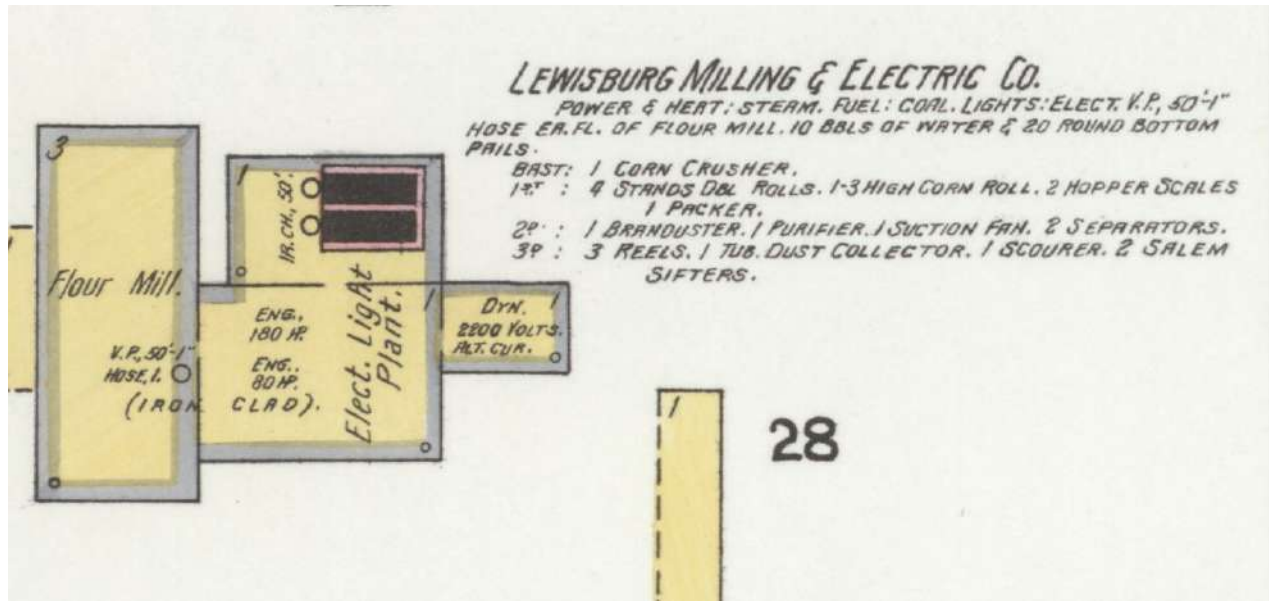


Lewisburg Milling and Electric Light Co. 1900 – 1907



Sanborn 1905 Fire Map

Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Sanborn Maps Collection

James Withrow built a brick building along Jefferson Street for his tannery around 1825 where it operated for the next 75 years. It was torn down in 1900 and a 3-story steam powered flour mill with two 50' chimneys and a generator was built on the original 1825 foundation for the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Light Company. The layout of the machinery and the flow of the grain in the mill may have been similar to what is shown in this diagram.

