

OLD STONE FORT: MYSTERY, INDUSTRY, AND LEISURE IN A LOVELY
GREEN SPACE

by

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ABSTRACT

Residing inside the boundaries of Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park, the now empty foundations sit astride a section of low, wall-like mounds that run along the Barren Fork of the Duck River as a testament to the industry that once dominated the nearby town. However, its presence among the mounds creates a perplexing boundary between deep prehistory and the site's more recent past. The presence of Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park amidst the ruins of this industrial site highlights the ways that the property's use changed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Currently, site interpretation does not demonstrate the ties between the mounds and the bones of industry. Nevertheless, the story that lies beneath the leaf litter and stone foundations is truly compelling, and connections between the establishment of the state park and the mills are strong.

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INTRODUCTION

THE OLD STONE FORT AND THE BARRENS

Standing atop the roaring curtain of Big Falls, visitors never fail to be impressed by the power of the Duck River. Here, the Barren Fork of the river crashes off the Highland Rim of Middle Tennessee, carrying sediment and nutrients from a part of the region called the Barrens. Locals first used this name at the beginning of the nineteenth century to describe the scrubby plants and acidic soils in the vicinity. While this name is inconsequential to most current visitors, these physical characteristics of the landscape and their relationship with adjacent lowlands have done much to shape the history of the region. When one considers the role of subsistence farming in the history of the Barrens in Coffee County, these characteristics of the soils and plant ecology take on increased importance. Since white settlement of the region officially began in 1806, the majority of people in the county have pursued agriculture as their main source of income. Most newcomers to the area in the nineteenth century established small farms primarily for subsistence. These farmers grew a variety of crops, and when the opportunity presented itself, they sold off excess for additional money. This pattern remained constant for most of the county's history. Even at the beginning of the twentieth century, many still relied on small scale, subsistence farming, or some form of working the land to make ends meet.¹

¹ Corrine Martinez Anderson, *Coffee County from Arrowheads to Rockets* (Tullahoma, TN: Coffee County Conservation Board, 1969), 145, 210.

In 1959, T.R. Love, L. D. Williams, and W. H. Profitt from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and I.B. Epley and John Elder from the Tennessee Agricultural Experiment Station surveyed the soils in the region and concluded: “52 percent [of Coffee County] is in forest of poor quality.” The team blamed the poor state of these grounds on “overcutting and fires.” Local farmers had cleared the remaining 48 percent for “crops and pasture.”² Their assessment of the agricultural land in the region echoed earlier findings. Another team from the U.S. Department of Agriculture had remarked, in 1910, that the county possessed some lands that, with a “practice [of] systematic rotation,” could produce “good yields.” According to the 1910 survey, many farmers in the region still used techniques from “the early settlement of the county.”³ Both of these reports argued that much of the county’s soil was not suitable for high yields without substantial alterations. They also pointed out that human activity had not triggered much of this low fertility. Instead, soil fertility resulted from the underlying geology along the Highland Rim. As a result, many of the farms surveyed in 1910 produced relatively low yields in the western Barrens, while most of the farms with higher yields came from the central portion of the county between the steep Cumberland Plateau escarpment and the rocky, abrupt landscape along the western boundary of the Highland Rim. The 1959

²T.R. Love, L.D. Williams, W.H. Profitt, L.B. Epley, and John Elder, *Soil Survey of Coffee County, Tennessee* (Washington DC: United States Department of Agriculture, 1959), 1.

³W.E. McClendon and C.R. Zappone, *Soil Survey of Coffee County, Tennessee* (Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, 1910), 28-32.

report similarly found that the county's soils ranged from the easy-to-work bottoms to the "severely leached" and difficult-to-work uplands.⁴

For these reasons, the early visitors to the region saw the future of these uplands not with crops, but with the power generated by the cascades that drained the Barrens. The rolling currents along the upper reaches of the Duck River pound the limestone bedrock, creating a varied landscape of falls and plunges. Waterfalls and their plunge pools sit nearly one hundred feet below limestone cliffs, providing the region with spectacular views and tremendous kinetic energy. Straddled between the Highland Rim and Central Basin, the river displays its power in the channels carved by its streams as well as the steady roar of its cascades and drops. To early visitors, these displays inspired awe and respect for the river and the variations in the landscape it created. Tradition among local historians maintains that where the waterfalls existed, early settlers recognized the potential for dams and wheels to harness the movement. According to local writers such as Basil McMahan, these visions of industry were so influential that the county seat, Manchester, received its name in the hopes that the town would develop into a great center mirroring the production center of England.⁵ For those who established the community in 1836, these sources of power needed cultivation for development. In early real estate advertisements, speculators stressed the favorable conditions for manufacturing on the Duck River around Manchester.⁶ Because of the efforts by local

⁴ Love, et al., *Soil Survey of Coffee County, Tennessee*, 27.

⁵ Basil McMahan, *Coffee County Then and Now* (Nashville, TN: Williams Printing, 1983), 84.

⁶ "Stone Fort Mills and 1000 Acres of Land For Sale," *Nashville Republican*, January 17, 1837, 4. While the title of the article mentions mills for sale, the body of the advertisement only mentions suitable sites for

citizens and people from across the region, this interaction with the landscape directed and controlled the development of the town and its immediate surroundings for the next century.

Despite its role in industrial development, the Duck River shaped more of the Barren's history than the development of Manchester. Its 284-mile journey from the Eastern Highland Rim to the Tennessee River drains the limestone uplands and moves to small floodplains at the base of dramatic cliffs. Here, it crosses the lowlands of the Central Basin, creating some of the greatest biodiversity in the inland Southeast. At this boundary, the currents carve complex ridges and valleys into the landscape, making the region around its headwaters a collection of ecosystems marked by abrupt boundaries, with upland and lowland habitats, barrens and forests, cascades and plunge pools all in close proximity. These tightly bound ecosystems shaped the evolution of organisms in the region over time, allowing for a wide variety of species within short stretches of river.⁷ Atop the highlands, scrublands dominated by beech, white oak, and prairie grasses provide ideal habitat for white-tailed deer and several endangered prairie grass species.⁸

constructing mills. This leads to some confusion over the state of industrial development at the site at this time. While other visitors to the area mention small operations around the Old Stone Fort, it remains unclear if this advertisement references these sites.

⁷Don Hubbs, Stephanie Chance, Leslie Colly, and Bob Butler, *2010 Quantitative Duck River Mussel Survey* (Nashville, TN: Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, 2011), 2. For more about the importance of these channels as drinking water for the regions, see J.V. Brahana and Michael W. Bradley, *Preliminary Delineation and Description of the Regional Aquifers of Tennessee—The Highland Rim Aquifer System* (Washington, DC: United States Geological Survey, 1986).

⁸ Natural Areas Program, *May Prairie State Natural Area Management Plan* (Nashville: Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Natural Areas Program, Revised 2012), 4-5. As an example of remnant prairie in the region, at the nearby May Prairie State Natural Area, there is one of the few remaining communities of prairie grasses and wildflowers struggling to squeeze out an existence on land adjacent to the Manchester Industrial Park.

Further downstream, in the lowlands along the river's course, are aquatic ecosystems that support freshwater mussels, numerous fish, and other riverine wildlife. The richer soils deposited along the course of the river support various plant communities that provide an excellent habitat for terrestrial wildlife. The different ecological niches and geographic regions that meet at the headwaters of the Duck River have always provided a wide variety of resources, while the river system has shaped human usage of the region since the prehistoric past (see Figure 1).⁹



Figure 1. From Stephen Yerka, “Geophysical Study at Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park, Manchester, Tennessee” (Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, 2010), 1.

For several millennia, people found niches to exploit the ecological systems surrounding the waters. Thirteen thousand years ago, the region's earliest human

⁹ Stephen Yerka, “Geophysical Study at Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park, Manchester, Tennessee” (Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, 2010), 18. For an in-depth discussion of local adaptations to the

inhabitants used the variations in topography and biodiversity to access a wide variety of resources as they followed herds of Pleistocene creatures. At this time, the region was arid, dominated by grasses and scrubland, and the areas along the edge of the Duck River were most likely the only places with much vegetation, making the area attractive to large animals. However, with the close of the last ice age and the extinction of the Pleistocene's large herbivores, these people changed their strategies for subsistence, exploiting newly created alcoves in an increasingly wetter and more temperate climate. Moving frequently and following seasonal patterns, native people utilized an increasing variety of ecological niches to provide more security in their subsistence strategies. Living along the boundaries created by the Duck River provided numerous contingencies to cover any shortages.¹⁰

Eventually, shifts in climate and the establishment of diverse plant communities in the region allowed people to experiment with plants. From the archaeological evidence, it appears that people began saving seeds for cultivation around 800 BCE. Focusing on plants such as goosefoot (*Chenopodium*), knotweed (*Polygonum*), and maygrass (*Phalaris caroliniana*), people developed reliable plots for food that could be stored for later use. Because of these developments, remains of these plants appeared in domestic storage pits, called middens, throughout the small flood plains surrounding the

borderlands around the Old Stone Fort, see C. H. Faulkner and M. C. R. McCollough, *Introductory Report of the Normandy Reservoir Salvage Project: Environmental Setting, Typology, and Survey* (Knoxville: Department of Anthropology, University of Tennessee, 1973).

¹⁰ Charles Faulkner, "Woodland Cultures of the Elk and Duck River Valleys, Tennessee," in *The Woodland Southeast*, ed. David Anderson (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 194.

upper reaches of the Duck River. The appearance of these plants hints at changes in the seasonal mobility of people. By cultivating the local wild vegetation, people created loose gardens.¹¹ This activity opened the door for larger, more complex arrangements of communities, encouraging residents to spend more time in one place. As a result, people migrated less frequently, and when they did move, they did so over shorter distances. By tweaking the local plant communities in the Duck River drainage, these groups were able to live on the land in new ways.

Judging from available archaeological evidence, these simple changes in resource production also modified the organization of human communities and their social ties. Because of these subtle changes, residents of the region began searching for ways to solidify their ties to one another. According to archaeologists, these social changes fostered the building of low, wall-like mounds atop a narrow plateau where the river makes some of its most spectacular drops within a quarter mile of Manchester. The four thousand feet of extant mounds provide evidence of significant ancient changes in native culture, accompanied by modifications in agricultural land use, habitation, and migratory patterns. Beginning two thousand years ago, groups visited and maintained this complex arrangement of earth and stone for hundreds of years before disappearing from the archaeological record. These mounds set apart a piece of land and, at their most developed state, aligned with the summer solstice at sunrise. Named the Old Stone Fort by the earliest European visitors to the region, this group of mounds symbolizes the changes in social organization that led to agricultural development. According to current

¹¹ Ibid., 202.

research, the Old Stone Fort's builders remade the landscape at the headwaters of the Duck River into a giant calendar for marking the seasons and performing certain religious observances.¹² For these people, the lands around the Old Stone Fort held the key to their subsistence. Their labor in the forests and fields produced the necessary energy for them to construct the Old Stone Fort.

While it is impossible to ascertain with absolute certainty the meaning of the mounds in the eyes of their creators, their existence provoked the interest of numerous Euro-American visitors to the site throughout the close of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. At Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park, on the outskirts of Manchester, a mile-and-a-quarter trail intended as part of a self-guided tour wanders along the cliff tops and waterfalls encircling the two-thousand-year-old archaeological site (See Figure 2). This path provides a gentle walk along the dramatic drops of the Duck River, hardwood forests, and forty-acre meadow. In addition to viewing the mounds, hikers can find interpretive signs that present several millennia of human history at the site and allow visitors to trace the evolution beginning with human habitation. The first interpretive sign, immediately behind the park's museum in close proximity to the most complex set of mounds, discusses the alignment of the mounds with the summer solstice every June. It raises questions for visitors to ponder about the use of the land by indigenous people. From here, the first section of trail traces the mounds to the left along

¹² Yerka, "Geophysical Study at Old Stone Fort State," 132. For a further discussion of the Woodland era cultural developments in the region evidenced by the archaeological record, see Faulkner, "Woodland Cultures of the Elk and Duck River Valleys, Tennessee," and Charles Faulkner, *The Old Stone Fort* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1966), 59-60.

the Bark Camp Fork of the Duck River. The path follows the low, wall-like mounds along the tops of steep cliffs. After a quarter mile, the trail turns away from the river, and the sounds of water fade into those of the forest. The trail continues its path along the mounds, moving visitors along the edge of a meadow at the center of the site. Here the mounds hide in the canopy, and tall grasses dominate the center of the enclosure. The trail's interpretation slows here as well, and visitors are free to let their minds wander as they walk along.

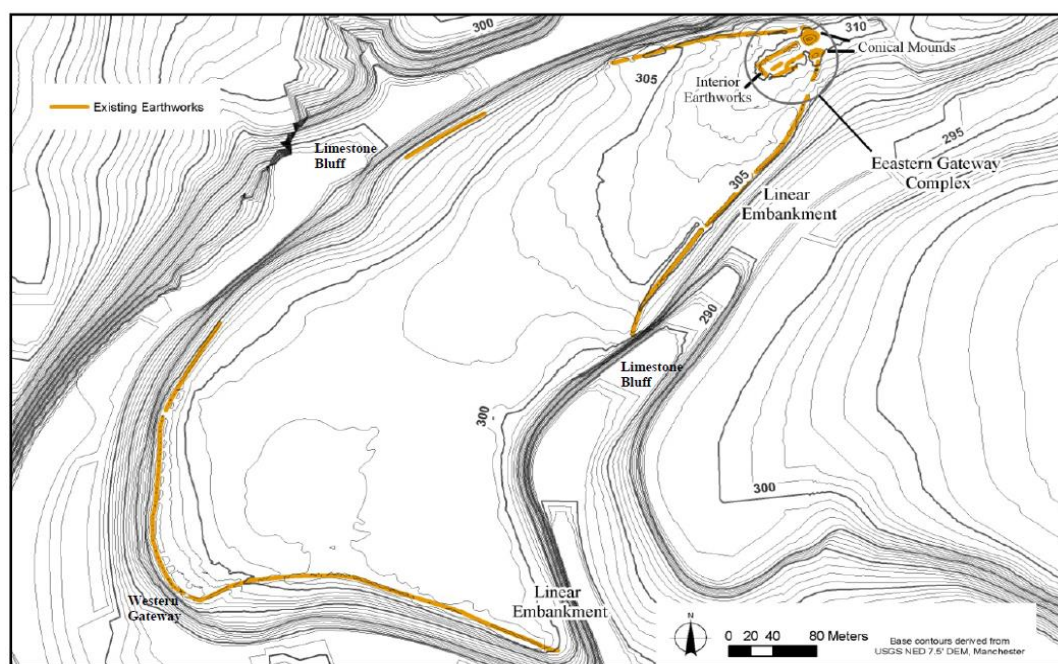


Figure 2. From Stephen Yerka, “Geophysical Study at Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park, Manchester, Tennessee” (Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, 2010), 5.

Soon after viewing the tall grasses at the center of the site, the sound of the Barren Fork of the Duck River greets hikers. Not long after the familiar sights and sounds of the river return, odd iron objects and foundations appear in and along the craggy cliffs and rocky cascades. The mounds become less distinct, and signs of erosion and disturbance

become more apparent. Above the largest waterfall in the park and just off the path are odd rows of stone and metal. Here, if one scrambles down cliffs to the base of the falls, large iron pipes and fittings poke out from underneath the forest cover. Looking across the river, green moss and foliage cover other large pieces of iron. Returning to the top of the falls and walking another hundred yards along the main path, a visitor can catch glimpses of iron bands, bricks, and cut stone. Overlooking the falls, a sign discusses attempts by industrialists to control the energy created by the voluminous waterfalls and rapids. Time and decay have worked together to mask the impacts of industry that lie scattered among the leaf litter. If visitors miss these remnants, they soon encounter the well-preserved stone foundation of one of the state's largest nineteenth-century paper mills just a short distance from Big Falls.¹³ Here, visitors to the uppermost headwaters of the Duck River come face-to-face with a major attempt by local people to industrialize the landscape of the Old Stone Fort. Much like the changes made by their prehistoric predecessors, the nineteenth-century industrialists used these alterations to put the land to work.

Even after the mills closed at the end of the nineteenth century, this industrial center continued to attract people. Just a couple of years prior to the final shutdown of the Old Stone Fort Paper Company Mills, visitors from Nashville enjoyed camping on the site and swimming in the plunge pools below the falls.¹⁴ In 1911, the owner of the site,

¹³ Old Stone Fort Interpretive Signage, observed by the author during site visit, September 5, 2013.

¹⁴ "At The Old Stone Fort: A Party of Nashville People Enjoying Themselves," *Nashville American*, July 12, 1896, 2.

Frances H. Wooton, entertained the idea of selling the land to the State of Tennessee in an effort to turn the property into a game preserve. Later, her descendants, resisting efforts by developers from outside Manchester, pursued advancement of the site as a place for contemplation of the prehistoric past and for outdoor recreation. They consulted with representatives from the Department of the Interior and political figures in efforts to see the site become part of the National Park System.¹⁵ This did not come to fruition, but on April 23, 1966, Tennessee turned the Old Stone Fort into the first archaeological state park.¹⁶

Complete comprehension of the development and significance of Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park takes more than understanding the archaeology or the nineteenth-century paper industry. The best way to understand the development of the park is by examining the changing perceptions of nature at the site. Beginning with descriptions of the raw power in the rushing waters of the Duck River, early settlers saw a landscape in need of development. Newspaper articles portrayed the land around Manchester and the Old Stone Fort as a rural hamlet of Middle Tennessee.¹⁷ In these written descriptions of Coffee County, the powerful falls along the mounds were as capable as they were beautiful. By examining visitor descriptions, correspondence

¹⁵ A.E. Demaray to John Chumbley, May 17, 1937, John Chumbley Papers, Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park, Manchester, TN, hereafter cited as John Chumbley Papers.

¹⁶ "Governor Dedicates Old Stone Fort Park," *Manchester Times*, April 20, 1966, 1.

