



Pride in Membership

by Jim Ballard, TMPS President

As a member of Thompson's Mills Preservation Society, each of you has a significant role to play in helping to preserve Oregon's last water-powered mill. Our task is to work with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department on projects that help keep the mill welcoming to visitors, whether Oregon citizens or not. OPRD recognizes your support of this historical treasure. I hope each of you is proud to be a member of TMPS.

You will read articles in this newsletter that explain some of what we do. Your Board looks for ways to enhance each person's visit to the Mill; we seek grant dollars to help fund projects; and we readily participate in activities at the Mill. These include apple pressings, school tours, maintenance work, and promotions.

Board member Carl Browning writes about the early days he and his wife spent living and working at Thompson's Mills State Heritage Site. Along with Carl's recollections is a captivating remembrance written by Larry Thompson. Larry recalls his youth at his family's business, what it was like being around a working mill. In his article, Roy Thompson outlines the process by which the original Martin Thompson immigrated to the US and demonstrates the way connections may emerge from unexpected sources.

I wonder if any of you would be willing to share reminiscences about the Mill in a future issue of this newsletter. A lengthy article is not necessary; a few sentences reflecting what you remember would enhance readers' understanding about life at the Mill. Please send your written accounts to TMPS, PO Box 1, Shedd, OR 97337.

We can all make a difference. Do enjoy your Mill and do stay involved with the Thompson's Mills Preservation Society.

Those of you who are TMPS members will find a membership card enclosed with this newsletter. Please write your name as you prefer it to be written. The membership date on all cards is the date Thompson's Mills Preservation Society started, Apr. 2, 2016.

Membership dues should be paid by Dec. 31, 2018. Dues are \$20 for an individual and \$30 for a couple. Please mail your dues to PO Box 1, Shedd, OR 97337. *We welcome new members!*

(There is a membership/renewal/donation form on the last page)

It's the Little Things

by Tom Parsons, Park Ranger

Everyone who comes to the mill sees something different. Artists may see the shapes and colors of the mill or landscape. Local old timers see the mill today through the lens of what the scene used to look like. Kids see the giant apple and rose logos on the silos... but then notice the poultry and get distracted. Historic preservationists see a challenge. A big one.

Of the three water powered mills on the entire West Coast, Thompson's Mill is the only one that is largely original. Occasional bits and pieces of the largest water- powered mill west of the Mississippi have been replaced, but almost everywhere you go in the mill, anything you see is historic, not a replacement or a substitute. It's the real thing, often put there by an Oregon Trail Pioneer. On tours of the mill, we often use this fact to connect visitors to history. "Reach over and put your hand on that beam," we'll say. "It was installed when Abraham Lincoln was president."

Today's Oregonians are fortunate that for well over a century the mill was properly maintained. Basic upkeep, painting, window glazing, and other tasks that preserve a wooden building in a wet climate were a priority for the owners, so the siding they installed is the siding you still see today. Their efforts made basic economic sense; inexpensive maintenance prevented the need for costly repairs. And while they didn't realize it, they were laying



the groundwork for a future State Heritage Site. Their time and effort and materials they had to gather or create themselves became a lasting legacy for future generations of Oregonians to appreciate.

And so, with that background in mind, I'm proud to report that, this summer, we came close to completing one particular small maintenance project. On the third floor, the mill's original north wall meets two other additions to create a small pocket of walls I lovingly call "The Nook." It's a dark and (formerly) damp area where mold and algae have thrived for years, but thanks to the quality of the original old growth wood, the siding had only just begun to rot and is 99% intact. A few years ago Park Ranger Assistant Matt Moritz and I slowly but surely prepped the area for preservation. This summer P.R.A. Thonni Morikawa continued the project with me. We scraped, primed, painted, and installed much needed gutters to stop the constant splatter of water from roofs above. Though a few more small pieces of trim remain to be replaced, I am confident that we

caught the decay before it crept into the framing of the area. Had the decay progressed, a costly and complicated repair would have resulted.

I know it's hard to imagine that such a small victory, especially one in an area that the public will likely never see, could be the topic for an annual article, but let me tell you, I am excited. My training in the area of Historic Preservation has been minimal, but I know enough to be proud. My training in economics is even weaker, but I know enough to be very proud. This little victory will likely never make it into the newspapers nor be appreciated by more than a few of us, but we see the value in the extra effort it takes to achieve such a hidden goal. It's the occasional triumph like this that makes me feel really good. And that feeling is what pushes me to come back day after day to work towards the next little victory in the ongoing effort to preserve Thompson's Mills.

