



## DATELINE FOR THE MILL

**1800**  
John Wood born in Peabody, Massachusetts. America was in its infancy, too.

**1816**  
Indiana becomes a state but the area where Wood eventually built his mill still belongs to the Potawatomi-Indian nation.

**1835**  
John Wood filed claim for the mill site beside Deep River. Wagon trains on their way west to Chicago began making regular stops at a clearing in the woods, called Wiggins Point, in nearby Merrillville.

**1836**  
Wood brought his family to Indiana from Massachusetts.

**1837**  
Sawmill was built to supply lumber for gristmill. Chicago incorporates as a city.

**1838**  
Wood built a gristmill along-side Deep River.

**1856**  
Wood sold his business to sons, Nathan & George.

**1860**  
Nathan bought out George's share. Abraham Lincoln, was elected the 16th President of the United States.

**1876**  
Nathan built the present building to produce flour. George Armstrong Custer led the 7th Cavalry into the Battle of Little Bighorn against the Sioux led by Crazy Horse. Custer and his men were massacred.

In 1835, Massachusetts native John Wood traveled westward through the Great Lakes seeking his future as a miller. He found that future in December of 1835 alongside a deep wide stream in Northwest Indiana.

A recent treaty between the United States government and the Potawatomi Indians had added a 10-mile strip of land to Indiana's map that became part of Lake County. To claim part of this land, Wood first built a log cabin then traveled nearly 30 miles eastward to LaPorte, Indiana, to enter his claim to the parcel valued at \$200 or \$1.25 per acre.

However he soon learned that, with the help of U.S. Senator John Tipton, Potawatomi Chief Quashma had filed a float on the claim under an 1832 treaty giving the Indians right to certain amounts of land. Although mill sites were considered a special use and should not have been subject to Indian claim, Wood paid five times the going rate—or \$1,000—to secure the Indian's deed and signature.

Wood returned to Massachusetts to bring his wife, Hannah, and their children to Indiana. After settling them in the log cabin, he built a sash frame sawmill in 1837 to supply the lumber needed for his planned gristmill.

In 1838—more than two years after he first saw the stream site—he erected a gristmill using native white oak and established Wood's Mill, the first continuing industry in Lake and Porter counties in northwest Indiana.



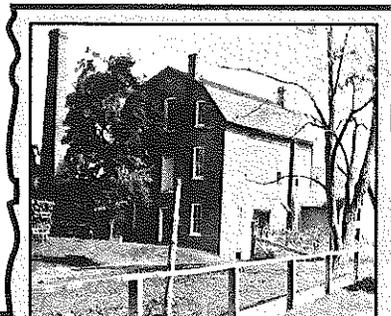
To power his sawmill and gristmill, John Wood dammed Deep River and constructed a sluiceway system. He ground local corn, wheat, rye, and buckwheat into flour and meal. Business flourished for John Wood and his family for more than a quarter century.

Then in 1856 John's sons, Nathan and George, purchased the mills from their 56-year old father and ran the two enterprises together until 1860 when Nathan bought out his brother's share. Nathan Wood replaced the wooden gristmill 16 years later with a three-story brick flour mill that still stands today where John Wood first envisioned his business.

One of the finest mills in the county, Wood's Mill could grind twelve bushels of grain per hour. Nathan's brand of patent flour, ACME, was well known throughout the area.

Nathan eventually sold the mill in 1908 and it passed through many owners' hands. By 1930, the mill stood abandoned and forgotten. It was found by the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department in the early 1970's in a state of near ruin.

Restoration began in 1975 and on October 10 of that year, the U.S. Department of the Interior placed it on the National Register of Historic Places. Officially dedicated in the fall of 1976, Wood's Mill reopened to the public in May 1977.



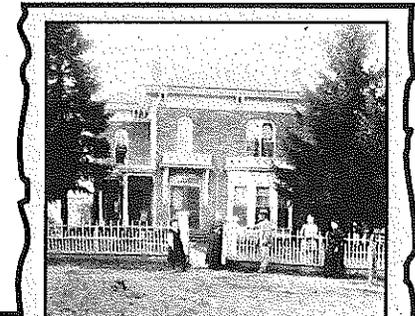
John Wood and his family did more than build mills. They settled a portion of Lake County near what would become the city of Hobart.

When the log cabin became too cramped, John built a more spacious home on the river's west bank. He then laid out a two-acre plot to be used as a commons.

Around this commons were built additional dwellings as well as a blacksmith shop, a general store, a shoe shop, a cider mill, a cheese factory and an ice house. John Wood refused to sell lots on the property he owned and thus kept a tight control on the small community first named Wood's Mill, then Woodvale, Deep River and finally Deepriver. His control kept out saloons which John felt would be a bad influence on the settlers.

