



Silo Logo Project Finished

Jim Ballard - President

TMPS asked members for financial support to help with the costs of repainting the silo logos, and you came through in a big way. Our sincere thanks to all who donated to this worthwhile project. We especially want to thank our top ten donors:

Liz Rapp, Janice Parsons, Shannon & Barbara Nill, Murlene Dubay, Tony & JoAnne Smith, Gordon Vogt, George & Cherly Pugh, Bud & Barbara Baumgartner, Sophie Steward, Joseph Brazie and the George Abernethy Historical Society.

We hope all of you can visit the Mill and see the improvements that have been made.

Silo Restoration a Success

by Ranger Tom Parsons

After 101 years of wind and rain the silos of Thompson's Mills are looking better than ever thanks to a major repair and preservation project undertaken by Oregon State Parks.

The goals of the project were to stabilize the unique concrete structure on top of the silos, replace the roof, repair the crumbling concrete edges and apply a fresh coat of protective but breathable white wash.



Engineers, architects, carpenters, metal workers and masons were challenged by the unique concrete structure on top of the silos. The 30 foot long rectangular room that houses the auger to deliver grain to the silos is the oldest non-military structure of its kind. Lots of head

scratching had to go on before the new internal support frame was installed and blended specialty concrete patches were applied to the exterior.

The scaffolding was a major project in itself but its massiveness led to some side benefits: a small addition was bolted on that connected to the mill roof allowing mill staff to repair and paint the sky bridge.

The timing of this project was critical. Had the rot on the upper concrete edges extended any further into the roof the job would have become far more expensive. OPRD management in Salem and project managers Austin Van Nette and Brian McBeth are to be congratulated for getting this complicated project completed before it became even more challenging.

On a personal note, I am really excited about the return of the black stripe around the top of the silos and auger house. Did you notice? I know it is a small detail but it is a rare treat to bring back an original design element that hasn't been seen for 70 years.



With the addition of the logos, funded by TMPS members and a grant from the Linn Country Cultural Coalition, the silos look as good as new and are ready for another 100 years.

Early Mill Creatures

by Carl Browning

When OPRD took possession of the Mill, the state got a small collection of creatures that had previously made the mill their home. These included a Blue Healer dog, aptly named "Blue," a cat named "Millie," and a pair of peacocks. All of these creatures claimed ownership in the property and, in various ways, expressed their objection to the presence of us outsiders.

Millie, for example, felt that the only real reason for a Ranger to be on site was to provide a lap. She did not seem particularly interested in doing much of anything. Millie's stay at the mill was short-lived. It was thought she probably passed over the Rainbow bridge because of heart problems, the result of the habit of one of the first hosts giving her bacon every morning. Her passing led to the arrival of Bucky, whose story has been told elsewhere.

Blue the dog was an interesting personality. To start with, Blue was a terrific mouser, making up for any weakness that Millie showed in this respect. Blue also announced the arrival of any visitors to the site. Unfortunately, Blue did not like anyone in uniform, and this hostility especially included the Ranger. Not surprisingly, their relationship was one of mutual dislike, distrust, and tolerance. Others in uniform fared no better with Blue. For example, the UPS drivers often refused to even get out of their truck during deliveries. I remember several times observing drivers slowing down just long enough to throw packages towards the house when Blue was in the area.

Blue also had conflicts with the peacocks. Frequently he and the Peacock would face off, one growling and the other in full tail feather display, both dancing around like fighters in the ring. I was never really sure if these were serious disputes or a game.

The peacocks would enter the Mill at every opportunity because inside the Mill was where the food was. While we didn't object to feeding them, we did get tired of cleaning up the droppings they left everywhere, so we tried to keep them outside. However, I once entered the office to find the Peahen standing on the desk. I tried to shoo her out through the open door, but she instead flew out through one of the windows, breaking the glass. The Peacock loved to stand on the hoods of cars and look at his reflection in the windshields. He also loved shiny hubcaps.

