

*The Rise and Fall of Fire Lookout  
Towers in Faulkner County:  
Construction by Company 4748  
of the Civilian Conservation Corps,  
1937-1939*

by Michael Murphy

**Introduction**

March 31, 2003, marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the United States. Between October 1, 1937 and May 4, 1939, Camp P-75 of the Civilian Conservation Corps, under the direction of the Arkansas Forestry Commission, undertook a multitude of forestry improvement projects in forestry Unit 18<sup>1</sup> of Arkansas. These projects included mapping and surveying, the construction of forest fire observation towers (lookout towers), cabins and outbuildings for the lookout rangers, truck trails, roads and telephone lines. Of a total of five such lookout towers built in Unit 18, three were constructed in Faulkner County.

**Forestry Concerns in Arkansas and Faulkner County During the 1930s**

Two events served as the genesis for the construction of fire lookout towers in Faulkner County in the 1930s: First, at the state level, passage of Act 234 of 1931, which authorized the creation of the Arkansas Forestry Commission. Second, Congress adopted the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) Act of 1933, allowing the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), also known as "Roosevelt's Tree Army," as part of the president's "New Deal" legislation.<sup>2</sup>

In Arkansas, despite the authorizing legislation, no funds had been appropriated to fund the work of a forestry commission. Indeed, in 1933, the General Assembly again failed to fund the administrative expenses for the fledgling body when it met that spring, despite a visit to the state by President Roosevelt followed by an offer of the federal government to set up a number of CCC camps to work with an activated forestry commission.<sup>3</sup>

With the creation of the CCC on March 31<sup>st</sup> of 1933 and the prospect of federal assistance for forestry conservation, it became imperative for Arkansas to have a mechanism, through its state forestry commission, for the delivery of much needed federal monies and assistance. Later in the spring of 1933,

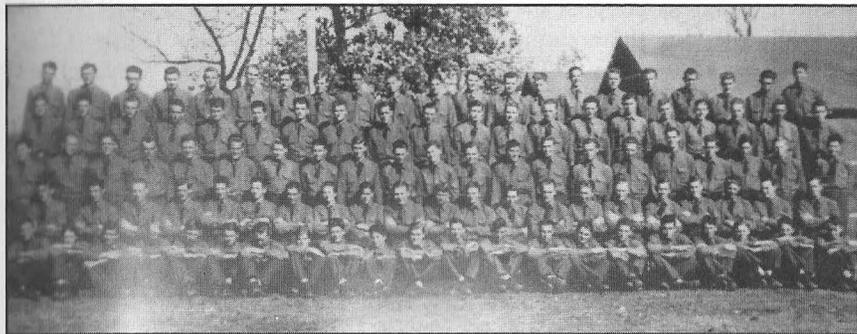
[Link to Endnotes 1-8](#)

E. I. McKinley, director of the state emergency relief commission under Governor J. M. Futrell, made requests of the county directors of that organization to raise funds for the operation of the forestry commission. The request for Faulkner County was for \$100.00, and its director, J. Frank Jones, made a public plea for donations, stressing that the funds would need to be promised no later than Monday, May 22.<sup>4</sup> The money was quickly raised in Faulkner County,<sup>5</sup> as well as the rest of the state. Armed with approximately \$8,000.00 in donated funds, the Arkansas Forestry Commission was now ready to function administratively and take advantage of many of the New Deal programs.<sup>6</sup>

### Camp Halsey Comes to Faulkner County

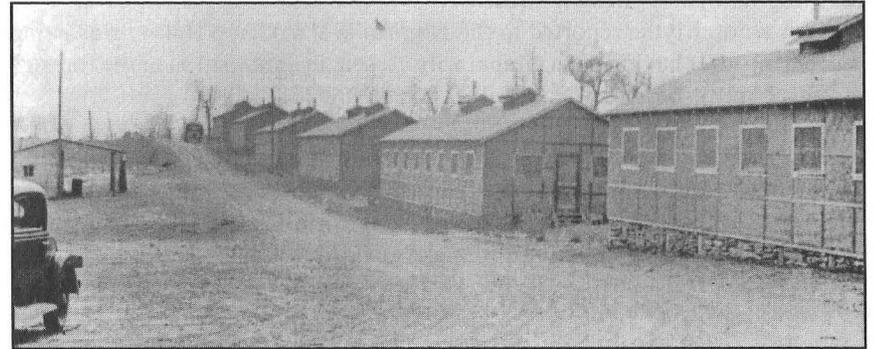
Simply put, the CCC was a program whereby the federal government sought to bring "together two wasted resources, the young men and the land, in an effort to save both."<sup>7</sup> The objective was to recruit thousands of unemployed young men and basically enlist them in a peacetime army. They would work under the combined organization of the Departments of War, Labor, Agriculture and Interior, where they would improve millions of acres of state and federal lands and parks. In Arkansas, part of the Seventh Corps area, the CCC, in cooperation with state agencies, including the state forestry commission, wasted no time in establishing a presence in Arkansas by opening some camps as early as May 1933. In October of 1934, Camp Halsey was established near Centerville in Faulkner County, on property owned by the A. F. Halsey family.<sup>8</sup>

Camp Halsey was initially occupied by the men of Company 1706, officially designated Camp SCS-1, on October 5, 1934 for work on soil conservation



Group photograph of Company 4748 in late 1937, just after relocation from Harrison. Reproduced from "Official Annual 1937/Arkansas District, Civilian Conservation Corps, Seventh Corps Area," p. 152-153. Courtesy, Archives and Special Collections, Ottenheimer Library, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

efforts.<sup>9</sup> Camp Halsey and the CCC are probably best remembered in Faulkner County for Company 1706's construction of the dam and improvements at what is now Lake Bennett and Woolly Hollow State Park. This soil conservation camp was closed in 1935, although most of the structures and facilities of Camp Halsey remained.



Front Street at Camp Halsey, looking west, c. 1934. This photograph was taken during the first phase of work at Camp Halsey, before Company 4748 arrived in October 1937. Reproduced from "Faulkner County: Its Land and People" (Faulkner County Historical Society: 1986), p. 42."

On October 1, 1937, a former soil conservation camp comprised of the men of Company 4748 near Harrison with a new designation of Camp P-75 was relocated to Camp Halsey. However, its task now was to engage in forestry work in Faulkner County and the other areas of protection unit No. 18:

About the 15<sup>th</sup> of September we got orders to abandon Camp Harrison and proceed to move to Camp Halsey where we were to furnish labor for a state forestry camp. By the tenth of October the movement of our remaining 72 men and all company property was completed.<sup>10</sup>

In its article announcing the reactivation, the *Log Cabin* observed that Camp P-75 was the only new forestry camp to be established in any CCC unit in the South since President Roosevelt issued an order reducing CCC camps across the nation.<sup>11</sup>

### Forestry Work and Lookout Towers in Faulkner County

The state foresters wasted little time in planning for the location of new lookout towers in Unit 18: Upon the relocation of Company 4748 to the Centerville area, District Forester Max Bolar announced an ambitious plan

to erect 10-12 lookout towers in Unit 18. On September 30, 1937, Bolar identified 10 tentative tower sites. Of those 10 tentative sites, there were two potential Faulkner County sites originally under consideration: One near Greenbrier and one near Saltillo.<sup>12</sup> The *Log Cabin* reported that the towers were to be of steel construction.<sup>13</sup> In the meantime, work commenced on mapping and surveying the area.

Mr. Vernon Blythe reported to the *Log Cabin* that Camp Halsey was being touched up after having been temporarily closed, in anticipation of the forestry duties about to be undertaken by its inhabitants:

CCC Camp Halsey is the scene of much activity these days. Carpenters are rushing the construction of new buildings and the repair of old ones to make ready for a large number of new enrollees, who are to make their appearance here this week.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to being the local correspondent for the *Log Cabin*, Mr. Vernon Blythe was listed in the first edition of the *Halsey Journal* as a foreman with the "forestry staff" at Camp Halsey. National Archives camp reports show him making an annual salary of \$1,200.<sup>15</sup> Mr. Blythe was primarily involved in the "type mapping" of private forestland in the area.

"Type mapping" literally was a process whereby CCC enrollees would methodically go about the area and record the type of trees and vegetation growing in each area. Mr. Jack O. Burns, 85, of Alpena, was one of the original 72 men who stayed with Company 4748 when transferred to Faulkner County. He recalled working with Mr. Blythe doing the mapping of the area.<sup>16</sup> Rayburn Wooley, 88, of Enola, was raised east of Camp Halsey near Centerville, and found himself enrolled at the camp there as a young man in late 1937:

For a time I worked in the office with Mr. Blythe, helping put together the maps. They were mapping, putting up phone lines and the fire towers. I did some work on some of the roads when I first got there, but then did the surveying and mapping. We were also making a map of all the roads. That was not long before the war, and they were planning for war. They wanted to know where all the roads in the area were. It wasn't too bad; it was pretty good for the time being. We made \$30 dollars a month.<sup>17</sup>

A typical progress report from the *Halsey Journal* discusses the mapping project and refers to Mr. Wooley:

This is one phase of work at Camp P-75 which has been going at full blast the entire month, with exception of the baseline crew, it was discontinued a short time ago. The drafting is the busy end of this work. They are running two shifts of draftsmen. Wooley and Bowers, the day shift, and Charles Price and Murphy on the night shift. The strippers seem to be running the usual gait this month.<sup>18</sup>

As for the fire towers, the original plan of 10-12 towers in Unit 18 was scaled back significantly. There would eventually be five observation towers constructed in Unit 18, of which three would be located in Faulkner County: On Buffalo Hump, just south of Quitman; at a site just southeast of Saltillo; and on Mt. Pisgah, approximately 3 miles northwest of Conway.<sup>19</sup>

C. D. Calhoun, who succeeded Max Bolar as district forester for Unit 18 in February, 1938, helped develop plans and specifications for these towers and their facilities: The towers were to be 100 feet high, with a cab six feet square at the top. A cabin and garage was to be built at each tower, and a man was to eventually be constantly on duty.<sup>20</sup> Reached at his home in Heber Springs, Mr. Douglas Bakko, 82, recalled working on the fire towers and ground cabins: "I remember a man working on the top of a tower walking back and forth on just a two-by-four; but that wasn't me!"<sup>21</sup>

There may be some confusion as to whether any of the Faulkner County towers were actually made of steel as opposed to wood. At least one newspaper article in the *Log Cabin Democrat* at the time just prior to construction refers to "steel" towers.<sup>22</sup> Although it was a general work on state forestry and not specifically Faulkner County, Lang's 1965 article also mentions steel towers being utilized in Arkansas. A brief entry in Mr. Robert L. Gatewood's book, *Faulkner County Arkansas. 1778-1964. A History in Three Parts* (1964) refers to "steel" towers. Mr. Henry Alsmeyer submitted the following discussion under the "Forestry" section in *Faulkner County: It's Land and People*:

Significant forest fire protection efforts in Faulkner County began when the CCC men transferred from the Harrison area to Camp Halsey and equipped steel towers from which observers could spot fires and summon firefighting crews.<sup>23</sup>