¹⁷ "Runaway," *Nashville Whig*, February 22, 1814, 1; "War and the Horse Fiddle," *Republican Banner*, February 2, 1846, 2; "The Stone Fort Ghost: A Rich and Racy Story of Fifteen Brave Hunters," *Republican Banner*, October 16, 1870, 3; "What Was A Dumb Bull," *Daily American*, June 3, 1887, 6.

between various owners and local people, and promotional literature, a shifting discourse of the site becomes apparent. As Richard White argued in his work on the Columbia River system, “We cannot understand human history without natural history, and we cannot understand natural history without human history. The two have been intertwined for millennia.”¹⁸ In the same way, we can further understand the significance of the Old Stone Fort’s history to the local community and the State of Tennessee when we wed its development to the changing local relationships with nature.

This study seeks to understand the transition of the Old Stone Fort from a remote, rural location with a mysterious ancient past to a place of industrial growth, and finally to a landscape of quiet reflection on the antiquity of the region. Accordingly, the early chapters will discuss the way locals and visitors described the land sandwiched between the two forks of the Duck River. At the Old Stone Fort, the earliest settlers to the region described the upper portions of the Duck River as perfect locations for industry. With the swift currents and high volume of water, these early writers saw nothing but promise in the river, once harnessed by the necessary dams and industrial works.¹⁹ They pointed to the works left by the region’s ancient inhabitants as further evidence of industry’s potential greatness. In several ways, it seems that the rise of industry from the ruins of the Old Stone Fort fit neatly into ideas about the rise and fall of civilizations. At the time, many visitors to such sites credited their construction to a lost race of mound builders. As

¹⁸ Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), ix.

¹⁹ *Acts Passed at the First Session of the Fifteenth General Assembly* (Murfreesboro, TN: I. Norvwell and G.A. and A.C. Sublett, 1823), 66.

Steven Conn observes in *History's Shadow*, historians and antiquarians of the time described this lost culture as an advanced race with a complex civilization. Borrowing from contemporary ideas about the history of the ancient Mediterranean, many writers suggested that some natives of the North American continent became wandering, uncivilized bands, assaulting their more advanced neighbors, the mound-builder civilizations. This narrative fit best with the way scholars at the time perceived events unfolding in the past. For them, a series of rises and falls best described the history of civilizations, and for many in the young and expanding American Republic, this narrative proved gripping and powerful when applied to the phenomenon of mounds.²⁰

Many locations in the American South experienced slower industrial development on a smaller scale than in northern states. However, in several locations, industrialists reshaped the landscape into vast industrial complexes capable of manufacturing products for global markets.²¹ However, industrialization was not restricted to large-scale producers seeking out global markets. For example, small producers like those in Rockdale, Pennsylvania, catered to regional and local markets.²² In the South, industry also transformed regional economies. Iron producers in Alabama and Tennessee extracted ore from the region and turned the raw materials into a localized steel industry.

²⁰ Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 24-31.

²¹David Carlton and Peter Coclanis, "Capital Mobilization and Southern Industry, 1880-1905: The Case of the Carolina Piedmont," *Journal of Economic History* 49, No. 1 (March 1989): 76-77.

²²Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), xxi-xxii.

In South Carolina, cotton led to textile production. However, despite these forays into manufacturing, industry always appeared on the sidelines of the overall economy in southern states. Industrial centers were smaller than their northern counterparts, and accordingly had little impact beyond their region. They suffered from smaller investor pools as well as difficulties in finding reliable labor. Despite these challenges, industrial development slowly became widespread in the South. In fact, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, industrialists had already begun to set up numerous facilities around developing cities.²³ The arrival of the railroads toward the middle of the century liberated production facilities from the river transportation networks, allowing them to locate wherever labor and waterpower were available. Once the rail lines secured the connections to the regional markets coming out of Nashville, the development of the Old Stone Fort quickly flourished.²⁴

The park's current relationship with its industrial past receives less attention because its primary mission is to educate the public about the site's prehistoric past. Planners and staff have placed several signs inside the area occupied by the mills but have not worked out a seamless way to explain their significance to the site. As a result, it is easy to see the industrial story as an interesting side note rather than an integral

²³A.J. Valente, *Rag Paper Manufacture in the United States, 1801-1900: A History, with Directories of Mills and Owners* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, 2010), 8-10.

²⁴ Donald Ball, "Paper Mills in the Confederate South: Industrial Archaeology of a Forgotten Industry," *Ohio Valley Historical Archaeology* 17 (2002): 39-41; Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 14-15; George Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 5-7; Henry McKiven, *Iron and Steel: Class, Race, and Community in Birmingham, Alabama, 1875-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 14.

component to the overall story of the site. However, when one examines the accounts of the mills and the regional interests in developing industry around the Old Stone Fort, it becomes clear that the story of the mills is a crucial component to the history of the landscape. Tours offered by operators of the Stone Fort Paper Company toward the end of the nineteenth century fostered regional interest in the site. At the same time, locals visited the waterfalls and plunge pools along the Duck River near the mills, seeing the place as a great site for picnics after church or swims during the hot southern summers. The shifting importance of industrial and recreational pursuits at the Old Stone Fort played a large hand in the site's preservation, which remains a largely unexplored segment of the park's history. In order to address this shortcoming, this work seeks to examine the industrial development of the Old Stone Fort and track how the changes made by mill builders and operators altered the physical layout of the site and human interaction with the landscape. The site served as a focal point for the town's development throughout most of the nineteenth century. Members of the community brought outsiders into the area to tour the mills, the waterfalls, and the mounds in order to promote the potential of the area most people considered out of the way until the construction of a rail line in the 1850s. Due to this, the Old Stone Fort became a center of the community by the 1870s.²⁵ It was where Manchester saw its future, and when the mills closed, that future became uncertain.

For the purpose of this work, the analysis tracks the beginnings of the area in chronological order, starting with the Old Stone Fort Paper Mills under the direction of

²⁵ "Coffee County, Closing Scenes of the Fair-6000 People on the Grounds," *Republican Banner*, October 17, 1874, 2.

W.S. Whiteman and his sons, then the Hickerson firm, and finally, Frances H. Wooton's operations on the site. Examining the ways different people have used Old Stone Fort provides greater understanding of the property's development, and enriches understanding of its continuing relevance to local and regional history. Currently a small sign presents a short narrative about the mills and their significance to the local and regional development. It pairs this text with a small map locating the rag mill and wood pulp mills along the river's edge. Together the map and text illustrate the size of the industrial complex amid the mounds. However, the industrial history is not as developed as it could be. One sign explains the presence of the industrial site and the mills as an episode in the site's history unrelated to the prehistoric past. This connects the park to nineteenth-century history, but it fails to illuminate the larger picture of landscape alteration over time. The local area's history also lacks detailed accounts of the human drama played out during these periods. In fact, there has never been a formal history of the Old Stone Fort Paper Company, or even the park itself. Because this story is as important as the archaeological site to the founding of the park, this work attempts to provide a narrative of the site's industrial history and offer suggestions for integrating this narrative into the central interpretive themes of the park. By looking at the evolution of the Old Stone Fort as a place for industry, mystery, and leisure, one gains a valuable perspective on the forces that created the park that now acts to preserve the two-thousand-year-old mounds found within the park.

CHAPTER I

A REGION ABOUNDING IN EVIL SPIRITS

In January of 1846, an article about an ill-fated hunting trip appeared in Nashville's *Nashville Republican* newspaper. Written under the pen name "Mountaineer," the author recounted a hunting trip one of his friends experienced as a youth growing up in the Barrens of Coffee County. This simple story appears to be an attempt to embarrass political rivals during a national debate about western expansion. However, closer reading of the events described therein provides insight into the relationship of the Old Stone Fort, and its setting, to the surrounding community.

This article by Mountaineer describes a conversation with a group of friends from Coffee County. According to our author, the group began by discussing an ongoing debate in the United States Congress over the northern boundary of the Oregon Territory. As the comrades sat together, Mountaineer read several comments by a representative whose name he withheld.¹ As their discussion developed, one of the members told his acquaintances that this type of speech did not match what he knew of the speaker's character and offered that he might be able to share a story from his youth that would demonstrate the courage of this young representative.

To set the scene for his tale, Mountaineer's friend described how the physical landscape of Coffee County's Barrens had once provided fantastic opportunities for

¹ "Mountaineer," "Fiddle and the War Horse," *Nashville Republican*, February 2, 1846. Despite this redaction, the author provided enough details for readers to determine whom exactly the story referenced. In later iterations of this story, authors identified the leader of the expedition as Leland Sims, a congressional representative from Missouri, who was a proponent of seizing territory in the Oregon Territory in the 1840s. Many of the later stories drop the overt politics to focus instead on the narrative.

hunting outside the rapidly developing areas surrounding the Cumberland River and its tributaries. Here, along the Eastern Highland Rim, the broken terrain had held off most serious development, and its low, scrubby plant life and pockets of forest created ample home for game. Additionally, the vertical nature of the territory slowed transportation with only a few easy avenues for travel in and out of the region, creating an illusion of isolation.² Furthermore, the small farmsteads and hamlets in the area had only just begun the process of transforming the terraces and tabletops of the region into serious farmland.³ These factors worked together, creating a kind of wilderness for the region's sportsmen. For our author, this area provided an apt comparison to the wilderness found west of the Mississippi River. According to Mountaineer, he was not alone in this opinion, and his cohorts describe the highlands of Coffee County as pastoral landscapes perfect for hunting and fishing. His account paints a picture of the area around the Old Stone Fort as one "abounding in deer."⁴ Language used by the author suggests that local people looked at the abundance of game in the region as a communal resource and merely tolerated the presence of these hunters' forays as long as the men did not interfere with their access to the resources.⁵ Unfortunately, the outsiders pushed this unspoken

² Martinez, *From Arrowheads to Rockets*, 67-69; McMahan, *Coffee County Then and Now*, 432.

³ Martinez, *From Arrowheads to Rockets*, 84. These descriptions of the county's development occur in many of the early writing about the region; also see "Manchester for Sale," *Nashville Republican*, May 19 1836, 4; *Goodspeed's History of Tennessee* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1889).

⁴ "Mountaineer," "War Horse and the Fiddle," 2.

⁵ Ibid.

arrangement to the breaking point. As a result, their expedition became an otherworldly encounter that earned the hunters a place in the folklore of Middle Tennessee.

The party of hunters, composed of prominent men from the towns of Murfreesboro and Nashville, had spent the day chasing deer through the forests along the Duck River's upper reaches, disrupting the peace wherever they went. They took every advantage of the narrow valleys, cliffs, and tabletop prairies to pursue their prey. Due to an abundance of opportunities for chase, the hunters had enjoyed considerable success. However, their methods had disturbed the peace in the countryside. Describing the conduct of the hunters during this annual autumn expedition, Mountaineer also suggested that the hunters upset routines in the communities surrounding the ancient mounds and earthworks of the Old Stone Fort. He compared the group to criminals referring to the outsiders as "these R____ county marauders," and even equated their intrusions on the land to that of an occupying army.⁶

Mountaineer argued that locals took issue with the disturbance among the wildlife caused by the hunters' methods. Like many gentlemen hunters of the era, this group used dogs to flush deer from their cover, providing excitement and clear shots.⁷ While apparently successful, these actions caused numerous problems for the rural people of the region, who also hunted deer for food and hides. By using dogs, the hunters scattered the remaining deer throughout the countryside, which in turn, made pursuit more difficult for

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Nicholas W. Proctor, *Bathed in Blood: Hunting and Mastery in the Old South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 210.

locals. Our storyteller, at that time a youth in Coffee County, asserted the local community's ownership of the deer, stating that the hunters "not only *killed* our deer, but drove those they did not kill out of the range with their dogs." His language suggests that these hunters gravely upset the balance of life in the region.⁸ The sportsmen not only created a commotion among the wildlife, but also threatened a local resource. Mountaineer's source implies that their actions violated an implicit pact for the utilization of natural resources. The annual sport hunt caused enough of an intrusion to stir resentment in the hamlets surrounding the Old Stone Fort, eventually motivating several youths to seek action against these outsiders.

Conflicts like this flared in the nineteenth century as traditional commons became scarcer in the eastern states. Writing about the role of similar conflicts in the adoption of game regulations during the late-nineteenth century, Louis Warren discusses the ways that many areas initially used by local communities as commons implemented regulations by means of hunting and fishing laws or transitioned into public lands under state or federal management. According to Warren, government control over resources often stemmed from tension between the various groups utilizing those resources.⁹ Local

⁸ "Mountaineer," "War and the Horse Fiddle," 2.

⁹ Louis Warren, *The Hunter's Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America: Third Edition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 9-11. Also see Bonnie J. McCay and James M. Atchison, "Human Ecology of The Commons," *The Question of the Commons* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987), 1-34; Arthur McAvoy, *The Fisherman's Problem: Ecology and the Law in California Fisheries, 1850-1980* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Additionally, several of the questions about the appropriate use of nature based on the various ways people come to understand their relationship with the natural world can be found in Richard White, "Are You an Environmentalist, or Do You Work For a Living," *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1996), 171-185.

management arrangements initially attempted to alleviate disputes over game between local users and visitors to a region. The primary goal of these informal arrangements was to guarantee local access to resources. Warren reports how these relationships changed as state and federal governments began to treat “local” resources as part of larger public commons. According to Warren, government management often had more flexibility toward outside utilization of resources and typically required a variety of measures to minimize conflict rather than prohibit use.¹⁰ For our hunters and locals, the use of the area around the Old Stone Fort provides an example of the way people in the community used the site early in the area’s history. James Proctor’s writings about southern hunting culture in the nineteenth-century South demonstrate how such expeditions served as arenas for aristocratic men to prove their control of the natural world.¹¹ It also provides a clear example of the methods employed by people in Coffee County to control access to the game and fish of the region.

Returning to Mountaineer’s source and narrative, local youths employed an elaborate prank to enforce implicit agreements regarding the use of the lands surrounding the Old Stone Fort. The hunters’ trip to the Old Stone Fort had been wildly successful. As the day worked toward its conclusion, the men filtered back into their camp and admired their harvest. They relaxed, settled into their cups for the evening, and began to sing and dance around the fire. These festivities carried late into the evening. Eventually, the

¹⁰ Warren, *The Hunter's Game*, 9-11.

¹¹ Proctor, *Bathed in Blood: Hunting and Mastery in the Old South*, 23, 30, 88, 220; Scott Edward Giltner, “The Art of Serving is With Them Innate”: Hunting, Fishing, and Independence in the Post-Emancipation South, 1865-1920” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh. 2005), xix, 114.

alcohol and exertion took their toll, and the hunters drifted into “the arms of Morpheus.” However, their pleasant evening took a terrifying turn. For soon after they nodded off to sleep, a strange noise drifted out of the trees and into their camp. Its pitch varied between a harsh shrill and a deep resonating boom, and its origin shifted among the trees. The hunters were at first numb to the disturbance; however, the sounds soon awoke the dogs and horses, filling the beasts with panic and breeding confusion throughout the camp.¹²

According to Mountaineer, the group had pitched their camp in a little valley near the Old Stone Fort, which made it difficult for the men to ascertain the source of the haunting sounds. Later, while recounting the events to a local, the hunters claimed that apparitions approached the camp making these strange noises. One of the hunters claimed to see “the old boy himself,” whose figure shifted out of the trees and then changed into that of a woman. As the figure came closer, the man thought he recognized it as his wife. He attempted to pull the trigger of his rifle, but he felt as though something had placed a spell on him, preventing him from doing so. The experience proved too much for the hunters, who soon scattered and took shelter in some nearby homes, “where they gave a heart rending account of the ‘devils and other evil spirits’ with which the Stone Fort region abounded.”¹³

What the hunters did not know was the rather earthly nature of their tormentors. To spook the hunters, the young men constructed a “horse fiddle,” a device that consisted

¹² “Mountaineer,” “War Horse and the Fiddle,” 2.

¹³ Ibid.

of a green piece of rawhide stretched over a hollow tree stump with a small cut in the center. Through this, the “musician” strung a piece of horsehair and pulled it taught. From here, the performer played the horse fiddle by running a bow across the horsehair and adjusting the tension to vary the pitch and tone of the noise. Later articles describing the device noted that players could change the direction of the sound by angling the position of their bodies around the stump to project the noise in various directions. For the Old Stone Fort pranksters, this meant the group could make the sound appear to have multiple origins simply by standing in different positions around the stump.¹⁴ Since the hunters had pitched their camp in a valley along the river, sound reverberated to make it nearly impossible to tell where it originated. The karst topography of the region with its high limestone outcrops provided the perfect environment to hide the pranksters and confound the urban interlopers.¹⁵

When the hunters shared the story of their otherworldly encounter near the ruins of the Old Stone Fort, the locals laughed at their misfortune. Oblivious to local motives, the hunters persisted. As the story put it, “The party were so ridiculed that by the return of the next autumn, they determined to try another campaign.” This time, the men brought more dogs and set up their camp in the same valley. Once the young men of the region learned of the plan, they repeated their scheme, which had worked so well the previous autumn. Situated atop a limestone bluff safely “at a distance (out of gunshot),”

¹⁴ Ibid.; “The Old Stone Fort and a Ghost Story,” *Daily American*, May 18, 1887, 2; “The Stone Fort Ghost,” *Daily American*, May 28, 1887, 2.

¹⁵ “Mountaineer,” “War Horse and the Fiddle,” 2; “The Old Stone Fort and a Ghost Story,” 2.

the group again set to making “music.” The results from this encounter matched those of the first, and again, the hunters scattered before the terrors of the Old Stone Fort.¹⁶

The story’s original purpose appears to have been to embarrass one of the sport hunters, U. S. Rep. Leland Sims of Missouri, a chief proponent of expansionism during the 1840s. However, in its numerous retellings, the mechanism for getting the story underway concerns the use of the land around the Old Stone Fort. Later retellings of this story always describe the participants as gentlemanly aristocrats from outside Coffee County, travelling to take advantage of the rich opportunities for hunting available around the mounds. One such account describes the leaders of the expedition as follows:

The major was a great lover of the sport of fox hunting and deer hunting, and as game had become somewhat scarce in his own neighborhood, he concluded to take a hunt in the country around the old Stone Fort, which was then a sort of paradise for hunters. With that intention, in company with a few choice friends, he repaired to that place at the time alluded to above. His friends were first-class gentlemen, most of them in easy circumstances, some of them, as Maj. Jack Fletcher, had seen service in the Seminole war, and they were called the chivalry of Rutherford County.¹⁷

Archaeologist Kevin Smith describes this story as an iconic piece of folklore from Middle Tennessee.¹⁸ Despite doubts about its origin, descriptions of the Old Stone Fort fit with other early descriptions of the site as a place between wilderness and the pastoral. In fact, many of the early descriptions of the Old Stone Fort and its surrounding area tend to

¹⁶ “Mountaineer,” “War Horse and the Fiddle,” 2.

