JACKSON’S MILL STATE 4-H CAMP:
THE SUMMER CAMP AS A CULTURAL HERITAGE SITE
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Thesis Abstract

Jackson’s Mill State 4-H Camp in Weston, West Virginia was established in 1922 as the first statewide 4-H camp in the nation. Following the tradition of the summer youth camp movement, founders of Jackson’s Mill sought to create a physical environment that supported their ideologies for youth development and advancement. Over the years, Jackson’s Mill has come to represent important aspects of West Virginian, rural, Appalachian and American culture, and has become a site of immense social importance to many West Virginians.

Jackson’s Mill has faced threats to its historic integrity as camp managers seek to increase revenue and occupancy through expansion and development. Many camps are currently experiencing pressure to move from traditional rustic buildings towards more luxurious conference center facilities, and are, in the process, placing their historic resources at risk. Working against Jackson’s Mill, and all summer camps, is a widespread neglect of study and analysis of the architectural and cultural meanings of summer camp, and a corresponding poor awareness of historic preservation tools and principles.

This thesis explores the various layers of significance of Jackson’s Mill within the contexts of cultural, regional, sociological and national conditions, as well as the manifestations of the camp’s cultural and historical meanings in its site plan and architecture. This analysis serves as the basis for preservation recommendations which are intended to maximize the historic resources of Jackson’s Mill as a cultural resource site and extend the benefits of the site to a wider audience. This thesis is presented as a model for research and analysis methods that may be used by other summer camp facilities interested in preserving their institutional heritage.