



Bringing Back Spring Mill Stores and Structures

The Village You See Today

In the late 1890s the mill at Spring Mill Village was abandoned. For the next few decades, neglect and nature transformed Spring Mill into a ghost town. The millwheel rotted away. Roofs collapsed. The surrounding forest crept in from the edges.

In the late 1920s, the State of Indiana took over the village as part of its newest state park. Workmen began the laborious task of restoring the village to its former appearance. But what was its former appearance? Several buildings referred to in old records were completely gone. Other buildings were no more than piles of decayed timbers.

The restoration of Spring Mill is a story of exhaustive research and some educated guesses. A few buildings were brought from other locations. Others were built from scratch on their original locations. Many, however, are the original structures on their original foundations. In every case, a great deal of thought and work went into the village's restoration.



The CCC at Spring Mill



The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

The village was in the midst of its restoration in the 1930s when the CCC Company 1536 was assigned to Spring Mill. The CCC was a public works program of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The program provided jobs to young men and completed long-postponed projects at public facilities. Much of the restoration and relocation of buildings at Spring Mill Village was completed by the CCC. Additionally, the CCC built park trails, picnic areas and shelter houses. They also erected the dam, creating Spring Mill Lake.



1. Sheeks House

Built: 1816, Lawrence Co., Indiana
Moved to Spring Mill: 1933

Story: George Sheeks built this cabin and with his wife Elizabeth raised twelve children. George also built the loom, a wedding gift to his wife. One of their sons, David, remained in the cabin and raised his family. Among David's children was John, who died in the Civil War. David also raised his orphaned nephew, Sam Bass, who would die an outlaw in Texas.



David Sheeks



Sheeks House at original location

Structure: George Sheeks built the cabin three miles north of Spring Mill on Lick Creek. One of the oldest log structures in Indiana, the Sheeks House was dismantled and moved to Spring Mill in 1933.

2. Granny White House

Built: 1824, Leesville, Indiana
Moved to Spring Mill: 1931

Story: Sallie Cummins, later known as Granny White, was born in Connecticut in 1784. After living in New York and Canada with her first husband, Silas Southerland, they moved with their six



Granny White House at original location



Granny White

children to Indiana. Along their journey, Silas became ill and died. Sallie settled in Indiana and two years later married David White. David and Sallie had three more children. Sallie was known for her kindness, earning her the nickname "Granny".

Structure: David White built the home on the site of the 1813 Leesville Indian Massacre. The large opening, or dogtrot, provided a protected area for unloading wagons. The home was dismantled and moved to Spring Mill.

3. Munson House/Leather Shop

Built: 1830, Lawrence Co., Indiana
Moved to Spring Mill: 1930

Story: This is the site of Amzi Munson's home. A cobbler by trade, he repaired and made shoes, boots, harnesses and other leather items. In 1850, he married Maria L. Hamer, daughter of mill owner Hugh Hamer. Maria died five years later and Amzi moved his business to Mitchell.

Structure: When the State took over Spring Mill Village, the Munson House was beyond repair. The 1830 home of Andrew Todd was erected on the site of the Munson House.



Amzi Munson

4. Saw Mill

Built: 1824, Spring Mill Village
Rebuilt: 1932

Story: After taking over the grist mill in 1823, the Montgomery brothers added a sawmill to the operation. Powered by a separate wheel, the sawmill was a big improvement over the slow and laborious sawing by hand. The sawmill could saw 2,500 board feet a day.

Structure: The present sawmill is rebuilt as a representation of the original saw mill.

20. Apothecary
Built: 1830, Spring Mill Village
Restored: 1929

Story: Spring Mill had a resident physician. Dr. Jacob Lemon was a self-taught physician. During his tenure, both cholera and smallpox epidemics assailed the village. Medicine of the time relied on powders, pills and tonics, usually made by the doctor himself from local plants.

Structure: This original building was restored in 1929.

21. Mercantile
Built: ~1830, Spring Mill Village
Restored: 1929

Story: This building served as the Spring Mill post office from 1828 - 1859. In 1859 the post office relocated in Mitchell. In 1831 Hugh Hamer served as the postmaster.

Structure: When the village was opened as a park, this original structure was restored as a general store.

Conclusion
The goal is to provide an authentic experience of life in early Indiana. While the bulk of the work on the village was completed in the 1930s, the village remains a work in progress. New methods for restoration are being discovered. New information about the village continues to be uncovered. As changes are made, historical accuracy is crucial.

5. Grist Mill

Built: 1817, Spring Mill Village
Restored: 1927-1930

Story: The present 1817 grist mill replaced a much smaller 1814 log structure. It is one of the largest mills in southern Indiana. Mills were the anchor for frontier communities. Farmers had to come to the mill to grind their grain, so mills became the place for trade and gossip. Other businesses grew from the presence of the mill. The mill operated from 1817 until 1892. By then, steam power had replaced water power as the dominant energy.

Structure: The mill was in ruins when the State received Spring Mill. The roof and support structure were weak. The mill wheel and flume were gone. Intensive research and hard work enabled the mill to be restored to its former glory.