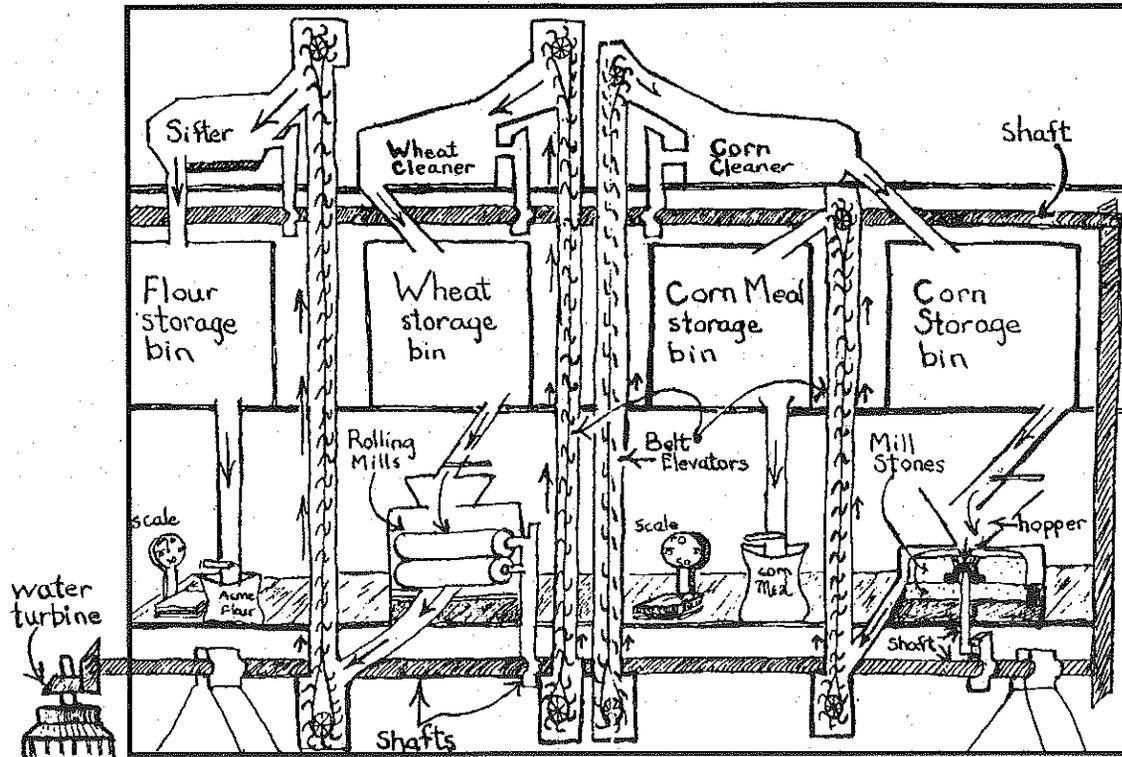
Like their father, John and Hannah Wood's children became active in business affairs throughout the Lake and Porter Counties. The eldest, Nathan, was appointed Postmaster of the community in 1845 by President John Tyler - a post he held until 1881.

The children also built homes in the area, married and raised families of their own. About the mid-19th century, Nathan Wood built what was then called a "grand home"—a fine brick structure across the road from the mill. The home still stands and is privately owned and occupied today.





**MILL  
ACTIVITIES  
BY  
FLOORS**



**BASEMENT AREA**

Housed the turbines, shafts and other mechanical devices used to turn the stones.

**FIRST FLOOR**

Roller mills and mill stones used to grind the corn, wheat, rye, and buckwheat were located here along with mill offices where grain sales took place.

**SECOND FLOOR**

Storage bins for flour, wheat, corn meal and shelled corn were kept here along with some bolting equipment.

**THIRD FLOOR**

Here the flour sifters as well as wheat and corn cleaners were housed.



**POWER  
SOURCES  
OF THE  
MILL**

River water served as the source of power for both John Wood's original wooden mill and Nathan Wood's later brick mill.

Water from Deep River was harnessed using a dam and a sluiceway. When water power was needed, the miller walked across the road to the sluiceway and began opening the sluice gates.

As the water poured through the sluiceway, it hit the turbines which were housed just beside the mill. Those turbines then turned the shafts. The shafts powered the