Our Early Days at Thompson's Mills

by Carl and Sue Browning

Our association with Thompson's Mills began on June 1, 2004, when we pulled our RV into the property. Some weeks prior we had agreed to be camp hosts, knowing only that this was a recently acquired OPRD property, and that it was somewhere south of Albany. I think the officials we dealt with also said something about it being an old mill. We could not at that time have possibly imagined how much we would enjoy our time at the Mill or what a long-term association we would have with that old mill. We returned several summers as hosts, and later as a Summers Rangers Aide, and finally we lived in the Mill house.

Two Rangers were assigned to the Mill at the beginning, and there was more than enough work to keep everyone busy. Converting the Mill from an industrial facility to a safe and meaningful public venue required a great deal of effort on the part of OPRD personnel and outside contractors. Besides the mill building, much needed to be done to the house and surrounding property, and that was where we spent much of our time. The house had suffered from deferred maintenance and unfinished renovation efforts. Some of the projects I worked on included re-glazing and re-finishing nearly every window in the house, complete demolition and replacement of both porches, installing the original door and window trim, re-finishing the staircase, and endless clean-up and painting. Sue spent hundreds of hours working on the grounds and flower beds around the house. The before and after effects were startling.

Within the Mill, there was a lot of clean up. In the beginning piles of "stuff" everywhere had to be dealt with. Many of the bins still contained product. Displays were created as unexpected and unique items were discovered on the property. Entirely new entries were constructed to meet code requirements and to allow proper handicap access. A host site was built, along with rest rooms and parking lots. A fair amount of money and many hours of labor were expended to establish the basis

of today's facility. In addition, for the first several winters, the Mill was still producing and selling electricity, yet one more task for the Ranger to deal with.

But there were numerous other activities of interest during those early years. A few examples included a visit by the Ghost Busters (Eugene Paranormal Society) to determine if the property was haunted. They concluded it was. The property was a movie set for the filming of "Zenophilia," a strange movie about a strange subject. Numerous car clubs visited, and the Mill provided a rest stop for one of the Cycle Oregon events. Our family loved to visit the Mill. In fact, the Mill was important enough to our oldest granddaughter that she chose it as her wedding site.

That June day in 2004 was the beginning of a fulfilling and enjoyable part of our lives that we will treasure forever.

Some Events of the 40's and 50's at Thompson's Flouring Mills

recalled by Larry Thompson

I was part of the fourth generation of Thompsons as great Grandfather Martin, Grandfather Otto and my father Myrle laid the foundation for the family. I remember in 1947 when we (sisters Murlene and Patricia) and I would spend the night. I would walk with Grandpa, which included his three foot long flashlight, to the mill to turn the water wheel off for the night. The generator provided electricity for everything at the mill. Then at 5 a.m. when the frost was still on the pumpkins, Grandpa would return to the mill to turn the wheel on for fresh lights.



The last year flour was manufactured at the mill was 1947. I used to walk on the third floor where the flour beaters were located, but I did not stay very long because of the white flour dust. They finished producing flour at the mill in 1947 since the supply of wheat was thin and two round trip truck loads per day to central Oregon was a challenge. The 1945 Chevrolet truck would leave about 4:30 am for the Redmond area and return about mid-day and repeat that process in the p.m.

More to tell in the next newsletter!!

Thompson Family History

By Roy Thompson

For those of you who know a little of the Thompson family history, let me tell you what my wife and I learned this past August.

Elisa Katharina Sophia Schult married Volquart Martin Thomsen. We know them as Sophia and Martin Thompson. Sophia's family immigrated to America before Martin did. The Schult family came over one or two at a time each year, and settled in the area around Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Sophia was one of the last of her family to venture to the US.

Sophia's sister, Catharina Maria Dorthea Schult, was already in Iowa, married to a Heinrich George Fredrick Burmeister. George Burmeister is responsible for Martin Thomsen immigrating to America. Mr. Burmeister provided the documents that allowed Martin to make the journey (and possibly to change the spelling of his last name). On occasion, Mr. Burmeister is referred to as a lawyer, but as I was told this past summer, he was not. It was just that he was a self-educated person, and whenever people in his community had legal problems, they went to him for help.

George Burmeister was a Captain in the Iowa National Guard at about the time the Civil War began. Charged with recruiting enough men to form a Company to fight for the Union side, he signed up around 100 men to volunteer. His Company was the first all-German speaking unit in that war. Later on, another three companies of exclusive German speaking soldiers were recruited.



