

MILL MUSINGS

A Publication of the Museum of Power and Industry, Inc.

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AMERICAN TEXTILE HISTORY MUSEUM ARTIFACT DONATIONS

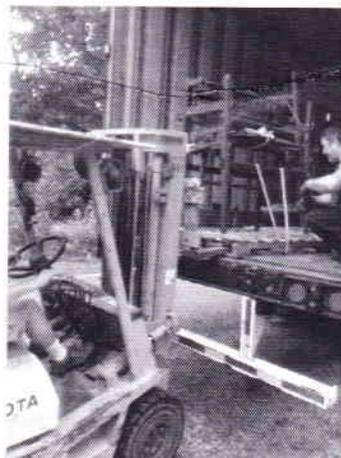
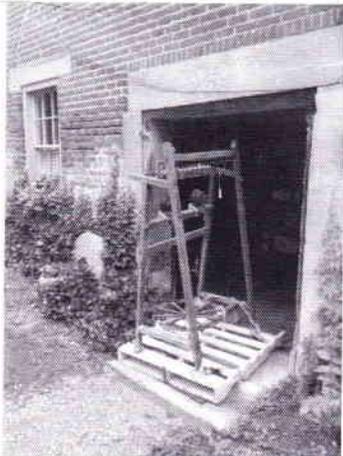
On Thursday, June 15th at 4:30 p.m., a 52' tractor trailer pulled into the Falls Mill parking lot with a collection of textile equipment donated from the American Textile History Museum (ATHM) in Lowell, Massachusetts. A carding machine, part of a slubbing billy, a vertical spinning jenny, accordion spinning wheel, pendulum wheel, tentering frame (for drying and stretching woven cloth), and a napping and shearing machine were carefully removed from the back of the truck.

The artifacts arrived in good condition but some restoration work will need to be done on each piece. Plans are to spend the cooler months dismantling the wooden grain bins on the second floor of the mill and opening a new exhibit room behind the weaving room to showcase the nearly 200 year old pieces. Financial difficulties prompted the closing of the ATHM and their collection of rare textile equipment had to be donated to other non-profit organizations. Museums all over the country requested artifacts, so we feel most fortunate to have been able to acquire a few pieces. If you wish to volunteer and help get the new exhibit space ready give us a call at the mill. Special thanks to the descendants of Robert Newton Mann, one of the builders of Falls Mill, for their financial contributions toward the restoration of this collection. Also, thanks to museum member Charles Taylor for his pledge of \$5,000 toward the moving and preservation of this rare and valuable collection.

We had submitted a proposal request to ATHM almost a year ago when we learned of their impending closure (they were the largest textile museum and collection in the U.S.). Some of the machines we received in their dissolution will be used to interpret the carding and spinning operations in factories prior to 1830. To this end, the carding machine we received, although similar to the ones we currently display, is much older and representative of that early period. The wool rovings produced from this machine were next placed into a machine called a slubbing billy, where they were condensed into continuous slivers, then spun into yarn on a spinning jenny. We now have two jennies, the traditional one John built, and the 1831 vertical machine donated by ATHM and originally sold for home use. John will take the slubbing billy carriage donated and build the remaining frame and assembly to make it operable. When this is accomplished, it will be the only billy known worldwide that is operational.

The two spinning wheels are quite rare and of unusual designs, and were suggested to us for acquisition by museum member Kim Caulfield of Far Out Farm in Cornersville, Tennessee. John has been making a few parts for them and should have both operational by the end of June.

The cloth shearing machine is believed to be quite rare and early, most likely made by Seth Parsons' manufacturing plant in Hoosick Falls, New York, before 1830. It is missing some critical parts, notably the shearing cylinder, so John is researching the history of the machine and patent records to try to replicate the needed parts. This machine raised the nap on the cloth as it was fed through, then sheared it off to the same height like a lawn mower cuts grass.



