

Milling Around

Motor Mill Historic Site Newsletter



Dave Beck

Milling Around is going digital.

The Motor Mill Foundation has decided to go digital with its newsletter. If you know someone who did not get a copy please have them contact us to be added to the e-mail list at cccb@claytoncountya.gov with "Milling Around" in the subject line.

Milling Around will also be available on our website: www.motormil.org

Clayton County Conservation Board

29862 Osborne Rd

Elkader, IA 52043



2020 Motor Mill



“Stories in Stone” Tours: Noon – 5:00 pm

- Every **Saturday** Memorial Day to Labor Day
- **September 12th**
- **September 26th**
- **October 10th**

Upcoming Events

- **July 18 - Ghosts of Motor - 8PM**
- **July 30 - STEAM Daycamp**
- **August 22 -Barn Dance**

Check us out at www.motormill.org or call 563-245-1516 for updates and more information on these and other events.



Grinding the Grist

Grist is another word for grain that is in the process of being ground. A set of two millstones was used. The bottom stone, which is stationary, is called the bed stone. The stone on top that turns is called the runner stone. Motor Mill used special, very hard millstones called burhs imported from France that were valued for grinding fine flour. Running the stones for 10 hours a day required them to be sharpened about every 3 weeks. Sharpening required a crane to lift the runner stone and 1 week to actually sharpen the stones by hand. Many different patterns were cut into the stones. The pattern is what guided the grist outward and into a hopper. It was then carried to a bolter to be sifted by size into different categories and then put into barrels to be shipped out to be used in baking.



Old Style Recipes

Cast Iron Corn Bread Bake

Recipe from Laura Schoen

3/4 c melted butter
2 c cornmeal
1/2 t salt
1/2 c boiling water
1 1/2 c milk
2 eggs
1 t baking powder

Blend butter, cornmeal, and salt together. Pour in boiling water and blend again to form a smooth batter. Add remaining ingredients, blending for a few more seconds.

Place mixture in prepared cast iron skillet greased with bacon fat or oil and bake 30 minutes at 425 until center is firm and the edges draw away from the sides of the pan. Do not overcook and dry out.

Turn onto rack to cool. Use right away. Cover leftovers with plastic wrap to preserve moisture.

Stone Ground Wheat Bread

Recipe from T. J. Hayes

2 1/4 tsp. active dry yeast (1 package)
1/4 c molasses, maple syrup or honey
2 tsp. salt
2 cups warm water
2 tablespoons melted butter
4 1/2 cups stone ground flour

Mix yeast, molasses, salt and warm water, add melted butter and mix until well blended. Add 2 cups of flour and mix until blended then add remaining flour to form a soft ball.

Turn dough out onto a floured surface and knead for about 5 minutes. Place dough in a greased bowl, cover with a towel and allow to rise 30 minutes until double in size.

Punch the dough down and form into a loose ball shape. Turn out into greased cast iron dutch oven or other baking pan. Cover and allow to rise for 45 minutes.

Brush the top of the loaf with butter or oil and sprinkle with a little flour. Bake at 375 degrees for about 25 minutes, or until the loaf sounds hollow when the crust is tapped.

Turn out onto a plate or cutting board - enjoy!

Friends of Motor Mill

Membership Levels

Apprentice (youth).....\$5.00
Stone Cutter.....\$25.00
Carpenter.....\$50.00
Stone Mason.....\$100.00
Cooper.....\$250.00
Miller.....\$500.00

