



# The Pack Family Legacy

By Peter Austin

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## The Pack Family Legacy



George W. Pack - 1831-1906

Vance Monument. But his name lives on mostly in association with his two greatest gifts to the city, Pack Memorial Library and Pack Square.

Asheville has been fortunate in having a number of benefactors who moved here after becoming successful and then shared their wealth with the city. None was more generous than George Willis Pack, a wealthy lumberman who moved here in the early 1880s.

He supported Mission hospital and the YMCA, and gave land for Aston and Montford parks. He supported a kindergarten and was the primary backer for the





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Pack Square - Early 1900s

And while George Pack's name is still remembered here — almost a century after his death in 1906 — other members of his family followed his example, becoming well known for their leadership and good works, and earning national reputations at the time of their deaths.





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One was a son, Charles Lathrop Pack, who worked throughout his life in the field of forestry, specifically in the area of forest economics.

Born in 1857, Charles studied forestry in Germany and then spent several years traveling to study the woodlands of Canada and the United States. He was an early promoter of forestry education, and endowed programs at Yale and the University of Michigan.



Charles L. Pack  
1857 - 1937

He sought to educate the public about the value of forests, and the benefits of planting trees. He also started demonstration forests around the nation — placed within sight of a busy road — so that travelers could see what a managed forest looked like.

Pack served on many boards and was president of the National Preservation Conference, the American Forestry Association, American





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Tree Association, and the American Nature Association. He was a founder of the latter two.

One point that might be of particular interest to the people of Asheville at this time is that Charles was a Trustee of Pack Square, a position passed to him by his father. An article published in 1933 in the local paper focused on this relationship that the Pack family had with Asheville.

Based on an interview with Pack, who was visiting Asheville at the time, he explained that it passed from George Willis Pack to Charles, and then to his son Randolph. Their duty was "...to protect the public's interest in the square against any and all encroachments."

It seems that this trusteeship ended with Randolph. His youngest son, Arthur N. Pack, continued the leadership in nature conservation



Randolph Pack  
1890 - 1956





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practiced by Charles. Born in 1893 in Cleveland, Arthur graduated from Williams College, studied Business Administration at Harvard, and served in France as a captain of Ordnance during World War One.

Later, he worked with his father in promoting better forestry practices, helping to manage the family foundations devoted to that task. Together they founded the American Nature Association and Arthur was editor of Nature magazine for many years. He wrote at least four books in the 1920s and 30s, three being concerned with forests and nature, but another, *The Challenge of Leisure*, took him in a new direction.

He moved to New Mexico in 1933 and bought a cattle ranch, which he named Ghost Ranch. Perhaps his interest in how Americans spend their leisure time was a factor in turning his cattle ranch into a popular guest ranch.





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However, this property was too close to the testing at Los Alamos, and Pack moved to Tucson where he opened the Ghost Ranch Lodge in 1941. It would become just as popular as its previous namesake, which Pack donated to the United Presbyterian Church in 1955.

Arthur Pack remained as active as his father and grandfather in the public affairs of his new home. He was a cofounder of the Arizona - Sonora Desert Museum, and although a Presbyterian, donated a million dollars for an endowment of St. Mary's Hospital, a Roman Catholic institution on the west side of Tucson.

He strongly supported the local YMCA, as his grandfather did in Asheville, and backed the Tucson Mountain Park. For these efforts, and others he was named in 1952 as Tucson's Man of the Year.

Although he had moved to Tucson, Pack had not forgotten his friends in New Mexico. Seeing that there were few medical facilities in the area near the first Ghost Ranch, north of Santa Fe, Pack and his wife searched for a way to build a hospital in the little town of Española.





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Although wealthy, even they could not build it themselves, or so they thought initially. The path became clear when Pack realized he could pay for the hospital by selling the stamp collection left to him by his father, which, when auctioned, funded a thirty-bed hospital with full supporting facilities.

We know the name of George Pack well in Asheville. It is interesting to know that other cities and owns across the country cherish the names of other Packs also, who carried on the habit of leadership and public activity learned from their grandfather.

*Peter Austin is a librarian at Salem Academy and College in Winston Salem. An Asheville native, he has been interested in local architectural history for over twenty years, with a special interest in the works of Rafael Guastavino.*





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For membership information in The Preservation Society,  
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