

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station

other name/site number _____

2. Location

street & town St. Regis Mountain not for publication

city or town Santa Clara vicinity

state New York code NY county Franklin code 033 zip code 12970

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William Carter, SAPO 11/5/05
SHPO/Commissioner, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station
Name of Property

Franklin County, New York
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- public-local
- private
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

- district
- building(s)
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
2		sites
1		structures
		objects
3		Total

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

Fire Observation Stations of the NYS Forest Preserve

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/fire observation station

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE/utilitarian (fire tower)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls

roof

other

Metal/steel (tower)

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station
Franklin County, New York

Section number 7 Page 1

Description

The **St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station** is located at the 2,874' summit of the St. Regis Mountain in the town of Santa Clara, Franklin County in the Adirondack Forest Preserve of New York State. The fire observation station includes a 35-foot tall, steel frame lookout tower erected in 1918, the site of the former observer's cabin, and nine-tenths of a mile foot trail between the cabin site and the summit. The original jeep trail to the summit and the lower portion of the foot trail, between the cabin site and the trailhead, have been excluded from this nomination due to lack of historic integrity and/or owner objection (portions of the earlier trail now pass through private property). The boundary for the nominated property is drawn to include a 500 square foot area surrounding the tower, the site of the observer's cabin, the trail connecting them, and related historic features (e.g., culverts, swales, support and retaining walls) along the trail.

Contributing Resources: 3 (tower, foot trail, site of former observer's cabin)

Non-Contributing Resources - 0

The St. Regis Mountain fire tower is located in the area between the three US Geological Survey Markers on the highest point, off to the north side, of the large open summit of St. Regis Mountain. The St. Regis summit is mostly open rock face with occasional areas of grass and moss. There is encroachment of various evergreen varieties on the north and northeast portion of the summit of generally less than ten feet in height. The summit of the mountain is mostly bare rock due to a fire that was started in 1876 by surveyors and their guides when they decided to get rid of some of the brush that loggers left behind on the mountain. The fire got out of control and destroyed most of the vegetation on the summit. (1)

In 1918, the state erected a 35-foot tall, steel frame lookout tower on the St. Regis Mountain summit to give the observer a better view. (2) The tower and its 9-foot high cab were fabricated by the Aermotor Company. This tower is typical of the "heavier type" tower, with integral staircase, built by the NYS Conservation Commission/Department between 1917 and 1950. The square, steel and glass cab atop the tower, which encloses the observation platform, has a riveted and bolted frame of angular steel and a hip roof. Steel stair risers, supporting wood stair treads, divided into five flights and four landings, provide access to the cab from the ground. The four tower legs are anchored by standard coupling plates atop concrete footings, placed on the exposed bedrock. These plates are anchored into the bedrock by two $\frac{3}{4}$ inch steel threaded rods that pass through the concrete footings. In 1919, a "Panoramic Map" was installed in the St. Regis fire tower. (3)

See continuation sheet

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St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station
Franklin County, New York

Section number 7 Page 2

The first fire observer assigned to the St. Regis Fire Observation Station only had a tent until 1925 when the NYS Conservation Commission built a standard-sized observer's cabin at the station. (4) In 1939, this cabin was replaced by the CCC with a 1936 style cabin (5), which was destroyed by vandals sometime after 1990. Today, only the site of these cabins and the foundation from the last cabin remains. At the site of the observer's cabin, the foot trail intersects with a small stream, which, when the cabin was in use, would have provided a good year-round source of water.

