

CAMP WASHINGTON CARVER,  
1928-1980  
A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF FIVE DECADES

## CAMP WASHINGTON CARVER, 1928-1980

1928 West Virginia University hired two African-Americans, James E. Banks and Lulu B. Moore, to promote 4-H Clubs for black youth. They worked from West Virginia State College at Institute, West Virginia.

1929 Banks and Moore reported that 4-H camps were held in forty-four of the state's counties, but not one of these was held for any of the state's African-American 4-H Clubs. They stressed the need to establish a "Negro 4-H Camp," similar to the 4-H Camp at Jackson Mill.

Using the above report Dr. John W. Davis, President of West Virginia State College, sought the assistance of the WV State Board of Control, and the two Boards of Education (white and black), asking them to petition the WV Legislature to purchase land for 4-H Camp; this began his decade-long effort to establish a 4-H Camp.

1937 The West Virginia Legislature authorized a 4-H Camp for African-Americans, as well as assigning extension services to West Virginia State College. It also appropriated \$25,000 as seed money to assist in the establishment the camp.

1938 On December 30 the WV State Board of Control purchased 583 acres from Charles and Kathryn Middleburg, near the small community of Clifftop in Fayette County for the camp.

1939 Dr. Davis secured a federal WPA grant of \$114,000 for the construction of the 4-H Camp.

Civilian Conservation Corps workers constructed a road and cleared some sixty-five acres for the camp. WPA workers, as well as locally hired labor, both black and white, worked on the camp's buildings, using limestone and chestnut trees for much of the building materials. Some twenty-seven prisoners from West Virginia State Penitentiary at Moundsville, also assisted in interior finishing, such as the windows and doors.

1940 The first building was completed, a small two-room log cabin, initially called the guest cottage (later designated the Crafts Cottage), followed by a water tank and pond.

1942 The large lodge, called the Great Chestnut Lodge completed, as well as two frame dormitories and swimming pool with a bathhouse. The Lodge had a large auditorium (55x111 foot), as well as a dining room, kitchen and office space on the first floor, while housing for counselors and sleeping quarters on the second floor.

On Sunday July 26 the "State Negro 4-H Camp" was dedicated, reportedly the first of such camps in the United States.

1945 Carl T. Hairston hired as camp's first director, taking the place of H. S. Alford who had

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overseen the camp since 1943.

1947 By this date West Virginia State College had changed the camp's name to Camp Washington-Carver, named for two prominent black Americans: Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver.

1950 Between 1948 and 1950 additional buildings were added to the camp, including a director's cottage, guest cottage, and separate boy's barracks.

During the 1950s and 1960s the camp was used not only for 4-H Camps, but also by other groups and organization, such as the Boy and Girl Scouts, Boy's and Girl's State, church groups, West Virginia homemaking groups, mining safety encampments, West Virginia State College faculty retreats, and private organizations.

1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown vs. Board of Education* ended segregation, which ultimately lead to the integration of the camp by 1960.

1955 Wesley Lynch hired as camp's second director; he served until 1961.

1957 West Virginia State College lost its land-grant status, ending its extension services, which were transferred to West Virginia University; this also impacted the college's 4-H camping program.

1962 Camp's third director, John B. Jones, hired, serving until 1970.

1964 All the state's 4-H activities were transferred to camp at Jackson Mill.

1970 Wendell Chiles, Jr., served briefly as the camp's fourth director

1971 Thomas W. Chiles hired as the camp's fifth and final director. He served until 1976.

From its founding in the 1940's the West Virginia Legislature had appropriated money for the camp's operations, but beginning in 1971 this ended and the camp's maintenance was taken from the appropriated funds of West Virginia State College—a definite hardship on the college's budget.

1973 West Virginia State College sought to expand the camp's by attracting groups and organizations, such as Head Start training conferences, the ROTC, and others.

1977 Charles Holliday began serving as the Caretaker, Camp Directors no longer being hired.

1978 The Legislature transferred the camp's administration from West Virginia State College to Department of a Culture and History, which renovated many of the camp's grounds

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and buildings

- 1980 June 20, Camp Washington Carver was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 1980 June 21, Governor Jay Rockefeller rededicated Camp Washington Carver as a mountain cultural and arts center. Camp Washington Carver continues to draw more than 10,000 persons annually to special programs, presentations, and events, many of which recall the camp's African-American legacy. It remains a historic landmark that preserves West Virginia's black history, traditions and arts of yesterday, as well providing a place for the continuation of such events into the future.