However, there is substantial evidence that those previous conclusions as to the composition of the towers were wrong. The first tower, located at Buffalo Hump, south of Quitman, was described in a 1940 station report of the National Coast and Geodetic Survey as being a "timber structure."<sup>24</sup> Mrs. Blanche Shaw Etchison, whose husband manned the Buffalo Hump tower from 1939-1940

and who herself lived there, confirmed that Tower 18-1 was wooden.<sup>25</sup> Also, the annual report of the Forestry Commission in 1938 made a short reference to the use of wooden towers in the caption of a photograph, although this was with respect to Arkansas generally, and not specifically Faulkner County. A short report from the camp newspaper in June 1938 provides a strong clue regarding the possible composition of some of the other Unit 18 towers:

The past week, Foreman M. L. Reid has been down in Texas getting some wooden towers for this unit. Unit No. 18, in which all our work is being done, will be due two more towers. Then the tower work in this unit will be done.<sup>26</sup>

The implication was that the final two towers in the unit, Tower 18-4 near Clinton and Tower 18-5 at Mt. Pisgah, were slated to be of wood construction. The oral interviews with Sherrill Gilmore and E. A. Norris, who worked on the Mt. Pisgah tower and whose interviews are discussed in more detail later in this article, confirm that Tower 18-5 was of all-wood construction.<sup>27</sup>

In fact, none of the former enrollees or area residents who were interviewed for this article believed any of the towers were made of steel, and each one who recalled any work on the towers stated that as far as they could recall, the towers erected by Company 4748 while at Camp Halsey were wooden: Cleo Stuart, 83, now of Republic, Missouri, recalled that the lookout towers were made of wood.<sup>28</sup> Noah Ragsdale, 88, originally from Ash Flat and now of Trumann, also recollected the towers were wooden, although he did not have a specific recollection of having worked on a particular tower. "I worked on roads, towers—we worked wherever they sent us. Those towers were wooden."<sup>29</sup>

While he primarily worked mapping the area, Mr. Jack O. Burns stated, "The towers were made of wood. As far as I know, they all were." He then added wryly: "That creosote timber can be pretty rough on the hide."<sup>30</sup>

Both Marvin "Bud" Kelley and Carlee Kelley, cousins who grew up in the Saltillo area at the time, recall clearly that the Saltillo tower was of wood construction.<sup>31</sup> There is much evidence, therefore, that the towers were, indeed, made of wood, notwithstanding various sources that made reference to "steel towers."

Superintendent Booker Logan of the CCC, who was in charge of all of the foremen and directed the projects until their completion, supervised the projects. The manpower came from Company 4748, which was under the command of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Dan T. Edwards, then later 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Frank C. Sullivan, who transferred in from Company 741 at Crystal Springs, Arkansas on February 4, 1938.<sup>32</sup> On March 1, 1938, the company numbered 175 men, 108 of whom

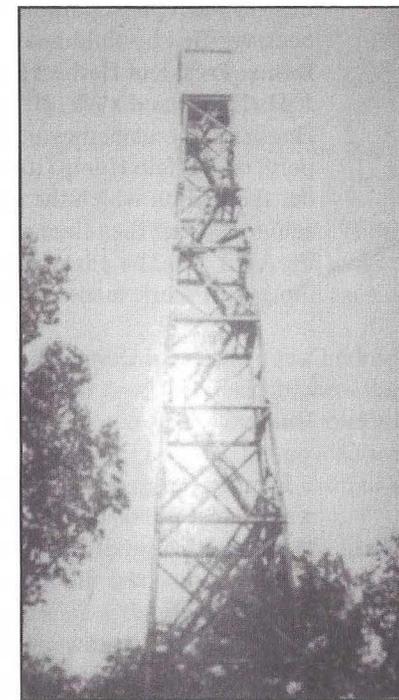
were assigned to forest or park work.<sup>33</sup> Enrollees in the CCC were paid \$30 per month at that time, with \$25 of that amount sent to the enrollee's family.<sup>34</sup>

By July 7, 1938, plans were also underway to build a district headquarters for all of Unit 18, which would include an office, garage and residence for the district forester and his family. At that time, the district forester's office was on the campus of Arkansas State Teachers College<sup>35</sup> (ASTC). The proposed headquarters was to be constructed on two acres of land on Highway 64 West that had been purchased by the Conway Chamber of Commerce from H. Kunhel, who operated a set of tourist cabins nearby.<sup>36</sup> Mr. J. Albert Hiegel, a local carpenter under contract with the Forestry Commission, supervised construction of the headquarters. He was assisted by Hervie Trotter and a crew of twenty CCC enrollees.<sup>37</sup> Guy Hodge assisted Mr. Trotter and carpenter John W. Phelps in the latter part of January 1939, as the headquarters neared completion.<sup>38</sup> At the time, it was one of only three such headquarters statewide.<sup>39</sup>

#### **Tower 18-1 on Buffalo Hump, Near Quitman**

At 882 feet, Buffalo Hump is the highest elevation in Faulkner County. This tower location was also the closest to Camp Halsey, located just south of Quitman and the Cleburne County line. While preliminary work on truck trails and telephone lines began by the end of 1937, actual construction did not begin on any of the Unit 18 towers until March 1938.<sup>40</sup> In the meantime, Senior Foreman M. L. "Luther" Reid, assisted by Barney Glass, had a crew of CCC enrollees clearing right of way and setting poles for the telephone line from Buffalo Hump to near Heber Springs, where Tower 18-3 would eventually be located. By January 1938, eight miles of the work was completed.<sup>41</sup>

Clarence Love, 85, a local boy when he entered Camp Halsey October 26, 1937, still lives in the Quitman area: "I was on the telephone crew—slack line—what they called it back then. Back in them days, this was just wild



*A wooden fire tower in Arkansas in 1938. Reproduced from the "Fifth Annual Report," Arkansas Forestry Commission (June 1938). Reprinted with permission of the Arkansas Forestry Commission.*

country. It wasn't as developed as it is now. I didn't work on those towers; they were too high for me!"<sup>42</sup>

By the end of March 1938, two of the Faulkner County towers were underway, including the first, Tower 18-1 at Buffalo Hump.<sup>43</sup> The camp paper described the special significance of the selection of the location for the unit's first tower:

Fire towers are always located on the highest point on a mountain, and in the case of fire tower No. 1 in the area of P-75 the highest point located by Supt. Booker Logan has been verified by field notes of a geological survey made by former President Herbert Hoover and his party in 1887. Mr. J. H. Tarver and a Mr. Hamilton of Quitman were with the Hoover party when they made the bench mark on the highest point on Buffalo Hump fifty-one years ago, and they remember the tree on which the metal plate was fixed. Mr. Logan said today that the tower on Buffalo Hump would be started by April 1<sup>st</sup>. The center of the tower will be directly over the bench mark made by the Hoover party.<sup>44</sup>

John Chapman, 84, of Quitman, entered Camp Halsey on October 26, 1937, and worked primarily as a driver. He recalled hauling sand and gravel to Buffalo Hump:

I remember going up that one lane road with a load, and was almost to the top when I met a grader and Caterpillar. Well, there was only one thing to do so I backed that truck halfway down the mountain."<sup>45</sup>

Construction of the first tower went surprisingly fast, after having started in March. By May the progress on the tower had not gone unnoticed:

Although we have lived six miles of the Buffalo Hump all our lives, Sunday was our first time to ever be on top of it. Our son, J. O., with his wife, wife and myself, motored to the hump—found a good road winding the mountain to the top. It seemed work on the tower was progressing nicely. When completed, the country can be viewed for miles and miles around and will be a beautiful place.<sup>46</sup>

In June, the cab on the top of the tower was being completed and painting had begun.<sup>47</sup> Sometime prior to June 30, 1938, Tower 18-1 was completed

and appeared on the operations map of the Arkansas Forestry Commission in its *Fifth Annual Report*, one of six new lookout towers constructed in Arkansas during that fiscal year.

One of the most detailed description of any of the towers comes from a 1940 Coast and Geodetic Survey station description of a station monument erected that same year on Buffalo Hump:

Point observed upon was the center of the Buffalo Hump, Arkansas Forestry Commission, lookout tower No. 18-1. This is a timber structure 100 feet to floor of lookout, and 14 feet from floor to peak of roof. The lookout room is painted white and the remainder of the structure is a dark color. The lookout is located about 12 miles NE of Greenbrier, and 3 miles S of Quitman on a prominent wooded hill known locally as Buffalo Hump.<sup>48</sup>

Dalton Montgomery, 87, of Greenbrier, recalled that the Buffalo Hump tower was 110 feet tall<sup>49</sup>, which, considering the distance from the lookout floor to the roof peak is consistent with the description by the Coast and Geodetic Survey.

The fact that, in all likelihood, all of the Unit 18 towers were built of wood is not necessarily surprising. In its *Fifth Annual Report* issued in June 1938, just after the Buffalo Hump tower was completed, the Arkansas Forestry Commission featured a photograph of a wooden tower with the caption: "Incorporating the most recent developments in wood construction some of the newest lookout towers have been built of wood."<sup>50</sup>

The completed tower on Buffalo Hump seemed to be well received by locals:

Well, I have spent most of my life near the Buffalo hump and climbed it many times in childhood days, never dreaming the day would come when this climb could be made as it is now—going up in cars. We in company with several did this Sunday afternoon. Up there we met Mr. and Mrs. John Turney and daughter, Eva, of Conway.<sup>51</sup>

In the fall, the Sulphur Springs correspondent incorporated the new tower in an observation of the changing seasons.

Old Buffalo Hump is clothed in beautiful colors now and the tower shines from its summit.<sup>52</sup>

## Tower 18-2, Near Saltillo

Not long after the reactivation of Camp Halsey in early October 1937, forestry officials set out to secure a lease for the site near Saltillo. The site of Tower 18-2 is between Saltillo and Faulkner Gap, southeast of Saltillo, on a ridge referred to as "Wilson Hill" on some topographical maps. Locally, the area was known as "Four Mile" and after the tower was completed, it was called "Four Mile Tower."<sup>53</sup> Progress reports in the *Halsey Journal* reflect the usage of the "Four Mile" nickname:

For two weeks we furnished fifty men to the new using service to build telephone lines and build a road to a tower on Four-Mile Mountain east of Conway.<sup>54</sup>

Three miles of right of way for the truck trail to the Saltillo (sic) tower have been cleared and the tractor will start this week on the construction of the road from highway No. 36 to the Four-mile Mountain Tower.<sup>55</sup>

Mr. Chapman also recalled hauling materials—and sometimes men—to the tower site at Saltillo. "I helped put in that road at Saltillo—did a little work there. We used to pull up a lot of the stumps by hand."<sup>56</sup> Local resident Carlee Kelley recalled the road work by the CCC workers: "They used to bring the CCC boys up there a lot, to work on a road up to the tower; they put in a good road. You could drive 60 miles an hour on that road."<sup>57</sup>

By November 1937, Booker Logan was working his CCC crews between Conway and the proposed location in the Saltillo area erecting telephone lines.<sup>58</sup> Plans called for the Saltillo tower to be connected by telephone to District Forester Max Bolar's office, at that time located on the campus of ASTC. Subsequently, a line would be connected to Camp Halsey followed by a number of other lines running off these main lines.<sup>59</sup> There had been some initial reluctance by area landowners to give the necessary 12-foot wide right-of-way for the phone lines. Published reports in November 1937 indicated that Bolar made a plea for public cooperation in this regard, citing the benefits to accrue to the landowner, including area road improvements and the accessibility of telephone lines.<sup>60</sup>

