

MILL MUSINGS

A Publication of the Museum of Power and Industry, Inc.

Volume XXV Number 1 January 2021



THE LEGACY OF 2020

In 1955 author and historian Walter Lord published *A Night to Remember*, his non-fictional account of the sinking of the famous ocean liner *Titanic* in 1912. Well, I think we can all agree that 2020 will be recorded as *A Year to Remember*. The terrible toll wreaked by the COVID-19 virus is continuing as we write this newsletter, but hope is in sight with the announcement that vaccines are becoming available. We trust they will prove effective and we will see a decline and elimination of this health threat in 2021.

The virus has caused several changes in the museum at Falls Mill. During the three days each week that we were open we regularly had over 100 visitors. Folks were looking for a place to get away for a few hours, enjoy some outdoor activities, and learn a little history at the same time. Practically all of the tour groups scheduled for 2020 canceled. By the fall we did host a few, smaller home school groups as well as an antique car club. The mill closed for the winter on December 12, and will reopen April 1 as conditions allow. Due to the reduced schedule, Carla Neal, who had worked for us for many years, chose to take a job at the Swiss Pantry Bakery in Belvidere where she is able to work more hours. We thank her for her many years of service and wish her much success in her new endeavor.

The COVID-19 virus has touched millions of lives nationwide. Many of our family members and friends have become infected during the past several months. Fortunately, most have recovered, but as of publication date we have lost 5 friends to this awful disease. We will continue to wear masks and practice social distancing at the mill and encourage all of our members to do the same.

THE LOG SCHOOLHOUSE – JOHN'S COVID PROJECT

Construction of the one-room log schoolhouse at Falls Mill has kept John occupied during the pandemic. The foundation was begun in January 2020. Since the July newsletter, considerable progress has been made on the building. Chinking of the logs started on July 28, and all the walls were completed by November 18. The whole chinking process took John around 250 hours.

During this time, the front porch was constructed, then later the small back porch entry. Molding trim for the doors and windows was made by an Amish mill near Ethridge, Tennessee. John and Janie picked it up on December 19. The trim boards have now been installed on the six windows and painted inside and out. The back door has been recently installed.

On November 20 John began work on the bell tower. He first had to install some heavy supports in the attic under the roof where the tower will be mounted. Construction of the tower was completed on December 9 (on the ground). A couple of days later, John and Janie put the primer coat on it, then the two finish coats. John then put the bell in place. We still have to attach the metal roofing and the weather vane. A crane will be used to set the tower on the roof. The following photos show the chinking of the walls and the bell tower.



Local contractor John Bush and his crew continue to help out when time permits. They brought a skid steer and completed the back fill on November 3 and 4. They also trenched and laid in water, drainage, and electric lines. The water line will service an old bucket pump on the front porch of the schoolhouse, so kids can crank the pump and draw water as from a well. Although the schoolhouse will not be wired for lighting (to preserve authenticity for the chosen year of 1898), John thought it wise to install a hidden outlet so that an oil heater could be plugged in during winter months when the schoolhouse is idle. We are also running phone lines through an existing underground PVC pipe (a former water line) so that we can connect a series of antique crank telephones and be able to communicate among the mill, house, shop, and schoolhouse.

Since the last newsletter, a few more artifacts have been acquired for the schoolhouse. John found an 1888 Spencerian penmanship workbook and two original newspapers from 1898 featuring accounts of the Spanish-American War and references to the Klondike Gold Rush. He also found the original sheet music for "When You Were Sweet Sixteen," a popular song from 1898. Museum member Walter Clement donated a couple of items for use with the pot belly stove in the schoolhouse. One is a cast iron ceiling flue plate, and the other is a stovepipe oven, which mounts in the flue pipe above the stove and was used for cooking. John White contributed a pottery ink well from England that will adorn the school master's desk. Local woodworker Tom McGill has offered two more antique school desks.

KEROSENE LAMP NOW WORKING

We reported in the last newsletter that we acquired a rare kerosene lamp from an antique shop in Bell Buckle, Tennessee. The lamp is a Miller "Jumbo" model that was hung from the ceiling in a store or schoolhouse. We had been searching for wicks for the lamp. John located a couple of wicks in Australia and ordered them. He then found a supplier in the U.S. Once the wicks were installed, the lamp was filled with kerosene and lit. It puts out a considerable amount of light and will be used in the schoolhouse.

DONATIONS

Total monetary donations for 2020 amounted to \$28,335, including a \$2,000 grant from the Camp-Younts Foundation. Many of these were earmarked for the schoolhouse construction and acquisition of furnishings and educational materials. Individuals contributing \$500 or more were (in alphabetical order) Kyle and Betsy Dugger, Bethany Ferguson, Waylon and Carol Ferguson, Frank and Beth Fogle, Genevieve Glazner, Clive Kileff, Vivien A. Kubricht, Alice and Steven Lyons, Gregory Mullins, John and K.M. Ofenloch, Robert S. and JoAnn Rock, Mark and Jayne Russell, Bernard and Kathleen Schroer, and Susan Stoltz. In all more than 200 friends of the Museum made financial contributions last year. We appreciate all of your grants, donations, and gifts. Your continued support of our restoration and preservation efforts has helped make Falls Mill a special place to visit.

