

# Devil's Head Lookout History

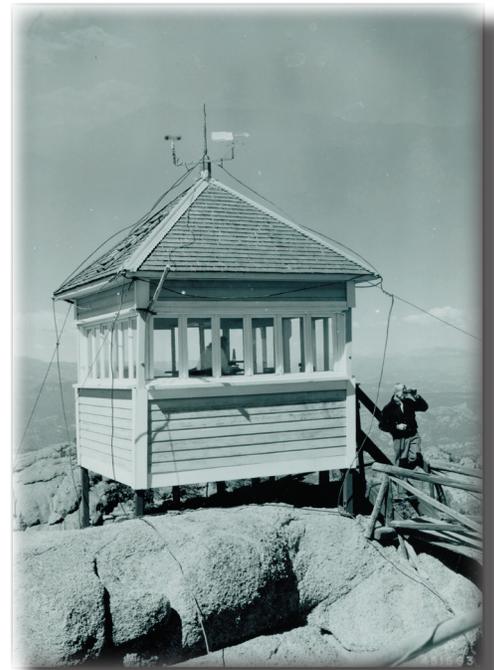


The original lookout in 1912

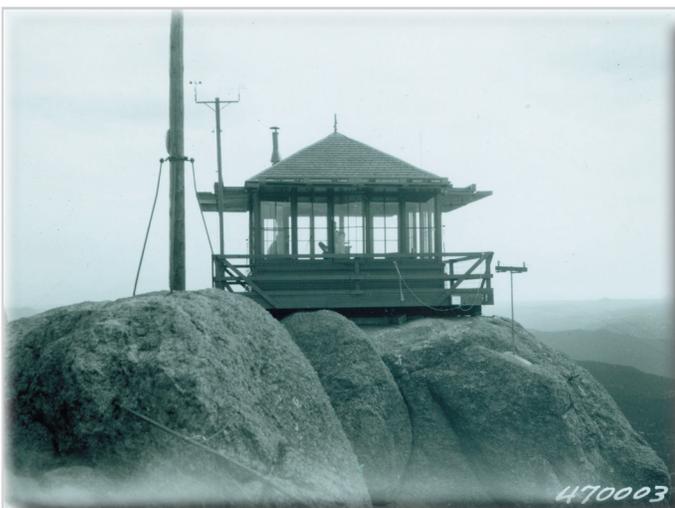
In 1907, the two-year old U.S. Forest Service planned a series of seven fire lookout stations, spanning the front range of the Rockies from New Mexico to Wyoming, of which Devil's Head was one. In 1912, the first lookout station was established on Devil's Head and consisted of a table with a fire finder bolted to a rock a few feet east of the present tower. A small log shelter was constructed near the fire-finder where a telephone was located and the lookout could go in case of a storm. A large tree at the base of the rocks was felled and served as steps for the first lookouts. The earliest lookouts ascended the peak from a trail originating south of the mountain near Watson Park and the Zinn Ranch. The present day trail originates on the north side near the Devil's Head campground.

In 1919 a glass-enclosed observatory measuring ten-by-ten feet was constructed on the peak, housing the fire-finder and telephone. A series of thirty foot poles with lateral slats nailed every ten inches, replaced the large tree as steps to the tower. A new wooden stairway and railing were built in 1921. The original tower was used extensively (often six months a year) for 32 years.

On June 1, 1951, 100 men and 72 mules from Company A, 973rd Engineer Construction Battalion from Ft. Carson, began to dismantle the old tower and construct a new one. Several tons of brick, steel, lumber, water and cement were hauled up the then two and a half mile trail by means of a small Forest Service tractor and mules. Work included reconstruction of the trail, stairway and cabin as well as the tower. The tower was completed on September 11, 1951. The trail and cabin were finished later that fall and the old shelter was cut up into firewood.



The second observatory in 1948



The current observatory in 1952

The 1951 tower and cabin are the ones still in use today, fully equipped with fire-finding apparatus and connected to Forest Service lines of communication by radio and telephone. Devil's Head is the last of the original sever front range lookout towers still in use; the rest having given way to more modern means of forest-fire detection.

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