

“To arrange school visits or group tours before Memorial Day or after Labor Day, call Heather Shoppa at 563-571-5213 or email hshoppa@yahoo.com . To arrange visits between Memorial Day and Labor Day, call the Park office at 563-263-4337. Content of tours offered by Friends and by Park staff may differ.”

INTERPRETIVE REPORT—2013

**Friends of the
Pine Creek Grist Mill**



The Friends of the Mill have restored much of the machinery in the old mill and the mill is a great interpretive site. To make the most of this historical site Friends of the Mill have developed an extensive interpretive program consisting of three main aspects:

- Host visitors during the warm season.
- Organize and host a school interpretation program.
- Organize special events to showcase the mill.

Summer Program



Once again this past summer the mill was open weekends in May, and then again just weekends in September and early October. During the summer months, the mill was open Wednesdays through Sundays. The Friends of the Mill staffed the Old Mill 88 days in 2013. During regular open hours the mill had 6405 visitors for a visitation rate of 18.2 visitors per hour.

Hours were 12:30 PM to 4:30 PM. Usually we had one person working on weekdays and two people working on weekends. On weekends we were also assisted by a park naturalist who came into the mill to assist in running the mill. The mill was run grinding grain into flour on Saturdays and Sundays at 1:30 PM and 3 PM.

The cost to staff the mill for the regular schedule was approximately \$15,000. We do not charge admission to the mill. Funds to hire tour guides for the summer are almost all raised from donations. It is only because of the generous support of various businesses and individuals that the Friends of the Mill manage to keep the doors of the mill open.

School Interpretive Program



The Pine Creek Grist Mill is a popular destination for school field trips, and May is the month for field trips. The program makes for a very busy May for the Friends of the Mill. By the end of the month we have talked ourselves hoarse, but it is one of our most appreciated programs. We had a near record of 1546 children and adults come on school field trips to learn about the mill, life in the 1800's, and the park. We did increase the number of participating schools to fifteen. We already have our spring 2014 schedule full.

- Students participating: 916
- Adults accompanying students: 345
- Hours of staff time by FOM: 438
- Hours donated by volunteers: 291.5
- Staff cost: \$3,960.00
- Number of presentations given: 387
- Number of schools participating: 15



In addition to the May school tours we also host a few other tours. These include homeschool groups, bus tours, community groups and any other group that wants a tour. This fall we hosted 34 students from China.

Special Events

The third part of our interpretive program is to put on two special events at the old mill. The special events help interpret the mill and bring its historical heritage to the people of Iowa and Illinois. The biggest event by far was Heritage Day on Sept. 21st. Heritage Day was then followed by the Ghost of Pine Creek on Oct. 11th.

Heritage Day

Heritage Day is a great family day. It was similar to past years with lots of presenters doing everything from tatting, helping kids saw logs, taking old time photos, making baskets, demonstrating old time games, and many other activities. Plus there was music, antique cars to look at, a blacksmith and more. We also ran the mill for twenty minutes every hour. On Heritage Day the whole mill is open and all the machinery can be viewed as the machinery is running.

Heritage Day was different this year because of the log cabin. The partially rebuilt cabin allowed us to create a 1-day historical village that included pioneer cooking, a blacksmith, and Old Time Tools. A fiddler added to the historical feel. Volunteers were on the cabin site to talk about their rebuilding of the 1850's log cabin.

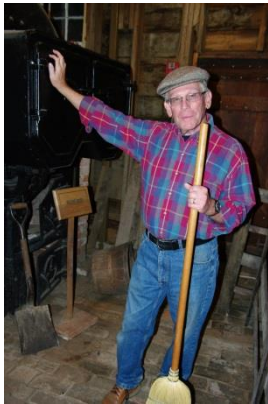
We have no way to accurately count the number of people at Heritage Day. There is no "one" entrance and we run a shuttle bus between the mill area and the Buckskinners Rendezvous in the west end of the park, so cars are parked all over the park. To get a count that we can compare with other years we station someone at the front door and count people going into the mill. This is not even a count of the people who enter the mill since the basement door is also open. But it does give us a number we can compare from year to year. This year's front door count was 840. The shuttle bus drivers count a similar number. The number of visitors was down a bit, but it was still a successful day.



Ghosts of Pine Creek

"Ghosts of Pine Creek" in October is a popular family event. Our ghosts, however, are not scary but are actually people dressed up in period costumes to represent people (ghosts) from the past. The ghosts give short presentations on what it was like to live in the past. This year's Ghost event had a Roaring 20's theme.

About 135 adults and children came for a fun evening of learning about history. Our ghosts came out to tell what life was like in Muscatine during the roaring 20's. On our hike we first met with Cora and Stanley Baker. Stanley had just gotten off work from his Uncle's radio station and was telling his Mom all about his busy day. As we traveled further on the trail we entered the world of Norman Baker's K-TNT Radio Station. Norman shared lots of his thoughts on his building and we even were able to stick around for one of his Home Folks Hour shows. Strolling down the pumpkin lit paths we came upon a young girl named Pearl McGill. She told of her challenges in Muscatine and her journey in the work she did with the button industry. Next stop was in the basement of Pine Creek Grist Mill where we met a worker who shared the story of the day the boiler system caught fire and blew a flue. We were even able to peek in the boiler and see what it looked like. We also learned that this was the point when Mike Missel started to consider selling the Mill. As we climbed the stairs we were met by the music playing on a Victor. A woman was all dressed in her flapper outfit ready to hit the town with her husband. He was taking her to the local Hotel for fine dining and an evening at the secret Speak Easy. Another set of stairs put us in the dust room where we were greeted and entertained with a ghostly story. At the tour's end we came to the general store area where we were able to have a sweet drink and social time. A grand time was had by all who attended.



Log Cabin

A new part of our interpretation program should be ready next year. Amazing progress has been made rebuilding an 1850's log cabin. The cabin was donated to us about 15 years ago. About a year ago the Friends of the Mill decided it was time to get the log cabin rebuilt. We have already used it as part of Heritage Day. When rebuilt, the log cabin will be used as part of the school interpretation program and during Heritage Day. Other visitors will be able to visit the outside of the cabin any time they wish.



Activities at the cabin on Heritage Day

Conclusion

The mission of the Friends of Pine Creek Grist Mill is to "restore, preserve and interpret the Pine Creek Grist Mill". Much of the machinery has been restored and the old mill is a great historic site, grinding grain into flour as it was done 160 years ago. The Friends of the Mill interpretive program served thousands of people in 2013. Our visitation during the summer was one of the best ever with 6405 visitors. In addition we served a near record of 1346 students and adults and hopefully increased their understanding of our pioneer heritage. The two big special events were well attended.

The coming year we will again hire tour guides, staff the mill, host school field trips, put on special events and most definitely we will keep ourselves busy. As a volunteer organization we are always in need of more volunteers. If you or someone you know would like to help the Friends of the Mill by talking to school groups, being a tour guide, donating funds, helping to restore machinery, or in any way you want, please con-tact the president of Friends of the Mill:

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