Despite poor weather and initial problems with securing easements, over twelve miles of telephone posts were set from the forestry office at ASTC to the tower site near Saltillo in November 1937.<sup>61</sup>

In May 1938 Foreman Vernon B. White and a crew from Camp Halsey were beginning work on Tower 18-2.<sup>62</sup> By June, much progress was noted in the camp paper:

The tower at Saltillo Mountain is reaching skyward in a hurry under the supervision of Foreman V. B. White and Project Supt. Booker Logan.<sup>63</sup>

Marvin "Bud" Kelley of near the Saltillo community recalled the construction of Tower 18-2: "I remember when it was built. They built it out of treated timber. It really had the creosote in it; that wood was as black as it could be."<sup>64</sup>

As the tower was being constructed, work was to commence on the residence and other outbuildings at the Saltillo site. Men from the CCC camp at Jacksonville, which was closer to this site, were originally slated to undertake construction of these ground buildings.<sup>65</sup> However, it is not clear whether the residence was ever built. Carlee Kelley, a cousin of Marvin "Bud" Kelley who lived in the area, recalled that some of the CCC men had initially manned the tower, but stated there was no house in which anyone lived, as far as he could recall.<sup>66</sup> This was consistent with the recollection of his cousin:

I don't think they ever built a cabin or anything like that up there. I don't think they ever had anyone who would regularly man it. This is only a guess, but I believe the start of the war probably had something to do with that.<sup>67</sup>

Steve Simon, who now owns the site where Tower 18-2 used to stand, only recalled the four concrete piers for the tower (two intact and two disturbed by road work) and no other evidence of building foundations.<sup>68</sup>

Tower 18-2 was completed by the end of the summer of 1938:

We now have two towers built, one on Buffalo Hump two miles South of Quitman and the other on Saltillo Mountain about twelve miles Southeast of Conway. Plans are to begin telephone installation on the towers soon.<sup>69</sup>

There is at least one newspaper article that indicates that the Saltillo tower may have been 110 feet, as opposed to the generally referenced height of 100 feet, which had appeared in some news articles.<sup>70</sup> Said Mr. Carlee Kelley: "I'm not sure how tall that tower was. I've been up to the top of it many times. You could see plumb to Little Rock."<sup>71</sup>

Tower Road, undoubtedly named for this tower, begins south of Saltillo, running in an easterly direction off Clinton Road. The exact location of the former tower site is 1/4 mile east of the intersection of Moran Drive, Rolling Manor Road and Tower Road. Physical evidence at the site indicates that when

Tower Road was extended, the heavy road equipment razed two of the four concrete tower foundation piers. Based on reference notes from the National Geodetic Survey, the razing of the southwest and southeast concrete foundations of the tower occurred sometime between 1967 and 1989.<sup>72</sup> Specifically, the final plat of Saltillo Heights Subdivision, filed April 6, 1977, shows a square parcel of approximately 2.5 acres, apparently excluded from a platted subdivision, with the notation: "Gov't Tower; Fire Tower & Survey Mkrs (USC&G)."<sup>73</sup> The roadway dedication filed by the developer, Rolling Manor, Inc.,<sup>74</sup> is shown splitting the parcel in half, thereby placing the two southern foundation piers in harm's way of the construction equipment which followed.

On January 5, 2003, the two concrete piers on the north side of the roadway remained relatively undisturbed, lying just east of a National Coast and Geodetic monument. The two other uprooted piers now lie on the south edge of the roadway, appearing as massive concrete boulders with gnarled steel rods protruding from them.

#### Tower 18-5 on Mt. Pisgah, Near Conway

The concrete foundations of a tower, cabin, gatepost and outbuildings at the peak of Mt. Pisgah in Conway remain in relatively good condition at the site of tower 18-5. Construction of the tower, the last of the five built in Unit 18, began in the fall of 1938. The site is approximately 1/2 mile north of the end of Blaney Hill Road at the summit of a tall, wooded ridge, referred to as "Pisgah Mountain" on topographical maps.<sup>75</sup> The peak, at an elevation of 607 feet, can be seen from Interstate 40, as one is looking north approximately midway between Conway and the Cadron Creek bridge.

Construction of Tower 18-5 was not completed without some twists along the way. When ownership records were searched for the property upon which the tower was to be located, it was found that the 40-acre tract was still owned by the federal government.<sup>76</sup> The *Log Cabin Democrat* reported in January of 1939 that a "presidential order" had been obtained in order for the forestry commission to use the property. Research at the National Archives and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library revealed that, indeed, on August 12, 1938, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 7951, which temporarily withdrew a portion of the land from federal control and cleared the way for the state forestry commission to use 20 acres of the property.<sup>77</sup>

After securing the desired location, work began. Under the supervision of Foreman Ed M. Cowan, crews from Camp Halsey began work on the tower road to the peak of Mt. Pisgah in October.<sup>78</sup> Mr. Cowan was assisted by Assistant Leaders Roy Johnson and Elmer Bryant in the road construction, which employed a crew of approximately 40 CCC men.<sup>79</sup>

Mr. E. A. Norris, 82, of Conway, remembered the road crew boss, Mr. Cowan:

I remember the foreman—his last name started with a "C." Yes, his name was Cowan. There were a couple of creeks that would run across the road between the tower site and the highway, and the trucks were always getting stuck. They hauled in a bunch of rock for fill and we had to beat those rocks up with a sledge hammer.<sup>80</sup>

By December 28, 1938, the tower road was practically complete, the garage for the "tower man" was finished and the residence foundation was complete. Plans also called for a well to be drilled along with the construction of a barn and root cellar.<sup>81</sup>

Construction of the Mt. Pisgah tower and outbuildings was supervised by Mr. N. P. Minor, a foreman from Camp Hardy<sup>82</sup> who had been transferred to Camp Halsey for temporary duty. Minor was to be assisted by Arlos W. Kelly and Paul Rutherford, and would work a crew of eighteen men in raising Tower 18-5.<sup>83</sup>

First hand observations of concrete gate posts, references in State Forestry Commission annual reports and a 1940 National Coast and Geodetic Survey report indicate that the area had gates and fencing around either the tower or residence or both.<sup>84</sup> Ground cabins, garages and fencing around the tower areas, along with the construction of register booths were outbuildings and structures common to the tower sites constructed by the CCC for the Forestry Commission at that time.<sup>85</sup>

The tower was to be capable of communicating with other area towers by way of a telephone system. By late January 1939, 182 of the planned 225 miles of telephone lines that would connect all the towers had been completed.<sup>86</sup>

We built a tower not far from Conway. It was west of Can Hill, up on the highest peak. It was all wood, and 110 feet tall. As far as I know, all of those towers were wood. They were made of creosoted poles that we bolted together. I remember lunchtime while we worked there, because one guy—I can't remember his name—would always put on his leather work gloves, wrap his legs around one of the support cables and slide down the cable. That probably wasn't very smart."<sup>87</sup>

In addition to the executive order necessary to secure the site for Tower 18-5, the actual construction was not without some slight setbacks. One instance in particular is described in the *Log Cabin*:

Ever since Camp Halsey has been working in unit 18 no lost-time accident has occurred and not even before that in Mr. Logan's experience has an accident in the CCC been of sufficient seriousness to cause lost time. But the other day on the tower at Mt. Pisgah a chisel was kicked off the top accidentally and it struck Enrollee Gilmore in the back with the sharp end sticking into his flesh. Fortunately, it missed the spinal cord and the doctors say he had a good chance of recovery.<sup>88</sup>

Regarding the question of whether the Mt. Pisgah tower was of wood or steel construction, Mr. Norris's recollection was consistent with those of Mr. Sherrill Gilmore, whose injury as reported in the *Halsey Journal* was caused when he was struck by a "wood chisel."<sup>89</sup> An internet search found Mr. Gilmore, 79, alive and well in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. In an interview conducted on March 7, 2003, Mr. Gilmore recalled working on the tower: "It was all wood, except for the steel support cables. It was made in sections, and had stairs leading up to platforms on each section, going back and forth as you went up. You didn't have to climb a ladder."

Mr. Gilmore went on to provide some interesting details regarding his time at Camp Halsey with the CCC. Born in Plumerville, Sherrill Gilmore grew up in Conway County near Sardis. Later on, his family found itself in the Liberty area. It is from there, along with 19 other Faulkner County recruits, that he entered the CCC at Camp Halsey on October 17, 1938.<sup>90</sup> Admittedly younger than the official enrollment age of eighteen, he discussed his enlistment:

I was about 15 or 16 when I went into the camp. There were some in the CCC 13 or 14 years old. In those days, you didn't need a birth certificate or anything. You just showed up, told them who you were and they loaded you up in the truck and sent you off to the camps.<sup>91</sup>

Mr. Gilmore recalled the wood chisel injury more than 64 years after the episode: "They were working on the platform at the 100-foot level. I was working on the 20-foot level. I heard someone holler 'headache!' and sort of glanced up about the time it hit me in the back, sort of sideways. It stuck in me then flipped out on the ground."<sup>92</sup>

The young CCC enrollee was hospitalized as a result of the injury, but soon returned to work at Mt. Pisgah:

After I got out of the hospital, they sent me back to work on the tower. I was so young, I was scared to go back on that tower. One day the foreman told me to go get a certain tool, which was up on top of the tower. I hesitated for a little, being scared, but I went and got it. Later, I found out he didn't need the tool at all; he was only trying to get me over the fear of going back on that tower."<sup>93</sup>

During the interview with Mr. Gilmore he recalled that another man had broken a foot at the Mt. Pisgah site, although he could not remember the other enrollee's name. Mr. Gilmore was correct: According to the March 1939 issue of the *Halsey Journal*, Elbert Goodrich was hospitalized at the Army & Navy Hospital in Hot Springs after suffering a broken foot from falling from the tower steps.<sup>94</sup>

Not only did Mr. Gilmore work on the tower itself, he recalled helping with the construction of the road and the building of the cabin dwelling:

It was the only tower I worked on. I can't really tell you anything about the others. The ranger's dwelling had a kitchen, two or three bedrooms and a living area. I don't recall any concrete foundations; I think we just built it on a rock foundation with some wooden pillars. I spent a lot of time on that ridge; in fact I spent almost all the time I was at the Greenbrier camp on that ridge."<sup>95</sup>

The *Log Cabin* quoted forester Calhoun regarding the significance of the completion of the third tower in Faulkner County:

With this tower completed and cross sighting of the three, accuracy is assured in the location of fires and next year the average size fire will be much smaller and the cause more easily determined.<sup>96</sup>

With the construction of the Mt. Pisgah tower nearing completion, Mr. N. P. Minor returned to his home company at Camp Hardy on February 17, 1939. In addition to supervising the construction of this tower, Mr. Minor had also taught a class at Camp Halsey in tower construction.<sup>97</sup> Tower 18-5 at Mt. Pisgah was completed in March 1939<sup>98</sup> just prior to Company 4748 being moved to Unit 17 at Paron (Saline County) on May 4 and re-designated Camp

P-78. According to its *Sixth Annual Report*, the Forestry Commission noted that Camp P-75 at Centerville was one of three camps that completed all its projects "within the allowable travel time."<sup>99</sup> The 1939 *Inventory of the County Archives of Arkansas* noted that from the top of the tower on Mt. Pisgah "smoke can be seen for 25 and sometimes 50 miles."

