

a church and a school and various residences. A mile away was a boat yard.

Hugh Hamer combined enterprise with showmanship. His ox fleets were famous on the rutted hill road between Spring Mill and Louisville, some fifty miles to the southeast.

The great, high-wheeled wagons were painted a brilliant red. Each was drawn by a team of twelve oxen whose horns were brightly polished and snubbed with shiny brass balls. As his facilities increased, the enterprising Hamer sent his products into wider and wider markets. Barges built in his boat yard carried lumber, grain, flour, pork and whisky as far south as New Orleans.

They were bustling times. The young state was growing fast. Steady streams of new colonists swarmed down the river to the south and followed the road north from Louisville.

In all this new growth Spring Mill village was strategic. The future was bright with hope. Someday it would be a city. There was no doubt of it.

Socially, the village kept pace. Many a notable of the day visited there, including the governor of the state and once a member of the Cabinet of the President of the United States. Not infrequent guests at the tavern were distinguished intellectuals from that revolutionary communal colony at New Harmony.

It is not difficult to imagine the appearance of the growing village at the height of the Hamer period of ownership. It is preserved in the re-creation of it today.

The village area itself occupied the comparatively flat valley floor, an area of some eight hundred feet in length by six hundred in width. It was cleared except for scattered shade trees. In the center stood the great mill. Beside it ran a roadway, twisting down from the crest of the southern hills.

Most of the shops and industries flanked the road. The dwellings were

But Colonel Lieber insisted that it was too small an area. The county must buy more land. It did—a considerable area flanking the Donaldson tract to the west, extending north. They offered it to the state as a park site.

Colonel Lieber rambled around over the acquired land on an inspection trip. It was chiefly hill land roughly L-shaped. In the corner of the L, but not in the tract, was a flat, narrow valley. The colonel found the land good. The hills were richly forested, the caves interesting. It would make a good park. Then he looked down in the valley. As he regarded it he had a vision.

"What about that?" he asked of his guide, pointing to the crumbling ruins of an old mill thrusting up among the weeds.

"Oh, that," said the guide. "We'll get rid of that old mill. Don't bother about it." But the colonel had a different idea. In his vision he saw a pioneer village brought to life, flanked by green lawns, set among its guardian hills. He saw the village as the central feature of a park, the finest and most significant park he had ever projected.

Who owned the village? An investigation was quickly made. It was owned by the Lehigh Portland Cement Company, which had bought the village site and considerable adjacent land to protect its water rights.

The colonel went to work quickly. The state would not buy the land, but it would accept it as a gift. Gen. Harry Trexler, head of the cement company, saw the point. He made the gift on the condition that the colonel could make his village a reality.

### New Pioneers

The restoration of Spring Mill village was an adventure in discovery. There was not a great deal to go on, and a great deal was needed. The mill building stood, but it was an empty shell. All the cum-

talking to oldsters who could remember active mills, exploring the ruins of old abandoned gristmills. On the site all sorts of theories were evolved, calculations made. From it all a conviction emerged that the Spring Mill water wheel had probably been a twenty-four-foot overshot wheel with buckets four feet wide. The theory was borne out by splash marks on the wall of the mill. But it was only a theory, and Doggett wanted proof positive. One day he and his associates were arguing about the matter. A segment of the theoretical wheel had been laid out with chalk on the mill floor. From outside came a shout. A workman had been digging in the bed of the village stream at some distance from the mill. His pick had struck a long curved piece of half-rotten wood. It was a small section of the outer rim of the original wheel. It fitted the chalk plan on the floor perfectly.

The axle for the wheel required a straight and perfect log twenty-five feet long and thirty inches in diameter when dressed. It should have been poplar, but no poplar tree of such a size could be found. Grudgingly, Colonel Lieber consented to the use of oak.

The reconstruction of the mill machinery with its great wooden gears, its cunningly contrived transmission of power, was a puzzling problem, until someone found a rare volume published in 1830 and written by Oliver Evans. It contained complete, specific and detailed instructions. They were followed faithfully, though frequently long periods elapsed in the rebuilding while men scoured the forests to discover types of wood specified by Millwright Evans.

The original French burrs, huge stones sixty inches in diameter, were found buried in weeds. But sharpening a mill burr was apparently a lost art until an old miller who knew the knack was finally found.

While the actual reconstruction was going on, help that was to add authen-



scattered over the rest of the valley, except for the stone houses of the owners immediately opposite the mill. The wooden flume, riding high on massive stone piers, paralleled the road.

From the edge of the village clearing, the hills, magnificently forested, rose abruptly two hundred feet above the valley. They sheltered the village against storm and intrusion. They were both a frame and a bulwark, giving unity and an aspect of special charm.

The heyday of Spring Mill was in the 50's. Toward the end of that decade there came a flurry of excitement. A railway was building west. It was to be called the Ohio and Mississippi. It would link the region with the seaboard on the east and the limitless new lands to the west. If it came to Spring Mill, it would mean a great new growth, new opportunities, a boom.

