



## 2017 Year in Review

by Tom Parsons, Park Ranger

If you're reading this you are part of a select group: people who know and care about Thompson's Mills. While it is nice to be part of an intimate group, the future of the mill depends on our group becoming larger and louder. More people need to be aware of the unique beauty of the mill so that they will help us overcome the challenges of preserving this structure. The TMPS and OPRD have worked hard together on connecting more people with the mill, specifically by hosting hundreds and hundreds of local school students for our education programs and hosting cider pressing events. But you also can directly help connect more people with the mill by bringing friends here for a picnic, suggesting to visiting relatives that they stop by on their way out of town, or you could call or write influential people you know and tell them to come see this place for themselves (a visit on a balmy spring day would be best!). The mill's future depends on Oregonians knowing about it. The more who know, the more will care, and the more voices will call for its preservation.

Meanwhile, 2017 saw some progress in preservation efforts, including some hands on actual care for the wooden building itself: I continued painting the west wall of the north warehouse and we prepped some nooks and crannies of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor exterior for painting and likely gutter installation. Noted historic preservationist Fred Walters wrapped up his comprehensive preservation plan for the mill. We



We sprayed a low toxicity wood preservative on the floors, walls, and ceilings of the basement. We had an electrical engineer scan the building with a thermal camera for any hot spots in the mill wiring (found none) and we gave a training tour to the Halsey-Shedd fire crew volunteers. Mill friend and fire engineer Nick Artim found and hired a new alarm monitoring and service company, and we worked with state worker safety experts (SAIF) to make a plan for cleaning the remaining grain out of the bins upstairs. As mentioned earlier our education programs really took off, and we had an

unprecedented number of adult special interest groups too. I moved and organized all the “stuff” that had accumulated in our bone-yard: heavy timbers, cinder blocks, bricks, pieces of metal roofing, old headgates, in preparation for moving the host sites behind the hay barn. We also had an extensive archaeology dig completed here to be sure that new utility trenches for the host sites would not harm any unknown underground treasures. Other projects that serve different kinds of needs were also completed this year: I assisted Tom Adams with his book *Open the Flume Gates*. If you’re reading the newsletter you should own a copy of this book. It is now a must-read for incoming hosts and volunteers. We planted 12 Oregon White Oak seedlings to expand the tiny oak savannah habitat at the north end of the property and while clearing some blackberry nearby, we found another 50 already growing! We interviewed Dorothy Prince, office manager in the 1970s, and learned that back in those days the mill was always well maintained and painted. Disco isn’t the only thing from the 70s I’d like to see come back!

In the coming year I hope we all continue to do our own part to preserve the mill. I will work tirelessly to protect this place, whether it is by direct preservation of the wood or by building programs or pursuing projects that will lead to long term care by OPRD. And you can share your interest and enthusiasm for this amazing place with our fellow citizens who have not been lucky enough to be exposed to it yet. Everyone who comes here, sees the towering silos, sees the hand hewn beams, feels the old grind stones and sees the turbines in action says the same two things: “This place is so cool!” and “I’ve lived in Oregon my whole life and never knew this was here!” Let’s hope that we can preserve the mill so it can give the same experience to more and more and more people.

## Yellow Buses Roll In

Bringing mid-valley children to the mill

by Jim Ballard

Thompson’s Mill State Heritage Site is not a museum; it is a treasure of the past that represents pioneer life typical of the mid-Willamette Valley. Students of Oregon history find the Mill to be a place where they can learn by stepping back in time to experience a bit of life in the 1800s. Park employees and volunteers aim to share with visitors the way people who lived and worked at the Mill functioned here.

Starting several years ago, a concentrated effort was put forth to increase visitation by school groups. Mill staff decided to develop a program that would tie directly to requirements mandated by Oregon social standards for fourth grade. Teachers from local schools were invited to bring their classes to Shedd to participate in this program. Of course, school tours are not restricted to fourth graders; children from second to seventh grades have toured the Mill. These students clearly enjoyed learning about the lives of settlers.

The program that evolved was flexible, but included hands-on activities such as grinding flour. When the young visitors watched the water that powers the Mill, the Mill itself would come to life. Many of its antique moving parts still move! As currently constituted, the students visit five or six stations where volunteers explain specific aspects of the Mill, and they experience the sounds and smells that surround them on the tour.



As word has spread during the past few years, more and more groups have visited. During the 2016-17 school year, more than 700 students came to the Mill. Many teachers have brought classes more than once, and some of these have indicated that they look forward to returning with students in the future. Not only that, students themselves have provided feedback after visiting the Mill. After having been to Thompson's Mill on a field trip,

some of these children have returned with their parents and others to explore the Mill further.

Some school groups picnic at the Mill, and almost all of the students who come enjoy interacting with the animals that live there. In addition to its historical value, the Mill provides an opportunity for all visitors to get acquainted with rural life.

Some members of Thompson's Mill Preservation Society may assist in facilitating these tours as volunteers; after all, each station requires a committed and informed adult. Introducing children of this area to the Mill is but one of the ways in which TMPS promotes the Mill.

## Old Time Cider Pressing

### Drawing Visitors to the Mill

by Donald Lyon

Always looking for new ways to attract visitors, the Thompson's Mills Preservation Society purchased a Correll cider press that was delivered in late August. Juggling vacation schedules, we managed the "squeeze" in three cider pressing events this fall. Saturday, September 2, saw crowds of approximately 350 during the day despite some rain. Friday, November 24, was a glorious fall day with 300 in attendance. Saturday, December 9, was bone chilling to begin with but we had about 150 visitors. Each event was publicized in local papers as family friendly events: bring the kids, help make cider and tour the mill! The enthusiasm was wonderful to behold: kids and adults chucked apples into the grinder, helped turn the screw to press the pomace and watched the

golden nectar pour forth. Old folks had tales to tell of making cider on the farm as kids. Parents brought their children to get hands-on experience making "real food." Bottled into half-gallon jugs, the cider was eagerly snapped up for a small contribution to the fire suppression system that is one of the many goals of the TMPS.



Future plans are to schedule regular pressings from late-August through November. Seems Johnny Appleseed did his job exceedingly well. Everyone has unpicked apples and many asked about donating them to the TMPS cider pressing events and volunteering to help press. Many were pleased to make a donation of more than the suggested amount. That's the spirit folks! More volunteers, more apples and we'll keep the cider flowing and the pioneer spirit soaring at Thompson's Mills.

## Thompson's Mills Preservation Society

formerly known as the Boston Mill Society

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In cooperation with the Oregon State Parks & Recreation Department: we support the mill, the other buildings and grounds that comprise Thompson's Mills State Heritage Site.

Thompson's Mills is the oldest operable water-powered grist mill in Oregon. We are dedicated to the preservation of the history of Thompson's Mills, its supporting structures and the way of life that developed here from its inception. We also look towards the future by aiding efforts to educate the public about the significance of the mill and its impact on the history of agriculture in our region.

**MEMBERSHIP** – We want to thank all of you for your past and present support of the Thompson's Mills Preservation Society (formerly Boston Mill Society). Reminder: our dues structure is \$20/year for a single membership and \$30/year for a couple. While supplies last, those who contribute \$50 or more will receive a copy of Tom Adams' fine book, *Open the Flume Gates*. Note: All dues paid after Aug. 31 include the following year.

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