

History of WVU Jackson's Mill

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The story of WVU Jackson's Mill (hereafter called Jackson's Mill or the Mill) is really a tale of two histories. One is about an early industrial site and boyhood home of Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, Civil War general. The other is about a campus established to train young people and rural leaders. This program topic will help the learner to:

- understand the history and development of Jackson's Mill,
- identify ways volunteers have assisted with the Mill's growth, and
- learn how organizations can strengthen the Mill's future.

(Slides with a script or a CD "The Development of WVU Jackson's Mill" are available from the Dorsey Resource Center to assist you in teaching this topic. Please ask your WVU Extension Service Office to secure this resource for you. Preview the program before your meeting. Use the following information to facilitate discussion.)

Jackson History

Edward Jackson and his wife, Elizabeth, settled on the land now known as Jackson's Mill, located on the West Fork of the Monongahela River, in 1801. They constructed a log cabin and gristmill. Later, they constructed a larger home, and the Jackson businesses grew to include grist and sawmills, carpenter and blacksmith shops, and a store. The homestead became a central meeting place for local residents and a center of news and politics. When Edward Jackson died, the businesses were taken over by his son, Cummins.

In 1830, following the deaths of his parents, 6-year-old Thomas Jonathon Jackson came to the farm and was raised by his uncle Cummins in the family traditions of milling and politics. Thomas left in 1842 at age 18 for West Point and a distinguished



Mt. Vernon Dining Hall

military career, where he gained the nickname of "Stonewall."

The property remained in the Jackson family until the mid-1870s, even though much of it fell into disrepair following Cummins' death in 1849. The property changed hands several times, and the family home was destroyed by fire about 1915.

In 1915, the Monongahela Valley Traction Company (also called Monongahela West Penn Public Service Company) bought the property around the old gristmill with the idea of making it into a memorial park to honor Stonewall. The new park area quickly became a popular place for picnics and outings. A granite stone and plaque mark the site of Jackson's boyhood home.

A State Camp Is Born

West Virginia's 4-H program had been growing steadily since the first club was organized in 1907. County 4-H camps had been held since 1914. By 1920, 28 counties were holding county camps, and state leaders began to talk about the need for a state camp. W. H. Kendrick and C. H. Hartley, state 4-H leaders, began looking for a place to locate the state 4-H camp.

Mrs. Arthur W. (Bertie) Rhodes, president of Stonewall Country Club of Lewis County and first state president of the W. Va. Farm Women's Clubs, suggested using the Jackson homestead for the camp because of its historic significance. Her club had been using the old Mill for their club meetings for some time.

In early 1921, Kendrick and others visited the site. They found 5 acres with an old mill building and a cornfield of stubble. After looking at other sites in the state, they identified five advantages of the former Jackson property: (1) It was centralized in the state. (2) It was located near electrical railway service, which provided inexpensive transportation to the site. (3) It was five miles from the nearest town. (4) It had historic value. (5) Business men in Weston and Clarksburg expressed willingness to cooperate in the development of the site.

Senate Bill 289, passed in 1921, named Jackson's Mill as the state 4-H camp and placed the site under the care of the WVU Extension Service. The legislature also appropriated \$10,000 for the development of the site.

A meeting in May 1921 brought together leaders of the State Board of Control, WVU, and business representatives to discuss the camp's potential. The group agreed to cooperate, and the first state 4-H camp in the nation was under way.

The Camp Site Develops

With the assistance of state grants, in-kind donations from local utility companies, and help from area businesses, the camp began to take shape. In 1921, a mess hall was built on the flat beside the old mill, small cabins were constructed for housing and office space, water and sewage disposal were developed, tents were purchased and floors built, and a pump house was constructed on the riverbank. The first state 4-H camp was held at Jackson's Mill in June 1921, with some 425 campers enjoying the facility.

The camp added additional acreage over the years. Some 30 acres were purchased by the Lewis County Farm Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce from Byron Jackson in 1922. In 1923, about 45 additional acres were purchased through state appropriation, and the state bought a 434-acre farm adjoining the site in 1931. After additional small acquisitions, Jackson's Mill currently contains 525 acres.

