

Vol. 39 • June/July 2025

Milling Around

Motor Mill Foundation



Motor Mill Historic Site Newsletter

View previous issues at <https://motormill.org/milling-around/>

OUR MISSION

To protect and preserve the architectural integrity, history, natural beauty, and serenity of the Motor Mill Historic Site and its surroundings and to develop appropriate uses and interpretation as a regional treasure for the benefit of future generations.



Motor Mill Historic Site
28518 Galaxy Rd, Elkader, IA, USA

Clayton County Conservation Board
29862 Osborne Rd, Elkader, IA 52043

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OPEN DAILY 10-5

Special tours each weekend by our
dedicated volunteers.

"Stories in Stone"

Weekend Tours: Noon - 5:00 pm



CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Historic Motor Mill, a 155-year-old, 85-foot-tall grist mill on the edge of the Turkey River southeast of Elkader, has recently undergone the first stage of critical repairs that should help the iconic building endure periodic flooding into the next century and beyond. The Mill and four other buildings, which are a popular tourist destination, are on the National Register of Historic Places.

Steege Construction of Waverly has installed aluminum forms anchored with steel rods and filled with masonry to protect limestone support pillars in the Mill basement. The contractors also tuckpointed and did minor repairs to other pillars in the basement.

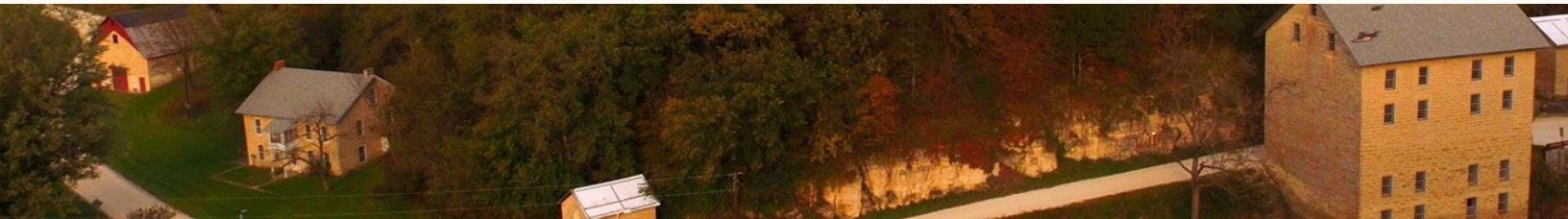
The two pillars of most concern were sitting on a fractured limestone bedrock ledge, which was eroding. There was a very real fear that further erosion would jeopardize the pillars and the massive, wooden posts that support the entire structure of the Mill.



The Clayton County Conservation Board, which owns the Mill, hired Shive-Hattery Architecture and Engineering to find a solution. Shive-Hattery proposed a two-phase project: initially protecting the pillars from further erosion by encasing them in flowable mortar, then ultimately installing steel micropile supports to supplement the wooden posts. The cost of the entire operation was estimated at more than \$211,000.

The Conservation Board and the Motor Mill Foundation, with the help of the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, began a capital fundraising campaign in November 2024. MMF board members made a combined contribution of over \$40,000. Over the past 8 months, many individuals, families, businesses, and visitors to Motor Mill have made additional donations to pay for the Phase 1 stabilization effort. The Conservation Board and the Motor Mill Foundation will continue the fund drive, plus apply for grants to help pay for Phase 2, which is likely to cost considerably more than the original estimate.

The Motor Mill Foundation and Clayton County Conservation Board thank the many donors who helped complete Phase 1 and prepare to begin Phase 2.



THANK YOU FOUNDATION RESCUE DONORS

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 Ruth Balster
 Mark & Dee Batchelder
 David Beck
 Greg Beisker
 Randi Berg
 Burnell Smith Family Trust
 Roger Buchholz
 Victoria Carolan
 Scot & Jane Christiansen
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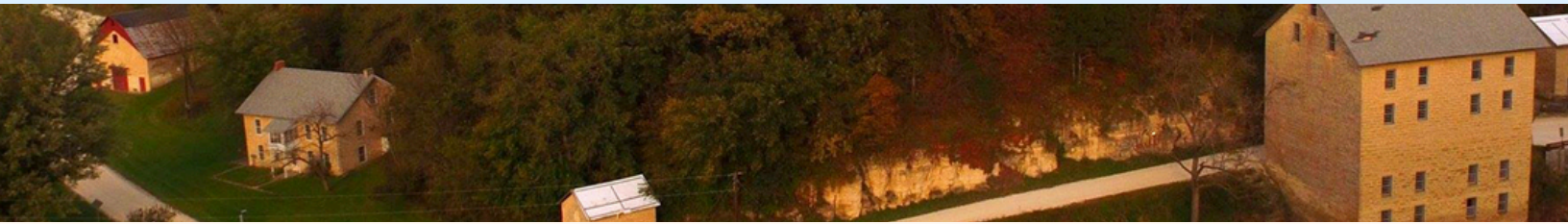
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 Dr. Kenneth & Fran Zichal

