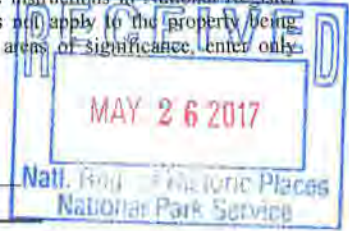


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MP-1297

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Pequot Fire Lookout Tower

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: County Rd. 11 about 0.5 mile east of County Rd. 112

City or town: Pequot Lakes State: MN County: Crow Wing

Not For Publication N/A

Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

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

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

 _____ Signature of certifying official/Title: Amy Spong, Deputy SHPO MNHS	<u>5-18-17</u> Date
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ Signature of commenting official:	_____ Date
_____ Title :	_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

Crow Wing Co., MN
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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

other (explain):

Joe Edson B. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

7.10.17
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

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

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u> </u>	<u> 1 </u>	buildings
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 2 </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u> 2 </u>	<u> 3 </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT: fire station

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT: fire station

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Steel fire lookout tower

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STEEL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower is located within the eastern city limits of Pequot Lakes in north central Minnesota's Crow Wing County. The principal element on the 6.1-acre nominated property is an intact 100'-tall steel fire lookout tower built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1935 for the Forestry Division of the Minnesota Department of Conservation (now Department of Natural Resources). The Contributing site, which is forested, also includes an access road, the ruins of two stone retaining walls, two building foundations, and other resources. There are three Noncontributing resources. One is a building: a concrete block utility shed (circa 1985). The other two are structures: a set of wooden trail steps (circa 2001) and a chainlink fence (2011) around the base of the tower. The fire tower is still in use for fire spotting and for public climbing.

Narrative Description

See Continuation Sheet.

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

CONSERVATION

ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

1935-1966

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

Minnesota Dept. Conservation Forestry Division (Builder)

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower meets the registration requirements in the MPDF "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943" (as amended) under the subsection "Fire Lookout Towers" within the property type "Conservation Structures." The property is eligible under Criterion A as an important example of Minnesota's second generation of fire lookout towers, those fabricated and erected during the New Deal. The property played an instrumental role in the detection and suppression of forest fires in Minnesota between 1935 and 1970 while the use of fire lookout towers was the most important fire detection method. The Pequot tower is an excellent example of the permanent physical accomplishments of CCC forestry work in the Brainerd area. It is associated with the New Deal's unprecedented dedication of public resources to forestry and natural resource conservation in Minnesota and is associated with the massive federal and state effort to combat the devastating poverty and social impacts of the Great Depression by providing meaningful work to the poor while at the same time constructing necessary public infrastructure. The tower is significant to the history of the Minnesota Department of Conservation Division of Forestry as one of the most important lookout towers in the Forestry Division's Brainerd Ranger District. The tower protected resources critical to the development of one of the state's most important recreational areas, the Brainerd Lakes region. It was a popular visitor destination thereby playing a key role in public education about forest fires and conservation; this tower-based public education was a critical aspect of forestry management since human activity was the leading cause of wildfires. The tower also played an instrumental role in protecting the timber resources critical to the area's commercial forestry, a significant component of the local economy. The Pequot tower is eligible under Criterion C by being an unusually well-preserved fire lookout tower. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of the property type by possessing the character-defining features of the type and retaining very good historic integrity. The areas of significance are Conservation, Politics/Government, and Engineering. The period of significance is 1935-1966. The level of significance is Local.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

See Continuation Sheet.

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

Crow Wing Co., MN
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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

See Continuation Sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): CW-SIB-012

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property approx. 6.1 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 | Easting: 400610 | Northing: 5161929 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |
| 5. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower

Crow Wing Co., MN
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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the nominated property is shown by the solid line on Figure 5. The south boundary is drawn 50' north of the centerline of Crow Wing County Road 11. This boundary is at the approximate top of the road ditch. The centerline of the county road is aligned with the section line dividing Sections 11 and 14, T136N, R29W. The southwest corner of the nominated property is 160' west of Section 11's half-section line (see Figure 5). The southeast corner of the nominated property is 665' east of the same half-section line. The north boundary is 456' north of the south boundary. This north boundary is 150' north of the center of the tower.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of the nominated property encompasses the parcel of land historically associated with the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower. The boundary was identified using the information in the "Determining Property Boundaries" paragraph under the registration requirements for fire lookout towers in Section F of the "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943" MPDF. As explained in this paragraph, the boundary of a National Register-eligible fire lookout tower property should include site elements (or remnants of these elements) that were in place during the period of significance including an access road, telephone line, buildings, retaining walls, trails, intentional plantings, etc. The boundary should also include significant portions of the hill or knob that elevated the tower to sufficient height to create an effective lookout.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Susan Granger and Scott Kelly
organization: Gemini Research
street & number: 15 East 9th St
city or town: Morris state: MN zip code: 56267
e-mail: gemres@info-link.net
telephone: 320-589-3846
date: January 2017

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
City or Vicinity: Pequot Lakes
County: Crow Wing State: MN
Photographer: Scott Kelly

See Figure 6 for camera facings marked on a sketch map of the site.

Photo #1 of 22

The lookout tower from County Road 11 outside of (southwest of) the boundary of the nominated property (facing northeast, Oct. 2014).

Photo #2 of 22

South and east sides of the tower (facing northwest, Oct. 2014).

Photo #3 of 22

East and north sides of the tower (facing southwest, Oct. 2014).

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower

Name of Property

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Photo #4 of 22

South side of the tower (facing north, Oct. 2014).

Photo #5 of 22

The east side of the cab. A modern communications antenna is attached to the southeast corner of the tower (facing west, Oct. 2014).

Photo #6 of 22

The lowest flight of steps (facing northwest, Oct. 2014).

Photo #7 of 22

Tower detail with steps and corner landing; photo taken midway up the tower (facing northwest, Oct. 2011).

Photo #8 of 22

Tower detail and view from the tower; photo taken midway up (facing northwest, Oct. 2011).

Photo #9 of 22

Interior of the cab windows before recent repairs (facing southeast, Oct. 2011).

Photo #10 of 22

The cab floor and its trap door before recent repairs (facing south, Oct. 2011).

Photo #11 of 22

The access road and steel entrance gate near the southwest corner of the property (facing northeast, Oct. 2014).

Photo #12 of 22

South side of the access road loop west of the tower. Obscured by the trees at center right is the foundation of the 12' x 16' Warehouse/Office (facing west, Oct. 2011).

Photo #13 of 22

North side of the looped access road. This part of the road is no longer in use. The tower is in the upper right corner of the view (facing east, Oct. 2014).

Photo #14 of 22

Utility pole located near the stone retaining walls south of the tower (facing south, Oct. 2014).

Photo #15 of 22

Southwest corner of the North Retaining Wall. The wall helped create a level area on which the cabin stood. The circa 1985 Utility Shed at upper left stands on part of the spotter's cabin site (facing northeast, Oct. 2014).

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Photo #16 of 22

Southeast corner of the South Retaining Wall. The utility pole is in the upper right corner of the view (facing northwest, Oct. 2011).

Photo #17 of 22

North end of the poured concrete foundation of the 12' x 16' Warehouse/Office (facing southwest, Oct. 2014).

Photo #18 of 22

Poured concrete foundation of the 20' x 26' Warehouse (facing east, Oct. 2014).

Photo #19 of 22

Utility Shed (facing southwest, Oct. 2014).

Photo #20 of 22

Modern trail approaching the north side of the tower. Note the tall Norway (also called red) pines, likely planted by the CCC (facing south, Oct. 2014).

Photo #21 of 22

Modern trail north of the tower (facing southwest, Oct. 2014).

Photo #22 of 22

Modern timber trail steps near the northeast corner of the nominated property. The steps are scheduled to be removed because the trail has been rerouted (facing west, Oct. 2011).

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

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

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Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
Name of Property
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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower is located on the north side of County Road 11, also called Breezy Point Road, about three-quarters of a mile east of the center of Pequot Lakes. Pequot Lakes is a small city about 18 miles north of Brainerd in north central Minnesota, a region historically populated with coniferous and deciduous forests, wetlands, and numerous lakes and streams.¹ The 6.1-acre nominated property is within the current city limits of Pequot Lakes. Before a 2002 merger of Pequot Lakes and Sibley Township it was outside of the city limits. The property is located in northwestern Crow Wing County. Because the tower stands only 1.5 miles away from the Cass County-Crow Wing County line, about one-half of the area it protects lies within each county (Figure 5).

The site was established in 1927 by the Minnesota Forest Service. It has served as the Pequot Fire Lookout from 1927-1928 to the present. (From approximately 2008-2014 the tower was not used for fire spotting but only for public visiting.) The property served as the headquarters for the Pequot Ranger District from 1929-1956.² The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower is still in use for fire spotting. The site is open to the public and the tower is often open for public climbing.

The current steel tower is the site's second lookout tower. The first tower was erected in late 1927 by the Minnesota Forest Service and first manned in the spring of 1928. In 1928 (or perhaps late 1927) the access road (extant) was built. In 1928 the agency also built the spotter's cabin (razed), the 12' x 16' Warehouse/Office³ (foundation extant), and, likely, the two stone retaining walls (ruins extant). In 1935 the agency replaced the first tower with the current tower using CCC labor. During the 1930s and early 1940s the CCC also improved the lookout cabin, built a new privy and a small icehouse (both razed), and built the 20' x 26' Warehouse (foundation extant).

The nominated property includes five substantive resources – three structures, one building, and one site. The principal structure is the fire lookout tower, which is Contributing. The other two structures are a set of circa 2001 wooden trail steps and a 2011 chainlink fence around the tower, both Noncontributing. The building is a circa 1985 Utility Shed, which is Noncontributing. The site, which is Contributing, includes elements such as the access road, modern gate, the ruins of two stone retaining walls, two concrete building foundations, a utility pole, a trail segment, and vegetation, none of which are individually counted but are part of the site. The property has not been evaluated for archaeological resources.

Setting. The 6.1-acre nominated property is located on the south edge of a 40-acre parcel of forested land owned since 1937 by the Minnesota Department of Conservation (now the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources or MnDNR). (The lookout tower site was leased by the state between 1927 and 1937.) The nominated property is surrounded on all sides by woodlands and farmland, with a mix of public and private ownership. The broad viewshed visible from the top of the fire tower contains a similar mix of forests, farmland, large and small lakes, roads, and towns. While there are more roads,

¹ All distances in this nomination are "as the crow flies."

² The tower and the ranger district were historically known as "Pequot," rather than "Pequot Lakes," because the town of Pequot did not change its name to Pequot Lakes until 1940. After 1940 the state forestry agency often continued to use the name "Pequot."

³ "Warehouse" is the state forestry term for a storage building.

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Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
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buildings, and other manmade structures visible from the cab than there were historically, the setting generally retains historic integrity from the period of significance.

A 10-car bituminous parking area is located about 550' east of the boundary of the nominated property on the north side of County Road 11. It was built in 2001 to provide public parking for people visiting the tower and walking on area trails. The parking lot is surrounded by forest and is not visible from the nominated property. A trail winding through the woods connects the parking area and the nominated property.

Topography. A fire lookout is created through a combination of topography and tower height – the two work together to raise the fire spotter above the surrounding landscape to create an effective lookout.⁴ Both the 1927 and 1935 Pequot towers were erected on the same spot, which is one of the highest places in the area. The elevation of the top of the hill (at the base of the lookout tower) is 1,378' above sea level. For comparison, the elevation of County Road 11 at the entrance to the site is 1,308' above sea level. The west, east, and south boundaries of the nominated property circumscribe the knob of this hill. The hill is part of an approximately two-mile-long ridge line aligned southwest to northeast (Figure 1). Hence, the land north of the tower remains at a high elevation for some distance. The nominated property's topography retains historic integrity from the period of significance.

Spatial Organization and Circulation. Like most of Minnesota's steel fire lookout towers, the Pequot tower is aligned cardinally. The rest of the site's spatial organization is informal and the access road is curved, both largely in response to the hilly topography (Figure 6). The top of the hill provides only enough level terrain for the lookout tower and the narrow access road. Immediately south of the tower, the land descends so that the spotter's cabin (razed) was built into the hillside and required a stone retaining wall (see North Retaining Wall Ruins below) to create sufficient level terrain. West of the tower along the access road, the 10' x 16' Warehouse/Office was also built into a slope. The somewhat larger 20' x 26' Warehouse was sited farther to the southwest where the terrain was more level. This location also placed the warehouse closer to the site entrance, desirable since the building housed firefighting equipment used district-wide. (The foundations of both warehouses are extant and described below.)

The access road was built by the Minnesota Forest Service in 1928 (or perhaps late 1927) when or soon after the lookout site was established. The road was used throughout the period of significance. The road was improved around the 1930s, possibly by the CCC. The access road generally retains its original width and alignment within the nominated property, except at the southwest end. The road enters the nominated site from County Road 11, climbs the hill to the northeast, and loops around the tower at the top of the hill. The road surface is about 10' wide. It is surfaced with sandy gravel and, in some areas, with an accumulation of soil and grass (Photo 12). The north side of the loop is built on fill on the north slope of the hill (Photo 13). Visible on the fill slope on this side of the roadbed are small, placed, stones suggesting a 1930s construction technique. The north side of the loop is not currently in use. It is being infiltrated by saplings but is otherwise generally intact. The road is not individually counted per National Register guidelines but is part of the Contributing site.⁵

⁴ See the fire lookout towers contextual information in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) entitled "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943," as amended.

⁵ The National Register bulletin entitled *Guidelines for Counting Contributing and Noncontributing Resources for National*

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The access road was originally about one-quarter mile long (Figure 1). Outside of the boundaries of the nominated property, the access road was originally built to follow an alignment that is now occupied by County Road 11. Until circa 1960 the county road, instead of being aligned entirely on the section line as it is today, curved around the south end of the hill on which the fire lookout site was developed. About 1960, within the property's period of significance, the county road was straightened to follow the section line – taking over the alignment of the access road – and the current site entrance was created (compare Figures 4 and 1).

Around 1985 a hinged entrance gate (Photo 11) was added to the access road in the location shown on Figure 6. The gate is built of steel angles and is about 20' long and 44" tall. The gate postdates the period of significance. Because it is a small-scale element, it is not individually counted per National Register guidelines.

A trail segment enters the nominated property near its northeast corner (Figure 6), aligned on the top of the ridge. The trail is about 6' wide and has a dirt bed. It approaches the fire tower from the north (Photos 20 and 21). It is not known whether the trail existed during the period of significance. It is not individually counted in this nomination. Around 2001 a set of wooden trail steps, about 85' long and 4' wide, was built on a branch of the trail just inside the boundary of the nominated property (Figure 6 and Photo 22). The steps are slated for removal because they are no longer needed due to a recent rerouting of the trail to a gentler grade north of the nominated property. The steps are counted as one Noncontributing Structure. East of the nominated property, the trail winds its way to the 10-car parking area described above under "Setting."

