

MILL MUSINGS

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PROJECTS ACCOMPLISHED DURING THE WINTER

While the mill and museum were closed during the winter, we were able to complete several projects. John worked on the antique cotton gin and finished in late December, as reported in the last newsletter. Soon after, we began work replacing gear segments on the water wheel. John Bush and Darren Earle helped with this project, then later Frank Turpin and John Boswell helped us complete the installation of the five new segments we had on hand. Then we contacted Cattail Foundry in Pennsylvania to have new segments cast. Two have been received and will be attached soon.

Next, John began construction of a loft storage area in the barn on the farm. This task took several weeks but was finally completed, although there is still a lot of work ahead lifting the items into the loft. One reason for the construction was to open a space where the 1946 Ford grain truck could be parked. Robin Fazio is planning to return the old truck, now 80 years old, to its former home at Falls Mill. It was the truck that miller Adrian Gonsolin used for decades to haul grain for his mill in Winchester, and later for Falls Mill. We bought the truck from Adrian in 1994 for \$500. It sat idle here until Robin took it to Baylor School in Chattanooga, where he was able to get it running again. After about 13 years, Robin told us the school was expanding, and the garage where the truck was stored would be removed. Therefore, he wants to return it to us.

With the new tourist season rapidly approaching, we decided we needed to replace a small bridge just past the picnic pavilion on the creek below the mill. It was deteriorating, and Janie thought the new bridge should be wide enough to support the riding mower and golf cart. John had to design a truss bridge much wider and heavier, so he used a Howe truss design from 1840 to construct the bridge. A couple of weeks later, just before opening time, the bridge was ready for mowers and foot traffic.



REQUEST FOR DONATIONS

The current grant that funds the Lucas house rehabilitation is a matching grant, so any donations may be used toward the museum's match of \$26,667. We have an estimate of \$2,080 for painting the walls in the parlor and front hallway, including the paint. We also have an estimate of \$1,550 for installing the new oak flooring in four rooms of the house (we already have the flooring). Tiling of the shower and the bathroom floor is expected to run \$10,000, including cost of the tile. If anyone would like to fund one of these tasks, please let us know as soon as possible, as the grant period expires September 30. Your name as donor will be posted in the appropriate location in the house upon completion of the project. Thank you very much for your interest in preserving this historic house.

CLEANUP DAY

On Saturday, March 14, we conducted our annual Cleanup Day at the mill, to prepare for the upcoming visitor season. 15 of our friends/museum members arrived to help with a variety of projects, including cleaning the buildings, picking up limbs and debris all over the grounds, cutting overhanging limbs around the farm trail, and cleaning around the old barn site near the dam. Barbara Hart helped Bernie Schroer plant boxwoods in front of the Lucas house, and Frank Hart, Ron Bundy, and Kevin Whisler planted yew bushes in front of the schoolhouse that Charoltte McKelvey cleaned and prepared for opening day. The Alfred Beachy family was with us again, accomplishing several tasks, and Susie Bundy priced items to be sold in the store. Kyle and Donald Dugger were busy everywhere!



GROUP TOURS

Even before we opened for the new season, we began a series of 39 group tours conducted on 27 days through the end of May. These were generally scheduled on days we were closed to the public (Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday), but occasionally happened on a Thursday or Friday. On the days the mill was open, Melissa Holloway helped with walk-in visitors while Janie and John conducted the guided tours.

CAPITAL MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS GRANT

The museum was successful in receiving its third Capital Maintenance and Improvements Grant, administered through the Tennessee State Museum. We focused this grant proposal on repair work to Falls Mill, listing 14 specific goals. Funds became available in December 2025, and we began utilizing them to replace gear segments on the water wheel in early January. We also replaced the deck at the rear of the mill, as well as the water wheel gate and spillway plug. New supports were placed under the big millstones at the back of the first floor of the mill (in the basement), and three rotting window sills were replaced. The floor in the southwest corner of the first floor had to be replaced, and a hole in the third floor was patched in. The major expense covered by the grant was the removal of the large poplar tree at the rear of the building. It was deteriorating and posed a serious threat to the building and the millrace if it fell. The grant expired June 30 with the allocated funds expended.



UPDATE ON WORK AT THE LUCAS HOUSE

At this writing, work continues on the Lucas house across the lane from the mill. John Bush's contracting firm is still working under a Historic Preservation Land Acquisition Fund grant administered through the Tennessee Historical Commission. Present work focuses on the interior of the house, including plumbing, wiring, HVAC units, and wall, ceiling, and floor repair or replacement. This is a matching grant, with the state furnishing 60% of the funds (\$40,000), and the museum providing 40% as a match. The match can include donated labor and materials as well as museum funds, and must total \$26,667. John Lovett has donated considerable time renovating the original doors in the house. Dean Lutes, owner of Wonders of Wood in Tracy City, Tennessee, replicated original door and window molding to replace what was missing or deteriorated. Ken Wilson of Wilson Lumber Company in Huntsville donated almost \$700 worth of beadboard we used in the house. John Bush has also donated time and materials on various projects. Additional furnishings have been offered from Delila Van Landingham, Christy Anderson, and Kathy Fillingham King, and John Bush has offered a player piano for the house.