Some donors have chosen to remain anonymous

DONOR APPRECIATION NIGHT





CLAYTON COUNTY MUSEUM CRAWL

Motor Mill Historic Site was one of 13 museums and historic sites to participate in the Clayton County Museum Crawl in June! Participants visited museums, got their “passports” stamped, and were entered into a drawing. Clockwise from left: Gail, Steve, Barb, Diane, and Dan (photo credit: Bonnie James), and Carlean, Jackson, and Grayson all stopped for a quick photo op.

The Motor Mill T-shirt winner for the scavenger hunt drawing was Wyatt Uhlenhake of Sumner.

PROMOTION OF THE MILL

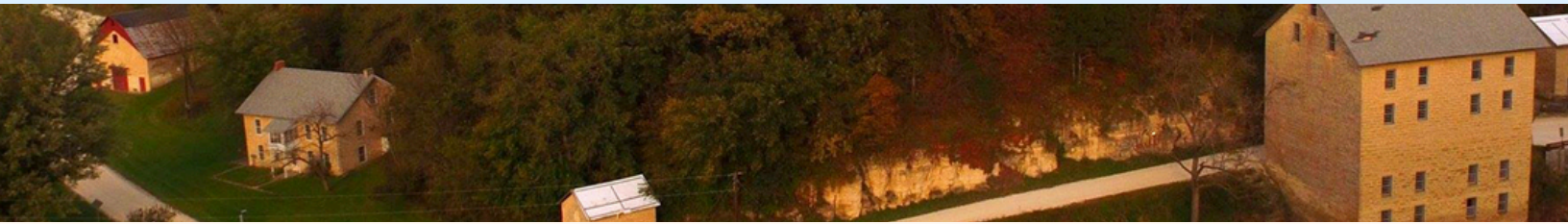
Motor Mill was featured on Iowa PBS “Road Trip Iowa” - River Bluffs Scenic Byway on April 16th. The segment can still be viewed at:

<https://www.iowapbs.org/shows/road-trip-iowa>



Motor Mill Historic Site made Travel Iowa’s Ultimate Iowa Summer Bucket List!

<https://www.traveliowa.com/ultimate-iowa-summer-bucket-list/>



S.T.E.A.M. CAMP SUMMARY

Despite the rain, 5 children participated in our June S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) camp. The participants made a homemade Water Wheel (we explained that Motor Mill has turbines instead of a water wheel), played games such as the Incredible Journey (where kids made beaded bracelets based on which part of the water cycle they rolled the dice for), took a hike, and made kaleidoscopes and art such as wind chimes with driftwood and beads.



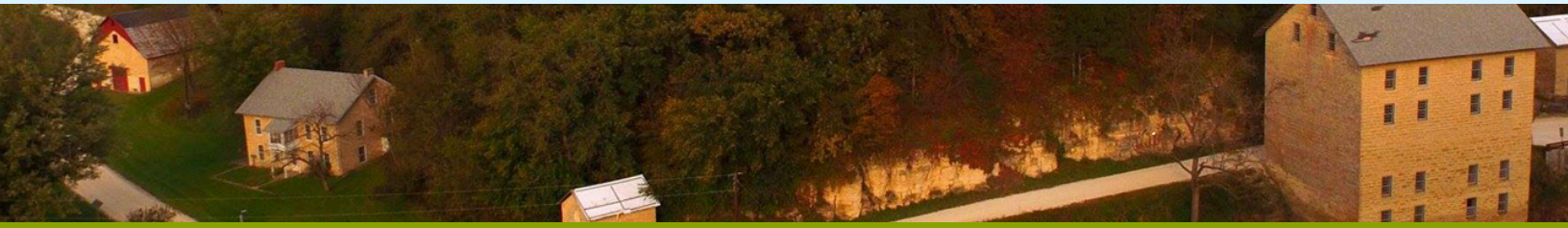
1897 Galbraith's Railway Mail Service Map



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NEW BOOK AVAILABLE!

