-by-side, encompassing the width of each elevation and providing a 360-degree panoramic view of the surrounding terrain. The interior of the observation room contains an alidade resting on a wooden table. The cab's floor is covered with linoleum tile, and interior walls consist of vertical wood boards that rise approximately three feet from the base of the cab and terminate at the windowsill.

Alterations to the Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower are minimal. They include the recent in-kind replacement of all wood planks for the stair treads and landings, as well as the addition of two modern radio antennae. The antennae are minimally attached to the tower's support legs and have not affected the tower's materials or design.

Lookout Operator's Cabin, ca. 1947 (Contributing Building)

Situated approximately 105 feet north of the Fire Lookout Tower is a ca. 1947 Lookout Operator's Cabin that once provided temporary shelter for fire spotter personnel. While the ten-foot by sixteen-foot cabin is in fair condition, it has been modified for its current use as a shed. The one-story, rectangular plan, frame building

¹ An exact construction date is not currently known. Documentation on file at the Tennessee Division of Forestry suggested it was built in 1948, but the tower appears on a 1947 White City Quadrangle USGS Topographic Map. The tower did not appear on the previous 1936 USGS Map. The year 1947 is therefore an estimated construction date based on currently available documentation.

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sits on a rough-cut stone foundation. The cabin is clad with vertical wood siding and is capped by a gable roof covered with standing seam metal, which was recently replaced in-kind. The east façade of the building includes a pair of non-historic wood doors, protected by the overhanging gable end. The west elevation of the building is windowless. The north and south elevations are marked by a single, centrally placed, one-over-one, double-hung, metal sash window. While the building has had material changes, it retains its integrity of location, setting, overall form, and association with the property's historical significance. It is therefore considered contributing.

Utility Building, ca. 1947 (Contributing Building)

Situated directly north of the Fire Lookout Tower is a ca. 1947 Utility Building that functions as a garage and workshop space. The fifty-five-foot by twenty-foot, one-story, rectangular plan, frame building sits on a poured concrete foundation, is clad with vertical wood siding, and features a gable roof topped with a standing seam metal which was recently replaced in-kind. An overhead bay door on the east elevation provides vehicular access to the building. A six-panel door situated to the south provides pedestrian access. The south elevation is marked by five one-over-one, double-hung, wood sash windows. The north elevation is marked by four similarly patterned windows, one of which has a metal stove pipe extending through it. A rough-cut stone exterior chimney was once located at its west end, but it was removed sometime between 2014 and 2021. A change in the vertical siding indicates its absence. A lean-to addition is attached to the west elevation. It features a poured concrete foundation and a shed roof topped with standing seam metal, also recently replaced in-kind. A six-panel door on the north elevation provides access to the addition. The door is flanked to the west by a six-over-six, double-hung metal sash window. A similar window is centrally placed on the addition's west elevation. The south elevation is marked by a one-over-one, double-hung, metal sash window. The Utility Building has some physical changes but conveys its association with the property's conservation history and is therefore considered contributing.

Crew House, ca. 1947 (Contributing Building)

Situated approximately forty-five feet southwest of the Fire Lookout Tower is a ca. 1947 crew house that currently functions as office space for employees of the TDF. The thirty-four-foot by twenty-four-foot, one-story, rectangular plan, frame building sits on a stone foundation, is clad with vinyl siding, and is topped by a metal side-gable roof, which replaced the previous asphalt shingle roof sometime between 2014 and 2021. The east façade includes a full-width integrated front porch supported by six evenly spaced replacement metal columns on stone bases atop a concrete floor. The façade features a centered, wood, entry door flanked on either side by a pair of one-over-one, double-hung, metal sash windows. This sash type is repeated in two window openings on the north elevation and two window openings on the west elevation. The building's west elevation is further marked by an enclosed, projecting, basement-level entrance that features vinyl siding and a gable roof topped with asphalt shingles. A single door provides access.

The south end of the building features an addition resting on a stone foundation. A concrete stoop leading to a door on the south elevation provides access to the addition. The door is flanked to the east by a single six-over-six, double-hung vinyl sash window. This window pattern is repeated in a single window on the addition's east and west elevations.

The interior of the building features a main room with remnants of a stone chimney, which has since been adapted with an electric heating unit. The building contains two offices, a bathroom, and an additional room. The interior features wood paneling on all walls, wood floors, and drywall ceilings. The addition contains

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two rooms, one of which is a kitchen. The Crew House has some physical changes but conveys its association with the property's conservation history and is therefore considered contributing.

Shed, ca. 2000 (Non-Contributing Building)

Situated approximately eighty feet northwest of the Fire Lookout Tower is a ca. 2000 shed. The one-story, rectangular plan building sits on a concrete block foundation, is clad with metal sheeting, and has a flat metal roof. A single metal door on the east elevation provides access to the ten-foot by nine-foot building. This building is non-contributing due to its construction date.

Radio Equipment Building, ca. 2010 (Non-Contributing Building)

A radio equipment building that services the radio tower is located approximately eighty feet northwest of the Fire Lookout Tower within a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. The exterior walls of the twenty-five-foot by fifteen-foot building are constructed of concrete blocks, and the east elevation features two metal doors protected by metal awnings. The building is topped by a flat roof. The Radio Equipment Building is non-contributing due to its recent construction and lack of association with the property's significance.

Radio Tower, ca. 2010 (Non-Contributing Structure)

Approximately 105 feet northwest of the Fire Lookout Tower and located within a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire is a modern radio tower under license to the State of Tennessee, Forestry Radio Division to broadcast public safety information to its subscribers. The cantilevered structure is constructed of steel and features a lattice of triangular cross-sections. The tower tapers in height from base to apex. The Radio Tower is non-contributing due to its recent construction and lack of association with the property's significance.

Site and Setting

The nominated property is sited atop Big Hill at an elevation of 2,032 feet on the Cumberland Plateau in Marion County, Tennessee. The TDF chose this location because it provided an optimal view of the surrounding forests and coves. The property's historic setting was primarily forested with minimal single-family homes, commercial development, and mines. The property is still surrounded by thick forests, private lands, and state-owned recreation areas. The property remains as it appeared historically with the shed, radio tower, and radio equipment building as its only intrusions. These non-contributing resources are located at the rear of the property and do not significantly affect any of the aspects of the integrity that make this property eligible for listing.

Integrity

The Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower and its contributing buildings have not been moved since construction and therefore retain integrity of location. Sited atop Big Hill on the Cumberland Plateau, the property retains its forested setting with scattered development. While the tower is no longer continually manned, TDF staff occasionally ascend the tower for fire-spotting purposes when needed. The tower's major physical characteristics that facilitate fire management have been maintained. The tower retains its sixty-foot metal structure and cab with metal windows affording a panoramic view of the surrounding area. The tower's only changes have been in-kind replacement of the wooden steps and landings and the addition of two radio antennae which are minimally attached to the tower's support legs and have not affected any of the tower's important characteristics. Therefore, the tower retains its integrity of materials, design, and workmanship, as well as its feeling and association with its significant conservation and architectural history. While the fire

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tower is the principal contributing resource on the property, historic support buildings contribute to the property's significance in conservation. The lookout operator's cabin, crew house, and utility building retain their integrity of location, setting, feeling and association. All feature some physical changes, but they maintain their overall forms and association with the property's historic role in conservation.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

N/A

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Conservation

Period of Significance

ca. 1947-1971

Significant Dates

1947

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Aermotor Company

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the "Tennessee Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers, 1933-1975" Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) under Criterion A in the area of Conservation for its local role in the TDF's efforts to protect forested land in the state through its fire control program. Additionally, the tower is eligible for the listing under National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an example of an Aermotor MC-39 fire lookout tower. The tower retains its original design features, and its historic setting has been preserved. The period of significance begins ca. 1947, when the tower was constructed, and terminates in 1971, about the time when Tennessee fire lookout towers were largely abandoned in favor of other methods of fire identification.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Located in Marion County, Tennessee, the Big Hill fire lookout tower was constructed ca. 1947 atop Big Hill on the Cumberland Plateau. Low-lying coves and valleys surround the tower. Dixon Cove is to the east; to the west are Gizzard Cove, Robinson Cove, and Denny Cove; and Pryor Cove is to the South. Further to the east and southeast is the Sequatchie Valley. Sited at an elevation of 2,032 feet, the Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower has a commanding view of the surrounding area, encompassing private and state-owned land, including discontinuous sections of the South Cumberland State Recreation Area.

Plans to construct a fire tower at this location began shortly after the TDF created its statewide fire management program. On September 1, 1934, the State of Tennessee entered into a contract with G. Sherman and the heirs of A.R. Hall, which allowed the construction, use, and maintenance of a fire lookout tower on Sherman and Hall's respective properties. The tower site was comprised of two leased parcels totaling one and one-half acres. The contract allowed the State to use the property for fire detection, gave the State the right of ingress and egress, and the right to construct a telephone line to the lookout tower. In the event of the State's abandonment of the property, the land title will revert to its original owners, and all structures and appurtenances will remain the property of the State.²

While the State leased the site in 1934, construction of a fire tower at the site did not occur immediately.³ The exact construction date of the Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower is unknown, but it was present by 1947 when the USGS recorded it on topographic maps. The Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower's view covered vast forests, including state-owned lands and private property. Big Hill was one of five lookout towers constructed in Marion County and is the one located at the highest elevation. The other four towers ranged in elevation from 1,830 feet to 1,919 feet. The next-highest tower was the Prentice Cooper Fire Lookout Tower, constructed about the same time as Big Hill and located about thirteen miles to the east within the Prentice Cooper State Forest.⁴ The two towers are located on the east and west sides of the Sequatchie Valley, where

² G. Sherman and Heirs of A.R. Hall to The State of Tennessee, 1934, Deed Book XXX, pp. 263-265, Marion County Register of Deeds, Jasper, Tennessee. The nominated property today is considered a single legal parcel.