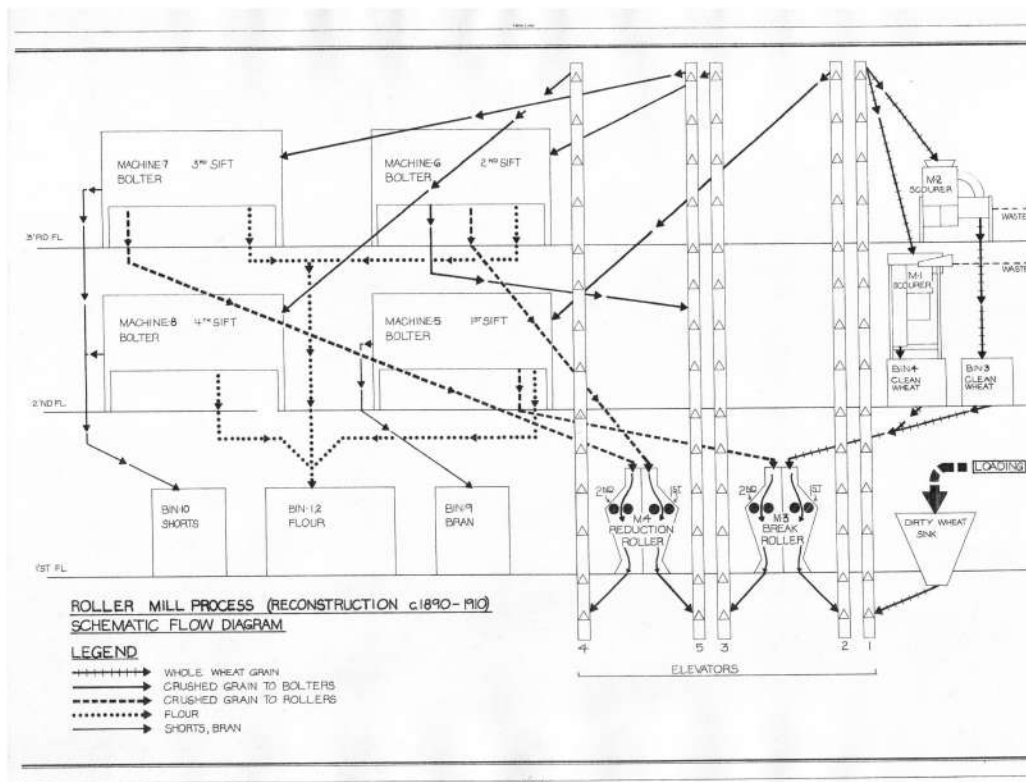


Figure 1 Schematic flow diagram of the Boxley roller mill

In addition to its primary function as a high quality grain and flour mill, the company brought electricity to Lewisburg for the first time, two years after an electric plant opened in Ronceverte(1). It was so successful that two years later, a larger engine and dynamo replaced the original machines and a 3-story wheat elevator for grain storage was added.

The introduction of electric lights into homes, businesses, and the Female Institute lead people to offer a number of suggestions for expanding the business – establishing an ice plant and cold storage facility for apples, powering an electric trolley line between Lewisburg and Ronceverte, damming the Greenbrier River to supply cheap power, and supplying electricity to Ronceverte. None of those suggestions were ever implemented and after changing hands in 1907, the electric plant was discontinued, but flour milling and grain sales continued.

During the next 50 years, ownership changed several times and the mill became a grain and farm supply store. In 1961 the mill building burned down and the log building at Montwell Commons became the third structure erected on the original 1825 foundation. Future articles will explore the history of the buildings from 1907 to the present.

A great deal of information has been gathered from deeds, the *Greenbrier Independent* weekly newspaper archives, and other referenced sources. Excerpts of some of these deeds, articles, and announcements are presented in the following pages. They give an indication of the role that the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Company played in the town and the Greenbrier Valley during the first decade of the 20th century.

February 27, 1896

Mr. H.T. Bell, who canvassed the town to secure a certain number of electric lights sufficient to locate a plant here in Lewisburg, has succeeded, and we suppose in a short time the old 'burg will be lighted by electricity. Now, let us have the railroad.

Greenbrier Independent vol 30 #40

January 4, 1900

It seems to be a certainty now that as soon as the weather will permit, a \$10,000 roller mill will be built here in Lewisburg. An electric plant for lighting the town will be attached.

Greenbrier Independent Vol 34 #31

March 8, 1900

We hear of many improvements to be made in old Lewisburg as soon as the weather will permit – a roller mill, an electric plant, the erection of several buildings and other enterprises. We trust that someone will erect several cottages for rent. They are badly needed.

Greenbrier Independent Vol 34 #40

March 22, 1900

Wm. Masters, Esq., of our town, has bought the old Tanyard property on Jefferson Street, of Mr. James Withrow. We are glad to announce that this means that the large roller mill and electric plant will be built in a very short time. (Deed 56-81 was recorded December 12, 1900)

Greenbrier Independent Vol 34 #42

June 4, 1900

William Masters conveys a parcel of land (where the Log building is now located) for \$800 to the incorporators of the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Light Company - Wm. Masters, J.J. Duffy, Daniel A. Dwyer, John G. Dwyer, and J.W. Dwyer by deed 55-176: “. . . a certain lot or parcel of land . . . being part of what is known as the Tanyard property . . . “ *Deed 55-176*

June 7, 1900

Tannery Building Razed On Tuesday morning last (June 5) a force of hands began tearing down another old landmark of Lewisburg – the old Tanyard brick building- which was built about the year 1825, by the late James Withrow, father of our honored townsmen, James Withrow, Esq. The removal of the building is necessary to make room for the erection of a big Steam Roller Mill and the laying of an electric light plant. If someone would have predicted when this old building was first erected, that it would be moved some day for the purpose above mentioned, he would, no doubt, have had to spend his days in some asylum.

