



Volume XXIX No. 6

The Milford Historian

===== Newsletter of the Milford Historical Society =====

November, 2001

Mission Statement: We are organized exclusively for educational purposes. We bring together those people who are interested in history, especially the history of the Village of Milford and Milford Township.

Wives of the Presidents

General Membership Meeting

Thursday, November 15th, 2001 @ 6:30 p.m.

Dr. Martin Brosnan of South Lyon will present a program highlighting a review of our First Ladies. Dr. Brosnan is an educator and an authority on these famous women in our American history. Also, as a bonus to the program, Judith Reiter will present an authentic Milford story a part of the Chatauqua program started this year. Judith's story will follow our main speaker.

Our general membership meetings are open to the public and all are invited. You don't have to be a member to enjoy this Thursday evening with people who like history!

Our evening will start with a sumptuous potluck dinner at St. George's Episcopal Church, 801 E. Commerce Street. (Set up at 6:15 p.m., eat at 6:30 p.m.) We will have a brief membership meeting at 7:30 p.m. and then the program starts at 8:00 p.m. Bring your own table service and a big dish to pass based on the first letter of your last name.

Milford Historical Society 6:30 p.m.
Thursday, November 15th, 2001

A-F Main Dish

G-Q Dessert

R-Z Salad

From the President's Desk

This is our last newsletter of the year, and I would like to take this opportunity to take a look back and remember our accomplishments this year. We have made great strides in our efforts to preserve and restore the Ford Powerhouse. We have been awarded a MDOT grant, which will allow us to go forward.

WE have worked cooperatively with the Questers in our area, providing some support for their State convention this fall, and benefiting from generous donations to the Powerhouse fund from their fundraisers.

We have joined in a collaborative effort with the Village Council for the Fine Arts, and our neighboring historical societies, in the planning and development of the Chautauqua Festival.

Under the continued care of Mary Lou, our Museum once again has welcomed many visitors over the summer months. Many thanks go to Audrey Miller who has taken over the scheduling of our docents.

We have awarded our first scholarships under our new docent program through Milford High School.

Our museum is getting a great once over and some needed repairs thanks to Bill Schimmel and his new maintenance committee. Continued on page 3...

Feature Story: Searching for Clues from Milford's Past - Part II

In Part I of our story, we determined if some authentic rough cut lumber from Milford's early days could be located, then it may yield the clues needed to solve the puzzle. Our puzzle is to determine what the first saw mills in Milford looked like and how they worked. Without any written descriptions or sketches from Milford's early settlers, a lot of assumptions must be made.

Our first assumption is that the lumber being inspected came from one of Milford's sawmills and not from another community such as Northville or Pontiac. Transportation was a major obstacle in the early 1800's. If goods then had to be transported by wagon, then lumber for building would need to come from the closest mill. Therefore, it's probably a safe assumption to declare that our evidence lumber is from a local sawmill.

Now, let's get on to the search. Two houses were chosen for inspection. The Greek Revival style house of Will and Barb Young on Garner Road was built in 1841 and is 2.6 miles north west of the Josiah Hudson mill site on Dawson Road. The Hibbard Tavern on Summit Street owned by Marge Sawruk was built in 1836 and is located 0.8 miles north of the Ruggles mill site on Huron Street.

These two houses were excellent subjects for evidence gathering.

In each case the rough cut floor joists that are visible when standing in the cellar and looking up were assumed to be authentic pieces of wood from the original house. Houses do get remodeled and revised. But these houses were quite authentic looking in the floor structure area.

In each case, the floor joists revealed a rough cut wood with telltale vertical cut marks about 1/3 inch apart indicating lumber made by a reciprocating saw. This corresponds directly with the same type of lumber created at the restored Mill Creek water powered mill at Mackinaw City. In Part I of our story, we learned that Mill Creek is our benchmark for understanding how and early 1800's saw mill operated.

The reciprocating saw type mill uses an interesting water wheel that is uncharacteristic of a conventional water wheel that we see on calendar photos. It's called a "flutter" wheel and is wider than it is tall. It looks more like something off the back of a small paddle wheel boat rather than what would be found in a saw mill apparatus.