³ The 1936 USGS Map for the White City Quadrangle does not depict a fire tower at this location. The first USGS Map when the tower appears is in 1947, providing evidence that the tower was constructed at some time between 1936 and 1947. Documentation on file at the Tennessee Division of Forestry suggests the tower was constructed in 1948. Therefore, ca. 1947 was chosen as the best approximate construction date given currently available documentation.

⁴ Tennessee Lookout Towers, <https://tnlandforms.us/towers/>, accessed April 25, 2021.

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most of Marion County's agricultural activities and communities were historically established. Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower therefore was an important link in the network of fire lookout towers to maintain visual observation of the Sequatchie Valley, as well as the forests on the higher elevations, which Tennesseans often visited for recreation. Recreation areas include discontinuous areas of the South Cumberland State Park, located about two miles north of Big Hill. The lookout tower's observation area also included numerous mining operations for coal and iron, which were important historical industries in Marion County but also increased fire risk due to the use of furnaces and coke ovens.⁵ Of the five towers once located in Marion County, only three remain: Big Hill, Prentice Cooper, and Cave Spring, which is located about twelve miles to the southwest of Big Hill overseeing the Franklin State Forest.⁶

Significance & Registration Requirements

The Big Hill Fire lookout Tower is nominated under the "Tennessee Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers, 1933-1975" Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) and therefore must meet the MPDF's registration requirements to be listed. Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower meets the registration requirements to be listed under Criterion A for its role in Conservation and under Criterion C for its importance in Architecture.

Under Criterion A, Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower played an important role in the state's fire management and conservation program. Tennessee, along with many other states, benefited from the early shift in public policy allowing for improvement in fire detection as a result of the conservation movement that led to the construction and staffing of fire towers. Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower was one of five towers constructed in Marion County to monitor the county's vast forests, fertile valleys, and coves for early fire detection and response. Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower played a vital role overseeing public lands and private property comprising various mining activities, as well as the Sequatchie Valley, which comprised fertile agricultural land and such communities as Sequatchie and Jasper.

The Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower is also significant under National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of an Aermotor MC-39 observation-only fire lookout tower. The MC-39 design was one of the most popular steel designs by the Aermotor Company of Chicago, Illinois.⁷ The Aermotor Company was the premier manufacturer of steel fire towers in the early twentieth century. A successful windmill maker, Aermotor re-tooled their existing designs into fire lookout towers.⁸ The MC-39 design type is characterized by a seven-foot by seven-foot steel cab (see Figure 2) and an internal stairway

⁵ E. Raymond Evans, *Inventory of Historic Architecture in Marion County, Tennessee* (November 1986). Report on file at the Tennessee Historical Commission, Nashville, TN; *Cultural Heritage Mining Trail*, Southeast Tennessee Tourism Association, <https://www.southeasttennessee.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Cultural-Heritage-Mining-Trail-Guide-min.pdf>, accessed April 25, 2021.

⁶ Tennessee Lookout Towers, <https://tnlandforms.us/towers/>, accessed April 25, 2021

⁷ Forest Fire Lookout Association, "Fire Lookout Types," <https://www.firelookout.org/fire-lookout-types.html>, accessed April 25, 2021; Bill Starr, *The Five Various Steel Fire Tower Models Utilized in New York State*. 2011.

http://nhlr.org/NY_Towers/New_York_Steel_Fire_Tower_Models_by_Bill_Starr.pdf, accessed June 5, 2014.

⁸ John R. Grosvenor and United States Forest Service. *A History of the Architecture of the USDA Forest Service*. United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, 1999; Peter L. Steere, "National Forest Fire Lookouts in the Southwestern Region, USDA Forest Service," National Register of Historic Places Thematic Resource Form (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1987).

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that doglegs from corner to corner. Each run of stairs terminates at a triangular landing. This type was available in varying heights, ranging from thirty-three feet to as tall as 176 feet.⁹

This type is very similar to an International Derrick Tower model from 1933, which was designed by Aermotor and the U.S. Forest Service. The International Derrick Towers often had issues with swaying staircases, however, and were unpopular.¹⁰ While no schematics have been located for the MC-39, schematics are available for the nearly identical International Derrick 1933 model (see Figure 1). The Aermotor MC-39 improved upon the International Derrick 1933 design, and the Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower therefore represents an important stage in the evolution of lookout tower architecture.

Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower meets the registration requirements specified in the MPDF. It was constructed as part of the TDF's fire management program and functioned as an important part of that system beginning with its construction ca. 1947. It represents an important example of fire tower design. The MPDF requires that an eligible tower retain its historic physical appearance. The Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower retains its original location, design, and a high level of its original fabric, and therefore maintains integrity. The historic setting has remained largely unchanged, with minimal new construction in the surrounding area. The tower has only undergone one notable alteration, the in-kind replacement of its wood plank stair treads and landing platforms. The replacement was in-kind and therefore does not substantially affect the tower's integrity. Modern radio antennae have also been attached to the tower's legs, but the antennae are easily removed and have not directly affected the tower's physical characteristics. Until the 1970s, the tower was used during high-fire season for fire detection and was constantly manned. Since the mid-1970s, however, when forestry employees became more dependent on fire-spotting planes and fire reports from 911 emergency calls, the tower is no longer continually manned, but forestry staff still use it for fire observation purposes as needed.

⁹ Forest Fire Lookout Association, "Fire Lookout Types," <https://www.firelookout.org/fire-lookout-types.html>, accessed April 25, 2021

¹⁰ Forest Fire Lookout Association, "Fire Lookout Types," <https://www.firelookout.org/fire-lookout-types.html>, accessed April 25, 2021; Bill Starr, *The Five Various Steel Fire Tower Models Utilized in New York State*. 2011. http://nhlr.org/NY_Towers/New_York_Steel_Fire_Tower_Models_by_Bill_Starr.pdf, accessed June 5, 2014.

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Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

Evans, E. Raymond. *Inventory of Historic Architecture in Marion County, Tennessee*. November 1986.
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Forest Fire Lookout Association. "Fire Lookout Types." <https://www.firelookout.org/fire-lookout-types.html>, accessed April 25, 2021.

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Grosvenor, John R. and United States Forest Service. *A History of the Architecture of the USDA Forest Service*. United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, 1999.

Southeast Tennessee Tourism Association. *Cultural Heritage Mining Trail*.
<https://www.southeasttennessee.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Cultural-Heritage-Mining-Trail-Guide-min.pdf>, accessed April 25, 2021.

Starr, Bill. *The Five Various Steel Fire Tower Models Utilized in New York State*. 2011.
http://nhlr.org/NY_Towers/New_York_Steel_Fire_Tower_Models_by_Bill_Starr.pdf, accessed June 5, 2014.

Steere, Peter L. "National Forest Fire Lookouts in the Southwestern Region, USDA Forest Service." National Register of Historic Places Thematic Resource Form. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1987.

Tennessee Lookout Towers. <https://tnlandforms.us/towers/>, accessed April 25, 2021.

U.S. Geological Survey. White City Quadrangle, 1936 and 1947. 1:24,000 7.5 Minute Series. Reston, VA: United States Department of the Interior.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	X	State Historic Preservation Office	
previously listed in the National Register	X	Other State agency: Tennessee Department of Agriculture	
previously determined eligible by the National Register		Federal agency	
designated a National Historic Landmark	X	Local government: Marion County Register of Deeds	
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #		University	
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #		Other	
recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #		Name of repository:	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A			

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 1.5 **USGS Quadrangle** White City 100-NW

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

1. Latitude: 35.158093 Longitude: -85.655501

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundary of the Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower property corresponds with the legal parcel lines of Marion County Parcel 071 008.00. These boundaries are depicted on the enclosed Tax Map/Boundary Map.

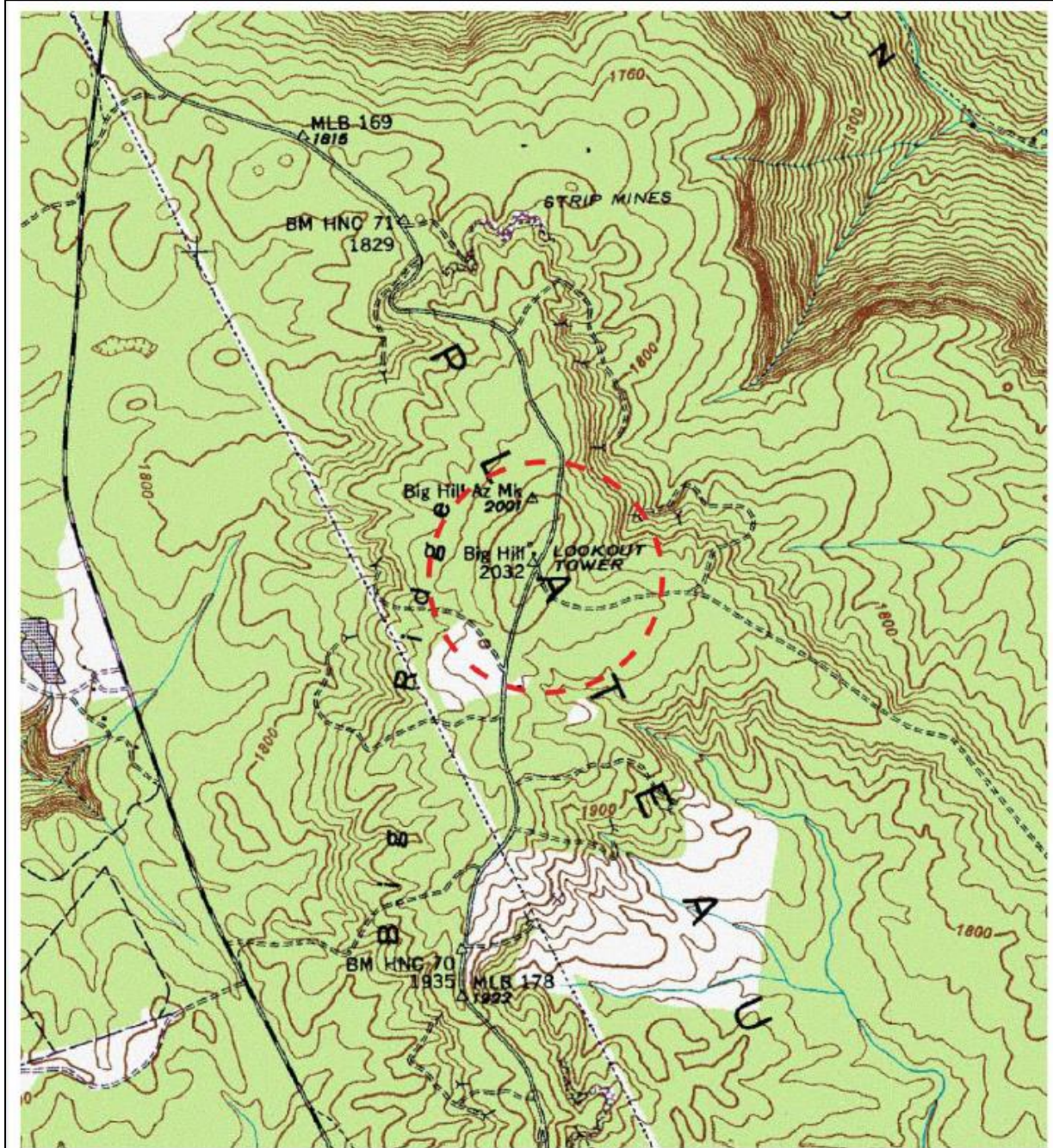
Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the resources historically associated with the Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower.

Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

Marion County, Tennessee
County and State

USGS Topographic Map



Location of Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower



Fire lookout tower location



0 160 320 480
Meters

0 500 1,000 1,500
Feet

Located on USGS 1974 White City 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle.

Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

Marion County, Tennessee
County and State

Property Tax Map and Boundary Map



Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

Marion County, Tennessee
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name Original 2014 Draft by Ted Karpyneec, Meghan Weaver, and David Sprouse (TVAR).
Revised by Rebecca Schmitt (THC)

Organization Tennessee Valley Archaeology Research/Tennessee Historical Commission

Street & Number 2941 Lebanon Pike Date April 2021

City or Town Nashville Telephone 615-770-1086

E-mail Rebecca.Schmitt@tn.gov State TN Zip Code 37214

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. should be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower
----- Name of Property
Marion County, Tennessee
----- County and State
TN Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photos and Plans Page 18

Photo Log

Name of Property: Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower

City or Vicinity: Jasper

County: Marion State: Tennessee

Photographer: Rebecca Schmitt

Date: February 23, 2021

- 1 of 11 Property Overview, including the Crew Cabin, Radio Tower, Fire Lookout Tower, and Utility Building. Photographer facing north.
- 2 of 11 Property Overview, including the Fire Lookout Tower, Utility Building, Radio Tower, Radio Equipment Building, and Shed. Photographer facing southwest.
- 3 of 11 Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower with Utility Building behind. Photographer facing northeast.
- 4 of 11 Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower and Radio Tower. A portion of the Utility Building is also visible. Photographer facing northwest.
- 5 of 11 Base and Steps of the Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower. Utility Building visible in the background. Photographer facing north.
- 6 of 11 Base of Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower and Utility Building. Photographer facing north.
- 7 of 11 Utility Building with Shed in Background. Also visible are portions of the Crew House, Fire Lookout Tower, and Radio Tower. Photographer facing west.
- 8 of 11 Shed and Lookout Operator's Cabin. Photographer facing northwest.
- 9 of 11 Crew House and Portion of Fire Lookout Tower Base. Photographer facing southwest.
- 10 of 11 Crew House with Radio Tower visible behind. Photographer facing northwest.
- 11 of 11 Base of Radio Tower, Radio Equipment Building, Shed, and Portion of Utility Building. Photographer facing north.

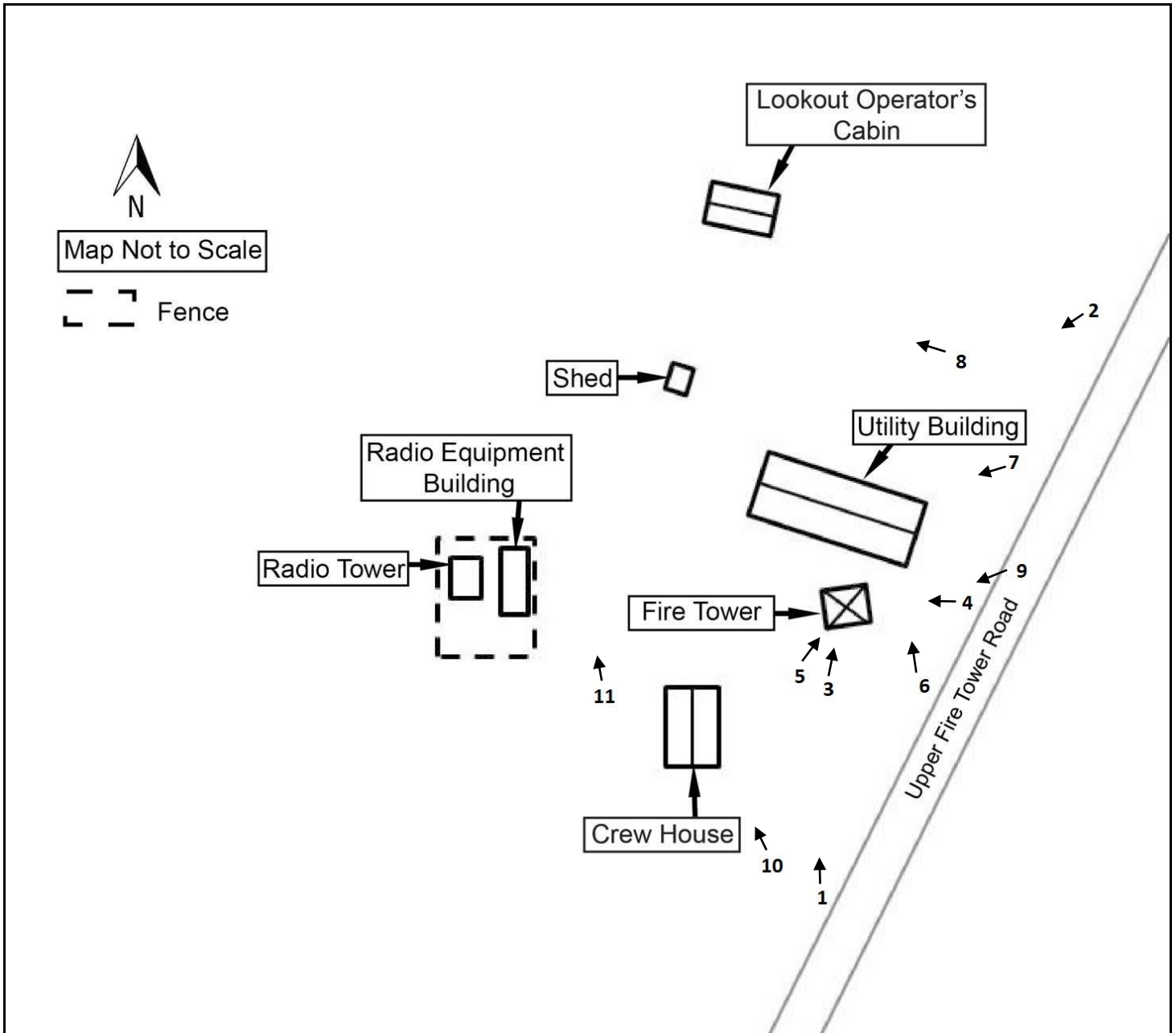
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property
Marion County, Tennessee
County and State
TN Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photos and Plans Page 19

Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower Site Plan with Photo Keys



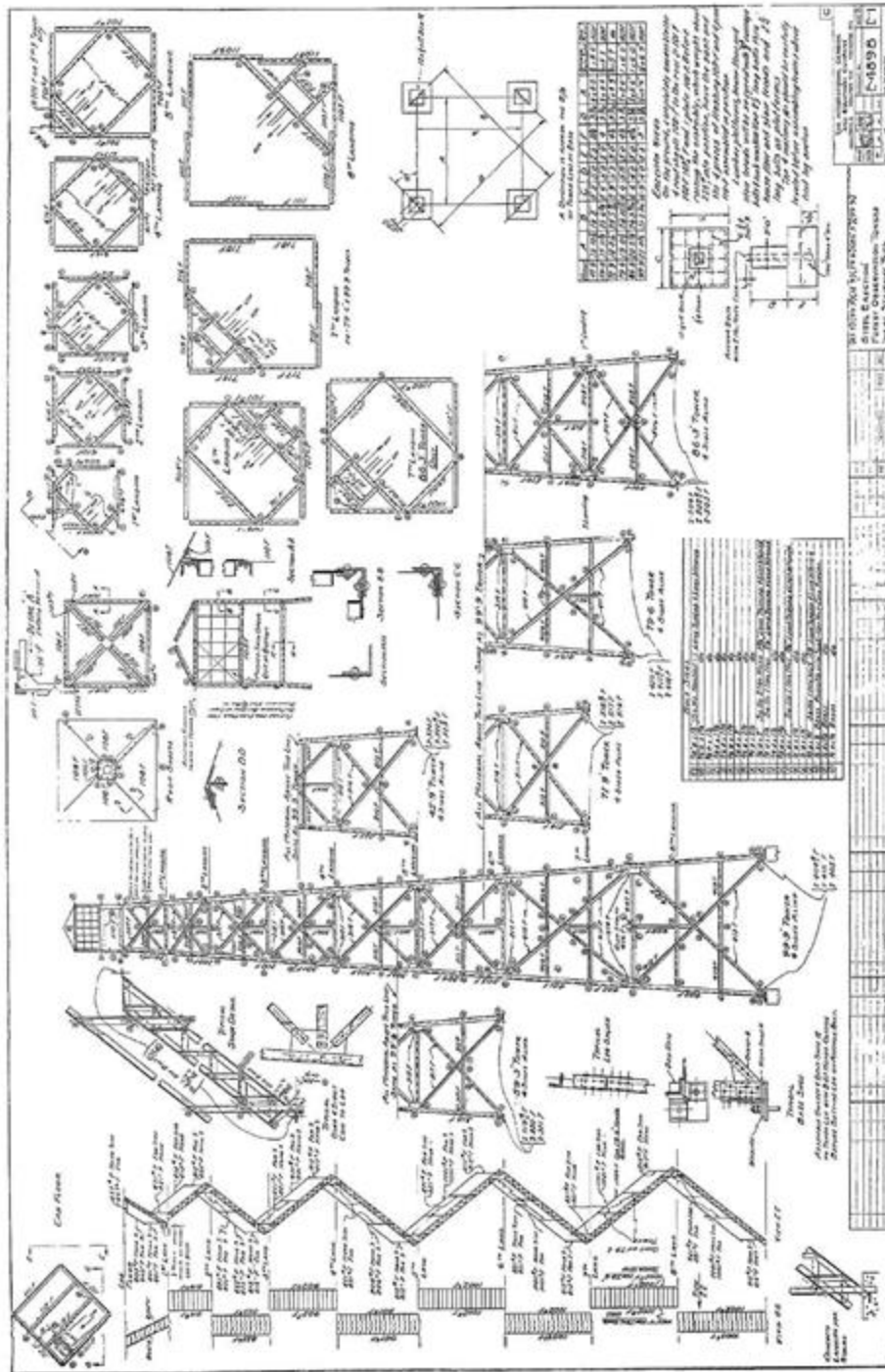
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property
Marion County, Tennessee
County and State
TN Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photos and Plans Page 20

