

Steam powered engines were used in new portable grist mills. They could be attached to a wagon in the farmer's field. No longer was the farmer obliged to transport their grain to Spring Mill. Now farmers ground their grain at their farms and then transported it to the railroads in Mitchell.

CONCLUSION

A combination of railroads, war and a shift from pioneer to industrial manufacturing began to unravel the prosperous community at Spring Mill. The 1850 census noted twenty families living at Spring Mill. Within a few decades, the village was abandoned. At its peak, Spring Mill was a hub of activity defined by waterpower, teams of oxen, small family businesses, and a nation at peace with itself.



AT THIS MOMENT IN 1863

- ◆ John Washington Sheeks, son of David Sheeks has been dead for a year.
- ◆ Andrew Todd (Munson House) is currently serving in the Civil War.
- ◆ The Sheeks Family includes their twelve-year-old orphaned nephew, Sam Bass. In six years Sam will head to Texas and become a notorious bank robber. In 1878, at age 27, he dies in a gun fight with the Texas Rangers.

◆ Amzi Munson is now a widower. His wife, Maria Hamer Munson died in 1855. He closes his leather shop and moves it to Mitchell.



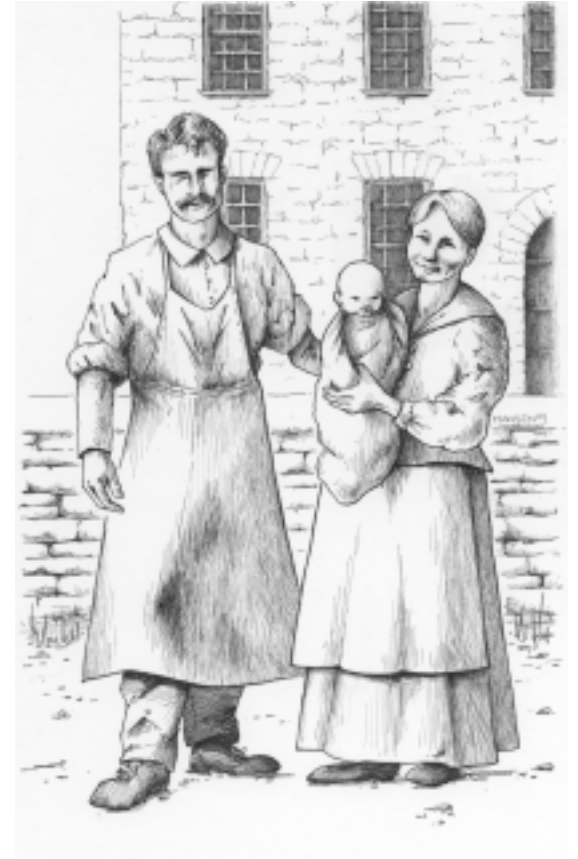
Amzi Munson

- ◆ Hugh Hamer's son Robert works at the mill for one dollar a day. In nine years his father dies and Robert will run the mill.
- ◆ The Spring Mill Post Office closed four years ago and relocated in Mitchell.



1863

STEPPING BACK INTO SPRING MILL VILLAGE



When you step into Spring Mill Village you step into the year 1863. Spring Mill is a thriving community, but major changes are occurring.

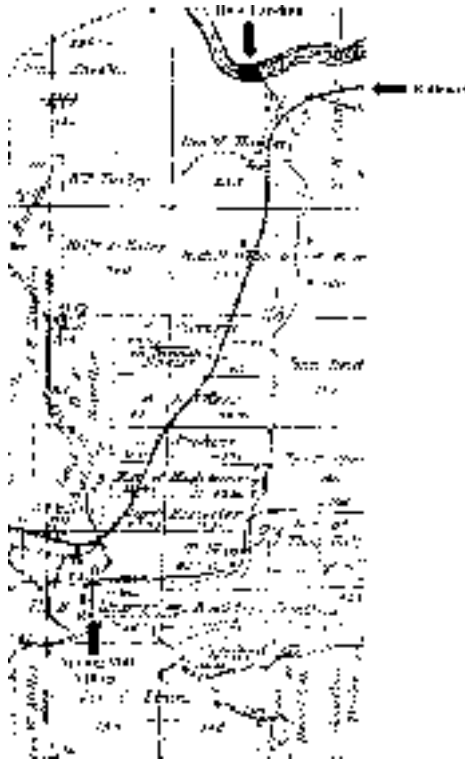
DNR

Division of State Parks and Reservoirs
Interpretive Services
Spring Mill State Park
Box 376
Mitchell, IN 47446
812-848-4129



RAILROAD BYPASSES SPRING MILL

Prior to the invention of the railroad the town of Mitchell did not exist. Spring Mill was the hub of commerce. Goods were transported by cart to the White



River and from there along the nation's rivers to New Orleans.

The railroads provided fast, reliable transportation for goods, but required the easiest path with the least amount of slope and curves. The topography of Spring Mill with its steep slopes and narrow valley made it inaccessible by rail.

In 1853 the north-south running Monon line was laid to the west of Spring Mill. In 1857, the Baltimore and Ohio railroad laid east-west tracks that ran north of Spring Mill. The two tracks crossed at Mitchell, Indiana.

SONS LEAVE FOR THE BATTLE FRONT

The Civil War had an impact on every community and Spring Mill was no exception. Many of the village's young men took up arms, leaving the community without workers, fathers and sons. Some never returned. John Washington Sheeks died in battle in 1862. At age 42, Andrew Todd (whose family resided in the cabin on the Munson site) was also serving.



John W. Sheeks



Andrew Todd

Trade routes were also greatly affected by the Civil War. Pork, lumber, grain, flour, whiskey and hats rode on flat boats from Spring Mill down the White, Wabash, Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans. In 1862, President Lincoln federalized the waterways. Commerce to the South was cut off.



Flatboat



Flatboat route from Spring Mill to New Orleans

STEAM POWER IS THE FUTURE

Prior to 1863, manufacturing was small and local. Most items were tied to local resources such as timber, furs and agriculture. The community at Spring Mill manufactured whiskey, pork and fur hats as well as grain. Many items were made in the home. The mid-1800s marked a shift from the pioneer economy to one of larger scale manufacturing. Factories such as the Cannelton Cotton Mill on the Ohio River



were early ventures in mass production. The days of families producing items for sale was drawing to a close.

The invention of the steam engine provided the nation with power that was constant, reliable and portable. The mill at Spring Mill required a strong flow of water to move the wheel. During a dry spell the mill operated at a lower horsepower or not at all. Farmers sometimes waited for days for their grain to be ground. The Spring Mill operation also required farmers to haul their grain by wagon from their farms to the mill.