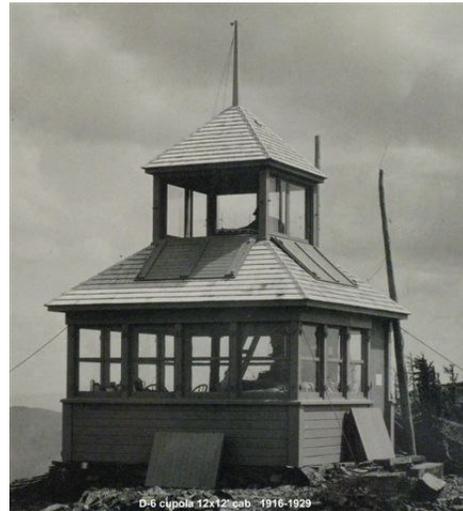


Lookout Show`n Tell #2 – Standard Lookout Designs

Before 1916, there was no standard pattern for fire lookout structures. The D-6 cupola cabin was the first; a wood frame 12x12' cab with a 1/4-size second story; windows all around. Its design grew out of a sketch drawn inside a tent atop Mount Hood in Oregon, and was given the name "D-6" from USFS District-6. About 100 were built between 1916 and 1929.



D-6 Cupola 12'x12' Cab 1916 - 1929

The "L" series began in the Northwest also. As early as 1920, Montana rangers were designing their own version of what a cupola cabin should look like. Made of hand-hewn logs cut on-site, some dove-tail cornered with great skill, the "D-1" evolved into the "L-2", "L-3", and "R3 Nezperce" cabin. 70+ were made.



R-3 (L-2, L-3) Nezperce Log 12'x14' 1928

"L-4" was by far the most popular live-in lookout. It came in three generations; with a 14x14' wood frame cab, windows all around; sitting on the ground, or atop pole or timber towers up to 100' tall. The 1929-1932 versions featured a gable (2-sided) wood shingle roof.



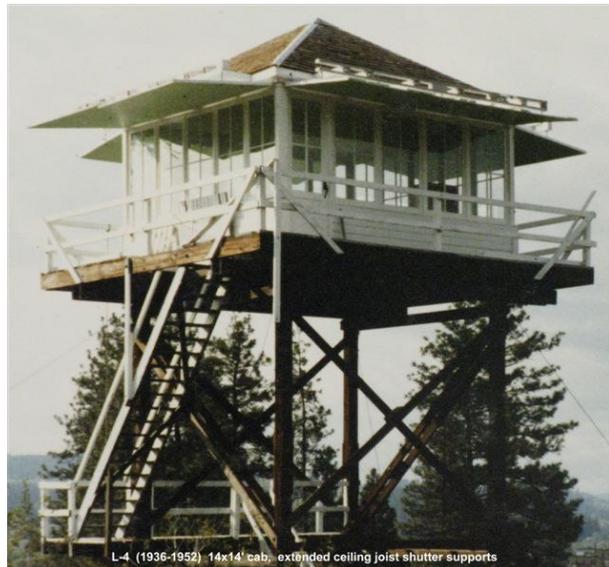
L-4 1930 (14'x14' Gable Roof)

The 1933-1935 versions had a 4-sided hip roof.



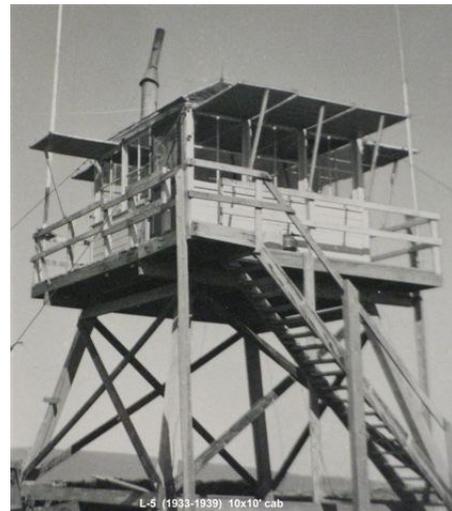
L-4 (1933-1935) 14'x14' Cab
Hip Roof, Propped Shutters

The 1936-1952 versions had a similar hip roof, with extended ceiling joists to hold the window shutters open. They were ordered in kits, packaged for mule or truck transport. More than two thousand were shipped from USFS warehouses in Missoula, Spokane, Portland, or fabricating mills in Vancouver, WA and Columbia Falls, MT.



L-4 (1936-1952) 14'x14' Cab
Extended Ceiling Joist Shutter Supports

"L-5" was similar to the 1933 L-4, but only 10x10'.



L-5 (1933-1939) 10'x10' Cab

"L-6" was also similar, but only 8x8'.



L-6 (1933-1939) 8'x8' Cab, Hip Roof

"L-7" had a low gable roof, was 7x7', wood frame, and had only two window sets each side; with access by door from the catwalk, or through a trapdoor inside the cab.



L-7 7'x7' Cab With Low Pitch Roof

"R-6" was developed in Oregon's USFS Region-6 in 1952. It has a flat roof; 15x15' frame live-in cab with 7 sets of windows each side. Several hundred exist today, from ground level, to 84' high on treated timber towers.



R-6 Flattop 15'x15' Cab

The most popular lookout structure elsewhere in the U.S. is the all metal tower. Its primary supplier, the Aermotor Co. (same company that made most of the windmills for farms all across America) offered its fire tower in a dozen different designs, since the early 1920s. Most common is the "MC-39"; a heavily galvanized free-standing batter-legged hurricane-proof structure with a 7x7' metal cab. It came in a wide choice of heights: 33' (4 flights, 44 steps); 45'9" (5 flights, 61 steps); 59'3" (79 steps); 79'6" (8 flights, 97 steps); 99'9" (9 flights, 133 steps). Also a few dozen were 120' tall; and the tallest, 176', is still in service at the Woodworth State Forest near Alexandria, Louisiana.



MC-39 100' Metal "Aermotor"

"LS-40" was similar at a glance, but lighter in material and design. They were found in several styles; with straight ladders or criss-cross stairs; made by Aermotor and a half dozen other manufacturers across the U.S. during the 1930s.



LS-40 Metal Aermotor: Criss-Cross Stairs, 7'x7' Cab

"LS-100" is an all metal live-in tower with a 14x14' cab; a preferred choice in California and Arizona, where many are in use yet.



LS-100 All Metal 14'x14' Cab

LS-100 all metal 14x14' cab

These are but a few of the many lookout designs still in use throughout the world today.

**Ray Kresek
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