

# MILL MUSINGS

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

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## **RESTORATION PROJECTS**

Work continues on the Cretors steam powered popcorn and peanut wagon donated from Walter Clement's collection in 2023. John has completed the mechanical restoration and, with the help of Ron McBride of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, operated the boiler and steam engine for the first time on September 9. Missing parts have been furnished by Bob Pearson of Olathe, Kansas, the leading restorer of Cretors machines. Research based on the steam engine number, and contacts with Cretors company (which still manufactures popcorn and concession equipment), has shown that the engine was manufactured by them in 1910.

Also donated to our museum from Walter's collection is a C. B. Rogers sash or moulding machine. It has a single cutting head for producing wood materials for window and door manufacture, as well as decorative mouldings. This machine is thought to date as early as the 1870s. John is working to make the machine again operable to produce beadboard for the Lucas House project.

The other machine is a Universal Woodworker made by the Sidney Machine Tool Company of Sidney, Ohio. This is a device patented in 1910 and sold to woodworking shops as a "do-all" machine for several tasks. It incorporates a table saw, band saw, horizontal boring attachment, jointer/planer, and means of using various other tools. We are in the process of having some missing parts fabricated in Manchester, Tennessee. If anyone out there knows of a vintage (1920s-1930s) electric motor in operating condition, we would like to find a 3 to 5 horsepower one to run this machine.

## **SWINGING PICKER**

A friend in Massachusetts, Amy Boyce, told us of a device for sale in Connecticut she thought might interest us for the museum. It is known as a "swing picker" for the processing of wool. It works similar to the industrial rotary picker we have now, but was sold primarily for home use in the nineteenth century. Modern versions are still available. Large teeth on a swinging frame open the locks of wool to allow burrs and trash to be separated before the wool is carded. After we contacted the owner and described our museum, he cut the price way down, and Amy picked it up for us. We hope to make it operable so we can demonstrate it with our 1830 vintage wool carding machine for group tours.



## **PRESENTATION TO THE ROTARY CLUB**

On December 17, Janie and John spoke to the Franklin County Rotary Club about recent accomplishments at Falls Mill and the Lucas house. This was the fourth time in 40 years we had been asked to address the Rotarians. The luncheon was good, and the talk was well received. It reminded John of the times he occasionally attended the Rotary Club with his father and uncle in his hometown of Crossett, Arkansas, in the 1960s. His uncle had been a Rotarian since at least 1920 and had a perfect attendance record for over 50 years.

## NEW COMPUTER

Thanks to the efforts of Gary Fillingham, our IT expert and long time museum member, Janie has a new office computer, replacing the one that had been in use for the past eight years. Gary helped us to set up the newest desktop computer and to back up all our files among three different computers, including one laptop still in use after 15 years. Maybe we need to add it to the museum artifact collection!

## LUCAS HOUSE UPDATE

We received another Capital Maintenance and Improvements Grant administered through the Tennessee State Museum to help with interior rehabilitation work on the Lucas house next door to Falls Mill. John Bush and his renovation company will begin the task in February as soon as weather permits. They completed most of the exterior and foundation work last July under the previous grant, so were therefore able to stabilize the house and save it from further deterioration. Individual donors have contributed more than \$20,000 earmarked toward further work on the house, for which we are very grateful.

We are still awaiting results from the tree ring samples that were taken in July, in order to determine the construction date for the house. Dr. Maegen Rochner of the University of Louisville, who led the team that took core samples from lumber in the house, reported that the analysis has been more involved than they anticipated, so could not provide a completion date as yet. We have located two more houses in the county with the same type of weatherboard siding, both said to have been constructed in the late 1890s.

There are a few pieces of donated furniture from Walter Clement's house that we will move to the Lucas house, as well as additional furniture and fixtures that our museum members and friends have offered. We are particularly interested in locating a Victorian "secretary" and chairs and tables representative of the period. Our goal over the next few months is to complete work on at least two rooms that can be secured for temporary storage of furniture. We believe the grant funds and donations will be sufficient to cover the cost to insulate the house, wire it, install the HVAC system, and rough in the plumbing. We will cover the chimney openings awaiting funds to rebuild the chimneys.

Our plan is to utilize the house as a visitor center, event venue, museum library, and handicapped accessible bed and breakfast. As we have reported before, it and the mill are the only remaining original buildings from the "Fall Mills" village that once existed in the hollow. Please let us know if you would like to contribute to the rehabilitation of this historic house.



## DONATIONS

In addition to the Capital Maintenance and Improvements Grant received at the beginning of 2024, we received a little over \$47,000 in additional individual donations in 2024, not including the regular museum memberships. We also received several nineteenth century readers and English books donated by Gail Coulter for use in the one-room schoolhouse. In addition, contractor John Bush donated part of his time during the Lucas house renovation.