¹⁷ “The Old Stone Fort and Ghost Story,” 2.

¹⁸ Kevin Smith, “The Mystery of the Stone Fort Ghost,” *Middle Cumberland Archaeological Society Newsletter* 38, No. 3 (May/June 2013): 2.

contrast the descriptions of the pleasant countryside with the large falls and mysterious mounds. Early visitors touring the archaeological site remarked about the power and beauty of the waterfalls and rock walls surrounding the site.¹⁹ Although they wrote about seeing the potential for cultivation of the waterfalls through the placement of mills, their descriptions also flirted with feelings of the sublime in describing their encounters with the wilderness. Instead of outright wilderness, the area around the Old Stone Fort appears in written accounts as a pastoral landscape that maintained some of its wildness by virtue of its ancient ruins.

Later newspapers recounting the story of the hunters' misadventure among the mounds continue to highlight the mounds as a place where one might still encounter strange things, even among people not likely believe in such things. An 1870 retelling of the 1830's hunt describes the Old Stone Fort and the individuals involved as follows:

In my travels through the country I have heard a singular story of Tennessee hunters, and the scene is laid at or near this place (the present pleasant village of Manchester). It is said that hunters, from the lower counties, were in the habit, near forty years ago, of coming up here to hunt deer—that they would camp out and kill large quantities of game, for weeks, and return home loaded with venison—that from the neighboring county of Rutherford, about thirty-eight years ago, there came fifteen hunters, composed of the leading men of that county—that for some years before, hunters had been in the habit of returning and telling of strange sights and sounds, which had created in the minds of these leading citizens nothing but curiosity, as they were not the men to be alarmed by ghost stories. But as it was near the old Stone Fort where, in the unknown past,

¹⁹ James Mitchell, "A Remarkable Old Fort," *The Democratic Clarion and Tennessee Gazette*, No. 128, July 6, 1810, 1; see also William Donneson, "American Antiquities in Tennessee," *The Colombian Centinel*, July 31, 1819.

men had striven with each other unto death, they could but realize that ghosts had as well haunt these woods as any other place.²⁰

Again, descriptions of the natural surroundings of the Old Stone Fort work with the mounds to create an atmosphere ripe for otherworldly encounters. This setting amplified the trick perpetrated by the local boys. The members from this hunting expedition remembered the Old Stone Fort as a graveyard and wilderness:

He would tell them that dead men's bones were as plentifully scattered over the ground around the Stone Fort as were sticks in Rutherford County, and that the caves in the banks of the river were full of human skulls and all manner of horrid sights. And he would wind up his talk by saying that hitherto, when, in reading an author, he found that the author believed in anything like ghosts he would throw the book aside as unworthy of credence, but that now he was convinced that such things did exist.²¹

Other early accounts of the Old Stone Fort describing the physical setting of the mounds also focus on the shadowy nature of the mounds' construction by very mysterious human builders. In 1810, while travelling through the country investigating locations for future development, James Mitchell described the arrangement of the Old Stone Fort—"one of the greatest curiosities in the western world"—and its surrounding landscape in vast detail. Starting with an assertion that described the mounds as works of human hands, he speculated that the fort was not a "place of refuge" or a location for "securing some great treasure," as others had suggested.²² Instead, Mitchell offered a warning to travelers contemplating the origins and use of the old stone to be careful "lest

²⁰ "The Stone Fort Ghost: A Rich and Racy Story of Fifteen Brave Hunters," *Republican Banner*, October 16, 1870, 3.

²¹ "The Old Stone Fort and a Ghost Story," 2.

²² Mitchell, "A Remarkable Old Fort," 1.

our imaginations and conjectures are lost in the wilds of meditation.” Mitchell’s caution toward the history of the Old Stone Fort prevented him from offering any meaningful interpretation of the site. Instead, he seemed content merely to leave the mystery where it was, offering no more than his belief that it was the work of a long gone civilization.²³

Even at this early date, Mitchell’s account provides an example of the ways travelers and writers portrayed and perceived the area around the Old Stone Fort, as it had attracted attention not just for its prehistoric curiosities but also for its incredible potential for economic development. Mitchell told his readers that, “You will find several very handsome falls, fit for any kind of water works.” Discussing the physical setting of the mounds and its surrounding resources, he stated:

This place is situated in a handsome level country, where there is the best water, and a continual circulation of pure and wholesome air, and lies on the main road from Nashville to Huntsville. The site is surrounded with about ten thousand acres of well-timbered land, and a very great appearance of iron ore close at hand, and the water in each is sufficient to turn any kind of machinery.²⁴

Mitchell described how the potential for industry had already lured settlers into putting the Duck River to work. Around the eastern edge of the Old Stone Fort, Mitchell described the Bark Camp Fork of the River as “mak[ing] a most elegant fall- at which place there is a grist and saw mill nearly in complete operation.”²⁵ However, at this time, major development by mill owners faced numerous logistical challenges. Anyone seeking

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

to develop the river fully would first have to find solutions to get raw materials to mills and products to market before major operations along the upper Duck River could be viable.

Although the area's potential for industrial development was recognized as early as 1810, the land around the Old Stone Fort in the years before railroad development remained largely rural with only limited industrial use. An 1854 description of the land in the *Republican Banner* provides an idyllic account of the mounds and surrounding countryside. In an article entitled "Visit to the Highlands," a contributor to the paper writes about his journey following the Old State Pike, now US Highway 41, up to Manchester and the Old Stone Fort. Much like earlier descriptions of the site, the author takes great leaps to enhance the scenery surrounding the Old Stone Fort. He paints a picture of tranquility in the countryside as his party watered their horses in the "transparent steam, while they surveyed the scenery." The descriptions of the site allowed readers in Nashville to imagine the area around Manchester and the Old Stone Fort as an idyllic pastoral location with a partially tamed landscape. Comparing the bucolic countryside with the setting of the Old Stone Fort, the author describes the cascading waterfalls and surrounding rock bluffs as "wild and variegated scenery" that "reaches the sublime." Here the wildness of the fort appears to work with the mysterious mounds to create a serene location for pursuing the fruits of wilderness by fishing in the river and

contemplating its power. Additionally, the author states the site is, “A fit theme for the painter and poet.”²⁶

Still, real estate advertisements from the first half of the nineteenth century also report the potential for manufacturing. In an ad from the *Nashville Republican*, a writer describes the area around the Old Stone Fort thus: “On each side of this fort runs a fine river of water with three of the best sites on each for propelling machinery in this or any other country.”²⁷ In this same advertisement, the author describes the countryside around the Old Stone Fort and the recently organized town of Manchester as “no less healthy than those proverbial spots where people never die of disease.” These optimistic estimations of the lands around Coffee County undoubtedly served the men who assembled this advertisement. However, the idea that the waterfalls and cascades surrounding the Old Stone Fort held the keys to the development of the county occurred in numerous other descriptions of the site. In an editorial notice from a little over a decade prior to this advertisement, John Williams wrote a brief article in the *Nashville Whig* arguing that the citizenry of the region should do its best to promote the establishment of a federal arsenal in the state. He listed several suitable locations for the construction of manufacturing facilities. After mentioning East Tennessee’s abundance of sites for water-powered machinery, he identified three locations west of the Cumberland Plateau where industrious entrepreneurs had established small industrial works: “Bell’s works on the Harpeth, the Stone Fort on the Duck River, and the iron works near

²⁶ “A Visit to the Highlands,” *Republican Banner*, September 1, 1854, 2.

²⁷ “Manchester for Sale,” *Nashville Republican*, May 19, 1836, 4.

Sparta.”²⁸ These locations were among the largest manufacturing sites in the state in the decades following the Civil War, and, at this time, many in the region surrounding Nashville looked to the surrounding communities nestled around the Cumberland Plateau and the Western Tennessee River and its tributaries for industrial development. Another enthusiastic advertisement from the *Nashville Republican* in 1837 specifically addressed existing mills near the mounds and the adjoining property. Harwood Morgan, the author of the ad, stated, “I will give a bargain in the above property if application is made soon. The land joins the town of Manchester in Coffee County, Tennessee. It includes three valuable sites on one of the forks of [the] Duck River for propelling machinery; at one on which there is a very valuable wheat and corn mill, and also a saw mill.”²⁹ The problem for many of these locations at this time sprang from the difficulties in getting heavy equipment to these sights. Particularly, the rugged terrain between the Old Stone Fort and Nashville slowed the development of the site for several decades.

The way Americans described rural areas and their conceptualization of wilderness in the first half of the nineteenth century provides some perspective on the way people talked about the Old Stone Fort and its surroundings. Various descriptions of the wilderness surrounding the site before the arrival of the rail system in 1853 fit neatly with the evolution of ideas about nature and wildness in the American mind of the nineteenth century. Environmental historian Roderick Nash demonstrates that writings

²⁸ John Williams, editorial, *Nashville Whig*, February 19, 1823, 3.

²⁹ Harwood Morgan, “Stone Fort Mills and 1000 Acres of Land for Sale,” *Nashville Republican*, January 17, 1837, 4.

about nature and wilderness featured encounters with the sublime alongside notes on economic opportunity during much of the nineteenth century.³⁰ For early visitors to the Old Stone Fort, these two viewpoints appeared in nearly every description of the site. From nineteenth-century accounts, it is clear that the mysterious mounds on the site ostensibly furthered the sublimity of the place, while the powers of the waterfalls served as a call for development.

In the following decades, activities such as hunting and fishing occurred around the plunge pools of the Old Stone Fort. However, these recreational uses did not require the Old Stone Fort to remain devoid of development. Instead, visitors to the site appeared to have a complex relationship with the area. Rather than seeing only the future harnessing of the falls, many who wrote about the site focused their efforts on attempting to understand the site's past. At this time, historians and antiquarians studying the mounds found throughout North America struggled to fit them into established historical arcs. For many of these writers, the mounds and monumental architecture of ancient North America appeared to be the work of advanced, vanished races. According to proponents of this idea, these mound-building races succumbed to their more savage

³⁰ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Fifth Edition (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 86. For some recent scholarship on ideas about the pastoral ideal and idyllic landscapes, see Steven Stoll, "Farm against Forest," in *American Wilderness: A New History*, ed. Michael Lewis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 55-72, and from the same volume, Bradley P. Dean, "Natural History, Romanticism, and Thoreau," 73-90, and Angela Miller, "The Fate of Wilderness in American Landscape Art," 91-112. See also Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 31-33.

neighbors, leaving behind only the mounds and monuments of the eastern woodlands to serve as testimonies to their accomplishments.³¹

Writers visiting the Old Stone Fort prior to the outbreak of the American Civil War marveled at the scale of the mounds and their mysterious layout. These visitors described the low, sprawling mounds and speculated about their age and the mysterious nature of their construction. Mystery made the Old Stone Fort a destination for travelers, and descriptions of the mounds often focused on the age and mystery of their construction. Mitchell's and Donneson's descriptions of the mounds both attempt to address some of the mystery surrounding the site as well as contemplate the lives of people who built them.³² Writing about cemeteries as sites for outdoor recreation, Aaron Sachs demonstrates how the landscape traditions surrounding New England cemeteries provided another way for people to conceptualize nature. He argues that people often had complex relationships with nature that was not fertile land ripe for utilization or sublime wilderness. For instance, at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Boston, Massachusetts, patrons often used the experience of walking amid the wooded glades and monuments to contemplate their own mortality and their relationship with nature. In turn, he chronicles how Mount Auburn Cemetery, and others, drove people to cultivate small garden-type areas around the graves of loved ones.³³

³¹ Conn, *History's Shadow*, 128-135.

³² Mitchell, "A Remarkable Old Fort," 1; Donneson, "American Antiquities in Tennessee."

³³ Aaron Sachs, "American Arcadia: Mount Auburn Cemetery and the Nineteenth Century Landscape Tradition," *Environmental History* 15, No. 2 (April 2010): 213.

While the mounds at the Old Stone Fort do not appear to have inspired the construction of natural areas in urban environments, visitation to the site did promote this kind of reflection on mortality and an appreciation of natural beauty. In particular, reflection on the fate of the Old Stone Fort's builders appeared with suggestions for the site's reuse by developers. The "thundering" waterfalls called out for development both to the founders of Manchester and visitors to the region.³⁴ The enigmatic nature of the site encouraged people to see it in complex ways that would shape interactions with the area around the mounds, but ultimately did not prevent development of the archaeological site. Consequentially, the presence of the mounds and the curiosity sparked in the region's antiquarians served as a footnote to Manchester's future. While the sublime nature of Old Stone Fort was something of which to take note, this attribute could not hinder the development of the Duck River. In this way, the Old Stone Fort was a mystery to solve, but not necessarily the key to preserving the landscape. Instead, many authors of the period, such as antiquarians Ephraim Squire and Edwin Davis, believed their writings and maps acted as sufficient forms of preservation for these sites.³⁵

Visitors to the Old Stone Fort saw the area as both a place of wonder and a potential industrial site. In the absence of satisfactory explanations for the construction and use of the mounds, visitors filled in the details with analogies from the histories of Europe. Donneson imagined masses from an advanced civilization huddled behind the

³⁴ "A Visit to the Highlands," 2; "Manchester for Sale," 4; "Stone Fort Mills for Sale," 4.

³⁵ Ephraim Squire and Edwin Davis, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1848), xxxv-xxxvii.

mounds for protection from marauding hordes. Mitchell revisited this idea, but cast doubts upon it due to the size of the complex and his estimates for the number of people necessary to defend the mounds.³⁶ Despite their obvious cultural origins, the mounds coalesced into their natural setting, which stirred different imaginings. In advertisements from the 1850s through the 1870s, writers labeled the area around the Old Stone Fort as the “Stone Fort Powers” in efforts to attract industrialists to the site.³⁷ Despite such interest in the site, the Eastern Highland Rim, with its limestone escarpments, shallow river channels, and poor roads, proved remote enough to keep out much of the industrial development of the Central Basin. Instead, the area around the city of Manchester remained largely rural until the construction of rail lines in the southern portion of the county in 1852.³⁸

While nineteenth-century visitors to the Old Stone Fort all recognized great potential in the manipulation of the land around the mounds, each of them described the site as a place where strange things happened. The mounds and their associated ambiguities became a local point of interest. Despite the industrial potential for the area,

³⁶ Donneson, “American Antiquities in Tennessee.”

³⁷ “Forty Four Tracts of Land for Sale,” *Republican Banner*, May 2, 1860, 2; “Great Sale of Land: Three Splendid Water Powers,” *Republican Banner*, November 14, 1857, 3; “Stone Fort Water Power,” *Republican Banner*, February 20, 1870, 3; “Powder Mill Property in Manchester, Tenn,” *Nashville Union and Dispatch*, June 5, 1868, 4.

³⁸ Martinez, *Coffee County from Arrowheads to Rockets*, 89. For contemporary descriptions of the local economy, see “Manchester: Gloopy [sic] Crop Prospects-A Growing Town- The New Baptist Church- Four Mile Law,” *Daily American*, March 21, 1884, 8; “McMinnville and Manchester Railroad,” *Republican Banner*, November 22, 1853, 2; “Manchester: Material Progress in the County of Coffee,” *Republican Banner*, February 10, 1871, 3; “Manchester: Largest Sawmill in the County-Measles increasing-Personal Matters,” *Daily American*, May 12, 1887, 2.

most of the townspeople found work on small farms in the first half of the nineteenth century. For many of these people, the Old Stone Fort and its surroundings primarily provided places for hunting and fishing, supplementing the citizens' incomes and providing various forms of recreation. Locals certainly visited the Old Stone Fort, though few found themselves able to experience the site as more than a curiosity, or at best, a fishing hole. Nearly one hundred years later, locals from the city of Manchester and state planners harnessed these different elements of recreation and mystery to create the state park. However, before that occurred, the water power of the Old Stone Fort became the muscle to drive industry, first by producing gunpowder for the Confederate Army during the Civil War and then supplying paper for the regions' newspapers and businesses.

CHAPTER II

PAPER

The economic potential of the waterfalls at the Old Stone Fort grabbed the attention of Manchester's earliest citizens. As a result, the community's founders chose the town's name to honor the manufacturing center in England.¹ Even in James Mitchell's early descriptions of the surrounding scenery and wonders of the mounds, he portrayed the land as "fully sufficient to turn any kind of machinery."² The potential of the landscape also garnered the interest of the federal government, which investigated the site for use as an armory. Despite its promise, in 1827 government officials determined the site unsuitable for heavy industry due to "its distance from navigation, and the limited resources from the surrounding country."³ This official assessment seemed to resonate with the region's private industrialists. As a result, the industry that did spring up centered on serving the needs of the local community rather than mass production for regional markets.⁴ Despite these lowered expectations, the Old Stone Fort remained a site of promise for economic development. In fact, as available transportation to the archaeological site continued to improve, these usages superseded (without wholly replacing) the earlier routines of recreational hunting and exploration.

¹ McMahan, *Coffee County Then and Now*, 84.

² Mitchell, "A Remarkable Old Fort."

³ *Public Acts Passed at the 16th General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, Extra Sessions* (State Of Tennessee, 1827), 9.

⁴ "Manchester for Sale," 4. The number of advertisements for land sales in Manchester appears to have been constrained by the region's lack of rail lines and water routes. For the period, there are only a handful of advertisements promoting the sale of the land based on its potential for industry.