Figure 1: International Derrick Model 1933





1 OF 11



2 OF 11









6 OF 11



7 OF 11



8 OF 11



9 OF 11



10 OF 11



11 OF 11

Correspondence



TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

2941 LEBANON PIKE

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37214

OFFICE: (615) 770-1098

July 30, 2021

Mr. Tom Womack
Deputy Commissioner
Department of Agriculture, State of Tennessee
440 Hogan Road
Nashville, TN 37220

Dear Mr. Womack,

We are pleased to inform you that the property:

**Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower
1657 Lower Fire Tower Road
Sequatchie, Marion County, Tennessee**

has, upon the nomination of this office, been placed in the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior on June 28, 2021. Properties listed in the National Register will be automatically included in the Tennessee Register.

Enclosed is a sheet explaining the results of listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The State of Tennessee shares the pride we hope you feel resulting from this recognition. Please contact Rebecca Schmitt at Rebecca.Schmitt@tn.gov or by calling (615) 770-1086 if this office can be of any assistance to you.

Sincerely,

E. Patrick McIntyre, Jr.
Executive Director and
State Historic Preservation Officer

EPM:ap

pc:

Senator Janice Bowling, Tennessee State Senator, Senate District 16
Representative Iris Rudder, Tennessee State Representative, House District 39
The Honorable David Jackson, Marion County Mayor
Ms. Nonie Webb, Marion County Historian
Ms. Melissa Mortimer, Southeast Tennessee Development District
Marion County Office of Planning and Development
Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library Local History Department
Mr. John Hull, Deputy Commissioner, State of TN Real Estate Asset Management Division
Ms. Ann McGauran, State Architect
Mr. David Arnold, State Forester and Assistant Commissioner, Department of Agriculture

Rebecca Schmitt

From: National Register Submissions, NPS <National_Register_Submissions@nps.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 12:26 PM
To: Rebecca Schmitt
Subject: [EXTERNAL] TN_Marion County_Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower

***** This is an EXTERNAL email. Please exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email - STS-Security. *****

Dear Colleague,

This email acknowledges receipt, effective today's date, of an electronic submission for action by the National Register program on behalf of the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places.

Should you have any questions regarding the review of this submission, please email to the National Register staff member assigned to your state (or the state in which the resource is located) as indicated at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/contactus.htm>

Sincerely,
National Register of Historic Places
US DOI – National Park Service
Washington, DC

From: do-not-reply@nps.gov <do-not-reply@nps.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 12:51 PM
To: National Register Submissions, NPS <National_Register_Submissions@nps.gov>
Subject: TN_Marion County_Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower_Form

You received 1 file from TennesseeSHPO via NPS - Online Mail Management System

Sent On: 5/26/2021 12:51:22 PM

File Location: \\Inp2204crfs02\omms\national-register\5-26-2021\TennesseeSHPO\TN_Marion_County_Big_Hill_Fire_Lookout_Tower_Form-TN_MarionCounty_BigHillFireLookoutTower_Form.pdf

If link doesn't work, open the run command(Window + r) and paste link to open the document

Message details are here

TN_Marion County_Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower_Form



TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
2941 LEBANON PIKE
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37214
OFFICE: (615) 532-1550
E-mail: Claudette.Stager@tn.gov
(615) 770-1089

May 19, 2021

Joy Beasley
Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

National Register Nomination

- *Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower, Marion County, Tennessee*

Dear Ms. Beasley:

The enclosed disks contain the true and correct nomination for listing of the *Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower* to the National Register of Historic Places. This property is being nominated under the Tennessee Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers, 1933-1975 MPS. We received no comments.

If you have any questions or if more information is needed, please contact Rebecca Schmitt at (615) 770-1086 or Rebecca.Schmitt@tn.gov.

Sincerely,

Claudette Stager
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

CS:rs

Enclosures(2)



TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

2941 LEBANON PIKE

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-0442

(615) 770-1098

April 9, 2021

Mr. Tom Womack
Deputy Commissioner
Department of Agriculture
440 Hogan Road
Nashville, TN 37220

Dear Mr. Womack:

We are pleased to inform you that the property:

Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower
1657 Lower Fire Tower Road
Squatchie, Marion County, Tennessee

will be considered by the State Review Board for nomination to the National and Tennessee Registers of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the Federal government's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation. Listing in the National Register provides recognition and assists in preserving our Nation's heritage. Properties considered for the National Register are simultaneously considered for the Tennessee Register. Properties listed in the National Register will be automatically included in the Tennessee Register.

Listing of the **Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower** provides recognition of the community's historic importance and assures protective review of Federal projects that might adversely affect the character of the historic property. If the property is listed in the National Register, certain Federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation and other provisions may apply.

Listing in the National Register does not mean that the limitations will be placed on the properties by the Federal government. Public visitation rights are not required of owners. The Federal government will not attach restrictive covenants to the properties nor seek to acquire them.

You are invited to attend the State Review Board meeting at which the nomination will be considered. The Board will meet at 9:00 a.m. on May 19, 2021 at the Tennessee Historical Commission office, located at Clover Bottom Mansion, 2941 Lebanon Pike, Nashville, TN 37214. Due to the ongoing public health concerns with the spread of COVID-19, the meeting may be conducted virtually. Details on alternate meeting plans will be posted to the Tennessee Historical Commission's website as they become available. Written comments may also be submitted regarding the nomination, and we will ensure the board receives the comments.

Enclosed please find notices that explain in greater detail the results of listing in the National Register and that describe the rights and procedures by which an owner may comment on or object to listing in the National and Tennessee Registers.

Should you have any questions about this nomination before the State Review Board meeting, please contact Rebecca Schmitt at Rebecca.Schmitt@tn.gov or by calling (615) 770-1086. E-Mail is currently encouraged as our staff is working remotely.

Sincerely,



E. Patrick McIntyre, Jr.
Executive Director and
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure

EPM:ap
pc:

Senator Janice Bowling, Tennessee State Senator, Senate District 16
Representative Iris Rudder, Tennessee State Representative, House District 39
The Honorable David Jackson, Marion County Mayor
Ms. Nonie Webb, Marion County Historian
Ms. Melissa Mortimer, Southeast Tennessee Development District
Marion County Office of Planning and Development
Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library Local History Department
Mr. John Hull, Deputy Commissioner, State of TN Real Estate Asset Management Division
Ms. Ann McGauran, State Architect
Mr. David Arnold, State Forester and Assistant Commissioner, Department of Agriculture

State of Tennessee  Comptroller of the Treasury
Real Estate Assessment Data

[Home](#)[About](#)[New Search](#)[Return to List](#)

County Number: 058

County Name: MARION

Tax Year: 2020

Property Owner and Mailing Address**Jan 1 Owner:**STATE OF TENNESSEE
STAR RT
SEQUATCHIE, TN 37374**Current Owner:**STATE OF TENNESSEE
STAR RT
SEQUATCHIE, TN 37374**Property Location**

Address: LOWER FIRETOWER RD

Map: 071 Grp: Ctrl Map: 071 Parcel: 008.00 Pl: S/I: 000

Value Information

Reappraisal Year: 2016

Land Mkt Value: \$0

Improvement Value: \$0

Total Market Appraisal: \$0

Assessment %: 0

Assessment: \$0

General Information

Class:	03 - STATE		
City #:	000	City:	
SSD1:	000	SSD2:	000
District:	03	Mkt Area:	R01
# Bldgs:	0	# Mobile Homes:	0
Utilities - Water / Sewer:	11 - INDIVIDUAL / INDIVIDUAL	Utilities - Electricity:	01 - PUBLIC
Utilities - Gas / Gas Type:	00 - NONE	Zoning:	

Subdivision Data

Subdivision:

Plat Bk: Plat Pg: Block: Lot:

Additional Description**Building Information****Extra Features****Sale Information**

Sale Date	Price	Book	Page	Vac/Imp	Type Instrument	Qualification
01/01/1900	\$0	FLD	VER			

Land Information

Deed Acres: 0.00 **Calc Acres:** 0.00 **Total Land Units:** 2.50
Land Type: 70 - EXEMPT **Soil Class:** **Units:** 2.50

[New Search](#) [Return to List](#) [View GIS Map for this Parcel](#)

Glossary of Terms	How to Search	Fact Sheet
Division of Property Assessments Home Page	Comptroller of the Treasury Home Page	State of Tennessee Home Page

Marion County - Parcel: 071 008.00



Date: April 25, 2021
County: Marion
Owner: STATE OF TENNESSEE
Address: LOWER FIRETOWER RD
Parcel Number: 071 008.00
Deeded Acreage: 0
Calculated Acreage: 1.5
Date of Imagery: 2018

Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors
TN Comptroller - OLG
TDOT
State of Tennessee, Comptroller of the Treasury, Office of Local Government
(OLG)

The property lines are compiled from information maintained by your local county Assessor's office but are not conclusive evidence of property ownership in any court of law.