Considerable work has been accomplished in the parlor of the house. We are trying to get as much done in that room as possible so that the donated furniture in the other rooms can be moved into the parlor. This will give us the opportunity to finish the wall, ceiling, and floor work in the other rooms. Decisions on wall coverings and paint colors are being made now. The grant expires September 30, so considerable work has to be accomplished between now and then. Our goal is to have the house ready to show visitors by the time we open again next April.



HORSE DRAWN MACHINERY

In 2023 museum member Steve Walker donated four pieces of horse drawn farm machinery. Not having a convenient place to display it, we stored it in the barn on our farm. Now that Greg Walls, who owns Redbuck's Mercantile in Huntland, has built a large display shed across from his restaurant and store, he has agreed to display our equipment there. John is making plans to begin moving the machines as soon as possible. These include a two-row cultivator, stalk cutter, reaper, and mowing machine. We will also move our wagon mounted sorghum mill and corn binder.

NEW DRIVE BELT FOR THE MILL

The large 12-inch wide drive belt at the rear of the mill building drives everything inside. We had been noticing that the plies on the belt were separating, and little could be done to remedy the situation. We finally decided that a new belt was necessary, so we contacted Vaughn Belting Company in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The new belt, with shipping, cost over \$1,000, but fortunately there was grant money left to cover the cost. On Sunday, June 21, John removed the old belt after 25 years of service, cut the new belt to length (70 feet), and inserted the belt lacing in each end. Then he fed one end of the belt over the top pulley and proceeded to the wheel pit below, where he connected the ends. Then the belt had to be pulled over the 8-foot drive pulley. Once the belt was on each pulley, John had to go back up to the tensioner pulley and adjust it so the belt would track properly. So far we have had no trouble with the operation of the new belt.

DEATHS OF FRIENDS AND MUSEUM MEMBERS

Sometimes it is difficult to realize we have been at Falls Mill almost 42 years. Although changes have been made to the building and grounds over the years, the one constant is the delightful friends we have made during these past four decades. It is always hard to say goodbye to old friends. As we age, more and more of our cherished museum members are passing away. Since our last newsletter, we regret to report the deaths of seven of our good friends and supporters, as follows:

Dr. Sam Hay, November 4, 2025. Sam and Sherry Hay were introduced to us many years ago by John and Carolyn White. Sam was John White's ophthalmologist, and practiced in Huntsville. Sam and Sherry acquired Hallehurst, an historic house near Pulaski, Tennessee, that we were privileged to visit several years ago.

Ken Lautzenheiser, November 23, 2025. We have known Ken and Loretta Lautzenheiser for more than 45 years. John and Janie met Loretta while John was teaching at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and she helped name our museum in 1981. Her husband Ken was a great person with a wonderful sense of humor. One of our earliest oral history interviews about the mill was conducted with Ken's grandmother Maggie Payne Marlowe in Tracy City, Tennessee, in the early 1980s before we purchased Falls Mill.

Gerry Cunningham, January 8, 2026. Gerry and Donette Cunningham have printed the T shirts, aprons, and caps we sell at the mill for decades. We always liked stopping by their log house on the way to The Docks Restaurant near Scottsboro, Alabama, to pick up an order of T shirts. Often they would join us when we ate at the restaurant, where we enjoyed exchanging stories with them. Gerry and Donette were among the first friends to stay in our log cabin B & B when we opened it in 1989.

Dr. John C. White, March 18, 2026. Janie was John and Carolyn White's travel agent in the first years of our ownership of Falls Mill. John was head of the History and Foreign Languages Department at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, and his wife Carolyn served as the university's Associate Provost while also teaching in the Department of History. John had a distinguished career, which included military service as well as academics. After retiring early from the university, John enjoyed entertaining friends and spending time at his seventeenth century home in Tenterden, Kent, in southern England. He and Carolyn split time between Tenterden and their historic home in Huntsville before they finally sold the home in Tenterden. John was a longtime friend and supporter of our museum.

Loyce Arrick, March 28, 2026. Loyce was a friend for many years, and the grandmother of Brook and Brittany Hill, who worked for us during their high school and college years. We have known her daughter Starr and son-in-law Jeff Hill for more than 40 years. Loyce was a very dear and sweet lady, who made many craft items and furnished them for sale in our store.