The completion of a section of the Manchester and McMinnville Railroad in 1853 connected the town to Tullahoma and thus opened the site to industrial development. William S. Whiteman's 1857 purchase of the waterfalls and riverfront surrounding the mounds for a water-powered paper mill fostered plans for new industrial expansion around Manchester.⁵ After his purchase of the property from W.T. Garrett, the eventual construction of Whiteman's mills helped to redefine the Old Stone Fort from a largely undeveloped tract used by hunters, anglers, and tourists to an industrial site producing paper and gunpowder.⁶ With this heavy expansion of industry along the river, the local community began to look at the waterfalls around the Old Stone Fort as their gateway to regional markets and an avenue to draw investors. Nashville newspapers described events in and around Manchester, boasting that its large mills produced more paper than any other site in the South.⁷ Visitors and tourists came to the site to witness production and then toured the surrounding falls and forests.⁸ From newspaper accounts, it is clear that the Old Stone Fort experienced a definite shift in its relationship with the community. What had been a location set aside largely for use as a hunting and fishing commons with

⁵ "McMinnville and Manchester Railroad," *Republican Banner*, November 22, 1852, 2; "Railroad Improvements in Tennessee," *Republican Banner*, January 15, 1853, 2; "From the McMinnville Enterprise: Annual Meeting," *Republican Banner*, July 21, 1853, 2. For a later summary of these developments, see "McMinnville and Manchester Railroad," *Republican Banner*, June 27, 1871, 2.

⁶ "Great Sale of Land: Three Splendid Water Powers," 3.

⁷ "Coffee County," *Nashville Union and American*, June 6, 1871, 5; "A Home Institution," *Republican Banner*, May 9, 1871, 4.

⁸ Editor, "A Delegate to the State W. C. T. U. Tells About Her Trip," *Southern Standard* [McMinnville, TN], Nov. 5, 1889, 5; "Towns of the State: Coffee County—Its Mineral Springs and Delightful Temperature," *Daily American* [Nashville, Tennessee], March 25, 1889, 8.

limited industrial use became a site dominated by paper manufacturers, large sawmills, and, during the Civil War, a gunpowder mill.

Advertisements, newspaper articles, and some correspondence between family members and potential business partners chronicle several developments at the site. Regional papers reported on the completion of the gunpowder mill as well as its destruction in March 1862. Additionally, discussions about the destruction of the gunpowder mill occur in a volume of the *Official Records for the Civil War*.⁹ In that same vein, the memoirs of several soldiers recorded activity around the site in 1862 and 1863, providing accounts of the industrial site in Manchester during the conflict.¹⁰ After the war, census records grant some clues to development, including the place of origin for some of the work force at the site, and their living situations.¹¹ Additionally, occasional news stories about criminal activity in the city of Manchester mention employees at the paper mills.¹² Descriptions of the site in real estate advertisements and from visitors to the site provide glimpses into the conditions and size of the complex. Equipment lists

⁹ *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, XVI (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1886), 400.

¹⁰ John S. Jackman, *Diary of a Confederate Soldier: John S. Jackman of the Orphan Brigade*, ed. William C. Davis (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 72; Alexis Cope, *Fifteenth Ohio Volunteers and Its Campaigns* (Columbus, OH: Edward T. Miller Company, 1916), 294.

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule Coffee County, Tennessee, 6th Civil District, 1870 Census; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, Coffee County, Tennessee, 6th Civil District, 1880 Census.

¹² There are two episodes mentioning criminal activity at the Old Stone Fort during this period. One describes a rape by a purported employee of the mill, while another describes a lynching that took place over the railroad bridge leading from town in to the site; see “Over the State,” *Daily American*, April 30, 1888, 6; “From a Bridge: Chas Everett Hung by Vigilantes near Manchester,” *Daily American*, May 20, 1892, 5.

furnished during property sales record some of the machinery inside the mills.¹³ By comparing these equipment lists and descriptions with recorded practices of other paper mills, it is also possible to imagine the hot and sweaty confines of the rooms that held rag boilers, rag cutters, and foundriner machines, which forced the rag pulp into sheets for paper. Although numerous sources detail and trace much of the mills' development, their historical contributions, in total, still amount to an incomplete picture of daily operations in the growing industry. Nonetheless, this complex picture of industrial progress reveals Old Stone Fort to be a site that retained many of its original uses by the community even after outside investments pushed it into new means of production.

By the 1850s, real estate speculators had begun advertising the area as a potential industrial area.¹⁴ However, the region's inaccessibility meant that the margins on production would be too thin. There were no navigable water routes to Manchester and no railroad, and as a result, costs for transporting raw materials and finished products were too high to make any sites profitable. This situation changed as railroads entered the Highland Rim. The construction of a railroad spur from nearby Tullahoma in 1853 made hydropower industry on the Duck River financially viable. The completion of this line solved the transportation problem, and construction at the forks of the river began within a few years.¹⁵

¹³ William P. Hickerson Sr. Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN (hereafter cited as Hickerson Papers).

¹⁴ "Great Sale of Land: Three Splendid Water Powers," 3.

¹⁵ Ball, "Paper Mills in the Confederate South," 39-41; See Also W.S. Whiteman, "Apprentice Wanted," *Nashville Union and American*, April 1, 1856, 2.

William S. Whiteman's family had been in the paper business for generations. His father founded the first paper mill in the state at Knoxville sometime before 1837. After helping in the family business for a couple of years, he moved to Nashville in the 1830s, where he set up a paper mill just outside the city on White's Creek. Eventually, this business produced enough income for him to open a warehouse in Nashville, where he bought the necessary raw materials for production and sold his finished products. However, due to the mill's proximity to Nashville and access to the shipping lanes of the Cumberland River, the facilities at White's Creek continually faced problems with clouded waters from the runoff of expanding urban development. Since the paper industry depended on clear water to wash rag pulp for the production of white paper, water quality became an important issue. Accordingly, as the city grew, the production of high quality, white paper became increasingly difficult.¹⁶ Finally, Whiteman relocated his operation further out of town.¹⁷

In December of 1859, William Whiteman purchased much of the archaeological site and its riverfront on the Duck River in order to establish a new paper mill adjacent to the clear, powerful waters found in the highlands. After this purchase, he placed advertisements in Nashville papers in an attempt to sell off some of his unnecessary equipment and buildings located in that city to accommodate a move to the Old Stone

¹⁶R. A. Halley, "Paper Making in Tennessee," *American Historical Magazine* 9, (July 1904): 211-217. For period accounts of this mill see, "New Paper Mill," *Republican Banner*, October 13, 1848, 2; "Paper Making" *Republican Banner*, March 9, 1849; "Printers, Merchants, and Peddlers," *Republican Banner*, March 8, 1854, 4.

¹⁷Ball, "Paper Mills in the Confederate South," 39-41. For additional evidence of this, see W.S. Whiteman, "Paper Mill Lands and Improvements for Sale," *Republican Banner*, December 31, 1859, 3.

Fort.¹⁸ However, the increasing sectional conflict and Whiteman's strident support for the South led him to build a gunpowder mill at the confluence of the Bark Camp and Barren forks of the Duck River just before the outbreak of war in April 1861. This decision appears to have consumed much of the work, as Whiteman geared up the site for wartime production of gunpowder instead of paper. While he also managed to erect the paper mill buildings before the war, it appears as though the mill did not produce paper until 1867, well after the conclusion of the war.¹⁹ Nevertheless, soldiers from Union and Confederate forces mention the presence of the facilities at the site.²⁰

Whiteman constructed the gunpowder mill to supply the recently formed Confederate army with ammunition. Additionally, the site functioned as a training center for operators of gunpowder mills under construction in Augusta, Georgia. Spending approximately \$15,000 on the project, Whiteman hired foreign planners who drew up the plans for construction in the spring of 1861.²¹ When war eventually washed over the region, this mill provided Confederate soldiers with a much-needed source of ammunition during the opening stages. However, it also attracted the attention of Union

¹⁸Whiteman, "Paper Mill Lands and Improvements for Sale," 3. This mill had burned in 1855, nearly destroying the entire facility. Its destruction probably helped to encourage Whiteman's decision to relocate to Manchester; see "Paper Mill Burnt," *Republican Banner*, August 23, 1855, 3. For an update on this fire, see "Fire at the Paper Mill," *Republican Banner*, January 8, 1856, 2. This recurred in 1859, when a stable next door started a fire; see "Fire at the Paper Mill," *Republican Banner*, March 12, 1859, 3.

¹⁹ "Destructive Fire: Whiteman's Paper Mill near Manchester Totally Destroyed," *Republican Banner*, October 12, 1873, 4. This article, written immediately after the fire at the mill, states that the mill was not completed until 1867.

²⁰ Jackman, *Diary of a Confederate Soldier*, 72.

²¹ "News via Washington," *Daily Exchange* (Baltimore, MD), August 2, 1861, 1.

forces, and on March 26, 1862, a cavalry unit raided the site and set fire to the powder mill.²² To add to this destruction, the Union advance on Nashville forced Whiteman to cease operation of his other paper mill located near Nashville. This shutdown left the incomplete Stone Fort Paper Mill as one of the few remaining factories in the South, creating a logistical headache for the Confederate government.²³ Because of the Duck River site's importance, Confederate forces struggled to keep Union troops from entering the region. After elements of the Ohio Cavalry burned the powder mill in March, units of the Seventh Pennsylvania Cavalry operated out of Manchester for nearly two months before Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry drew them out of the town and drove them back towards Nashville.²⁴

In 1863, Union forces drove out Bragg's Army of the Tennessee during the Tullahoma Campaign. As a result, it did not take long for occupying units to make their way to the mill sites just outside of Manchester. In several of the dispatches contained in the official record of the war, officers describe the facilities and landscape. One Union officer remarked,

Near our camp were several large mills and factories, the power being furnished by the falls in the river, which were an interesting sight, and furnished excellent bathing facilities for the men. In the angle formed by Duck River and a stream which flows into it near the bridge which there

²² Donald Ball, "An Ill-Fated 'School of Instruction': Comments on the History and Archaeology of the Confederate Gunpowder Mill at Manchester, Tennessee," *Ohio Valley Historical Archaeology* 17 (2002):65; "News via Washington," *The Daily Exchange*, August 2, 1861, 1.

²³Ball, "Paper Mills in the Confederate South," 40.

²⁴ Jackman, *Diary of a Confederate Soldier*, 72.

crossed them, were some old fortifications, said to have been thrown up by De Soto for protection against the Indians.²⁵

Like many people in the nineteenth century, this officer assumed the mounds at the Old Stone Fort were defensive positions. This way of understanding the mounds dates back to some of the first descriptions of the site by early surveyors and visitors.²⁶

Despite the movements of armies through Manchester for the next few years, the paper mill structures seemingly escaped the war largely unscathed. Shortly after war, the Whiteman family returned to the Duck River site and the business resurfaced, now managed by his sons and called Whiteman and Brothers Paper Company. By 1868, the company had finished constructing improvements and put the river back to work.²⁷ Because of this relatively quick rebound, the mills took on renewed significance as one of

²⁵ Cope, *Fifteenth Ohio Volunteers and Its Campaigns*, 294. For accounts of earlier Union activity in the region during 1862, see “Report of Colonel, John Kennet, Fourth Ohio Cavalry, March 28, 1862,” *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, X (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1889), 46-50. Also of interest is the business between locals and the Union Army units that passed through Manchester prior to the Battle of Stones River; see *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, XVI (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1886), 400. Of particular interest is a certificate for reimbursement from the 1st brigade of Illinois Cavalry to William P. Hickerson for feed; see Accounts—Bills, Notes, and Receipts—Account of the United States with Major William P. Hickerson, Sr., 1862, William P. Hickerson Papers.

²⁶ Mitchell, “A Remarkable Old Fort,” 1; Donneson, “American Antiquities in Tennessee.” Additionally, see North Carolina Grant No. 216 and North Carolina Grant No. 229 in “The Old Stone Fort, An Interesting Prehistoric Ruin in Coffee County: A Collection of Early Accounts,” *Coffee County Historical Society Quarterly*, 17, No. 1 (1986): 5-6.

²⁷ “Paper Making In Tennessee,” *Nashville American*, June 26, 1910; W.S. Whiteman “Paper Mill Lands and Improvements for Sale,” 3; “Stone Fort Paper Mills,” *Nashville Union and American*, December 24, 1869, 2. Additional clues about the operational status of the mills come from an article written immediately after the 1873 fire at this mill: “Destructive Fire: Whiteman's paper Mill near Manchester Totally Destroyed,” 4.

the few industrial sites for the production of paper in the South.²⁸ Capable of producing 2,800 pounds of paper a day, the mills supplied surrounding states with paper in the Civil War's aftermath. Additionally, the Whiteman and Brothers firm attempted to make inroads into northern markets. In June 1871, the *Nashville Union and American* stated that the mills "recently shipped a large amount of paper on order to Chicago, Illinois, for newspaper purposes." The writer of this article remarked that the Whiteman Brothers' mill did so well that, "The proprietors contemplate enlarging their business by the erection of other mills just below those now in operation, the foundations for which have already been laid."²⁹ Behind these glowing reports in the Nashville media stands the stark reality of restoring the South's economy. In the post-war South, paper was in high demand, and the shortage of mills only exacerbated this problem. However, competition from northern mills was high, and eventually, in the first decades of the twentieth century, cheap paper from Canada would begin to make serious inroads into the American market.³⁰

Due to the destruction of its potential competitors, and the demands of the post-war South, the paper mill along the Barren Fork of the Duck River remained busy. However, within a decade of these glowing descriptions, disaster struck the Whiteman's

²⁸ "A Home Institution," 4.

²⁹ "Coffee County," *Nashville Union and American*. June 6, 1871, 5.

³⁰ *Testimony Taken By the Subcommittee on the Tariff of the Senate Committee on Finance in Connection with the bill H.R. 9051, To Reduce Taxation and Simplify the Laws in Relation to Revenue, Part III* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1888), 1240-1247. For a snapshot of the national paper industry and Tennessee in particular, see U.S. Census Bureau, *Report on Manufacturing Industries in the United States at the Eleventh Census 1890: Partial Totals for States and Industries* (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 1895), 61, 590-597.

operation. On October 13, 1873, a fire consumed several buildings at the site. According to the initial reports of the fire, the flames left little more than the stone foundations, some equipment, and several surrounding outbuildings. A Clarksville paper described the event as a “severe blow” to the state’s capacity to produce paper.³¹ Nashville papers characterized the event in equally grim terms. An account written by one of the Whitemans reads as follows:

The mill was burned this morning at about 4 o’clock. The hands went to the fair yesterday, and started the mill at 6 o’clock yesterday evening, and the mill was standing for only about one hour before it was in a sheet of flame. It was first discovered in the rag cutter room. The cutter had not been run for over fifteen hours. We saved the paper and what good felts we had, but nothing more it burned so fast. It is now about 6 o’clock, and it is a perfect ruin. I think it was set on fire. I don’t see how it could have caught any other way. I dispatched this to you this morning.

Your Brother,
J.H. Whiteman.³²

The fire that destroyed the paper mill appears to have wiped the firm out. The fallout from this disaster left the future of the mills uncertain. Shortly after the fire, the company called its investors to a hotel in Nashville for a meeting on their fate. Meanwhile, creditors headed to Chancery Court in Nashville to collect what they could.³³ The Whiteman and Brothers firm also sued their insurers in an attempt to recover, but failed in their efforts after the court battle reached the state supreme court. Because of this turmoil, a member of one of Coffee County’s founding families and one of the best-

³¹ *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*, October 18, 1873.

³² As quoted in “Destructive Fire: Whiteman’s paper Mill near Manchester Totally Destroyed,” 4.

³³ “The Late Judge Hickerson,” *Daily American*, April 19, 1882, 2; “Tribute to Judge Hickerson,” *Home Journal*, May 17, 1882, 2.

known judges in the region, William Pitt Hickerson, began positioning himself to take advantage of the Whiteman's misfortune. By the time the Whiteman's case came before the state supreme court, the firm had sold its property to the Hickerson family. Nonetheless, Whiteman and Brothers continued to pursue the case on behalf of the property's new owners.³⁴ In the end, their efforts proved unsuccessful, and the brothers split up and moved away. Months later, an 1874 advertisement in the *Nashville Union and American* invited former customers to meet A.G. Whiteman at a hotel in Nashville, as he was now representing Rockdale Paper Company, out of Georgia, as an "authorized agent for the sale of our Book, News and Wrapping Paper."³⁵

William Pitt Hickerson was the son of John Hickerson, an early settler in Manchester. He began a law firm with Thomas Powers in the 1840s.³⁶ For as long as he practiced law, Hickerson also was involved in numerous industrial enterprises in Coffee County. He was a board member of the McMinnville and Manchester Railroad, and he even loaned money to the Whiteman brothers when they moved their business interests into the county.³⁷ During the Civil War, he dropped his law and business affairs to tend to

³⁴ Albert Hamilton, ed., "Whiteman and Brothers v. American Central Insurance." *American and English Corporation Cases*, Vol. 10 (Long Island, NY: Northport, 1886), 504-509.

³⁵ "Rock Dale Paper Company," *Nashville Union and American*, June 2, 1874, 2.

³⁶ "McMinnville and Manchester Railroad," 2. "Railroad Matters," *Nashville Union and American*, May 27, 1871, 5. Additionally, W.P. Hickerson was involved with the railroad for several decades; see, "Railroad War," *Republican Banner*, August 8, 1867, 1; "Nashville and Chattanooga Road," *Republican Banner*, August 13, 1868, 4.

³⁷ "The Late Judge Hickerson," 2; "Judicial Election: Full List of Judges and Chancellors Selected," *Republican Banner*, August 23, 1870, 4; "Murder Most Foul," *Republican Banner*, May 25, 1869. The latter article discusses a murder trial and its impact on W.P. Hickerson's run for office. There are several other newspaper articles discussing cases in a similar manner, weighing judgments with political risks.

his small farm near Manchester. After the war, Hickerson entered local politics. In 1865, the governor appointed him to a circuit court judgeship, and later he won election to this position, sitting on the bench for another three years.³⁸ His success made him a high-standing member of the local community, allowing him to amass a fair bit of wealth. Hickerson served as a circuit court judge in Coffee and Bedford counties from 1865-1867 and again from 1874-1877.³⁹

By the end of 1874, W.P. Hickerson Jr. began preparing to help his father rebuild and operate the site.⁴⁰ The next year W.P. Hickerson Sr. placed advertisements about a new general store in Manchester he planned to operate, and subsequently began quietly working to reestablish the mills. As rumors about the revitalization of the mills circulated throughout the community, some citizens positioned themselves to take advantage of the situation. In 1877, Douglas Rathbone, a local merchant, offered to sell his store in exchange for a job at the mill, or company stock as an investor. Rathbone's letter also mentions his previous involvement with a flourmill across the river operated by William Huggins. Additionally, he outlines the numerous advantages the purchase of his store would bring to Hickerson's business after completing the reconstruction of the mills by

³⁸ "The Late Judge Hickerson," 2; "Tribute to Judge Hickerson," *Home Journal*, May 17, 1882, 2. Additional evidence for this reputation exists in many of the remaining notations and letters among the William P. Hickerson papers at the Tennessee State Library and Archives, which includes numerous notes from legal cases.