Mill in ruins



Restoration, 1929

6. Distillery

Built: 1824, Spring Mill Village
Rebuilt: 1932

Story: Surplus corn that was not consumed by people and livestock was frequently distilled into whiskey. Whiskey was easier to transport than grain and was also more profitable. Spring Mill's "Old Hamer Whiskey" was produced here and sold to markets in New Orleans.

Structure: Logs salvaged from the original site were used to rebuild an accurate representation of the distillery.

7. Tavern

Built: 1824, Spring Mill Village
Rebuilt: 1932

Story: A stagecoach road connecting Louisville and Terre Haute traveled past the door of the tavern. Known as *ordinaries* because they catered to ordinary needs, the tavern furnished food and lodging for travelers.

Structure: The tavern was rebuilt using logs from the Timothy Murry cabin.

8. Carpenter Shop/Hat Shop

Original Structure: built 1830s, Spring Mill Village
Current Structure: moved to Spring Mill

Story: In the 1800s, it was customary for men to wear hats when outside. The demand for hats led to the presence of a hat shop on this location. John Lindsey, a hatter from Bono, Indiana, built his shop around 1830. Most common were felted wool hats. More expensive beaver fur hats were also made here.

Structure: The building was moved to Spring Mill from another location where it had been the home of Young Edwards. Its original location is unknown.

9. Mill Office

Built: 1818, Spring Mill Village
Restored: several times

Story: The mill office was built by the Bullitt brothers, early owners of the mill. Business related to the mill was handled from this building.

Structure: Changes were made to the building throughout its existence. In the 1830s, the Upper Residence, School and Mill Office were all connected as one large enclosed building. At that time the mill office was the Hamer Family's livingroom. Village restoration included returning the building back to its original function.

10. Nursery/School

Built: 1830s, Spring Mill Village
Restored: several times

Story: The nursery was built when the Hamer brothers owned the mill. As the first resident owners of the mill, the building served as the nursery and school house for their children. Accounts indicated that other children from the village attended the school. A teacher lived in the building, paid by Hugh Hamer.

Structure: With the arrival of sawmills, the nursery reflects the move from a log to a plank structure. Its modern frame uses an internal structure, plaster and overlapping siding. The smooth interior walls permitted another modern amenity: wallpaper.

11. Gardener's Cabin

Built: 1850s, Doans, Indiana
Rebuilt: 1996

Story: Early records show a cabin on this site. The cabin was a dye house where yarn and fabric were dyed.

Structure: A recent addition to the village, this cabin was moved here from Doans, Indiana.

12. Gardens

Built: 1830s
Restored: 1930s

Story: Gardens provided food, flowers and medicines. Early settlers were very knowledgeable in the uses of medicinal plants and every homestead included a garden. Livestock roamed freely in the village, so a wooden picket fence protected the garden.

Structure: Formal gardens existed at this site. In the 1930s the CCC built the stone wall and arched entrance.



Gardens, 1937

13. Upper Residence

Original Structure: built 1817-18, Spring Mill Village
Current Structure: moved to Spring Mill from Bedford, Indiana in the 1930s

Story: The Upper Residence was built by the Bullitt Brothers, early owners of the mill. Although the Bullitt Brothers lived in Louisville, they would stay at the house during their visits. A later mill owner, Hugh Hamer, lived in the home with his family.

Structure: The structure on the site was the home of John Allen who lived near Bedford, Indiana. It represents the large log home that originally stood on this site.

14. Lower Residence

Built: 1817-18, Spring Mill Village
Rebuilt: 1930s

Story: Like the Upper Residence, this residence was built by the Bullitt Brothers. It was the home of the mill supervisor, Uriah Glover. In later years it would be the home of Thomas Hamer, brother of Hugh. Thomas would remodel it, covering the logs with siding.

Structure: The Lower Residence was built from salvaged logs to represent the original home that stood on this site.

15. Summer Kitchen

Built: unknown, Spring Mill Village
Restored: unknown

Story: In the summer, cooking fires were maintained in separate summer kitchens to keep the homes cooler. This summer kitchen was used by both Hamer families.

Structure: The summer kitchen is a reconstruction.

16. Spring House

Built: 1840, Spring Mill Village
Restored: unknown

Story: Spring houses were the refrigerators of the pioneer days. The cool water and air temperatures in the spring house kept perishables such as milk, cheese and butter from spoiling.

Structure: This is an original structure.

17. Carriage House

Built: unknown

Story: Stage coaches, wagons and horses were housed at Spring Mill during overnight stays.

Structure: The carriage house is a design from the 1800s time period. It provides space to store carriages and other artifacts.

18. Blacksmith Shop

Built: 1930-31

Story: Barns were located at this site. There is no evidence of a resident blacksmith at Spring Mill. A 1859 village account book shows that a local blacksmith performed tasks at the village. Blacksmiths worked with metal. Tasks included shoeing horses and making metal tools, utensils and wagon parts.

Structure: This structure was built to represent one of the barns that existed at the site. It was converted into a blacksmith shop in 1983.

19. Meeting House

Built: 1976

Story: There are no records of a meeting house or church at Spring Mill Village. It is possible that a circuit preacher may have visited Spring Mill or that residents attended services at nearby communities.

Structure: This structure illustrates a style of meeting house from the 1800s.



CCC Restoration