The site's spatial organization and circulation generally retain historic integrity from the period of significance. While support buildings have been removed, no other landscape or structural elements are missing. The tower, access road, stone retaining wall ruins, and building foundations continue to convey the property's historic arrangement and functional relationships. The north loop of the access road is no longer used but is clearly visible. The relocation of the southwest end of the access road occurred during the period of significance. The steel entrance gate (circa 1985) and the modern trail steps (circa 2001) are minor, unobtrusive additions.

Vegetation. At the time the tower was built, the nominated property had fewer trees because it had been logged. The CCC and the state forest service planted numerous trees on the property during the period of significance including red (Norway) pines near the tower that are now mature (Photo 20). During the period of significance the property gradually became more forested as trees and shrubs "volunteered" to the site – that is, naturally propagated from the surrounding forests.

Today the nominated property is forested with a mixture of coniferous and deciduous trees including pines, spruce, maples, oaks, ash, aspen, and birch, among others. The site also contains deciduous shrubs such as smooth sumac, dogwoods, and elderberry, and a wide range of herbaceous

Register Documentation (National Register Bulletin 14) categorizes road and trail systems as structures. The bulletin indicates that only resources "substantial in size and scale" should be counted. In the bulletin's examples, access roads such as that at Pequot Fire Lookout Tower are not individually counted, nor are small-scale or minor resources such as sheds, fencing, and utility poles.

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groundcover plants. There are grasses along County Road 11 and along the access road including at the base of the tower. In the vicinity of the North and South Retaining Wall Ruins are three large flowering lilac shrubs (*Syringa vulgaris*) that were undoubtedly planted by rangers or their families while living at the site during the period of significance. These three ornamental shrubs are distinct from the naturalistic forest environment and interesting evidence of domestic occupation. The property's vegetation generally retains historic integrity from the period of significance.

Fire Lookout Tower (Built 1935, Contributing Structure)

The fire lookout tower, erected in 1935, was a newly-fabricated tower as opposed to being a tower moved from another fire lookout location.⁶ The tower is 100' tall, measured from the top of the footings to the bottom of the cab, which is the typical way fire towers were measured by forestry agencies and manufacturers (Photos 1 and 2). It is made of unpainted galvanized steel. The steel parts are stamped with the manufacturer's part number. Some members also bear the mark "Bethlehem, USA," which identifies the steel maker as Bethlehem Steel Company.

The base of the tower measures about 22' square. The legs are bolted to battered concrete footings, each 3' square at the base (Photo 6). The legs are made of steel angles that measure 5" on each side. The tower legs are joined by principal horizontal members or girts that are made of 4" angles (Photos 3 and 4).

The tower legs and girts are connected with cross-braces made of 2½" steel angles. Smaller intermediate horizontal and vertical members also help stabilize and stiffen the tower.

The tower has 135 steps divided into several flights. The stairs climb the tower from inside corner to inside corner (Photos 2-5). The lowest flight of steps is bolted to a 32" x 35" concrete footing (Photo 6). The stairs are about 2' wide and the treads consist of 2" thick boards. The stairs' lattice-like stringers are made of 1½" and 2" angles. There are eight landings; those at the lower levels are rectangular and the rest are triangular. The landings have wooden floor boards. Most of the stair treads and landing boards have been replaced in-kind, both within and after the period of significance. The stairs and landings have handrails made of 1½" angles. The landing handrails are 42" tall. Attached to the landing framework is flexible, woven wire safety fencing with octagonal openings (Photo 7). The fencing may date from the period of significance or may have been replaced in-kind after the period.

At the top of the tower is an enclosed cab that is 7' x 7' square and 9' tall. The cab framework is steel. The cab's lower walls and roof are made of heavy-gauge galvanized steel sheets. The floor is made of thick tongue and groove boards with a trap door-style opening (Photo 10). The floor boards are probably original.

The cab has steel-framed, nine-pane windows (Photo 9). There are eight sashes, two per side of the cab. On each side of the cab the left-hand sash (when viewed from the outside) pivots open with the upper part tilting in and the bottom part tilting out. The inside of the cab has no permanent furnishings.

⁶ As indicated in the fire lookout towers contextual information in the "Federal Relief Construction" MPDF, the movement of a steel lookout tower from one lookout site to another was fairly common in Minnesota.

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One Division of Forestry document indicates the tower was manufactured by the McClintic-Marshall Company while another indicates the tower was manufactured by the Aermotor Company.⁷ The two companies manufactured almost identical steel towers with corner-to-corner stairs and 7' x 7' cabs. Because fire tower manufacturers competed to supply towers to government forestry agencies, some models made by competing companies were nearly identical in design. (See the fire towers discussion in Section F of the MPDF for information on the design and construction of Minnesota's fire towers.)

The tower retains good historic integrity and has few alterations. Most of the stair treads and landing boards – which are fully exposed to the elements and therefore subject to deterioration – have been replaced in-kind. The woven wire safety fencing has also probably been replaced in-kind since the period of significance. A modern vertical antenna has been added to the southeast corner of the tower below the cab. Elsewhere near the top of the tower are a few inconspicuous bolted fittings that remain from modern antennas that were installed and later removed. The base of the tower is surrounded by a chainlink fence, installed in 2011, that forms a square about 36' on each side. The fence has a hinged door opening on the east side. The fence is counted as a Noncontributing Structure. In 2012 the tower was repaired. As part of this effort, the cab was painted, broken window glass replaced, and deteriorated stair treads and landing boards replaced in-kind.

Other Site Elements

North Retaining Wall Ruins (circa 1928). The North Retaining Wall Ruins (Photo 14) consist of a mortared boulder retaining wall located about 35' south of the tower and two much smaller remnants located nearby. The North Retaining Wall helped create a flat area on which the spotter's cabin stood. The retaining wall was probably built by Minnesota Forest Service personnel in 1928 when the cabin was built. The wall ruins have a U-shaped footprint and battered southern corners (Figure 6). The south side of the ruins measures 35' east-west. The east side is about 25' long (north-south) and the west side about 12' long (north-south). At its tallest corner, which is the southwest, the wall ruins are about 36" tall (Photo 15). On the ground just south of the main part of the North Retaining Wall Ruins are two much smaller remnants. The first is a piece of mortared concrete and stone (shown in the foreground in Photo 15). The second is a larger piece of concrete and stone that resembles a step or stoop. The North Retaining Wall Ruins are in fair to poor condition and the area overgrown with trees. The North Retaining Wall Ruins are not individually counted per National Register guidelines but are considered part of the Contributing site.⁸

The fire lookout spotter's cabin, which measured 16' x 24', was built in 1928 and improved by the CCC circa 1940 when at least one of its porches was added. According to state forestry service records, the cabin had two screened porches: 12' x 7' and 6' x 8'. The building had a small concrete basement and a cistern. It was heated with a wood-burning stove and had a sink with a hand pump. The cabin

⁷ McClintic-Marshall is listed on Inventory Index Cards, updated through ca. 1950, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry; Aermotor is listed on Pequot Tower Lookout Tower Record and Administrative Site Record, index cards, ca. 1960, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry. A study of the tower part numbers would probably confirm the manufacturer.

⁸ The National Register bulletin entitled *How to Complete the National Register Form* (Bulletin 16A) indicates on page 17 "Do not count ruins separately from the site of which they are a part."

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received electricity in 1944.⁹ The cabin was razed in 1971. The northwest part of the cabin site is now occupied by the circa 1985 concrete block Utility Shed (see below).

A wooden utility pole with remnant wires and insulators at the top (Photo 14) stands about 88' south of the tower near the site of the spotters cabin and the North Retaining Wall Ruins. It is not individually counted but is part of the Contributing site. As described in the fire towers discussion in Section F of the MPDF, telephone service was essential to the operation of a fire lookout tower in Minnesota. The first telephone service to the Pequot lookout site and its tower was established in 1927. Portable telephone equipment was hauled up to the tower's cab each spring and removed in the fall. Eventually there was a telephone in the 10' x 16' Warehouse/Office and possibly also in the spotter's cabin. The current utility pole appears to date from the 1930s. A 1939 aerial photo shows a north-south telephone line extending into the site from County Road 11 that would be aligned with the pole.¹⁰ In 1944 the property received electrical service via the Rural Electric Association. Both the spotter's cabin and the 10' x 16' Warehouse/Office had electricity.¹¹

South Retaining Wall Ruins (circa 1928). The South Retaining Wall Ruins (Photo 15) consist of a mortared boulder retaining wall located about 84' south of the tower. It is believed the South Retaining Wall was built to help create a flat area measuring about 24' x 38' that served as an open yard or private area for the ranger and his family. The retaining wall was probably built by Minnesota Forest Service personnel circa 1928. It is also possible it was a 1930's CCC enhancement to the site. The wall and open area are visible on a 1939 aerial photo of the site. The stones and masonry style closely resemble those of the North Retaining Wall Ruins. The South Retaining Wall Ruins have a U-shaped footprint and battered southern corners. The south side of the ruins measures 24' east-west. The east side is about 20' long (north-south) and the west side about 38' long (north-south). At its tallest corner, which is the southeast, the wall ruins are about 36" tall (Photo 16). The wall ruins are in fair to poor condition and the area overgrown with trees. The South Retaining Wall Ruins are not individually counted per National Register guidelines but are considered part of the Contributing site.

10' x 16' Warehouse/Office Foundation (1928). The poured concrete foundation of a 10' x 16' warehouse, later office, is located about 50' west of the tower along the access road (Photo 17). The foundation is about 12" thick and about 24" tall at the northwest corner, which is the tallest, where the hill drops off. Several anchor bolts project from the upper surface of the concrete. Along the south side, where the building entrance was located, is a poured concrete apron that projects about 3' south of the rest of the foundation. The warehouse/office was a woodframe, gable-roofed building constructed in the spring of 1928 by the Minnesota Forest Service (Figure 2). It was first used as a warehouse for the storage of firefighting tools. After 1941 when the larger 20' x 26' Warehouse was built (see below), the 1928 warehouse was converted to an office. According to forestry division

⁹ The cabin was built in 1928 according to Part 2 of a 1937 history of state forestry in the Brainerd area by the Brainerd district ranger: see J. H. Hubbard, comp., "History of Forest Service Development in Territory," 4-part series, *Brainerd Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1937; Oct. 28, 1937; Nov. 4, 1937; Nov. 11, 1937. See also Inventory Index Cards; the inventory index card for the cabin has conflicting and updated information but lists construction by "ECW." This suggests the cabin was improved in the 1930s by the CCC. The CCC improved many of the Forestry Division's pre-New Deal cabins at lookout towers and remote patrol stations by adding porches, new roofs, windows, paint, etc. See also "Pequot Cabin, Building Record."

¹⁰ Aerial photograph of Pequot Lakes vicinity, Aug. 14, 1939.

¹¹ Electrical service date from "Pequot Cabin, Building Record," updated through ca. 1952, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry; see also Inventory Index Cards.

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records it may also have occasionally served as a bunkhouse. The building was heated with a wood-burning stove and, when used as an office, had electricity and telephone service.¹² The building served as the Pequot ranger subdistrict office from 1941 until 1956 when a new headquarters complex was built in the town of Pequot Lakes. The building superstructure was removed circa 1960. Like the retaining wall ruins, the foundation is not individually counted but considered part of the Contributing site.

20' x 26' Warehouse Foundation (1941). The poured concrete foundation of a 20' x 26' warehouse (Photo 18) is located about 265' southwest of the tower along the access road. The foundation is about 10" thick and about 24" tall on the east side, which is the tallest. Several anchor bolts project from the upper surface of the concrete. The Warehouse was a gable-roofed, woodframe building constructed in 1941 by the CCC.¹³ It stored firefighting tools and other equipment. The building superstructure was removed sometime after 1965. The foundation is not individually counted but considered part of the Contributing site.

Utility Shed (circa 1985, Noncontributing Building). The concrete block Utility Shed (Photo 19) is located about 35' south of the tower. It occupies the northwest part of the site of the spotter's cabin. The building was constructed circa 1985 to house communications equipment when a local radio station mounted an antenna (later removed) on the fire tower. The building has a 12' x 16' footprint, a shed roof, and a single-leaf door on the east side.

Removed from the Site. Three other structures have been removed from the property. They were located near the tower and spotter's cabin. No remnants are visible. They were: a 7' x 9' icehouse (razed in September 1948); an approximately 5' x 6' privy (believed to have been the site's second privy, raised after 1960); and a 180'-deep, 3"-diameter well with a hand pump (the well was installed in 1939; the hand pump was removed at an unknown date; the well may be extant but capped).¹⁴

Summary of Integrity

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower retains good historic integrity. Integrity of location and setting are strong. While ancillary structures have been removed, their loss does not detract from the property's ability to convey its historic character and significance as a fire lookout. Per the registration requirements for fire lookout towers in the "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943" MPDF, ancillary site elements are not required for National Register eligibility. The site retains its spatial organization, access road, and remnant retaining walls and foundations, all of which help the property convey its historic appearance, function, and significance. Since the period of significance, some of the fire tower's wooden stair treads, landing boards, window glass, and safety fencing has been replaced in-kind. A modestly sized communications antenna has been mounted on the tower. A small concrete block utility shed (circa 1985) and a chainlink fence (2011) have been erected at the

¹² The date of construction is from Hubbard, Part 2. See also Inventory Index Cards.

¹³ Inventory Index Cards.

¹⁴ List of Buildings, ca. 1940, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry; Inventory Index Cards; Administrative Site Record; "Stock Inventory," updated through ca. 1957, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry; "New Construction Proposed and MFS Tower and Bldg. Sites," ca. 1935, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry.

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base of the tower. These changes do not significantly diminish the historic integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The National Register eligibility of the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower was evaluated using the registration requirements in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) entitled "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943" (as amended) under the subsection "Fire Lookout Towers." "Fire Lookout Towers" falls within the property type "Conservation Structures" in Section F of the MPDF.

Pequot Fire Lookout Tower was built with federal funds and completed before the end of 1943, thereby meeting the MPDF's Registration Requirements 1 and 2 under "Conservation Structures."

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower meets the registration requirements specifically related to fire lookout towers as described below. The areas of significance are Conservation, Politics/Government, and Engineering. The period of significance is 1935-1966. The level of significance is Local.

National Register Criterion A

The property is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A as outlined below:

The property meets Requirement 1 by being erected before 1955. The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower represents Minnesota's second generation of fire lookout towers, those fabricated and erected during the New Deal. As such the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower played an instrumental role in the detection and suppression of forest fires in Minnesota between 1935 and 1970 while the use of fire lookout towers was the most important method by which Minnesota forestry agencies detected forest fires.