The building to be erected for the mill will be a large three story structure with wheat elevators and all necessary machinery to make a 60-barrel capacity mill. An electric plant will also be attached for the purpose of lighting the old town by electricity. The promoters of this enterprise are Wm. Masters, John J. Duffy, John G. and James W. Dwyer, all of our town, and, when it is completed, will cost about \$10,000. This enterprise will not only be a great convenience to our community and profitable to the promoters, but will furnish a cash market for all the wheat and grain grown in this entire Valley. We, therefore, wish these gentlemen unbounded success. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 34 #52

1900

Lewisburg, W. Va. - The Lewisburg Milling and Electric Light Company has contracted for the installation of an electric light plant.

(2)*The Electrical World and Engineer, volume 36 No. 17 1900p. 663*

August 30, 1900

If Squire Duffy don't hurry up his electric light business he'll get left. Among other things impressed upon her husband lately on lady said "now don't forget to git some 'uv them electric light plants we hear'n so much about. We can jis as well raise 'em ourselves, an' save kerosene.

Greenbrier Independent Vol 35 #12

September 13, 1900

W.H. Wade, representative of the Salem Mill Works, Salem, Va., is here engaged in putting the machinery in the big mill, and O.H. Michaelson, of Charleston, is also here putting down the electric plant.

The boiler for our big steam mill and electric light plant, which was hauled from the depot to Lewisburg on a wagon drawn by Mr. Alta Young's big engine, weighs 11,000 pounds. It won't be but a short time until we hear the hum of the machinery. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 35 #14

September 20, 1900

Jonathan Hern has a force of men work this week putting up poles for our electric lights. The old 'burg will soon put on city airs. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 35 #15

September 27, 1900

Capt. Duffy now has a force of hands wiring the houses of the town, and in a short time the old 'burg will be lighted by electricity. The Lewisburg Female Institute Building will have 75 lights.

Greenbrier Independent Vol 35 #16

October 4, 1900

The Lewisburg Steam Mill and Electric Co. hope to have its plant in operation within two weeks.

Greenbrier Independent Vol 35 #17

October 11, 1900

The Lewisburg Steam Mill will begin operations early next week. Its smoke-stack towers 75 feet in the air. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 35 #18

October 25, 1900

The new mill is now completed and ready for business. It is an excellent structure with first class modern machinery and in all respects a credit to the town and to the men who have built it. The electric plant is also complete and has been tested with satisfactory results. The arc light exhibited on Main Street Tuesday night was a revelation to the old town and impressed us forcibly with the idea of what a little push and enterprise can accomplish. As soon as a few additional details can be attended to, the light will be turned on in the streets and in all the stores and residences which have contracted for it. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 35 #2

November 1, 1900

Our big mill and electric plant are now in full blast – the mill turning out 50 barrels of flour per day (9,800 lbs). *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 35 #21

December 12, 1900

James Withrow conveys the lot between Jefferson and Lafayette Streets (where the Market building is now located) to the five incorporators of the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Light Company for \$600: “. . . certain lot or parcel of land . . . being a part of what is known as the Tanyard property . . . “ *Deed 56-81*

January 3, 1901

C.H. Trent of Mansfield Ohio, an expert machinist, was here last week adjusting the engine of the Lewisburg Mill and Electric Company. He knows his business, and consequently the machinery at the mill is in perfect running order. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 35 #30

July 18, 1901

Deputy Sheriff John G. Dwyer was in Mansfield, Ohio this week inspecting an engine recently constructed for the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Co. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 36 #1

August 1, 1901

The new engine, which was built at Mansfield, Ohio, for the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Company, arrived here Tuesday, and has been put in operation. It is a daisy!
Greenbrier Independent Vol 36 #6

January 16, 1902

The Lewisburg Steam Milling co. will in a short time build a wheat elevator with a capacity of 10,000 bushels. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 36 #30

March 13, 1902

The Lewisburg Milling Co. gave a bill last week for the lumber to erect a large building, with elevators, sufficient to store away about 15,000 bushels of grain (450 tons). Stuart Knapp of the Richlands, will do the work. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 36 #38

March 20, 1902

The Lewisburg Milling and Electric Co., owing to the great demand for lights, finds it necessary to put in a dynamo twice the capacity of the one it now has. The mill is in full blast, running day and night, grinding about 400 bushels of wheat (12 tons), 250 bushels of corn (7 tons) and chop daily.

