

Salamonie Mills, Inc.

Founded: [1833–34 or 1837–40]

Location: Originally claim of Fleming Mitchell on Salamonie River one mile north of Warren (also known either as McCoy Mill or McCoys, or the site of a later mill known by this name); now on the Salamonie River across from Warren

The Salamonie River, which originates in Jay County, is a narrow creek for much of its course; only in Huntington County does it widen and deepen, and here many mills grew up in the nineteenth century. In the fall of 1833 Fleming Mitchell settled in Salamonie Township in Huntington County and soon thereafter constructed a sawmill with the aid of his nephew Leander Morrison. Mitchell was born in Bourbon County, Kentucky, but he grew up in Ohio, where both he and his nephew had been living prior to coming to Indiana. Their mill, which was located near Mitchell's cabin about one mile above the town of Warren (a site later occupied by the McCoy Mill or, more simply, McCoys), was in operation by the fall of 1834, and by the end of the following year Mitchell had installed a buhrstone, which enabled the mill to grind corn.

Mitchell sold this original mill to John Reid, originally of Barnstable, Massachusetts, in 1837. Reid added bolting (or sifting) machinery, which enabled him to produce wheat flour. This mill continued for several years, although its ultimate fate is unclear. Between 1837 and 1840 Mitchell built a second mill across from Warren. He sold this mill to Barney Miller in 1854. David Finkle later acquired the mill. Finkle was born in Pennsylvania in 1816 and came to Wayne County, Indiana, at the age of twenty-two. He operated a mill owned by Isaac Dalrymple on the Mississiniwa River five miles below Marion. Later he and his brother William operated a mill at Milton and then constructed their own mill at Aetna. He and his second wife, Mary, eventually moved to

Warren and operated the mill built by Mitchell for about seven years. In the nineteenth century a farmer's trip to a gristmill could sometimes take more than one day, depending on his distance from the river. While David ran the mill, Mary would cook meals for the farmers and look after their needs.

Finkle and his wife eventually left Warren, but Finkle later returned and purchased a half interest in the mill on the Salamonie River. His partner died, and in 1862 Finkle assumed full ownership of the mill. He worked tirelessly at the mill. His sons Henry, John, and Jacob grew up working in the mill and eventually became millers like their father. The oldest son, Henry, eventually owned a mill in Pennsylvania, while John and Jacob became partners in their father's operation on the Salamonie River. Their firm became David Finkle & Sons, and the sons later inherited the mill. Just prior to 1921 the company was reorganized as the Finkle Milling Company. In 1921 the firm built a new five-story mill, which came to be known as the "Salamonie Mill." This Salamonie mill was constructed in part from timbers and other materials used in the old McCoys mill, which had been damaged in 1913 and was later sold and disassembled. The Salamonie Mill relied on four horizontally mounted water turbines, which were equipped with pitch controls to maximize water volume. Ownership of the mill was in a state of flux for a number of years, passing to Milton J. Anderson in 1921, then to Thomas Nutter, and finally to Emery C. Smyth in 1932.

James Arthur McDaniel and LaMoine McDaniel purchased the mill in May 1947. Two years later they incorporated it as Salamonie Mills, Inc. The McDaniels expanded the feed mill's operations, building a seed-cleaning barn in 1952 and an office and farm supply building in 1954. In 1957 they acquired what came to be known as the East Plant,

a manufacturing plant used for grain conditioning and storage, seed warehousing, and maintenance shops. It had originally been built by the military in 1943 to manufacture rope for the navy. Salamonie Mills later acquired a storage and loading facility, known as the Grain Plant, which was located adjacent to the railroad between State Road 5 and Main Street. The building had originally been the Warren Elevator Company, which was built in 1879. By the 1990s it was loading approximately six hundred railway cars and fifteen hundred to eighteen hundred trucks per year. On 12 April 1976 the 1921 Salamonie mill building burned to the ground. A new feed mill was built on the same basic foundation as the earlier one. The president of the firm in the 1990s was Donald L. McDaniel.