

The Milford Historian

Newsletter of the Milford Historical Society

September, 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.

Lincoln's Yacht That Was Not

General Membership Meeting

Thursday, September 20, 2001 @ 6:30 p.m.

Fall has arrived and it's time to get into the regular fall routine. That means a grand meal and a great program at the Milford Historical Society's potluck dinner! Dr. Weldon Petz will entertain us with an interesting story about a civil war boat that had presidential intentions for Abraham Lincoln but ended up in Michigan of all places. Where is it now? Come to the dinner / meeting and find out!

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, September 20th, 2001**

A-F Dessert
G-Q Salad
R-Z Main Dish

From the President's Desk

As many of you have probably already heard, we found ourselves in the position of having to cancel Home Tour this year. It was one of the hardest decisions the Board has had to make, and one we did not make lightly.

For 25 years, the Milford Historical Society Home Tour has been our major fundraiser, and most importantly, it has been a highlight of many of our neighbors' and visitors' fall schedules. It certainly was a source of pride for the Historical Society, as we were able to spotlight interesting and historical homes in our community, thanks to our many generous neighbors and friends and we were able to be a real presence in our community.

I want to thank those homeowners and volunteers who did come forward this year. They are greatly appreciated, but there just weren't enough of you all to make this event possible.

But, don't despair! Home Tour will be back again next year! I think this is an excellent opportunity for us to take stock of what and how we do things, and look for ways to keep what was working and to bring in some new ideas. We have already had some exciting
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Feature Story: Searching for Clues from Milford's Past

As most of us know, Milford was founded because it has flowing water sources that can provide power. In our local history book Ten Minutes Ahead of the Rest of the World, two saw mills were established in the year of the Village's founding in 1832. The Ruggle's saw mill was on the Huron River where Huron Street crosses that river. Another saw mill built by Josiah Isaiah Hudson was located where Dawson Road crosses the river.

Unfortunately, we have no written description or sketch of how these enterprising men built and operated their mills. Other mills that were built in and around the village don't have any descriptions of their workings either. Our Village logo shows a pictorial representation of a log cabin, a water wheel and some trees and tree stumps. The artist's conception is great for telling a quick story of our founding history, but, it leaves one yearning to know what the early saw mills really looked like.

The only water-powered mill that we do have a thorough understanding of is the one that is still standing the Ford Powerhouse on West Liberty Street. This mill is under restoration and, of course, very modern when compared to these mysterious 1832 versions that are now long gone.

So how does one go about finding out how these saw mill builders harnessed the flowing water? Did they use a classic water wheel like it shows in the Village logo on the sign as we enter the Village? Well, the solution is easy: just ask Barb Young!

Seriously, though, this reporter did ask our local historian and Ms. Young threw up her hands and declared that in her extensive research she had never found a description of how any of the water powered mills worked.

Where does one look next? How about "Go north, old man"! Some answers were provided with a visit 300 miles north at the Historic Mill Creek State Park just east of Mackinac City.

If you want to see an operating saw mill that probably duplicates what we had in Milford, this reporter strongly recommends a visit to this site.

This mill was one of the earliest industrial sites in Michigan. Mill Creek provided sawn lumber for the settlement of Mackinac Island in the 1790's, almost 40 years ahead of when Milford started sawing lumber using waterpower.

Archeologists who excavated the site located the dam, the footings of early buildings, and other important clues to help them piece together what this small industry looked like. One of the best clues was the sawn boards used for making the buildings inside the fort on Mackinac Island. The rough cut boards bear witness marks that help one understand the type of saw and saw method that was used in the cutting process.

They also discovered at the mill site a piece of saw blade in an area that was probably a blacksmith's forge. This blade and the rough cut boards were corroborating evidence indicating that the mill used a reciprocating motion saw that cut logs longitudinally at a rate of one third of an inch per stroke.

But now we're stuck again. What does the water wheel look like? What mechanism connects the saw blade to the wheel? How is the carriage that holds the log advanced one third of an inch with each blade stroke? The mill site did not have any of these clues.