Greenbrier Independent Vol 36 #39

April 24, 1902

Stuart Knapp, with a force of hands, commenced the construction of a large three-story building for the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Light Company last Monday. The increased business of the company necessitates the erection of this building which will have a storage capacity of about 15,000 bushels of grain with grain elevators.

Greenbrier Independent Vol 36 #44

July 3, 1902

The large addition to the Lewisburg Mill is nearing completion, and when finished, will be one of the finest mills in the State, having grain elevators with a storage capacity of 15,000 or 20,000 bushels. The Milling Company also finds it necessary, on account of increasing business, to put in a much larger dynamo, which is now on the road here. The Company is now furnishing between 700 and 900 electric lights, and in a short time there will be a demand for about 500 more.

Greenbrier Independent Vol 37 #2

August 28, 1902

the Lewisburg Milling company has several thousand bushels of wheat in the mill and eight car-loads on the road. The mill now has storage capacity of about 25,000 bushels (750 tons). *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 37 #10

September 11, 1902

The Lewisburg Milling and Electric Company has contracted to put in from 250 to 300 electric lights in the new Lewisburg Female Institute buildings and two 2,000 candle power arc lights in front of the buildings. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 37 #12

1902

Agent for Powhatan Chemical Company, Richmond, Virginia: Magic Wheat Grower, Bone and Potash Mixture, High Grade Acid Phosphate fertilizers *West Virginia Agricultural Experimental Station Commercial Fertilizers – Report for 1902* p.75

May 7, 1903

Percy Hynson vs. Lovering Bros. et als. Lewisburg Milling & Electric co. paid into Court \$666.37 and was discharged from further liability, and order entered that plaintiff and Ches. & O. Co. do interplead as to the right to said fund. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 37 #46

September 3, 1903

Pickups in Town and County: "Greenbrier ought to have three cold storage and ice plants to save her large fruit crop," was a remark made by one of our citizens recently. One is now being erected in Ronceverte and there ought to be one here in Lewisburg. There are thousands of bushels of the finest apples ever grown in Lewisburg and vicinity that are now going to waste – offered at 25 and 30 cents per bushel without buyer. If this fine fruit could be gathered and put in cold storage until December it would bring \$3 or \$4 per barrel. We hear that the Lewisburg Milling & electric Light co is preparing to put in a larger boiler and engine to meet the demand of of its large and ever increasing business, and

we hope they will put them in large enough to furnish power to a cold storage and ice plant in addition to its other demands. It will be a paying investment. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 38 #9

September 24, 1903

Coal! Coal! Coal! - We will furnish delivered in your coal house First Class New River Red Ash Lump Coal, at \$5.25; First Class Splint Lump Coal, \$3.00 per 2,000 lbs. If you want good Coal, good weights, Phone us. Lewisburg Milling & El't'c Co. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 38 #12

October 29, 1903

We understand the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Light Co. is doing such a business in exchange work that they find it almost impossible to fill their orders for their celebrated brands of flour. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 38 #17

November 26, 1903

Cheap Power The Lewisburg Milling Company has under consideration schemes for furnishing cheaper power for its mill and electric light plant in Lewisburg. One is the building of a dam across Greenbrier River, putting in a turbine-wheel and thus getting water power with which to generate electricity. It has two points on the Greenbrier under investigation. If either is selected, it proposes to make such a dam as will furnish 300 horse-power. This will enable it to furnish power to outside parties, as it will need only about 75 horse-power to run its own plants. The town water works would thereby be afforded an opportunity to get cheaper power with which to pump water to town. It is also probable that the electric power plant at Ronceverte would find it cheaper to get its power from the mill people. There would also be enough power left, it is believed, to run a trolley line between Lewisburg and Ronceverte, if parties seeking a profitable investment could be induced to build a line between the two towns. In the event that the turbine wheel scheme should be impracticable or too expensive the mill people propose to place at Ronceverte a steam plant of 300 horse-power for its purpose. The steam will be used to generate electricity to run the plants here in Lewisburg, and the surplus power the Company will sell to parties wishing to use it.