The arrival of the tower on Mt. Pisgah led to the addition in the *Log Cabin* of another rural correspondent, who sent in articles from "Tower Hill." The author's submissions first appeared in December of 1939, and frequently made references to visitors from Gleason, Cadron Gap and Beaver Fork, which are not far from this site. Presumably, the name "Tower Hill" was chosen because another rural correspondent already wrote from 'Mt. Pisgah' – a different location in southern Faulkner County. In one early entry, the correspondent took note of the CCC's handiwork in building the tower road:

Roads in this community are comparatively good for this season of the year. The CCC road which was built to the tower has remained passable thus far and we believe it will remain so through the winter.<sup>100</sup>

In 1940, the tower was a reference point for a survey station erected that year by the National Coastal Geodetic Survey, being located 114 feet east of the concrete monument referencing "Point Pisgah."<sup>101</sup>

### Public Relations, the Lookout Towers and Forestry Management

Public relations had always been a concern of the Arkansas Forestry Commission, in terms of gaining public acceptance of certain forestry management practices and educating the public in basic forestry concerns, such as fire prevention. To this end, the Commission showed movies to civic groups, made speakers available and even had a full-time employee devoted to matters of public relations.<sup>102</sup> One way to provide entertainment to a populace mired in the Depression and, at the same time, deliver educational materials and information regarding modern forestry practices, was the sponsorship of forestry festivals. These festivals were held across the state during the 1930s. The first forestry festival in protection Unit 18, and the fifteenth state-wide up till that point, was held at Lake Bennett on Friday, September 2, 1938, and was estimated to have attracted 1,500 people.<sup>103</sup>

Ironically, attendance might have been higher had it not been for a heavy, 45-minute rain which, though much needed in this drought-stricken area, delayed the event.<sup>104</sup> Attendees were invited that afternoon to participate in a variety of contests, including: log sawing (two-person teams, men and women, sawing through a 46-inch diameter log); horseshoes, pie eating, bean

guessing, cracker eating and hog calling. One lady in attendance, Geneva Glover, was credited with winning in several categories, including the sawing event, women's nail driving, women's shoe kicking, rolling pin throwing and husband calling.<sup>105</sup> Mr. Vernon Blythe, the Centerville correspondent who is cited repeatedly as a source in this article, purportedly set a state record in tobacco-spitting—22 feet, 2 inches.<sup>106</sup>

A picnic supper followed, with various forms of entertainment: Music and singing by the Camp Halsey band and Walter Tyler's quartet; imitations by one W. W. Lane and accordion pieces from Farris Beene. The main program featured C. C. Denney, who gave a talk on trees, a color slide presentation by Dr. H. N. Wheeler of the national forest service at Washington, D. C. and three motion pictures on forest fires.<sup>107</sup>

The Forestry Commission and CCC, eager to gain public approval for its efforts and educate the public regarding forestry management, made the tower areas accessible to the public. Not long after completion of the tower at Buffalo Hump, the *Log Cabin Democrat* ran a story announcing plans for its annual rural correspondents' picnic to be held in Quitman, including the possibility of a first-hand observation of the new tower:

Dean W. W. Wood has arranged for some interesting features of the meeting. It is hoped that after the meeting in the church there will be time to visit the new forestry service tower atop Buffalo Hump, highest altitude in Faulkner county and only a short distance from Quitman.<sup>108</sup>

Various reports from some of the rural correspondents following the gathering indicate that attendees were not disappointed:

What a dinner. Mr. Robins and wife and "Mother" Robins were with us. We are always glad to have "Mother" Robins each year. And we want to thank Swift & Company for that good ice cream they donated and the Quitman folks for the lemonade and ice water. It was all appreciated. Some went to Buffalo Hump after the meeting closed. The day was enjoyed by all.<sup>109</sup>

The *Log Cabin* briefly mentioned the new lookout tower at the end of an article that detailed the annual "get together":

Following the meeting many of the group drove to the top of Buffalo Hump, about two miles to the south. This mountain, which was surveyed by a party of government engineers

including Herbert Hoover about 45 years ago, is the highest elevation in Faulkner county and on top of it the state forest commission has recently erected a 100-foot observation tower, from which the view spreads over five adjacent counties.<sup>110</sup>

In Mr. Blythe's September 1, 1938 submission, he apologized for missing the correspondent's annual meeting, but noted that he had prepared the crew at Buffalo Hump for guests:

The only thing I was privileged to do toward helping out in anyway (sic) was to instruct the fire-fighting crew of CCC boys who were stationed at the Buffalo Hump tower to be sure to try to answer any question the visitors might ask about any of the work the forestry service is doing in this area. I hope the visitors felt free to ask the questions.<sup>111</sup>

Reflecting perhaps both a simpler time and an example of the public relations aspect of public works projects during the Depression, the *Log Cabin* passed on the following information regarding the anticipated completion of the Mt. Pisgah tower:

Visitors are welcome and they will find that this is a short mountain trail easy to travel and one they will enjoy. Later cooking pits and tables will be fixed on the tower site.<sup>112</sup>

The cooking pits may have been delivered as promised: In a June 27, 1940 submission, the Tower Hill correspondent noted: "A party of young folks enjoyed a wiener roast at the tower Monday night."<sup>113</sup>

### Manning the Towers and Fighting Fires

It had always been the intention of the Forestry Commission to man the towers year round and to utilize the phone system to provide complete forest fire detection coverage, with reports coming into the new headquarters on the Morrilton highway in Conway and a dispatcher providing instructions to fire crews.<sup>114</sup> In Arkansas during this time, tower lookouts used a system of circular maps drawn at a scale of 1 inch to the mile and large enough to show a twelve-mile radius of the local area around the towers.<sup>115</sup> Around the perimeter of this twelve-mile circle, the azimuth circles, used to obtain readings from the map, were drawn.<sup>116</sup> The azimuth circles are graduated around its edges at one-degree intervals, up to 360 degrees, like a compass. On the map, the location of the lookout site is set at the center of the map,

and it is aligned in such a way that the "0" degree mark is due north. The azimuth angle or bearing is read clockwise from the "0" degree mark. When smoke was spotted, the lookouts would look through a "fire finder" instrument, such as the Osborne Fire Finder,<sup>117</sup> to obtain an azimuth and approximate location of the source of the smoke. The lookout could then notify the dispatcher in Conway of this information, using the telephone system set up connecting the various towers of Unit 18 and district headquarters. By using information from other lookouts and comparing their readings (triangulating), a more precise estimate of the exact location of a fire could be obtained. The dispatcher in Conway would then relay the most precise estimate of the location of the fire to the firefighting crews standing by in that particular area.

Notices appeared in the *Log Cabin Democrat* as early as April of 1938 seeking applications from persons between the ages of 18-24 through the National Youth Administration (NYA) to fill the positions of forest rangers, including the duties of a lookout, and to live at the cabins located at the tower sites. However, at least one report indicated that the district forester, who had a residence at the district headquarters on Highway 64, was stationed on Mt. Pisgah.<sup>118</sup> Also, as Mr. Blythe's columns previously indicated, CCC men were apparently manning the tower at Buffalo Hump.

1938 was a year of extraordinary drought in Arkansas, and Faulkner County experienced its share of fires. As early as January 1938, prior to any of the towers being completed, an article in the camp newspaper foreshadowed what lay ahead during the year:

The Forestry Department has been called to three fires this month. January being considered an off month for fire in the forest, it puts the service to wondering what March and April will bring them.<sup>119</sup>

By June, it was also obvious to those at the Forestry Commission that 1938 would be a long year in terms of protecting the state's forests. As the state's assistant forester put it, "Mother Nature, being a fickle wench, did not smile on us as graciously as last year."<sup>120</sup>

It was not long after its construction was complete that the Buffalo Hump tower was being used for its intended purpose, as illustrated in this dispatch from Mr. Blythe:

This writer and family accompanied them on a drive up to Buffalo Hump, and back to Lake Bennett by way of Guy and Greenbrier. While we were up on the lookout tower we saw the home of Mr. Price of Rowlett community, as it was

being destroyed by fire. We can really sympathize with Mr. Price, as we have had that experience.<sup>121</sup>

As the hot, dry summer of 1938 extended into late September, both the Buffalo Hump and Saltillo towers were manned continuously, which aided the efforts of the CCC crews and volunteers reach any trouble spots:

All of the CCC boys at Camp Halsey, near Centerville, have been held in and are divided into crews ready to go at a moment's notice. Three crews have been kept also at each tower with one stationed at Conway to cut down distance to be traveled to each fire.<sup>122</sup>

With the headline "Forest Fires, Forest Fires, and More Forest Fires" the camp paper observed the increase in fire protection activity:

On the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup> a vast number of the men in the company were called out to fight fires at Gleason, Palarm, and many intervening points. It is the red letter day so far in the history of Camp Halsey.<sup>123</sup>

Mr. Blythe echoed the words of caution regarding the unusually hot and dry weather, in terms of fire prevention and awareness:

Dry weather and careless people are causing this part of the news hunting squad to be rather short of news and sleep lately. It so happens that when it comes time to write items we get a fire call, and we haven't found a way to miss these calls. We believe that if those who are carelessly setting these fires could be with the CCC boys, who are spending days and nights trying to save our timber from destruction—and occasionally even having the experience of saving people's homes—they would try to be a good sport and stop letting fires get away. It is a fine thing to have crews of men ready to fight these destructive fires, but this should not be abused so much.<sup>124</sup>

The Damascus correspondent provided an account of that community's own forest fire experience during that same week, praising the efforts of the CCC fire crews:

From some unknown cause fire broke out just south of town Tuesday. George Williams and Ard Shoffner discovered it first and were fighting it hard, when a bunch of CCC boys from Camp Halsey came to their rescue. It did quite a bit of damage to a woodland belonging to W. A. Brown. Had the boys not stopped and helped, it would probably have done a lot of damage to the farmers in that section. We think a company of men or boys trained to do a deed like this is fine. We surely appreciate it.<sup>125</sup>

The southern part of the county was not spared from the consequences of such hot, dry conditions. The Gold Creek correspondent also praised the efforts of the men of Company 4748:

Thanks to the forest ranger and CCC boys from Camp Halsey, this Community was probably saved from a very disastrous fire Saturday and Sunday. As it was, it burned over a good portion of our own pasture and our closest neighbor's. It seems to us that if we let folks hunt on our premises they would appreciate it enough to be reasonably careful about throwing their matches and cigarettes down. If people don't get more careful about fire we must stop them from hunting altogether, as it is a bad job to get out and fight fire all afternoon and Sunday, besides the damage it causes.<sup>126</sup>

The men of Company 4748 fought fires outside of Faulkner County, including a large fire on Petit Jean Mountain.<sup>127</sup> Occasionally, Mother Nature provided a break for the crews, as illustrated in Mr. Blythe's October 20 submission:

The firefighting crew at Camp Halsey at last had the gratifying experience of having a big rain beat them to a forest fire. They returned with smiles that the rain couldn't wash off. As I write this it is a rainy morning, the first in many moons.<sup>128</sup>

However, the dry fall of 1938 still posed dangers for those in the fire-fighting business, even into mid-November:

It must be a fact that there is no rest for the weary. Sunday afternoon just as we were about to indulge in a "breathing spell", fire broke out in the field west of us, spreading to

the woodland. The north side of the hill was soon under control, but the folks on the south side called out the fire department from Camp Halsey.<sup>129</sup>

