

Sunridge Fire Tower

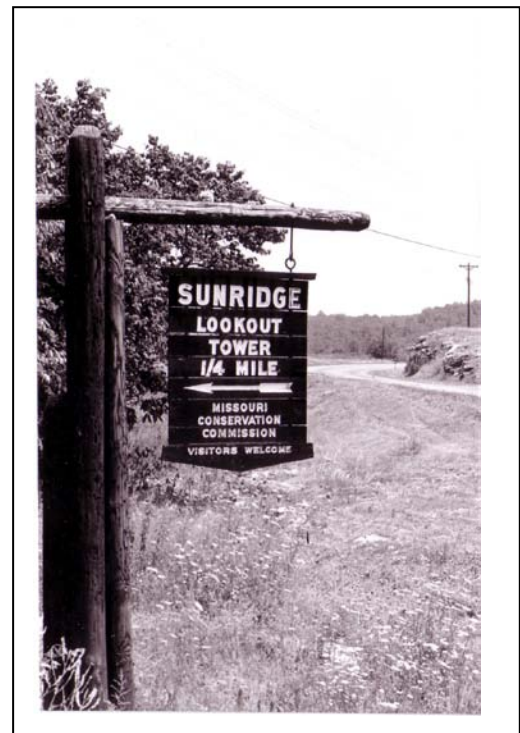
By Dave Hallemann



Located about 6 miles north of Hillsboro just off State Highway 21 on Tower Road sits this 6 acre site. It is at the time of this writing a Jefferson County Park.

The photo at left and below are from the collection of Ed Hemme photographer for the book "*Historic Sites of Jefferson County.*" It was taken in 1967 and is a glimpse into the past of this wonderful historic site.

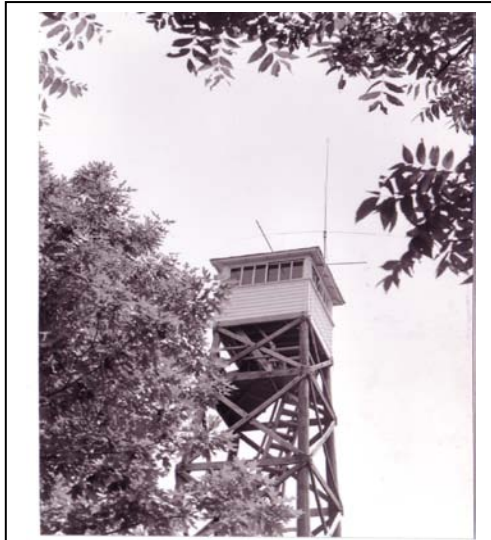
The tower in this picture is made of pine poles. It is thought to have possibly been built by the Civilian Conservation Corp about 1940. Siting about 60+ feet into the air atop a 950 foot tall ridge it commanded a mammoth view of the Jefferson County hillsides for miles in all directions.



As it looked in 1967, the sign denoting the tower can be seen siting alongside Missouri State Highway 21, is no longer present today.

The property was first purchased by the Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri on the 16th December 1948, from Roy Yates and his wife Milerna, for \$1 and other valuable considerations, 6.06 acres, being part of the Southwest quarter of Section 36, Township 42 north, Range 4 east...