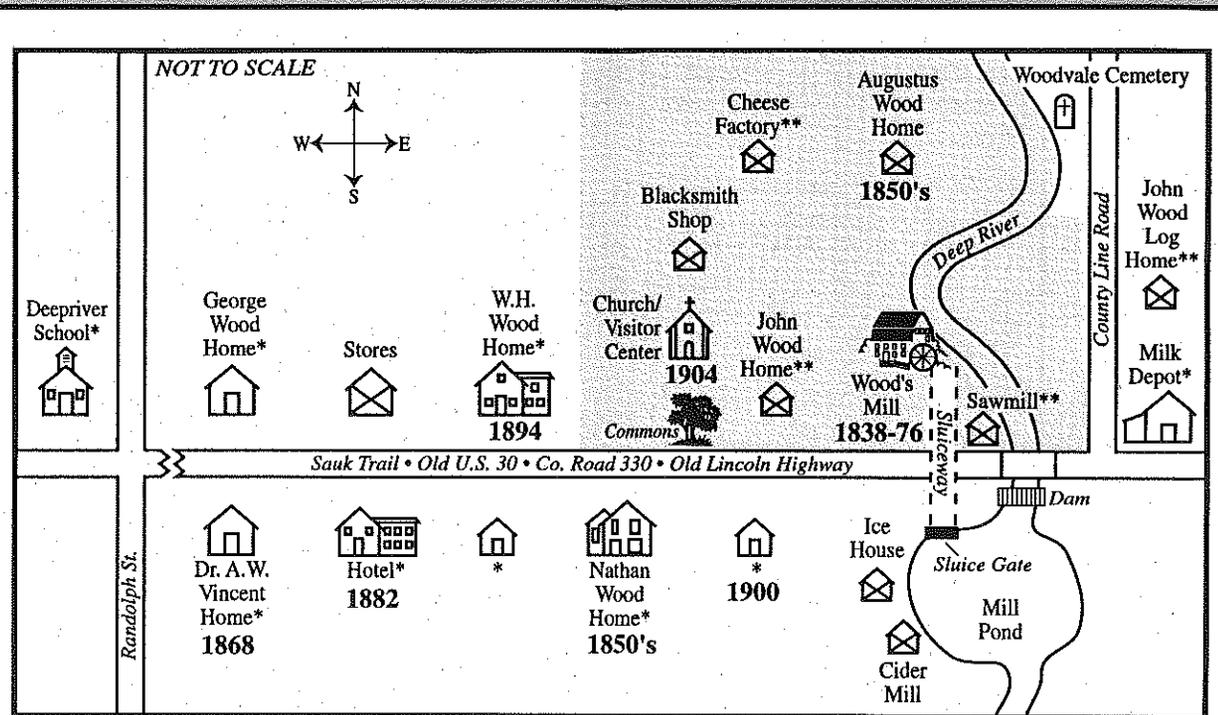
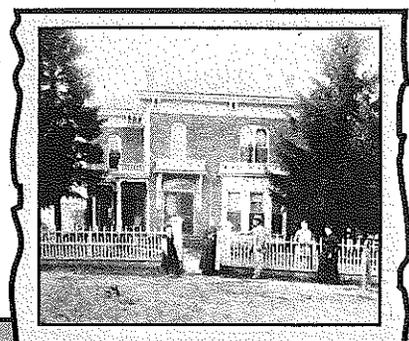
mill stones, the roller mills, and the bolting equipment as well as a belt elevator system which allowed the raw materials and finished products to be moved throughout the mill for processing or storage.

Eventually the mill was converted to steam power which gave it many operating advantages.

One of the original iron turbines was found buried in the mud when the mill was renovated in 1975 and is on display outside the brick mill. Today a water wheel sits where the original iron turbines of Nathan Wood's mill were located. Although such a wheel was not used by Wood's Mill, the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department added it as an example of another type of power system available for use by water-powered gristmills.

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| <b>1838</b><br>Wood built a mill along Deep River. | <b>1856</b><br>Wood sold his business to sons, Nathan & George. | <b>1860</b><br>Nathan bought out George's share. Abraham Lincoln, was elected the 16th President of the United States. | <b>1876</b><br>Nathan built the present brick mill building to produce flour. In Montana George Armstrong Custer led the 7th Cavalry into the Battle of the Little Bighorn against the Sioux Indians led by Crazy Horse. Custer and his forces were massacred. | <b>1902</b><br>Nathan donated 1/4 acre of land for church. Deep River was used to baptize church members. Sunday school was held in a nearby dance hall. | <b>1904</b><br>Deep River Church of Christ (non-denominational) was built.<br><b>1908</b><br>Nathan sold mill and property. | <b>1922</b><br>Electricity came to the Deep River community and the church. | <b>1930</b><br>After having several owners, the mill was closed. The Great Depression was putting a stranglehold on the nation's economy. | <b>1973</b><br>Lake County Parks & Recreation Dept. bought church as an historic building. A ceasefire was signed in Vietnam. | <b>1975</b><br>Wood's Historic Grist Mill was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. | <b>1976</b><br>Lake County Parks & Recreation Dept. restored the mill. America celebrated her 200th birthday.<br><b>1977</b><br>Mill opened to the public. |
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**VILLAGE OF DEEPRIVER**

- Deep River County Park
- ⊗ - Not existing today
- \* - Privately owned
- \*\* - Location Unverified



**WOOD'S MILL VISITOR CENTER & GIFT SHOPPE**

Built in 1904, the current Gift Shoppe and Visitors' Center building was a church where the Wood family once worshipped. Open from 10am to 5pm daily from May 1 to October 31.

The Gift Shoppe takes visitors back to the general store of yesteryear. Here the visitor will find jars of candy, wooden toys, cookbooks from yesterday and today, teas, honey, apple butter, pure maple syrup, books on area and U.S. history, volumes on herb gardening, and more.

The Visitors' Center offers special educational and craft programs and information about the 10 Lake County parks, located from Lake Michigan to the Kankakee River.