A 20-year master plan was completed in the spring of 1922 by Morris-Knowes Inc., of Pittsburgh, Pa. The plan and its accompanying map outlined sites for county cottages and common areas. (*The framed map is located in the hallway of the Mill's Administration Building.*)

Kendrick, the first director of Jackson's Mill, declared he wanted to build the camp so that each structure would stand for an ideal in the lives of youths to be served. He believed the fundamentals of American civilization should be brought out in the buildings, which would challenge the best in boys and girls. He wanted to foster ideals that were immortal because he believed boys and girls grow to be exactly like things placed around them. The architecture at Jackson's Mill features many fireplaces, stone buildings, and an overall simplicity of structure and color to assist in furthering these ideals.

Originally, plans called for each county to build a cottage where youths and adults from that county could stay when they came to Jackson's Mill. Several counties discussed the idea and raised money toward their cottages, but in the end only 14 cottages were built. County people took an active role in building these cottages, sometimes even having work crews participate in the construction.

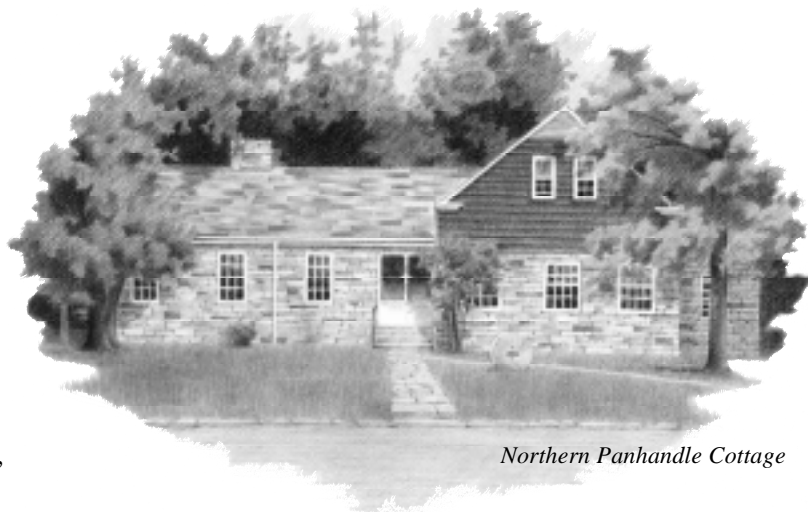
(Leader might want to discuss your county's effort, if known, or check with the local Extension office for historical references to the Mill. We have seen correspondence that the following counties considered building cottages, but they were never completed: Berkeley, Cabell, Doddridge, Greenbrier, Mercer, Mingo, Raleigh, and Ohio.)

The following county cottages are located at Jackson's Mill:

- Lewis—completed in 1922; remodeled in 1948 and 2002.
- Webster—dedicated October 1923; expanded in 1935.
- Upshur—dedicated October 1923.
- Harrison—completed in 1924; remodeled in 1949.
- Marion—completed in 1926; remodeled in the 1940s.



- Monroe—dedicated in 1928; remodeled in 1949.
- Gilmer—completed in 1929.
- Monongalia—dedicated in May 1929.
- Barbour—completed in 1929.
- Randolph—completed in 1931; remodeled in the 1960s.
- Calhoun—completed in 1932; remodeled in the 1960s.
- Braxton—completed in 1938.
- Kanawha—dedicated in 1940.
- Northern Panhandle (Hancock, Brooke, Ohio, Marshall, and Wetzel)—dedicated in 1952.



Northern Panhandle Cottage

(Discuss with members what it meant to a county to build a cottage at Jackson's Mill. How hard was it to raise funds in the 1920s and '30s? What was happening with the 4-H program and camp construction in the county at the same time?)