The property meets Requirement 2 by playing a substantive role in several of the significant trends or patterns of events outlined in the statement of significance (III. Significance) in the fire lookout towers subsection of Section F, as follows:

- Built by the CCC during the New Deal, the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower is an excellent example of the permanent physical accomplishments of CCC forestry work in the Brainerd area. It is associated with the unprecedented dedication of public resources to forestry and natural resource conservation in Minnesota in the 1930s and early 1940s. It is associated with the massive federal and state effort to combat the devastating poverty and social impacts of the Great Depression by providing meaningful work to the poor while at the same time constructing necessary public infrastructure.
- The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower is significant to the history of the Minnesota Department of Conservation Division of Forestry as one of the most important lookout towers in the Forestry Division's Brainerd Ranger District, a two-million-acre forest protection zone in north central Minnesota.
- The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower protected resources critical to the development of one of the state's most important recreational areas, the Brainerd Lakes region. The tower protected public and private investment in the resorts, summer cottages, campgrounds, parks, and forests that were the backbone of this increasingly important tourism industry. The tower was a popular visitor destination. This helped forestry officials educate the public about forest fires and

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conservation; this public education was a critical aspect of forestry management since human activity was the leading cause of wildfires.

- The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower played an instrumental role in protecting the timber resources critical to the area's commercial forestry, a significant component of the local economy.

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower meets Requirement 3 by possessing the character-defining features of the property type as listed in the "Fire Lookout Towers" subsection in Section F of the MPDF, and by retaining very good historic integrity as defined by the subsection's Integrity Guidelines. These qualities make it a significant example of the property type.

National Register Criterion C

The property is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C by being an unusually well-preserved fire lookout tower, thereby embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

Contextual Background Information of Fire Lookout Towers

The historical development, function, physical attributes, and significance of Minnesota's New Deal-era fire lookout towers are described in detail in the fire lookout towers discussion in Sections E and F of the MPDF. That information is not repeated herein.

Introduction to the Pequot Area

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower is located adjacent to the town of Pequot Lakes and about 18 miles north of Brainerd. For centuries north central Minnesota, including the Pequot and Brainerd area, was populated and controlled by native people including the ancestors of today's Dakota and Ojibwe. The landscape was dominated by lakes, rivers, and towering conifers. Forests of jack and red (Norway) pine were interspersed with stands of oaks and other hardwoods. Other forests of white and red pine were mixed with paper birch and aspen trees. There were also significant areas of boreal hardwood-conifer forest populated by balsam fir, white spruce, and white cedar mixed with birch and aspen. The boreal forest also included numerous tamarack swamps or peat bogs.¹⁵

Euro-American settlement of the area began with very early fur trading posts and Christian missionary stations operating between the mid-1820s and the mid-1860s at Gull Lake and at the confluence of the Crow Wing and Mississippi rivers. Crow Wing County's modern borders were established in 1857 and the county government was organized in 1870. Cass County's borders were established in 1851. Cass County was settled by Euro-Americans somewhat later than Crow Wing County and its county government was not organized until 1897.

The area's largest city, Brainerd, was founded on the Mississippi River in 1870 as the Northern Pacific Railroad was constructed east to west across the state between the Great Lakes port of Duluth and the

¹⁵ See Figure E1 of the fire towers discussion in Section E of the MPDF for a map of vegetation types at the time of Euro-American settlement.

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Red River of the North at Fargo-Moorhead. The Northern Pacific would soon become the first northern transcontinental railroad in the United States. Brainerd became a major node for passenger and freight service and a Northern Pacific division headquarters with a large railroad car maintenance facility.

Brainerd became one of the state's important centers for logging by the 1880s. Logs were cut in the winter and hauled by horse-drawn wagon over ice roads to be stacked on the banks of rivers and streams. When the ice melted in the spring, millions of logs were floated down rivers and across lakes, into the Mississippi River, and further south to sawmills in Minneapolis. Brainerd became a milling center in its own right in the early 1890s when the Mississippi River was dammed and a significant water-powered sawmill, later called the Northwestern Paper Company, was built. At logging's peak there were an estimated 8,000 lumberjacks working in the Brainerd region, many of them cutting trees in the winter and either working small farms or employed in sawmills in the summer.¹⁶ In the 1930s when the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower was built, Brainerd was a leader in the regional timber industry thanks to its surrounding forests, excellent railroad shipping facilities, large paper mill, and many smaller timber-related businesses. The community continued in this role for many more decades.

Harvesting the region's trees became more efficient in 1889 when a narrow-gauge logging railroad called the Brainerd and Northern Minnesota (headquartered in Brainerd) was built. The tracks penetrated the forests around Gull Lake, about five miles southwest of Pequot, and extended north to Spider Lake in what would later become Foot Hills State Forest. (Spider Lake is about 20 miles northwest of the Pequot tower.) Logging became even more productive in 1893 when the Brainerd and Northern began to build a new railroad from Brainerd north toward Leech Lake through the present-day Pequot Lakes area. The railroad passed through the Pequot area, in 1894 reached the south shore of Leech Lake (about 30 miles north of Pequot), and in 1897 reached Bemidji. Several spur lines were built out from the main line and forests were rapidly cut once accessed by tracks. In 1901 the railroad's impact was increased when it was acquired by the Minnesota and International Railroad, a subsidiary of the Northern Pacific, and the tracks were extended north from Bemidji to the Canadian border.¹⁷

Construction of the Brainerd and Northern Railroad north from Brainerd led to the founding of settlements in Crow Wing and Cass Counties such as Merrifield, Nisswa, Pequot, Jenkins, Pine River, and Backus (listed in order from south to north). Prior to the turn of the 20th century most of these settlements were very small with a railroad depot and a few stores, one of which usually housed the post office. The village of Pequot was platted in 1900, Pine River in 1901, and Jenkins in 1902. Nisswa was platted in 1921. Pequot had a small sawmill early in its history and in had a population of 300 people.

Recreation also became an important economic force. By the late 1890s a trickle of fishermen, hunters, and other seasonal visitors were taking the train from Brainerd and other centers to fishing camps and small resorts being built along the shores of the region's lakes. The development of moderately-priced automobiles and improvement of roads in the 1910s and the 1920s simplified access and the region's tourism industry began to thrive.

Small farms were established in the Brainerd area around 1910 as the largest and most valuable trees

¹⁶ Writers' Program of the Works Progress Administration, comp., *The WPA Guide to Minnesota*, 1938 (rpt. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1985), 428-429.

¹⁷ John C. Luecke, *The Northern Pacific in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Grenadier Pub., 2005), 173-200.

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were being cut. As forests were cleared and logging jobs diminished, many private and government interests believed agriculture was a reasonable use for the cutover land – an effort that proved largely misguided. Most farms remained small and were only marginally successful because of the short growing season, thin rocky soil, extensive peat bogs, poor roads, and distance to markets. By the onset of the Great Depression many farms had failed and their owners were destitute. Some farmers scraped by cutting wood or working as seasonal guides for local resorts. Others built small resorts or rental cabins on their land to take advantage of the tourist trade.

Just before World War I the Cuyuna Iron Range successfully mined and shipped its first iron ore. The last of Minnesota's three iron ranges to be developed, the Cuyuna was located in southern Crow Wing County and extended northeast into Aitkin County. Most of its commercially viable mines were located in the so-called North Range, about 15 miles southeast of the Pequot tower. Many miners lived in the towns of Manganese, Riverton, Ironton, and Crosby. The Cuyuna Range, along with Minnesota's Mesabi and Vermillion ranges, supplied significant ore to the nation's steel industry. Collectively the ranges employed thousands of northeastern Minnesota residents.

Forest fires were a recurring event in the Brainerd area. Fires burned readily on the region's forest cutover land and threatened the natural resources, manmade structures, and human population that comprised the region's settlement and economic development. Fires handicapped the region's recovery from clear-cut logging by destroying settlements, preventing forest regeneration, wrecking game habitat, opening the land to soil erosion, and degrading water quality. (See more information on the threat and effects of forest fires and the magnitude and challenges of cutover redevelopment in the fire towers discussion in Section E of the MPDF.)

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower's Development

The Pequot Fire Lookout site was established by the Minnesota Forest Service in 1927. The forest service first had a 10-year lease on the site and then in 1937 purchased 40 acres of land that included the parcel it had previously been leasing. The site's first tower was erected by the Minnesota Forest Service in late 1927 and first manned when the fire season began in the spring of 1928. The first tower was an 80' steel structure with a ladder for access and a glass-enclosed octagonal cab.¹⁸

In 1928 the forest service built the spotter's cabin (razed), 10' x 16' warehouse (foundation extant), and, likely, the two stone retaining walls (ruins extant). The access road was also probably built or improved in 1928. In 1929 the Pequot lookout became the headquarters of one of five subdistricts in the Brainerd Ranger District. The Pequot lookout remained the Pequot ranger district (technically subdistrict) headquarters until 1956 when a new headquarters office and warehouse were built near the center of the town of Pequot Lakes.¹⁹

During the New Deal, CCC assistance enabled the forest service – by then called the Department of Conservation's Forestry Division – to significantly improve the Pequot lookout. The CCC erected the

¹⁸ "Guard Ordered For Fall Fire Hazards," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, Sept. 23, 1927; "Build New Tower East of Pequot," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, Oct. 29, 1927; "Forestry Men Here Find 1928 Active," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, Dec. 29, 1928.

¹⁹ The Brainerd Ranger District was also called District 4, Administrative Area 4, Supervisory Area 4, and Protection Zone 4 depending on the organizational scheme in place at the time. The Pequot ranger district was a subdistrict within it. Despite the fact that they were technically subdistricts, Pequot and other subdistricts in the system were often simply called "ranger districts."

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current tower to replace the seven-year-old original tower. The new tower was first manned in the spring of 1935. During the New Deal CCC crews also improved the lookout cabin (razed), built a new privy (razed), built a small icehouse (razed), and built the 20' x 26' warehouse (foundation extant). The CCC probably improved the access road along with other site work.

Ground work to erect the current tower occurred after the fire season ended in late 1934. This work included removing the 1927 tower.²⁰ According to Forestry Division documents, the new tower was erected by the CCC in the early spring of 1935, in time for the spring fire season. Supervising the CCC project for the Forestry Division were two men: one named Anderson (probably Arthur K. Anderson) and the other Mitchell. A Forestry Division document indicates the cost of the tower was \$1,170, with the State of Minnesota's share being \$323. A CCC-prepared report indicates the CCC (i.e., federal) share of the cost was \$847.²¹

The new Pequot tower was 20' taller than the earlier tower to provide better coverage. The new tower had a larger cab than the previous tower, and had stair access rather than a ladder. Beginning about 1929 the Minnesota Forest Service began erecting stairway towers "to replace ladder type towers at points where there is considerable educational value to the location and many visitors."²² The new stair tower at Pequot more comfortably accommodated the thousands of visitors who climbed to the top of the tower each year, and encouraging such visits was an important part of the Forestry Division's efforts to reduce forest fires – most of which were caused by human activity – through public education. (For information on the important public education role of fire lookout towers see the fire towers subsection in Section E of the MPDF.)

As was typical of fire lookout towers in Minnesota, the Pequot tower and ranger district were minimally staffed, usually with a ranger (sometimes called a patrolman) and a seasonal towerman. George E. Ericson (1902-1980) was the Pequot ranger from at least 1931 to circa 1946. He had been working for the state forest service since 1926. After leaving the forest service he served in the state legislature in the early 1950s. Ericson was succeeded by Arthur K. Savage (1906-2001). The ranger was responsible for all aspects of fire prevention and all other forestry management work in the Pequot ranger district, an area comprising about one dozen townships or more than 7,500 acres.²³

The lookout towers were the centerpieces of formal fire plans developed by the Forestry Division for ranger districts, subdistricts, and individual towers. The plans identified by name the local citizens (all civilians) who could be called upon to help prevent and fight fires. They included the township fire wardens (responsible for issuing burning permits and raising firefighting crews); the men who could initially locate the fire ("smoke chasers"); the men who could serve as firefighting foremen; Forestry Division equipment available (e.g., 1 mobile pump, 9 backpack pumps, 400 ft. hose, 10 shovels, 2 axes, 3 pails); state and private vehicles available; individuals willing to feed firefighting crews; and

²⁰ "Ground Work Completed for Fire Lookout Tower," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, Nov. 5, 1934. The fate of the 1927 tower is not known. Since it was only seven years old when it was replaced it was probably reused at another Forestry Division lookout site.

²¹ Pequot Tower Lookout Tower Record; Inventory Index Cards; L. R. Beatty, *Summary: Minnesota CCC Work, 1933-1941* (U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, and Minnesota Dept. of Conservation, 1942), 7.

²² "General Seasonal Notes, 1930," Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry.

²³ "Rhodes Names the Personnel of Dept.," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, April 20, 1931; Hubbard, Part 2; "Forestry Supervisor is also Mister Weather Man," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, April 8, 1948; "Conservation: How and Why it Started," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, Aug. 11, 1950.

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miscellaneous help such as farmers or a private company willing to lend equipment and tools. Having a clear formal plan helped redress the fact that fighting a forest fire required immediate action yet motorized vehicles and equipment were in short supply, manpower was limited in sparsely-populated rural areas, and many men named in fire plans did not even have a telephone with which they could be reached.²⁴

Like all of the state's fire lookout towers, the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower was connected to the outside world – first solely the Brainerd Ranger District headquarters – via telephone. Eventually the Pequot tower was equipped with a two-way radio to link it to nearby towers, other ranger stations, and to mobile firefighting units.²⁵

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower served for many decades and is still in use. In 1971 Pequot was one of ten towers in the Brainerd area that were operating full-time to provide the region's fire protection. That year the state forest service was also planning to build a new tower 12 miles south of Brainerd. Aerial surveillance had not yet begun in the area.²⁶

The Pequot tower remained in fairly constant use until 2002 and was then used intermittently for spotting for the next several years. By this time the Forestry Division had been using airplane surveillance for about 20 years. In addition, there were growing numbers of permanent and seasonal residents in the area – and more telephones – which allowed the public to discover and report most fires soon after they started.

In 2011 the MnDNR closed the aging tower to public climbing. (By this time the tower was rarely used for spotting.) After a local grassroots effort to support its refurbishment, several repairs were made and the popular tourist attraction was reopened to the public in the fall of 2012.

In 2015 the Pequot tower was placed back in service for fire detection because of its strategic location and expansive viewshed. During the first few weeks of operation in April 2015, the towerman spotted and reported a significant fire that took two airplanes and 20 firefighters to extinguish. While on duty the towerman welcomed visitors to the cab and educated them about fire detection and conservation. His visitors log indicated that during the first 20 days of the 2015 spotting season, 116 visitors had already climbed to the cab while he was on duty.²⁷

Significance Under National Register Criterion A

Built by the CCC during the New Deal, the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower is an excellent example of the permanent physical accomplishments of CCC forestry work in the Brainerd area. It is associated with the unprecedented dedication of public resources to forestry and natural resource conservation in Minnesota in the 1930s and early 1940s. It is associated with the massive federal and state effort to combat the devastating poverty and social impacts of the Great Depression by providing meaningful

²⁴ Lookout Tower Fire Plan, blank form, ca. 1935, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry; "State Forests Fire Plan," ca. 1935, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry.

²⁵ "Hinckley Fire Launched Forestry Service in '95," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, Aug. 2, 1958.

²⁶ "Fire of 1895 Set Stage for Forestry Work," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, May 20, 1971.

