

# History of WVU Jackson's Mill

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## Oh Jackson's Mill

*In the heartland of West Virginia  
There's a place I love so well  
By the West Fork's flowing water  
Stands lovely Jackson's Mill  
It's a place of dedication to the four-fold way,  
A place of new beginnings ev'ry day.  
It's a place of inspiration, Your cup to fill,  
This is Jackson's Mill  
Oh, Jackson's Mill  
Oh, Jackson's Mill  
You have led us on our journey, Jackson's Mill  
Oh Jackson's Mill  
Oh Jackson's Mill!  
You have led us on our journey, Jackson's Mill!*

—Words and Music by Harriet Weaver  
(Unpublished)

Have you ever been to WVU Jackson's Mill (hereafter called the Mill or Jackson's Mill) or known someone who has been there? For those who have been to the Mill to participate in a meeting, picnic, conference, or event, the experience means different things to each person. What do you remember about your experience? Is there a favorite place you like to visit when you are there? Is there a special memory? Who was with you? What have you heard others say about the Mill?

Think again about what you remember. No doubt it was the people you were with or the program you attended that created your memories. But the unique setting at Jackson's Mill no doubt enhanced those memories.

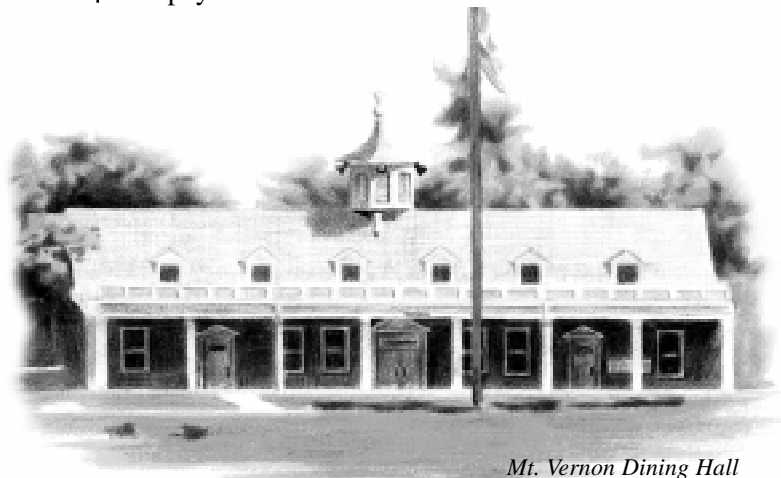
A longtime worker at Jackson's Mill, Ralph Myers, once said, "No one person is responsible for Jackson's Mill . . . It is a communion of minds, communion of efforts." (Notes from a 1954 State Camp talk.)

As one studies the history of Jackson's Mill, it is apparent that volunteers—adults and youths—played a big role in the development of the state camp and

conference center. They conducted fund-raising drives, came to the Mill to work on building projects, and learned skills while helping expand the facility's resources. Why do you think they did those things?

The 14 cottages alone account for numerous fund-raising projects before they were completed. Volunteer efforts were many. 4-H youths conducted contests and fund drives and worked with county courts (commissions), teachers, and others to raise the funds for their cottage. The Farm Bureau in Lewis County made a loan to the boys and girls of the county, which the youth paid off in three years. Logs were donated by a Webster County lumber company for its cabin. In Upshur County, stones were sold for 10 cents each to fund its cottage. Materials to build Marion Cottage were donated by local civic clubs; e.g., Kiwanis paid for the roof and Federated Women's Clubs the chimney. Randolph County youths were asked to donate either "a hen or a dollar."

Work groups of youths and adults often helped in the actual cottage construction. Lewis County 4-H'ers were involved in building their cottage. 4-H'ers from Monroe County traveled to the Mill to work on their cottage. Calhoun Cottage was built with the help of unemployed men who were brought to the camp each Monday morning and returned to their home on Saturday evening. 4-H clubs supplied money to pay board for the men.



Mt. Vernon Dining Hall

Other parts of the Mill were made possible because someone cared. The Assembly Hall, Mt. Vernon Dining Hall, and other major meeting sites were constructed primarily with funds allotted by the state legislature. Donations were sought from businesses and individuals for the “Century of Progress” building, now called the West Virginia Building. Electric and gas utilities were instrumental in the building of the Farm and Home Electrification Building (now the Electric Energy Center) and Flameway Hall, respectively.

Staff at Jackson’s Mill have always been involved in building and renovation projects, particularly in the “off” season. However, in the early days, campers and summer workers were active in the building projects. The Jackson Spring, located behind the Assembly Hall, was built in the summer of 1922 by a group of 4-H boys who didn’t want to attend camp classes. The first swimming pool, located in front of the dining hall, was built by a group of boys who spent a winter learning how to pour and work concrete. The West Virginia Lake was planned and built by pool lifeguards in their time off between swimming classes.

Sometimes, organizations or businesses sponsored certain buildings and/or sites at the Mill. For example, the Amphitheater (dedicated in 1940) was funded by the W. Va. Daughters of the American Revolution. The All-Faith Chapel (1959) was donated by the Laymen of the Methodist Church. The “Teepi” Shrine to honor the first camp director was developed by the 4-H All Stars. The State Garden Clubs were instrumental in developing the original Formal Garden, which was located in the area of the current Blaker Mill pond.

The Community Educational Outreach Service (CEOS) and its predecessors have been actively involved in various phases of the Mill’s development. The organization has been instrumental in seeing that the Jackson’s Mill conference center grows and

continues. It has held meetings, conferences, and camps at the Mill since 1922. Financial donations have been made for cottage renovation, the development of the historic area, refurbishing of meeting rooms and guest rooms, etc.

The group bought materials and provided financial resources to continue a child care center begun in the 1970s. They loaned the materials and toys so other groups could have access to child care while at the Mill. Later, they purchased playground equipment. They provided funds and other resources to renovate the Dorsey Resource Center and established and furnished the center’s Gertrude Humphreys Room.

As noted above, the success of the Mill depends on individuals and organizations who care about it and want to see it succeed. One of the groups spearheading this development is the Friends of Jackson’s Mill organization. Its goal is to bring together the many individuals and groups who cherish and support WVU Jackson’s Mill and, as one, work to preserve its past and ensure its future. Their objectives include increasing the visibility of the Mill, raising funds to support services and activities not covered by the facility’s budget, encouraging community involvement and volunteerism in Mill-related activities, and educating state residents about its history and past contributions.

If you are interested in assisting with the Friends’ activities, you may gain more information by contacting:

**Friends of Jackson’s Mill**

160 Jackson Mill Road  
Weston, WV 26452.

If you are interested in further study of the history and development of WVU Jackson’s Mill, you may find the following resources helpful:

Davis, Brad. *The Nature of Jackson’s Mill*. 1982

Meador, Michael M. *A Walking Tour of Historic Jackson’s Mill*. McClain Printing Company. 1982, 1991.