

HISTORY

This 532-acre historical park stands as a memorial to the pioneer spirit of Watters Smith, who settled here in 1796. The park came into being when Burr Smith, a descendent of Watters Smith, died in 1949 and willed his 235-acre farm to the state of West Virginia to be developed into a park to honor his paternal great-great-grandfather.

Watters Smith, the son of Thomas Smith of England, was born in Trenton, New Jersey, on July 15, 1767. In 1793, he married Elizabeth Davisson, a first cousin and neighbor of his father. His father owned a 1,000-acre tract of land in Harrison County, then in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and it was only natural for Watters Smith to choose land adjacent to his father's when searching for a place to establish a home and family. Smith purchased 112 acres adjoining his father's for the sum of \$266 in 1792, but the lingering threat of Indians prevented him from moving to the area immediately with his new bride.

In 1796, he and his wife moved to their future farm on Duck Creek and began clearing the land, planting crops and building a cabin. His tools were made by hand and necessitated the construction of a blacksmith and carpenter shop as well. The goods that could not be grown or handmade were obtained from distant urban areas over "roads" that were merely wide hazardous trails cut through the wilderness.

Watters and Elizabeth Smith had eight children, and Charles, their second, was the first white child born on Duck Creek. The youngest child, Watters Smith, Jr., eventually inherited the property. He, in turn, gave it to his son, John, who passed it on to his son, Alexander, who was born in 1847. In 1876, Alexander (better known as "Uncle Doc") had a home constructed to replace the original hand-hewn log Smith cabin. Today, his home is used as one of two museums on the park.

The farm was operated as a business for four generations, and the implements used can be seen in the museums, barns and sheds. Thanks to the foresight and generosity of Burr Smith, it now stands as a lasting tribute to a family that carved a life out of the wilderness — a view of life from 1796 to the early 1900s.



RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Museum

- Guided tours available
- Open seasonally
- Reservations available
- Group tours welcome

Activity Building

- Reservable
- Great for family reunions
- Seating for up to 60 people

Recreational Courts

- Volleyball
- Horseshoe pits

Other Recreational Opportunities

- Hiking and biking trails
- Gift shop

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

- Holly River State Park
- Philippi Covered Bridge
- Prickett's Fort State Park
- Teter Creek Lake Wildlife Management Area
- Tygart Lake State Park
- Valley Falls State Park
- West Virginia State Wildlife Center
- West Virginia Wesleyan College



LOCATION

Watters Smith Memorial may be reached by taking Exit 110 of Interstate 79 (Lost Creek Exit) and following the directional signs to West Milford, and then left on Duck Creek Road (approximately 7 miles). Visitors traveling on U.S. Route 19 should turn off at West Milford and follow the signs three miles to the park.

Watters Smith Memorial State Park

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West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, 324 4th Avenue, South Charleston, WV 25303
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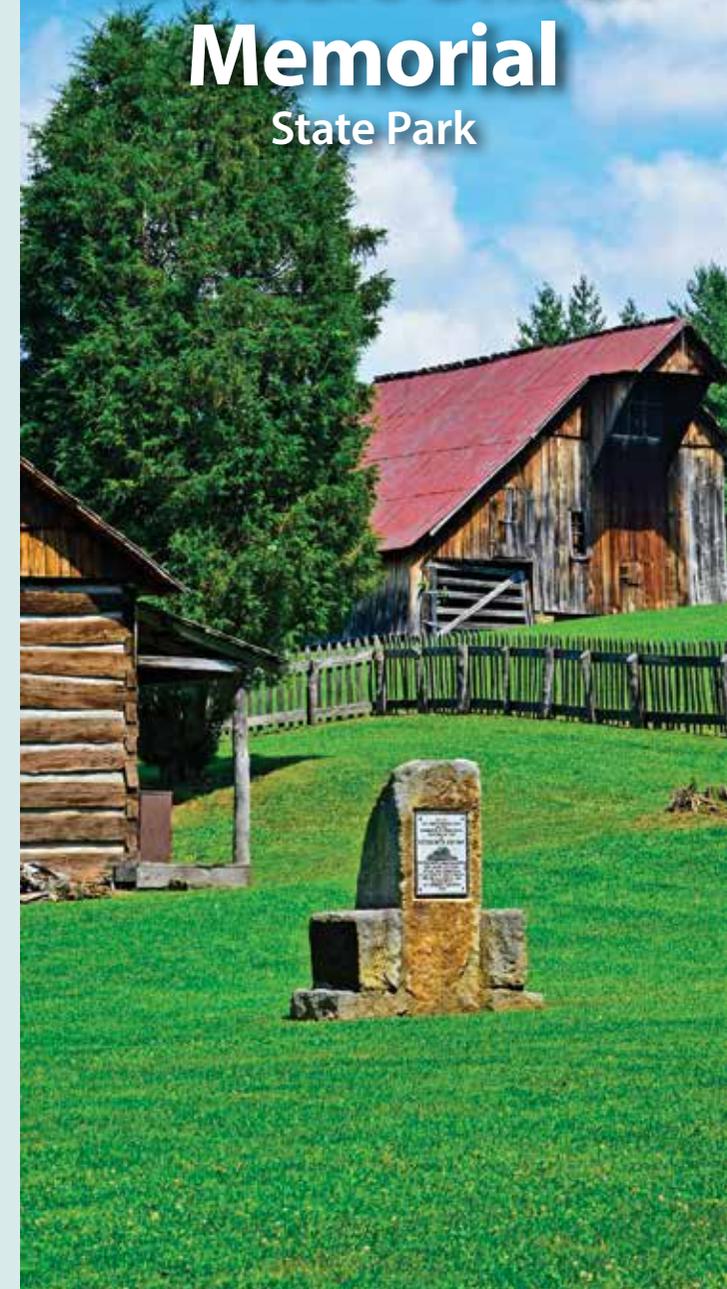
Visitors are responsible for observing park rules and regulations.