²⁷ Nancy Vogt, "Wind Whips Up Grass Fires," *Lake Country Echo and Pine River Journal*, April 8, 2015; Nancy Vogt, "Retired DNR Forester Called Back into Action," *Lake Country Echo and Pine River Journal*, May 7, 2015; Nancy Vogt, "Pequot Lakes: Fire Tower Being Called Back to Service," *Lake Country Echo and Pine River Journal*, Oct. 22, 2014.

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work to the poor while at the same time constructing necessary public infrastructure.

The impact of CCC forestry work across northern Minnesota cannot be under estimated. The CCC allowed the state to tackle the immense challenge of repairing the cutover – physically, economically, and socially. The CCC helped protect the cutover from fire; planted millions of trees to support future timber production and recreation; constructed buildings, roads, water conservation dams, parks, and campgrounds; repaired erosion; and created wildlife habitat, among many other activities. This contribution moved the work of the Minnesota’s Department of Conservation ahead by decades. It facilitated a profound shift in natural resource conservation from a custodial approach to increasingly active management. The work of the CCC helped shift public opinion as well. One historian explains that the CCC introduced “the theory and practice of conservation to the CCC’s working-class enrollees, to residents of local communities situated near Corps camps, and to the public as a whole through national media coverage of this wildly popular program. The result was a more broad-based constituency that reflected, and helped to produce, the grassroots character of post-World War II environmentalism.”²⁸ That support for conservation is still manifest in Minnesota today.

The infusion of New Deal federal money and manpower allowed the Minnesota Forestry Division to improve and expand the fire tower network, realizing plans that had previously existed only on paper. The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower was among 66 lookout towers erected statewide by CCC camps assigned to state forests during the New Deal. Additional towers were built by CCC camps assigned to federal forests, federal wildlife refuges, and Indian reservations. Many new towers were erected on newly created lookout sites. Others, such as at Pequot, represented upgrades to previously-established lookout sites.²⁹

The new towers erected by the CCC were all sturdier than their predecessors and in many cases taller. They had square rather than octagonal cabs that were larger inside and safer to access, whether by ladder or stairs. The CCC installed thousands of miles of Forestry-owned telephone lines between towers and ranger stations. In addition to running new lines, the CCC restrung existing lines, placing them on proper utility poles when they were strung through tree tops.

Before the CCC arrived lookouts often had crude, nearly impassable access roads, usually built by forestry staff themselves when they weren’t on tower duty.³⁰ Spotter’s cabins and privies were also hastily built and often of poor quality. The CCC improved many of these roads, cabins, privies, and warehouses with a level of workmanship that allowed them to serve the state for many decades. In addition the Corps planted millions of trees on the cutover landscape. These included efforts to reforest lookout sites such as Pequot which had been extensively logged and sometimes burned.

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower was built during the peak of CCC activity in the state. In 1935, 104 camps operated in Minnesota and the work program was in full swing. A typical new enrollee of a CCC camp near the Pequot tower was “18-19 years old, 147 pounds, and 5'8" tall. He was malnourished, unemployed, and generally had no more than an 8th grade education.” He came from a small town or

²⁸ Neil M. Maher, *Nature’s New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 225.

²⁹ Beatty, *Summary: Minnesota CCC Work*, 3.

³⁰ For details on Minnesota fire lookouts and their construction before the New Deal see Don Wilson, *Be a Forest Ranger, 1927-1936* (by the author, 1986).

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farm and had three or four family members to help support.³¹ (For more information on the CCC and its forestry accomplishments, see the MPDF.)

It is not clear which CCC camp actually erected the Pequot tower. Summary reports prepared by the CCC in 1936 and 1942 indicate the tower was built by CCC Camp S-76, which was located on the southeast shore of Pelican Lake about eight miles southeast of the tower.³² However, the tower was built in the early spring of 1935 and Camp S-76 was not established until September of that year. It is possible that for bookkeeping purposes CCC officials recorded the tower as being the work of Camp S-76 when in fact it was built by a CCC crew working from another camp. It may have been built, for example, by a side camp or "spike" camp, which according to a CCC manual, were "small camps, usually of tents, to which detachments of a few men are sent to work on some particular project too far from the main camp to make transportation each day practical."³³ It is possible the workers who built the Pequot tower were attached to CCC Camp S-135 located near Vineland on Mille Lacs Lake just east of the Brainerd Ranger District. Established in August 1934, this camp had somewhat unusual origins in northern Minnesota as a drought-relief rather than state forest camp. It was originally numbered Camp DS-135 and was later renamed S-135 (the "S" denoting state forest). Crews from this camp built the Isle Harbor and Borden Lake fire towers south and west of Mille Lacs Lake, the latter being within the Brainerd Ranger District. In October 1935 the camp was absorbed by Camp S-76 at Pelican Lake and thereafter operated as a side camp of the Pelican Lake camp.

It is also not known which CCC camp improved the Pequot spotter's cabin (ca. 1940); built a new privy, small icehouse, and 20' x 26' warehouse (1941); and made other landscape improvements such as rebuilding the access road. If done before mid-August 1938, the work may have been done by CCC Camp S-76 on Pelican Lake. This camp's principal assignment was work in and near the newly established Crow Wing State Forest located about nine miles east of the Pequot tower. It also worked extensively in Pillsbury State Forest about 12 miles southwest of the Pequot tower. Camp S-76 operated from September 1935 to mid-August 1938. Its crews worked on projects as far as 15 miles from the camp. By March 1938 the camp had worked on at least seven fire lookouts – erecting towers, building support structures, and making site improvements. The camp superintendent throughout the camp's existence was Carl A. Shogren, an experienced woodsman who had been working for the Minnesota Forest Service since late 1920.³⁴

Improvements to the Pequot site made after August 1938 may have been the work of CCC Camp S-97 near Outing which was assigned to Land O'Lakes State Forest about 22 miles northeast of the Pequot tower. Camp S-97, which operated from September 1935 through January 1942, did considerable work for the state Forestry Division in the Brainerd Ranger District many miles from its home base. The

³¹ James H. Henderson, *Lost in the Woods: The Legacy of CCC Camp Pelican* (Milwaukee, WI: Pelmar Pub., 2008), 4, 9.

³² Robert T. Smith, *Report of Accomplishments for 39 Minnesota State Forest Emergency Conservation Work [E.C.W.] Camps, June 12, 1933 to March 31, 1936*, prepared by Minnesota E.C.W., 1936; Beatty, *Summary: Minnesota CCC Work*.

³³ Quoted by Henderson, 49. According to Henderson, Camp S-76's first building was already under construction when its first enrollees arrived in September 1935 – the work was probably being done by CCC men from another camp such as the Vineland camp who were temporarily working at Pelican Lake to prepare the new site.

³⁴ This camp was sometimes called the Pelican Lake camp for its location, the Merrifield camp for the nearest railroad stop, and the Nisswa camp for the nearest post office. See Henderson for a detailed history of the camp. See also "Merrifield CCC Camp to Hold Open House this Weekend in Observance of Fifth Anniversary of [CCC's] Founding," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, March 31, 1938.

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camp's work included dismantling Camp S-76 on Pelican Lake when that camp was closed in August 1938.³⁵

During the New Deal, dozens of CCC camps were assigned to work in and near state forests. Some also operated side camps. According to a 1943 Department of Conservation publication:

The work consisted almost entirely of forest development such as road construction, fire prevention, firefighting, removing fire hazards, the construction of buildings, recreational development, and the planting of millions of small trees. While this work has now been discontinued, the results of the CCC efforts will be felt for a long time. Undoubtedly, if the time ever comes when the supply of labor cannot be used in industry, the CCC camps or something similar will be reestablished. The forests are a huge reservoir [which needs] useful labor.³⁶

The work of CCC Camp S-76 on Pelican Lake provides an example of the CCC's extensive forestry improvements in the Pequot area. Crews from the camp cleared slash and other flammable debris from a 400' swatch on all major roads and many secondary roads in the Pelican Lake-Pequot-Nisswa-Gull Lake area. They cleared slash and debris from forest interiors; built truck trails, campgrounds, and water conservation dams; planted hundreds of acres of trees; surveyed and mapped lakes; inventoried public timber resources; fought 52 forest fires; and manned lookout towers, among other work. The CCC camp on Pelican Lake had about 20 buildings, six of them – a headquarters office, maintenance shop, warehouses, and garages – built to facilitate the Forestry Division work program. The fire prevention work of the Pelican CCC camp was locally popular and one of the reasons the CCC garnered strong support from local communities.³⁷

Crews from Camp S-76 probably helped man the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower from the fall of 1935 through the summer of 1938. A report prepared by the CCC in 1942 indicates Camp S-76 devoted 550 man-days to tower duty during those years. After Camp S-76 closed, men from Camp S-97 near Outing may have helped man the Pequot tower. The camp near Outing devoted 300 man-days to tower duty from the late summer of 1938 through the fall of 1941. A March 1937 article in the *Brainerd Daily Dispatch* uses the tower on the west shore of Gull Lake to describe Camp S-76's lookout duty, writing, "it should be a comforting thought to the people who have summer cottages around those lakes to know that during the fire season there will probably be a couple of CCC boys perched up there ready to warn of a fire the minute the smoke appears above the trees. This is another job without any thrills and with long hours that will be faithfully performed [by the CCC] at the proper time."³⁸

³⁵ See C. Homer Whiting, Report of Activities in Area Four for 1938, Dec. 22, 1938, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry; see also Henderson, xiv.

³⁶ *Minnesota State Forests* (St. Paul: Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry, 1943), 21.

³⁷ Henderson, e.g. 14-19; "Timber Stand Improvement, Lake Survey, Forest Work at ECW Camp," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, April 8, 1937; Beatty, *Summary: Minnesota CCC Work*, 7, 16. For a general summary of CCC work in the Brainerd area as of October 1937 see Hubbard, Parts 2 and 3. Members of several CCC camps assisted with firefighting in the Brainerd Ranger District. See also "Record of Construction Work at Pelican Lake CCC Camp Hailed as Contribution to Minnesota Life," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, March 25, 1937.

³⁸ Beatty, *Summary: Minnesota CCC Work*, 7; newspaper quote from "Record of Construction Work."

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The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower is significant to the history of the Minnesota Department of Conservation Division of Forestry as one of the most important lookout towers in the Forestry Division's Brainerd Ranger District, a two-million-acre forest protection zone in north central Minnesota.

The Minnesota Department of Conservation Division of Forestry (previously the Minnesota Forest Service) was the state agency responsible for natural resource conservation including support of the state's timber and tourism industries. The agency's top priority from the early 20th century through the 1960s was the prevention of wildfires in the northern third of the state. Erected in 1935, the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower played a significant role in the detection and suppression of forest fires during the period that fire lookout towers were the most important method by which Minnesota forestry agencies detected fires.

The two-million-acre Brainerd Ranger District encompassed all of Crow Wing and Morrison counties, the southern third of Cass County, the northeast corner of Todd County, and small parts of Aitkin and Mille Lacs counties. The southern boundary of Chippewa National Forest in northern Cass County was located a few miles north of the Brainerd district and about 28 miles north of the Pequot tower, which protected land just south of the national forest. (Part of the boundary of the Brainerd Ranger District appears on Figure 5 below. See also Figure E2 in the fire lookout towers discussion in Section E of the MPDF for the entire boundary of the Brainerd district in 1942.)

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower was located near the northern end of the Brainerd district. The 1935 tower, by virtue of its location and height, was one of the most important towers in the district. Between one-third and one-half of the entire Brainerd Ranger District could be seen from the Pequot tower, depending on conditions.

The Brainerd Ranger District was created in 1911 when the Minnesota Forest Service was established. For many years the district office was located in the Brainerd City Hall. In the mid-1930s federal relief work crews built a new state Conservation Division building in Brainerd that housed the forestry headquarters. The Brainerd Ranger District was divided into five or six subdistricts, depending on the era. In 1927 when the Pequot lookout was established, for example, the Brainerd district had a head ranger and six deputy rangers (also called forest patrolmen), stationed at Brainerd and at towers near Emily, Hillman, Motley, and Pine River. In 1929 after the Pequot lookout was established it became a subdistrict headquarters and Pine River was discontinued. In 1932 the Brainerd district was staffed by a district ranger, three year-around and four seasonal rangers, and six seasonal towermen. Rangers were then stationed at Brainerd and at towers near Emily, Garrison, Pequot, Pine River, and Pillager. In 1932 warehouses for firefighting equipment were located in Brainerd and at the Pequot tower. In 1948, after considerable CCC construction, each ranger district had its own warehouse. In 1948 there were 10 lookout towers in use. They were connected to the Brainerd headquarters, and in some cases to each other, by 90 miles of state-owned telephone line maintained by the Forestry Division.³⁹

In 1927 when the Pequot lookout was established, Earl H. Rhodes was head of the Brainerd Ranger District. He had joined the state forest service about 1917. Arthur K. Anderson was head of the Brainerd district in 1935 when the new Pequot tower was built. In July 1935 Anderson left Brainerd to

³⁹ "Guard Ordered;" "Muster Forestry Men in District," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, April 20, 1929; "Efficient Crews Give Protection to Forests Here," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, May 12, 1932; "Forestry Supervisor is also Mister Weather Man;" "Conservation: How and Why it Started."

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supervise plans for all CCC work for the state Forestry Division statewide. Anderson was succeeded by Arnold Erickson, who led the Brainerd district from July 1935 through March 1936, and by J. H. Hubbard, who served about two years until circa 1938. Hubbard was succeeded by C. Homer Whiting who was head of the Brainerd district from the late 1930s through at least 1961.

Ranger Whiting described the Brainerd Ranger District in a 1951 article on its protection. In a description of the district's topography, land use, and vegetation he wrote: "Jack pine is the dominant timber type throughout most parts of the area. Mixed in with the jack pine is Norway [red] and white pine on the better soil types which are found in the eastern tier of townships and also around Gull Lake and Lake Alexandria in Morrison County. There are also considerable areas of aspen, birch, and red oak scattered throughout the area." Whiting wrote that in 1951 farms were scattered through the area but concentrated south of Highway 210 (about 19 miles south of the Pequot tower; see Figure 5). He wrote:

North of Highway 210 . . . farming gives way to rather extensive rural settlement with few acres cleared . . . most of these settlers either work in Brainerd, Crosby, Ironton, or depend on the very large summer tourist trade for their living and farming is secondary. [This] type of settlement increases the risk of kindling in an area of high fire hazard, and during summer months when tourist activities are in full progress the risk of kindling becomes very high by reason of the large increase of people using the lake and woods area for recreation.

Whiting described the roads in the ranger district as plentiful, so that most fires can be reached from a ranger station within reasonable travel time, although in some cases there may be a three- or four-mile walk from the road to the fire. He noted that in the spring some county and township roads were impassable, which slowed firefighting response.

Whiting also noted:

The protection area is divided into five ranger districts, with headquarters located at Brainerd. There are 10 lookout towers within the area, so located that under normal visibility the entire area is under observation. There are also lookout towers in adjoining state and federal [Chippewa National Forest] ranger districts which we also call on for readings and also give readings to.