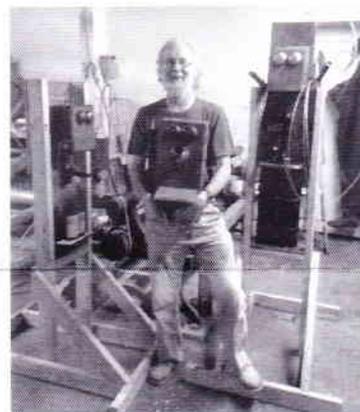
OLD PHOTOS OF FRONT OF MILL

In April, David Bryant of Charlotte, NC shared photos from his late father Wilbur Earl Bryant's collection. For years, the only pictures we had of the front of the mill were from the auction poster that depicted the property when it sold during the great depression. Mr. Bryant's snapshots show the gin building that adjoined the brick mill. Most of the mill windows and several lintels are missing and bricks on either side of the front door are damaged. The fish fry photo was taken below the mill around 1902. Wilbur Earl Bryant is a youngster in this photograph. We are particularly grateful to David Bryant for the photo showing the old cotton gin, torn down in the late 1940's.



SPINNING A GOOD YARN

Friendly smiles and good stories greet visitors who venture onto the back porch of the log house overlooking the waterfall and dam on the third Saturday of each month. "Spinning and Weaving Saturday" has been a big hit with tourists. Museum member Carole Runyon, Bea Naasz and Judy Thelen and friends bring their wheels and fiber to demonstrate the art of hand spinning. Museum member Candy Albright works at the barn loom on the second floor of the mill and relates the history of Falls Mill while weaving scarves. Please check the calendar on the website fallsmill.com for the next scheduled spinning demonstration day.

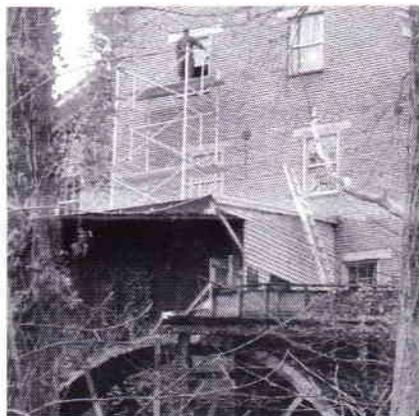


ANTIQUe PHONE RESTORATION

You may remember that John has been struggling off and on to restore four antique hand cranked telephones for a working exhibit. The phones range in age from 1906 to about 1918. Thanks to museum member and electrical engineer Stephen Moss, a longtime friend from Huntsville, all four phones are now working! Stephen was able to troubleshoot the sometimes wacky wiring in each phone and devise methods of testing the various components. John felt like Alexander Graham Bell when he first heard Stephen's voice coming through the bare wires connecting the ancient telephones. The next step is to position them in the mill, store, blacksmith shop and our home. Communication skills take a giant step backwards and we are very proud of Stephen's skills and willingness to help out on this very interesting task. No more phone bills with this system!

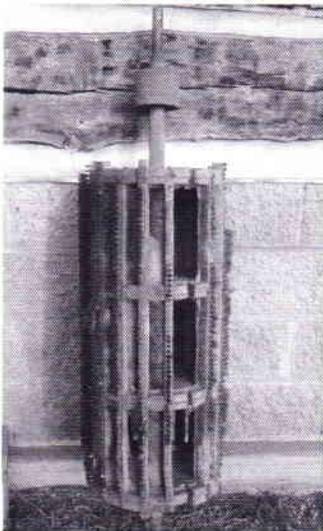
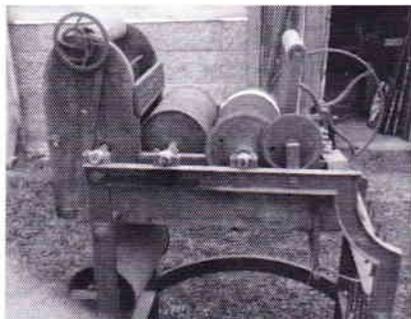
NEW WINDOWS IN PLACE

Thanks are offered to Mervin Mast for constructing and installing the new third floor windows in the mill. Working on the back of the building by the waterwheel on scaffolding 60 feet above the creek can be a little unnerving, but Mervin did a wonderful job. Thanks also to Robyn and Jenny Glazner, museum members from New Market, AL for their help painting the window trim on the front of the mill. These fearless ladies really enjoyed painting from the bucket lift. Great job folks!