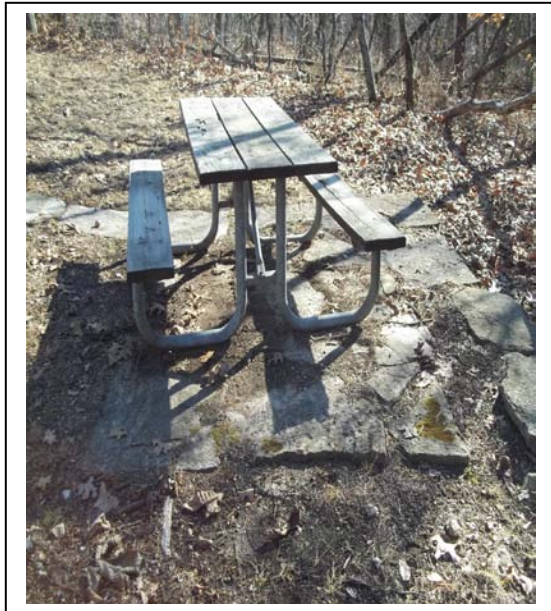
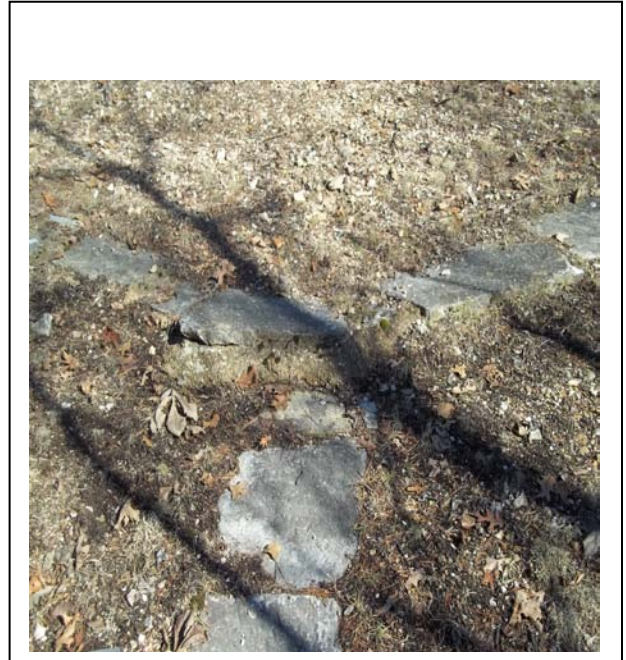
Contacting Craig Luetkemeyer, CPRP Recreation Division Manager Jefferson County Parks and Recreation Department, I was advised that the only history they had is that the tower was deed to the Jefferson County Parks in 1980 as the conservation no longer had use for it.



In this 1967 picture notice the steepness of the steps up to the lookout platform and the radio antenna on top.

I next contacted Tim E. Smith, MDC Ombudsman to see if they had a history of it. Tim stated his records shows it was originally a wood fire tower, built in 1940 and he believes it was replaced in 1969 by he assumes a 100 foot metal tower. The pictures from 1967 bear this fact out that it was originally a wooded tower.

Below the tower are picnic tables with large flat stones used as walkways between the tables and parking area.



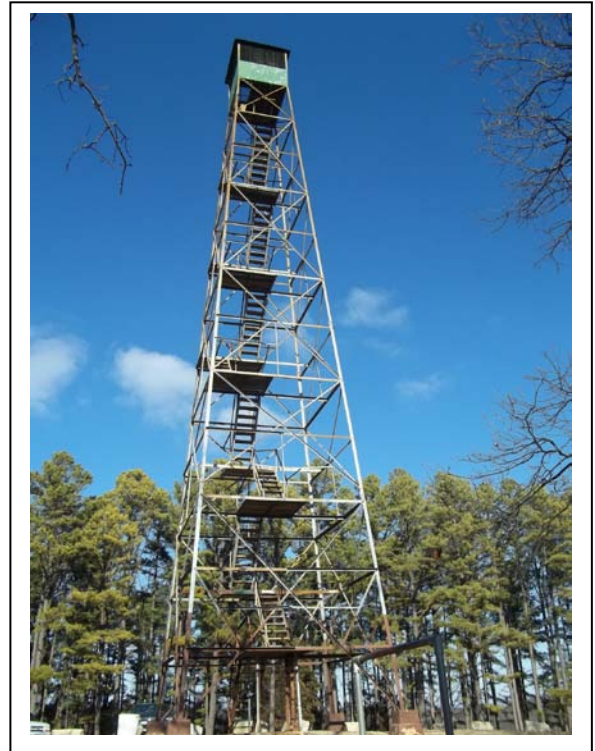
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Below is the tower as of today January 2014. It appears to be approximately 100 feet tall made out of metal as Tim thought. This would be a benefit if a fire was in the area around the tower as it would not burn.

The sign is at the entrance to the park on Tower Road. Under the tower is a parking area, bathrooms, picnic tables scattered around and a covered pavilion with more tables.



Sunridge Park is open from dawn to dusk. You may climb the tower at your own risk if you have the courage. If you do you will be rewarded with a truly inspiring view of Jefferson County.



I remember back about 1962 when I was a boy scout, one of our members grandfather, owned a farm a few miles down Tower Road past the park. During our campout we hiked up to the tower and climbed up to the top. It was great time that I never forgot.

However in 1940 when a war mentality gripped the nation, the public was barred from lookout towers to prevent sabotage or covert signaling.

It is a wonderful area to take the kids for an afternoon picnic, to enjoy the view, or to just reflect on the way things were 70+ years ago. So if you find yourself driving down Highway 21 take a few minutes to detour to Sunridge Park. It will definitely be worth your while.