Pequot Lakes and Cuyuna lookouts are designated as primary towers and are manned on any Class Three day during the time ground is not snow covered. These two towers can cover [nearly the] entire area under normal visibility, and during the summer months when vegetation is green and hazard is at minimum we have coverage [from these two] without tying up [the] entire ranger force.⁴⁰

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower's location, large viewshed, and proximity to valuable resources requiring protection is a major reason the MnDNR reopened the tower for detection in 2015. The MnDNR indicated in a 2014 newspaper article the "tower is in a particularly good location, surrounded

⁴⁰ [C.] Homer Whiting, "Vacationland Forest Protection," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, April 21, 1951.

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by fire-prone property.” The view from the tower extends 15 miles in all directions and up to 20 miles in several directions, making an effective supplement to surveillance from airplanes.⁴¹

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower historically protected timber resources, farmsteads, resorts, summer homes, and most of the towns in which Crow Wing County’s population lived. Included in the protection zone were the towns of Brainerd, Crosby, Ironton, Jenkins, Nisswa, Pequot Lakes, Pine River, and many smaller settlements.

The Pequot tower also helped protect the west half of the important North Range of the Cuyuna Iron Range near the towns of Crosby, Ironton, Riverton, and Manganese (Figure 5). The mines of the North Range were located on the east bank of the Mississippi River about 15 miles southeast of the Pequot tower. More than 50 mines were worked in the Cuyuna during the years 1911-1980. During World War I the Cuyuna produced roughly 90 percent of the country’s manganese, an essential component of steel production, and during World War II manganese from the Cuyuna was equally critical.

In the Forestry Division’s special planning for World War II, the Cuyuna Iron Range was identified as the agency’s second priority for protection statewide after the area encompassing the Mesabi and Vermilion ranges. According to an agency planning document, “The materials produced by the timber and iron mining industries in the state are at present almost entirely converted to war needs. The Minnesota mines are producing approximately two-thirds of the iron ore mined in the United States. Fires burning in the vicinity of the mines will retard production in various ways, but most important is the possibility of [fire] disrupting the transportation facilities since most of the ore-hauling railroads running between the mines and the Great Lakes traverse extremely high [fire] hazard areas.”⁴²

Pequot was one of approximately 11 lookout sites built in the Brainerd Ranger District as listed below. The towers ranged in height from 47’ to 100’. Four of the towers are extant.⁴³

Tower Name	Location	Current Status
Ahrens Hill	N of Brainerd	razed
Ben Draper	N of Emily	extant (built 1937)
Borden Lake	W of Mille Lacs Lake	razed
Cuyuna	near Cuyuna	razed
Emily	near Emily	extant (built 1929)
Gull Lake	near W shore of lake	razed
Longville	near Longville	extant (built 1929, cab missing)
Pequot	near Pequot Lakes	extant (built 1935)
Rail Prairie	S of Pillager	razed

⁴¹ Vogt, “Pequot Lakes: Fire Tower Being;” also Vogt, “Retired DNR Forester.”

⁴² “National Defense Emergency Fire Control Estimates for State and Private Lands in the State of Minnesota,” 1942, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry.

⁴³ Susan Granger and Scott Kelly, *Fire Lookout Towers in Minnesota, 1910-1970: Historic Context Information* (submitted to MnDOT by Gemini Research, Dec. 2015), Appendix G. See this report for information on all fire lookout towers in the state, not just those built during the New Deal.

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Spider Lake	Foot Hills State Forest	razed
Sullivan Lake	SW of Mille Lacs Lake	razed

The first towers were built of either wood or lightweight steel. The first substantial tower in the area was a steel tower built in Pillsbury State Forest near Gull Lake in 1911; it was one of the first steel towers in the state. (The Gull Lake tower listed above was near, but not on, the site of the 1911 tower.)

Some of the lookout sites listed above had a succession of towers such as one predating the New Deal and a replacement tower built by the CCC. (The Cuyuna lookout's last tower was erected shortly after World War II.) In addition to the 11 towers listed above the Brainerd Ranger District also had a tower on the Camp Ripley military reservation southwest of Brainerd that was sometimes called the Goose Lake tower. It was operated by Camp Ripley rather than by the state forestry agency.

Fires. The Brainerd Ranger District was threatened by hundreds of forest fires annually. The 1935 Pequot tower was built during a long period of drought when Minnesota suffered some of its most damaging fire seasons. During 1925-1935, for example, northern Minnesota experienced a rain shortfall in ten of eleven years. The 1936 fire season was one of the worst in state history. There were more than 2,100 fires on land within the Forestry Division's purview statewide. The fires burned 276,000 acres and killed at least one person. CCC Camp S-76 on Pelican Lake fought 31 fires in 1936 alone. Those fires burned more than 2,000 acres. In 1939, statewide, there were 1,357 fires and 68,000 acres destroyed.⁴⁴

In 1938 the Brainerd district suffered 144 separate fires burning nearly 18,000 acres. According to state forestry records, about 30% of the fires were caused by "smokers" (e.g., vacationers, hunters, berry pickers), about 40% by farmers clearing land and burning meadows, and the rest by railroad trains, logging operations, and other causes.⁴⁵ In 1942 there were 98 fires in the Brainerd district, some very large. They burned 6,807 acres and accounted for about 20% of all acres burned in the state that season. The 1942 fires in the Brainerd Ranger District were caused by farmers (38 fires), travelers (21), fishermen (13), hunters (7), locomotives (3), work crews (2), and miscellaneous causes (14).⁴⁶

In the decade after World War II, land protected by the Forestry Division statewide suffered an average of 1,000 fires per year. 1948 and 1952 were especially severe seasons with 1,490 fires and 1,235 fires, respectively. Most were caused by logging railroad locomotives, farmers clearing land and burning meadows, and the cigarettes and campfires of people working in and visiting the forests.⁴⁷

In the Brainerd district in April 1949 there were 100 fires in one month alone. They burned more than 1,270 acres. During a two-day period on April 29th and 30th, 1949, the district fought 18 fires with 317 men. Another example of severe conditions occurred in the spring of 1956 when more than eight simultaneous fires on April 20th destroyed a cabin at North Shore Pines Resort on Whitefish Lake and a home on Gull Lake as well as burning dozens of acres of land.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ "Timber Stand Improvement;" *Forest Fire Protection in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry, 1954), 20-21.

⁴⁵ C. Homer Whiting, Report of Activities.

⁴⁶ "Quarterly Report of the Director of the Division of Forestry to the Commissioner of Conservation for October, November, December, 1942," Jan. 11, 1943, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry.

⁴⁷ *Forest Fire Protection in Minnesota*, 20-21.

⁴⁸ "Foresters Battled 100 Fires in District During Past Month," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, May 2, 1949; "Flames Destroy Two

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In May of 1958 the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower played an important role in the early detection of some of the most destructive fires of the season statewide.⁴⁹ According to coverage in the *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*:

Forestry crews were on standby all night and were expected to be on hand all day as smoldering remnants of nearly 800 acres of timber and brushland continued to threaten a large resort area north of Brainerd in the Pequot Lakes area and at Baxter [just west of Brainerd].

Reports this morning stated that the fire east of Pequot Lakes was halted at a large swamp area but that low humidity and high southeast winds continued to be a threat to the area.

Fire at Lower Hay Lake yesterday [four miles north of the Pequot tower at the west end of the Whitefish chain of lakes] mowed down about 200 acres of jack pine, 400 acres of scrub oak, and 150 acres of grass while destroying a cabin, two boats, and a boat trailer plus a tool shed on private property there.

Officials here said the fire spread from a dumpground where refuse was being burned.

At Baxter over 150 volunteers joined Forestry Service personnel to prevent a fire in jack pine and jack pine slash from spreading to heavily populated lakeshore homes.

C. Homer Whiting, area forester, said the large crew of men fought the blaze for more than six hours, aided by bulldozers and equipment of the Brainerd Rural Fire Department and held the loss to about 20 acres.

The fire at Pequot Lakes was described by Whiting as 'one of the most dangerous fires in my experience.' The blaze there leaped the road several times as it raced along a mile and three-quarter front. It was reported today the fire crowned [spread to the tree tops] several times but fortunately was kept from spreading to more heavily-timbered areas.

Winds from the southeast yesterday reached a maximum of 18 miles per hour and quickly spread both the Baxter and Lower Hay Lake fires. Humidity was extremely low at only 24 percent and forest and grass conditions were described by Whiting as being explosive. High winds and continued low humidity today were expected to extend the danger, according to E. L. Lawson, state forestry head.⁵⁰

Buildings as Forest Fire Danger Mounts," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, April 21, 1956.

⁴⁹ Pete Mohs, "Historic Fire Tower Closed to Visitors," *Lake Country Echo and Pine River Journal*, July 6, 2011; Elizabeth Bachmann, *A History of Forestry in Minnesota With Particular Reference to Forestry Legislation* (Association of Minnesota Division of Lands and Forestry Employees, 1969), 44.

⁵⁰ "Smoldering Forest Guarded by Crews," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, May 13, 1958.

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The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower protected resources critical to the development of one of the state's most important recreational areas, the Brainerd Lakes region. The tower protected public and private investment in the resorts, summer cottages, campgrounds, parks, and forests that were the backbone of this increasingly important tourism industry. The tower was a popular visitor destination. This helped forestry officials educate the public about forest fires and conservation; this public education was a critical aspect of forestry management since human activity was the leading cause of fires.

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower protected hundreds of lakes famous for their deep bottoms, clear water, wooded shores, sandy beaches, and excellent swimming. Historically these were some of the most popular and well known resort lakes in Minnesota including the Whitefish chain of 14 lakes, Pelican Lake, and Gull Lake (Figure 5). Many of the area's lakes were nestled in pine forests and stands of maple and oak trees. Within this landscape the Pequot tower protected considerable public and private investment in state forests, resorts, cottages, businesses, parks, and campgrounds.

Resorting in the Brainerd-Nisswa-Pequot area began in the late 1890s with the first passenger rail service and as early fishing camps and small resorts were built on area lakes. The recreational industry eventually comprised commercial resorts, summer camps, parks, private campgrounds, and seasonal cottages, as well as gas stations, restaurants, taverns, dance halls, and gift shops. As automobiles became more common and roads improved in the 1920s, the number of seasonal visitors rose steadily. In 1940 the town Pequot changed its name to Pequot Lakes to encourage tourism. After World War II as middle class incomes grew, leisure time increased, and the number of automobiles rose, existing resorts were enlarged and many new resorts and summer homes were built in the region.

Among the earliest resorts on the Whitefish chain of lakes, about five miles northeast of the Pequot tower, was Piney Ridge Lodge, established circa 1902. By the 1930s the Whitefish chain had dozens of resorts including Manhattan Beach Lodge, which was frequented by wealthy families from the Twin Cities and Chicago.

On Pelican Lake, five miles southeast of the Pequot tower, one of the largest resorts was Breezy Point Lodge, established in the early 1920s. Breezy Point had a 75-room headquarters lodge built in 1925 that was one of the largest of its kind in the state. In the 1940s Breezy Point could house 300 guests in cabins and lodge rooms.

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In the 1930s and 1940s Gull Lake, five miles southwest of the Pequot tower, had about 35 resorts operating on its shores. Most were small family-owned businesses, but some such as Grand View, Madden's, and Cragun's became large operations with golf courses and public dining and dancing. In the 1930s Gull Lake's Grand View, Pine Beach Hotel, and Ruttger's Lodge could each accommodate 150 guests.⁵¹

Brainerd Lakes area resorting was an important component of a much larger northern Minnesota tourism industry that developed in the late 19th century and became a critical factor in northern Minnesota's recovery after the collapse of white pine logging. Minnesota's tourism resources were concentrated in the forested northern third of the state, which was also the state's fire protection area. (For more information see the fire towers discussion in Section E of the MPDF.) Recreational resources attracted both Minnesotans and outside visitors, especially drawing vacationers from surrounding states and from the Chicago area. In the 20th century Minnesota competed rigorously with the Black Hills, the northern Rocky Mountains, and forests in other Great Lakes states for tourism dollars.⁵²

Tourism in the Brainerd Lakes region was supported by the State of Minnesota as part of a public strategy to help revive a regional economy that had crashed after more than 30 years of intensive logging. Beginning in the early 1930s state government – through agencies such as the state highway department and the Department of Conservation's divisions of Tourism (Minnesota Board of Tourism), Forestry, State Parks, and Game and Fish – began a decades-long campaign to build highways to and within northern Minnesota; create state forests and parks on tax-delinquent land; build wayside rests, campsites, and picnic grounds; lease state-owned lakeshore lots for private summer cottages; and advertise the region's recreational resources to a growing population of automobile-owning tourists.⁵³ These strategies paid off and, combined with transportation improvements and a strong postwar economy nationwide, led to significant increases in the number of visitors to the Brainerd Lakes region.

In 1940 Crow Wing County had one of the highest concentrations of seasonal homes in the state. The only counties with comparable numbers of seasonal homes were Douglas, Otter Tail, St. Louis, Hennepin, and Washington counties. (The latter two counties are within today's Twin Cities metropolitan area.) In 1960, one-fifth of all seasonal homes in Minnesota were located in Crow Wing and Cass counties. In 1964, 26% of all resorts in Minnesota were located in the two counties.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Resort information is from Ren Holland, *The Early Resorts of Minnesota: Tourism in the Land of 10,000 Lakes* (Edina: Beaver's Pond Press, 2013), 103-148. Holland provides details on hundreds of resorts that operated in Crow Wing and Cass counties beginning in the late 1890s. See also Carl A. Zapffe, *Oldtimers: Stories of Our Pioneers in the Cass and Crow Wing Lake Region* (Pequot Lakes and Brainerd, MN: Echo Publishing and Historic Heartland Assoc., 1987). A few resorts located within the Pequot tower's protection area such as Sherwood Forest Lodge on Gull Lake (Cass County), Grand View Lodge (Crow Wing County), and Minnewaha Lodge on Clark Lake near Nisswa (Crow Wing County) are listed on the National Register.

⁵² John R. Borchert and Donald P. Yaeger, *Atlas of Minnesota Resources and Settlement* (Prepared for the State Planning Agency by the Dept. of Geography, University of Minnesota, 1968), 165.

⁵³ Thomas J. Baerwald, "Forces at Work on the Landscape," in *Minnesota in a Century of Change: The State and its People Since 1900*, ed. Clifford E. Clark, Jr. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989), 35-36; see also David Lanegran with Carol L. Urness, *Minnesota on the Map: A Historical Atlas* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008), including 178-179.

⁵⁴ Borchert and Yaeger, 166, 170-176.

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From the Forestry Division's perspective, tourism was an important industry that the state agency was responsible to support. According to a 1931 policy statement:

The recreational use of forests has grown to such importance that an established and recognized industry has been the outgrowth. Minnesota ranks third [among states] in the value of its recreational resources, and within the state the [tourism] industry ranks fourth in magnitude in income derived.