The current St. Regis Mountain trailhead is located 2.5 miles off of the Keese Mills Road, which intersects with Route 30 less than 100 feet from the main entrance to Paul Smiths College. The current foot trail leading to the St. Regis Mountain summit is approximately 3 miles long with 1,235 feet of vertical rise and is oriented north (trailhead) to southwest (tower) up the mountain. Originally, the trail traveled through private land owned by Marjorie Merriweather Post and Paul Smith's College. Over the years, the first part of this trail has been rerouted several times, and in 1934, a new foot trail on state land was cut to the summit by the CCC. (6) In the summer of 1999, a new parking area at the trailhead and the first two-thirds of the trail were rebuilt by a professional Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) trail crew under NYS Department of Environmental Conservation auspices. (7) However, the only portion of the original trail that remains unchanged, and is included in this nomination, is the nine-tenths of a mile stretch from the site of the observer's cabin up to the summit.

The St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station was decommissioned by the state in 1990, but, the trail remains in active recreational use and is maintained by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

End Notes:

- (1) O'Kane, Walter Collins. Trails and Summits of the Adirondacks. Boston: 1928, Pg. 255.
- (2) Conservation Commission: Report for the year 1918. Albany. J.B. Lyon Co. 1919. Pg. 118.
- (3) Conservation Commission: Report for the year 1919. Albany. J.B. Lyon Co. 1920. Pg. 138.
- (4) Conservation Commission: Report for the year 1925. Albany. J.B. Lyon Co. 1926. Pg. 197.
- (5) Conservation Department: Report for the year 1939. Albany. J.B. Lyon Co. 1940. Pg. 82.
- (6) Conservation Department: Report for the year 1934. Albany. J.B. Lyon Co. 1935. Pg. 101.
- (7) John P. Freeman. Views from on High: June, 2001 Pg. 111.

8. Description

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.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Recreation

Conservation

Architecture

Period of Significance

1918 - 1954

Significant Dates

1918; 1925; 1939

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Aermotor Corporation (tower manufacturer)

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency (NYSDEC)
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository: _____

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St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station
Franklin County, New York

Section number 8 Page 1

The **St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station** is a component in the multiple property submission, Fire Observation Stations of the NYS Forest Preserve. It was identified as a historic resource in an unpublished inventory prepared by NYSDEC in 1991. Subsequently, with assistance from the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Field Services Bureau, the St. Regis Mountain Forest Fire Observation Station was identified as meeting the criteria for listing on the State/National Registers of Historic Places. Additional contextual information for the St. Regis Mountain Forest Fire Observation Station can be found in **Sections E:1D *Rethinking Forest Fire Protection, 1909 – 1915*; E:1F *“Conservation as a Social Service”: Managing Recreation and Resources, 1909 – 1916*; E: 2C *Standardized Fire Observation Stations, 1916 – 1932*; E: 2E *Decommissioning and Abandonment of the Fire Observation Stations, 1992 – 2000*** of the Multiple Property Documentation Form. Additional associated property type information can be found in **Sections F:1 *Steel Towers*; F:2 *Observer Cabins and Outbuildings*; and F:3 *Trail and Road Features*** of the Multiple Property Documentation Form.

Statement of Significance

The St. Regis Mountain Forest Fire Observation Station is significant under criteria A and C for its association with the New York State Forest Preserve and as an example of an early-20th century forest fire observation tower and related historic resources.

In April of 1910, the state placed the first fire observation station on St. Regis Mountain, which was comprised of an observer and a tent, which served as the observatory. A tower was not initially built on this site because the observer could see 449,209 acres by merely standing on the cleared summit. From there he could see 12 miles to the east, 15 miles to the south, 30 miles to the west and 15 miles to the north. The type tent that served as the first observatory on St. Regis Mountain can be seen in the image below of a 1910 observation tent on Pharaoh Mountain. (1)

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St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station
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Section number 8 Page 2



Fire Observation Tent on Pharaoh Mountain 1910

The state spent a total of \$294.77 for the construction of the first observation station. (2), and built a three-mile telephone line to the summit to connect the station. This observation station also had an excellent radio relay link to areas unreachable by repeater towers.

