



## Time Marches On

by Jim Ballard - President

At the end of 2020, most of us exchanged holiday greetings with family and friends. One theme many of these greetings will have in common is a reminder of how 2020 has affected each of us.

Thompson's Mill State Heritage Area is no exception; this particular unit of the Oregon Parks has been affected, too. Even though the Park was closed for part of the year, it did reopen on a limited basis. A dedicated staff of OPRD employees and volunteers continued to work. Visitors enjoyed strolling the grounds throughout the summer, despite being unable to tour the Mill itself.

TMPS has not been dormant. Planning for future projects and for funding those projects has continued. Until this year, apple pressings provided an infusion of cash in the fall; now, your membership dues and limited sales of TMPS merchandise generate income.

If you desire to help out in a particular area, we welcome your assistance; specific projects can be coordinated through TMPS. As always, monetary contributions are appreciated, too. Our contact address is PO Box 1, Shedd, OR 97377.

Hoping for better days ahead and wishing each of you a happy 2021. Please check updates noted in Tom Parsons' article.

## Annual Meeting Canceled

Due to the ongoing difficulties presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic, combined with the reality that a large proportion of our members are in vulnerable groups, and the trend that our Annual Meeting usually only attracts one or two guests, we have decided to forgo the Annual Membership Meeting this year. We will have an online board meeting to establish a budget, then meet as needed to tend to business as the year progresses.

# Mill Update

by Ranger Tom Parsons

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There is no doubt that 2021 is going to be an interesting year but I will go out on a limb and say it is going to be a great year. We have a long way to go in stopping the pandemic, but things are headed in the right direction and I fully expect that Thompson's Mills and the TMPS will pick up where we left off in 2019.

Thanks in large part to the leadership of TMPS President Jim Ballard, the school group program here was providing unforgettable experiences to hundreds of local kids per year. One teacher told me that they had replaced their annual train trip to the Capitol in Salem with a bus ride to the mill because not only did the kids enjoy it more, but the mill does a better job at meeting their curriculum goals. With new Ranger Rye Guessford on board, I expect the program to really take off. His experience, humor and jovial attitude will be perfect for finding even more ways to achieve success with the school group program.



Another bit of progress that makes me feel good about the coming year is again thanks to the TMPS. As you all know the mill is a towering structure and the safety issues posed by working 50 feet above the ground have never been tackled. The TMPS funded a professional fall-protection contractor who guided us in the design, purchase and installation of the complicated equipment that

allows staff to safely perform desperately needed maintenance. Once the weather turns, I bet Rye and I will have our safety harnesses on almost every day as we make progress in caring for the upper floors of the mill.

Finally, I am already looking forward to cider pressing this fall. I think we have to be optimistic about conditions being right for expanding and promoting the events to include a food truck and early advertising in local and even statewide media. The vast majority of the visitors to Cider Days in the past were new folks who were drawn in by the opportunity to have a new experience. Following the hands-on pressing and tasting of the juice, you can see the awe on their faces as they explore the mill. These events are absolute home runs and the TMPS should

pat itself on the back for creating such fantastic opportunities for the public. Cider Days are the best days of the year here.

Looking back and looking ahead, I cannot stress enough how important the TMPS is to the successes we have had- and will continue to have- at this challenging site. Without your contributions- well, I don't even know what to say about how impossible success would be without you. We have a long way to go, not only in fighting the pandemic, but also in preserving and promoting this infinitely fascinating, rich, complicated, sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes thrilling site. And we will get there together. Working here is such a challenge but also a privilege beyond what I could have hoped for in a career. Thank you so much for your support and care for this one-of-a-kind gem.