According to the 1790's book *The Young Mill-Wright and Miller's Guide* by Oliver Evans, a flutter wheel is suited for a reciprocating saw mill. It harnesses the water- power using a relatively short head of water (height of the water behind the dam) and operates at high enough RPM so that the rotation of the wheel does not have to use a gear reduction mechanism. The Huron River at the Ruggles and Hudson mill sites would only provide a six to eight foot head at best based on the depth of the river there. To watch the reciprocating saw in action at Mackinaw City's Mill Creek is quite a site. Water is flying everywhere as the wheel spins at two revolutions per second. That's a lot of energy being harnessed by a wheel that is about five feet wide and only four feet in diameter.

The wheel rotates and is linked directly to the reciprocating saw located in the sawmill built directly above the wheel. A detailed sketch this mill is shown in Evan's book and will be on display in our museum. The log being cut is secured to a rack that moves horizontally into the reciprocating saw. A linkage advances the rack about 1/3 of an inch with each stroke of the blade. While watching a log being cut at the Mill Creek site, you can feel the floor shake as the powerful machine strokes the blade and the sound of rushing water can be heard below.

With the small amount of evidence and some reasonable assumptions, we can grasp what Milford had for sawmills in the 1800's. The Oliver Evans text on water powered mills served as an excellent resource for this story and is now part of our museum library. It describes many types of mills and tells how to harness a flowing water source. Perhaps our founding settlers arrived in Milford in 1832 with a copy of this book under their arm!

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We outdid ourselves at Milford Memories this year! The Cemetery Walk was a great success thanks to Barb Young's leadership. And we were able to fund the entire event thanks to the efforts of Dave Chase and his ice cream salespeople. We also made a great impression on the visitors to the festival

through our booth exhibits thanks to Sue Bullard and Catherine Irish of our membership committee.

Membership has increased this year and it's that membership committee again. Not only have they gotten the word out, but also they have planned some great activities, from a day at the ballpark to a walking tour of the Village. With more to come!

Our summer picnic was well attended. Even the sunshine came out for the day!

And our members have been well informed and entertained by our many fine presentations at our membership meetings, thanks to our program chair Al Riggs.

The Board has worked hard at planning this year, and at keeping you informed through our newsletter, thanks to our editor Tom Joynt. In all, it has been a good year....

WE have some challenges for next year. We are working on redefining our Home Tour, making it more of an event than ever. And we continue to be faced with Mary Lou's eventual retirement as our Museum Director. I think we are in a good place to meet these challenges...and hope you all will join in as we move forward for another historical year!

Your president, Sue Fleming

News Updates

From our membership committee chairperson Sue Bullard comes the good news that we have two new members. Welcome to Hans and Nancy Ott and William and Georgene O Chadleus. Hey wait, that's four new members! Also, Sue wants everyone to know that an e-mail address has been created to let members know about upcoming events. If you want to be put on the list, e-mail Sue at milfordhistory@yahoo.com.

The membership committee is also organizing a trip to Lansing in January for Statehood day, January 26th. More news to follow in the January edition of the Historian.

Board member Bill Schimmel is pursuing the creation of an Indian artifact display. Bill has some artifacts himself and would like to have our local residents add to it. It will make an interesting display for our museum and will make a great attraction for Home Tour next year. If you can help Bill with some "ancient evidence", contact him at 685-1406.

Museum repair is a constant process! As President Sue Fleming mentioned in her letter, Bill Schimmel is orchestrating the needed work on the museum. Recently the west and south exterior walls on the first floor were scraped and primed. Finish painting will wait until next year when the

weather warms up. In the cellar, asbestos has been removed from the pipes. The Village of Milford helped with the expense on this item.

The next big job is repairing the foundation on the west wing. Bill will also see to it that the cellar floor will get a layer of cement when the footings are poured. Thank you Bill for tackling this big job!

Recently the MHS has been contacted by scouting organizations requesting assistance with history badges. Scouts can earn their badge by learning something about their local history. Visits to the museum and walking tours of our historic village are part of the plan. More details to follow in our next newsletter.

MHS history research specialist Barb Young is offering her services to people needing information from our reference room. She offers this service for \$10.00 / hour and 10c per page. This service helps the Oak Grove Cemetery Project that started earlier this year. See our web site for more information: milfordhistory.org.