As spring of 1939 approached, Company 4748 was once again heavily into the fire fighting business:

The time of the year that the CCC enrollee dreads most, fire fighting time, has reached us. On March 16 a crew was called on the first major fire of the season. The fire was located in the Ozark Mountains near Scotland, Van Buren County. The crew was composed of seventeen men in charge of Assistant Leader Roy Johnson. The fire burned over about seven hundred acres. As a result of this fire a fire detail was held in during the week end of March 18 and 19.<sup>130</sup>

By March 1939, much of what Company 4748 had set out to do in the fall of 1937 had been accomplished:

The work of the forest service at Camp Halsey is rapidly being finished. They have all the surrounding country for a distance of 30 or 40 miles, linked by telephone, and have lookout towers built on high points commanding an unobstructed view of the whole of Faulkner county, as well as a large part of all adjoining counties.<sup>131</sup>

The Centerville correspondent and "squad foreman" tried to give the reader an idea of what the CCC crews and the local volunteers experienced:

There have been occasions when the boys were unable to save the barns of unfortunate victims, so far they have always been able to save the houses that were in the path of the forest fires they were fighting. The only extra pay anyone in our crew has ever had for all this hot, dirty work has been given in the form of grateful thanks from some people who had already given up their homes as lost when our crew checked the fire within a few feet of the houses.<sup>132</sup>

Some area farmers also assisted the CCC firefighting crews by serving as "fire guards," receiving "a small yearly remuneration and a free telephone in their homes."<sup>133</sup>

Local farmers and other volunteers also got the benefit of hands on training in both fire suppression and life-safety matters, including first aid courses in how to treat burn victims under the guidance of the Camp Halsey doctors and the American Red Cross.<sup>134</sup>

Camp Halsey was ordered closed in May 1939 when Company 4748 moved on to Paron, in Saline County. This action was met with protest from the communities of Centerville and Greenbrier, who greatly appreciated the economic and social benefits of having the CCC camp nearby. Despite entreaties by local leaders to U. S. Senators Hattie Caraway and John Miller, the decision stood.<sup>135</sup> Undoubtedly, the loss of the presence of the federally paid CCC workers who had manned at least one of the towers (Buffalo Hump) and who had served as fire-fighting crews in the county was a blow to the effectiveness of the fire suppression efforts locally.

Each of the towers has had prominent mention with the National Geodetic Survey. That is because in the spring of 1940, a crew from the National Coast and Geodetic Survey set up headquarters in Conway establishing monuments for their triangulation readings to assist the army engineers "in connection with flood control work along the Arkansas River."<sup>136</sup> This work included the construction of a 126-foot steel tower on the Hendrix College campus, in order to make triangulation readings on "other towers surrounding Conway, including Mt. Pisgah station about four miles northwest and Conway station about four miles southeast."<sup>137</sup>

In November 1942 the state forestry commission issued a press release published by the *Log Cabin* stating that it was preparing to increase the number of women employed as tower observers and rangers. At that time, according to the article, women lookouts were already working in Union County. It was anticipated that the forestry commission would utilize more women in its workforce as more men left to serve in the war effort.<sup>138</sup> Although the article mentioned that the only woman ranger working for the commission, Mrs. Ethel Gaffney, patrolled in Faulkner County near Palarm Creek, there was no specific discussion of women manning any of the towers in Faulkner County.

### **Budget Woes Claim the Mt. Pisgah Tower**

The CCC had provided significant forestry protection infrastructure, including the lookout towers in Faulkner County, at no cost to the state. The Arkansas Forestry Commission summed up the situation in June of 1938:

Without the improvements constructed by the CCC during the past five years Arkansas would have been unable to develop the present forestry program for the state, since the CCC has supplied the vast outlay of money required when

forest protection is new [sic]. The time has come, however, when the state must redeem the pledge made for its people by its governor when CCC work was started that all CCC improvements built for the protection of privately owned timber land in the state would be adequately maintained. In the past the state has merely employed men to use the improvements built by the CCC but in the future definite allowances must be made for the maintenance of the forest protection improvements.<sup>139</sup>

Fire control work was financed at this time by what was described as a three-way cooperative agreement between the owners of forestland, the state, and the federal government.<sup>140</sup> In Unit 18, these cooperative contracts with private landowners covered over 43,000 acres of private lands in early 1939. Under the terms of these contracts, 247 cooperators in the unit agreed to pay 2 cents an acre for fire protection.<sup>141</sup>

During the 1939 legislative session, the General Assembly increased the membership of the state forestry commission from five to nine. The new members were critical of State Forester Charles Gillett's administration, which had included an ambitious program during the time the Faulkner County towers were built, doubling the area of statewide fire protection. However, despite the vast sums of money spent and large increases in employees, the firefighters had been no match for the fires that broke out over the state during the first and last parts of 1938.<sup>142</sup>

The criticism from the reconstituted Commission led, in part, to Gillett's resignation on March 7, 1939. Fred H. Lang was appointed state forester on June 8, 1939, with his marching orders from Governor Carl E. Bailey: "Don't operate in the red."<sup>143</sup>

On June 30, 1943, the state forestry commission, through Bruce P. Mety, district forester, announced that Tower 18-5 on Mt. Pisgah near Conway was being dismantled.<sup>144</sup> According to the article, Mr. Mety stated that the tower had never been manned due to the lack of funds for fire protection work locally.<sup>145</sup> He explained further that this was due chiefly to the fact that few area landowners paid the 2-cents per acre annual "cooperative" fee for systematic forest fire protection, as most of the commercial timber in this immediate section had been exhausted.<sup>146</sup> Thus, the Mt. Pisgah tower's demise, after only being in place four years, was purportedly due to a lack of funding, and not because of a manpower shortage during wartime.

There seems to be ample evidence that, despite the Commission's previously stated commitment to maintain the facilities constructed by the CCC, the state had come to rely on the CCC in terms of actual manpower, in addition to the infrastructure its companies created. To blame the inability to properly

man the towers on (1) area landowners' lack of financial support, and (2) the exhaustion of the commercial timber by those landowners in only four years, seems too simplistic. A combination of factors, not the least of which was the closure of Camp Halsey and with it, the loss of manpower for fire detection and suppression, is probably a more reasonable explanation of the demise of the Mt. Pisgah tower, as well as the other area towers.

Indeed, in recounting the infrastructure work of the CCC in Arkansas in its 1941 annual report, the Forestry Commission observed bluntly: "The State has never accepted its obligation, through appropriation, for the maintenance of these improvements."<sup>147</sup>

In the final analysis, the need to keep young men employed and out of soup lines, even with "make-work" projects such as erecting lookout towers—destined to stay up only a relatively short time—may have transcended truly well-designed long-term forestry management plans for Arkansas.

The tower structure at Mt. Pisgah was to be dismantled and removed to an area of the state where there was a more pressing need for fire protection. The Commission offered the residence and garage located near the tower for sale and the successful bidder would be required to remove the structures.<sup>148</sup>



*Hiegel Lumber Company, c. 1941. Three years earlier, J. Albert Hiegel (far left) was under contract with the Arkansas Forestry Commission to help build a district headquarters in Conway. Also pictured with Mr. Hiegel, from left: Pete Hiegel, Shelly White, Emil Luyet, Jack Shelton, Dwight Jordan, George Luyet and Tony Worm. Reproduced from "A Pictorial History of Faulkner County, Arkansas" (Log Cabin Democrat: 1991). Reprinted with permission of the Log Cabin Democrat.*

As for the 20 acres upon which the Mt. Pisgah tower and buildings were located, this land was being used by the state of Arkansas at the pleasure of the federal government, through President Roosevelt's Executive Order No. 7951 of August 1938. Inexplicably, that executive order remained in effect long after the tower site was abandoned, and was not rescinded until the early days of the Johnson Administration. On December 3, 1963, Public Land Order 3277, issued through the Secretary of the Interior, revoked Executive Order No. 7951 and the property was "restored to the operation of the public land

laws, effective at 10:00 a.m. on January 8, 1964, subject to valid existing rights, and requirements of applicable law, and the provisions of existing withdrawals.”<sup>149</sup> On June 16, 1965, Hubert A. Saunders purchased the 20-acre site from the United States.<sup>150</sup>

### The Other Faulkner County Towers

It is unclear when the other Faulkner County towers fell victims to the same fate as the Mt. Pisgah tower.<sup>151</sup> Mrs. Blanche Etchison, the widow of Elmer Etchison, one of the original 72 transfers from Camp Harrison, provided some interesting details about the Buffalo Hump tower site in its early days of operation.

Blanche Shaw was raised on Clinton Mountain and was attending Centerville High School in 1936-1937. Elmer Etchison was from Omaha, near the Missouri line, and came down with Company 4748 from Harrison: “He was a good ballplayer from Omaha, and they paid his way to play ball and go to high school at Harrison. He had pretty legs. I remember those legs!”<sup>152</sup> They met at Woolly Hollow and later were married in 1938, the same year Elmer was discharged from the CCC:

Elmer Etchison who leaves us the 30<sup>th</sup> informs us that he will probably return to Harrison soon after his discharge if employment comes his way soon. Elmer wants the *Journal* to express how he feels towards the boys of Co. 4748. We may add here that he already knows how we appreciate him. We hope [he] and Blanche godspeed in whatever business adventure they choose to make.<sup>153</sup>

Ironically, Elmer Etchison would shortly find he and his new bride’s “business adventure” back in Faulkner County, near Centerville: As the “forest ranger” manning Tower 18-1 at Buffalo Hump:

We were on Buffalo Hump from 1939 to around 1940. I remember the dates because our oldest son was born there, on Buffalo Hump. Elmer was the forest ranger there on the tower, and we lived in the house there. You went in the front and there was a living area, kitchen, one bedroom and a screened-in back porch. The cistern, where we got our water, was on that back porch. I used to go up that tower myself every other day or so. Elmer was working for the Forestry Commission, and they sent us up there because no one else was there. We were the first to live there. One day, some

of the local kids got up in the tower, and they threw down a bucket of sand Elmer kept up there for people who smoked. He wasn’t one to be hateful, but he told those boys they needed to clean up their mess. At first they weren’t going to, but he told ’em again and they cleaned it up. After we were there, they sent us up to Heber to the tower up there, because no one was on that one. I’m not sure, but I don’t think anyone came along behind us at Buffalo Hump.<sup>154</sup>

The Buffalo Hump and Saltillo sites still appeared on the operations map of the Arkansas Forestry Commission as late as its *Annual Report* of 1943-1944. Unfortunately, neither the University of Arkansas nor the University of Arkansas at Little Rock libraries have any of the Commission’s annual reports, if any existed, between 1944 and 1981-1982. The Commission likewise does not have reports for the “missing” years.