NON-MONETARY DONATIONS

There were some notable non-monetary donations as well. A very nice spinning wheel, yarn winder (weasel), and hand cranked butter churn from the estate of Peter J. Garland in Sewanee were contributed by Mark Stewart. Museum members Carole and Gary Runyon got the wheel in working order and spinning beautifully. Ken Boyd Photography donated a large framed photo of Mrs. Kathren Greene at the front counter of the mill taken around 1986. Kathren, a retired school teacher from California, moved to Huntland with her husband in the early 1970's and volunteered for many years at Falls Mill.

ARTICLES FEATURING FALLS MILL

In early August Mark Boehler, a writer and photographer with the *Daily Corinthian* newspaper in Corinth, Mississippi, visited the mill and museum and interviewed John for a feature article in the *Crossroads Magazine* publication. The article appeared in the fall "2020 Outdoors Edition." Several photographs of the mill, dam, and bed and breakfast log cabin were featured. Also included were two pages of our recipes with stone ground grain products. The article brought many visitors from Northern Mississippi and Southern Middle Tennessee. *Tennessee Home & Farm* magazine, a publication for members of the Tennessee Farm Bureau, featured a brief article and photo of Falls Mill in its Winter 2020-21 issue. We sponsored a gift box for a drawing that included a selection of flour and meal products, Melissa Holloway's Salem Lexie Farm Goats Milk Soap, and a selection of hand woven pieces by museum members Kyle and Betsy Dugger and Charlotte McKelvey.



BROOK AND BRENT'S NEW BABY

We are happy to report the birth of Brook and Brent Davis' new little girl, Henley Jade. Her big sister Madi was so excited! She is shown above holding her new little sister. Brook worked for us at the mill and museum while in high school and college. She and Brent both teach at Huntland School.

EARTHSCOPE VIRTUAL TOUR OF FALLS MILL

For more than 25 years, the Earthscope environmental education program in the Huntsville City Schools has brought the fourth grade classes on field trips to Falls Mill. We typically see between 800-1,000 students during these tours. The students spend half of their time on a guided tour of the museum and the other half on a pioneer quiz with the Earthscope teachers. Last year all the tours were canceled due to COVID-19. In the fall, Kim Huskey and Laura Fallon of Earthscope brought Alex Russell to film a virtual tour for the program. Retired Earthscope director Jayne Russell (Alex' mother) accompanied them. The video was developed and is now available to the classes who were unable to make the trip. We look forward to welcoming the student groups again soon.

A NEW TEXTILE ARTS DEMONSTRATOR AT FALLS MILL

Chrissa Bledsoe of Minor Hill, Tennessee, known as “Cricket” among her friends, volunteered to demonstrate some textile arts to the only two school groups that visited the mill in 2020. Cricket raises angora goats, sheep, alpaca, and rabbits, and teaches hand spinning and tatting. She set up a very interesting display and also brought her goat Man of War (or Manny) for the kids to see. She supplied us with an array of her handmade items for sale at the mill. She processes all the fibers from the animals herself, so the finished pieces represent the entire process from raw fiber to handmade textiles. We appreciate Cricket giving her time for these student groups.

NECROLOGY

It is always with sadness that we report the deaths of friends and museum supporters. Recently we lost Dr. Lawrence Crowson, a longtime friend and museum supporter. He was a physician in Huntsville and one of Janie’s clients from her days as a travel agent. Jimmy Thomason, a friend and supporter, also recently passed away. Jimmy and his wife and children had been frequent visitors to the bed and breakfast log cabin. The most recent death from complications of pneumonia was William “Billy” Naasz. Billy came to the mill many times on our demonstration days, and often helped Gary Runyon in the blacksmith shop while his wife Bea demonstrated yarn spinning on the back porch of the log house. We extend our sympathies to the families of these friends.

CAMP-YOUNTS FOUNDATION

For more than 20 years the Camp-Younts Foundation of Virginia has provided an annual grant to our museum. Our friend and museum member Laurie Atkinson of Huntsville and his nephew Hal Atkinson of Raleigh, North Carolina, have been instrumental in securing these grants for us. Hal is a longtime board member of the Camp-Younts Foundation. He has been battling a severe case of encephalitis for many weeks. At this writing, he is out of the hospital and in rehab. We sincerely hope he will make a full recovery from this terrible illness.

UPCOMING ANNIVERSARY OF THE MUSEUM

On June 18, 1981, John and Janie Lovett incorporated The Museum of Power and Industry as a non-profit organization in Tennessee. Three years later the museum was permanently located at Falls Mill. This coming June will mark the 40 year anniversary of the museum. If conditions permit, we plan to have a celebration of this landmark date. Watch the web site fallsmill.com for details.

Check your museum membership card, and if it is time to renew, please join us at the Museum of Power and Industry, Inc., at Falls Mill for another year! Thank you for your contribution.

Check the contact/calendar page of the website fallsmill.com for special events.

INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY MEMBERSHIP \$25.00 per year _____

TAX DEDUCTIBLE MUSEUM DONATION \$ _____



Museum of Power and Industry, Inc.

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