

## Missouri

### James Cash Penney - Founder, J.C. Penney



Hometown: Hamilton, Missouri

Nominated by: Missouri 4-H

Year Inducted: 2002

Internet:

[www.jcpenney.net/company/history/history.htm](http://www.jcpenney.net/company/history/history.htm)

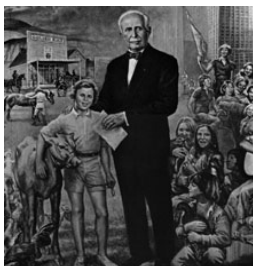
Mr. James C. Penney was not a 4-H member, but he contributed much to 4-H. In 1928 J.C. Penney began his association with 4-H when he purchased a 4-H Grand Champion Steer, and in 1930 his store housed 46 calves for the Calf Club show that he held. In 1964-65 Penney became a Gold Clover donor. He sponsored the first Western Regional Leader Forum and attended the last session and banquet. Mr. Penney met with Mrs. Nixon at the White House (1969) and both accepted Honorary Co-Chairmanship of the National 4-H Club Foundation Advisory Council. Penney received "Partner-in-4-H Award" at the 1969 4-H Leader Conference. Mr. & Mrs. Penney received the "Friend of 4-H" award in 1970 from Missouri for donating dairy cattle and land to the University of Missouri. The main hall at the National 4-H Center near Washington D.C. is named after J.C. Penney and a mural inside honoring him shows the joy received from helping 4-H youth. Mr. Penney also donated a substantial amount of money to Leader Forums, capital expansion and general support of 4-H

"My husband had a unique way of saying things you couldn't help but remember them. Today I remember one of his sayings particularly, because it fits this occasion so well. He said to me, more than once, 'If one builds for a decade, one should cultivate trees-but if one wants to build for the centuries, one should cultivate men and women.' I just can't imagine a better way to 'cultivate men and women,' as Jimmy put it, than through 4-H and its work."

Mrs. J.C. Penney, Sept. 1977

J.C. Penney was born on September 16, 1875, on a small farm near Hamilton, Missouri. At age eight, his father told him that he had to start buying his own clothing. The boy needed a pair of shoes, but he had only \$2.50 from running errands, collecting and selling junk and occasional farm work. He invested in pigs and later sold them at a profit. After high school, Penney held several jobs. In 1898 he went to work for Golden Rule Stores, a group of small dry-goods stores in Colorado and Wyoming. By 1917, Penney had achieved a remarkable level of success, and his J.C. Penney stores grew from a handful of small western dry-goods stores to one of America's largest retail chains.

To support youth interest in farming, Penney became a major benefactor of the National 4-H clubs. In 1954, Penney established the James C. Penney Foundation. This family foundation supports organizations addressing issues of community renewal, the environment and world peace. The Penney's were involved in developing the National 4-H Center, and J.C. Penney Hall remains the centerpiece of the campus. Mrs. Penney designed the stained glass in the chapel, and Mr. Penney is featured in a mural in the main lobby. J.C. Penney Co. has supported 4-H volunteer leader forums for many years and recently expanded their commitment to 4-H through after-school programs and the 4-H centennial.



Section of mural commemorating J.C. Penney and 4-H in America by Dean Faucett at the National 4-H Center.