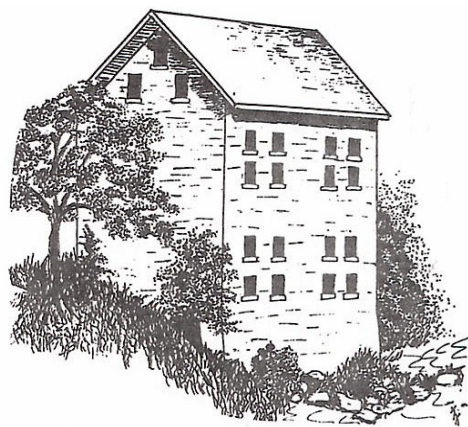


A newsletter from  
The Motor Mill Foundation  
of Clayton County

Number 4 Fall 2006

# Milling Around



## **Join us:**

The Motor Mill Foundation is made up of dedicated volunteers from diverse backgrounds. They meet regularly for planning or work projects.

Nested within the foundation is our Friends of Motor Mill group (FMM). Our friends share information, gain support for and help on various endeavors. To sign up:

## **Contact us:**

Motor Mill Foundation  
of Clayton County,  
29862 Osborne Rd.  
Elkader, Iowa 52043  
563-245-1516. Email:  
[cccb@alpinecom.net](mailto:cccb@alpinecom.net)

Milling Around is available electronically. Email addresses are needed to save postage. If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please let us know.

Look for photos and current happenings at:  
[www.claytoncountyconservation.org](http://www.claytoncountyconservation.org)  
& [www.motormill.org](http://www.motormill.org)

## **Updates:**

- The Motor Mill Benefit Concert will be held at 7:30 pm, October 14, 2006 at the Elkader Opera House. Tickets are \$10. Funds raised will help with current projects.
- The Clayton County Conservation Board received funding through a REAP (Resource Enhancement And Protection) HRDP grant. This \$38,500 will allow engineering and structural repair work to begin at the mill. A cash match of \$19,250 will be needed.
- Construction of two replacement stairways in the mill continues. We plan to have them completed by mid-October.
- The Clayton County Conservation Board has applied for a \$55,400 preservation grant to replace the roof and two chimneys on the mill and the inn's roof. A match of \$55,800 will be needed to reach the project total of \$111,200.

## **Living Memories:**

Mrs. Arrah Lavon Polkow, 88 years young, grew up approximately 3 miles from Motor. She was raised 1 ¼ mile North of Communia on the Tieden family farm and shared stories with us.

Frank Tieden, one of her uncles, (born in 1871) took grain to the Motor Mill for grinding. Sacks of flour could also be purchased at Motor. In earlier days, a family member went all the way to Dubuque for milling. Since he had to wait in line when he arrived, the trip took 3 days, so he was grateful to have a mill close by.

Arrah never went in the mill's basement. When she was 9-10 years old, her father took her up to look out a 6<sup>th</sup> floor window. Along the way, she saw the remnants of rectangular silk shaker screens. She described three "screens"; one each on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors. Wood boards, perhaps 5 ft long, ran on two sides. Their blue color dulled and dirty, the silks hung tattered, fluttering with the breeze. Her father told her there was a mechanism used to "shake" the screens and move the flour through.

Most of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors had been removed by the 1920's. She also remembered cattle and work horses being stabled in the mill at times. Horses were still common and needed in rural areas.

### **Living Memories:** *Continued*

Most 1920 roads were not gravel, but dirt, which were deeply rutted in the spring. At times, the roads were challenging for wagons and impassable for cars. Her dad used his team of horses to pull out a few mired cars.

Farmers used a king drag to smooth nearby roads. It seemed “wonderful when they graded and graveled the roads. The road at Motor wasn’t traveled much then. Her family went to Elkader from the Communia side of the river.

When Mr. Tieden hauled sand from a sand pit north of Motor for a building project at their farm, he took Arrah along 5 or 6 times. He would drop her off at the Klink house at Motor, while he shoveled the wagon full of sand. By the time they arrived, little Arrah was thirsty and looked forward to a drink of spring water. Mrs. Polkow described the artesian water that ran through the downstairs kitchen in a pipe about 18” above the floor.

Mrs. Klink needed a wheelchair and enjoyed visitors, since there wasn’t much traffic by the Klink farm. Mrs. Klink was kind, and Arrah fondly remembered the large, tasty sugar cookies with nuts or raisins she would bake.

On the hill north of the mill, Arrah remembered the place where the cable cars, which hauled stone in 1868, ran. The cable cars’ path was not as overgrown as the rest of the hillside.

### **Living Memories:** *End*

When she was 12-14 years old, her father asked Mr. Klink if he could buy a few barrel staves. Arrah stood at the door and saw some barrel hoops and many staves left inside the cooperage floor. Klink gave Tieden some staves and her father used them to make skis for her and her brother, Dale. The children used the barrel-stave skis on their farm and barnyard, even jumping a horse tank with the skis. Granted the horse tank was dug into the hill on one side....

In those lean times, folks fished for anything they could catch and eat. Arrah would walk with her brother or an aunt down a creek bed to the Turkey River where a large spring entered about a 1/3 mile upriver from Motor. They also crossed the bridge to fish near the mill.

The old Motor school closed before her time, but she looked in once with her aunt. The interior had been damaged by vandals. It saddened her to see books tossed all over. The cracked black board still hung on the wall.

She was not familiar with moon-shining at Motor, but a man near Littleport made enough moonshine for weddings and large family gatherings. Many area folks “cooked a little” at home; beer, wine or moonshine were common. Even her mom made a small amount of beer. Mrs. Tieden brewed one crock at a time, plus some root beer for the kids.