Research and Supplemental Information



Marion County

Written by **Patsy B. Beene**



3 minutes to read

Marion County, located in the southern part of the Cumberland Plateau and the Sequatchie Valley, encompasses five hundred square miles. Established in 1817 out of Cherokee lands, the county was named for General Francis Marion, a Revolutionary War leader in South Carolina. When Tennessee became a state, the Sequatchie Valley was a part of Roane County. The upper end of the valley was established as Bledsoe County in 1807. This county included all of the valley, but treaties with the Cherokees kept white settlers out of the lower end. The first white settlers are thought to have been Amos Griffith and William and James Standifer in 1805, while the area was still part of Roane County.

Native Americans have played an important part in the history of present-day Marion County. They built their towns on the rivers and were living here when the white men came. These newcomers kept the Indian names Tennessee and Sequatchie for this area. Recent research indicates that in 1560 Spanish soldiers from Tristan de Luna's expedition entered the Tennessee River valley in the vicinity of Marion County, visiting the main town of the chiefdom of Napochies. More than a century later, the next Europeans to make contact with the Native Americans found a number of tribes in what later became Tennessee. The Cherokee dominated this area later in the 1700s and early 1800s.

In 1789 Chiefs Catetoy and Vann, accompanied by forty warriors in canoes, intercepted the boat of Colonel James Brown, who was en route with his family and party to Middle Tennessee to take up land awarded him for Revolutionary War services. The Indians killed the men and captured the women and children, including Joseph Brown, a youth who later escaped and guided the Cumberland settlers' expedition to Nickajack in 1794 to destroy the native towns of Nickajack, Running Water, and Long Island. After the

The first court in 1817 was held in the [Objects](#) in Shropshire in what is now Whitwell. Then court was held for one year in the [Donate](#) house, a two-story log house located south of Whitwell in a place called Chickville, later named Liberty, where court had been held while this county was still in North Carolina. In 1819 the county seat was moved to Jasper, named in honor of Sergeant Jasper of Revolutionary War fame. The commissioners to select and establish the county seat were William Stone, David Oats, Burgess Matthews, Alexander Kelly, William King, William Stevens, and Davis Miller. Betsy Pack, a Cherokee Indian woman, sold these commissioners forty acres, and the courthouse built in 1820 was near the center of the tract where the present one now stands. John Kelly was the first clerk of the court and Alan Griffith the first registrar.

During the Civil War sentiment in the county was so divided that frequently members of the same family could be found in both the Confederate and Federal armies. The presence of the railroad and major turnpikes meant that troops from both sides often passed through the county.

Industry and mining marked the county's postwar history. In 1877 James Bowron and associates from England brought sufficient capital into the valley to develop the iron and coal industries. Coal mines opened in Whitwell; coke ovens operated in Victoria; iron ore came from Inman; and smelters dominated South Pittsburg. In the early 1890s J. C. Beene installed a small steam plant at South Pittsburg to serve the city. It became an industrial town for several important iron-making firms and manufacturing companies. The still-operating Lodge Cast Iron is one of the state's oldest manufacturing firms. Industrialist Richard Hardy established Richard City as a company town for the Dixie Portland Cement Company in the early 1900s. Today the county is famous for its manufacture of fireworks.

The development of hydroelectric power came with the completion of Hales Bar Dam in 1912. In 1933 Congress created the Tennessee Valley Authority for the purpose of flood control, navigation, and the sale of cheap hydroelectric power in the Tennessee Valley. The lake created by its Nickajack Dam covered the earlier Hales Bar Dam. The dams that the TVA built on the Tennessee River and its tributaries changed the look of the area without damaging its beauty; while covering sites used by first settlers, they improved navigation on the river.

In this lovely Sequatchie Valley county today lie the graves of countless military heroes and politicians: Brigadier General William Stone, War of 1812; General Adrian Northcut, Mexican War; U.S. Senator Hopkins Turney; Governor and U.S. Senator James B. Frazier; U.S. Senators Foster V. Brown, James Whiteside, and Tom Stewart; Congressmen Joe

**Citation Information****Objects**[Donate](#)

The following information is provided.

- Article Title Marion County
- Author Patsy B. Beene
- Website Name Tennessee Encyclopedia
- URL <http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/marion-county/>
- Access Date March 4, 2021
- Publisher Tennessee Historical Society
- Original Published Date October 8, 2017
- Date of Last Update March 1, 2018

CATEGORIES[County History](#)[East Tennessee](#)**RELATED ENTRIES**[Chickamaugas](#)[Hales Bar Dam](#)[Luna Expedition](#)[Mining](#)[Tennessee Valley Authority](#)

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower

Other names/site number Jasper Fire Lookout Tower

Name of related multiple property listing Tennessee Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers, 1933- ca.1975
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & Number: 1657 Lower Fire Tower Road

City or town: Sequatchie State: Tennessee County: Marion (115)

Not For Publication: NA Vicinity: NA Zip Code: 37374

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**
State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official: **Date**

Title: **State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**
Government

Bill Hill Fire Lookout Tower
 Name of Property

Marion County, Tennessee
 County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

 Signature of the Keeper

 Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	2	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
4	3	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Bill Hill Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

Marion County, Tennessee
County and State

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Fire Lookout

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Fire Lookout (emergency)

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/Standard Plan Aermotor MC-39

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE; METAL:Steel; WOOD; GLASS

Narrative Description

The Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower is located in Marion County, in southeastern Tennessee. The Fire Lookout Tower is a skeletal steel structure that provided a high, sheltered location for fire observation. This task was facilitated by the tower's square cab and unbroken band of windows across each elevation, an arrangement that permitted a 360° panoramic view of the surrounding terrain. While the fire tower has experienced normal wear and tear, it is in overall good condition. The nominated property includes four contributing buildings, two non-contributing buildings, and a non-contributing modern radio tower.

Big Hill Fire Tower, ca. 1948 (C)

Located in Marion County in southeastern Tennessee, the Big Hill fire tower was constructed in 1948 by an unknown entity (Kirksey 2014). Situated at an elevation of 2,035 feet, the tower is constructed of galvanized steel members with bolted connections. At its base, the tower measures 16 feet by 16 feet. The four-sided, truss frame tower is 60 feet in height and topped by an enclosed seven-foot by seven-foot square cab (Kirksey 2014). The structure is supported on four legs secured to concrete footers. Steel X-bracing is affixed to the structural frame at each of the tower's six levels, spanning the distance between every level of the tower with diagonal support members on each face. The lower portion of each section of X-bracing is further reinforced by T-bracing, which traverses the distance between each leg and is bisected by a single steel member at center. Additional steel bracing is installed at the juncture of each level of the tower.

Bill Hill Fire Lookout Tower

Marion County, Tennessee

Name of Property

County and State

Oriented on a horizontal plane, the bracing extends from each of the staircase's five landings to the opposing section of the tower, thereby forming a rectangular figure. The structure tapers in width from the base to its apex, a square-plan observation room.

Access to the observation room is achieved via a series of steel staircases with wood treads that lead to a trap door positioned on the cab floor. In all, the tower consists of six staircase runs with differing numbers of treads: 18, 17, 14, 12, 9, and 8, respectively from bottom to top. Each successive staircase rises diagonally across the interior of the tower to a triangular landing, also constructed of wood planks. The first landing is located at the northeast corner of the tower. The second landing is located at the next level of the structure at the southwest corner. This alternating, dogleg pattern continues through five landings, with the sixth stairway reaching the apex of the tower, which is accessed via a trapdoor at the base of the square observation room.

The observation room is steel-framed, clad with metal sheeting, and topped with a hipped metal roof. Two large, one-light, fixed, metal sash windows on each elevation provide a 360° panoramic view of the surrounding terrain. The windows are oriented side-by-side and encompass the entirety of the width of each elevation, thereby forming an unobstructed 360° view of the surrounding terrain. The interior of the observation room contained an alidade resting on a wooden table. The cab's floor is covered with linoleum tile, and interior walls consist of vertical wood boards that rise approximately three feet from the base of the cab and terminate at the window sill.

While no manufacturer's mark was readily apparent, based on stylistic evidence the Sewanee Fire Lookout Tower appears to be a 60-ft. Aermotor MC-39 type. Based in Chicago, Illinois, Aermotor Company was the premier manufacturer of steel fire towers in the early twentieth century. A successful windmill maker, Aermotor re-tooled their existing designs into fire lookout towers, which were typically topped with a small, 7-foot by 7-foot square cab (Grosvenor 1999:96).

Modern alterations to the Big Hill lookout tower include the replacement of all wood planks for the stair treads and landings. In addition, the tower has been outfitted with modern antenna.

Lookout Operator's Cabin, ca. 1948 (C)

Situated approximately 105 feet north of the Fire Lookout Tower is a ca. 1948 Lookout Operator's Cabin that once provided temporary shelter for fire spotter personnel. While the 10 feet by 16 feet cabin is in fair condition, it has been modified, and is currently used as a shed. The one-story, rectangular plan, frame building sits on a rough-cut stone foundation. The cabin is clad with non-historic vertical wood siding, and is capped by a gable roof covered with standing seam metal. The east façade of the building includes a pair of non-historic wood doors, protected by the overhanging gable end. The west elevation of the building is windowless. The north and south elevations are marked by a single, centrally-placed, one-over-one, double-hung, metal sash window. The interior of the building was inaccessible at the time of survey.