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Watters Smith Memorial State Park



TOUR OF THE GROUNDS

UPON CLOSE INSPECTION, the antiquity of the original farm buildings becomes clear. What may have at first just appeared to be the ordinary outbuildings common to any West Virginia farm have actually been constructed of hand-hewn logs and lumber now grey with age. The logs are locked together with wooden pegs made in the carpentry shop, and the boards are fastened with nails forged in the blacksmith shop. The buildings are roofed with shingles handmade on a special "shaving horse" that may be seen in the Visitors' Center.

The Horse and Cattle Barn was built around 1835 to shelter the animals during the severe winters of that time. In it now is an interesting display of old farm implements, buggies, sleds and other paraphernalia the Smith family used.

The Mill Room, first structure to the right of the barn, was used as a feed storage house. Shelled and cracked corn or other grains were kept here for the livestock and chickens. Some were stored in hollow sycamore log barrels such as the one in the exhibit.

The Corn Crib, just beyond, was used to store dried corn on the cob through the winters. For family use, some was ground into cornmeal to make cornbread, johnnycakes or pancakes with maple syrup to delight the children. The rest of the corn was fed to farm animals to fatten them during the lean, cold months. The fact that the crib is on stilts may at first seem odd, but this was done to discourage rodents and other corn-loving predators, as well as to keep the corn off the damp ground.

Next is **the Hog Pen**, which was built around 1840. It was designed to protect the old sow and her young from carnivorous predators and to fatten others to provide much of the winter supply of meat for the family. The animals thrived on kitchen scraps such as peelings, rinds and excess buttermilk. In summer, the pigs could fend for themselves, foraging for fruits, berries, acorns or anything else they could find in the woods.

Though small, **the Smokehouse** was very important due to its function of preserving and storing of meats in the time before refrigeration. In it hams, bacon, shoulders and other meats were salted down, smoked, cured and stored to provide protein for the family diet throughout the year.

The Smith Residence, constructed in 1876 to replace the original log cabin, is a classic example of the sturdy farm houses built completely by hand in the late 1800s. The house has been completely refurbished and serves as a museum containing many furnishings belonging to the Smith family, including many antiques bequeathed to the state by Rachel Smith Hershey when she passed away in 1975. In addition to the furnishings, Mrs. Hershey willed to the state her 252-acre farm that was adjacent to the park, doubling its size.

On the site of the original cabin, a hand-hewn log cabin once located in Beech Fork State Park was reconstructed as a representation of the 1796 Watters Smith cabin. A commemorative stone and bronze monument honoring Watters Smith also is located here.

A Food Storage Cellar is nearly hidden beneath the woodworking shop, which is next on the left as one ascends the path toward the Visitors' Center. The cellar was dug into the mountain and lined with thick stone walls, which served as insulation to maintain a constant, cool temperature. Here milk, butter, cheese, apples, potatoes, pickles, home-canned foods and probably fresh meat were kept to preserve them much as a refrigerator is used today. Water was carried from the well just outside and poured into specially built troughs in which crocks and jars of food were placed. Natural evaporation of the water would then lower the temperature to cool the food.

The Woodworking Shop over the cellar conveniently adjoins the blacksmith shop since many items were made of both wood and metal. Fashioned here by hand were the household furnishings, farm equipment and tools the family needed to make their work a little easier and their life more comfortable.

The Blacksmith Shop is next. The survival of a pioneer family depended on the weapons, farm tools and other household items made in the shop. The very existence of such a family-owned shop is extremely rare, for in later days a man who was a blacksmith by profession would set up his shop in town to serve the entire community.

A Farm Barn, opposite the cattle barn, was built some years later to protect the winter supply of hay in the loft for the cattle. The lower floor was used to store or to work on larger pieces of equipment and implements used in agriculture.