The first fire observer assigned to St. Regis Mountain was George F. Brown, who reported 55 fires the first year. (3) Within the first few years, there were a few dangerous fires in the area of the St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station. On the afternoon of May 31, 1915, a small fire, that was probably left by fishermen in the town of Santa Clara, was fanned by swift winds and destroyed 1,550 acres of state land. Most of this land had been burned over from a previous fire. (4)

There is a significant history of hikers enjoying their visit with the observer and the panoramic views from the tower. In 1921, the Conservation Reports began to record the number of visitors at the fire towers. That year there were 944 visitors to the St. Regis fire tower. In 1934, there were 1,639(5), and in 1973, there were 1,400 visitors. In 1990, the state decommissioned the St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station.

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Continuation Sheet**

**St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station
Franklin County, New York**

Section number 8 Page 3

End Notes:

- (1) State of NY Forest, Fish and Game Commission, Sixteenth Annual Report [for the Year 1910] (Albany: JB Lyons, 1911), p. 27 insert.
- (2) Conservation Commission: Report for the year 1910. Albany. The Argus Co. 1911. Pg. 26.
- (3) Conservation Commission: Report for the year 1910. Albany.. The Argus Co 1911. Pg. 25.
- (4) Conservation Commission: Report for the year 1915. Albany. The Argus Co 1916. Pg. 89.
- (5) Conservation Department: Report for the year 1934. Albany. J.B. Lyon Co. 1935. Pg. 100.

See continuation sheet

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St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station
Franklin County, New York

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Major Bibliographical References

Besanceney, Laurie. "Supporters rally to save St. Regis Mt. Fire tower." *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* Dec. 6, 2003.

Briggs, James. "Interest in Adirondack Fire Towers Growing". *Hamilton County News*. April 13, 1993. Pg. 10.

Freeman, John P. *Views from on High*. June, 2001. Pg. 111.

Karlin, Rick. "Renovating Adirondack Lookouts A Tall Order". *Albany Times-Union*. Aug. 2, 1998. Pg. A-3.

Russell, Matthew. "New Use For Fire Towers Could Include Educational Initiative". *Daily Enterprise*. Feb. 4, 1993. Pp. 1, 10.

Williams, Stephen. "Lookout Lore" *The Sunday Gazette*. May 20, 2001. Pp. H-1, H-2.

Other Sources:

"Adirondack Fire Towers Get New Lease on Life", *Adirondack Explorer*, Aug. 1998. Pp. 14-15

"Room with a View" *Adirondack Life*. June 1993. Pg. 16.

Steven Englehart to Steven Guglielmi; Letter to DEC. from A.A.R.C.H. supporting retention of the St. Regis Mt. fire tower. Oct. 21, 2003

St. Regis Mountain Fire Observation Station

Name of Property

Franklin County, New York

County and State

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property less than one acre**UTM References**1) 18 553345 4917270
Zone Easting Northing2) 18 554525 4917864
Zone Easting Northing3) 18
Zone Easting Northing4) 18
Zone Easting Northing See continuation sheet**Verbal Boundary Description**

Boundary includes a 500 square foot area surrounding the tower; the site of the observer's cabin; and a 15-foot buffer from the center line on either side of the nine-tenths mile foot trail between the site of the observer's cabin and the tower

Boundary Justification

Boundaries have been drawn to include the extant resources historically associated with the observation station.