The industry built up around recreation has too often neglected to evaluate the importance of conservation. Without lakes and streams, game and fish and scenic beauty, the recreation and tourist industry could not exist. All forest land within the state irrespective of ownership (state, national, or private) should be so managed and protected as to encourage, assist, enlarge, and perpetuate the recreational facilities of the state.⁵⁵

According to the statement, the Forestry Division planned to support tourism by reducing forest fire hazards, establishing well-managed state forests, providing for scenic beauty, creating campsites, and leasing summer home and resort sites in state forests, among other measures.⁵⁶

In another statement from 1940, the Forestry Division called the Brainerd region "a highly developed recreational and a valuable forest area." The article explained that forest fire protection was of primary importance to the physical and economic development of the Brainerd area and, to this end, the Forestry Division had created a system of lookout towers, firefighting equipment, and 32 permanent and seasonal employees to "protect property and timber valued at millions of dollars."⁵⁷

Tourism was useful to state foresters and other conservationists because it increased the public's appreciation for forest resources which often resulted in increased funding and other support. Tourism also placed more pressure on forestry agencies by increasing the number of people using the forests (and potentially starting fires) and by raising the value of the resources the Forestry Division was responsible to protect. A Forestry Division official wrote in 1942, for example, that "very little progress was made in forest protection except for the educational program in conservation" during the Minnesota Forest Service's first ten years of existence (1911-1921). However:

In the second decade, the period from 1921 to 1931, we find some real progress in forest protection, due very largely to public recognition of other [non-logging] uses of our forest resources. It was during this time that we fully realized the recreational value of our forests, lakes, and streams. Without question, no other factor has been more helpful in promoting effective forest protection than recreational development. It has been responsible for enlisting wholehearted cooperation in forest protection from thousands of people who are not connected with or interested in the development of our recreational resources. The expansion of this industry has resulted in the building of large resorts, cabins, and summer homes on a great number of the 10,000 lakes scattered throughout the forest areas of our state.

⁵⁵ Grover M. Conzet, *A Forest Policy for Minnesota*, Jan. 23, 1931, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry.

⁵⁶ Conzet.

⁵⁷ Henry G. Weber, "Sixteen Lookout Towers Safeguard Nat'l Beauty," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, May 31, 1940.

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The coming of this industry, even though it did play a major role in promoting better cooperation in forest protection, also brought with it a number of added responsibilities, not only in the control of fires resulting from increased traffic by our tourists throughout the timbered lands, but [also] the responsibility of providing more intensive fire protection to lakeshore development that has now reached a staggering sum in increased property values.

Not so many years ago, timber on lakeshores had only a stumpage value the same as all other merchantable timber. Recreational development not only placed a greater value on lakeshore timber but created another property value in structures and improvements, both of which are so adjacent to and intermingled with forest fire hazards that they represent a very definite responsibility for intensive fire protection.

In the last ten years we find further progress being made in forest protection. In order to keep pace with public demand for better forest protection, the legislature increased appropriations to provide additional manpower and substantial increases for firefighting equipment and provide for the expansion of structures and improvements – lookout towers, telephone lines, and the construction of [patrol and spotter's] cabins and administrative sites [e.g., ranger stations] located at points where forest protection could be given most effectively.⁵⁸

From the 1920s through the 1960s the state forest service submitted frequent articles to area newspapers describing the Brainerd Ranger District's firefighting infrastructure and readiness, and asking for the public's help in preventing and reporting fires. An April 1940 article, for example, asks "the cooperation of all settlers, resort owners, sportsmen, and summer home owners, to assist in keeping the red demon of fire under control." The article contains a list of precautions property owners were asked to take such as: "Resort and summer homesite owners should burn their rubbish on lake shore or at some other place on mineral soil, and not run fire over their property." If any member of the public noticed an unattended fire, they were urged to place a "collect" call to the nearest lookout tower or forest ranger. The phone numbers of ten lookout towers, including the Pequot tower, were given in the article.⁵⁹

An April 1948 *Brainerd Daily Dispatch* article bore the headline "Pequot Lakes Area Resorters Assured of Fire Protection." The role of the fire lookout towers was highlighted as was the state forest service's cooperative arrangement with the Pequot Lake volunteer fire department to detect and extinguish fires, including at recreational properties.⁶⁰

Because of the region's large number of visitors, the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower was one of the most frequently visited fire towers in Minnesota and, because of this popularity, played an important role in the Forestry Division's public education efforts. These efforts were a critical component of the Division's strategy to prevent forest fires and advance public understanding of, and support for, forest conservation. (For more information see the fire towers discussion in Section E of the MPDF.) In 1937, according to the Brainerd district's head ranger, the district's first three stair towers – Ahrens Hill, Pequot, and Borden Lake – were "attract[ing] thousands of visitors during our tourist season each

⁵⁸ J. H. Hubbard, "State Forest Protection," *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer*, Dec. 1942, 21-22.

⁵⁹ C. Homer Whiting, "Forestry Department Warns Against Fires," typescript copy for local publication, April 1940, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Division of Forestry.

⁶⁰ "Pequot Lakes Area Resorters Assured of Fire Protection," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, April 2, 1948. See also Whiting, "Vacationland Forest Protection."

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year.⁶¹ The volume of public visits was a key reason forestry officials chose to replace ladder towers with stair towers in popular locales like Pequot. Two years after the current Pequot tower was erected, an October 1937 article in the *Brainerd Tribune* featured a photograph of the tower with the caption: "The Pequot tower at the lookout station is a show place in that neighborhood as nearly 10,000 visitors were there the past season."⁶²

State Forests. Within and near the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower's protection zone were three state forests that represented a key part of the State of Minnesota's efforts toward conservation, sustainable forestry, and recreational development. The Pequot tower protected much of Pillsbury State Forest, most of Crow Wing State Forest, and the eastern part of Foot Hills State Forest (Figure 5).

According to a 1935 state law establishing Crow Wing State Forest and others, Minnesota's state forests were designated:

. . . for state use and development for the purpose of preserving, propagating, and breeding wild life of all suitable kinds including species of game, fish, and fur bearing animals and birds of rare and useful species, and especially for the development of forests and prevention of forest fires, and for the preservation and development of rare and distinctive species for flora native to such area including the state flower, and for the protection of watershed areas valuable for domestic and commercial uses, and for the establishment and development of recreational areas⁶³

State forests historically protected some of Minnesota's last surviving stands of "old growth" trees as well as preserving critical watersheds and a broad and complex range of wildlife and plant populations. Publicly owned land in the forests served as testing grounds for Minnesota's evolving scientific forestry and conservation practices. In addition to timber, the forests contain thousands of lakes and streams making them attractive recreational resources important to the growth of tourism. In 1943 Minnesota had 29 official state forests and four similar parcels (including Itasca State Park and Forest Reserve). Today there are 58 state forests.

Pillsbury State Forest, located about 12 miles southwest of the Pequot tower, was highly significant as Minnesota's first state forest (first termed "forest reserve"), preceding others by decades. The forest began as nearly 1,000 acres of tax-delinquent cutover land donated to the state in 1899 by former governor John S. Pillsbury.⁶⁴ Under the 1899 state law that enabled forest reserves, two-thirds of the timber income was set aside for public education; the University of Minnesota was chosen by Pillsbury as the designee. CCC Camp S-76 and others worked in Pillsbury State Forest during the Depression. The forest totaled 51,773 acres in 1941.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Hubbard, Part 2.

⁶² Hubbard, Part 1.

⁶³ *Session Laws of the State of Minnesota Passed During the 49th Session of the State Legislature at the Session Commencing January 8, 1935* (St. Paul: State of Minnesota, 1935), 685.

⁶⁴ The legal process was completed in 1902, and this is usually given as the year the state forest was officially established.

⁶⁵ For information on Pillsbury, Crow Wing, and Foot Hills state forests, see *Minnesota State Forests*; also Jerry Vessels, "State Forests and Their Future," *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer*, Feb. 1941; and J. H. Hubbard, "State Forest Protection." See also "Pillsbury State Forest was First in Minnesota," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, May 20, 1971. For CCC camps see Beatty, *Summary: Minnesota CCC Work*.

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Crow Wing State Forest, located about nine miles east of the Pequot tower, was established in 1935 at about 140,000 acres. It was one of the state forests established during the New Deal to allow the State of Minnesota to manage and redevelop marginal land that had been clear-cut, repeatedly burned, and/or had reverted to public ownership due to tax-delinquency. Establishing these state forests in the 1930s allowed the state to leverage the resources of the CCC, which established camps within and near the forests. When *Crow Wing State Forest* was established in 1935 it was occupied by about 400 people, mostly the owners of small resorts and farms. In 1935 about 40% of the land had reverted to public ownership due to tax forfeiture. The land had been cut- and burned-over, but had high potential for recreational development and conservation forest management.⁶⁶ CCC Camp S-76 and others worked in *Crow Wing State Forest* during the Depression. The forest encompassed 182,425 acres in 1941.

Foot Hills State Forest is located about 15 miles northwest of Pequot; the eastern edge of the forest was protected by the Pequot tower. *Foot Hills State Forest* was authorized in 1931. That year the forest had about 225 residents, 50% to 60% of whom were impoverished and on relief. CCC Camps S-136, S-66, and S-144 worked in the forest during the Depression. The forest was 177,650 acres in 1941.

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower played an instrumental role in protecting the timber resources critical to the area's commercial forestry, a significant component of the local economy.

By the time the Pequot tower was erected, indiscriminant logging that began in the 1880s had completely cleared most of the region's towering pines. Thousands of acres had been burned in subsequent forest fires. In the 1930s, however, there was still a substantial local timber industry as trees that had been missed in the first wave were being cut and as less desirable aspen, jack pine, and other species were harvested. The region had significant tracts of land in recovery that were being replanted and/or otherwise actively managed so they would eventually produce new timber crops.

While most logging companies and wood processors in the Brainerd-Pequot area were small enterprises, the Northwest Paper Company in Brainerd was one of the state's largest paper mills. The first mill had been established in the late 19th century and the plant reconstructed several times. In the 1950s it underwent a major modernization and expansion. Once owned by Weyerhaeuser and Musser interests, the mill was eventually owned by Potlatch Corporation. (It closed in 2013.)

During World War II the Brainerd mill and four other paper mills in the state were identified by the Forestry Division in a wartime planning document as needing protection because they were operating around the clock "producing defense materials."⁶⁷

During World War II the area protected by the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower was part of the area identified by the Forestry Division as the fourth most important fire protection zone in the state. According to the war-readiness plan, the area "includes the largest, and one of the most important of Minnesota's recreational areas, vast farm development [much of it southwest of the Pequot tower's viewshed], widely scattered and numerous small logging operations, and a network of railroads, highways, and water routes." In terms of fire threat the area was categorized as "extremely high risk

⁶⁶ "Proposed State Forest Gains Support," *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, Feb. 21, 1935.

⁶⁷ "National Defense Emergency Fire Control Estimates."

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and hazard, with unusually large [property] values involved." The population more than doubled during the summer months, with "campers, hunters, fishermen, tourists, berry pickers, rice pickers, urban farmers, and truck gardeners." The area had one paper mill (at Brainerd), many small saw mills, and "numerous widely scattered timber operators" whose production had increased due to wartime demand for wood products. The area had widely scattered accumulations of logging slash, was among the driest of the state's timbered lands, and had large tracts of regrowing Jack pine, among other risky conditions.⁶⁸

After World War II the Pequot tower continued to protect existing and regrowing forests that supported the region's important postwar timber industry. In 1946 about 72% of Crow Wing County's land mass of 639,360 total acres was classified as commercial forest land – that is, land producing or capable of producing timber for commercial use. Crow Wing County also had 5,560 acres of non-commercial forest land, mostly comprising land in parks or land currently covered with substandard pulpwood or very small trees. About 66% of the commercial forest land was privately owned and 34% publicly owned. The public land was divided into county (30%), state (4%), and federal (.4%) ownership.⁶⁹

A 1948 study of Crow Wing County's forest resources confirmed that the production of forest products was critical to the local economy. According to the economic development study:

The sand plains and moraines of Crow Wing County have furnished an important share of the timber production of Minnesota during the past 70 years. The continued importance of forest products is shown by the estimated value of \$1,155,000 that has been placed on the 1946 harvest. In that same year the cutting of sawlogs, box bolts, pulpwood, poles, etc., and the subsequent manufacture into finished products provided over 160,000 man-days of work to county residents. The perpetuation of this source of income is of primary importance to the 30,000 persons residing in the county. A little less than one-third (31%) of the population is found in rural areas and is dependent upon farming and forestry for a living. The [railroad] car repair shops, mining, forest industries, and the tourist business, all more or less dependent on the forests of the county, furnish employment for many other city and town folk. . . . It is apparent that every acre of forest land should be brought into full production.⁷⁰

The study indicated that Crow Wing County had more than 100 sawmills operating in 1946. Most were small operations, but collectively they produced more than 12 million board feet of construction lumber and railroad ties from jack, red, and white pine and aspen. The largest operation was Northwest Paper Company at Brainerd which produced 40 to 50 tons of paper daily. The mill was using about 20,000 cords of pulpwood daily, most cut within a 75-mile radius of Brainerd. There was an increasing demand for utility poles in the state, and local timber was also being used in the iron mines and for fence posts and fuel.⁷¹

The 1948 study indicated that one-third of Crow Wing County's commercial forest land was about evenly divided between aspen, pine, and hardwood forests. About one-third of the commercial forest land was in need of replanting and other active management. Recovery from fire and continued fire

⁶⁸ "National Defense Emergency Fire Control Estimates."

⁶⁹ *The Forest Resource of Crow Wing County* (St. Paul: Office of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation, 1948), 53.

⁷⁰ *The Forest Resource of Crow Wing County*, 10.

⁷¹ *The Forest Resource of Crow Wing County*, 21-26.

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protection were seen as critical to encouraging forest productivity.⁷²

The situation in Cass County was similar to that of Crow Wing. A study on Cass County forestry published in 1950 indicates that about 77% of Cass County's 1.3 million acres of land was classified as commercial forest land in 1950. Of the commercial forest land, 35% was owned by private parties, 26% by the county, 20% by the federal government (most in Chippewa National Forest), 10% by state government, and 6% was Leech Lake Reservation Indian trust land. The study describes levels of timber production somewhat similar to those of Crow Wing County, adjusted for the fact that Cass County is much larger. The report reviews the status of Cass County forests and their future outlook and management challenges including the need for fire protection.⁷³

In 1958 C. Homer Whiting, head of the Brainerd Ranger District, believed the economic future of Crow Wing County and the surrounding area was "bright." In an interview with the *Brainerd Daily Dispatch* Whiting explained that land unsuited to successful agriculture was no longer being farmed as aggressively as in the past. According to the article, "The present generation has changed its thinking [regarding using cutover land for agriculture] and realizes the importance of the forest to the economic development of the county. As a result our forest growth is increasing and with better timber management and fire protection will continue to support wood-using industries, maintain our beautiful lakes, and increase the recreational possibilities for the Brainerd area."⁷⁴

Significance Under National Register Criterion C

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower is a significant example of a Minnesota fire lookout tower because it possesses all of the character-defining features of the property type and retains very good historic integrity.