According to Grey Turney of Heber Springs, former district forester for the area, neither the Saltillo tower nor the Buffalo Hump tower were in service (or even in existence) in 1954, the year he began work with the forestry commission.<sup>155</sup>

Mr. Turney’s recollections are consistent with those of Mr. George Johnson of Greenbrier. Mr. Johnson is the current owner of the property upon which the summit of Buffalo Hump is located, although his family did not own it during his childhood. In an oral interview conducted February 14, 2003, Mr. Johnson, who was born in 1935, related how as a youngster living in the area at that time, he had climbed the tower at Buffalo Hump in the mid 1940s. By then, he recalled, the tower was no longer in service and was in poor shape. Several of the wooden planks in the stairwell were missing, making the structure dangerous to climb. Mr. Johnson left the area briefly in 1953 and stated that the tower at Buffalo Hump was gone by his return in the mid 1950s.<sup>156</sup>

As far as other possible clues, after the 1940 report, there were no subsequent station reports for Buffalo Hump found in the *National Geodetic Survey Data Sheets*. A “high point” trip report posted by a private individual on the Internet gave this description of the summit of Buffalo Hump on April 12, 2001:

The walk to the summit is about 3/4 of a mile following a gravel road that winds around the north and west sides of the hill before heading to the top. The natural highpoint is located at the base of a large oak tree, this is about 50 feet west of the benchmark location. The entire summit of Buffalo Hump is forested, with lots of poison ivy just starting to green up. There is a point that is man made that is taller, it is

southwest from the oak tree by about 15 feet. The man-made point seems to be some sort of concrete cistern covered with soil. On the summit there were also the concrete bases for a fire tower long gone.<sup>157</sup>

Located just south of present day Buffalo Mountain Road off Highway 107 about 3 miles south of Quitman, the Buffalo Hump location is not the same as the site of the steel fire tower currently standing near Guy on Highway 25, which was erected in the early 1960s.<sup>158</sup>

As far as the Saltillo site, the 1967 station recovery notes published in the *National Geodetic Survey Data Sheets* for Saltillo refers to both “the site of the Saltillo state fire tower” and the “site of the old lookout tower and station.”<sup>159</sup> Steve Simon, the current owner of the property, recalled that as of 1966 or 1967, all that remained of the tower was the four concrete piers. According to Mr. Turney, the Saltillo tower had been out of service since before 1954. Marvin “Bud” Kelley also recalled the tower:

I went into the Army in 1945. I was in the Army about two years. When I came back, that tower was pretty much all gone. I remember folks would go and get pieces of it and use it in their barns or to make posts out of it. It had some big, square posts in it.<sup>160</sup>

Mr. Simon related hearing stories about people taking the steel support cables off the tower. Eventually, so the stories go, the wind blew the tower over.<sup>161</sup> Said Mr. Carlee Kelléy: “I don’t know when that tower came down. It just fell down, sometime. I believe it came down while I was in the service.”<sup>162</sup>

Presumably, the loss of the Mt. Pisgah tower in 1943 would have been detrimental in terms of the effectiveness of other tower observers “triangulating,” or “cross-sighting,” as Mr. Calhoun put it in 1938, at locales such as Buffalo Hump and Saltillo. Again, however, it is not clear exactly how soon after the loss of the Mt. Pisgah tower the other CCC-era Faulkner County towers went out of service. The Kelley interviews indicate that by the mid-1940s, the Saltillo tower was not being utilized or maintained. In response to inquiries regarding the history of these towers, officials with the Arkansas Forestry Commission indicated that the Commission has no records, other than their appearance on the old operations maps, regarding any of the Unit 18 towers and no knowledge of either their construction or when they were taken out of service.

## Conclusion

On September 1, 1939, less than four months after Company 4748 moved on to Paron and Camp Halsey was closed, Hitler invaded Poland. By the summer of 1941, it was clear that the improving economy was contributing to a steady drop in the enrollment of new CCC workers. After Pearl Harbor and the United States’ entry into the war, the fate of the CCC was sealed, and it passed on into history by July 1, 1942.<sup>163</sup>

In addition to the work done across the country in both state and national parks and forests, the Civilian Conservation Corps is credited with constructing 3,116 lookout towers<sup>164</sup> across the United States during its existence, some of which are either still in service or have been restored for their historical significance. The accomplishments of the men of Company 4748 during their time at Camp Halsey, from October 1937 until May 1939, can be summarized briefly as follows: Five lookout towers constructed, including the three in Faulkner County; five cabins plus other outbuildings; the District Ranger Headquarters buildings in Conway; 21 miles of truck trails constructed; 181.1 miles of telephone lines completed; several hundred thousand acres of land mapped by type mapping crews.<sup>165</sup>

According to the Forestry Commission, there are no longer any active fire towers in Arkansas, although some are used as radio antenna masts. Other parts of the United States, especially some heavily forested areas in the West, still use fire lookouts. Airplanes, communications advances, and satellites – all have contributed to the decreasing dependence on fire lookout towers as part of the first line defense against forest fires.

In some quarters, there is a deeply held sense of nostalgia for the structures and the people within their cabs who peered out from their lonely confines in search of the first sign of forest smoke. Across the country, organizations such as the Forest Fire Lookout Association (<http://www.firelookout.org>) and the National Historic Lookout Register (<http://www.firetower.org>) undertake to restore and preserve old towers of historical significance and maintain their place in the annals of forestry.<sup>166</sup>

The tower road to Mt. Pisgah has long been abandoned and now can only be faintly seen branching off to the west from Skinner Hill Road just northwest of Conway. The concrete gateposts near the summit stand as quiet sentinels keeping watch over remnants of a bygone era.

Buffalo Hump rises prominently from the north Faulkner County terrain and the old, winding CCC road leading to the tower site lies safely behind a locked gate.

At Saltillo, the four old concrete foundations on either side of Tower Road are still present, two of which have been damaged and disturbed but left alone, too massive to have been removed. For anyone interested in viewing this site,

the final entry in the 1989 recovery notes by the NGS regarding the Saltillo site is instructive: "Note—watch out for the snakes."<sup>167</sup>

Unfortunately, many of those who experienced the days of the CCC first hand have passed on, and those remaining are being lost daily. The contributions of the CCC in Faulkner County, specifically the efforts in forestry conservation and the construction of lookout towers, was significant at that point in time and should be remembered as a testament to the "can do" attitude of a special generation in American history. Fittingly, Mr. Blythe should get the last word:

This writer has seen signs that seem to indicate that the CCC camp boys may be about to leave this community in the near future. It should be gratifying to them to hear of so many expressions of regret at their having to move, and we who have always made our home here feel a touch of pride in hearing it said that we have also been a great help to many of the boys in ways in which a community can be of use to a strange boy in a strange country. As one who is a lifelong resident of Centerville and who is extraordinarily proud to acknowledge it, and as one who has also known every person who has ever been stationed at Camp Halsey, I should like to say that no camp and community anywhere has ever cooperated more fully than this community and this camp. Both have profited much by doing so.<sup>168</sup>

#### Acknowledgments

This article is the result of a very simple case of curiosity. As a child in the late 60's, my father, Guy W. Murphy, would take us hiking or hunting on Mt. Pisgah, property he and my mother, Dolores, acquired in 1968. At various times upon reaching the summit (such as it is, at an elevation of 607 feet), we would contemplate the concrete foundations of what had obviously been an old fire tower. Three large concrete pillars with what appeared to be metal gate hardware for fencing still stood, as did some other concrete building foundations on a shelf just north and below the tower site. However, as far as any of us can recall, Dad never had a "story" about the tower. We can remember also, during trips to the Greers Ferry area, Dad pointing out Buffalo Hump as we drove along Highway 25 near Quitman, telling us the story of Herbert Hoover's survey party being in Arkansas in the 1800s. If he was aware of the connection between Buffalo Hump and Mt. Pisgah and their shared histories in the late 1930s with the Civilian Conservation Corps, he did not reveal it to us, which, of course, was not like Dad.

In writing this article, the best initial sources for clues were articles in the *Log Cabin Democrat* archived at the Faulkner County Library. The staff at the library was most helpful and accommodating.

Stumbling through the internet, I found microfiche of the CCC camp newspaper, the *Halsey Journal*, at the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago. The staff at Bailey Library at Hendrix College was of great assistance, allowing me to read and print the microfiche at my leisure.

Special thanks to the Archives/Special Collections librarians at Ottenheimer Library at UALR, which helped me find a group picture from Company 4748's early days at Camp Halsey, near Centerville. Also, the Arkansas Forestry Commission, the *Log Cabin Democrat* and the Historical Society's *Faulkner County: Its Land and People* were all sources for photographs considered for use in this article.

Finally, a very heartfelt and special thanks to everyone who was interviewed for this article, especially those connected with Civilian Conservation Corps Company 4748. Those who were eyewitnesses to the Depression and World War II lived through a remarkable time in our nation's history, and their stories remain relevant, interesting and sometimes fascinating, even today.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Arkansas Forestry Commission, *Sixth Annual Report*, (June 30, 1939). Unit 18 of the Arkansas Forestry Commission covered, at that time, all of Faulkner and parts of Pulaski, Conway, Cleburne, Van Buren, White and Lonoke counties.

<sup>2</sup>PAIGE, John C. *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* [online]. National Park Service, Department of the Interior. 1985. [Cited March 11, 2003]. Available from: [http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/ccc/](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/ccc/) While known informally as the Civilian Conservation Corps since 1933, legislation was passed in June 1937 that formally established the Civilian Conservation Corps as the official name of the agency, merging most of the ECW infrastructure with it and extending the program for three more years.

<sup>3</sup>Fred H. Lang, "Two Decades of State Forestry in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1965), p. 208.

<sup>4</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, May 18, 1933, weekly edition.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*, May 25, 1933, weekly edition.

<sup>6</sup>Lang, *Two Decades of State Forestry in Arkansas*, p. 212.

<sup>7</sup>National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni, [online]. Cited March 17, 2003. Available from <http://www.cccalumni.org>

<sup>8</sup>There are very few published articles that deal specifically with the second phase of Camp Halsey, in which forestry work was the main objective. There is a brief mention of it by Henry Alsmeyer, Jr., in *Faulkner County: Its Land and People*. An article by Billy Joe Scott, "The Development, Construction, and Effects of Lake Bennett," published in the Faulkner County Historical Society's *Facts and Fiddlings*,

Spring and Summer 1994, discusses the soil conservation efforts of Company 1706 at Camp SCS-1, which first occupied Camp Halsey. Also, "Origin of Lake Bennett" was an article written by Sam Clark for an issue of *Faulkner Facts and Fiddlings* (Volume XIII, No. 3, Fall 1971). The National Archives found a few of the "camp reports" for Camp P-75 (Company 4748), the second occupant of Camp Halsey. The *Halsey Journal*, the monthly camp newspaper for Company 4748 during its time at Camp Halsey, was a rich source for this article. Microfiche of it and most of the CCC camp newspapers during the existence of the CCC can be obtained from the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago. Newspaper accounts in the *Log Cabin Democrat* provided invaluable sources of information, including periodic articles from its "correspondent" in Centerville as well as other "rural correspondents." (For a better understanding of the "rural correspondence" utilized by the *Log Cabin Democrat* during this period, see *Country Correspondence (1938)* by Frank E. Robins, Sr., a speech delivered January 14, 1938 by Mr. Robins and reprinted in Volume XLI, Spring and Summer 1999, Nos. 1-2, *Faulkner Facts and Fiddlings* at page 37; see also, "Fifteen Years with the Country Correspondents" by J. Richard Berry in *Faulkner County: It's Land and People* and in Volume IV, No. 2, *Faulkner Facts and Fiddlings*, pp. 23-28). In researching the origins of the Faulkner County lookout towers, it seems apparent that a separate study of Camp Halsey generally is in order.

