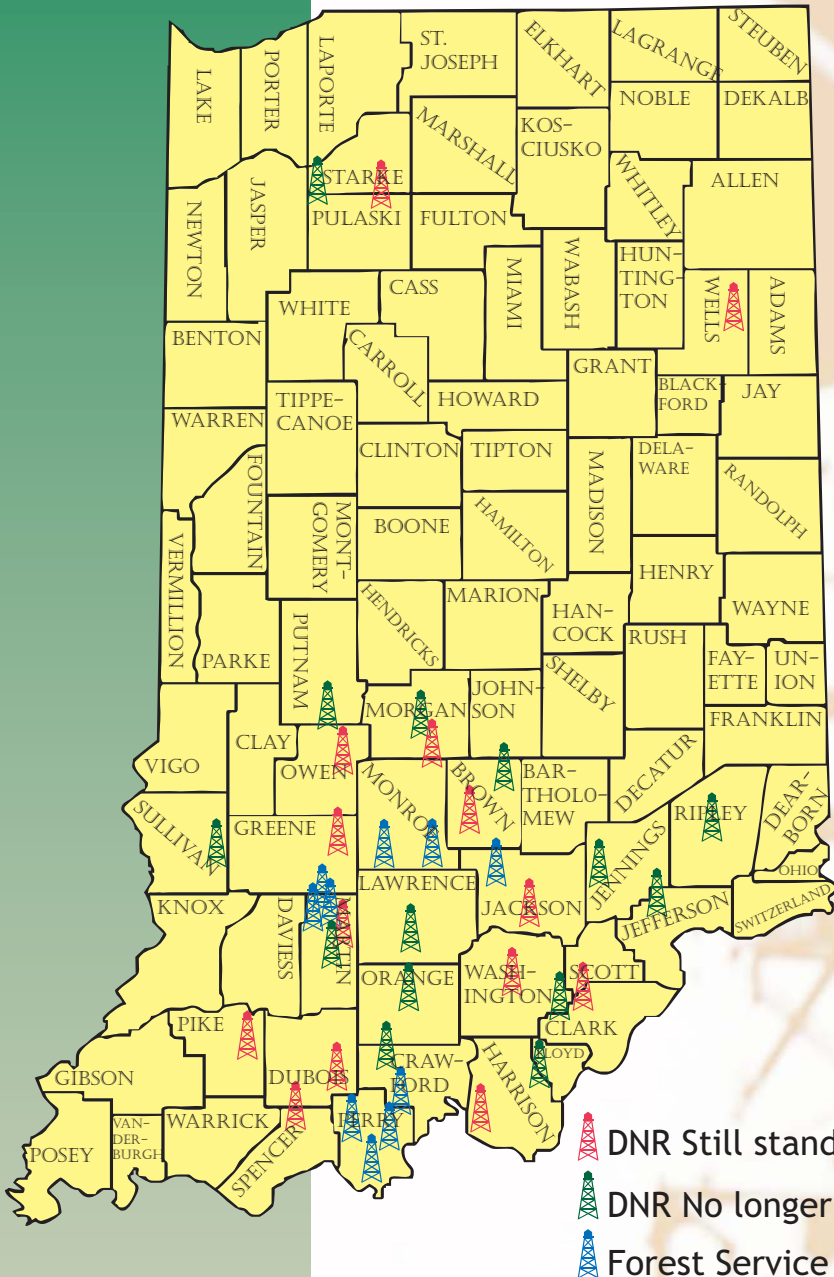


# Indiana's Fire Towers

This fire tower was part of a network of towers that once protected Indiana.

In 1930, Indiana began constructing a series of fire towers with the goal of having no visibility gap. By 1952, Indiana had 33 towers, most of them in the southern half of the state.



## Tools of the Trade

Fire towers were generally equipped with:  
*Communication equipment* (radio and telephone)  
*Psychrometer* to measure humidity and determine fire danger  
*Alidade* to determine the exact location of a fire.

## Osborne Fire Finder:

*pinpointing a fire*  
 An alidade, sometimes referred to as an Osborne Fire Finder, consisted of an oriented topographic map on a circular disk. Moveable sighting apertures were opposite each other on the disk.



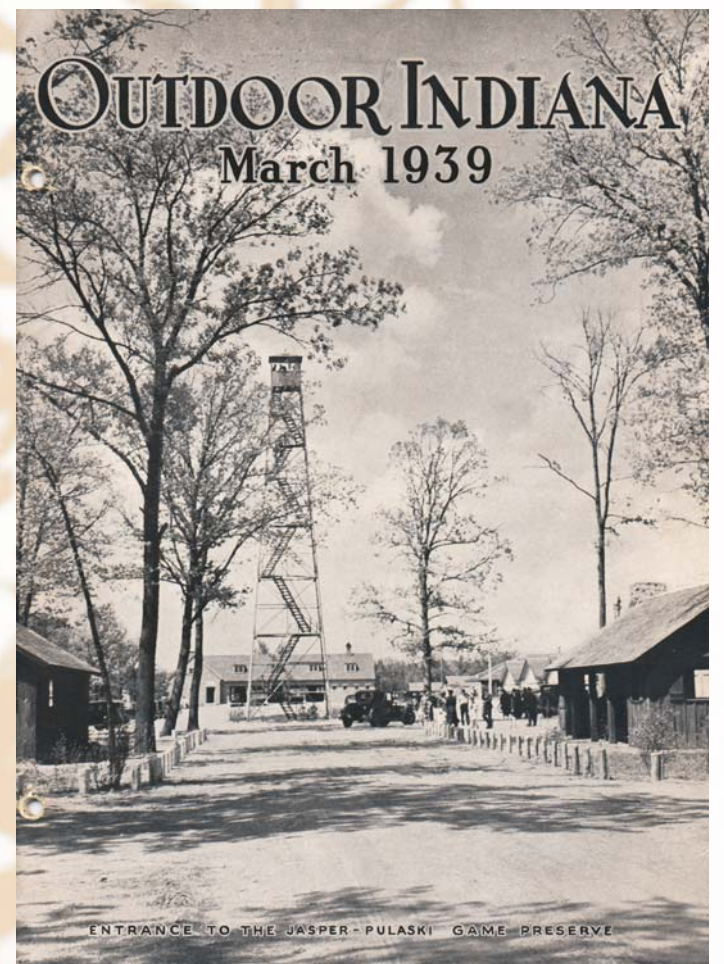
The fire lookout lined the apertures on a plume of smoke and determined the line on which the fire was located. Another fire tower lookout did the same process. The fire was located where their two lines crossed.



## Fire Lookouts

Many Indiana lookouts were local farmers, recruited when the fire danger was high. Sometimes a wife or other family member would serve as lookout. Lookout duties included: watching for smoke, locating and reporting suspicious smoke plumes, taking weather readings, communicating with fire crews during a fire, recording fires, keeping the area around the tower mowed and keeping the outhouse clean.

Lookouts had to pass a vision test and be able to climb the tower several times. During WWII, many of Indiana's lookouts were women.



By the 1970s, planes replaced fire towers as the means of locating fires. Today, fires are reported by local residents.

This fire tower stands as a sentinel, reminding us of the time when Indiana was protected by a series of towers staffed by dedicated lookouts.



**DNR**  
 Indiana Department  
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