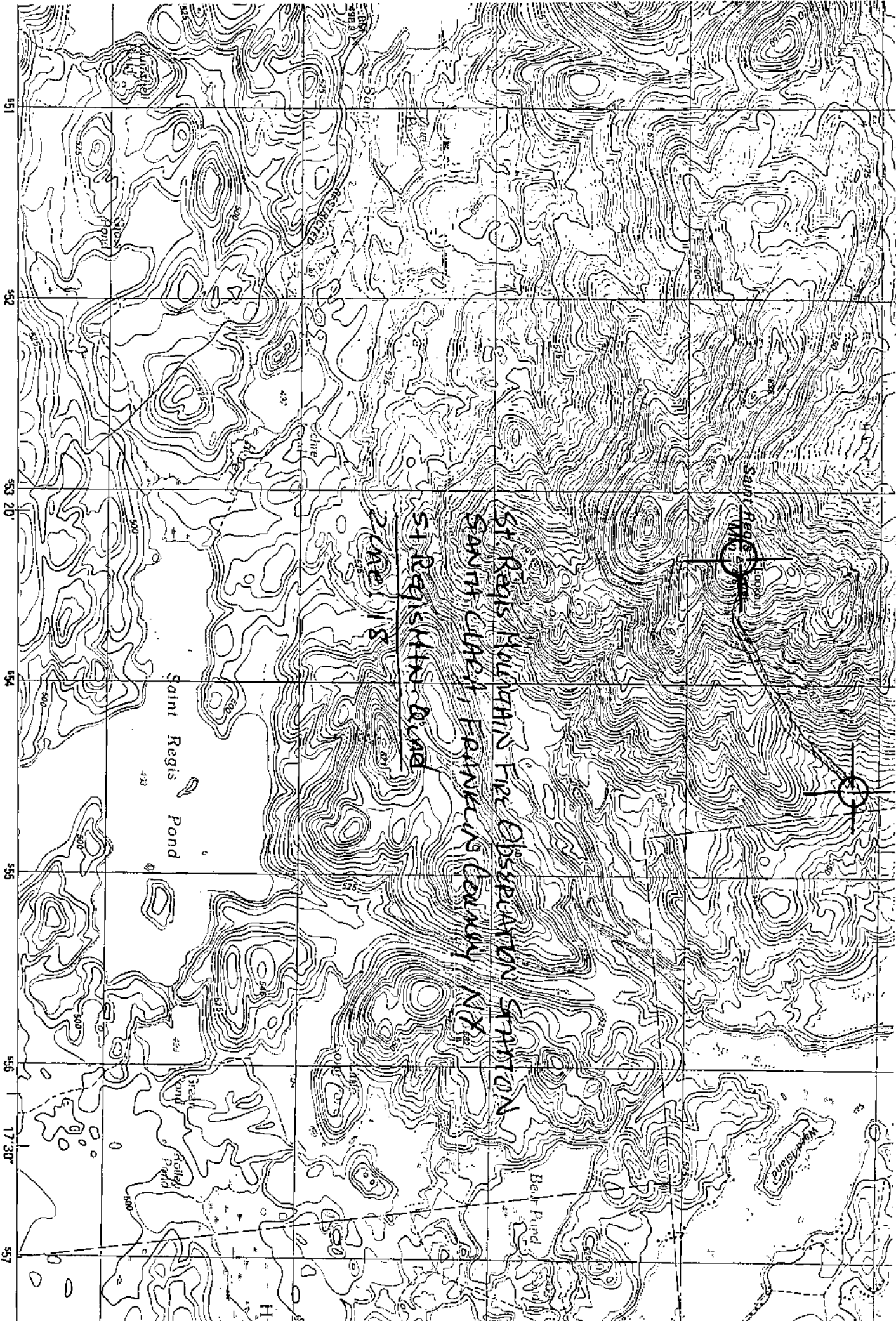
11. Form Prepared Byname/title David Petrelli (with research assistance from Marty Podskoch & William Starr)Ed. By L. Garofalini, NYSOPRHP, Peebles Island, Waterford, NY 518-237-8643 ext. 3267organization Saving St. Regis Tower date 12/6/04street & number 108 County Route 25 telephone 518-483-3767city or town Malone state NY zip code 12953**Additional Documentation****Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative black and **white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)street & number 625 Broadway telephone 518-457-7433city or town Albany state NY zip code 12233-7020**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. 470 *et seq.*).**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.



THE GROUND



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Saint Regis Pond

ST REGIS MOUNTAIN FIRE OBSERVATION STATION

SAINT REGIS, FRANKLIN COUNTY, N.Y.

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