³⁹ W.P. Hickerson, "A Letter from Judge Hickerson," *Daily American*, May 31, 1878, 4. It is clear from some other articles about Hickerson during this period that his health was on the decline and probably contributed to his retirement; see "Personal," *Daily American*, February 29, 1876, 4.

⁴⁰ "Sale of Valuable Property," *Republican Banner*, January 23, 1874, 2; "Sale of Manchester Mill Property," *Republican Banner*, February 11, 1874, 4; "Contemplated Industry," *Republican Banner*, December 16, 1874, 4.

allowing him to sell goods to his employees at the paper mill.⁴¹ Nashville newspapers reported on these developments and sought updates with anticipation, describing the power of the landscape to produce.⁴²

The site was close to completion by 1879.⁴³ With its first run of production the next year, the Old Stone Fort, instead of reverting to purely local production for local markets, retained its regional economic significance.⁴⁴ The rebirth of the mills breathed life back into industrial development at the site. Just as it had under the leadership of the Whiteman Brothers, the number of employees surged, doubling within a few years. Additionally, the mills increased in size, becoming larger than they had been under their previous owners. For some watching these new developments, it seemed as though Manchester's potential as a regional manufacturing center was finally on the verge of realization. Because of these advances, newspapers from Nashville reported on the mills' progress with excitement.⁴⁵ In its 1880 history of the region, the Goodspeed Publishing

⁴¹ Rathbone to W. P. Hickerson, 1877. This letter is available at the Coffee County Historical Society.

⁴² "Manchester: Ruffians Work—McMinnville Railroad Extension—Manufacturing Interest—Reviving Prosperity," *Daily American*, October 18, 1879, 1; "Manchester: Counterfeiters at Work—More Massachusetts Emigrants Expected—The New Paper Mills," *Daily American*, December 9, 1879, 3; "Manchester," *Daily American*, January 3, 1880, 1.

⁴³ "Manchester: Counterfeiters at Work—More Massachusetts Emigrants Expected—The New Paper Mills," 3.

⁴⁴ "Over the State," *Daily American*, April 16, 1882, 2.

⁴⁵ "Manchester: Ruffians Work—McMinnville Railroad Extension—Manufacturing Interest—Reviving Prosperity," 1; "Manchester: Counterfeiters at Work—More Massachusetts Emigrants Expected—The New Paper Mills," 3; *Daily American*, January 3, 1880, 1; "Manchester: The Paper Mills Running Eighteen and Twenty Four Hours—Notes and Personal Mention," *Daily American*, February 17, 1887, 2; "Manchester: Social Event of the Week—The Indian Lecturer—Fire—General Notes," *Daily American*, April 5, 1887, 3; "Vanderbilt Notes," *Daily American*, April 20, 1889, 5; "Stone Fort Paper Company: Wrapping Mill

Company devoted a paragraph to describing the expansions made by the Hickersons. Improvements to the site gave it the capacity to produce nearly “12,000 pounds [of paper] daily.”⁴⁶ If accurate, this means the new expansions turned the mills into a much larger operation than it had been previously. Although still dwarfed by mills in the North and in the Carolinas, the mills at the Old Stone Fort were capable of competing in markets throughout the interior South. As a result, national publications such as the *American Stationer* occasionally mentioned the mills in the trade gossip section.⁴⁷

One individual to tour the site from McMinnville in November of 1889 described the facilities and setting as follows:

My first stop was at Manchester where I had a most enjoyable visit. That town is at present enjoying a moderate sized "boom," many dwellings, one large brick block and one church (the C. P.) nearing completion. Monday we visited the lovely cascades and falls near the Stone Fort paper mills on Duck river [sic]. Then a tour of the mills was made which proved of great interest. We were shown every attention and the different processes clearly explained. The rags take two days to make their journey through the mill and emerge clear white paper ready for the printing press. We were given samples of different colors of paper which they make, also heavy wrapping paper. The old fort and mound are pre historic, belonging to the mound building period. The mound is particularly noticeable, being oval in shape and nearly rising to a height of forty feet, the land all around being perfectly level. Manchester is "far and away" ahead of any of her sister towns, as she has attained the dignity of hydrant water in regular city style, the water being pumped from their splendid spring to a large tank and from there distributed over the town. I must not forget to mention one

Destroyed By Fire Yesterday,” *Daily American*, September 17, 1893, 9; “Happenings about Town,” *Daily American*, September 22, 1893, 4.

⁴⁶ “History of Coffee County” *Goodspeed’s History of Tennessee* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing, 1887), 841.

⁴⁷ “Trade Gossip,” *American Stationer* 17, No. 5 (January 29, 1885): 133.

other attraction, known as "Copperas Cave," and I will only mention it, as I do not know how to describe it.⁴⁸

Her descriptions expressed pride in the industrial advancement of the region and admiration for the developments in Manchester in particular. However, the nature of her description also demonstrated how the site's transition to industry had not wholly removed it from being part of the local community's commons. Specifically, the mention of "Copperas Cave," a large rock shelter near the Old Stone Fort occasionally used as a site for community picnics, suggests that the locals conducting the tour felt this feature was worth visiting.

In addition to their expansions at the Old Stone Fort, the Hickersons frequently looked for ways to promote their site as an example of progress in Manchester. Throughout the 1880s, writers reported on the bustling activity surrounding the site, mainly focusing on the large buildings, the constant hubbub around the location, and the impressive power of the Duck River. According to the press, the mills near Manchester provided paper for the region and served as a positive example of industry in the state. The fact that many industrial sites in Middle Tennessee were still in shambles in the wake of the Civil War, the reemergence of the paper mills along the Duck River provided Coffee County with a sense of pride.⁴⁹ A newspaper from as far away as Mississippi even

⁴⁸ Editor, "A Delegate to the State W. C. T. U. Tells About Her Trip," 5.

⁴⁹ "Our Newspaper," *Southern Standard*, March 18, 1882, 2; Ball, "Paper Mills in the Confederate South, 22. The Whitemans probably funded this expansion of the mills through the sale of property at the old powder mills site, which the Union Army destroyed in 1862; see, "Powder Mill Property for Sale," *Nashville Union and Dispatch*, June 5, 1868, 5.

ran advertisements declaring their use of paper from the Stone Fort paper mills as evidence for their support of southern industry.⁵⁰

The mills' significance stretched well beyond supplying paper for newsprint and correspondence. In a time when all business happened on paper, supplies of the material were in constant demand by industry as well as individuals. Accordingly, the paper mills at the Old Stone Fort made a variety of products such as wrapping paper, newspaper, writing paper, and blotting paper, all of which had numerous commercial applications such as the packaging of products and record keeping. In an effort to compete for these customers, the Hickersons shipped their products across the Southeast and into parts of the Midwest. However, despite this ostensibly impressive output of the mills, the expanding business remained small in comparison to its regional rivals. Even with all of the additions and expansions, many northern producers dwarfed the Manchester paper mills in terms of production. For example, mills in Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts dominated the national market for paper at this time, and, as production of wood pulp paper accelerated toward the end of the century, even larger mills sprang up in Maine and Canada. Despite the presence of such large producers, the increased demand for paper outstripped the supply and left room for smaller producers such as the Stone Fort Paper Company to flourish. Additionally, the sharp regional decrease in the number of mills during the Civil War allowed the remaining southern entrepreneurs to gain a foothold in the developing business. Still, large northern competitors were able to expand their reach farther into southern markets after the war, thus providing brisk competition

⁵⁰ "A Southern Paper Mill," *The Patron of Husbandry* (Columbus, Mississippi), June 18, 1881, 4.

for paper producers in South.⁵¹ The press heaped praise on what they saw as local ingenuity in using the river for industry. Several even went so far as to portray Manchester as an example.⁵²

The 1870 and 1880 censuses provide snapshots of the paper mill's workforce. A comparison shows an increasing number of people employed by the mills. In all, census takers listed twenty-five people working at the paper mill in various capacities in 1880.⁵³ This increase more than doubles the people who told census takers they worked for the Whiteman Mills in 1870. The names of the workers also suggest that few of the men remained employed at the mill after ownership changed hands in 1874.⁵⁴ However, this is unsurprising given the nearly five-year gap in operation. Of the dozen people who worked at the mill under the Whiteman brothers, only one name reappears in 1880.⁵⁵ This long furlough also suggests that many of Whiteman's workers simply aged out of their positions, as work in the paper mills often demanded good health. As Donald Ball noted, paper manufacturing in this period required workers to be semi-skilled, strong, and healthy to handle the workload.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Ibid, 40.

⁵² "Manchester," *Southern Standard*, March 1, 1890, 1; "Coffee County," *Nashville American and Union*, June 6, 1871, 5; "Towns of the State: Coffee County—Its Mineral Springs and Delightful Temperature," 8.

⁵³ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, Coffee County, 1880 Census.

⁵⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, Coffee County, 1870 Census.

⁵⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, Coffee County, 1880 Census.

⁵⁶ Ball, "Paper Mills in the Confederate South," 41.

Upon Hickerson's death in 1882, the management of the Stone Fort Paper Company transferred to his son and daughter, William P. Hickerson Jr. and Fannie Hickerson Wooton. Hickerson's last will and testament left his half of the interest in the company to Fannie and J.D. Wooton, while W.P. Jr. retained the land upon which the mills sat.⁵⁷ Despite the continued success of the company, W.P. Jr. left within a decade to pursue a career in banking and finance. He eventually became state treasurer in 1913 and remained in that position until his death in 1915.⁵⁸

In 1889, however, the corporation ran into financial trouble. The mill owners sued the *Nashville Union and American* twice concerning debts owed to them for paper.⁵⁹ Two years later, Fannie Wooton purchased the business from her brother for \$38,000, becoming one of the few women to act as a sole proprietor for a paper mill.⁶⁰ Her operation of the mills even became a point of pride for the community, and when Manchester set up a display for the state's centennial exhibition in 1896, Fannie operated the booth.⁶¹ During this time, her husband, Dr. J.D. Wooton, assisted in the management

⁵⁷ Last Will and Testament, William P. Hickerson, Sr., taken from Coffee County Wills, June 1836-August 1906, *Coffee County Historical Quarterly* 17, No. 3-4 (1986): 325.

⁵⁸ "W.P. Hickerson, Ex-Treasurer of State, Dies," *Nashville Tennessean and Nashville American*, February 18, 1915, 1. Hickerson had only just resigned from this position in the previous weeks; see "Able Official Who Retires," *Nashville Tennessean and Nashville American*, February 4, 1915, 1b.

⁵⁹ "Chancery Court Record," *Nashville American*, December 7, 1894, 2. This case dragged on for most of the decade and announcements related to it appear in the records from time to time; see "The Court of Record," *Nashville American*, December 2, 1898, 5.

⁶⁰ "State Briefs," *Daily American*, June 5, 1891, 4.

⁶¹ "Coffee County Ladies: Swelling the Fund by Splendid Entertainment," *Nashville American*, January 27, 1896, 2; Also see "Tennessee Waifs," *Nashville American*, April 15, 1897, 4.

of the mills, appearing in directories and census listings as a merchant.⁶² Census records and city directories suggest Dr. Wooton abandoned his medical practice to focus his efforts on running the family general store associated with the mill.⁶³ However, records are scarce for the years after the death of William Hickerson, and these remain some of the only clues as to how the operations at the mills proceeded. Around this time, Fannie Wooton's relationship with her husband also began to unravel. In a letter signed and dated by both parties, the couple separated their finances and households in 1894. While the letter references friction between the two parties, it refuses to expand on the strife.⁶⁴ These familial struggles as well as the financial challenges definitely added complexity to the management of the operation.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Stone Fort Paper Company and its owners faced a growing mountain of challenges to their industrial operations near Manchester. The 1889 sale of W. P. Hickerson Jr.'s interest to his sister cost the company its most experienced businessperson. Local tradition holds that most of Fannie's experience came from involvement with her brother and husband during the 1880s.⁶⁵ In

⁶² U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, Coffee County, Tennessee, 6th Civil District, 1900 Census,

⁶³ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, Coffee County, 1880 Census.

⁶⁴ Letter of Agreement between J.D. Wooton and Frances Wooton. December 1894, John Chumbley Papers. While there is no evidence that the couple ever divorced because of this disagreement, there is some evidence that they did in fact split their lives.

⁶⁵ Mark H. Crocker, "Interpretation in Tennessee State Parks: Selected Case Studies" (Master's Thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 1978), 61-64. While this thesis is primarily about interpretation, its case studies provide histories of each site surveyed. Since one of the selected sites was Old Stone Fort, Crocker wrote a short history of the park. He based much of his information on interviews with park staff and local historians, and as a result provided some valuable insight into local traditions about the park property.

newspaper articles about the mills during this decade, she receives little attention, but her purchase of the operation at the close of the 1880s appears to have surprised few. While the lack of documentation for any prior experience raises some questions about her ability to manage the operations at the paper mill, people writing about her after the purchase described her as possessing “perseverance, economy and skill.”⁶⁶ In fact, local historians characterized many of her activities at the Stone Fort Paper Mills as generally successful. During her management, she received statewide notoriety for her ability to run the paper mills. In 1896, she represented industry in Coffee County during the centennial exhibitions, with newspapers referring to her as the only woman to run a paper mill in the South.⁶⁷ At the same time, the company’s principal customers still expressed pride in using the locally produced paper in their printings.

The paper mills appear to have completely ceased operation sometime in the late 1890s or the early 1900s. The disappearance of the mill’s work force in the 1900 census and the company’s absence from the city directories suggest that the company had ceased its paper operations by then. Additionally, several letters to Fannie Wooton dated 1901 contain inquiries about purchasing the site. One of them even mentions that the author had heard the mills were idled in the previous year.⁶⁸ Despite hints about familial strife, identifying a direct cause for the ultimate closure of the mills remains elusive. The 1889

⁶⁶ “Coffee County Ladies,” *Nashville American*, January 27, 1896, 2.

⁶⁷ “Tennessee Waifs,” 4.

⁶⁸ W. H Kroll to F.H. Wooton, August 21, 1901; R.J. Sullivan to F.H. Wooton, September 13, 1901, John Chumbley Papers; “Able Official Who Retires,” 1b.

settlement of J.D. and Fannie Wooton dissolving much of their joint property hints at undisclosed troubles.⁶⁹ A 1913 article in the *Nashville Banner* about Manchester's fair reported similar issues and additionally expressed surprise that the parties involved in these unnamed conflicts could not resolve their differences.⁷⁰ Even with these mentions in regional newspapers and the existence of the document in the John Chumbley Papers, there remains little documentation to shed light on the details of familial strife between J.D. Wooton and Fannie.

A newspaper article from 1896 stated that Fannie's purchase of the mills occurred "when it was several thousand dollars in debt."⁷¹ According to local tradition, after the purchase she was only operating the paper mills to relieve herself of debt. Rather abruptly, she simply shut them down five year later.⁷² While there is currently no correspondence or other evidence to corroborate local tradition, debt appears to have followed Fannie. One of her last surviving letters to her grandson, John, supports the notion that debt plagued her for the rest of her life.⁷³

Other possibilities for the company's demise include fierce competition from other producers that were springing up in the South. As the nineteenth century drew to

⁶⁹ "F.H. and J.D. Wooton Separation," November 16, 1889, John Chumbley Papers; "JD Wooton settlement to FH Wooton," December 16, 1889, John Chumbley Papers.

⁷⁰ "Manchester Free For All Fair Causes Interest among Farmers," *Nashville Tennessean and the Nashville American*, December 21, 1913, 6B.

⁷¹ "Coffee County Ladies," 2.

⁷² Mark H. Crocker, *Interpretation in Tennessee State Parks*, 61-64.

⁷³ F.H. Wooton to John A. Chumbley, January 30, 1926, John Chumbley Papers.

close, numerous mills and factories sprang up in southern states. By the 1890s, the Stone Fort Mills were no longer the only paper mills in Tennessee. General reports on industry from the 1890 census show a shrinking number of mills nationwide. The paper industry received special attention in this survey, which put the total number of mills decreasing from 692 in 1880 to 567 in 1890. Despite this decline in the number of manufacturing facilities, the report stated that the wages for employees in this industry had increased on average, and the value of paper climbed higher. The overall picture the census presents of the national paper industry is of consolidation among domestic manufacturers.⁷⁴ In the end, the Old Stone Fort Paper Company likely met its demise from multiple causes. The stress of family infighting and the increasingly competitive market for paper did not favor a mill constantly at risk of fire and flood. In the end, the rivers may have proven too wild for a permanent link to the industry.

After the final closure, locals were not the only people to see the potential for redevelopment of the Old Stone Fort mills. In one newspaper article, an author held fast to a small beacon of hope for industrial revitalization: “The magnificent water power at this place, idle since the Stone Fort Paper Company shut down several years ago, is a matter of continual discussion, and it is predicted that in the near future one or more mills will be projected.”⁷⁵ Almost immediately after the final idling of the paper mills, outside industrialists and investors noticed the availability of the Old Stone Fort’s waterpower

⁷⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *Report on Manufacturing Industries in the United States at the Eleventh Census 1890*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 1900).