The character-defining features of the property type are listed under the registration requirements in the fire lookout towers subsection in Section F of the MPDF. The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower possesses all of these character-defining features including:

- o a standardized design, unaltered by forestry agencies
- o on-site construction from a kit of prefabricated parts
- o tower made of steel angles bolted together
- o poured concrete footings
- o cab access via a set of stairs with wooden treads and landings
- o a square cab with wooden floor, sheet metal roof and lower walls, large multipaned windows with narrow frames, and a very simple interior
- o a viewshed that varies in radius of 15 to 20 miles, depending on compass direction
- o tower erected on the summit of a hill which, with the tower, creates the lookout
- o a narrow access road
- o miscellaneous site elements – in this case two building foundations and the ruins of two stone retaining walls – whose existence on lookout tower sites is now rare

⁷² *The Forest Resource of Crow Wing County*, 11, 14.

⁷³ Lynn Sandberg et al., *The Forest Resource of Cass County* (St. Paul: Office of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation, 1950).

⁷⁴ "Hinckley Fire Launched."

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- o foundations of small support buildings – an warehouse/office and a warehouse – whose existence on lookout tower sites is also now rare

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower retains good historic integrity. The property's setting, topography, spatial organization, circulation, and vegetation have not been significantly modified. (Minor alterations are described in Section 7.) The 1980s Utility Shed is small and does not overly disrupt the property's integrity of feeling and association, nor does the modern chainlink fence at the base of the tower. While the spotter's cabin, warehouse/office, and warehouse have been removed, the registration requirements indicate it is not necessary that a National Register-eligible tower be accompanied by support buildings because the tower itself was historically the principal manmade feature on the site and the key functional element. According to the registration requirements the historic integrity of a lookout tower property is strengthened if building foundations remain since their presence helps an observer understand the site's historic spatial arrangement and operation.

The steel fire tower itself has only minor alterations, largely consisting of the addition of a communications antenna. Broken window glass, deteriorated stair treads and landing boards, and woven wire safety fencing have been replaced in-kind. According to the registration requirements, the in-kind replacement of worn or damaged parts does not substantively diminish a fire tower's historic integrity.

Conclusion

The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower is an important example of Minnesota's second generation of fire lookout towers, those fabricated and erected during the New Deal. The property played an instrumental role in the detection and suppression of forest fires in Minnesota between 1935 and 1970 while the use of fire lookout towers was the most important fire detection method. The tower is an excellent example of the permanent physical accomplishments of CCC forestry work in the Brainerd area. It is significant to the history of the Minnesota Department of Conservation Division of Forestry as one of the most important lookout towers in the Forestry Division's Brainerd Ranger District. The tower protected resources critical to the development of one of the state's most important recreational areas, the Brainerd Lakes region. It was a popular visitor destination thereby playing a key role in public education about forest fires and conservation. The tower also played an instrumental role in protecting the timber resources critical to the area's commercial forestry, a significant component of the local economy. The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower is also an unusually well-preserved fire lookout tower that possesses the character-defining features of the property type and retains very good historic integrity.

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INDEX OF FIGURES

- Figure 1. The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower identified on a 1959 USGS topographical map, Nisswa Quad.
- Figure 2. June 1929 photograph of the 12' x 16' warehouse, later used as the office (photo by the Minnesota Forest Service, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation, Forestry Division Records, Minnesota Historical Society).
- Figure 3. Circa 1940 of the spotter's cabin (photo by N. N. Nadeau for the Minnesota Forest Service, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Records, Minnesota Historical Society).
- Figure 4. The nominated property's UTM coordinate point (USGS topographical map from *The National Map*, USGS website, <http://nationalmap.gov>, with UTM tick marks added to the edge for reference).
- Figure 5. Map of the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower vicinity (map by Gemini Research using a topographical base map from *The National Map*, USGS website, <http://nationalmap.gov>).
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- Figure 7. Photo facings map (Gemini Research).

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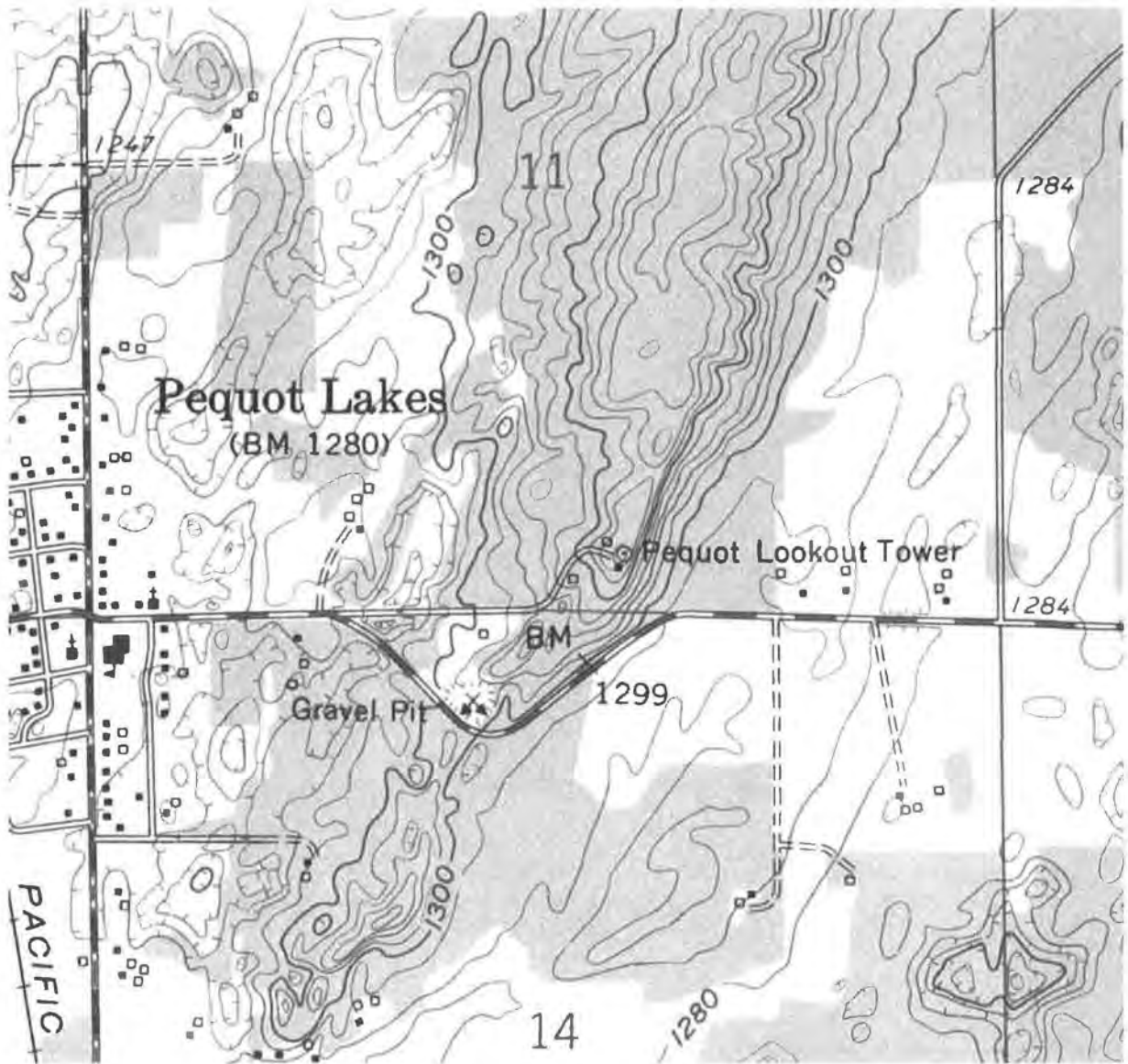


Figure 1. The Pequot Fire Lookout Tower was built on one of the highest hills in the vicinity. As the contour lines indicate, the tower stands on a summit within a ridge aligned southwest/northeast. This USGS topographical map was drawn in 1959 before County Road 11 was straightened. Note the lookout's long original access road, which circa 1960 became the new alignment of the county road (compare this figure with Figure 4) (Nisswa Quad, USGS topographical map, 1959 data).

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Figure 2. A June 1929 photograph of the 12' x 16' warehouse (i.e., storage building) about one year after construction. Its poured concrete foundation (Photo 16) is located about 50' west of the tower. From 1941-1956 the building served as the office for the Pequot ranger district. In the foreground is the south side of the access road loop (photo by the Minnesota Forest Service, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation, Forestry Division Records, Minnesota Historical Society).

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Figure 3. A circa 1940 photograph of the spotter's cabin. It was built in 1928, improved by the CCC circa 1940, and razed in 1971 (photo by N. N. Nadeau for the Minnesota Forest Service, Minnesota Dept. of Conservation Records, Minnesota Historical Society).

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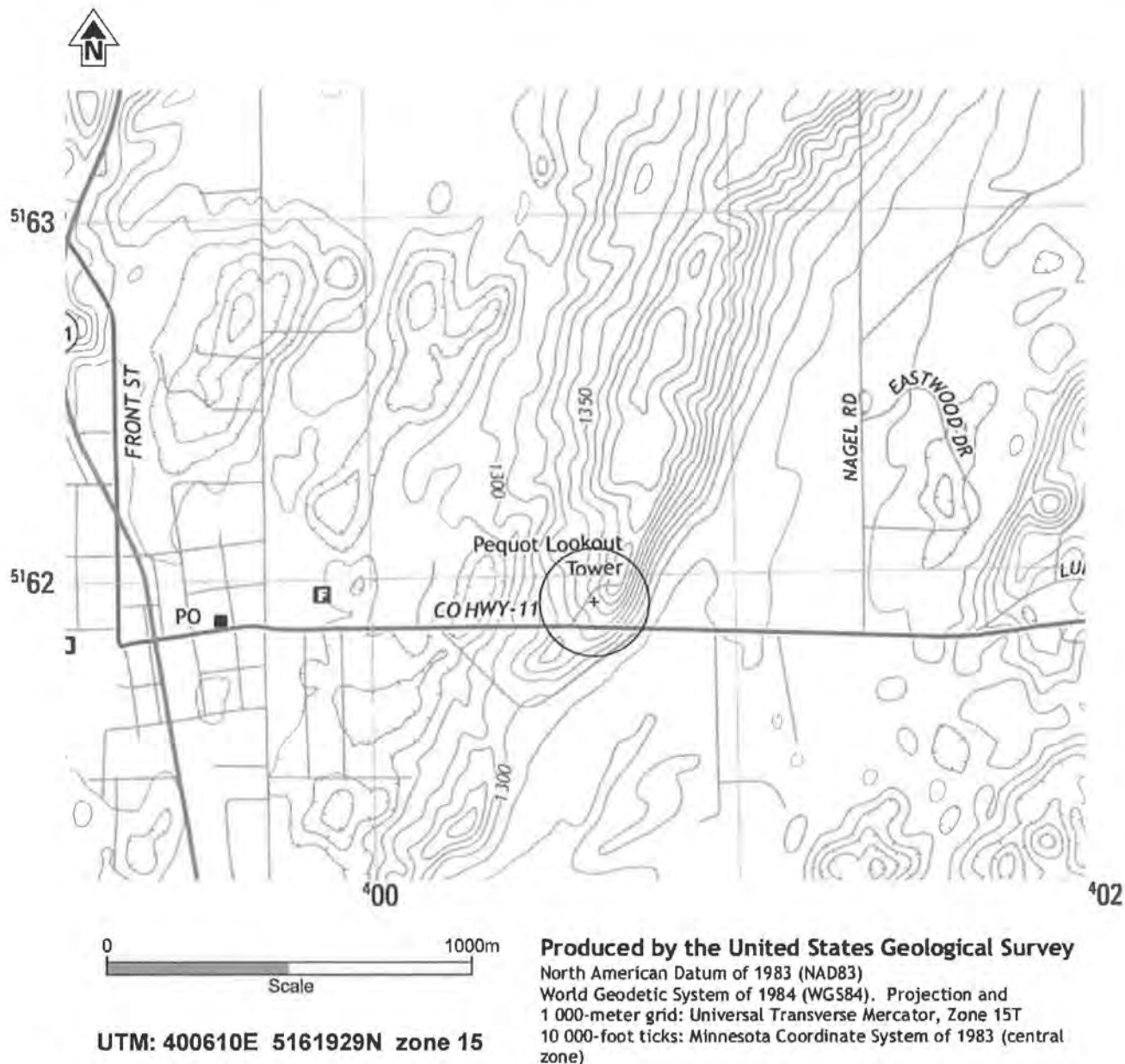


Figure 4. The nominated property's UTM coordinate point (USGS topographical map from *The National Map*, USGS website, <http://nationalmap.gov>; UTM tick marks added to the edge for reference).

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National Park Service

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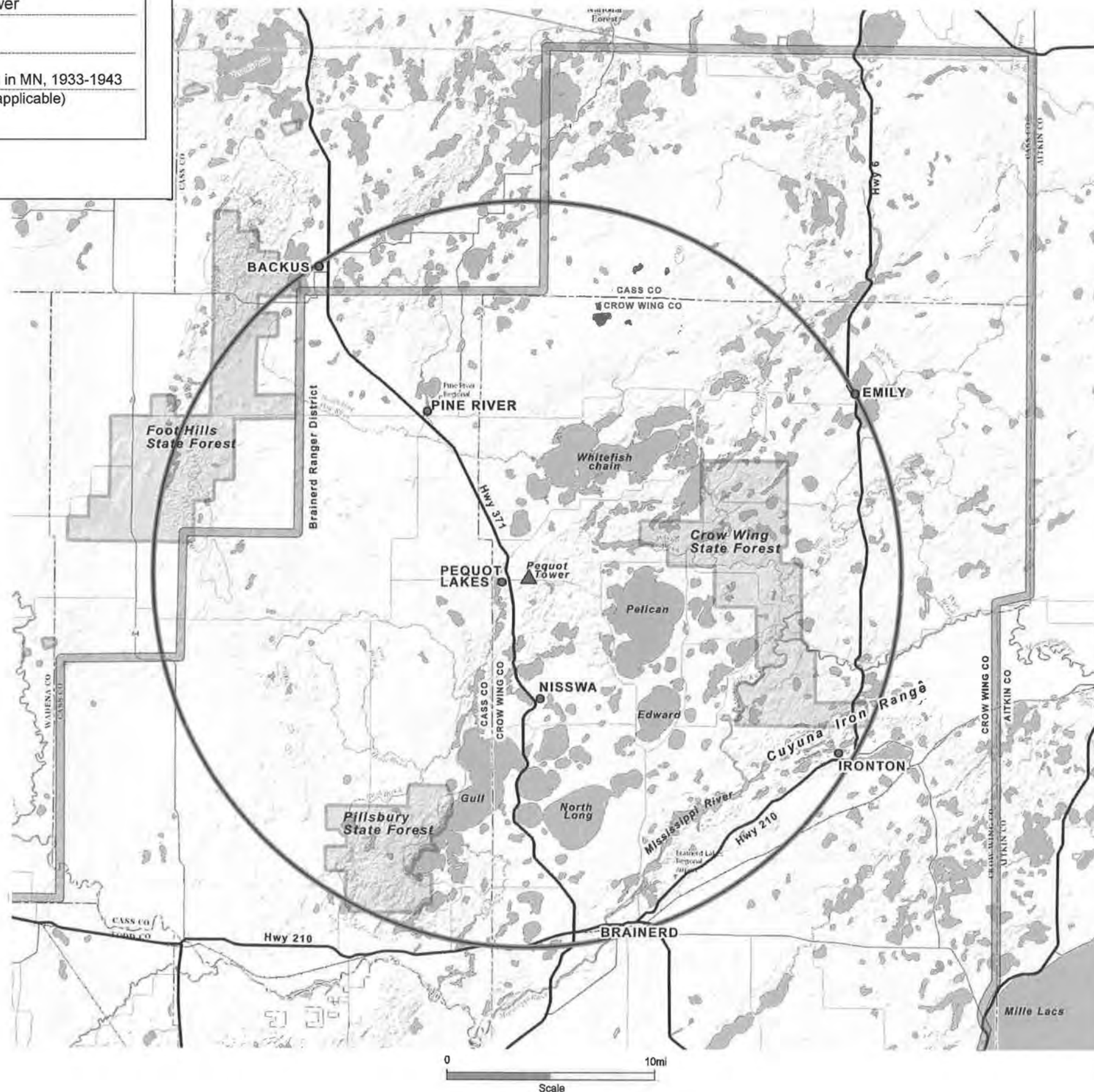