The re-creators at Mill Creek decided to use a mill design described in what had to be the mill-wright's bible of its time. In a book titled The Young Mill-Wright and Miller's Guide by Oliver Evans, there is a detailed description with sketches showing what had to be the state of the art for a water powered mill in that era. The book was published in 1795 and is full of information needed to build a successful water powered mill.

Mill Creek's operational mill is a great resource for understanding "how it was done". Back in Milford, the task is before us. This reporter now needs some clues to help pin down how our mills worked. If anyone can help me find and inspect some authentic rough cut lumber that is part of a structure from the 1830's in Milford, I will report what I find in *the* next issue of *The Milford Historian*.

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discussions and ideas of how to make this event even bigger and better in the future.

And we have learned a big lesson from this. It takes a huge volunteer effort in order to accomplish all of the goals for the Milford Historical Society. We need to find ways to involve you, our members, much more in our activities, not only in our big events, such as the Home Tour, but in our everyday operations. So, please think about how you too, can help make the Home Tour, and the upcoming year of events, bigger and better!

Your president, Sue Fleming
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Granny's Attic yard sale was just getting underway at our last newsletter printing. The results are now in. The event raised \$1081.00! A big thanks goes out to all who helped: Larry Horvath, Bill Crawford, Mary Lou Gharritty, Sue Bullard, Betty Bullard, student docents Elizabeth Stanton and Jessica Heidt. Chairperson Tom Joynt reminds you to start now setting aside those saleable items for next years "somethin' out of nothin" sale.
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Those in our thoughts: MI-IS members to keep in mind are Judy Gorsline and Brad Beam due to illness or injury. Hang in there, we're thinking of you! -

Milford Memories was a glorious weekend with spectacular weather. Our booth on Main Street did exceptional as a fundraiser and the horse drawn carriage ride to the Cemetery Walk went very well.

Those who helped in the booth selling ice cream, peanuts, and lemonade are to be congratulated for their good work! Thank You's go to Elsie Garner, Betty Gates, Bill Horn Sue Horn, Sue Fleming, Cahti Irish, Denise Leja, Brian Mooney, Pat Mooney, Margaret Miller, Greg Beck, Marge Sawruk, Audrey Nelson, Ray Keeling, Bill Schimel, Dave Chase, Betty Bullard, Sue Bullard, Tami Averill, Lee Johnson, Wade Herzig, John Herzig, Elizabeth Stanton, and Jessica Heidt.

The Cemetery Walk that was conducted during Milford Memories once again provided our community some first hand historical perspectives of noteworthy people from Milford's past. Organizer Barbara Young has yet to run out of biography's to review in Oak Grove!

Thanks to the following Cemetery Walk helpers: Kim Purcell, Louise Austin, Jim Austin, Sue Fleming, Alice Davies, Judith Reiter, Tom Joynt, Linda Joynt, Barbara Young, Will Young, Tom Young, Kris Young, David Young and David's friend Helena.

Our student docent program reached a milestone August 15th Two of our graduating seniors received \$500 scholarships for their service to the museum and other MHS activities. Congratulations go out to Ashley Orlor and Brandy George. Both of these young ladies are off to further their education beyond high school. We know that students need all the financial help they can get. And, we know our museum needs all the docent help it can get. So far, the plan is working!

Milford High School counselor Noel Essig is formulating our next batch of student recruits; We hope to have several new student docents in training this fall.

For those of you who receive this newsletter on Saturday, September 15th, you will be glad to know that you haven't missed the third annual Tractor Show. Show Chairman Bill Crawford will be lining up the participants at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 16th in South Side Park. The show runs from 10:00a.m. to 5:00p.m. and coincides with the car show on Main Street.

Bill hopes to also have some hit-and miss engines at the show. Either way, the show a hit! And, it's free

MHS Program Line-up

Sept. 16th Tractor Show - South Side Park
Sept. 20th Dr Petz - Lincoln Yacht / Not
Nov. President's Wives