COTTON GIN AND PLANTATION SPINNER RESTORATION

John is progressing on the restoration of the Pratt cotton gin and plantation spinner. The Pratt gin was donated by the Monroe County (Alabama) Heritage Association, and the plantation spinner by Travellers Rest Plantation and Museum in Nashville. The gin was built in Prattville, Alabama, in 1887, and there are only a few of this type and age that have been restored to operating condition. John has received help from friends in South Carolina and from Bob Vitale in Franklin, North Carolina. John has completed a new brush wheel with replacement brushes installed, and is now at work on the saw shaft for the gin. The plantation spinner is a very rare machine manufactured primarily before the Civil War and sold to Southern plantations and to the Shaker villages. It was designed to gin, card, and spin cotton in one hand cranked operation. The yarn produced was used to weave clothing. The machine we received was made in Hendersonville, Tennessee, by Hugh Joyner, probably in the 1850's. John has had to do a great deal of cleaning on the parts, as well as fabricate several missing parts. Some have been made in the Falls Mill forge and some are of wood. The goal is to be able to operate the machine for demonstrations.



REMEMBERING LOST FRIENDS

Sympathy is offered to the family members of Beverly St. John, grand-daughter of George and Martha Pickup. Mr. Pickup was the first weaver to work at Falls Mill, and his son later went on to become a noted engraver, artist, and print maker in Nashville. Francis Tucker of Lois, TN had been a member, supporter and promoter of Falls Mill for many years. He and his wife June owned the Tucker Inn Bed and Breakfast in Lois. They donated a hand loom to the mill several years ago. Robert Wilkinson of Belvidere passed away in May. Robert and his wife Virginia managed Falls Mill for 10 years for their cousin, Donald Cunningham, who owned the property from 1974 until the Lovetts bought it in 1984.

A WINDY SPRING

High winds in April and May brought down several trees on the mill property and near the dam and mill pond. The metal roof on the mill was lifted and damaged on the north side, but this was promptly repaired by Tim Marshall's roofing company. Woody's Tree Service was called in to remove the fallen trees that were accessible. One positive thing is we have enough firewood for the next two winters!

Check your museum membership card, and if it is time to renew, please join us at the Museum of Power and Industry, Inc., at Falls Mill for another year! Your membership fee and any donation you care to make are so important to us in continuing the work we have undertaken these last 32 years. Thank you for your contribution.

Check the contact/calendar page of the website fallsmill.com for special events.

INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY MEMBERSHIP \$25.00 per year _____

TAX DEDUCTBLE MUSEUM DONATION \$ _____

The Museum of Power and Industry, Inc.

Falls Mill

134 Falls Mill Rd.

Belvidere, TN 37306



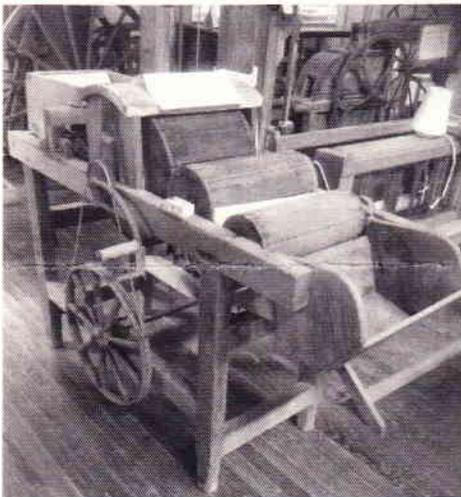
LOANS AND DONATED ITEMS

The Museum of Power and Industry at Falls Mill has received three interesting pieces on loan from members and friends of the museum. One of these is a pre-1830's "gin carder," a machine that was hand turned and used to both gin and card cotton. This machine is on loan from Tony Mullins of Louisiana. A second machine is known as a "plantation spinster (or spinner)," and was used to gin, card, and spin cotton by hand cranking. This is a primarily wooden machine found by museum member Bill Friday of Alabama. Bill also brought a device called a "filer/gummer" that was used to sharpen the blades on cotton gin saws. This is on loan from Bill's antique engine club. Bill and Tony have been collaborating with John to research the plantation spinsters and similar devices, and helped our museum secure such a machine that John is presently restoring (see related article).

Another donation came from Eva, Alabama. This is a horse-drawn corn binder donated by Don Oden, which we hope to use to help harvest our annual sorghum crop. This year's date for the sorghum cooking will be announced on the Falls Mill calendar in the Website at fallsmill.com, and should be around the first weekend in October. David Tapp and Jim and Mary Frances Neal are growing sorghum for our annual syrup making event this year.