⁷⁵ “Telephone Services Assured: Manchester Hopes for Utilization of Great Water Power,” *Nashville American*, March 15, 1900, 5.

and made motions to acquire the property. In July 1900, M.M. Kline, an industrialist from Nashville, managed to secure an initial agreement to purchase the property from Fannie. According to their draft agreement, Kline planned to reopen the paper mills and possibly upgrade the existing facilities by replacing several pieces of equipment.⁷⁶ Unfortunately, for those wishing to see the mills revitalized, the negotiations fell apart, and the deal never went through.⁷⁷ However, despite this initial setback, other inquiries about the property continued to roll in over the next year.⁷⁸ Often, these interested parties sought lease agreements or the outright purchase of the site and its timber with terms similar to those in the earlier agreement with Kline, or made general inquiries into the general status of the property. Like Kline, these outsiders also pursued the property for continued paper production. In his September 1901 letter, R.J. Sullivan, an industrialist from Ohio, briefly described his search for an existing paper mill in good repair, including a proposal for a five-year lease with privilege of purchase at the conclusion of terms.⁷⁹ Another letter from August mentioned his proposal and inquired about machinery still available on the property so he could make an informed decision about retooling. The details of this letter make it clear that the existing machinery at the site was of limited interest.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Agreement, Frances Wooton and M.M. Kline, July 4, 1900, John Chumbley Papers.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ R.J. Sullivan to F.H. Wooton, September 13, 1901, John Chumbley Papers.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ F.H. Wooton to W.H. Kroll, August 21, 1901, John Chumbley Papers.

Despite these setbacks, the idea of waterpower at the Old Stone Fort held firm in the imagination of industrialists looking to profit from the Duck River. In 1911, investors from Middle Tennessee again approached Fannie with another proposal for the property. Looking at the increasing demand for electric power along the Highland Rim, this group recommended the transformation of the mill site into an electric-power-generating station. Proposing to reuse the site's foundation, dam, and spillway, the group argued that the water could easily generate enough power to supply the town of Manchester. This group, coming largely from the nearby town of Shelbyville, utilized the notion of progress to sell the idea. They promised electric lighting and improved water works for the city, even claiming enough excess power to run an electric railway between Manchester and Tullahoma.⁸¹ Since this meant easy access to the region's railroad system, this detail became another selling point to the people of Manchester for repurposing the site. J.W. Cowan worked with both Wooton and John Chumbley, Fannie's grandson, to plan site redevelopment. With the help of some financiers from the region, the company made advancements toward new operations at the site. The first challenge was to replace the remaining machinery at Big Falls with electric-power-generating equipment and repair the existing dam. Through these repairs, the company hoped that the facilities could produce enough electricity to supply the local community. However, after the initial excitement faded, plans began to go awry. The company made

⁸¹ "Railroad Development," *Tradesman* LXIX, No. 7 (February 12, 1913): 60; also see, "Big Power Deal Closed," *Paper Trade Journal* LV, No. 15 (October 10, 1912): 8.

it as far as organizing and establishing headquarters in Winchester, Tennessee, but do not appear to have accomplished much else.⁸²

In 1916, the Public Electric Light and Power Company, a northern company that consolidated many small, local Tennessee corporations, acquired the industrial rights of the property, and all plans for improvements at the Old Stone Fort ceased. However, since the plans focused on securing industrial rights and never reached the stage of actually acquiring the property from Wooton, the Old Stone Fort itself remained in her care. Soon after, the Southern Cities Power Company acquired the Public Electric Light and Power Company's assets. In turn, Southern Cities Power Company sold its interest in the Manchester facilities to the Tennessee Electric Power Company (TEPCO) in 1925. This company eventually built a small electric-power-generating station near Manchester on a property approximately one mile upstream from the Stone Fort Paper Company's buildings.⁸³ However, this venture also fell apart with the construction of larger facilities, which eliminated much of the need for the small power-generating stations. Since TEPCO bought the property on the condition that it would operate power-generating equipment at the site, its abandonment violated the terms of the deed. As a result, John Chumbley reacquired the site. Subsequently, he helped develop a residential neighborhood adjacent to the small reservoir created by the power station's dam.

⁸² "Headquarters of Light Company in Winchester," *Nashville Tennessean and the Nashville American*, August 13, 1916.

⁸³ John A. Chumbley vs Tennessee Electric Power Company, No. 1931 (Chancery Court, Winchester, Tennessee, 1930), Chumbley Papers.

Eventually, this neighborhood took the name of Morton's Lake Community, which survived both the collapse of the dam and the draining of the reservoir in the 1990s.⁸⁴

Although industry in the town of Manchester never matched the size of nearby Tullahoma, the Stone Fort Paper Mills provided the town's citizens with their tie to the gears of production in the Industrial Revolution. In the nineteenth century, as settlement of the region increased and more lands in the middle of the state opened to settlement, these new inhabitants recognized the potential of the waters of the Duck River. The falls and rapids along the river gave rise to a popular tale regarding the foundation of Manchester, linking the water and its potential for manufacturing to the town's naming. This story of industrial development around the falls remained significant to Manchester's citizens, functioning as a major component of the city's identity. Accordingly, local historians Basil McMahan and Corrine Martinez have written about the developments at the Old Stone Fort as important moments in the development of Manchester. Martinez's work, entitled *From Arrowheads to Rockets*, places the industrial development around the Old Stone Fort in a continuum of development for the community. The transformation of the waterfalls by industry works as metaphor for the development of Manchester and Coffee County.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ McMahan, *Coffee County Then and Now*, 389.

⁸⁵ McMahan, *Coffee County Then and Now*, 84; Martinez, *Coffee County from Arrowheads to Rockets*, 137-138.

CHAPTER III

“A PARK OF GREAT VALUE TO YOUR COMMUNITY”

For those writing about and living in the community, there was little excuse for allowing the water wheels of the Stone Fort Paper Company to slip into a period of idleness. According to the writer celebrating the success of the county fair, the major reason the paper mills suffered their eventual shutdown stemmed from the “altogether personal reasons” of the owner.¹ Despite the brief flurry of activity at the site in the 1900s and 1910s, the Old Stone Fort had played its last role as a site of industrial ambitions. Instead, the mill buildings sat dormant and decaying, while grazing cattle covered the surrounding fields and trespassing anglers snuck into their favorite fishing holes below the crashing waterfalls. With the collapse of industrial activity at the Old Stone Fort, the site’s recreational uses and sense of mystery surrounding the mounds once again took center stage, shaping the property’s future development.²

In addition to its regional significance as a center of production, the paper mills in conjunction with their surrounding scenery had played a key role in tourist development for the town of Manchester throughout the nineteenth century. The location of the mills atop the mounds of the Old Stone Fort, and surrounded by the waterfalls of the Duck River, had made the site a traditional gathering spot for the local community. The

¹ “Manchester Free For All Fair Causes Interest Among Farmers,” 6B.

² For a description of the types of activities going on at the property after the closure of the mill, see Agreement, Frances Wooton and M.M. Kline, July 4, 1900, John Chumbley Papers. For ideas about recreational developments at the site, see “Mound Experts May Bring U.S. Park Here,” *Nashville Tennessean*, May 2, 1920, 1. For information about the recreational potential in the 1960s, see Carey Waldrip to Col. William Slayden, October 30, 1967, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN (hereafter cited as the Carey Edward Waldrip Papers).

relationship between the mounds and their dramatic setting had helped to enhance the significance of the place in ways that stretched beyond the economic benefits of the cascading waters. With its steep drops and rushing rivers, the surrounding landscape enhanced the presence of the mills, often mesmerizing visitors and locals alike. As a result, articles dedicated to the description of the industrial site frequently included several lines about the nearby waterfalls, rock shelters, and valleys. As an example, one such narrative referred to the site as “Niagara Falls in miniature.”³ This spectacular scenery provided opportunities for local appreciation of the river and its surrounds. An 1896 newspaper article, for instance, described walks around the mounds, the mills, and the waterfalls all while enjoying a Sunday picnic.⁴ Throughout the nineteenth century, people from the region described tours of the paper mills and demonstrations by its operators, as well as tours of the archaeological site and views of the waterfalls.⁵

Mysteries of the archaeological site also captured the interest of scholars and visitors to the Old Stone Fort. One such individual, Alexander Kocis, a Hungarian immigrant, drew a map (see Figure 4) of the industrial sites around the Old Stone Fort with an eye toward documenting the site beneath the whirling machines and boilers of industry. His work, in addition to providing a description of the archaeological site’s mounds and features, mentions several roads and many of the industrial buildings. Kocis describes the mills as impressive, although he addresses their presence as definite

³ “Manchester-A Description of It in Brief,” *Republican Banner*, June 21, 1873, 4.

⁴ *Manchester Times*, May 8, 1896, 1.

⁵ “A Delegate to the State W. C. T. U. Tells About Her Trip.”

contributors to the destruction of the archaeological site. Despite his focus on the remains of the Old Stone Fort, a reader can appreciate how operations of the mill flattened prehistoric mounds and redirected the river to manufacture paper. He writes about his trip to the site:

On revisiting the locality this year it was found that the march of improvement made considerable encroachments on this relic of antiquity. Saw, paper, powder mill and necessary buildings for man and beast were there erected, all the heavy timber was cut down, a farm of 15 acres cleared, so that only about one fourth of the enclosure is left in indifferent woodland. To get building sites, and effect means of communication, the embankments were cut in two places near the entrance and the rear wall pierced likewise, parts on the Barren Fork were entirely demolished and rocks thereof, as well as from the eastern side of the parallelogram were carted off to normalize the roads. The burnt district and stone heaps disappeared under a dense undergrowth of 10-15ft high.⁶

A few sentences later Kocis concluded his description of the archaeological site writing, “Thus the Old Stone Fort is shorn of its savage grandeur. Only the Backbone stands in its ancient glory.”⁷

As previously demonstrated, recreational activities at and near the Duck River waterfalls had always been a key component of the community’s relationship with the site. Despite the supremacy of industrial ambitions for much of the nineteenth century, the site entertained numerous local visitors interested in

⁶ Alexander Kocis, *The Old Stone Fort*, ed. Betty A. Bridgewater (Manchester, TN: Coffee County Historical Society, 1973), 3, 6-7. Additional information about Alexander Kocis appears several times in newspapers. He is often described as a scientist seeking to understand the construction of the Old Stone Fort. As a result, many of these articles discuss his visits; see “Towns of the State: Coffee County-Its Mineral Springs and Delightful Temperature,” 8. Investigations of the forts origins continued while the mills operated at the site; see “Manchester’s Stone Fort,” *Nashville American*, March 22, 1896. Another interested source mentions Kocis’s presentation to historical societies in Nashville; see “Transactions of the Historical Society,” *Daily American*, March 10, 1880, 4.

⁷ Kocis, *The Old Stone Fort*, 7.

its pleasant scenery, rushing waters, and mysterious mounds. Additional descriptions of this section along the Duck River identify the area as an ideal location for anglers. One author described the setting around the mills as “beautiful scenery” where “the large and small falls of the Duck River come together with Copperas Cave.”⁸

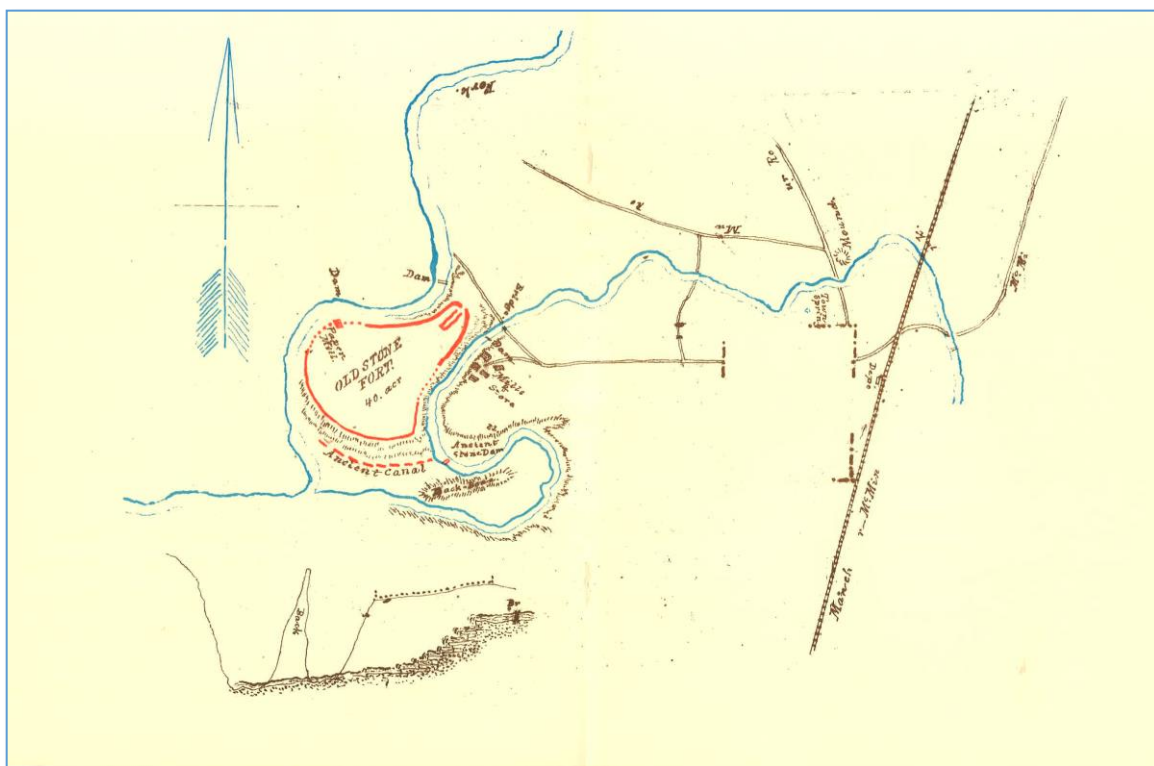


Figure 3. From Alexander Kocis, *Old Stone Fort* (Coffee County Historical Society: Manchester, TN, 1973).

Furthermore, the prospect of hunting in the surrounding forests of the Old Stone Fort even received some attention despite the regional decline in large game

⁸ “Coffee: This County Was at One Time the Home of Henry Watterson,” *Nashville American*, June 26, 1910, 2D.

in the last decades of the nineteenth century. While the deer and large game do not factor into most descriptions of the site, the accounts glow with depictions of pursuing smaller game like squirrels and rabbits.⁹ These local activities still comprised a large enough part of the site's utilization that even its industrial owners ensured mill visitors a wondrous tour of the surrounding natural features and archaeological site. In several written accounts describing trips to the Stone Fort Paper Mill, authors demonstrate that the area held vast appeal as a destination for a variety of travelers.¹⁰

Articles targeting people with the time and money for leisure travel filled newspapers with accounts of the beauties of the Highland Rim.¹¹ Resorts in the area, particularly those in nearby Tullahoma, received summertime tourists from Nashville and other cities. Seeking solace in the cool, evening breezes and small, pleasant waterfalls, visitors to Coffee County frequented the Old Stone Fort.¹² Even amid the commotion and activity created by the mills, which had altered portions of the immediate landscape, visitors discovered their own bits of wilderness. In this way, the mills atop the bluffs and

⁹“At the Old Stone Fort: A Party of Nashville People Enjoying Themselves,” 2.

¹⁰ Towns of the State: Coffee County-Its Mineral Springs and Delightful Temperature,” 8; “Vanderbilt Notes,” 5; “Everyman Should Help,” *Nashville American*, August 27, 1895, 4.

¹¹ Kocis, *Old Stone Fort*, 1-2; “Towns of the State: Coffee County-Its Mineral Springs and Delightful Temperature,” 8.

¹² “Tullahoma—The Biggest Little City in the US,” *Nashville Tennessean and Nashville American*, March 29, 1914, 4d.

waterfalls, enclosed by the forests and fields, became a visual link between the past and present.¹³

Through papers and speaking engagements, people like Kocis stimulated interest in the site among scholars and travelers curious to see some of the remaining prehistoric wonders of the eastern states.¹⁴ Interestingly, the presence of milling structures did little to diminish the experience for most visitors, some of whom even mentioned them as examples of positive developments on the land. In fact, when people offered descriptions of the site they found it easy to flow seamlessly between physical descriptions of the paper mill facilities, the mounds, and waterfalls.¹⁵ Interest in the site persisted after the closure of the mills, and as the property's industrial significance receded, people continued to travel to the Old Stone Fort to experience its wild setting and contemplate its past. Members of the local community, who wasted few chances to talk about the mounds to media outlets, also fed public interest. Even during the 1880s, the paper mill's busiest decade, the town used the site's prehistoric resources to lure in travelling academics. In

¹³ "A Delegate to the State W. C. T. U. Tells About Her Trip," 5.

¹⁴ "Towns of the State: Coffee County- Its Mineral Springs and Delightful Temperature," 8; "Everyman Should Help," *Nashville American*, August 27, 1895, 4; "Manchester's Stone Fort, An Effort to Ascertain How it Came there," *Nashville American*, March 22, 1896, 17; "Mound Expert's Visit May Bring U.S. Park Here," 1. This practice had been going on for most of the nineteenth century, see "A Visit to the Highlands," *Republican Banner*, 2.

¹⁵ "A Delegate to the State W. C. T. U. Tells About Her Trip," 5; Sam Carson to Carey Waldrip, March 15, 1965, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

this way, the mounds became part of Manchester's unique identity. The proximity of the mounds to the town represented a tie to a mysterious past.¹⁶

As pride in the mills faded from memory, a renewed pride in the mysterious and picturesque uplands surrounding the town seemed to take hold. In 1915, one writer claimed, "Recent discoveries tend to establish that Manchester is built upon a veritable Indian burying ground or battlefield."¹⁷ Much like early visitors to the site, this author combined the mounds' physical setting with the mystifying nature of the complex. The scenery enhanced the enigmatic origin of the mounds, adding a degree of wildness to the site: "Two rivers, in this section, flow almost parallel for miles, their silvery streams running at frequent intervals over cliffs, forming waterfalls and making solemn, yet delightful music when blended together in the stillness of the night."¹⁸

In addition to its popularity among travelers and tourists from the region, the Old Stone Fort and its surrounding waterfalls and cascades continued to serve as gathering points for the local community. One description of a Friday picnic near the archaeological site during the final years of the paper mills portrays the site as a pleasant place to take in the countryside: "After visiting the paper mill and other adjacent curiosities the party repaired to the Copperas Cave-that wonderful phenomenon of nature,

¹⁶"Towns of the State: Coffee County- Its Mineral Springs and Delightful Temperature, 8; "The Old Stone Fort and What is Known of its History," *Daily American*, March 25, 1889, 8; "Transactions of the Historical Society," 4.