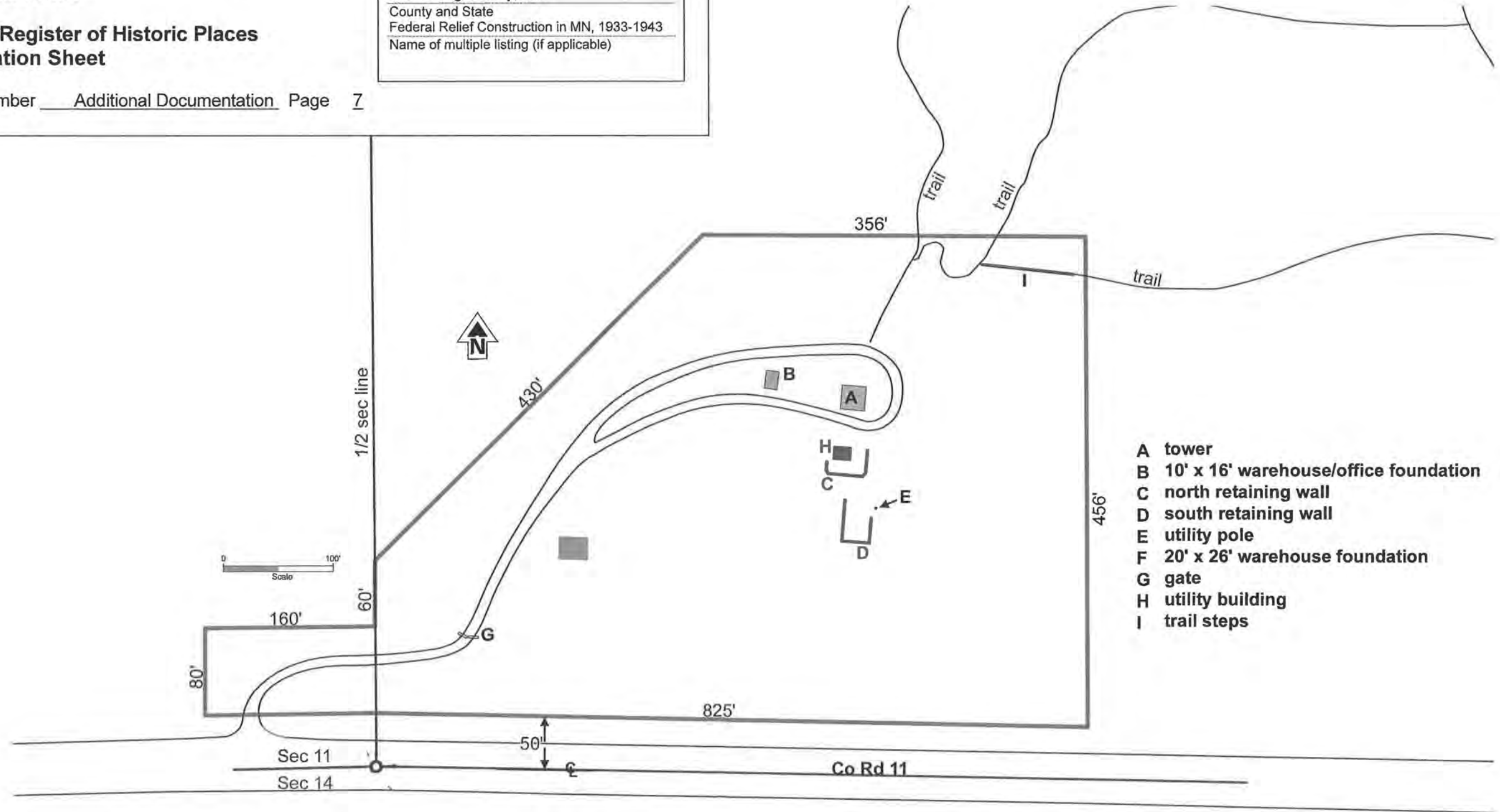
Figure 5. Map of the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower vicinity. The tower's viewshed or protection zone varies from 15 to 20 miles in any direction depending on topography and daily atmospheric conditions. The circle on the map is drawn with an 18-mile radius to approximate the protection area. The tower is located in the northern part of the Brainerd Ranger District; the ranger district boundary is indicated as a gray line (map created by Gemini Research using a topographical base map from *The National Map*, USGS website, <http://nationalmap.gov>).

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Pequot Fire Lookout Tower
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- A tower
- B 10' x 16' warehouse/office foundation
- C north retaining wall
- D south retaining wall
- E utility pole
- F 20' x 26' warehouse foundation
- G gate
- H utility building
- I trail steps

Prep by Gemini Research 2015

Figure 6. Sketch map of the nominated property (Gemini Research).

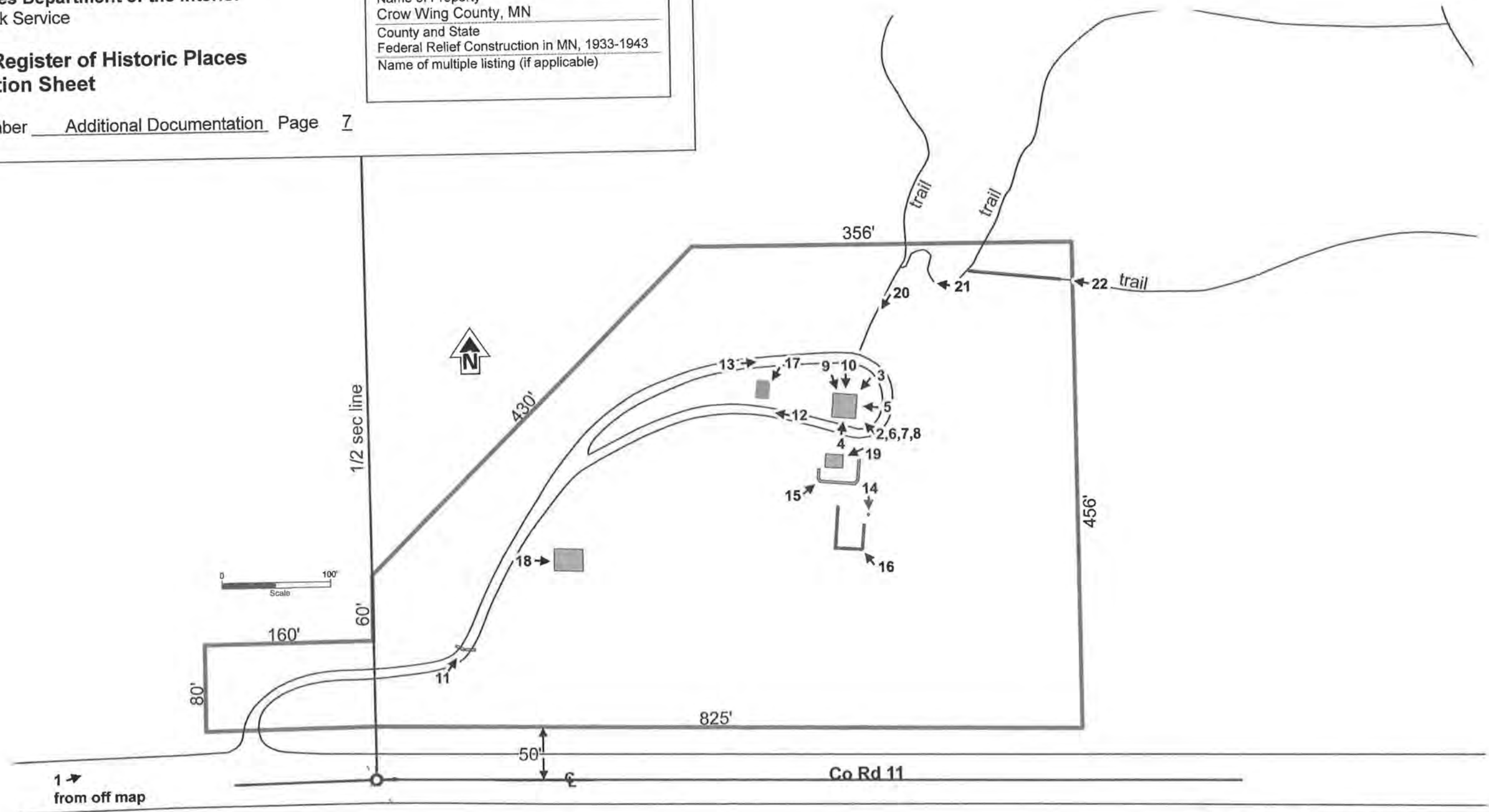
— Boundary of nominated property

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Prep by Gemini Research 2015

Figure 7. Photo facings map (Gemini Research).

- Boundary of nominated property
- ←** Camera facings













WEIGHT
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Police
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CLARA
CLAYTON

KAS + JTC
||
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EMILY

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KOP-IT



















CAUTION
HIGH VOLTAGE

15A 120V
240V/120







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 5/26/2017 Date of Pending List: 6/28/2017 Date of 16th Day: 7/13/2017 Date of 45th Day: 7/10/2017 Date of Weekly List: 7/13/2017

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 7/10/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Edson Beall Discipline Historian

Telephone _____ Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



4638 COUNTY ROAD 11 • PEQUOT LAKES, MN 56472 • (218) 568-5222 • FAX: (218) 568-5860 • www.pequotlakes-mn.gov

April 7, 2017

State Review Board
State Historic Preservation Office
345 Kellogg Boulevard West
St. Paul, Minnesota 55102-1906

To Whom It May Concern:

The Pequot Lakes City Council, at their meeting held on April 4, 2017, unanimously approved a motion supporting the placement of the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower on the National Register of Historic Places.

This Tower is an iconic piece of our community's history and symbolizes the instrumental and educational significance it plays in the detection and suppression of forest fires in Minnesota through the years. The City of Pequot Lakes asks for your support in placing the Pequot Fire Lookout Tower on the National Register of Historic Places.

If you have any questions, please contact me directly at (218)568-2352.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Malecha".

Nancy Malecha
City Administrator/Clerk
nmalecha@pequotlakes-mn.gov

Fwd: Pequot Fire Lookout Nomination

1 message

Denis Gardner <denis.gardner@mnhs.org>

Mon, May 8, 2017 at 7:53 AM

To: Michele Decker <Michele.Decker@mnhs.org>, Mary Virginia Way <ginny.way@mnhs.org>, "NR--MN: DAVID MATHER (E-mail)" <David.Mather@mnhs.org>

FYI.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Magner, Mike (DNR)** <mike.magner@state.mn.us>

Date: Fri, May 5, 2017 at 4:48 PM

Subject: Pequot Fire Lookout Nomination

To: "amy.spong@mnhs.org" <amy.spong@mnhs.org>

Cc: "sarah.beimers@mnhs.org" <sarah.beimers@mnhs.org>, "Denis.gardner@mnhs.org" <Denis.gardner@mnhs.org>

Ms. Spong –

I note that the State Review Board will be considering the Pequot Fire Lookout for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places next week. The nomination was thoroughly prepared, and the accompanying MPDF will be an asset in the management of this property type.

Please be advised that DNR-Forestry is currently in the process of divesting itself of facilities and parcels that no longer fulfill the mission for which they were acquired, have limited potential to generate income for the state, and pose safety and liability issues. The Pequot Fire Lookout, as well as the 40-acre parcel on which it is located, have been identified as candidates for divestment; therefore, the tower may not remain in state ownership much longer. DNR-Forestry will make efforts to find a buyer interested in maintaining and interpreting the Pequot Fire Lookout. However, it is possible that DNR divestment will result in the tower being razed or relocated, which could nullify or compromise the property's NRHP eligibility.

The State Review Board may therefore wish to delay forwarding the Pequot Fire Lookout nomination to the Keeper of the National Register until issues regarding the ownership of the tower are settled. Otherwise, it may become necessary to remove the property from the Register shortly after adding it. In the meantime, while the property remains in state ownership, DNR-Forestry recognizes that the Pequot Fire Lookout is an NRHP-eligible property. Any undertakings affecting the tower property will be coordinated with the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and its implementing regulations (36 CFR 800), as well as Minnesota Statutes 138.665 and -.666. Should the tower ultimately be sold to a private concern, this transfer would also be completed in consultation with the MnHPO.

- Mike Magner
DNR Forestry / Fish & Wildlife Archaeologist
DNR Forestry Resource Assessment Office
483 Peterson Road
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Phone: 218-322-2513

Minnesota Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Office
345 Kellogg Blvd West, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102
651-259-3451



TO: Stephanie Toothman, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Denis P. Gardner

DATE: May 18, 2017

NAME OF PROPERTY: Pequot Fire Lookout Tower

COUNTY AND STATE: Crow Wing County, Minnesota

SUBJECT: National Register:
 Nomination
 Multiple Property Documentation Form
 Request for determination of eligibility
 Request for removal (Reference No.)
 Nomination resubmission
 Boundary increase/decrease (Reference No.)
 Additional documentation (Reference No.)

DOCUMENTATION:

- Original National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
- Multiple Property Documentation Form
- Continuation Sheets
- Removal Documentation
- Photographs
- CD w/ image files
- Digital Map
- Sketch map(s)
- Correspondence
 - Owner Objection
 - The enclosed owner objections
 - Do Do not constitute a majority of property owners

STAFF COMMENTS:

One of the two pieces of correspondence for this property is an e-mail. Technically, the e-mail is not an objection to listing, but the public owner of the property suggested that listing of the fire lookout tower be delayed until the agency passes ownership to another party. The suggestion was noted, but the process of nomination continued.