Utility Building, ca. 1948 (C)

Situated directly north of the Fire Lookout Tower is a ca. 1948 Utility Building that functions as a garage and workshop space. The 55 feet by 20 feet, one-story, rectangular plan, frame building sits on a poured concrete foundation, is clad with vertical wood siding, and features a gable roof topped with standing seam metal. An overhead bay door on the east elevation provides vehicular access to the building. A door situated to the south provides pedestrian access. The south elevation is marked by five one-over-one, double-hung, wood sash windows. The north elevation is marked by four similarly patterned windows, and a rough-cut

Bill Hill Fire Lookout Tower

Marion County, Tennessee

Name of Property

County and State

stone exterior chimney at its west end. A lean-to addition is attached to the west elevation, and features a poured concrete foundation, and a shed roof topped with standing seam metal. A door on the north elevation provides access to the addition. The door is flanked to the west by a six-over-six, double-hung metal sash window. A similar window is centrally-placed on the addition's west elevation. The south elevation is marked by a one-over-one, double-hung, metal sash window.

Crew House, ca. 1948 (C)

Situated approximately 45 feet southwest of the Fire Lookout Tower is a ca. 1948 crew house that functions currently as office space. The 34 feet by 24 feet, one-story, rectangular plan frame building sits on a stone foundation, is clad with vinyl siding, and is topped by a side-gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The east façade includes a full-width integrated front porch supported by six evenly-spaced replacement metal columns on stone bases atop a concrete floor. The façade features a centered, wood, entry door flanked on either side by a pair of one-over-one, double-hung, metal sash windows. This sash type is repeated in two window openings on the north elevation, and two window openings on the west elevation. The building's west elevation is further marked by an enclosed, projecting, basement-level entrance that features vinyl siding, and a gable roof topped with asphalt shingles. A single door provides access.

The south gable end of the building features an addition resting on a stone foundation. A concrete stoop leading to a door on the south elevation provides access to the addition. The door is flanked to the east by a single six-over-six, double-hung vinyl sash window. This window pattern is repeated in a single window on the addition's east and west elevations.

The interior of the building features a main room with remnants of a stone chimney, which has since been adapted with an electric heating unit. The building contains two offices, a bathroom, and an additional room which was inaccessible at the time of the survey. The interior features wood paneling on all walls, wood floors, and drywall ceilings. The addition contains a kitchen and another, inaccessible, room.

Shed, ca. 2000 (NC)

Situated approximately 80 feet northwest of the Fire Lookout Tower is a ca. 2000 shed. The one-story, rectangular plan building sits on a concrete block foundation, is clad with metal sheeting, and has a flat metal roof. A single metal door on the east elevation provides access to the 10 feet by 9 feet building.

Radio Equipment Building, ca. 2010 (NC)

Approximately 80 feet northwest of the Fire Lookout Tower, and located within a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire, is a radio equipment building that services the radio tower. The walls of the 25 feet by 15 feet building are constructed of concrete blocks, and the east elevation is differentiated by two metal doors protected by metal awnings.

Radio Tower, ca. 2010 (NC)

Approximately 105 feet northwest of the Fire Lookout Tower, and located within a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire, is a modern radio tower under license to the State of Tennessee, Forestry Radio Division to broadcast public safety information to its subscribers (Federal Communications Commission 2014). The cantilevered structure is constructed of steel and feature a lattice of triangular cross-sections. The tower tapers in height from base to apex.

Bill Hill Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

Marion County, Tennessee
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations N/A

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

CONSERVATION

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1948-1975

Significant Dates

1948

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as part of the "Tennessee Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers, 1933- ca.1975" Multiple Property Document under National Register Criterion A in the area of Conservation as a reflection of changing conceptions regarding forest management and fire control in the twentieth century. Additionally, the tower is eligible for the NRHP under National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an example of an Aermotor MC-39 fire lookout tower. The tower retains its original design features, and its historic setting has been preserved. The tower was constructed as part of the Tennessee Division of Forestry's (TDF) statewide efforts to protect forested land in the state through its fire control program. The period of significance begins in 1948, when the tower was constructed, and terminates in 1975, when Tennessee fire lookout towers were largely abandoned in favor of other methods of fire identification.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Located in Marion County, Tennessee, the Big Hill fire lookout tower was constructed in 1948 by an unknown entity. While very little historical information is available regarding the Big Hill fire lookout tower in particular, it is known that the State of Tennessee entered into a contract with G. Sherman and the heirs of A.R. Hall on September 1, 1934, which allowed the construction, use, and maintenance of a fire lookout tower on Sherman and Hall's respective properties. The tower site is comprised of two leased parcels totaling 1.5 acres. The contract allowed the State to use the property for fire detection, gave the State the right of ingress and egress, and the right to construct a telephone line to the lookout tower. In the event of the State's abandonment of the property, the land title will revert to its original owners, and all structures and appurtenances will remain the property of the State (Marion County Register of Deeds Deed Book XXX: 263-265).

The lookout tower is significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of Conservation as a reflection of changing conceptions regarding forest management and fire control in the twentieth century. Tennessee, along with many other states, benefited from the early shift in public policy allowing for improvement in fire detection as a result of the conservation movement that led to the construction and staffing of fire towers. In Region 8, and particularly in the State of Tennessee, with large areas of difficult-to-access mountain terrain and thick forest canopy, fire towers have served as a particularly important fire management tool. At its peak, the state had 208 lookout towers of which 142 are extant as of March 26, 2014 (University of Tennessee-Knoxville 2014). The lookout tower is a prominent symbol of the history of fire management and a key component of the conservation movement. From its establishment, the Forest Service played a significant role in shaping national fire control policies as well as in the development of state level fire prevention systems. The Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower is a visual reminder of this multi-agency, federal and state-level governmental cooperation for the benefit of forest land in Tennessee.

The Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower is significant under National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of an Aermotor MC-39 observation-only fire lookout tower. The MC-39 design was one of the most popular steel designs by the Aermotor Company of Chicago, Illinois (Forest Fire Lookout Association; Starr). The tower design was based on standardized plans adapted from Aermotor windmills (Steere 1987). The type is characterized by a 7-foot by 7-foot steel cab, an internal stairway that doglegs from corner to corner. Each run of stairs terminates at a triangular landing. This type was available in a number of heights, ranging from 33 feet to as tall as 176 feet (Forest Fire Lookout Association n.d.).

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This type is very similar to an International Derrick Tower model from 1933, which was designed by Aermotor and the U.S. Forest Service. The International Derrick Towers often had issues with swaying staircases, however, and were unpopular (Forest Fire Lookout Association; Starr). While no schematics were located for the MC-39, schematics are available for the nearly-identical International Derrick 1933 model, and are located in the additional documentation section. The Aermotor MC-39 improved upon the International Derrick 1933 design, and the Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower represents an important stage in the evolution of lookout tower architecture.

The Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower retains its original design and a high level of its original fabric, and therefore maintains integrity. The historic setting has remained largely unchanged, with minimal new construction in the surrounding area. The tower has only undergone one notable alteration, the replacement of its wood plank stair treads and landing platforms. Until the 1970s, the tower was used during high-fire season for fire detection, and was constantly manned. Since the mid-1970s, however, when forestry employees became more dependent on fire-spotting planes and fire reports from 911 emergency calls, the tower is no longer used for observance, but is occasionally ascended by forestry staff for maintenance checks.

For additional information, please refer to the Multiple Property Documentation Form "Tennessee Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers, 1933- ca. 1975".

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

Forest Fire Lookout Association

n.d. Fire Lookout Types. Electronic document, <http://www.firelookout.org/fire-lookout-types.html>, accessed June 5, 2014.

Grosvenor, John R. and United States Forest Service.

1999 *A History of the Architecture of the USDA Forest Service*. Engineering Staff, United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service.

Kirksey, John

2014 Personal communication. John Kirksey, Fire Management Unit Leader, Tennessee Division of Forestry.

Marion County Register of Deeds

1934 G. Sherman and Heirs of A.R. Hall to The State of Tennessee. Deed Book XXX, pp. 263-265.

Starr, Bill

2011 *The Five Various Steel Fire Tower Models Utilized in New York State*. Electronic document, http://nhlr.org/NY_Towers/New_York_Steel_Fire_Tower_Models_by_Bill_Starr.pdf, accessed June 5, 2014.

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Steere, Peter L.

1987 "National Forest Fire Lookouts in the Southwestern Region, USDA Forest Service." National Register of Historic Places nomination, on file at the Kaibab National Forest.

University of Tennessee-Knoxville

2014 Tennessee Lookout Towers. Electronic document, <http://web.eecs.utk.edu/~dunigan/towers/>. Accessed May 28, 2014.

Refer to the Multiple Property Documentation Form "Tennessee Division of Forestry Fire Lookout Towers, 1933-ca. 1975" for additional related sources.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	X	State Historic Preservation Office	
previously listed in the National Register	X	Other State agency	
previously determined eligible by the National Register		Federal agency	
designated a National Historic Landmark		Local government	
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #		University	
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #		Other	
recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #		Name of repository: USDA Forest Service	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):			

Bill Hill Fire Lookout Tower
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _____ **USGS Quadrangle** White City

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84:

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Verbal Boundary Description

The proposed boundary of the Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower property follows the boundary of Marion County Parcel 060 021.13, and is shown on the accompanying site map entitled "Big Hill (Jasper) Fire Lookout Tower Boundary". The National Register boundary includes four contributing buildings, two non-contributing buildings, and one non-contributing structure.