<sup>9</sup>National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni, [online] Cited March 17, 2003. Available from <http://www.cccalumni.org>

<sup>10</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 1, p. 1, November 1937. A camp report from the National Archives dated March 1, 1938, also spelled out the direction under which the camp would work and the objectives of Camp P-75: "Arkansas State Forest Commission. Building towers and telephone lines."

<sup>11</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, September 30, 1937, weekly edition.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, November 25, 1937.

<sup>14</sup>Vernon Blythe, Centerville correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, October 28, 1937, weekly edition.

<sup>15</sup>Camp Report, November 28, 1938. *National Archives*, Record Group 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Entry 115, Division of Investigations, Camp Inspection Reports, Box 16, Folder P-75. By November 1938, Mr. Blythe was listed as a "squad foreman," with his salary increased to \$1,260 per year.

<sup>16</sup>Jack O. Burns, oral interview, March 8, 2003.

<sup>17</sup>Rayburn Wooley, oral interview, March 8, 2003. In the course of speaking with Mr. Wooley, he related a story involving my late father, Guy W. Murphy, and the late W. E. Bailey of the Enola community. He recalled that while working at the Cadron blockhouse, Mr. Bailey had apparently locked himself and my father out of Mr. Bailey's truck. Mr. Wooley assisted Mr. Bailey in obtaining access to his vehicle.

<sup>18</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 2, No. 3, January 1939, p. 8. The word "strippers" in the quoted article refers to "ground strippers" who were CCC enrollees who would

walk the local terrain in an array of parallel lines and record the location of various types of trees and vegetation.

<sup>19</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, March 24, 1938, weekly edition. The other sites were Hunter Mountain, south of Clinton in Van Buren County (Tower 18-4), and near Heber Springs in Cleburne County (Tower 18-3). In his work *Faulkner County, Arkansas. 1778-1964: A History in Three Parts* (1964), p. 139, Mr. Robert Gatewood states in reference to the CCC towers: "Two steel fire towers were constructed. One at Saltillo with another near Greenbrier." However, this conclusion appears to have been based on the tentative sites first located by Mr. Bolar and reported by the *Log Cabin* in September of 1937. The references to "steel" towers by Mr. Gatewood and the November 25, 1937 *Log Cabin* story are also contradicted by the oral interviews of the men who built them, as well as the other sources identified in this article.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Douglas Bakko, oral interview, March 8, 2003.

<sup>22</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, November 25, 1937, weekly edition. During the 1930s, most of the steel lookout towers constructed in the southeast part of the United States, including those assembled by CCC companies, were manufactured by the Aermotor Company, then of Chicago, whose development of fire lookout towers sprang from its design and manufacture of windmills. By way of example, the Sugarloaf fire tower in Stone County, placed on the National Historic Register in 1995, was a 100 foot steel tower with a 7 X 7 foot cab, manufactured by Aermotor and erected by CCC enrollees in 1937. Coincidentally, the company headquarters of Aermotor was moved to Conway in 1974. The windmill division has since been sold and moved to San Angelo, Texas. [www.aermotor.com](http://www.aermotor.com)

<sup>23</sup>Henry Alsmeyer, "Forestry," *Faulkner County: It's Land and People*, (Faulkner County Historical Society: 1986) p. 43.

<sup>24</sup>*The National Geodetic Survey Data Sheet*, [online]. Cited March 17, 2003. Station Designation: Buffalo Hump. Available from <http://www.ngs.noaa.gov>

<sup>25</sup>Blanche Shaw Etchison, oral interview, March 8, 2003.

<sup>26</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 8, June 1938, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup>Sherrill Gilmore, oral interview, March 7, 2003. E. A. Norris, oral interview, March 9, 2003. Their interviews are more fully developed later in the article in the section dealing with Tower 18-5.

<sup>28</sup>Cleo Stuart, oral interview, March 8, 2003.

<sup>29</sup>Noah Ragsdale, oral interview, March 8, 2003.

<sup>30</sup>Jack O. Burns, oral interview, March 8, 2003.

<sup>31</sup>Marvin "Bud" Kelley and Carlee Kelley, oral interviews, March 17, 2003.

<sup>32</sup>Supplementary Report, March 1, 1938. *National Archives*, Record Group 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Entry 115, Divisions of Investigations, Camp Inspection Reports, Box 16, Folder P-75.

<sup>33</sup>Camp Report, March 1, 1938. *National Archives*, Record Group 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Entry 115, Division of Investigations, Camp Inspection Reports, Box 16, Folder P-75.

<sup>34</sup>The National Archives does not have a roster of all of the persons enrolled at Camp Halsey during this time period. The *Halsey Journal* contained a list of the original enrollees and periodic articles detailing discharges and new enrollees. The Christmas issue of 1938 included a complete list of enrollees. The Ottenheimer Library archives at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) included the *Official Annual, 1937/Arkansas District, Civilian Conservation Corps, Seventh Corps Area*, which contained a group photograph with a list of enrollees just after Company 4748 was relocated to Camp Halsey. As the typical enlistment period was 6 months, with the opportunity to reenlist for up to 24 months, some men came and went and overlapped the particular times discussed in this article. Some of the original enrollees from the Harrison were rotated out and some local recruits were sent to Camp Halsey.

<sup>35</sup>Now, the University of Central Arkansas.

<sup>36</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, July 7, 1938, weekly edition.

<sup>37</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 2, No. 1, November 1938, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, Volume 2, No. 3, January 1939, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, July 7, 1938, weekly edition.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, January 26, 1939, weekly edition.

<sup>41</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 3, January 1938.

<sup>42</sup>Clarence Love, oral interview, March 10, 2003.

<sup>43</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, March 10 and March 24, 1938, weekly edition; *Inventory of the County Archives of Arkansas, Number 23, Faulkner County* (1939).

<sup>44</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 5, March 1938, p. 2. Hoover, a geology major at Stanford from 1891 to 1895, visited Arkansas as a summer employee of the National Geological Survey doing survey work. The camp paper's reference to the field notes and the date of Mr. Hoover's survey as 1887 is questionable, in light of the known dates that Hoover was at Stanford and reportedly in Arkansas, and also in view of the fact that he would have only been thirteen years old in 1887, having been born in August 1874. See the *National Archives and Records Administration, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, Hoover Online!* See also *The Log Cabin Democrat*, Vernon Blythe, Centerville correspondent, December 23, 1937, weekly edition and *The Log Cabin Democrat*, September 1, 1938, weekly edition.

<sup>45</sup>John R. Chapman, oral interview, March 10, 2003.

<sup>46</sup>Cleophas Woolly, Quitman correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, May 12, 1938, weekly edition. (Mr. Woolly passed away not long after this dispatch, on July 22, 1938 at age 74.)

<sup>47</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 8, June 1938, p. 7.

<sup>48</sup>*The National Geodetic Survey Data Sheet*. Designation point: Buffalo Hump, [online] Cited March 19, 2003. Available from <http://www.ngs.noaa.gov>

<sup>49</sup>Dalton Montgomery, oral interview, March 10, 2003.

<sup>50</sup>*Fifth Annual Report*, Arkansas Forestry Commission (June 30, 1938).

<sup>51</sup>Author unknown, Alder Branch and Quitman correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, July 7, 1938, weekly edition. This entry is possibly by Mrs. W. A. Cargile, who, according to Berry's article in *Faulkner County: It's Land and People*, was the rural correspondent for this community on August 8, 1937.

<sup>52</sup>Author unknown, Sulfur Springs correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, November 3, 1938, weekly edition.

<sup>53</sup>John Wayne Carter, Faulkner County Judge, oral interview, January 9, 2003. According to the original description by the Coast and Geodetic Survey in 1940, the actual driving distance from the "Saltillo store" was 4.85 miles.

<sup>54</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 1, p. 1: November 1937.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup>John R. Chapman, oral interview, March 10, 2003.

<sup>57</sup>Carlee Kelley, oral interview, March 17, 2003.

<sup>58</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, November 25, 1937, weekly edition.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, November 1, 1937, weekly edition.

<sup>61</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 1, November 1937, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, Volume 1, No. 7, May 1938.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, Volume 1, No. 8, June 1938.

<sup>64</sup>Marvin "Bud" Kelley, oral interview, March 17, 2003.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, Volume 1, No. 7, May 1938. According to the National Association of CCC Alumni, the Jacksonville camp, which had opened in June of 1935, was a soil conservation camp (SCS-11) made up of the men of Company 3787.

<sup>66</sup>Carlee Kelley, oral interview, March 17, 2003.

<sup>67</sup>Marvin "Bud" Kelley, oral interview, March 17, 2003. Whether a residence was ever constructed at Saltillo is not clear. As noted earlier, the camp paper indicated the outbuilding work was to be done by the Jacksonville camp. The final edition of the *Halsey Journal* credits Company 4748 with completing "5 towers and 5 cabins," among other improvements. Available witnesses do not recall a permanent residence at the Saltillo site.

<sup>68</sup>Steve Simon, Faulkner County Tax Assessor and former state representative, oral interview, March 17, 2003.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, Volume 1, No. 11, September 1938, p. 5.

<sup>70</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, November 25, 1937, weekly edition.

<sup>71</sup>Carlee Kelley, oral interview, March 17, 2003.

<sup>72</sup>*The National Geodetic Survey Data Sheet*, [Online] Designation Point: Saltillo. Available from <http://www.ngs.noaa.gov>

<sup>73</sup>Plat Book D, Page 49, and Plat Book H, Page 33, records of Faulkner County, Arkansas.

<sup>74</sup>The president and secretary of this corporation were James B. McDougal and Susan Henley McDougal.

<sup>75</sup>Gordon D. Morgan provides a somewhat colorful description of the area in "Remembering Blaney Hill," a chapter in his 1991 work *Conway's East Side Community*: "A series of similar ridges of about the same height, some as much as about a half mile apart at the greatest, ran more or less parallel to each other as though they were furrows dug by a team of huge horses or mules pulling an enormous middle-buster plow throwing the dirt up on both sides to a height of a couple hundred feet, with the middles accounting for the almost half mile separating the ridges." (p. 106)

<sup>76</sup>*Inventory of the County Archives of Arkansas, Number 23, Faulkner County* (The Arkansas Historical Records Survey Project: December 1939) p. 13.

<sup>77</sup>"Executive Order No. 7951: Withdrawal of Public Land for Lookout Station, Arkansas." *National Archives, 3 Federal Register* 1995.

<sup>78</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 12, October 1938, p. 6.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, Volume 2, No. 1, November 1938, p. 5.

<sup>80</sup>Ervin A. Norris, oral interview, March 9, 2003.

<sup>81</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, December 29, 1938, weekly edition.

<sup>82</sup>Camp F-70, Company 1705.

<sup>83</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 2, No. 1, November 1938, page five. According to the CCC Alumni Association, Camp Hardy (F-70) was a forestry camp established in October 1935 and was made up of the men of Company 1705.

<sup>84</sup>*The National Geodetic Survey Data Sheet*, [Online] Station Designation: Point Pisgah. Available from <http://www.ngs.noaa.gov>

<sup>85</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 11, September 1938, p. 5.

<sup>86</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, January 26, 1939, weekly edition.

<sup>87</sup>Ervin A. Norris, oral interview, March 9, 2003.

