

## Jackman's "Johnstown" Now Stretches Over 75 Acres



Famed Johnstown, Pennsylvania is located about 80 miles east of Pittsburgh, on the bend of the Little Conemaugh River where it joins with Stony Creek. It is a community of more than 100,000 people and is famous for what happened there on May 31, 1889.

No such fame has descended on Jackman's "Johnstown," but one can see and appreciate the growth and activity that is merging on the 75 acres just off Coburn Avenue on Jackman's west side. Most simply refer to it as John's Trailer Park. But it is more - much more.

John Baillargeon is the owner and operator of the extensive housing and entertainment area. His own growth and development tends to be a reflection of his holdings.

Baillargeon was born in Holeb fifty-three years ago, one of seven children. At age seven, he moved to Jackman, primarily for the purpose of his elementary and middle school education. By age 15 he was back at Holeb, where he had purchased a hunting camp and had built another. These he rented to "sports" for hunting and fishing while simultaneously cultivating his own guiding and trapping skills. Old-timer Hap Crandall also hired him to run his lot of sporting camps at Holeb, and before long, John had set himself up in business in a profitable way. He lined up long-time customers, outfitted and guided, and developed a high degree of trapping skill that has been nurtured and refined along the way. He trapped in the winter and he fished in the spring. And he had started his lifetime career as an entrepreneur of some high regard.

After eight years as a woodsman, guide and camp operator, Baillargeon went to work for Larry Beaudry in 1963. He worked at the Beaudry mill as a handyman and the driver of a forklift. In 1966 he bought his own truck with which he hauled logs for some seven years.

But John's dream and plans for the future stayed with him and over the years, he managed to invest whatever money he could in land. A piece here and a piece there, and he was finally able to consolidate it all into the present 75 acre site he now owns. He had moved to Jackman from Holeb in 1974 and he started, on a very small scale, to build a trailer park. He cleared 12 sites - and he was in business.

By 1983, John B. had set aside enough cash to purchase an aging rooming house from Glen Lumbert on Coburn Avenue that he named the Canadian Hilton. Additionally, he remodeled some older buildings and added some housekeeping units to his emerging conglomerate.

In 1989, Baillargeon started to build a campground and, when finished, will offer a total of 100 sites on 35 acres set aside for camping alone. It will feature a recreation and entertainment center. All of this, he says, will be completed in the next five years.

Currently there are some 68 rental units at "Johnstown," of which he owns 36. He accommodates approximately 175 residents which is somewhere around 12% of Jackman's population. Most all of his units provide for less costly living, making them an attractive housing complex.

John will be offering the new entertainment center for weddings, receptions and traveling shows. Recreational activities on site, after he builds his man-made pond, will include swimming, fishing, and "floating ducks." He takes a measure of significant pride in knowing that all of his achievements were accomplished with a minimum of hired manpower and, in truth, one's mind is somewhat boggled by that realization.

Even now, Baillargeon employs Mary Viles as park manager and Ron Sevigny as maintenance mechanic and all around helper. He doesn't encourage the name of "Johnstown," but to the casual observer, it simply appears as almost a separate community. It really isn't, but for a former woodsman, trapper, truck driver and fledgling entrepreneur, John's Trailer Park is a sizeable and significant entity. And the future will, one has to believe, fulfill a personal dream and add further enhancement to the area at large.