## ACQUISITION OF ADDITIONAL ANTIQUE PRINTING EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

We were fortunate to acquire through donation Walter Clement's circa 1844 R. Hoe & Company Washington printing press. This is a hand press similar to the Cincinnati Washington press we restored and now exhibit in the mill, only some 40 years older. Walter acquired the press in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1985 and restored it to operate in his vintage print shop in Notasulga, Alabama, before moving here.

Presses of this age are relatively rare. They also require the use of oversize chases, which are the frames that allow the type to be locked in, and these chases are scarce and difficult to locate. We were able to find two from John Barrett, a letterpress machinery and supply dealer in Massachusetts. In addition, John provided a complete font of half inch wooden type, a size that is rarely encountered today. Museum member Kyle Dugger located several more large size chases in northern Virginia, which we hope to relocate here as soon as we can. The owner offered a significant discount since the museum is non-profit.

## USE OF THE SCHOOLHOUSE FOR CLASS

On October 17, the Mennonite school in Belvidere held a full day of classes in our one-room schoolhouse, thanks to teacher Serena Beachy. Serena is the eldest daughter of Alfred and Juanita Beachy of Huntland. The Beachy family has helped us with various projects at the mill for many years. The class of eight students, ranging in age from 6 to 14, were representative of the age group who would have attended the original one-room schools. It was a chilly day, so John lit the old pot belly stove, and it worked very well and drafted as expected. By the afternoon, Serena had to open the back door since the stove was performing too well. John dressed in his 1890s schoolmaster outfit and provided a 30-minute presentation to the children after their lunch. The students later told Serena that this was their favorite school day!



## MUSEUM MEMBERS PICNIC AND SPOOM CONFERENCE

On September 15, 2024 we hosted the annual museum members picnic, with entertainment once again provided by guitarist and singer Gabe Larose from Huntsville. The weather was good and about 85 members and their families attended. Then September 26 – 29, John and Janie attended the annual conference of the Society for the Preservation of Old Mills (SPOOM) in southern Missouri. Kyle Dugger, the conference coordinator, had set up the meeting based in the city of West Plains, Missouri. The hilly terrain in the Ozarks and the beautiful azure blue natural springs that powered most of the mills combined for a most scenic getaway and pleasant trip.



## FAREWELL TO TWO FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM

We are saddened to report the deaths of two museum supporters since our last newsletter. Floyd Ayers, a longtime friend, passed away on September 26 after a brief illness. Floyd was on the board of the Franklin County Historical Society and was instrumental in researching the original Trail of Tears routes and marking these throughout the region.

Don Shadow, an internationally known nurseryman, horticulturist, and plant expert, died November 11 at the age of 84. Don had provided several species of trees and other plants to our museum grounds over the years. He was also a well known collector and breeder of exotic animals, and at one time had over 650 animals of a significant range of species.

## BOXWOOD DIGGING

As most of you know, when we acquired the bordering lot with the dam in 2023, we also took possession of more than 1,200 small boxwood shrubs that are growing in the field. Quite a few have been lost as a result of the prolonged drought we experienced in 2024. We are offering those remaining to any of our museum members who may want to come by and dig them up. Just let us know when you wish to come. The last 2 Saturdays in March would work well as the ground should be soft after the winter rains. Any cash donation you would like to make for the shrubs you take would be most welcome.

## ANNUAL CLEANUP DAY MARCH 22, 2025

We are again asking for any volunteers who can help us clean the buildings and grounds in anticipation of our opening day April 3. We are scheduling Saturday, March 22 for this event, with March 29 as an alternative in case of bad weather. Let us know by text (931) 469-7161 or email [fallsmill@gmail.com](mailto:fallsmill@gmail.com) if you are available to participate this year. We'll get started at 9:00 and lunch will be provided for all workers. Many hands make light work! All are welcome.

**CHECK YOUR MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP CARD, AND IF IT'S TIME TO RENEW, PLEASE JOIN US AT THE MUSEUM OF POWER AND INDUSTRY, INC., AT FALLS MILL FOR ANOTHER YEAR! YOUR MEMBERSHIP FEE AND ANY DONATION YOU CARE TO MAKE ARE SO IMPORTANT TO US IN CONTINUING THE WORK WE HAVE UNDERTAKEN THESE LAST 40+ YEARS. THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!**

INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP \_\_\_\_\_ \$35.00 PER YEAR

TAX-DEDUCTIBLE MUSEUM DONATION: \_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER



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