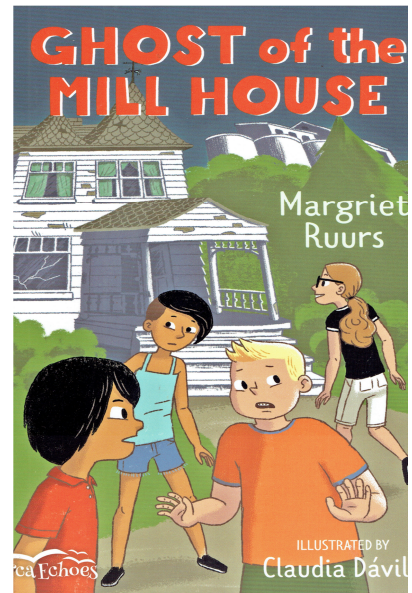
After several years, Blue and the peacocks had to go. Blue was just too possessive of the property and was not always tolerant of park visitors and had to be relocated to a new home. However, before he left, he did dispatch the peahen one day. The lone surviving peacock was relocated to a home with other fowls.

Ghost of the Mill House

Book Review by Carl Browning

We are excited about a new offering for sale in our mill store; a book for younger readers. The book was written by noted children's book author, Margriet Ruurs. Margriet and her husband were the first residents to live in the Mill House after the Mill became state property. This small book captures the early days of the mill's history through a series of adventures, as seen through the eyes of some young summer visitors. While Thompson's Mills is not specifically mentioned, the physical connection is clear, from the cover illustration to the adventures experienced.

This modestly priced offering will allow our younger visitors to relive the experience of their visit, as well as being a wonderful gift from a visiting grandparent.



Open the Flume Gates

Book Review by Donald Lyon

Visitors to Thompson's Mills are often surprised to learn that the mill dates to 1858--one year before Oregon became a state. Of course many improvements were made over the years--including the iconic silos with the Valley Rose and Delicious Apple flour logos. Open the Flume Gates will open your mind to much that has happened over the past 160 years. The book is an invitation to look around and see the ghosts of Richard Finley and his two partners as they select just the right site near the Calapooia River for the mill, have the mill race dug and hew the huge timbers that have held the structure together all these years. Today, Thompson's Mills is the last surviving water powered mill in Oregon. It is not just a relic of the past, but a monument to man's tenacity and determination to create a civilization where there had been only wilderness.

The 56 page soft-cover book contains 140 images, both current and archival, organized brilliantly--each image worth a thousand words. The images are accompanied by historical and explanatory remarks by Tom Adams, volunteer archivist, and Tom Parsons, Park Ranger, overseeing the maintenance and development of Thompson's Mills State Heritage Site.

The book is divided into the four "lives" of the mill, including 1858-1910 as Boston Mills-Boston Rolling Mills; 1910-1965 as Thompson's Flouring Mills; 1965-2004 as Thompson's Mills-Boston Power Company; and 2004 to the present as Thompson's Mills State Heritage Site.

A bill of sale shows that the original land purchase of 3 acres cost \$50. The water rights cost \$75. Late 19th and early 20th century photographs show mule drawn wagons delivering wheat. Color images picture what may have been the original French Burr millstones--now on display since the mill was converted to steel roller mills shortly after 1900. Colorful flour sacks, including "The Pride of Oregon" flour, circa 1905, are shown. The mill was converted to produce animal feed in the 1930s and some of the interesting machinery such as the Corn Cracker, "Molassesizer," and Pellet Mill are shown.

An early innovation by Martin Thompson in 1903 was generating electric power from one of the turbines, which was used to power electric lights in the mill and nearby mill house but it was not enough power to run the machines at the mill. The machinery was run exclusively by waterpower until 1948 when the property was connected to the power grid. In 1986 Thompson's Mills began to generate electric power of its own, which became a major source of income for nearly the next 20 years.