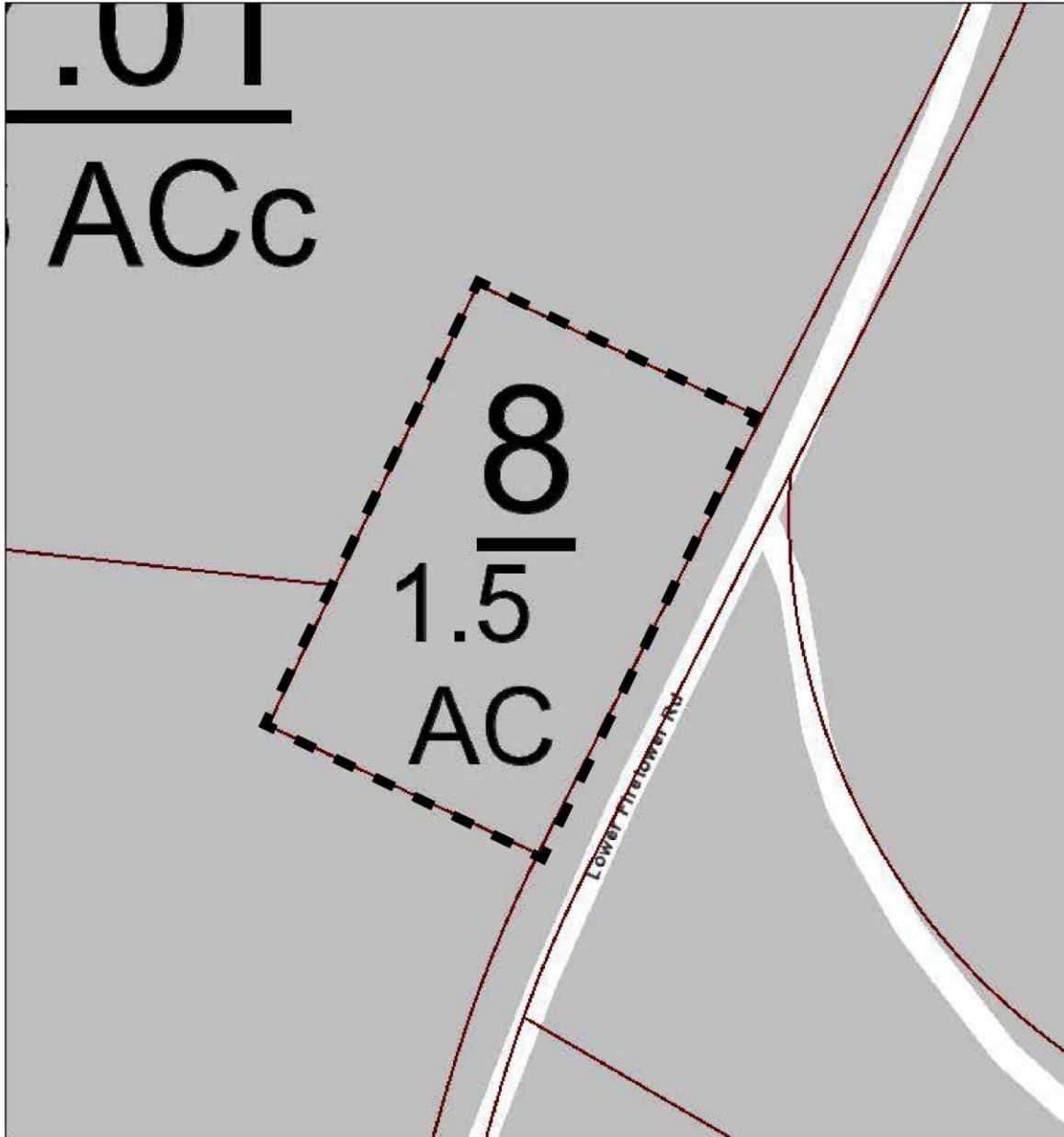
Boundary Justification

The National Register boundary for the Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower property includes those buildings that are historically associated with the fire observation complex during its period of significance (1948-1975) and retain adequate integrity.

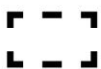
Bill Hill Fire Lookout Tower
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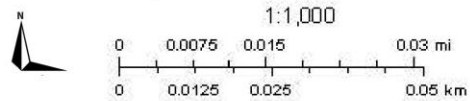
Marion County, Tennessee
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Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower Boundary



April 14, 2014
Marion County, TN Tax Map

 Proposed NRHP Boundary



OIR-GIS Services

Bill Hill Fire Lookout Tower
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Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower Aerial Map with Boundary

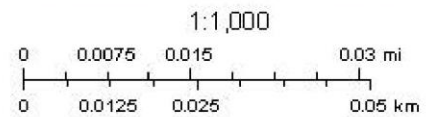


April 14, 2014

Marion County, TN Tax Map

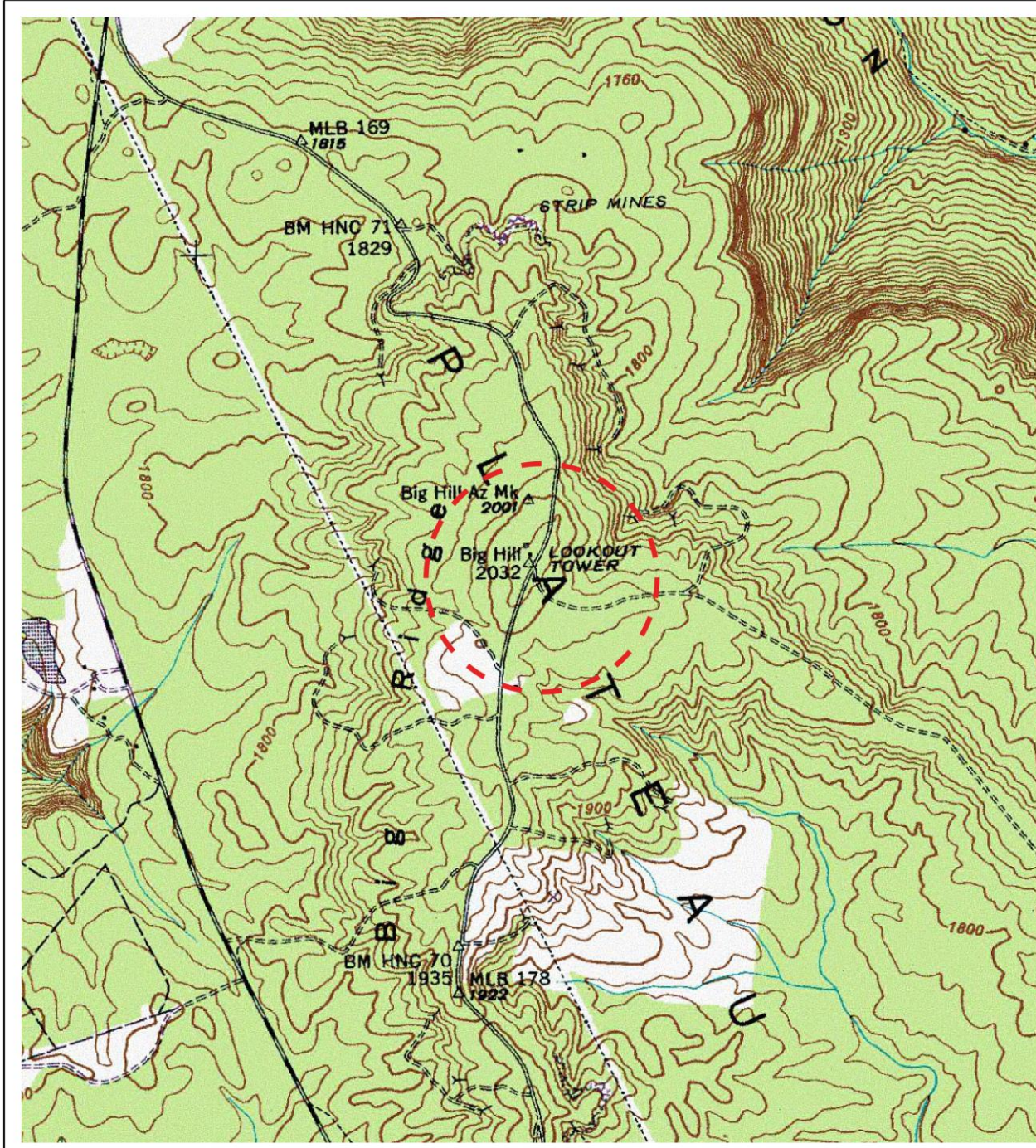


Proposed NRHP Boundary

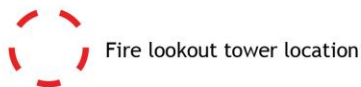


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Location of Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower



0 160 320 480
Meters

0 500 1,000 1,500
Feet

Located on USGS 1974 White City 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle.

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11. Form Prepared By

Name Sr. Preservation Planner Ted Karpynec, Preservation Planner Meghan Weaver, and
Historian David Sprouse

Organization Tennessee Valley Archaeology Research

Street & Number 5219 Hillsboro Road, Suite 201 Date June 4, 2014

City or Town Nashville Telephone 615-760-5693

E-mail mweaver@tvaresearch.com State TN Zip Code 37215

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. should be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Bill Hill Fire Lookout Tower
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Photo Log

Name of Property: Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower
City or Vicinity: Jasper, Tennessee
County: Marion State: Tennessee
Photographer: Meghan Weaver, Tennessee Valley Archaeological Research, Nashville, TN
Date Photographed: April 11, 2014

*All digital images labeled as follows:
TN_Marion County_TN Fire Lookout Towers MPS_Big Hill_#.tif (also .jpg)*

0001. Overview of Big Hill fire lookout tower facility. Includes (from left to right): crew house (C), radio tower (NC), utility building (C), and fire lookout tower (C). Camera facing northwest.
1 of 35.

0002. Overview of Big Hill fire lookout tower facility. Includes (from left to right): fire lookout tower (C), utility building (C), radio tower (NC), and shed (NC). Camera facing southwest.
2 of 35.

0003. Crew house (C) north and east elevations. Camera facing southwest.
3 of 35.

0004. Crew house (C) south and west elevations. Fire lookout tower (C) south and west elevations in background. Camera facing northeast.
4 of 35.

0005. Crew house (C) interior. View from main room towards entrance.
5 of 35.

0006. Crew house (C) interior. View of main room towards kitchen area.
6 of 35.

0007. Crew house (C) interior. View of stone chimney with electric heater in main room.
7 of 35.

0008. Crew house (C) interior. View of main room towards offices.
8 of 35.

0009. Crew house (C) interior. View of bathroom.
9 of 35.

0010. Crew house (C) interior. View of kitchen.
10 of 35.

0011. Crew house (C) interior. View of kitchen.

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0012. Crew house (C) interior. View of main room from kitchen.
12 of 35.

