

Vol. 41 • Spring 2026

Milling Around

Motor Mill Foundation



Motor Mill Historic Site Newsletter

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

Follow us!



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

THIS ISSUE:

Mission
Page 01

Motor News
Page 02-03

History Corner
Page 04

Motor Your Way
Page 05

Support
Page 06

Partner Organizations
Page 07



MOTOR NEWS

Motor Mill Pioneer Camp

New this year, a Motor Mill Pioneer Camp was held in late June. This event served to educate the youth regarding life in the Late 1800s. The kids had fun participation in hands on demonstrations such as fire starting, grinding grain, foraging, and spinning yarn from wool.



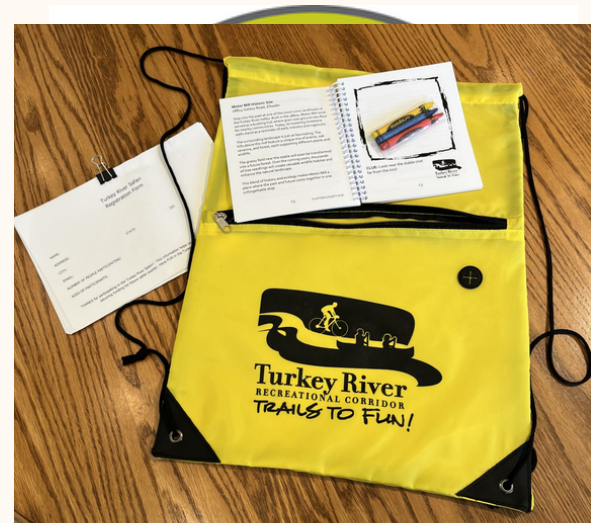
CLAYTON COUNTY MUSEUM CRAWL

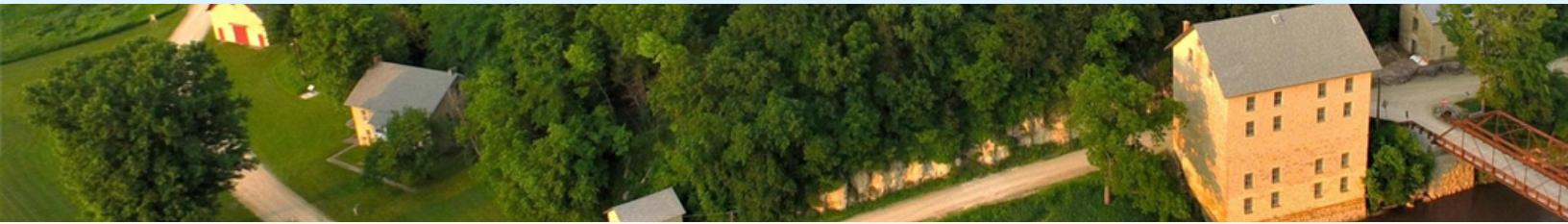
The Clayton County Museum Crawl returned this June for its 2nd year. As one of the 17 participating locations, Motor Mill saw a number of visitors joining in the crawl as they learned about Clayton County's amazing history and attractions.

TURKEY RIVER SAFARI

Motor Mill is also a participating location for the Turkey River Safari. The Turkey River Safari is a summer-long adventure along the Turkey River Recreational Corridor. There are 20 locations to explore across Clayton and Fayette Counties.

There is still time to join the Safari - Starting materials are available at participating locations, including Motor Mill.





PROJECT AWARE CLEANS UP THE TURKEY RIVER

Thanks to all the hard working volunteers who helped clean-up 66.9 miles of the Turkey & Little Turkey Rivers in Clayton, Fayette, & Winneshiek Counties.



There were 60 Canoes on the last leg, Elkader to Motor Mill. The Motor Mill Foundation welcomed them as they finished their week of hard work with milkshakes at the Mill.

C.A.L.I.S.A. SIDE X SIDE RIDE

The Motor Mill Foundation welcomed the C.A.L.I.S.A. Ride with pie and ice cream as they came through Motor.





HISTORY CORNER: THE FOUNDERS



Crosby's papers are the best resource we have for historical information on the site. The Garnavillo Historical Museum houses his entire collection of documents.

Like John Thompson, Crosby also made a name for himself and had much influence in Iowa. In 1870 he served on the first State Capital Commission, in 1889 he served as an Iowa Commissioner for the International Expo in Paris and in 1893 for the Chicago World's Fair. In 1898 he became president of the State Bar Association. Crosby also was the 1st person in Clayton County to own a horseless carriage.

JAMES O. CROSBY

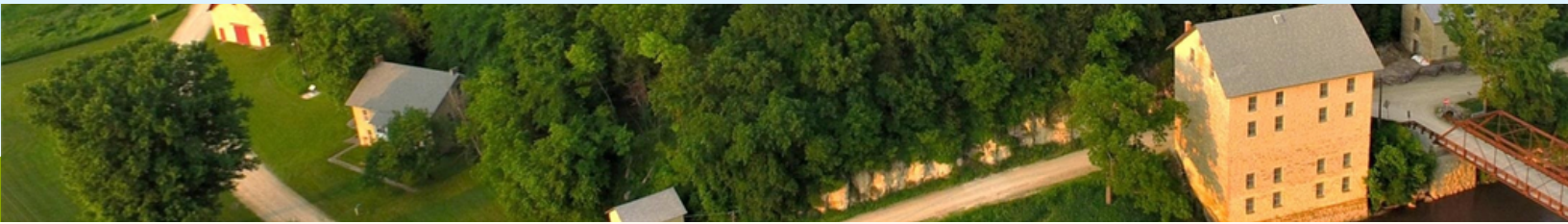
3/22/1828 - 5/23/1921

We continue our Motor Mill Founder Series with James Crosby. James Crosby was a well respected and progressive thinking attorney with many talents from New York." He was admitted to the Bar in Albany, New York in 1849. He came West and located at Garnavillo, Iowa in 1854.