¹⁷ "Relics of Mound Builders are discovered near Manchester, Tennessee," *Nashville Tennessean and the Nashville American*, May 2, 1915, 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

which never fails to interest visitors.”¹⁹ After finishing their meal, the party “put up a nice swing which was enjoyed by all,” and visited “Wooton’s Mill, where all enjoyed a boat ride upon the clear and placid pond.”²⁰ According to local historians, such gatherings at the Old Stone Fort were common, although primary source accounts are quite rare. What does appear to be more certain is that in the wake of the site’s deindustrialization, the perception of the Old Stone Fort as a place for community gatherings, fishing, and general outdoor recreation insured its continued significance for locals.

Fannie Wooton and her family facilitated recreational activities at the site, especially among travelers from Nashville who came to tour the mills. In many ways, the Stone Fort Paper Company promoted Old Stone Fort as much as the local community did. In 1896, for instance, she hosted a “summer camp” for families from the Nashville area. Available information does not suggest that the venture was commercial. However, what does exist suggests that people outside the Highland Rim travelled to the site to enjoy outdoor recreation. Camped “immediately below her immense paper mills,” the summer camp attendees enjoyed activities such as “croquet, lawn tennis, or some other amusing and harmless game” in addition to fishing and hunting, as reported in a Nashville newspaper. They also brought many comforts of home into this little paradise. The party even enjoyed the services of “one of the best cooks around and two waiters.” In

¹⁹ “An Excursion to Stone Fort,” *Manchester Times*, May 8, 1896, from “Old Stone Fort: A Collection of Accounts,” *Coffee County Historical Quarterly* 17, No. 1, (1986): 16.

²⁰ Ibid.

describing the “summer campers,” the reporter remarked that, “The only thing they seem to regret is that they haven’t got more of their friends along with them to share their unspeakable pleasures with them.”²¹

Summer camp movements in the United States began as part of an effort to provide respite from the dangers of modern life.²² Wild spaces like those around the Old Stone Fort served as places where young people could develop good moral standing and fortitude. While the camps at the Old Stone Fort do not have a well-documented past, as do those in other parts of the country, outdoor excursions had become fashionable to counter the pitfalls of city life in terms of morals and poor health. According to historian Michael Smith, “As urbanized Americans moved further away—physically and psychologically— from their mostly rural origins, there evolved a sentimental view of nature and agrarian life as the focus of a simpler Arcadian past.”²³ With the lapse in industrial activity at Old Stone Fort, the rise in outdoor recreation as a leisure activity dovetailed with local interest in seeing the site preserved for its unique cultural resources to provide a broad base of support for the eventual park.²⁴

²¹ “At the Old Stone Fort: A Party of Nashville People Enjoying Themselves,” 2.

²² Peter Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 162-163.

²³ Michael B. Smith, “The Ego Ideal of the Good Camper’ and the Nature of Summer Camp,” *Environmental History* 11, No. 1 (2006): 73. See also T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1980); Paul S. Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978); William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1996), 76-80.

²⁴ “Mound Expert’s Visit May Bring U.S. Park Here,” 1.

These feelings about the Old Stone Fort as a place for outdoor pursuits received more attention in the wake of the failed Stone Fort Power Company venture at the site in 1913. The property's undeveloped landscape still offered a space for outdoor pursuits close to the city. Seeking to do something to protect the Old Stone Fort, the Wootons and the Chumbleys pursued turning the property over to the state. As a result, a 1916 article in the *Nashville American* announced, "An effort will be made to secure the location of a state game reserve and fishing reserve for Coffee County." This idea included the importance of providing a place for the people of the region to hunt and fish among the waterfalls and mounds.²⁵ Writing about the proposal, the article's author roughly described the proposed boundaries, stating:

A magnificent tract of land located at the conjunction of the Big Duck and Little Duck Rivers near Manchester and including several miles of these streams and a number of beautiful waterfalls. The proposed tract includes properties of the Hickerson estate, Mrs. Fannie D. Wooton, the Adyelott Estate, W. and E. Alwood, Alf May, and a number of other large property owners. The Old Stone Fort, a place of historic interest, is included within the proposed boundary.²⁶

These concerns over preserving the Old Stone Fort add another twist, implying that the attempts to preserve the landscape were not isolated just to preserving the pursuit of game.

At this time, the region became an attractive destination for travelers seeking a brief respite from the city of Nashville. Papers describe how numerous people took to the Highland Rim traveling along the convenient lines of the Nashville and Chattanooga

²⁵ "Coffee County Wants State Game Preserve," *Nashville American*, August 13, 1916, A 12.

²⁶ Ibid.

Railroad to the upland counties of Coffee, Franklin, and Grundy. With tourists seeking to escape Nashville and bask in the cool evening breezes and countless waterfalls found in this region, nearby resorts such as Tullahoma's Hurricane Springs enjoyed substantial popularity during this period. In the same way that the rail lines had opened industry to the Old Stone Fort's rivers and waterfalls, the line now made the site an easy journey for travelers along the major routes between Chattanooga and Nashville. The site's proximity to the McMinnville and Manchester Railroad line also made day trips to the site easy and accessible from Tullahoma. All that was required was a ticket to the town of Manchester and then a short mile walk. Once on site, the roads constructed to serve the various mills at the Old Stone Fort made the site's features accessible.

Members of the Hickerson-Wooton family also continued to see the place as an excellent setting for outdoor excursions, recounting tales of recreation along the Duck River long after Fannie's death. Particularly for her grandson, John Chumbley, the summers at the Hickerson family home gave him a love of the property that stretched beyond its mere economics. These feeling persisted for many more years. Even in his later years, visitors to Mr. Chumbley's residence remarked that he fondly told stories about riding down to the mills in a buggy with his grandmother and spending summers in the oak forests that surrounded her house.²⁷

With her death in 1927, Frances Wooton's estate became the property of her daughter, Sarah Chumbley, and her husband, William Wallace. With the help of their

²⁷ Frank G. Clement, "Dedication of Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park," speech given at the public dedication of the Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park, Manchester, TN, April 23, 1966, 4, John Chumbley Papers.

son, John, the family directed much of the site's use for the next 39 years. After John returned to the United States at the conclusion of the Great War, he began working as an attorney for firms in Washington D.C. Around this time he also worked with the National Democratic Party's labor relations committee. Despite this distance, John participated in family discussions about managing the Old Stone Fort property, including visitors to the property and proposed business plans.²⁸ In the wake of Fannie's death, the family seemed disinterested in further attempts to develop the property for industry. Instead, the family discussed turning the archaeological site and remains of the paper mill over to government agencies for management. Letters between the family members also consider other men or parties presumably interested in the site for commercial purposes; however, the letters never disclose the exact nature of these parties' interests.²⁹ Since John knew his way around federal officials and because the State of Tennessee had not launched its system of parks, the family's focus settled on generating interest with the National Park Service. For the time being, the site remained part of the family's real estate holdings, and as a result, the family took protection of the site seriously.³⁰

Local legends about John Chumbley and his relationship with visitors to the Old Stone Fort usually center on his difficult personality. When asking numerous locals about the man, there are instantly stories about him threatening trespassers with prosecution for

²⁸ John A. Chumbley to William Wallace Chumbley, September 11, 1928, John Chumbley Papers; John A. Chumbley to Sallie W. Chumbley, February 25, 1931, John Chumbley Papers; John Chumbley to Mama and Papa, April 12, 1934, John Chumbley Papers.

²⁹ John A. Chumbley to Mama and Papa, April 12, 1934.

³⁰ Ibid.

fishing in the river or hunting without his permission. During his ownership of Morton's Lake, local people recall that he chased off anyone he caught fishing in the lake, threatening prosecution to all violators. Letters written to Chumbley asking for permission to visit the site indicate that people who knew Chumbley had suggested asking permission before entering the property.³¹ Despite his curmudgeonly nature regarding fishing and hunting on his land, John's interest in the archaeological aspects of the site seemed to have been longstanding. In a 1928 letter to William Chumbley, Fannie's son-in-law, he wrote, "I am glad to know that Mr. Cox is at work down at the fort, and I hope he will make some valuable discoveries. At least no doubt, he will give us quite the write up. I hope that you will see that the photographer makes the pictures when the falls are running at full blast."³² When state archaeologist P.E Cox concluded his work at the site in 1929, Chumbley wrote to his father, William, "I hope the state gets it."³³ Judging from this correspondence as well as Chumbley's later attempts to get the Old Stone Fort turned over to the federal government, the family appeared to have had public ownership of the property as a final goal.

However, weighing ideas for the property after Fannie's death in 1927, her heirs considered various options for their tracts of property along the Duck River. Writing to

³¹ Tri-State Hiking Club to John A. Chumbley, January 15, 1965, and W.E. Lowe to John A. Chumbley, July 26, 1956, John Chumbley Papers. It is worth note that long-term residents related several stories to the author about John Chumbley's hostility towards local trespassing on the property without permission while he was working at the site March 2006-September 2013.

³² John A. Chumbley to William Wallace Chumbley, September 11, 1928, John Chumbley Papers.

³³ John A. Chumbley to Sallie W. Chumbley, February 25, 1931, John Chumbley Papers.

his mother and father about plans for a piece of property approximately one mile upstream from the paper mill and archaeological site, John stated:

Of course we would be willing to accept, \$15,000 cash for the Mill Pond, if we could get it for the condition it is in now in, but I do not care to make this proposition unless we have an interested purchaser, until after the Legislature meets and we find out whether or not Mr. Bunton would purchase the property for a fish hatchery or a game preserve. Naturally, if the state would purchase it, I would rather for them to do so than a private individual.³⁴

From this letter, it appears that the Chumbley family was not averse to selling the property to a private interest, but John used his contacts in Washington to examine a public option for the property. Writing to his father in another letter, he remarked, “I had another very pleasant talk with the man about the government buying the Fort, he appeared very much interested, and I will see him when I return.”³⁵ Ultimately, these efforts failed to materialize, and the Old Stone Fort did not become part of the national park system.³⁶ Instead, it would have to wait until the conclusion of the Second World War before any government agency would take up the issue of preserving the archaeological park.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ John A. Chumbley to Sallie W. Chumbley and William Wallace, April 12, 1934, John Chumbley Papers.

³⁶ In the National Archives are records dealing with the attempt to have Old Stone Fort turned into a national monument. However, this story is beyond the scope of this work. During the 1920s and 1930s, John Chumbley used contacts he forged during his time working in the U.S. State Department distributing food relief after the First World War to generate interest in creating a national monument at the Old Stone Fort. Ultimately, Chumbley was able to have a bill presented to the floor of the House of Representatives, but without success. After this failure, Chumbley’s active interest in preserving the site cooled, and it was not until the State of Tennessee expressed interest in the early 1960s that he sought a public option for the site. See papers in the John Chumbley Papers.

Chumbley's interest in the archaeological site led him to give tours of the mounds to visiting dignitaries and travelers. One such visit in 1955 included the state historical commission and several high-ranking officers from the nearby Arnold Air Force Base. Writing back to express their gratitude, these officers thanked Chumbley for a thorough and enjoyable tour of the property.³⁷ To give these tours Chumbley conducted research on mounds throughout the eastern United States, compiling notes on resemblances between the Old Stone Fort and other similar sites throughout the region. Additionally, he researched his family ties to the property, keeping numerous documents relating to the period of his family's ownership and their operation of the mills. This familial research often introduced visitors to the efforts of his grandmother to operate the Stone Fort Paper Company as one of the few women in the South running a manufacturing business.³⁸

By the 1961, interest in preserving the Old Stone Fort as part of the Tennessee State Parks system began to gather momentum. In that year, State Senator Edwin Threet wrote a letter to Governor Buford Ellington seeking the creation of a state park.³⁹ Additionally, several civic groups began to coalesce around the idea. In that same year, the state officials and Chumbley made headway when he presented the state with a signed proposal to sell the Old Stone fort.⁴⁰ Over the years, Chumbley's tours had attracted

³⁷W.E. Lowe to John A. Chumbley, July 26, 1956, and Colonel McCulla to John A. Chumbley, December 12, 1955, John Chumbley Papers.

³⁸ "Historical Commission Tours Old Stone Fort," *Manchester Times*, December 9, 1955; Frank G. Clement, "Dedication of Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park," 4.

³⁹ Buford Ellington to Ewing Threet, July 21, 1961, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

⁴⁰ John A. Chumbley Option to Convey property to State of Tennessee, February 3, 1961, John Chumbley Papers.

attention to the site, and spurred public interest in the preservation of the archaeological site.⁴¹ By 1964, groups like the Manchester Jay-Cees, the Coffee County Archaeological Society, and the Tennessee Archaeological society had begun putting together presentations on the archaeological site to garner public support for the effort.⁴² However, despite the efforts of state officials and the local civic groups, Governor Buford Ellington stated that the proposed project was too expensive and did not meet the state's requirements for a state park.⁴³

With the next administration of Governor Frank Clement, supporters of the park received a boost with the potential for an infusion of funds from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.⁴⁴ This new infusion of cash in addition to the rising interest in the site provided an opening for those interested in creating a state park at Old Stone Fort.⁴⁵ By 1965, the movement to incorporate the Old Stone Fort into the state park system gained steam through the organization of "Old Stone Fort Days."⁴⁶ These public events allowed numerous visitors to tour the archaeological site guided by local historians

⁴¹ LeRoy Camp to Carey Waldrip, September 27, 1965, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

⁴² Alfred K. Guthe to Carey Waldrip, October 19, 1964, and John H. Groom to Carey Waldrip, November 13, 1964, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

⁴³ Buford Ellington to Ewing Threet, July 21, 1961, and E.D. Chappell to Edwin Threet, July 11, 1961, Cary Edward Waldrip Papers.

⁴⁴ Leo J. Zuber to Walter Criley, August 10, 1964, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

⁴⁵ Thomas Wiseman to Carey Waldrip, February 1, 1965, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

⁴⁶ Walter Criley to Carey Waldrip, February 10, 1966, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

and amateur archaeologists.⁴⁷ These tours fostered curiosity about the mounds of the Old Stone Fort and promoted tourism in the county.⁴⁸ Eventually, the efforts of these interested parties began to make measureable headway in pushing for the creation of a park at the Old Stone Fort, and by the end of 1965, the creation of the park looked likely.⁴⁹

On Saturday April 23, 1966, a crowd of Manchester's citizens gathered around the courthouse, huddling under umbrellas for shelter from the spring showers. The spring rainstorms had turned the roads leading into the Old Stone Fort into a slippery mess, and the lack of facilities at the site made it unsuitable for any event celebrating the opening of the park. As Governor Frank G. Clement climbed the stage erected in the town square, an attendant held an umbrella over his head to shield him from the falling rain. Under this shelter, he stepped forward and delivered an address to the collected citizens of the town to commemorate a new chapter in the community's relationship with the archaeological site on its outskirts.⁵⁰ The waterwheels no longer turned in the paper mills, and the buildings stood now as only skeletons of their former selves. The land had remained largely silent for sixty years, visited only occasionally by anglers and the curious. Its industrial aspirations now behind it, the Old Stone Fort began a journey that eventually

⁴⁷ Ibid. This letter mentions the 1966 Old Stone Fort Days would be the second annual event of its type held at the property.

⁴⁸ Sam Carson to Carey Waldrip, April 8, 1965, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

⁴⁹ Frank Clement to Carey Waldrip, May 25, 1965, and Walter Criley to Carey Waldrip, February 10, 1966, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

⁵⁰ "Clement Hails New Fort Park," *Manchester Times*, April 29, 1966, 1.

brought the archaeological site back into a commons utilized by both visitors and locals.⁵¹ The types of pursuits enjoyed by all fell under the jurisdiction of the state, but the way people talked about the site focused on enjoying the wildness of waterfalls and the mysterious mounds. The plans of the state government for enlarging its system of parks sought to provide tourism dollars to both the local and state economy as well as provide a public service to the citizens of Manchester.⁵²

The language in Governor Clement's speech focused on the natural setting of the Old Stone Fort, drawing attention to the beauty of the "cascading waterfalls" and "the carpet of wild flowers." Praising the sublime wilderness, the governor stressed "the steep bluffs, and virgin oak trees" that existed as "manifestations of such natural beauty" in an effort to emphasize the opportunities for individuals to renew themselves and attract visitors to the county.⁵³ This language revisited the territory familiar to nineteenth century travelers and highlighted the quality of the property about to become the first archaeological park in a growing state system.⁵⁴ Despite the encouragement toward understanding the site's significance to its Native American builders and the rejuvenating effects of the waterfalls, the speech also echoed the industrial past. Oddly, Clement focused on the short-lived powder mills rather than the paper industry. Perhaps this was due to the facility's tie to the Confederate war effort during the Civil War, or the mills

⁵¹ Frank G. Clement, "Dedication of Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park," 1-2.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Clement, "Dedication of Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park," 6-7.

⁵⁴ Walter Criley to Carey Waldrip, October 23, 1967, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

had lost their place in the minds of Coffee County's citizenry to the point that their preservation meant relatively little. What this mention of the mills allowed the governor to do was segue into a discussion on the importance of tourist dollars to local communities and the state at large.⁵⁵ The discussion of tourist revenue highlights how the preservation of Old Stone Fort and its natural setting remained tied to the site's economic possibilities.

⁵⁵ Clement, "Dedication of Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park," 6-7.