0013. Crew house (C) interior. View of office.
13 of 35.

0014. Crew house (C) interior. View of office.
14 of 35.

0015. Fire lookout tower (C) south and west elevations. Camera facing northeast.
15 of 35.

0016. Fire lookout tower (C) east elevation, and utility building (C) east elevation, with modern radio tower (NC) in background. Camera facing northwest.
16 of 35.

0017. Fire lookout tower (C) cab south and west elevations. Camera facing northeast.
17 of 35.

0018. Fire lookout tower (C) cab east elevation. Camera facing west.
18 of 35.

0019. Fire lookout tower (C) cab north and east elevations. Camera facing southwest.
19 of 35.

0020. Fire lookout tower (C) stairway detail with new wood plank steps. Camera facing north.
20 of 35.

0021. Fire lookout tower (C) original concrete pad detail.
21 of 35.

0022. Fire lookout tower (C) replaced concrete pad detail.
22 of 35.

0023. Fire lookout tower (C) "B.S. Co-CAMBRIA U.S.A." stamp detail.
23 of 35.

0024. Fire lookout tower (C) cab interior.
24 of 35.

0025. Fire lookout tower (C) cab interior with alidade.
25 of 35.

0026. Fire lookout tower (C) cab interior with trap door and stairway.

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0027. Fire lookout tower (C) cab interior.
27 of 35.

0028. Utility building (C) north and east elevations. Camera facing southwest.
28 of 35.

0029. Utility building (C) south and west elevations. Camera facing northeast.
29 of 35.

0030. Lookout operator's cabin (C) south and east elevations. Camera facing northwest.
30 of 35.

0031. Lookout operator's cabin (C) north and west elevations. Camera facing southeast.
31 of 35.

0032. Shed (NC) south and east elevations. Camera facing northwest.
32 of 35.

0033. Shed (NC) north and west elevations. Camera facing southeast.
33 of 35.

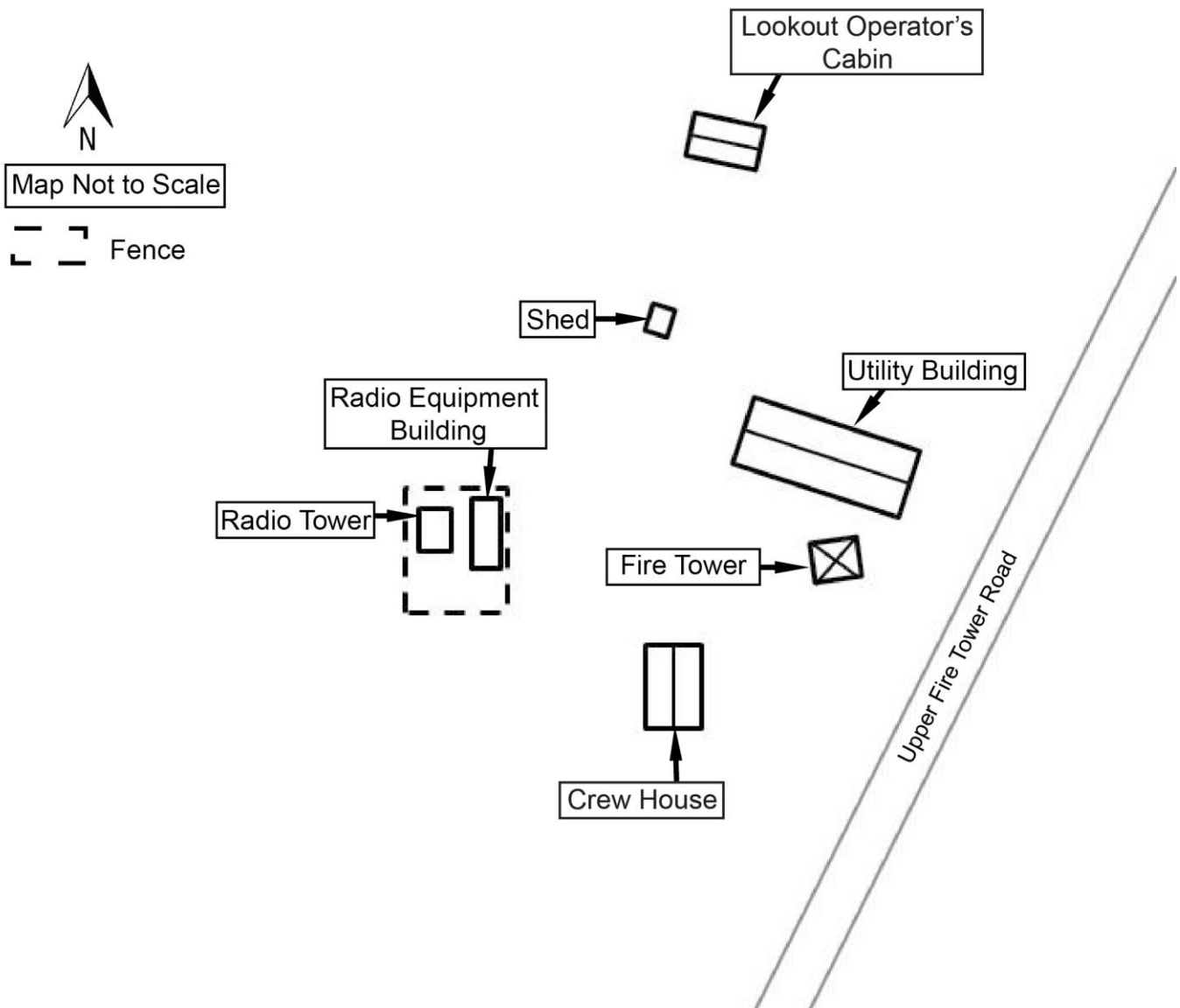
0034. Radio equipment building (NC) south and east elevations. Camera facing northwest.
34 of 35.

0035. Radio equipment building (NC) north and west elevations. Camera facing southeast.
35 of 35.

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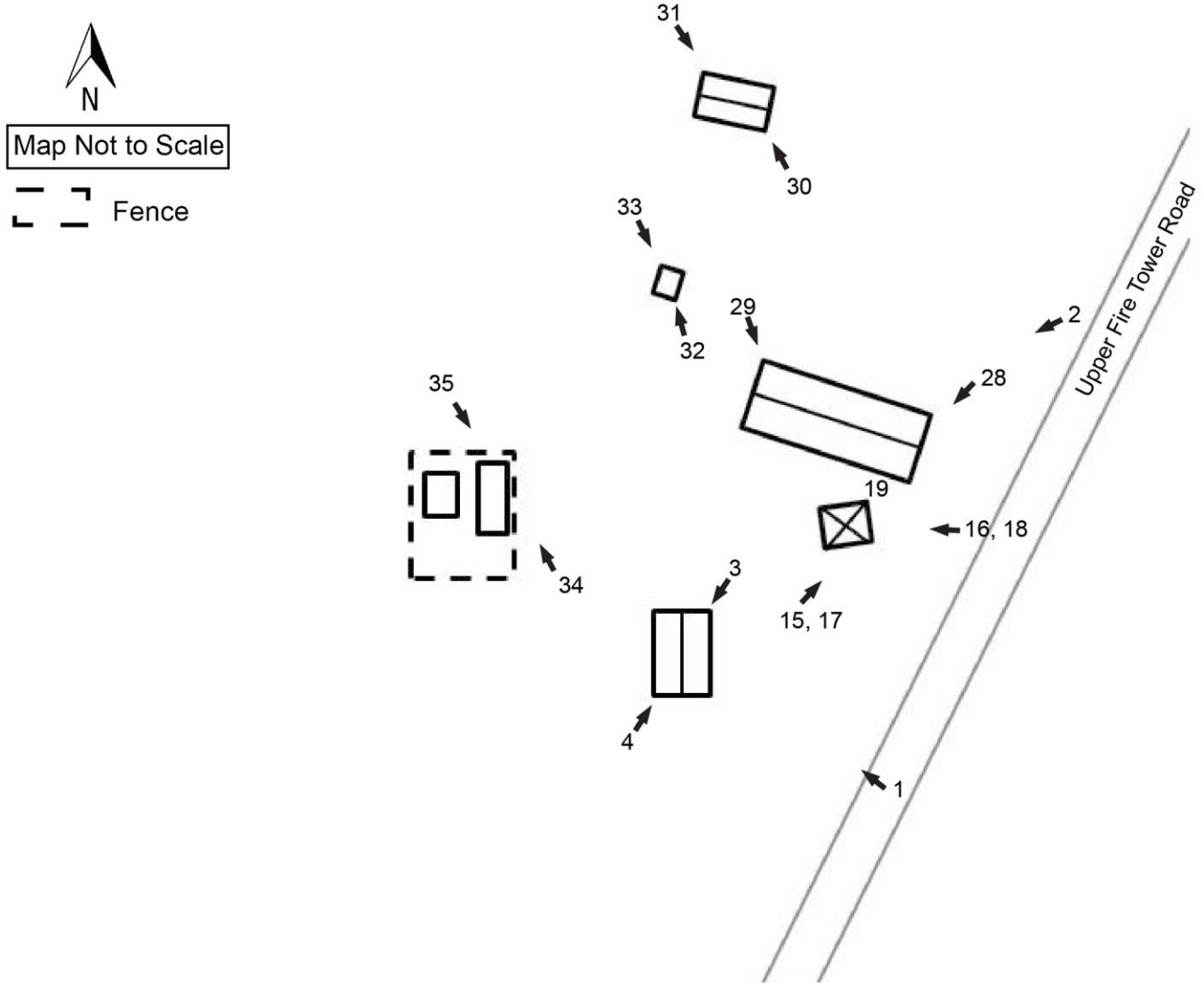
Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower Site Plan



Bill Hill Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

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Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower Site Plan With Photo Key



Bill Hill Fire Lookout Tower
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Big Hill Fire Lookout Tower Crew House Floor Plan



Map Not to Scale



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International Derrick Model 1933