<sup>88</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, January 26, 1939, weekly edition. It appears that either the *Log Cabin* or Mr. Logan may have embellished the "lost time" story and placed too much "blame" on Mr. Gilmore, a relatively new enlistee. Mr. Sherrill Gilmore's injury at Mt. Pisgah on January 20, 1939, according to the *Halsey Journal*, merely broke a string of eighty-one days without a "lost time" accident. On the same page of the camp paper which welcomed Gilmore to Camp Halsey the previous October, the *Journal* lamented the fact that an injury to a Mr. James H. Jones broke a much more significant long-running "no lost time" record among Arkansas CCC camps at the time: 650 days.

<sup>89</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 2, No. 3, January 1939, p. 2.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, Volume 1, No. 12, October 1938, p. 2.

<sup>91</sup>Sherrill Gilmore, oral interview, March 7, 2003.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 2, No. 5, March 1939, p. 2.

<sup>95</sup>Sherrill Gilmore, oral interview, March 7, 2003.

<sup>96</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, December 29, 1938, weekly edition.

<sup>97</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 2, No. 4, February 1939, p. 6.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, Volume 2, No. 5, March 1939, p. 5.

<sup>99</sup>Arkansas Forestry Commission, *Sixth Annual Report*, June 30, 1939.

<sup>100</sup>Author unknown, Tower Hill correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, February 8, 1940, weekly edition.

Regarding this particular road and as testament to the workmanship of the CCC, this writer drove the old tower road from Skinner Hill Road to the summit on camping trips as a high school student in the late 1970s. Though tricky in places, the road was still passable in a non-four-wheel-drive 1970 GM pick-up.

<sup>101</sup>*The National Geodetic Survey Data Sheet*, [Online] Cited March 17, 2003. Station Designation: Point Pisgah, available from <http://www.ngs.noaa.gov>

<sup>102</sup>Lang, *Two Decades of State Forestry in Arkansas*, p. 213.

<sup>103</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, September 8, 1938, weekly edition.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.* Mr. Blythe took his prize in stride, noting in his September 8, 1938 column: "Upon some sad morrow, no doubt, someone with stronger pucker and pressure will rob me of my glory, but until then, let me be champion with all the attending honors." It is unknown whether his record still stands.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, August 25, 1938, weekly edition.

<sup>109</sup>Author unknown, Gleason correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, September 1, 1938, weekly edition. This entry is possibly by Miss Jennie Shaw, who, according to Berry's article in *Faulkner County: It's Land and People*, was the rural correspondent for this community on August 8, 1937.

<sup>110</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, September 1, 1938, weekly edition. The careful reader will note that the *Log Cabin*'s reference to "about 45 years ago" for the time of Hoover's survey party in Arkansas is probably more accurate than the *Halsey Journal*'s "fifty-one" years, for the reasons discussed in footnote 44.

<sup>111</sup>Vernon Blythe, Centerville correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, September 1, 1938, weekly edition.

<sup>112</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, December 29, 1938, weekly edition.

<sup>113</sup>Author unknown, Tower Hill correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, June 27, 1940, weekly edition.

<sup>114</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, December 29, 1938, weekly edition.

<sup>115</sup>Arkansas Forestry Commission, *Fifth Annual Report* (June 30, 1938) pages 11-12.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*

- <sup>117</sup>Originally designed by W. B. Osborne in 1920, this instrument is considered the standard instrument used by lookouts for over 80 years. Osborne, a former U. S. Forest Service employee, was also instrumental in pioneering panoramic photography techniques. For more information, see the website for the Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center, United States Geological Survey, <http://www.nrmssc.usgs.gov/research/panphoto.htm>.
- <sup>118</sup>*Inventory of the County Archives of Arkansas, Number 23, Faulkner County*, p. 13.
- <sup>119</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 3, January 1938.
- <sup>120</sup>N. K. Clemmensen, Assistant Forester, "Forest Protection Activities," *Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of Arkansas Forestry Commission Cooperators*, June 20, 1938.
- <sup>121</sup>Vernon Blythe, Centerville correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, July 14, 1938, weekly edition.
- <sup>122</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, October 6, 1938, weekly edition. Presumably, because the tower at Mt. Pisgah (18-5) was still under construction, the writer is making reference to towers 18-1 (Buffalo Hump), 18-2 (Saltillo) and the Heber Springs tower (18-3).
- <sup>123</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 11, September 1938, p. 6.
- <sup>124</sup>Vernon Blythe, Centerville correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, October 6, 1938, weekly edition.
- <sup>125</sup>Author unknown, Damascus correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, October 6, 1938, weekly edition. This entry is possibly by Mrs. Dora Brown, who, according to Berry's article in *Faulkner County: It's Land and People*, was the rural correspondent for this community on August 8, 1937.
- <sup>126</sup>Author unknown, Gold Creek correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, October 13, 1938, weekly edition.
- <sup>127</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 12, October 1938, p. 6.
- <sup>128</sup>Vernon Blythe, Centerville correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, October 20, 1938, weekly edition.
- <sup>129</sup>Author unknown, Republican correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, November 17, 1938, weekly edition. This entry is possibly by Miss Emma Duncan, who, according to Berry's article in *Faulkner County: It's Land and People*, was the rural correspondent for this community on August 8, 1937.
- <sup>130</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 2, No. 5, March 1939, p. 2.
- <sup>131</sup>Vernon Blythe, Centerville correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, February 23, 1939, weekly edition.
- <sup>132</sup>*Ibid.*, March 16, 1939, weekly edition.
- <sup>133</sup>*Archives of the Counties of the State of Arkansas, No. 23, Faulkner County*, p. 13.
- <sup>134</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, February 9, 1939, weekly edition.
- <sup>135</sup>*Ibid.*, April 6, 1939, weekly edition.
- <sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*, March 28, 1940, weekly edition.
- <sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*, April 4, 1940, weekly edition. Presumably, the article meant to state the Saltillo station.
- <sup>138</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, November 19, 1942, weekly edition.
- <sup>139</sup>Arkansas Forestry Commission, *Fifth Annual Report*, June 30, 1938.
- <sup>140</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>141</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, January 26, 1939, weekly edition.
- <sup>142</sup>Lang, *Two Decades of State Forestry in Arkansas*, p. 215.
- <sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>144</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, July 1, 1943, weekly edition.
- <sup>145</sup>*Ibid.* The reader will note the apparent conflict in this reference and the information cited from the *County Archives* which states that the district forester "manned" this tower at some point, even if briefly.
- <sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>147</sup>Arkansas Forestry Commission, *Eighth Annual Report*, June 30, 1941.
- <sup>148</sup>*Log Cabin Democrat*, July 1, 1943, weekly edition. Throughout this article, there have been references made to the "residence," "dwelling" or "cabin" constructed in tandem with each tower. The use of the term "cabin" comes from the various articles in both the *Halsey Journal* and the *Log Cabin Democrat*, and even the Forestry Commission's annual reports. However, there is no evidence that these residential structures were the type of log or stone cabins built by other CCC companies and found in Arkansas state parks such as Devil's Den or Petit Jean. In light of the type of concrete foundation piers found at Mt. Pisgah, and the fact that the residence there was capable of being moved, the indications are that the structures were probably simple, wood frame buildings.
- <sup>149</sup>Public Land Order 3277, December 3, 1963, *Federal Register* Volume 28, Number 237, page 13306; F.R. Doc. 63-12673.
- <sup>150</sup>Patent No. 1238375, recorded at Deed Record Book 173, Page 539, records of Faulkner County, Arkansas. In 1968, Guy W. and Dolores Murphy purchased this parcel as part of a larger tract sold by Mr. Saunders. As of this writing, the site remains in the Murphy family.
- <sup>151</sup>The Forestry Commission's operations map in its *Annual Report* of 1941 indicated that the Hunter Mountain tower south of Clinton, one of the other five towers of former Unit 18, was no longer in service as it does not appear on the map. While the Forestry Commission's operations maps have been a valuable source in researching this article, the maps are not infallible: The Mt. Pisgah tower symbol was consistently shown on the maps on the west side of the Cadron Creek—in Conway County. One possible explanation for this error is that had the symbol been placed in the proper location, it would have obscured part of the word "Faulkner" on the map.
- <sup>152</sup>Blanche Shaw Etchison, oral interview, March 8, 2003.
- <sup>153</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 1, No. 11, September 1938, p. 6.

- <sup>154</sup>Blanche Shaw Etchison, oral interview, March 8, 2003.
- <sup>155</sup>Grey Turney, former district forester, Arkansas Forestry Commission, oral interview, January 24, 2003.
- <sup>156</sup>George Johnson, oral interview, February 14, 2003.
- <sup>157</sup>Hauastein, Hans "Faulkner County High Point Trip Report" [online]. Cited April 12, 2001, available from [http://www.cohp.org/ar/Faulkner\\_1.html](http://www.cohp.org/ar/Faulkner_1.html). Apparently, "high pointing" is a hobby in which the participant hikes to the point of highest elevation in a county or parish.
- <sup>158</sup>Grey Turney, former district forester, Arkansas Forestry Commission, oral interview, January 24, 2003.
- <sup>159</sup>*The National Geodetic Survey Data Sheets*, Station Designation "Saltillo:" [Online] Cited March 17, 2003, available from <http://www.ngs.noaa.gov>
- <sup>160</sup>Marvin "Bud" Kelley, oral interview, March 17, 2003.
- <sup>161</sup>Mr. Simon related another story that was similar to what Mr. E. A. Norris witnessed during the construction of the Mt. Pisgah tower. He stated that some of the old timers told tales about people taking leather straps and using them to slide down the cable supports at the Saltillo tower.
- <sup>162</sup>Carlee Kelley, oral interview, March 17, 2003.
- <sup>163</sup>National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni, <http://www.cccalumni.org>
- <sup>164</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>165</sup>*Halsey Journal*, Volume 2, No. 6, April 1939, p. 7.
- <sup>166</sup>On January 15, 2003, a 100-foot steel Aermotor lookout tower salvaged from the Missouri forestry department could be purchased on Ebay®. One opening bid of \$12,500.00 was placed, but the minimum sale price set by the seller was not reached.
- <sup>167</sup>*The National Geodetic Survey Data Sheets*, [Online] Cited March 18, 2003. Station Designation "Saltillo:" Available from <http://www.ngs.noaa.gov>  
Mr. Clarence Love also recounted his own snake story—corroborated by Mr. Chapman. It seems that while working near the Cadron bottoms, Mr. Love, in the absence of a foreman, was in charge of a crew of men. One enrollee encountered a rattlesnake and caught it behind its head, with the snake then wrapping itself around the worker's arm. Mr. Love advised the excited CCC man to get the snake on the ground so that he could dispatch it with an ax. At the same time, Mr. Chapman was indulging a habit he had developed after he would deliver a load of sand, gravel or workers: napping under a shade tree. Mr. Love and some other workers took the remains of the rattler and curled it up not far from the drowsing enrollee. According to Mr. Chapman, his napping days were over.
- <sup>168</sup>Vernon Blythe, Centerville correspondent, *Log Cabin Democrat*, April 13, 1939, weekly edition. After the closure of Camp Halsey, Mr. Blythe apparently followed Company 4748 to Paron. The new Centerville correspondent noted in articles in May of 1939 that Mr. Blythe returned from Paron to attend church and "has moved away with the forestry department."