CONCLUSION

FINDING A PLACE FOR HISTORY

Calls for Old Stone Fort's metamorphosis into as state park echoed early uses of the site by the community. It also tapped into the sense of mystery that permeated nearly all the literature about the archaeological site. One local group in Coffee County, the Jaycees, argued that the site's mystery created a necessity for preserving the site. Led by Carey Waldrip, the group disputed that private ownership of the land would place the site at risk for future development.¹ In their efforts to keep the community and region interested in the area, the group offered tours of the site. Additionally, members discussed the importance of the site in the local paper. Similarly, the local chamber of commerce believed that the creation of a state park would draw tourism to the region, injecting money into the local economy. Through these two interests, members of local civic groups, state officials, and the property's owner gained the necessary support to convert the archaeological site as well as another 500 acres into Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park.²

The establishment of the Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park stabilized the site and represented a return of sorts to the location's original use by nineteenth century inhabitants of the region. As a protected landscape removed from the possibility of industrial development, the site reverted to a place for sanctioned outdoor recreation and quiet reflection on the mounds and their builders. In this sense, the park recreated a type

¹ James H. Groom to Carey Waldrip, November 13, 1964, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

² Clement, "Dedication of Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park," 5-7.

of commons for the citizens of the local community. State control limited the types of activities inside the park's boundaries, and public ownership allowed more visitors than ever to experience the mounds of the Old Stone Fort.³

However, the state's ownership of the site raised questions about the way the property would operate.⁴ At the time of the park's creation in 1966, the Tennessee State Park system had not actively managed an archaeological site as an individual park unit. As a result, park officials involved in the creation of Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park looked to a wide variety of groups to determine appropriate site management and interpretation. Park officials speculated that guests would visit the site for a variety of reasons, thus requiring staff to provide and maintain an assortment of facilities, trail systems, and interpretive programs. Consequently, various groups submitted proposals addressing multiple aspects of the property's geology, biota, and cultural heritage. Additionally, there was a move to designate certain spaces inside the park as "natural areas" to protect wildlife and plants.⁵ Local historians also called for a reconstruction of the paper mills at one of the visible foundations. Finally, members of the Tennessee Anthropological Society and faculty from the University of Tennessee's Department of Anthropology wanted to see the vast majority of the park devoted to interpreting the

³ Carey Waldrip to Clarence Redmon, April 20, 1966, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

⁴ Bevely Coleman, "A History of State Parks in Tennessee" (PhD. Dissertation, George Peabody College For Teachers, 1963), 366-367.

⁵ Walter Criley to Carey Waldrip, August 4, 1967, and Walter Criley to Carey Waldrip, October 23, 1967, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

mounds and the culture that produced them.⁶ How the staff at the site ultimately represented these aspects of the park depended on the strength of influence various groups wielded in the planning process.

Given the department's historic focus on activities such as hiking, camping, and fishing, planners from the state parks' planning commission encouraged the recreational potential of the rivers and forests, proposing numerous campgrounds, picnic areas, and a recreational trail system.⁷ Local historical societies argued for a robust presentation of the industrial role of the Old Stone Fort in the development of Manchester and Coffee County.⁸ However, as Governor Clement's address at the park's opening spelled out, the principal aim of the state was preserving the 4,000 feet of low, wall-like mounds.⁹ The most influential group, professional archaeologists interested in the prehistoric resources of the site, sought to ensure that the public understood the significance of the mounds to the development of Native American culture in the Southeast.¹⁰ Park planners nonetheless hoped to engage a large range of audiences and fulfill a multitude of goals for the community of Manchester and the Tennessee State Park System as a whole.¹¹

⁶ Alfred Guthe to Carey Waldrip, October 19, 1964, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

⁷ Walter Criley to Carey Waldrip, October 23, 1967, and Walter Criley to Carey Waldrip, October 30, 1967, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

⁸ Walter Criley to Carey Waldrip, October 30, 1967.

⁹ Clement, "Dedication of Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park," 4.

¹⁰ Alfred Guthe to Carey Waldrip, October 19, 1964.

¹¹ For a copy of the map, see "Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park," park brochure, Tennessee Department of Conservation, Division of State Parks, 1969. For a description of the meeting in which state

Consequently, the park shifted toward a middle ground, with most of the interpretive effort in the early days centered on the archaeology with a secondary focus on the natural features and recreational opportunities of the Highland Rim, the bread and butter of state parks at the time.¹²

While interpretation at the site has centered on the site's archaeological heritage, local groups initially pressed for interpreting the industrial heritage as well. This resulted in several proposals for utilizing various areas of the park. One suggestion, from the Manchester Jay-cees, endorsed a plan to designate different areas of the park for interpreting archaeology, natural resources, and local history. Maps distributed with this plan included a reconstructed mill, a trail around the mounds, campgrounds, and extensive picnic areas.¹³ The proposed master plan demonstrates the challenges park planners faced in finding a central theme for interpretation at the site (see Figure 4). The plan lists multiple use areas within the proposed park boundaries. It also marks the mill sites as interpretive points. These points provide clues that the site's important role in the history of the community did not escape the attention of planners.¹⁴

officials shared this map with members of the community, see Carey Waldrip to Walter Criley, October 30, 1967.

¹² Barge, Waggoner & Sumner, Inc., *Report on the master plan, Old Stone Fort TN State Park* (Nashville: Barge, Waggoner & Sumner, 1968).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Weems's tenure resulted in the park focusing the vast majority of its interpretive efforts on the role of the Old Stone Fort in the sacred lives of the Highland Rim's Woodland Period inhabitants. His role was so influential that the current interpretive action plan still holds most of his ideas for site management. Accordingly, the interpretive aims are to present the Old Stone Fort's archaeological resources in such a way that "will cause every person to find an increased intensity of regard toward the preservation of such examples of their nation's and state's cultural legacy."¹⁷

The interpretive strategies to meet this goal emphasize ranger-led interpretive hikes along the mile-and-a-quarter trail around the mounds and museum exhibits inside the visitor center. Both of these experiences seek to impart the unique nature of the mounds and their cultural context by presenting visitors with archaeological evidence from the mounds themselves as well as archaeological sites in the nearby region. In the most recent interpretive action plan, the goals focus on providing visitors with the necessary context to make sense of the site as a 2,000-year-old sacred ceremonial site.¹⁸ Ultimately, through presenting the Old Stone Fort as an integral part of Native American prehistory in the region, park employees encourage visitors to appreciate the depth of human history in the area and understand the emergence of complex native societies of the Southeast. Additionally, interpretive goals stress the development of agriculture in the

discusses the author's ideas about the importance of monuments as symbols, referencing the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as an example of an attack on cultural symbols.

¹⁷ *Interpretive Action Plan Old Stone Fort* (Nashville, TN: Tennessee State Parks, Division of Education and Interpretation, January, 2014), 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

South, including the domestication of indigenous plants and the introduction of corn. From here, exhibits such as the “Time Tunnel” point to the rise of complex societies during the later Mississippian Period (800-1450 CE). Here the story of the Old Stone Fort links with that of the indigenous tribes that called Tennessee home during the historic periods of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.¹⁹

The involvement of groups such as the Tennessee Anthropological Society, the Department of Anthropology at the University of Tennessee, and the Tennessee Division of Archaeology has driven interpretation at the site since the 1970s. As a result, the park’s master plan concentrated on making the archaeology of the Old Stone Fort the central feature of interpretation. Early park brochures describe with archaeological precision the evidence for the construction of the Old Stone Fort and its use as a ceremonial center; however, the interpretation omits nineteenth-century theories to explain the mysterious uses or strange builders of the mounds.²⁰ In fact, there is no mention of previous ideas about the use of the site other than a statement that the Old Stone Fort is not, despite its name, a fort. Overall, these efforts have been successful in foregrounding the archaeological legacy of the site, particularly how it fits into current scholarship on the prehistoric Southeast. Interpretive hikes and special events, such as the summer solstice sunrise, draw attention to the organization of the mounds, offering

¹⁹ Visit to park museum, November 1, 2015.

²⁰ “Old Stone Fort: Legends and Facts,” reprinted from “UT Anthropologists Find Answers to Questions of the Ages at the Old Stone Fort,” *Tennessee Conservationist*, 33, No. 1 (August 1967): 1-4. This pamphlet is a large brochure printed during the early years of the park. Its intent is to settle most of the strange theories that surrounded the fort’s creation, and provide visitors with current archaeological data on the site’s construction. A copy of this document is available at the park office.

visitors a chance to speculate on the meaning of the site's orientation to celestial events and its relationship with prehistoric lifeways. Overall, the park's interpretive staff direct public conversation about the Old Stone Fort squarely toward its archaeological resources. In turn, this has worked to foster greater public understanding of the significance of the mounds in the prehistoric Southeast as well as the development of complex native cultural groups.

Since most of the established museum exhibits and scheduled interpretive programs focus heavily on the archaeological material, it is difficult to show links between the landscape's distant past and its present configuration. However, recent steps toward integrating the historic legacy of industry at the site have helped to illustrate the size and scope of the site's utilization during the American Civil War and the following four decades. As part of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, the park installed a wayside exhibit at the top of the visitor's center parking lot, which interprets the role of the powder mills during the war.²¹ This exhibit provides an opening to discuss the journey the Old Stone Fort property underwent through the nineteenth century to preservation during the 1960s.

Demonstrating the different ways the site was important among the people who settled in and developed the region in the nineteenth century is important to fulfilling the park's mission to interpret the significance of the Old Stone Fort. Since industrial developments dominated sixty years of the Old Stone Fort's history and shaped much of

²¹ *Civil War Powder Mill*, Wayside Exhibit, August 15, 2015.

the site's current layout, local history represents an integral part of the narrative that makes the landscape understandable. These episodes provide valuable context for the way people experience the park today. The industrial remains scattered about the park present interpretive challenges. However, these challenges are easily surmountable. One possible approach would be to offer organized tours of the industrial areas. Currently, there is a sign at the stone foundation of the pulp mill that gives a brief history of the mills and their operations during Hickerson and Wooton ownership. However, trail systems take visitors past the footprints of most of the facilities from the mills, which would allow for the interpretation of numerous historical episodes associated with these sites. Located just behind the office and next to the archaeological feature called the "entrance complex" is a nineteenth-century road cut made to access the mills.²² Other nearby features from the industrial period include a bridge head for one of the roads leading from Manchester to the mill complex, and a road bed still used by park staff to access parts of the interpretive trail. The bridge and road provided a means to move equipment and goods in and out of the mills. According to the Kocis' map of the mills, as well as a written description of the site, several buildings, including the office, were along this roadbed.

Given the amount of industrial debris and artifacts in the park office and on the trail, there are numerous ways to incorporate this material into site interpretation. With some additional research to identify these material remains, the staff could determine the use of various areas. A surface archaeological survey of the industrial remains could help

²² Ibid.

settle many of the lingering questions regarding the exact layout of the mills and provide clues to the working and living conditions of its workforce. The location of one of these buildings, the mill workers' bunkhouse, remains especially elusive. The mention of boarding houses in the 1900 proposed Wooton – Kline agreement suggests that such facilities were near the mill buildings proper.²³ However, there is no depiction of its exact location on any map. Additionally, there is no known physical description of the boarding house. While it is most likely safe to assume that the building would have been similar to structures found in other industrial areas of the South, site-specific information is preferable for local context. It is probable that the building existed somewhere along the road leading into the group of mill buildings. However, without a surface survey or the discovery of better plans for the site, it will remain difficult to determine its exact location.

The mysterious nature of the site that dominated several early accounts of the Old Stone Fort did not vanish with the presentation of archaeological evidence. In fact, such narrative motifs still resonate with site visitors. Most often visitors discuss the mounds as mysterious, mention stories popular with pseudo archaeologists, and occasionally reference popular media presentations such as television programs or websites.²⁴ As a result, park staff members regularly encounter visitors wishing to discuss antiquated

²³ Agreement, Frances Wooton and M.M. Kline, July 4, 1900, John Chumbley Papers.

²⁴ McMahan, *Coffee County Then and Now*, 523-524. For more recent public references to the Old Stone Fort, see "Into Bone Cave," *Search for Giants*, History Channel, December 2, 2014. According to park staff, one of the most cited works they hear about from visitors is Dana Olson, *The Legend of Prince Madoc: Discoverer of America in 1170 A.D. and the History of the Welsh Colonists* (Jeffersonville, IN: Olson Enterprises, 1987). Carey Waldrip's correspondence contains numerous examples of discussions surrounding mysterious iron deposits, and theories about Welsh involvement on the Highland Rim.

theories about the construction and use of the mounds, such as a fort built by wandering Welsh or lost tribes of Israel. These ideas about the Old Stone Fort's origins appear to be attempts to understand the past by squeezing possible (if improbable) narratives into familiar frameworks of European history, or integrating familiar actors into the development of indigenous cultures and architecture. However, their persistence in the imagination of the public grants an opportunity to review the different ways people have tried to fit the history of indigenous people into a western narrative. A possible way of dealing with these theories is to describe their rise to prominence among amateur archaeologists in the nineteenth century. Focusing on the ways writers used evidence, as well as the quality of such evidence, gives modern park visitors a way to understand how these ideas developed and how they complicate interpreting the archaeology and history of the Southeast.

Another avenue for addressing the popularity of these early ideas about the site is to fit them into the nineteenth-century association of native people with the academic discipline of anthropology and archaeology. The particular interest of amateur archaeologists in the Old Stone Fort's mysteries provides an opportunity for public presentations on the evolution of anthropology and archaeology, and contemporary issues associated with anthropology-based interpretations. For instance, as Conn argues in *History's Shadow*, shifting the study of native people to anthropology and archaeology in

effect removed them from a shared history with European explorers and colonists and helped to reinforce the idea of native people as others.²⁵

The archaeological discoveries of the past fifty years have mitigated much of the mysterious nature behind the mounds at the Old Stone Fort. However, even with extensive archaeological excavations of the site in the 1960s, earlier stories still held the imagination of numerous people in the community who were not ready to relinquish the old theories.²⁶ The Old Stone Fort ghost story strikes at the sense of mystery permeating the mounds throughout the nineteenth century. While the details of this story may be dubious, it is less important whether the exchange between the young men and the hunters occurred than the fact that the event fit with what people thought about the site. While the fort was not actually haunted, it definitely seemed like a place that foul spirits could inhabit. Attempts by most of the amateur scholars roaming middle Tennessee during the late nineteenth century were incapable of providing an answer backed by serious evidence, and many embraced the site's enigmatic nature.

In order to tie the Old Stone Fort's historic relationship with the community back into interpretive programming, it will be necessary to soften the boundaries that define some of the themes found in the site's interpretive action plan. By treating historic period developments at the Old Stone Fort as part of the site's whole story, it becomes possible to see how the relationship between the community and the archaeological site

²⁵ Conn, *History's Shadow*, 6.

²⁶ Clyde Keeler to Carey Waldrip, January 18, 1965, Carey Edward Waldrip Papers.

perpetuated the site's importance. Additionally, integrating local history will demonstrate to the public the ways in which archaeological sites nationally experienced similar reevaluations throughout their history. By fostering this conversation, the park can offer a broader view of the archaeological site, encouraging visitors to see that the place has remained important to the community even as its meaning has shifted throughout its history.

Current interpretive plans scrub much of the mystery from the Old Stone Fort's interpretation. Instead, interpretation focuses on presenting visitors with current scholarship on the Woodland Period and the development of mound centers. Specifically, the exhibits in the park museum concentrate heavily on theoretical ideas about indigenous religious beliefs and observations of celestial bodies. To provide context for these exhibits, the park museum also presents a discussion on the development of indigenous cultures of the American South. Current interpretive goals seek to have visitors understand the Old Stone Fort as a "prehistoric hilltop enclosure" that acts as an "incredible primary source for understanding and relating Southeastern Middle Woodland cultural tradition."²⁷

This approach does not always make good connections between prehistory and history. Instead, it can set up an artificial barrier that does not allow visitors to see how the community's relationship with the site has evolved. The fluidity of a location's

²⁷ *Interpretive Action Plan Old Stone Fort*, 1.

meaning is a persistent topic for public historians.²⁸ Narratives of local history, moreover, are central to the primary mission of the park. They provide context for the events that led members of the community to seek protection for the Old Stone Fort. Much as the archaeological context presented in the park museum, this history could give the public a chance to understand how the mounds, hidden in the wild places on the Highland Rim, transformed from mysterious features to integral parts of the cultural landscape.

The setting of the Old Stone Fort also allows park staff to impart the sense of wildness. The sudden changes in elevation and steep cliffs are as rugged today as they were in the nineteenth century. As a result, there are numerous opportunities to convey the feelings of awe held by nineteenth-century visitors. Given the popularity of nighttime and fireside programming, park staff could convey the sense of trepidation that visitors to the Old Stone Fort reported by retelling the 1846 ghost story as part of a storytelling interpretive program. Addressing the use of the park as a destination for hunters and the potential for supernatural encounters demonstrates the variety of ways that visitors to the site made use of the landscape. Such narratives present opportunities to discuss the changing ways people of the nineteenth century viewed the natural world. Additionally, given the description of the hunters as wealthy outsiders, such an interpretive program also could address class and race among local and sport hunters who frequented the area.

²⁸ Ronald A. Greele, "Whose Public, Whose History," *Public Historian* 3, No. 1 (1981): 45-47; Ormond H. Loomis, "Historic Preservation and Folklore," *The Conservation of Culture: Folklorist and the Public Sector*, ed. Burt Fientuch (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1988), 184; Donald A. Ritchie, "When History Goes Public: Recent Experiences in the United States," *Oral History* 21, No. 1 (2001): 92.

Finally, stories about the use of such resources in places like the Old Stone Fort provide examples of what happened to property and resource rights on loosely controlled land.

Overall, the history of the Old Stone Fort provides new perspectives to understanding the events that led to the park's preservation. Presenting the various ways people have interacted with the mysterious mounds and spectacular scenery demonstrates what has endeared the landscape to local residents and visitors alike. Over time, the evolution in thinking about the site's importance led to the eventual creation of the park to protect these valuable cultural resources. Visitors to the park should always remember that many archaeological sites like the Old Stone Fort did not survive their brush with industrialization or nineteenth-century agriculture. Thus, this story about the evolving relationship between an archaeological site and the surrounding community aids our understanding of how such places are set aside, protected, and preserved.

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U.S. Census Bureau. Population Schedule Coffee County Tennessee 6th Civil District 1870 Census, 1870.

This table provides a look at the people working at the Old Stone Fort Mills in that year. It provides some clues as to the numbers of employees as well as their gender and racial identities.

U.S. Census Bureau. Population Schedule Coffee County Tennessee 6th Civil District 1880 Census, 1880.

This table provides a look at the people working at the Old Stone Fort Mills in that year. It provides some clues as to the numbers of employees as well as their gender and racial identities. This table in particular demonstrates the growth in the number of employees at the site since the 1870 census.

U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule Coffee County Tennessee 6th Civil District 1900 Census 1900.

This table provides a look at the Hickerson and Wooton families in the wake of the mills. Here none of the family list themselves as mill operators or managers. Instead, they all provided census takers with occupations that dealt with agriculture or banking.

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