Greenbrier Independent Vol 38 #21

December 24, 1903

The firm of Stuart & Watts closed last week, a sale of three-fifths interest in the Lewisburg Milling and electric Co. , to Messers. S.L. Price, James M. Preston, James Laing and John A. Preston at a good price. We understand that the owners propose forming a joint stock company, embracing a cold storage and ice plant, have applied for a charter and contemplate enlarging the scope of business heretofore conducted at the mill. Stuart & Watts are enterprising agents and have been of great service to persons wishing to buy and sell real estate here or elsewhere in the county. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 38 #26

December 26, 1903

THE LEWISBURG MILLING AND ELECTRIC COMPANY

Charter issued Dec. 26, 1903; charter expires Jan 1, 1950, Principal office – Lewisburg, WV

Purposes – The objects and purposes for which this corporation is formed are as follows: For the purpose of conducting the business of a merchant mill, buying and selling grain, grass seed, conducting an electric plant, a cold storage plant and buying and selling in connection therewith meat and farming products of all kinds; operating an ice plant; buying and selling coal and fertilizers, lime, salt, cement, lumber and building material of all kinds.

Capital stock – Authorized. \$5,000.00; par value shares, \$100.00; subscribed, \$30,000.00; paid in \$10,000.00 And the capital to be hereafter sold is to be divided into shares of the like amount.

Stockholders - The names, post office addresses, and the number of shares of stock subscribed for by each, are as follows: David A. Dwyer, Lewisburg, Greenbrier Co., W. Va., 60 shares; John G. Dwyer Lewisburg, Greenbrier Co., W. Va., 60 shares; James S. Preston, Lewisburg, Greenbrier Co., W. Va., 90 shares; S. Lewis Price, Lewisburg, Greenbrier Co., W. Va., 20 shares; John A. Preston, Lewisburg, Greenbrier Co., W. Va., 10 shares; James Laing, Sun, Fayette Co., W. Va. 60 shares. Total number of shares, 300.

Corporation Report of Secretary of State: Charters Issued in 1903 p.766 ⁵

December 31, 1903

The Lewisburg Milling and Electric Company has been duly incorporated. Capital stock, \$30,000. Incorporators: David A. Dwyer, John g. Dwyer, James A Preston, and John A. Preston. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 38 #27

January 4, 1904

The five incorporators of the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Company incorporated convey the two parcels where the mill is located to the Corporation for \$10 by deed 64-67: “. . . That certain parcel or lot of land on which the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Company's mill and electric light plant stands and all lots adjoining and adjacent thereto lately owned by the Lewisburg Milling and electric Company – a partnership – together with all buildings thereon and also the fixtures belonging thereto and all appurtenances thereunto belonging and the appliances, machinery, wires, poles, and other things used in the electric light plant such as boilers, engines, belts, dynamos, shafting and poles and electric appliances whether on said premises or elsewhere, also two teams (4 horses & two wagons and harnesses) the real estate so granted is in two parcels or lots, . . . “ *Deed 64-67*

January 14, 1904

The stockholders of the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Company met recently and elected the following officers: President, S.L. Price; Vice-President, David A. Dwyer; Manager and Treasurer, James M. Preston; Miller, W.S. Shank *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 38 #29

March 7, 1904

John E Shank, of Salem, Va., was here last week, the guest of his brother, W.S. Shank. He represents the Salem Mill Works, and was taking measurements for new machinery for the Lewisburg Milling & Electric Co. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 38 #35

May 26, 1904

Two 125-horse power boiler and one engine for the Lewisburg Milling & Electric Co. have arrived and are now being put in position. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 38 #47

June 29, 1904

Notice: By order of the Board of Directors of the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Co. all persons whose accounts are past due to said company are requested to settle their accounts with the Company must be settled every 30 days. Persons failing to settle for lights and electric fixtures as aforesaid will have their lights cut off. Lewisburg M. & E. Co. by Jas. M. Preston, Treas. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 38 #51

July 7, 1904

The Lewisburg Milling & Electric Light Company has put in two tremendous boilers and an engine. We hear that this Company proposes to build an electric railroad from Lewisburg to Ronceverte, provided the railroad, now being surveyed to the coal fields, does not come by our town. No one can

tell the great benefit and convenience such road would be to our town and community. If a trolley line was running every hour from here to the railroad it is said many of the business men and coal operators and their families would live here in Lewisburg. Some men here and at Ronceverte have predicted, if such a line was built, there would be a continuous town from here to Ronceverte. We also hear that every arrangement has been made for the construction of this road. *Greenbrier Independent Vol 39 #1*

November 10, 1904

We need a Steam Laundry here in Lewisburg. Can't the Milling and electric Light Co. start one? It will pay them. Think about it, gentlemen. *Greenbrier Independent Vol 39 #19*