Motor Mill: Stories in Stone is now available at the gift shop. This carefully researched compilation of history and stunning photographs is sure to make an amazing gift for someone or a special reminder of your time at Motor Mill. Special thanks to Clayton County historian David Beck for his contributions.



Lee Lenth

Jan. 15, 1938-Oct. 12, 2023

These beautiful photos of Lee were taken by Photographer Dick Evans on the afternoon of October 11th, 2023. These photos are believed to have been taken during his last day working at the mill while giving Dick a tour. Dick was so touched by Lee's passion for Motor Mill and how proud Lee was of his family he brought them to the site a few weeks ago to share them with everyone.



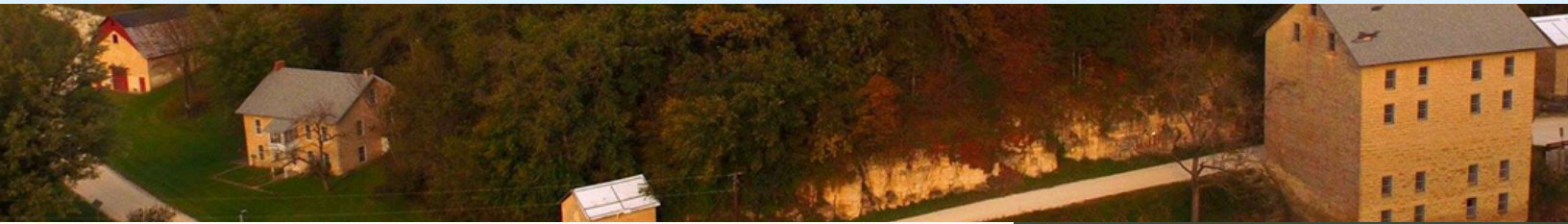
UPCOMING EVENTS

LEE LENTH MEMORIAL DEDICATION 3:30PM JULY 26

Friends and family of Lee Lenth are invited Motor Mill Historic Site to help honor Lee's years of dedication to the site. Join us as we remember Lee by unvailing a memorial plaque in his honor on Saturday, July 26th at 3:30.

Lee Lenth, a long-standing Motor Mill Foundation Member, could often be found at the mill working on different specialty projects over the years. Lee was an avid craftsman who dedicated countless hours to the Motor Mill Foundation. Most recently he completed the basement platform so visitors could view the location of the turbines unearthed in the 2020 sediment removal project. Lee always brought a smile to those he greeted through his knowledge, stories, and gift for connecting with people. He will be greatly missed.





VOLUNTEER!

Volunteers are nothing less than the heart and soul of the Motor Mill Historic Site. One way to volunteer is to become a weekend tour guide. Before you become a guide yourself, you will shadow another guide in order for you to get comfortable with the site and giving tours. It is a rewarding experience to share this special place with its visitors!



Another way to support the Mill is to help with renovations as a member of the volunteer work crew. It is impossible to maintain the Mill without the crew's contributions. Bring your hands and heart and enjoy the camaraderie with like-minded people in common effort.

DONATE

Help Us Keep the Lights ON! Utilities alone cost the Mill \$950 a year. Donations are necessary to stay up and running. Please consider a donation to help offset these costs then bring your family to visit this community treasure that you cherish. Ask for a personally guided tour for your group.

Also, consider contributing to the Motor Mill Foundation Endowment.

This sustainable source of funding supports the long-term operation of the Motor Mill Historic Site, payable to Community Foundation of Dubuque and Clayton County.

Donations to the Motor Mill Foundation or Clayton County Conservation Board are tax deductible. Any amount helps. Become a Friend of the Motor Mill at any of these levels!

Friends of Motor Mill

Apprentice (under 14)	\$100.00
Stone Cutter	\$250.00
Carpenter	\$500.00
Stone Mason	\$1000.00
Cooper	\$2500.00
Miller	\$5000.00



'here he would build a mill finer and bigger than any that had yet been conceived by pioneers.'

James O. Crosby

TO SEND DONATIONS OR FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Donate online at:
www.motormill.org/donations

Mail to:
Motor Mill Foundation

-or-

Clayton County Conservation Board
29862 Osborne Rd
Elkader, IA 52043

Phone: 563-245-1516
Email: cccb@claytoncountyia.gov



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 beautiful green landscape.

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



[Silos and 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 model and encourage preservation, conservation, education, and recreation through responsible use and appreciation of our natural resources and cultural heritage. www.claytoncountyconservation.org



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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 businesses 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. Motor Mill Historic Site is a designated Interpretive Center (IC) of the Great River Road - An All American Road! www.experiencemississippiriver.com