Donna Bull of Winchester, Tennessee, donated her grandfather's grain cradle scythe, and Doris Lewis of Gurley, Alabama, gave the museum several items from her family, including a small corn sheller and seed planter and wash boards and ironing boards.

We are also very grateful to our members and friends who have provided monetary donations since the last newsletter. We depend greatly on these to keep the museum functioning, since we do not receive any type of funding other than through memberships, admissions, and donations, and an annual grant from the Camp-Younts Foundation of North Carolina.



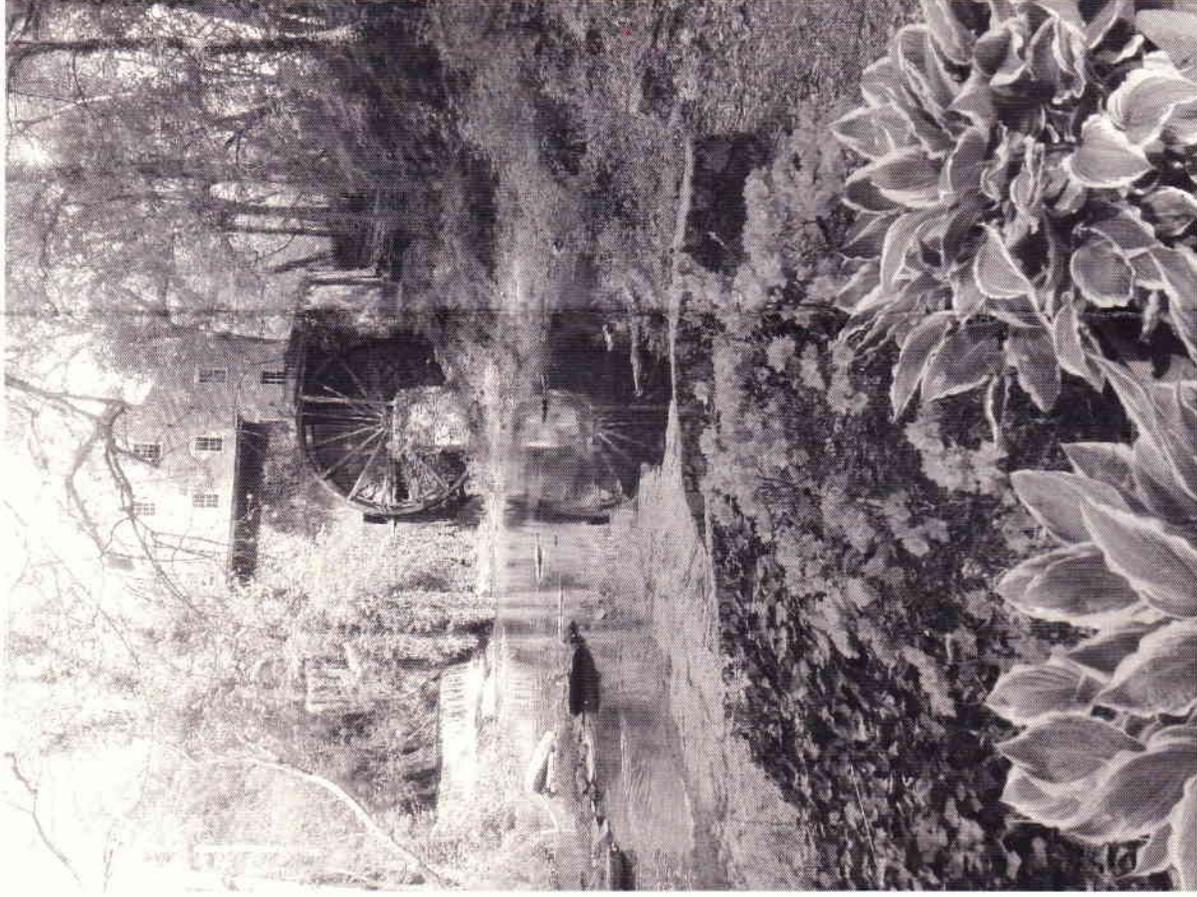
Gin Carder



Plantation Spinster



Corn Binder



Museum of Power and Industry, Inc.

Annual Membership Picnic

at

Falls Mill

Saturday, September 16, 2017

4:30-6:30

Bring a vegetable, side dish, or dessert to share

Barbecue and beverages provided

r.s.v.p. by September 10th

(931) 469-7161