August 10, 1905

Notice: The following order was made by the Board of Directors of the Lewisburg Milling and electric CO., Aug. 2nd, 1905: That all patrons supplied with Electric Lights by this corporation will be charged for each bulb in his possession according to its capacity, except where meter is used and light inspection shall be made each month. It is proper that all persons taking light on the flat rate will govern themselves accordingly. For the ensuing year the "flat rate" and the "meter rate" will be the same as for last six months. Your very truly, W.S. Shank, Sec. and Treas.
Greenbrier Independent Vol 40 #6

December 21, 1905

The Lewisburg Milling and Electric company is having a residence erected on the mill lot for its fireman, Len Cumby *Greenbrier Independent Vol 40 # 25*

March 15, 1906

Last Monday morning as Raymond Grubb with a force of men from the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Company's plant were engaged in putting in poles for electric wires to the residence of Major Harry Frazier, south of town, the men lost control of one of the poles and it fell striking Mr. Grubb on the back inflicting a severe but not a fatal injury. He was taken in a helpless condition to Wm. P. Scott's, where he boards, and has since been confined to his bed. *Greenbrier Independent Vol 40 #37*

June 28, 1906

For Sale Large flour mill and electric light plant. Capacity of mill, 75 bbls. Good income from lights, and the demand is increasing. Railroad will be completed to the town in four months, is well under way. Mill is located in the bluegrass section of Greenbrier County. Property will bear close inspection. Good reason for selling. For further particulars, call on or address Lewisburg Milling & Electric Co., Lewisburg, W. Va. *Greenbrier Independent Vol 40 #52*

August 2, 1906

R.B. Holt, Esq., has taken charge of the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Company as general manager. *Greenbrier Independent Vol 41 #5*

October 18, 1906

Kanawha coarse salt in barrels and dairy and table salt in 100-lb bags at the Lewisburg Milling Co. *Greenbrier Independent Vol 41 #16*

November 15, 1906

“James Laing its President, . . . on the 15th day of November 1906, made sale of all of its property, both real and personal, except outstanding accounts, . . . and that L.L. Stuart for etc became the purchaser at the price of \$25,750.00 of which he paid cash \$8,820.00 and executed bonds for the balance . . . “ *Deed 24-72*

November 22, 1906

The Lewisburg Milling and Electric Co's plant was sold at public auction here last Thursday and was knocked down at \$25,700 to a company of which, we understand, Lewis S. Price, Jas. Laing, Richard Jasper, John A. Preston, Jas. M. Preston, and Fred Snyder are members. Byrne Holt as general manager of the plant is pushing the business with energy and good judgment. *Greenbrier Independent* Vol 41 #21

November 29, 1906

The Secretary of State has issued a charter to the Bluegrass Milling Co., of Lewisburg, to do a general milling business, buy and sell grain, etc. Capital \$50,000 of which \$25,700 has been subscribed and \$8,820 paid. Incorporators James Laing, Lewis S. Price, Jas. A. Preston, Richard Jasper, Fred W. Snyder, and John A. Preston, all of Lewisburg.
Greenbrier Independent Vol 41 #22

May 19, 1907

“ . . . it is therefore ordered that James Laing the President of this corporation make a deed for the property of this corporation to the said Blue Grass Milling company as soon as all the purchase money shall be paid and whereas said purchase money has been paid in full, now therefore this deed: . . . those two certain parcels of land adjoining each other . . . upon which is situated the Lewisburg Milling and Electric Light plant, together with all buildings thereon, and also the fixtures belonging thereto and all appurtenances thereto belonging, and the appliances, machinery, wires, poles and other things used in the electric light plant such as boilers, engines, belts, dynamos, shafting etc and electric appliances whether on said premises or elsewhere, also the grain of every kind in said mill and the product, thereof, also two teams (4 horses, 2 wagons, and harness) . . . “ *Deed 74-272*

References:

Figure 1: Library of Congress, Boxley Mill Diagram

<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ar0051.sheet.00019a/>

- 1) <https://mountainmessenger.com/ronceverte-pioneer-power/>
- 2) https://archive.org/details/sim_electrical-world_1900-10-27_36_17/page/662/mode/2up

All deeds are on file in the County Clerk's Office in the Greenbrier County Courthouse. Deeds are identified as 'book number – page number'.

The *Greenbrier Independent* newspaper was researched at the Greenbrier County Historical Society archives at the North House Museum, Lewisburg, WV, where a digitized version is available.