## Open the Flume Gates

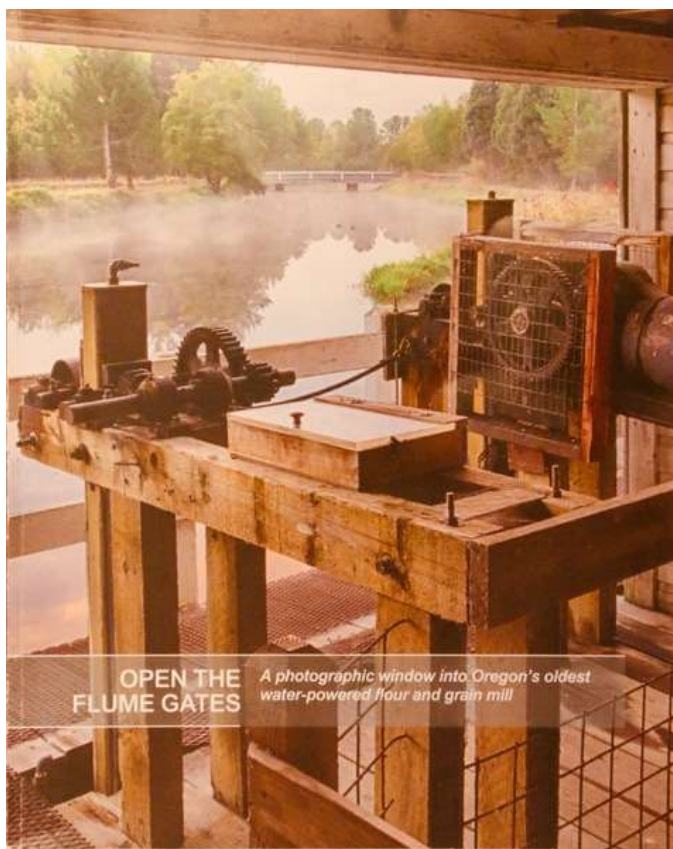
Book available at Thompson's Mills

by Don Lyon

Christmas is over and if you did not receive a copy of Tom Adams' wonderful book (*Open the Flume Gates; A photographic window into Oregon's oldest water-powered flour and grain mill*) about Thompson's Mills then it is time to buy it for yourself. Details at the end of this essay.

Oregon's only surviving water-powered mill was built in 1858 by Richard Finley and two partners. They began work when the land along the Calapooia River was still part of Oregon Territory and machinery was shipped "around the Horn" to the Columbia and Willamette River system. 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 made for the book 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 1930's 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 waterpower 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. Thompson's Mill was powered by three turbines, 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 apples 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 is available for \$15 at the Mill. For an additional \$5 shipping, Park Hosts will mail the book to you after receiving your check for \$20. Call 541 491 3611 to request that a book be held for you or send your check made to OPRD to TMSHS, 32655 Boston Mill DR, Shedd, OR 97377. You can also call with your credit card number.

Thompson's Mills State Heritage Site is currently open every day except Christmas and New Years from 9-4pm. Due to COVID 19 restrictions, buildings are closed but the grounds and toilets are open.

# Some Events of the 40's and 50's

Dorothy Thompson Chase

recalled by Larry Thompson

Dorothy was born into a busy household as the sixth child of Otto and Laura Thompson to be raised in the 1904 Mill House. She was born November 1928 in Brownsville with the assistance of a mid-wife. The first child in the family was my father Myrle, born in January 1909, followed by Sylva, Orval, Alice and Eunice. Dorothy attended Shedd Grade School and graduated from High School in 1946. The School was built in 1913 to handle grades 1-12 and the new Shedd High School was built in 1948 while Myrle (my father) was chairman of the Shedd Oregon School District #37 Board.

While Dorothy was growing up, her after school job was working in the office at the mill. In addition, she would help out in the mill house. With seven bedrooms full of family and one or two mill employees, there was always cleaning to be done. After finishing school in Shedd, Dorothy attended University of Oregon for four years along with all the WWII veterans who were back home at that time. Her older brother Orval (past U of O student body president) helped her find a room for a single freshman. As all available rooms were full, Orval's connections were valuable.



While attending U of O, she was enrolled in a math class. A fellow student in the class, a vet named Milton Chase, asked for some assistance with a math problem. They soon began dating and four years later, after graduation, they were married at the Shedd Methodist church. I, the nephew, was the ring bearer at that wedding.

The couple then moved to Portland, where Milton Chase began his career in business. He retired as the trust officer at the Bank of California. They had three children. Milt passed a few years after retirement. Dorothy still lives in Portland with her daughter and is doing well at 92 years. She resides as the last living member of the second-generation Otto Thompson mill family.

## \* The Butte Creek Mill in southern Oregon is asking for help

shared by Carl Browning

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For 143 years the Butte Creek Mill has relied on its 1872 non-consumptive water rights to power the millstones. After the 2015 fire, and subsequent sale of the mill to the Butte Creek Mill Foundation, the mill has been without its original water rights. When the 2018 mill sale took place, the property and building were transferred to the Butte Creek Mill Foundation, but the previous owner's water rights were not. The Foundation has been informed that the previous mill owner has an offer for the water rights from a third party who is not able to lease back any portion of the 1872 water rights. The loss of waterpower to the mill could be devastating if a replacement cannot be found.

The Butte Creek Mill Foundation is therefore soliciting community assistance in raising the necessary funds to purchase a portion of the original 1872 water rights or the donation of alternative water rights to meet the Mill's power needs. At this time, the Mill estimates that it will require a minimum of 10 cubic feet per second to power the millstones. The purchase of the 10 cfs will cost an estimated \$257,390.

This is an urgent issue for the Butte Creek Mill Foundation as there is only a short window of opportunity to purchase a portion of the 1872 water rights before they are sold off. The Foundation has a separate fund set up for water rights donations. You may donate on our website - [buttecreekmill.com](http://buttecreekmill.com) and note that it is for the Water Rights or send a donation to Butte Creek Mill Foundation, PO Box 957, Eagle Point, OR 97524.

For more information call us at 541-690-5356 or email at [info@buttecreekmill.com](mailto:info@buttecreekmill.com).

## 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 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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## 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 carry 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:	
Address:	
Phone:	
Email:	
Amount:	
Comments:	

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