### The Town That Time Forgot

But the engineers running their grade lines had different ideas. They took one look at the guardian hills which flanked the village and ran their stakes several miles to the north. Though no one knew it at the time, it was the end of Spring Mill. The railway was completed in 1859, and from that time on, the decline of the village began. Hugh Hamer kept things running as best he could. He died in 1872. Thereafter for a few years another owner kept the distillery and the mill running. But it was no use. The village was doomed.

In the meantime, the eccentric Mr. Donaldson moved in. He bought hill land to the south of the village, including a cave. Hugh Hamer was still alive and still very much a personage, but he was an old man and he knew that his village was under a blight. With the death of Hamer the spotlight of community interest switched to Donaldson, who was

which delighted the doctor was that all the fish were blind. He had been hunting for blind fish all over the world, and here, practically in his back yard, was the finest and most numerous family of them existing anywhere in the world. He named his famous fish the Amblyopsids, which means "dim-eyed." He described them as resembling skinned catfish swimming on their backs.

Delighted with his discovery, Doctor Eigenmann persuaded Indiana University to acquire the Donaldson tract from the court, so that he might set up a permanent experiment station to investigate the blind fish. The university did so, and the good doctor went to work.

Over a period of many years he led his students and visiting scientists to Donaldson's abandoned village of Spring Mill, now grown up with weeds, its mill wheel fallen apart, its log buildings crumbling.

The next event occurred some twenty years after the good doctor had made his sensational discovery in Donaldson's cave. In the late 20's the state of Indiana had become acutely park conscious. Col. Richard Lieber, head of the Indiana Department of Conservation, had begun to develop a system of state parks. So popular were the new parks that every section of the state clamored for one. Colonel Lieber did not propose to scatter expensive state parks around. He made one inflexible rule. The state would not buy land for parks. The land must be donated, either by private individuals or by counties. A law permitting counties to raise money for park purposes was passed in the state legislature. The people of Lawrence County wanted a park. They proposed the Donaldson tract, some four hundred acres, which was owned by Indiana University. It was richly wooded, too, and the cave on it was now famous, as were the fish that lived in the cave.

bersome mill machinery was gone. The water wheel was gone completely. The piers which carried the original flume had crumbled down, and the flume itself was not even a memory. Most of the houses had disappeared. Fragments of walls marked their foundations.

The colonel had two cardinal principles in mind to guide his engineers and his craftsmen in their reconstruction plans. There must be no faking, no sham. The second principle grew out of the first. It was that, as far as possible, every bit of material which went into the re-creation must come from the region itself, preferably from the original village quarry or the forests thereabouts.

It was the colonel's job, but he had able and enthusiastic assistants. To one of these, a young engineer named Denzil Doggett, goes the credit for an idea which was not a part of the original plan. It was the idea of restoring the village as an actual working village, particularly the mill.

The colonel's original idea was that the village be restored as a memorial to a rich and vivid period of pioneer history. Doggett argued that if a village was going to be restored, why not actually have it work? Let the mill grind corn, the saw-mill slash boards, the looms weave.

### Out of the Past

Doggett even argued, though no one took him very seriously, that if the mill machinery was restored and permitted to grind corn, visitors would buy the meal they saw ground as a souvenir of their visit.

At the time it was a novel idea. The colonel gave it his blessing, and Doggett and his assistants went to work. Their first job was to find out what the mill wheel had been like and what sort of mill machinery the mill had contained. Doggett went up and down the land

to the restored village was coming from all sorts of unexpected quarters. Word had gone out that the state was restoring a pioneer village and that contributions of furniture and accessories appropriate to the period would be acceptable.

Attics and basements all over the state disgorged old beds and tables, chairs, pots and pans, tools, implements of all sorts. A veritable flood of them descended upon the committee placed in charge of such donations.

Enough came in to furnish completely and re-equip most of the restored buildings.

Typical of the public interest in the project was a letter received by Colonel Lieber one day, containing a check for \$1000.

It had been sent by a pharmaceutical manufacturer whose father had been a pioneer pharmacist in Indiana during the period of Spring Mill. He wanted to donate the money to help restore and re-equip the village apothecary shop. So much material was contributed that enough remained after the village buildings had been refurnished to provide a considerable pioneer museum which was housed on the third floor of the mill.

### From Vision to Reality

A day came when the village was ready to live again. The mill was complete, the great wheel, hewn and fitted by hand, in place, the wooden flume restored. A storage bin was filled with shelled yellow corn, corn of the region. A gate in the flume was lifted and water surged over the wheel.

It turned slowly, groaning and creaking, turned faster and faster. Inside the mill the great burrs turned, throwing out the yellow meal. Colonel Lieber's vision had become reality.

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