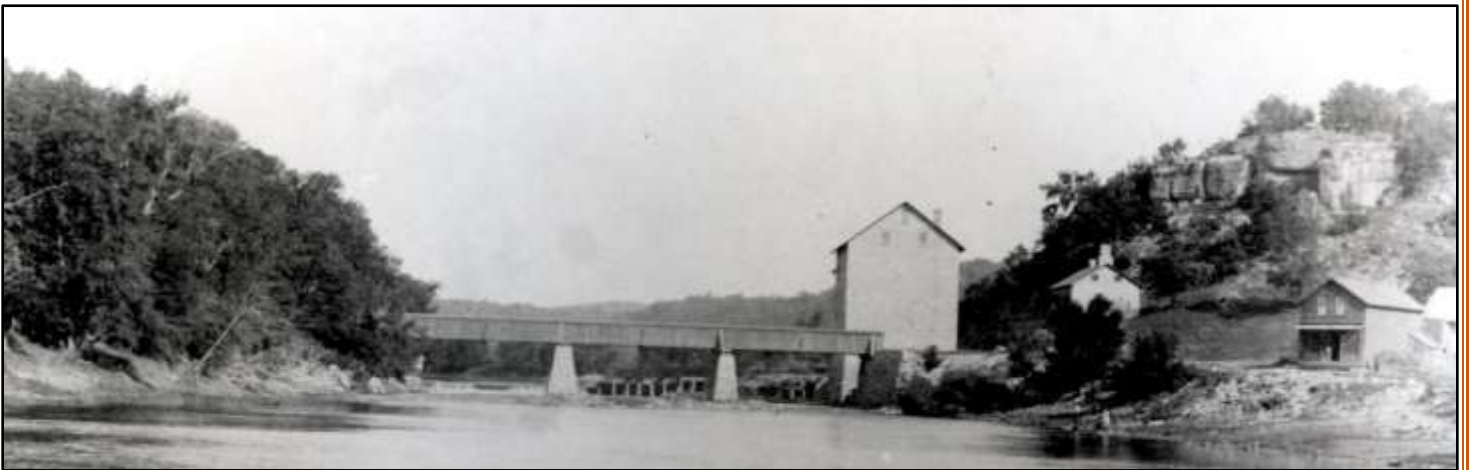
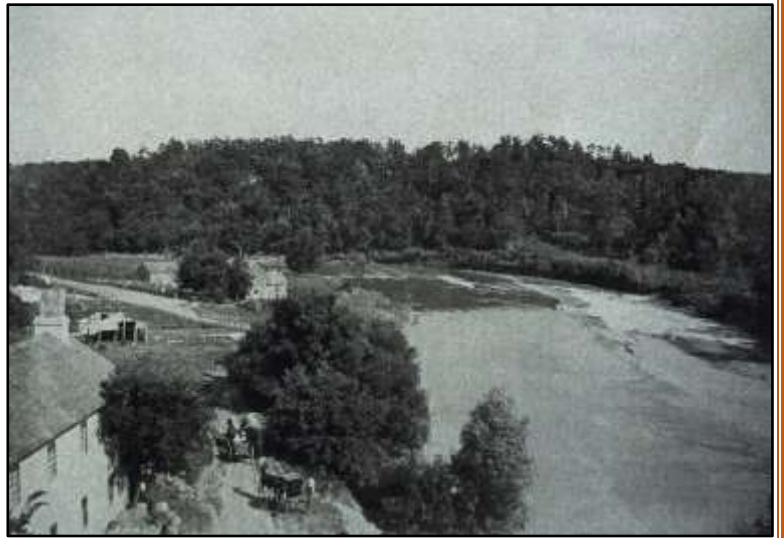
Become a friend of Motor Mill to help with the ongoing restoration and educational programs offered at the site which are funded through sponsorships, donations, and grants. The Membership Endowment Fund is used for the long-term operation of the Motor Mill Historic Site.

You can find yellow donation envelopes at the mill and at the Osborne Nature Center.

Early Years at Motor

The Mill itself and the stone buildings that still stand today actually arose fairly quickly. Once John Thompson and James Crosby set their minds on building it didn't take very long. Within about three years, from 1867 to 1869, the bridge, mill, stable, inn, and smokehouse were all completed. In the decade afterwards some houses and other buildings were put up to develop the small village of Motor. In a past interview, Carrol Berns, who lived at the site as a boy, mentioned remembering 17 house foundations where the campground is now. Carrol's dad grew watermelons in the sandy ground near the river and they drew people in because they were so delicious. He said a tavern sat on the corner where the canoe landing road is. The road goes right over where the foundation was. Carrol informed us that the road that heads east from the mill, and is now a dead end, used to go all the way to Garnavillo.

James Crosby had high hopes for his town and mill. He applied for a post office while the mill was being built but he was turned down because a town just over a mile away, Communia, already had a post office. He did however succeed in applying for a school in 1868. The Motor Sabbath School was organized by electing J. Worley as superintendent and Jotham Dickinson, part owner of the mill at the time, as secretary and treasurer. Carrol recalls the schoolhouse sitting up in the woods east of the cooperage a little way. A U.S. census taken in 1870 lists Mary J. Davis as a schoolteacher, A. Falconer as a hotel keep, John Thompson as flour miller, and Louis Schroeder as a store keep. Unfortunately, Crosby's dreams of a town were continually brought down by floods. Flooding caused the mill to shut down in the late 1880's and the town disappeared shortly after.



Motor Moonshine

Northeast Iowa's rugged river bluffs and deep valleys made the perfect spot to hide a still for cooking moonshine 100 years ago. They were almost as good as the Appalachia for hiding a good still. The key was to have the still far back into a remote valley where it would be hard to spot. The smoke from the fire was the hardest part to hide, but winding remote valleys made smoke harder to pinpoint and the thick trees helped diffuse the smoke.

Motor Mill was no exception and has a colorful past of moonshining legends. According to one source, "most folks cooked a little", but some went a little further to make a little extra money. When times were tough, a little side business selling hooch was a decent source of income. It probably was also a little exciting. Many stories were shared at past Motor Mill Memory events by those who attended. They said there were at least four families along the Garber Road who sold Moonshine. *Latteyer and the three others were said to make a good jug*. The more you paid for the moonshine the better quality it was.

When the subject of moonshine at Motor Mill comes up, locals around Motor Mill and Communia start to talk about the Latteyer Farm. The Latteyer Farm was downstream of Motor Mill at the end of the dead end road at what is now known as Turkey River Bend. Long ago this road kept going to Garnavillo, but has been a dead end for a long time now. There are many stories and legends surrounding the farm at the dead end.