Additional pictorial essays show how grain was moved with water power from three turbines, how the vertical power is changed to horizontal power through gears and then moved throughout the mill by flat belts. "Weights and Measures" is another pictorial essay with images of various devices, such as the Richardson Sacking Scale and the circa 1910 Fairbanks Scale. "Fire and Flood" deals with the various fire suppression systems and alarms, including the rounded bottom fire buckets and "fire grenades." "Hidden Spaces" show how the past is made present with the discoveries that came from shining a bright light into the cob-webbed corners of a 160 year old building.

A short pictorial essay illustrates the importance of the gristmill to Oregon's first non-Native settlers. As the Mill became a central gathering place, a village called Boston developed nearby. When the railroad tracks were laid a few miles west, the villagers moved their homes and businesses to that site. Three turbines powered Thompson's Mill. Four head gates control the level of the millrace and two flume gates open to turn the three vertical turbines. Two of the turbines are over 100 years old. A short afterword outlines plans to develop an exercise-history-nature trail around the 20 acre property. An orchard of heritage cider apple trees has been planted.

All mill enthusiasts and Oregon history buffs will find the quality of the images and the accompanying text to be both informative and enjoyable. The book may be purchased at the Mill or from Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's on-line store for \$15 including shipping. The following link will take the reader to the Oregon Park online store, as will the QR code.



Open the Flume Gates; A photographic window into Oregon's oldest water-powered flour and grain mill by Tom Adams and Tom Parsons. Photographs by Tom Adams. Printed 2017.

<https://store.oregonstateparks.org/index.cfm?do=&itemTypeld=4>

Get a copy of this wonderful book for your coffee table today!

A Christmas at the Mill

as recalled by Larry Thompson

Christmas at Thompson's Flouring Mills was a busy, festive occasion. There was a wreath on the door to confirm the season. A major project, along with the regular delivery of grain and feed, was the Thompson Flouring Mill Calendar. Grandpa and Uncle Ron Townsend (son-in-law and salesman at the time) would decide on the various pictures and design to be used each year. This provided a choice for each customer. The special calendars would be handed out to each customer, along with a small stack to each feed store. My job was to deliver these precious gifts to each house in Shedd. These calendars later became a collector's item.

Grandma (Otto) and Grandma (Laura) decorated the house with a big fresh tree in the bay window of the living room. There would be fresh greens throughout, and colorful balls and lights enlivened the atmosphere. Outside, using 20 ft. extension ladders, Grandpa and the boys from the mill would put up lights in the large fir trees and smaller lights in the two holly bushes. It was quite beautiful.

On Christmas morning, Otto and Laura's six children (2 boys and 4 girls), with 16 grandchildren, would arrive around 9 a.m. bringing even more presents to be placed under the tree. The traditional present opening was around 10 a.m. Family tradition was all the grandchildren were given presents from everyone until they were 12 years old. One Christmas, I had forgotten I was no longer included in that group as I sat there watching everyone else open their gifts. Grandma knew this would be a hard transition for me and had made me three shirts from the Thompson's Flouring Mills print feed sacks so that I would have three gifts to open.

At midday, a large Christmas turkey dinner was served that had been prepared by Grandma and the housekeeper. Not a potluck, but prepared for us. The festivities ended early so that family members could return home. Some were as far away as Seattle. Then the wait for the phone calls that everyone had returned home safely. This was Christmas at the Mill in the 40s and 50s.

Thompson's Mills Preservation Society

formerly known as the Boston Mill Society

In cooperation with the Oregon State Parks & Recreation Department, we support the mill, the other buildings, and the 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 thank all of you for your past and present support of the Thompson's Mills Preservation Society (formerly Boston Mill Society). Our dues structure is \$20/year for a single membership and \$30/year for a couple. We hope you will continue to support us in helping to preserve Oregon's last water-powered mill.

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Newsletter 4, November 2019

Membership / Renewal / Gift (Please circle one)

Our dues structure is \$20/year for a single membership and \$30/year for a couple.

Note: Dues paid after Aug. 31 carries through the following year.

Mail this completed form, along with your check payable to:

Thompson's Mills Preservation Society
PO Box 1, Shedd, OR 97377

(Please print clearly.)

Name:	
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**Thank you for helping to preserve
Oregon's last water powered mill.**