Dr. Jennie Lynn Williams, April 20, 2026. Lynn was a close friend, and our primary care physician for almost 30 years. She was well respected and loved by all her friends and patients, as well as by her life partner Betty Pinkerton. After Lynn retired, she continued to mentor nursing staff and provide health care advice to several of her longtime patients. She was only 68 years old, and will be deeply missed.

Gary Fillingham, June 22, 2026. We became acquainted with Gary and Rue Fillingham of Winchester, Tennessee, many years ago through the Chamber of Commerce and through Gary's sister, museum member Chyree Plehal. We soon found that Gary was a computer guru, and he began to fill a much needed niche as he became our "go to" guy for any technical problems that developed with our computers. Gary served in the military and enjoyed a long career as a computer technology consultant, having a large client base. Rue preceded Gary in death.

We consider it a great honor when the families of these departed friends ask that donations in their memory be made to our museum. Hopefully our estate plan and endowment will continue the preservation work we have undertaken these many years.

RECENT MUSEUM DONATIONS

In addition to monetary donations from several museum supporters, we have received some museum artifacts as well. Longtime museum member and benefactor Alice Bogle Lyons donated a nineteenth century school book for use in our one-room schoolhouse. The book is the *Independent Fifth Reader*, originally published in 1868 by J. Madison Watson. Another school related item is a circa 1930s Richmond school easel with blackboard and roll out pictures. An oak pedestal for use in the Lucas house was donated. Also mentioned previously was the donation by museum member Ken Wilson and Wilson Lumber Company of Huntsville, 400 feet of beadboard for use in the Lucas house. The late John Childers, longtime friend from Kentucky, bequeathed the museum his grandmother's cherished spinning wheel. Other textile related items recently donated were two hand woven woolen blankets from Wales, given to us by museum member and longtime supporter Carolyn White.

On June 18 we were visited by Randall and Susan Dennis of Boaz, Alabama. Randall had previously worked for Kendall Cotton Mill in Albertville, Alabama, and was familiar with all types of power looms used in the mill. He had begun work during the shuttle loom period and then witnessed the transition to air jet looms, which are much faster. He brought a Leno hook used for specialized Leno weaving, an old loom shuttle, a split dropper (used on shuttleless looms to stop motion in case of thread breakage or loss of tension), a reed hook, reed pliers, loom scissors, and a pick glass (magnifier for counting threads per inch in woven fabric). He also brought DVDs that show the cotton process in Kendall Mill before it was shut down. Randall offered to return in cooler weather and help with the restoration of our power loom collection in Falls Mill.

VISITORS AND NEW MUSEUM MEMBERS

In April, May, and June we hosted visitors from Texas, Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Georgia, North Carolina, Germany, Australia, and Nova Scotia. It is wonderful to know that people are still enjoying seeing the beauty of Tennessee for themselves. We are proud to have so many people from near and far come to tour the mill and museum, or even spend a night or two in our log cabin.

We frequently see visitors who remember coming to the mill as children. They are now bringing their children, even grandchildren, to experience this beautiful place. We want to welcome several new members including the Howell family of Tullahoma, TN, the Stone family from Clarksville, TN, the Renfroe and Mabry families from Huntsville, AL, and the King family from Decherd, TN. We also welcome the Picton family from Palm Harbor, FL.

TIDBITS

Congratulations to Chandler Ross, son of Marie Cahill Ross of Chattanooga (Janie's sister) and his lovely bride Kelsey Wilson who married on June 12th.

We welcome a new addition to the Brittany (Hill) and Jonathan Doherty family. Ginny is due any day now.

It was a treat to have the members of the Cabin Fever Tour antique car club visit on April 16th. Most of the vintage vehicles that participated in the tour were pre-1915. Automobiles included Reo, Marmon, Packard, Jackson, Buick, Model T's and even a 1926 Rolls Royce.



PICNIC TIME!

Mark your calendars to attend the annual Museum Membership Covered Dish Picnic on Sunday, September 20th. Gabe LaRose, guitarist from Huntsville, AL, will once again entertain members. Music will begin at noon and we will plan to eat at 12:30. Bring a favorite covered dish, salad, or dessert to share with your fellow members. We will furnish the meat and drinks. Tours of the Lucas house will follow the meal. Come and see the progress that has been made!

Please RSVP for the picnic by September 11th. Call or Text (931) 469-7161

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 42 YEARS. THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP _____ \$35.00 PER YEAR

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

I WOULD LIKE TO BE A PART-TIME VOLUNTEER AT FALLS MILL. CONTACT ME AT THE FOLLOWING PHONE NUMBER TO FIND WHEN I MIGHT BE AVAILABLE: _____



Museum of Power and Industry, Inc.

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