

Surveyor's Compass and Other Equipment Owned by Samuel Jackson, 1781-1860 A&M 3705

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1781-1860



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Abstract

Surveyor's equipment, including compass, two rulers or protractors, and metal cable, owned by Samuel Jackson, a successful entrepreneur of western Pennsylvania. One of the rulers, bearing engravings of the initials "GW" and the year "1781", is thought to be a gift from George Washington to Samuel Jackson. The survey cable could be from the middle 19th century. For additional biographical information regarding Samuel Jackson, consult the historical note for this collection; for provenance information regarding the compass, see the Newsletter of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, Volume 25, No. 2, Spring 2010 (a copy is filed in the control folder for this collection).

Creator

Jackson, Samuel

Extent

0.5 Linear Feet 6 in. (1 flat storage box)

Physical Location

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Repository

West Virginia and Regional History Center

Administrative Information

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Biographical / Historical

For provenance information regarding the surveying compass in this collection, see the Newsletter of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, Volume 25, No. 2, Spring 2010 (a copy is filed in the control folder for this collection).

For historical background regarding the profession of surveying in colonial America and Washington's role in it, see the book "George Washington and the Virginia Backcountry", edited by Warren R. Hofstra.

Samuel Jackson, Iron Master of Cheat

A native of Chester County, Pennsylvania, Samuel Jackson moved to Redstone Fort at the present location of Brownsville, about 1780. He became one of the region's most enterprising and successful businessmen, and an acquaintance of George Washington.

Jackson's initial meeting with Washington probably took place during Washington's visit to Fayette County, Pennsylvania in September, 1784. Washington had organized a land lease sale of his holdings in the region at "Simpson's" (Perryopolis) only ten miles from Redstone. Samuel Jackson likely attended this sale in the company of his neighbor, Major Thomas Freeman, who Washington employed to superintend his western lands. Jackson is mentioned in Washington's correspondence with both Freeman and Levi Hollingsworth regarding land and farming ventures. Jackson may have also visited Mount Vernon to deliver communications to Washington from Freeman.

In the decades surrounding the turn of the nineteenth century, Samuel Jackson's fortunes soared. He built and operated an assortment of mills including saw mills, grist mills, a linseed oil mill, a woolen mill, a glass factory, and with partner Joseph Sharpless, built the first paper mill west of the Alleghenies. He also engaged in building boats with which to transport both goods and people up and down the Monongahela and beyond.

In the late 1790s, Jackson expanded his growing empire to include interests in the iron industry, first in Fayette County, and then in neighboring Monongalia County. In the words of Monongalia County historian Earl L. Core, Jackson became "the best known name in the story of the development of the iron industry in

this region". About 1800, he built a log dam and mill in a location now submerged beneath Cheat Lake, and within two years was selling bar iron for cash or exchange in all manners of goods. In 1806, he bought three hundred acres adjacent to his mill, and built a factory that produced iron goods ranging from cut nails to stoves. Jackson continued to produced bar iron that was shipped as far north as Lake Erie where it helped build Oliver Hazard Perry's fleet and as far south as New Orleans where it provided cannon balls and shot for Andrew Jackson's army.

The Jackson Iron Works eventually developed into an elaborate complex of businesses and structures with a tangled web of ownership, including interests in assorted Cheat area iron furnaces. When Jackson died in 1818, he left his iron business to his son, Josiah, who likely began construction of the Henry Clay Furnace before selling his entire business during the mid 1830s.

Keywords

Surveyors and surveying.

Jackson, Samuel