The first tale was told by Carrol Berns in an interview many years ago. Carrol recalled that the road was very busy going past his house every Saturday as folks headed down the dead end road. They had a system so no two customers were back there at the same time. According to Carrol, the common folks would come down on Saturday afternoon and bring the whole family: mom, dad, and the kids and everyone would go down there. But Sunday afternoon the upper class would come down, but it was just the husband that went back there and nobody else. The dead end was a busy place. The Latteyer's still was said to be back in the hills in a cave. They would store the moonshine in tin cans they bought to sell it in. One of the farmhands in the Inn once found a buried gunnysack while out squirrel hunting that was filled with cans of moonshine. Carol remembered the Feds trying to raid the place from time to time, but they usually knew when the Feds were coming and would get everything hidden in time.

Some other stories were told at Motor Mill Memory events by those who attended. Moonshine was said to have been distributed through the Irish Madden tavern in Littleport. During another past interview, Thor Fisco remembered being a rich kid in those days because he would pick up their empty bottles, wash them, and sell them back to the bootleggers for 10 cents with a cap or 5 cents for one without a cap.

The most colorful tale by far though has to be "The Undertaker and the Frozen Man". Many locals who attended the memories events remember this tale being told regularly at Motor Mill. They say this frozen man was one of the Motor moonshiners coming back from tending his still.

"One winter the undertaker was called to Motor for an older man who died outside and was found sitting with his back against a tree or fencepost. The Undertaker and another man came to take the body to town. It was dark, and the corpse pose was frozen, so they "sat" him in the car's back seat. They brought his Jug along too, and shared it on the ride back to Elkader. On the way back to town they stopped for a man who needed a ride. The shine was passed to the passenger, who offered it to the man sitting next to him. The undertaker said, "Oh, he doesn't drink anymore." When they reached town, a streetlight shown in the car and the rider got a look at his cold seatmate. Don't know if he waited for the car to stop before exiting, or ever accepted another ride with the mischievous undertaker....while he lived anyway..."

The Motor Mill foundation has worked to try and preserve the stories from the past before they are lost to time. These stories and legends were shared during several Motor Mill Memories events and interviews told by descendants of the area.

**Articles in the Elkader Register from 1923-1926 confirmed the names of these area moonshiners during bootlegging raids. **

How You Can Help Motor Mill

Volunteer: Volunteers are greatly needed and appreciated since they are nothing less than the heart and soul of the Motor Mill Historic Site.

One way to volunteer is to become a tour guide. Tours are given every weekend during the tour season. Before you become a guide yourself, you will shadow another guide in order for you to get comfortable with the site and giving tours.

Another way to volunteer is to help with renovations by serving on the volunteer work crew. It is impossible to keep the mill up and running without the crew's help. Experience with construction or a similar area is preferred.



Donations may be sent to:

**Motor Mill Foundation
or
Clayton County
Conservation Board**

29862 Osborne Rd
Elkader, IA 52043

Donate: Donations of any amount help to maintain and enrich the architecture and beauty of the Motor Mill Historic Site. Any donation is appreciated and no donation is too small!

Donations to the Motor Mill Foundation or the Clayton County Conservation Board are 100% tax deductible due to their 501c3 status.

For More Information

Phone: 563-245-1516

E-mail: ccb@claytoncountya.gov

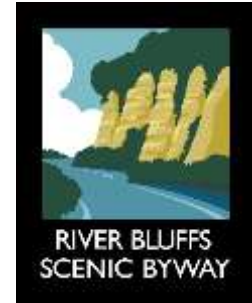
Website: <https://motormill.org>



Our Partner Organizations

•The **River Bluffs Scenic Byway** stretches throughout both Clayton and Fayette counties. This scenic route extends for 109 miles and passes through “Bluff Country”, an area in Northeast Iowa known for its rolling hills and valleys, towering bluffs, and a beautiful green landscape.

www.traveliowa.com/trails/river-bluffs-scenic-byway/11/



•**Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area** preserves and tells the story of American agriculture and its global significance through partnerships and activities that celebrate the land, people, and communities of the area. www.silosandsmokestacks.org



•The mission of the **Clayton County Conservation Board** is to promote the health and general welfare of the people; and to encourage preservation, conservation, education and recreation through responsible use and appreciation of our natural resources and cultural heritage. www.claytoncountyconservation.org



•The mission of the **Motor Mill Foundation** is to protect and preserve the architectural integrity, history, natural beauty and serenity of the Motor Mill site and its surroundings and to develop appropriate uses and interpretation as a regional treasure for the benefit of future generations. www.motormill.org

•The **Turkey River Recreational Corridor** provides several outdoor activities, like land and water trails, that people can enjoy along the Turkey River. The scenic river connects the towns of Elgin, Clermont, and Elkader offering various business and historic attractions as well. <https://turkeyrivercorridor.com/>



•The **Great River Road National Scenic Byway** follows the course of the Mississippi River for 3,000 miles from northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. The scenic route passes through 10 states and hundreds of river towns. The Great River Road is arguably the longest and most important scenic byway in America. www.experiencemississippiriver.com