John Thompson needed investors to help him fulfill his dream at Motor and Crosby was a perfect choice. With 25% interest in the mill, he had many skills that were valuable as they began their project. He surveyed the property, plotted the townsite and engineered the cable car tracks to transport stone down from the quarry. He was also very useful as a lawyer by facilitating all the legal documents, paperwork, and bookkeeping.



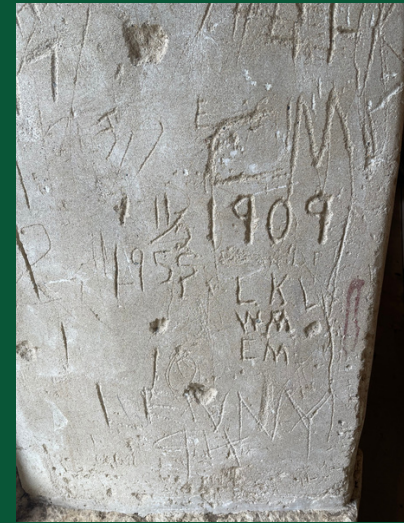
J.O. Crosby with wife Caroline and his Crestmobile traveling into Garnavillo on Van Buren Street.



GRAFFITI AT MOTOR

The addition of new graffiti to Motor Mill is expressly forbidden. However, older graffiti has historical value that is part of the intrigue of the site.

This graffiti dates back to as early as 1909 and tells the story of the mill's abandonment and colorful history. The descendants of old graffiti authors who visit often have something "set in stone" to reminisce about.



Follow this QR Code to find select merchandise and apparel that can be purchased online.



UPCOMING EVENTS

GRAU SAVANNA SAUNTER

5:30 PM FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 18TH

OSBORNE DAYS

10:00- 4:00 PM OCT. 10TH-11TH

HOLIDAY BRIDGE LIGHTING

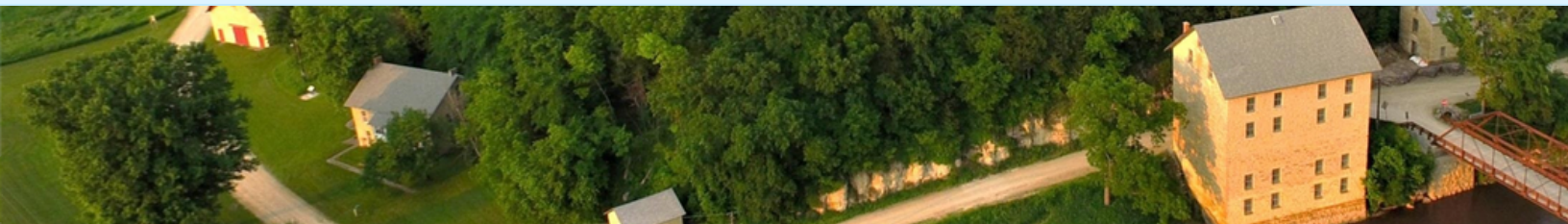
4:00 PM NOV. 21ST

TOURS EVERY WEEKEND

"Stories in Stone"

Weekend Tours: Noon - 5:00 pm
by our dedicated volunteers.

(Welcome Center at the Inn open daily)



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 \$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:

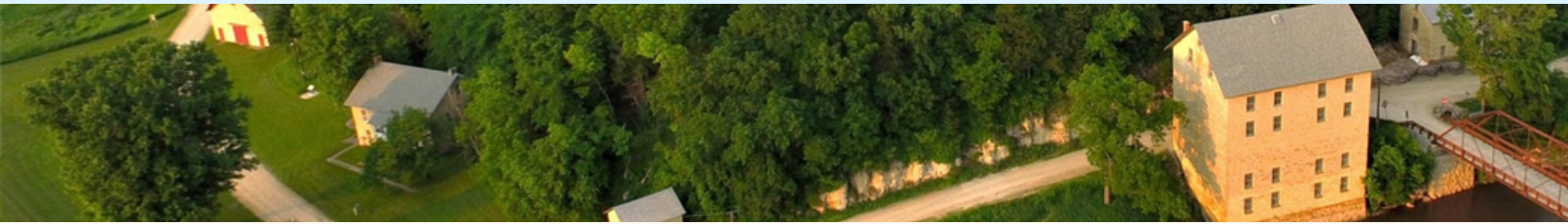
Donate online at:
www.motormill.org/donations

Mail to:
Motor Mill Foundation

-or-

Clayton County Conservation Board
29862 Osborne Rd
Elkader, IA 52043

Phone: 563-245-1516
Email: cccb@claytoncountya.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



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 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