Other parts of the Mill were financed from a variety of sources. The Assembly Hall, Mt. Vernon Dining Hall, and other major meeting sites were constructed primarily with funds allotted by the West Virginia Legislature. Donations were sought from businesses and individuals for the "Century of Progress" building, now called the West Virginia Building.

Staff at Jackson's Mill have always been involved in building projects, particularly in the "off" season. However, in the early days campers and summer workers were active in 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. And 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 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 was financed by the state 4-H All Star organization. The State Garden Clubs were instrumental in developing the original Formal Garden, which was on the site of the current historic area. Electric and gas utilities were instrumental in building the Farm and Home Electrification Building (now the Electric Energy Center) and Flameway Hall, respectively.

Role of CEOS Organization

Throughout the history of Jackson's Mill, the Community Educational Outreach Service (CEOS) and its predecessors have played a major role in its development. Farm women held their first camp at Jackson's Mill in 1922 when 80 women attended the one-week camp. Camps, meetings, and events have been held there ever since. In 1947, the Mill was the site of the National Home Demonstration Council Conference.

In the 1970s, the organization welcomed a child at one of its conferences. In subsequent years, the conferences offered a child care center. At its peak, some 15-20 youngsters were cared for while their mothers attended the learning sessions. Later, the organization financed playground equipment. This equipment has been removed because of safety hazards, and a gazebo has been built in its place.

The mid-1970s saw the renovation of the camp shop building into the Dorsey Resource Center. The group committed considerable funds toward the renovation and the development of the center's Gertrude Humphreys Room. Many books, pictures, and exhibits have been housed there over the years.

Several areas and counties have assisted in refurbishing rooms and cottages. Among these sites are a lodge room (refurbished by the Parkersburg Area), common areas in Harrison and Marion cottages, and Lewis Cottage. In the late 1960s, the original Sewing Center was remodeled and enlarged. It became a multipurpose building, and a computer center was added. The Beckley Area suggested the building be renamed the Southeastern Learning Center and they helped with refurbishing the main conference room.

One of the newest projects completed by the organization was a walkway between the lodge and the historic area. Monies for this project were in a fund established in 1976 for use with the Agricultural Hall of Fame. When the Hall of Fame decided to house its exhibits in the old Administration Building, this money became available for other uses.

Throughout the years, clubs and counties have worked to make Jackson's Mill a showcase conference center. They raised monies for the Blaker's Mill project; trees were planted by counties and state committees; and needed items have been purchased for the Mill through auctions, donations, etc.

Today, many counties are raising funds for additional cottage renovation. The Friends of Jackson's Mill has revived a successful money-raising project—salt boxes—which CEOS used to make money for its 1976 national meeting. Counties and clubs have been challenged to “salt away funds” for cottage renovation.

Opportunities always exist for individuals and groups to assist Jackson's Mill. Plans for the Mill's future development have been outlined, and the Mill staff will gladly help you find a task you or your club can do.

Think about it and become a part of the Jackson Mill history!

Other Resources

- If members are interested in the Jackson's Mill Historic Area, you may want to borrow the slide/tape set “Jackson's Mill: The Artifact as History.” This program explains how historians and archaeologists work together and demonstrates the methods they used at Jackson's Mill.
- Members may want to visit Jackson's Mill. Let the registration office know you are coming so that the staff can be prepared to assist you. An audiotape walking tour of Jackson's Mill is available for loan. Depending on what is happening at the Mill, you may be able to purchase lunch or visit the historic area. Brochures and maps are available.
- The Archives unit at Jackson's Mill is interested in any historical documents, pictures, postcards, or stories you have featuring Jackson's Mill. For more details, contact:

Friends of Jackson's Mill

160 Jackson Mill Road
Weston, WV 26452.

Bibliography

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

Kendrick, W.H. “In Appreciation of Youth.” Unpublished report. 1934.

Meador, Michael M. *A Walking Tour of Historic Jackson's Mill*.

McClain Printing Company. 1982, 1991.

Miscellaneous documents, letters, etc., from the 4-H Archives Unit of the Friends of Jackson's Mill.