Ruth and I learned of this at the Burmeister family reunion the weekend before Labor Day 2018. One memorable event at the reunion was the demonstration showing how difficult it was to load a muzzle-loading rifle. Volunteers who came forward to participate were given a six-foot-long dowel representing a rifle. They were then taught all of the moves that it took to load and fire it. (You must should

know that the volunteer army that day was made up of people ranging in age from eight to eighty.) Before they could fire their weapons, volunteers had to be taught how to march and do some close order drills. As you might expect, this training exercise kept more than 100 people at the reunion entertained for about an hour.

Ruth and I would never have known about this reunion if I had not answered my phone one summer day in 2015. Ellen McVey and her sister, Marian Wetjen, were vacationing in the

Willamette Valley, staying with some people in Corvallis. When the subject came up of things to do and see, Thompson's Flour Mill was mentioned. Ellen promptly called her mother, Dolores Rawson, in Cedar Rapids to see if there was a personal connection. As it turns out, their mother was Dorthea Schult Burmeister's granddaughter. The sisters went to the Mill the next day, took the tour, and obtained phone numbers for both Larry Thompson and myself. I answered their phone call and then met with the ladies at the Portland airport an hour before they left to return to Cedar Rapids. In their parting comments, they extended an invitation to attend their family reunion. We have been in casual contact with the Iowa Burmeister descendants since then, and on each occasion, they remind us of their reunion. This past August, Ruth and I decided to take them up on their offer.

Thompson's Mills Cider Orchard

-- old and new

by Donald Lyon

The original apple orchard at TM is gone now but a new orchard is taking its place--keeping history and tradition alive at the Mill. Apple cider, both fresh and fermented, has a long history in America and at Thompson's Mills, too. Old photographs show an orchard of very large standard size apple trees west of the Miller's house. Larry Thompson recollects gathering the windfalls and taking them to a neighbor's farm on Roberts Road to be crushed into cider. Fresh cider could be enjoyed during the apple-growing season from late August through December (depending upon the apple varieties planted). To produce a beverage that would last through the winter, the fresh cider would be put into barrels and allowed to ferment through the action of whatever wild yeast was present on the apple skins or in the air. With any luck the hard cider would be a palatable beverage with an alcohol content of 3-4%, similar to beer. If the fermenting cider was exposed to the outside air and vagrant yeast, the result might well be cider vinegar--also a valuable product in the pioneer household, used for pickling vegetables.



In 2012, Roy and Larry Thompson (Thompson's Mills Preservation Society), Orchardist Monica Maggio and Ranger Tom Parsons grafted 23 heritage varieties of apple scions onto 3/4 standard rootstock for a total of 41 trees, many of these are classic cider varieties such as Red Winesap, Ashmeade'S Kernal, Spizenburg, and Cox's Orange Pippin. These are varieties that you won't often see at the supermarket because, for the most part, they make

for better cider than they make for good eating. In 2013 the young trees were planted, using aerial photos from the 1930's to map the trees' original locations. In 2018, those trees are 6-8' tall and beginning to bear fruit. Certainly in another ten years friends of the orchard will be making cider again from apples grown at the Mill.

In 2016 your Thompson's Mills Preservation Society purchased a cider press made by the Correll family in Veneta, Oregon. It looks and works almost exactly like the old time two basket presses found on many farms all over the country. One notable exception is that the grinder is now powered by an electric motor. Apples are being sourced from Riverwood Orchards in Monmouth, Oregon Country Farm (an orchard with over 200 trees and 40 varieties of cider apples), apples donated by both backyard orchardists and our good friends at 2 Towns Ciderhouse in Corvallis. With the grinder spinning, whole apples are fed into a hopper, which quickly reduces them to a juicy pulp. The filled barrel is then placed underneath the press screw and the fun begins. Stalwart youngsters and a few old codgers turn the handles on the press screw and the beautiful, sweet nectar comes pouring out into collecting pans and then decanted into half-gallon jugs. During cider pressing days, the public is invited to tour the Mill, help with the pressing and sample the fresh cider. Few visitors can resist making a donation to the Thompson's Mills Preservation Society and going home with a jug, or two, carrying on a tradition that extends, in America, back to George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, cider makers and aficionados all. Old Ben is recorded as advising us "that it is indeed bad to eat apples; it is better to turn them all into cider."

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 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). 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.

Copyright © 2018 Thompson's Mills Preservation Society all rights reserved.



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 includes 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.**